

ANALYSIS 7
WINDS OF POLITICAL
DUBIETY IN KERALA**MONEY 8**
GOVT ALLOWS IMPORT OF
MEDICAL DEVICES FOR 3 MONTHS**SPORTS 12**
MUMBAI BACK IN
VICTORY STRIDE

HYDERABAD, FRIDAY APRIL 30, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

NARAPPA
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POSTPONED

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**US TELLS CITIZENS TO LEAVE INDIA
AS COVID SWAMPS HOSPITALS**

The U.S. government told its citizens to leave India as soon as possible because of the country's escalating Covid-19 crisis. In a Level 4 travel advisory — the highest issued by the Department of State — U.S. citizens were told "not to travel to India or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so." There are 14 direct daily flights between India and the U.S. and other services that connect through Europe, the department said. Indian authorities and hospitals are struggling to cope with record Covid-19 infections and deaths. Official data on Wednesday showed new infections rose by 360,960 in the prior 24 hours, while 3,293 additional lives were lost — both a record for the country. India has the world's fastest-growing caseload.

**MANMOHAN SINGH COVID-FREE,
DISCHARGED FROM DELHI'S AIIMS**

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who was hospitalised after testing positive for COVID-19, was discharged this morning from Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences. The 88-year-old veteran Congress leader was admitted to the Trauma Centre of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on April 19. The former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has received his two vaccine doses of Covaxin - the first on March 4 and the second on April 3. Dr Manmohan Singh was moved to the hospital as "a matter of precaution".

**DEADLY CALIFORNIA FIRE WAS STARTED
TO COVER UP A MURDER: POLICE**

A California fire that killed two people last year was intentionally set to cover up a murder, investigators revealed in a press briefing. The Markley Fire was started in Northern California's Solano County on August 18, 2020 near where police found the burned body of 32-year-old missing person Priscilla Castro. Authorities had previously said Castro was reported missing after she went on a date with Victor Serriteno two days before the fire. She was not seen again. "Based on an extensive, eight-month investigation, we believe Serriteno deliberately set the Markley Fire in an attempt to conceal his crime," Tom Ferrara, the Solano County Sheriff, said in a briefing Wednesday.

**DELHI REPORTS HIGHEST EVER DEATHS
DUE TO COVID ON A SINGLE DAY**

The national capital yet again reported its highest ever fatalities on a single day due to COVID-19. Government data shows 395 Covid patients died in the last 24 hours in Delhi. The city reported 24,235 Covid cases during the same period. The positivity rate or the chances of infection spreading is 33 per cent, and the active cases are at 97,977. The rising daily fatalities have put intense strain on crematoriums across the city. The Delhi Police has asked the municipal body to find more sites to be used as crematoriums amid Covid.

**Govt promotes all
students, but private
schools insist on
exams!**

3

**Reinforcing
capacities to fight
Covid: Rajnath**

5

**Global cues, bottom
fishing lift equity
mkts; metal
stocks shine**

8

TODAY**ALMANAC****Month & Paksham:**Chaitra & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam**Tithi :** Chaturthi: 07:09 pm**Nakshatram :** Jyestha: 12:07 pm**Time to Avoid :** (Bad time to start any important work)**Rahukalam :** 10:38 am – 12:13 pm**Yamagandam :** 03:22 pm – 04:50 pm**Varjyam :** 07:30 pm – 08:58 pm, 10:41 am – 12:07 pm**Gulika :** 07:29 am – 09:03 am**Good Time :** (to start any important work)**Amritakalam :** 04:21 am – 05:50 am**Abhijit Muhurtham :** 11:48 am – 12:38 pm**HYDERABAD
WEATHER****Forecast:** Mostly sunny**Temp:** 37/23**Humidity:** 36%**Sunrise:** 05:50 am**Sunset:** 06:36 pm**Current Weather Conditions**

Updated april 29, 2021 5:00 PM

NO VACCINE

It's difficult to start vaccination for 18+ from May 1 in Telangana due to shortage of stock where as AP CM Jagan said vaccination for 18+ can start only from Sept

PNS ■ HYDERABAD/VIJAYAWADA

Hit by a shortage of Covid-19 vaccine, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh may not be able to start mass immunisation for those aged between 18 and 44 from May 1, official sources in both the states said on Thursday.

A senior official of Telangana health department said though the state government is in touch with vaccine manufacturers, there is no certainty on when the stocks would be available for the mass vaccination.

"There are no possibilities (of vaccination). We are in the process

of getting a vaccine where there is no vaccine available in the country. We are in touch with the manufacturers also," Telangana Public Health Director G Srinivasa Rao told PTI.

"We are in search of the vaccine. We require around four crore doses," he said.

He said the vaccine manufacturers also could not assure the state government as to when they will be able to supply stocks.

The vaccine rates have been fixed by the Centre and accordingly the state will have to place their requirements with the manufacturers, he added.



The official, however, said vaccination for people above 45 years of age will continue as the doses are supplied by the Centre.

According to a senior official in Andhra Pradesh, inoculation may

not start on May 1 in the State as planned due to delay in procurement of vaccine from manufacturers.

The official said the state government has already written to the manufacturers for vaccine supplies and yet to get confirmation from them, hinting that there may be delay for those in the 18-44 age group.

Amid an unprecedented surge in coronavirus cases in the country, the government has decided to allow everyone above 18 years of age to get vaccinated from May 1.

2

**Artist Chandra
succumbs to Covid**

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Noted illustrator, artist and writer Chandrasekhar, popular as Chandra, passed away here on Thursday.

Chandrasekhar, who tested positive for Covid recently, breathed his last at RK Mother Teresa Rehabilitation Centre in Secunderabad. He was 75.

Chandrasekhar, a Fine Arts graduate, worked and retired as artist-cum-designer in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University.

He has drawn thousands of illustrations for thousands of story books, magazines, cover pages for many books, apart from thousands of cartoons that are popular for their satire on political and social developments.

2

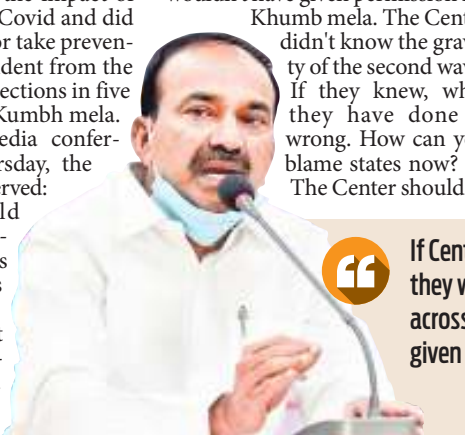
Center failed in assessing the Covid second wave: Eatela

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TS Health Minister Eatela Rajender has said that the Centre has failed utterly in assessing the impact of the second wave of Covid and did not alert the States or take preventive steps. It was evident from the way it announced elections in five States and allowed Kumbh mela.

Addressing a media conference here on Thursday, the Health Minister observed: "Across the world countries have reacted to the crisis as nation and not as state government. Nobody tackled it like this. Central government has alerted that there will be second wave but

did they say it will be this intense? If center knew the magnitude of the wave, they wouldn't have conducted elections across the country; they wouldn't have given permission for Khumb mela. The Center didn't know the gravity of the second wave. If they knew, what they have done is wrong. How can you blame states now? ... The Center shouldn't



If Center knew the magnitude of the wave, they wouldn't have conducted elections across the country; they wouldn't have given permission for Khumb mela

— EATELA RAJENDER
Health Minister

2

Facebook blocks #ResignModi posts for hours, restores

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Facebook blocked posts tagged #ResignModi amid raging criticism of the government's handling of the COVID crisis, but restored it hours later calling it a mistake.

The blocking on Wednesday, Facebook said, wasn't at the behest of the government. Facebook isn't the first social media company to censure posts critical of government handling of the COVID-19 crisis. Twitter had removed or restricted access to several critical posts on orders from the government, which called it fake news.

In a tweet, the Ministry of Electronics and IT said: 'Govt has not issued any direction to remove this hashtag. Facebook has also clarified that it was removed by mistake.'

"We temporarily blocked this hashtag by mistake, not because the Indian government asked us to, and have since restored it," a Facebook spokesperson said in a



statement on Thursday. It however did not elaborate.

2

Elections held at the expense of lives of people: High Court

Maybe SEC officials are living on Mars

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday asked the state government to spell out what it proposed to do after the night curfew ends on the 30th April. When the state government responded stating that a decision would be taken on Friday, the Court asked as to why decisions are always taken at last

moment and why can't they inform at least one day in advance.

When the Court was informed there was still one day's time, it wanted to know why the government could not decide today (Thursday), instead of attending to it on Friday.

2

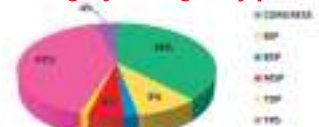
Exit polls predict huge victory for TRS in NS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Exit polls have predicted a clear and huge victory for the ruling TRS party's candidate Nomula Bhagat Kumar in the Nagarjuna Sagar by-poll held on April 17.

The AARAA predicted that the TRS candidate will win the elections bagging 50.48 per cent of the votes and the Congress candidate K Jana Reddy will be in the second place securing 39.93 per cent of the votes. The BJP will occupy the third place with 6.31 per cent of the votes, while others will get 3.28 per cent of the

Which party would you vote in Nagarjunasagar by poll?



HMR Research Pvt Limited predicted votes. However, the ruling party candidate will win the elections with 10.55 per cent vote majority.

2

Mamata has edge in Bengal, DMK to sweep TN, Left set to win in Kerala: Exit polls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mamata Banerjee has an edge in Bengal and her Trinamool Congress could win 148 of the state's 294 seats with the BJP not far behind at 131 seats, says exit polls in state elections that were held alongside a steep rise in Covid cases across the country.

An aggregate of six exit polls predicts that Mamata Banerjee may just make it past the half-way mark but her comfort factor will largely depend on how much she can widen the gap with her challenger BJP after a series of defections. The



BJP's projected tally is significant in a state where it has so far been an outlier. In Kerala, the incumbent Left-led LDF front is likely to retain



power with 88 of 140 seats and the Congress-led UDF will be a distant second with 50 seats, the polls say. If that proves right, it will be the first



re-election for an incumbent in Kerala's see-saw politics. The BJP is set to make its presence felt in the southern state with two seats, the exit polls say.

In Tamil Nadu, the polls predict a sweep for the opposition DMK and its allies; they are likely to win a staggering 165 of 234 seats, the polls say. The ruling AIADMK -- the BJP's ally -- will end up with 66 seats in its first state election since the death of its charismatic leader J Jayalalithaa in 2016, say the exit polls.

2

2 held for selling Remdesivir at higher price in Hyderabad

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

Two persons who were allegedly involved in the sale of Remdesivir injections were arrested by the Uppal police on Thursday. The police seized three vials and two mobile phones from them.

The arrested persons were identified as Kakumani Dilip (29), a male nurse at Pragma Hospital in Vanasthalipuram and Vallamalla Madhu (22), a lab technician at Sai Sanjeevani Hospital in Kothapet. One suspect, Pradeep, is absconding. "The gang was selling each injection at Rs 30,000 in view of the huge demand," said N Shyam Prasad Rao, ACP (Malkajgiri), adding that the police laid a trap and nabbed them at Uppal. Efforts are on to nab Pradeep.

In another incident, the Commissioner's Task Force (East) caught one person on charges of selling Remdesivir injections in the black market and seized four vials.

Acting on a tip off, the team caught B Srihari (39), who runs a pharmacy in Kachiguda. Police said he, along with his associate Vinay were selling the vials each at Rs 30,000 higher than the MRP," said K Srinivas, Inspector, Task Force (East). Police had laid a trap to nab Srihari while Vinay managed to escape. Srihari was handed over to the Kachiguda police while efforts are on to nab Vinay.

Elections held at the expense of lives of people...

Continued from page 1

The Court asked why the state is trying to cover up the restrictions and found fault with the government for its 'lack of seriousness' in controlling the spread of the infection. The High Court asked the state to take a decision keeping in view the field conditions.

The Advocate-General told the court that a decision would be taken at a review by the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary on Friday.

The Court made it clear that it was not giving any suggestions to the government, but only asking for measures to arrest the spread of the pandemic, keeping in mind the ground realities. The Court asked why the government is not increasing the number of tests and pointed that the number of reported cases had also decreased as the number of tests had decreased. About 400 and 500 police personnel were infected by the coronavirus due to the recent elections. The Election Commission told the Court that 2,557 policemen were in charge of the elections. The bench, comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B Vijaysen Reddy, were hearing the petition on

Document writers hold sway over sub-registrar offices in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Unlicensed document writers act as middlemen and hold sway over the sub-registrar offices and get the registration of document done without any queries, of course, for a consideration. In fact, the state government has no control over these unlicensed document writers.

Prior to the pandemic, these document writers did not demand any bribe to get things done. However, in the post-Covid scenario they have been demanding certain percentage of the value of the property to be registered as their fees on the pretext of they have to grease the palms of some persons in sub-registrar offices.

In fact, Madhukar Reddy of Yacharam in Rangareddy district bought 300 square yard plot in a real estate venture. As per the government valuation of the property, the registration fee was fixed as Rs 1.20 lakh. To register the plot, he paid Rs 8,800 towards the stamp duty, transfer duty, registration fees and user charges and paid Rs 4000 to the document writers towards bribe. The amount was paid to ensure preparation of document and to get things done in the sub-registrar office without any delays and problems.

If the demanded amount was not paid towards bribe, the registration would get delayed with one problem or the other cropping up. Sometimes, the



Representational Photo

registration process even gets stalled. There are allegations that there is involvement of sub-registrar office personnel in the whole affair.

In fact, if anyone approaches the sub-registrar offices one finds small shops with one or two computers and five or six chairs. All through the day, there will be hectic activity. These are nothing but the offices of document writers, which play pivotal role in getting the lands and other properties registered.

The sub-registrar offices transact the business of registration of document, while the rest of the 90 per cent of the work is done in the offices of the document writers. In fact, every thing will be pre-arranged. Once the document writer enters the sub-registrar office every thing will be done

in a jiffy. In fact, no outsider should be allowed inside the office of the sub-registrar barring the purchasers, sellers and witnesses. In the offices of the sub-registrar, one can find a lot of activity by middlemen compared to the activity of the employees there.

In fact, the document writers do not have any license. Moreover, the government has no control over the document writer system. They collect money in thousands to get everything done perfectly right from preparing the document to getting it registered without delays on the pretext of they have to grease palms of the office personnel.

In fact, there are over 2,000 document writers working under the jurisdiction of 141 sub-registrar offices.

In a bid to reorganise the

sub-registrar office system, a proposal was mooted to bid adieu to the document writer set up and replace it with more accountable system. But the proposal did not see light at the end of the tunnel.

After the Covid-19 pandemic, the document writers became so brazen as to demand their cut in getting the documents registered. Earlier, there was no demand from them and they used to collect their charges depending on the nature and scope of the work.

There were instances of the document writers demanding a certain percentage of the value of the property as their consideration.

There were allegations that the registration would be very easy and quick if the transaction was done with the help of the document writers, otherwise the parties would have to face problems. Parties to the registration say that the sub-registrar office personnel would make them pay rounds to their offices if not approached through document writers.

The document writers openly admit that the amount they receive would have to be shared in the offices of the sub-registrar. While ordinary people approaching the sub-registrar offices go via the document writers to get their things done, the realtors and owners of reality ventures and bigwigs negotiate their deals with the sub-registrar office personnel.

TS records 500 plus deaths in April!

Continued from page 1

Fatality figures often differ because the state doesn't consider people with underlying conditions and infected with Covid as death due to virus. Experts said that deaths in the second wave are higher because the infections are higher. However, they point out that the fatality rate in TS is not as scary as in other states. The case fatality is 0.51% in the state, while it is at 1.1% in the country. Telangana Health department officials who analysed the deaths found that in most cases the deaths happened in 24 hours of infection and in some situations they were 'brought dead' cases. Director of Medical Education Dr Ramesh Reddy said on Wednesday: "In this pandemic, deaths happen and we

cannot stop it. When people come early, they are getting cured. But in a lot of cases in our government hospitals, especially in Gandhi, TIMS and MGM - cases are coming in the last moment. Some are Covid and some are non-Covid. This time, even though the hospital is converted to Covid, if any patient comes in a critical stage, we are admitting them, because there is court direction. We are admitting them and there are deaths among such critical cases... It is because of disease progression apart from co-morbidities, but not due to lack of resources. We are taking all cases and clearing them sterile with sodium hypochloride, putting in a plastic bag and giving treatment, irrespective of whether they are Covid cases or not".

Exit polls predict...

Continued from page 1

The Mission Chanakya predicted that the TRS party will win elections with 21,486 votes majority, while getting in total 93,450 votes. The Congress candidate will get 71,964 votes, BJP candidate will get 14,806 votes and others will get 9,561 votes.

The Political Laboratory agency predicted that the TRS candidate will win with 48-50 per cent of the votes and the Congress candidate will occur

py second place with 38-42 per cent of the votes and the BJP candidate will get 6-8 per cent of the votes.

HMR Research Pvt Limited predicted that the TRS will win with 41.15 per cent of the votes. The will Congress get 37.85 per cent of the votes. BJP will get 9.26 per cent, MSP will get 4.77, BSP will get 1.97, TDP will get 1.24 and others will get 3.76 per cent of the votes. It predicted that the TRS party would win with 3.3 per cent vote margin.

Center failed in assessing the Covid second wave...

Continued from page 1

which had been controlling their supply, failed to take appropriate steps for ensuring their proper distribution and supply to save people's lives.

There could be no greater humiliation for a country than to see its citizens dying due to lack of oxygen and such a situation would shake the confidence of people in the Government. The Centre ignored its basic responsibility of extending cooperation to the States while only focusing on exercising control over the States, he said.

The Centre, which has several resources at its command like the Railways, defence etc., should mobilise resources to supply medical oxygen on a war-footing in view of the health emergency prevailing in the country. It should also take measures to ramp up vaccine production to speed up vaccination, more so when it has opened vaccination to people aged above 18 years from May 1.

The Health Minister said States had been following whatever the Prime Minister and Union Health Minister said in their video conferences, but they were not getting expected response to their appeals for help in supply of vaccine and Remdesivir injections. The Centre's failure in assessing the intensity of the second wave of corona

resulted in the shortages of

TS receives 3 lakh doses of Covishield

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana on Thursday received 3 lakh doses of Covishield amid the continuous shortage of Covid vaccine for targeted groups.

The vaccine doses reached Rajiv Gandhi International Airport from Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune.

The consignment was then shifted to state vaccine centre in the city. Officials were making arrangements to transport the doses to various districts.

The doses arrived at a time when vaccination programme in the state has been hit by the vaccine shortage. Many people were returning disappointed from vaccination centres. At some centres heated arguments were seen between people and

the officials. The fresh stock will last for only couple of days as the state health authorities plan to vaccinate 1 to 1.5 lakh people every day.

Officials said that the state has no vaccine stocks for launching vaccination of people aged between 18 and 45 years from May 1.

Uncertainty prevailed over the launch of the thirds phase of vaccination due to lack of sufficient supplies. The authorities are currently focusing on vaccination people above the age of 45, especially those due for second dose. Director of Public Health, G. Srinivas Rao had on Wednesday reiterated that the state has the capacity to vaccinate 10 lakh people every day but it is waiting for sufficient number of doses.

HC asks if government wants to shut TSPSC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Thursday has made critical remarks on the appointment of the Chairman of the Telangana Public Service Commission (TSPSC). The HC questioned whether the state government had any intention of appointing an actual chairman. The court made harsh remarks as to whether the state government intended to shut down the TSPSC.

The Chief Justice bench of Telangana High court has directed the TS govt to fill up the vacancies of chairman and 9 members out of 10 members in Telangana State Public Services Commission" within 4 weeks.

The CJ passed this order while dealing with a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by J Shankar from Karimnagar seeking to fill up those vacancies of TSPSC.

The CJ was serious on the inaction of TS government in filling up the vacancies for a vital institution of the state and directed it to fill up those vacancies within 4 weeks.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 48, 330 (10 gm)	
SILVER	
₹ 73, 300 (1kg)	
₹ 200	

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹141
Without Skin	₹160
Broiler at Farm	₹97

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	365
VIJAYAWADA	389
VISAKHAPATNAM	379
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹3.65

Artist Chandra succumbs to...

Continued from page 1

He published over 125 stories in various magazines and wrote several articles and reviews on art and drawing. He was also

the Art director for 20 mainstream films and six documentary films.

He was a member of Virasam (Revolutionary Writers' Association) from

1970 to 1976 and served prison term during the Emergency in the country. Chief Minister K.Chandrasekhar Rao mourned the death of Chandra who hailed from Warangal

district. Recalling Chandra's contribution as artist, illustrator and cartoonist, KCR conveyed his condolences to the members of the bereaved family.

Facebook blocks #ResignModi posts for hours, restores

Continued from page 1

According to reports, a hashtag calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was blocked on Facebook for hours on Wednesday. Users searching the hashtag were given a message that said such posts were "temporarily hidden here" because "some content in those posts goes against our Community Standards".

Facebook periodically blocks hashtags and posts for a variety of reasons. Some of the blocks are done manually and some are

automated. The blocking of posts tagged #ResignModi came ahead of polling in the last phase of West Bengal assembly elections.

The Modi government has drawn a lot of flak in domestic and international media for handling of the second wave of COVID infections, which on Thursday crossed the 1.8-crore mark.

India reported 3,79,257 new COVID-19 cases and 3,645 new deaths - the deadliest day so far for any country hit by the pandemic.

The US government has told its citizens to leave India as soon as possible.

Social media timelines are filled with SOS calls with people looking for oxygen cylinders, medicines, hospital beds, plasma donors and ventilators. Organisations across the spectrum have come forward to support the fight against the COVID pandemic.

Just a few days back, Twitter and other social media platforms removed about 100 posts and URLs after the government asked them to remove

content that was critical of the handling of the current medical crisis or spreading fake news around the pandemic.

Reports citing Lumen database, an independent research project studying cease and desist letters concerning online content, suggested that more than 50 posts - including those by a Member of Parliament, MLA and filmmakers - were removed by Twitter on government request.

Government sources had said the social media platforms were asked to remove the posts and

URLs (uniform resource locators) to "prevent obstructions in the fight against the pandemic" and disruption of public order due to the said posts.

They had added that the order was issued in view of the misuse of social media platforms by certain users to spread fake or misleading information and create panic about the pandemic in the society "by using unrelated, old and out of the context images or visuals, communally sensitive posts and misinformation about COVID-19 protocols".

Continued from page 1

Registration for vaccination for all those aged 18-44 years began on the CoWIN platform and Aarogya Setu App from April 28.

An official release from Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy's office on Thursday

said as per the availability of stocks and eligible people (18 to 44 years) in the country, the complete vaccination process for them will not be completed until January next year. Jagan appealed to people to maintain hygiene and observe Covid-19 protocols to keep the contagion at bay.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
GHMC
NIT No.: NIT No.GHMC/MKA/E/TR/2021-22/3
Name of Work: Maintenance works CC Road-2, Parks-18, other works-16, (Total Works 36). ECV(Rs in Lakhs): 941396.8. Bid submission Start date & Time/ Bid Submission of Closing date & time: 01.05.2021 @ 04.30 PM. Date:05.05.2021 @ 04.30 PM. Name & Address officer Cell No. Executive Engineer, 9989930374
For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ https://www.tender.telangana.gov.in
R.O. No.: 11429/PPCL/AGVT/1/0621-22. EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, DIVISION NO.28, GHMC

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Govt promotes all students, but private schools insist on exams!

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In an example of state government proposes but managements of private schools disposes, several private schools under the limits of Khairatabad with total student strength of over 95,913 have been conducting examinations to promote them to higher classes.

In fact, the state government of Telangana is promoting all students including that of the SSC without examinations in view of the sensitive Covid situation in the state.

These private schools at the time of inception agree to follow government rules, but later conveniently ignore them.

In Khairatabad's area of education department, there are 17 government high schools, 50 primary schools and over 190 private schools. In them, over 95,913 students are pursuing education. These schools are located in



Yousufguda, Vengal Rao Nagar, Borabanda, Rahamath Nagar and Yerragadda divisions.

It may be recalled that the state government recently issued orders promoting students of Classes I to IX and also declared that all SSC students are deemed to have been promoted as conducting the public examinations is not feasible due to the pandemic.

As the government promoted all students, students and parents breathed a big sigh of relief and thanked the government for saving their children from the Corona hazard. But, the private school managements beg to differ. In the above said divisions, in some of the private schools examinations are being conducted for all classes with the exception of SSC to the bewilderment of parents and students.

The examinations for lower classes are already over. Examinations are under way for high school students.

The parents are surprised at the private schools conducting the examinations in spite of the state government issuing orders promoting them to

next class. The parents are not able to say anything since the schools are purely private.

The examinations were held till Monday last. However, on Tuesday, question papers were given away to the students and teachers asked them to answer them at home. Students have completed answering the papers and submitted them in school.

The parents of the children are surprised at the private schools conducting the examinations in spite of the Telangana government issuing orders promoting them to next class

3-layered cloth masks effective as surgical masks against Covid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A team of researchers have found that well-fitting, three-layered cloth masks can be as effective at reducing the transmission of Covid as surgical masks.

The research team found that under ideal conditions and dependent on the fit, three-layered cloth masks can perform similarly to surgical masks for filtering droplets - with both reducing exposure by around 50 to 75 per cent.

For example, if an infected person and a healthy individual are both wearing masks, scientists believe this could result in up to 94 per cent less exposure.

While wearing a simple and relatively inexpensive cloth face mask cannot eliminate the risk of contracting Covid, measurements and theoretical model suggests they are highly effective in reducing transmission," the researchers said adding that, "We hope that our work inspires mask designs to be optimised in the future and we hope it helps to remind people of the importance of continuing to wear masks while Covid-19 remains present in the community."



At the height of the Covid pandemic, 139 countries mandated the use of face coverings in public space such as supermarkets and public transports. The World Health Organization also advises the use of face coverings and offers guidance on their effective features. Face coverings suppress the onward transmission of Covid through exhalation and protect the wearer on inhalation.

To better understand, the team looked at how liquid droplets are captured and filtered out in cloth masks by reviewing and modelling filtration processes, including inertial impaction.

Inertial impaction does not filter as a sieve or colander does - it works by forcing the air in your breath to twist and turn inside the mask so much that the droplets can't follow the path of the air. Instead, the droplets crash into fibres inside the mask to prevent inhalation, the team explained.

CITY LIGHTS

14 passport offices shut due to spike in Coronavirus cases

Amid the ongoing second wave of the Covid infections in the state, Telangana Regional Passport Office has decided to suspend its services in fourteen Post Office Passport Seva Kendras (POPSK) in Telangana from April 29 to May 14. The Regional Passport Office had already reduced the number of online passport slots at Passport Service Centers in the state by 50 per cent starting from April 22, till further orders. Dasari Balaji, the regional passport officer, said services in all the 14 POPSKs located in Warangal, Khammam, Nalgonda, Mahabubnagar, Medak, Adilabad, Bhongir, Siddipet, Manchiryal, Mahabubabad, Kamareddy, Vikarabad, Vanaparthi and Medchal will remain suspended. He also said that services at the five passport service centers in the state would continue as before. Services at Begumpet, Ameerpet, Tolichowki, Nizamabad and Karimnagar passport centers will continue as usual.



Professionals to address 10K TS students on future of work

Telangana Academy of Skills and Knowledge (TASK), Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC), X Billion Skills Lab, and The United Nations Young Changemakers Conclave (UNYCC) have partnered to organise a summit on '21st century workplace skills' for the benefit of over 10,000 aspiring students across 33 districts of Telangana on 1st May 2021 at 3.00 pm. Keynote addresses will be delivered by Padma Bhushan Pullala Gopichand, Indian National Badminton Coach and Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary, Department of ITE&C and Industries, Government of Telangana. Recognizing the changing priorities and requirements of the industry, TASK, TSIC and UNYCC have joined hands to address this skill gap and ensure that students are made aware of what needs to be done in order to build a sustainable career in the new technology driven world of work. This Summit is open to all the students from across different fields of study. To register, please fill and submit this form' (http://bit.ly/unycc_task). Registered students can attend the live program on www.task.radiusedutech.com, as well as the Facebook and YouTube channels of TASK and UNYCC.



OGH holds health, wellness camp for Rachakonda police

As the second wave of Covid grips the country, the chance of exposure of police personnel to the disease is very high. To assess this long term risk, the Telangana State RSSDI along with the Department of Endocrinology of Osmania General Hospital (OGH) organised health and wellness risk assessment camp at the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate health centre for Covid affected and non-affected police personnel. Commissioner of Police, Rachakonda Mahesh Bhagwat speaking on the occasion thanked RK Sahay, HOD Endocrinology department, Osmania General Hospital and the team of Genesis Medical systems who have organised the health camp for Rachakonda Police personnel. In the present scenario where many police personnel are testing positive, it is important to consider the post Covid health of the affected personnel also, he stated adding that the tests will help diagnose any arterial stiffness particularly in those who have blood pressure, diabetes. He stated that over 250 police personnel including the higher officials have been tested with a patented technology medical device 'PeriScope' developed by Genesis Medical Systems.



Active virus cases jump to 76K in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Covid claimed 58 more lives in Telangana during the 24-hour period as the state reported a new high in daily fatalities.

This is the highest number of daily death toll since the outbreak of the pandemic last year. The state had on Wednesday reported 56 fatalities. The overall death toll has surged to 2,208. The case fatality rate now stands at 0.51 per cent against the national average of 1.1 per cent.

The state reported 7,994 new cases during the 24-hour period that ended 8 p.m. Wednesday. The tally slightly dropped from 8,061 the previous day. However, the number of tests conducted remained around 80,000.

The state had Tuesday reported 10,122 cases the highest single day spike so far but nearly a lakh samples were tested. The fresh cases pushed the state's cumulative tally to 4,27,960.

The number of active cases jumped to 76,060. A total of 4,009 people recovered from the virus during the last 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 3,49,692.

The recovery rate has slipped further to 81.71 per cent against the national average of 82.1 per cent. For the first time the recovery rate in the state had dropped below the national average.

The recovery rate in Telangana was almost 99 per cent early last month but the second wave has led to a big drop in recoveries.

Banned tobacco products, gutka worth Rs 2 lakh seized, one held

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Task Force along with the Santosnagar police raided Noor General Stores and caught one person on charges of illegally selling foreign cigarettes, gutka and banned tobacco products on Thursday.

Police seized foreign cigarettes, gutka and tobacco products worth Rs 2 lakh from him. The arrested person Hussain, 30, procured the banned tobacco products and foreign cigarettes from dealers in Bidar and sold it to customers in Hyderabad.

Gold worth Rs 1.36 cr seized from passenger

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Customs officials at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here on Thursday seized 2.7 kg gold from a passenger who arrived from Dubai.

The passenger had concealed the 24-carat gold bar, valued at Rs 1.36 crore, in a pasta making machine. The Customs Department booked the passenger for smuggling of gold and said further investigations are in progress. Last week, 386 grams of gold was seized from a passenger who had arrived from Dubai.

According to officials, the gold in paste form was concealed in the inner layers of specially-designed T-shirt. A total of 386 grams of gold valued at Rs 19.1 lakh was recovered and seized.



SERPENTINE QUEUES

At ten past 5 am on Wednesday, city resident Ramesh reached state-run Fever Hospital to get a Covid test done. He had to wait behind more than 80 people, only to get turned away at 8 am. This was the second time Ramesh was turned away, as people made a queue before 4 am to get the tokens, which start at 7.30 am. Like Ramesh, hundreds of people are waiting in queues for up to 10 hours, as crowds increase and testing capacity remains the same.

— SV CHARY

Bank guard killed, 1 injured as robbers open fire at ATM

DUGGU RAGHU ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

A bank employee was killed and another was injured, when armed robbers opened fire at an ATM in Kukatapally area in Hyderabad on Thursday, police said.

Security guard Ali Baig, an ex-serviceman, was killed and the other bank employee, Srinivas was injured in the incident. The attackers escaped with Rs 5 lakh cash on the two-wheeler. Local residents who noticed the incident, stayed still as the robbers were armed. The daylight robbery and firing sent panic in the busy area.



The armed robbers came on a two-wheeler and attacked two bank employees refilling money in the ATM. One of the assailants opened fire, injuring Ali. The security guard, who received a bullet injury in the stomach, succumbed at a hospital. Srinivas, the staff who was at the ATM to dispense cash in the machine is being treated. His condition is said to be stable. Cyberabad Police Commissioner VC Sajanar who visited the scene of offence, told reporters that all check posts were alerted to prevent the offenders from leaving the city.

He said the police officials gathered vital clues and hoped to track down the guilty soon. The Police Commissioner said a home-made weapon was used in the offence.

He suspected involvement of an inter-state gang in the incident. Police were scanning the CCTV footage in the area to identify the offenders and gather more clues.

Covid testing within the reach of motorists

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The first drive-through Covid testing centre in Hyderabad, being operated by Apollo Diagnostics was became operational on Thursday. Individuals can now drive through in their four-wheelers, register and allow the healthcare workers to collect their samples for Covid RT-PCR tests, while sitting in their cars.

The kiosk for RT-PCR tests has been set at the Jubilee Hills Public School in Jubilee Hills. The complete process of registration and payment for test-



ing is totally touchless and contact free.

Fully equipped for testing and with capacity to manage up to 250 patients per day, the centre will cater to the residents living in areas of Jubilee Hills,

Banjara Hills, Shaikpet, Film Nagar and Attapur.

"The surge in Covid cases has citizens scouting for RT-PCR testing centres, however these centres either offer testing at specific timings or being

too crowded has inconvenienced those in dire need. To help mitigate and ensure testing with ease, Apollo Diagnostics launched this innovative drive through testing at the Jubilee Hills Public School and have more such centres in the pipeline to be set up at various locations of the city," said Vishwajit Reddy Konda, Strategy & New Initiatives, Operations, Apollo Diagnostics.

Carrying of the necessary identification documents, as specified by the government (PAN Card or Aadhaar Card) is mandatory.

Cops bust human trafficking racket

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Rachakonda Anti-Human Trafficking Unit busted an interstate human trafficking racket at LB Nagar and arrested an organiser, apart from rescuing three women from West Bengal and Maharashtra here late on Wednesday.

The arrested person was identified as Debjyoti Das, 27, a resident of Fathulaguda in Nagole and a native of Khanapur in West Bengal. He allegedly maintained an online dating app, through where he collected money from customers.

According to the police, Das, a postgraduate, was arrested in 2016 for running a

brothel house at Nagole. After being released on bail in 2018, he started a web designing channel in a rented house in Fathulaguda. Due to the lockdown last year, he faced financial problems and contacted sex workers and began trafficking them from Kolkata and Mumbai to Hyderabad.

"Since last March, he shared pictures of women on Locanto.com and lured customers. He collected rates ranging from Rs 2,000 to Rs 15,000 from customers," police said.

The organiser collected the amount through e-wallets and transferred them into his mother's account, the police officials added.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
PUBLIC HEALTH & MUNICIPAL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
'e' Procurement Notice
M-Procurement Notice No.5184/SE/UNIT-1/TUPDC/Warangal/R-1/Wedding/2021-22 Dt: 29-04-2021.
Municipality: Warangal Municipality: Infrastructure Development in URBs with TUPDC Assistance: Wedding of CC road from Warangal Junction to Saravali Junction on both sides in Warangal Municipality with TUPDC Assistance.
No. of Works: 01 No. Estimated Contract Value (ECV) of Work: Rs.108.82 Lakhs. The tender schedule dates for the above works are as follows: Bid download start date: 30-04-2021, Bid download end date: 03-05-2021
Further details can be seen (i) e-procurement marked place i. www.telangana.gov.in and for any further clarifications required, please contact office of the Superintending Engineer (P), Unit-1, TUPDC, Warangal.
DIPR No.: 92-DP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22
Unit-1, TUPDC, Warangal

Theatre groups use digital tools to survive amid pandemic

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As the second wave of corona is raging through the country, the theatre artists, whose livelihood was impacted during the lockdown imposed in the first phase of corona with all cultural events, including stage performances cut short, have embraced online platform to showcase their talents.

group quotient theatre has an educative value for the people living in the society.

However, because of the lockdown people were deprived of deriving the benefit that a stage performance offers. In order to overcome the hurdle imposed by the lockdown theatre organisations and trusts promoting theatre moved towards innovative solution and online provided them the answer.

They began to showcase their performance on the social media platform YouTube. Now with the second strain of corona wreaking havoc more and more theatre companies are embracing the online platform to give their viewers a safe and hassle-free viewing experience.

The online plays are gaining popularity among the viewing community as the viewers are liking the plots

that cultivate social consciousness as also spirituality. As part of this, many fans are enjoying the plays being performed online under the auspices of Abhinaya Theaters Trust and Venkateswara Surabhi Theaters.

Using online platform to impress art lovers, these groups present plays every day through a YouTube channel called Tri-Color. For the first time in the country,

they have started the process of performing plays in all the languages of the country online for one hundred days with Hyderabad as the venue.

Drama fans are happy to have the opportunity to watch theatrical performances on their mobile without leaving home in these pandemic conditions prevailing in the country. They are expressing their joy and love towards the plays by

commenting and subscribing their channels as also by paying some money for the upkeep of the channel.

Following the attention from viewers to the plays presented online, Surabhi Theatre management has made plans to undertake an online drama performance in collaboration with Book My Show, one of the leading movie ticket reservation platforms in India.

Corona may cast a shadow on polling, fear politicians



K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

Two Municipal Corporations and five municipalities are all set to go to polls on Friday amidst life-threatening situation with the severity of Corona pandemic spiralling almost out of control. The elections will be held to Warangal and Khammam Corporations, along with Siddipet, Achampet, Jadcherla, Nakrekal and Kothur municipalities. Byelection will also be held for the Lingojiguda division in the GHMC limits.

However, the political parties are afraid that the prevailing Covid-19 conditions may

show its impact on the voter turnout on Friday thereby impacting the winning prospects of many candidates. The political parties' expectation may turn on its head if voter turnout is less than what they expect. There would not be any trouble however, to the political parties if the poll percentage was as per their expectation.

In fact, the pandemic has been showing its severe impact on Warangal city. The Corona patients' standing in queues at MGM and other hospitals while the deaths are frightening the denizens. The situation is no different even in Khammam. The municipal towns of Siddipet, Jadcherla, Achampet, Nakrekal

and Kothur, too, are witnessing Corona cases in large numbers.

Amidst these conditions, people may not show the enthusiasm they generally show in normal conditions to cast their votes. However, the political parties may not leave the voters alone till they cast their votes, whatever conditions may prevailed, Ramesh from Warangal city opined.

places where election are scheduled, he alleged.

"The State Election Commission has been conducting these elections blindly, in tune with the TRS risking people's lives. As a national party we are contesting the elections though we are against these ongoing elections," TPCC official spokesperson Ravali Reddy said.

Elaborate arrangements for municipal polls in Achampet

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

Elaborate arrangements have been made for the conduct of Achampet municipal elections on Friday.

The polling will be conducted from 7 am to 5 pm. In all, 40 polling booths have been set up at the rate of two for each ward. A total of 240 personnel has been deployed for poll duty.

The town has a total number of 20,684 voters, including 10,50,508 women. The other voters in the town are 46.

In all, 80 ballot boxes have been kept ready for the polling. The district authorities said that there is not a single problematic booth from law and order point of view in the town.

Security has been beefed up near the polling booths to avoid any untoward incident.

Acting on the directions from the Election Commission, masks, hand gloves, face shields and 100 ml sanitiser bottles have been supplied to those on poll duty to ensure that the Covid regulations are followed during the municipal polls.

Till the polling process is over, the face masks and shields should not be removed. Training classes have been held for personnel on poll duty from April 18 to 26.

All eyes on Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation polls

NS RAO ■ WARANGAL

All eyes are on the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) election, which are slated for Friday, more so because the erstwhile Warangal district is in the grip of the second wave of Corona, with cases rising rapidly in the district.

The question that is plaguing all sections of the society is how many voters will finally exercise their franchise in these times of crisis.

The GWMC election is a prestigious issue to the ruling TRS, whose leaders are confident that the several welfare schemes that they launched over a period of time will eventually see them through.

BJP and Congress parties have also taken this election as a challenge. However, going by the war of words that was witnessed during the campaign, it appears that the main fight will be between the TRS and the BJP.

While the Congress party

has its own strategy, the Independent candidates, observers may give the candidates of the main political parties a run for their money. The communists are however, contesting in limited divisions in this election. "The TRS will win all the 66 divisions in the GWMC election," said Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao. TRS leaders assume that many welfare schemes implemented by their party till date will ensure their victory. However, one could not be so sure, observers felt, more so going by the healthcare system, which had so far let the public down in these times of Corona.

Private hospitals are allegedly taking full advantage of the pandemic situation to fleece patients. The district authorities have failed to control the private hospitals. In most of the government hospitals there is lack of adequate doctors and para-medical

■ The GWMC election is a prestigious one to the ruling TRS, whose leaders are confident that the several welfare schemes that they did launch over the period will eventually see them through.

staff. The minimum facilities are lacking in government hospitals. The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Warangal, is in doldrums and the government has failed to provide the best treatment for the patients there. Given the circumstances how many seats the TRS can certainly win remains a question unanswered.

Moreover, nobody is sure about the voter turnout, given the crisis situation. It may be recalled that all major and opposition parties had demanded postponement of the polls given the Corona situation. However, the Election Commission, had gone ahead with the polling.



Ministers assure timely help to Covid patients

PNS ■ BHUPALA PALLY

Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao, along with Woman and Child Welfare Minister Satyavati Rathod, on Thursday reviewed the measures initiated to rein in Corona virus and implementation of the vaccination programme and assured officials of necessary support in providing timely medical help to Covid-19 patients.

Reviewing preparedness to tackle Covid through a video conference from here, they expressed happiness over the medical services provided by the district administration to help Covid patients recover boosting their morale.

They said that with the help of CM KCR, Medical and Health Minister Eatala Rajender they would ensure that there is no shortage of Remedisivir, oxygen, Corona testing kits and vaccines.

They advised isolation centres to increase oxygen beds. The MGM Hospital, which is turned into a full-scale Covid treatment facility, will have all amenities oxygen, emergency medicines and so on. They appealed to people to make use of the facilities in MGM Hospital.

They asked authorities to test all those who have the symptoms. At village level,

they advised maintaining of sanitation and providing medical amenities in containment zones. The police, panchayat raj officials, local sarpanches and ward members should ensure people confine to villages.

They asked the officials to ensure that the NREGS workers should not congregate at one place. Taking precautions for Covid, highest number of workers should be deployed on work.

District Collector Krishna Aditya said that 60-bed Covid treatment facility with oxygen supply has been provided at Chityala and Mahadevpur Primary Health Centres, while quarantine facilities have been set up at Bhupalapally, Kataram, Chityala, Mahamuttaram and Tadicherla.

District headquarters government hospital at Mulugu and Community Health Centre at Yetrunagaram have Covid treatment facilities with oxygen supply. He said that the vaccination programme and Covid treatment facility are going on smoothly with the support of officers of two districts.

He asked the district officials to test all those who have symptoms and take steps to administer vaccine to all those who are above 45 years of age.

MUNICIPAL POLLS TODAY

'Siddipet municipality will witness triangular contest'



A CHANDRASHEKAR RAO ■ SANGAREDDY

The battle for the Siddipet municipal elections has reached its final stage as the campaign ended in the wake of Corona protocol. Elections will be held on April 30 and candidates belonging to major parties are confident of their victory, but their fate will be known only after May 3 when the counting of votes begins.

Many development works have been taken up in Siddipet under the supervision of Minister for Finance Harish Rao. The TRS is hopeful that the results will be in its favour as the people who witnessed the growth of the town, will vote in its favour.

The TRS is confident of

making a clean sweep in 43 wards as Harish Rao campaigned in all wards and met the voters seeking their votes.

The BJP, which was limited to two seats in the 2016 elections, is focused on winning more seats. Out of two councillors, one has joined the TRS. Currently, it has only one seat. BJP leaders are hopeful that the party will romp home in more seats this time. Dubbak MLA Raghunandan Rao stayed here for a few days and campaigned and BJP state unit president Bandi Sanjay also campaigned in the town.

The Congress, which once ruled the Siddipet area, could not found candidates in the elections. As no prominent campaigned for

- TRS confident of a clean sweep
- BJP eyes majority seats
- Congress strives for the survival
- Counting on May 3

the party candidates in the town, the contesting candidates have to fend for themselves.

The Congress, too, won two seats in the last elections, but two of them switched over their loyalties to the TRS. The party candidates want to win more seats this time to make their presence felt in the municipality.

Meanwhile, the urban local body elections have become an acid test for the political leaders and workers as they have to brave the Corona pandemic while campaigning. Congress took the government to task for conducting the polls when the Corona cases are on the rise.

While the opposition and ruling party traded charges against each other not only on political issues, but also on the Corona cases.

HC questions govt on Revanth's plea on drugs case

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The High Court has questioned the State government to tell as to why it has been hiding the names of those who have links with the drug cases. Why such a need arose to the government to hide the names, it questioned. It also questioned the Narcotics Control Bureau to tell as to what it has been doing. The High Court directed the State and Central governments to file a counter within four weeks.

Reacting to the petition filed by the TPCC working president and Malkajigiri MP A Revanth Reddy, on Thursday, the High Court questioned the state and central governments. Revanth Reddy urged the court in his petition that the drugs case must be handed over to central agencies CBI, Enforcement Directorate and others.

Over 1 lakh to cast votes in Siddipet

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

In all, 1,00,653 voters will exercise their franchise in the municipal polls to be held here on Friday. In all, 130 polling booths have been set up in the town for the purpose.

About 236 candidates belonging to all political outfits are contesting the elections for 43 ward member seats.

Out of the total number of voters, 50,767 are female voters and 11 voters belong to other voters category.

For the purpose of the polling, 11 zones have been cre-

ated and 14 zonal officers have been appointed and 17 returning officers and 155 polling officers, 155 assistant polling officers, 464 OPO officers have been appointed.

The municipal polls will be captured on video in 60 polling booths, while webcasting of the polls will be done in 69 booths. In all, 47 wheeled chairs have been kept ready at various polling booths.

Security has been beefed up for the polling with 465 police personnel, including three additional DCPs, four ACPs, 14 CIs,

31 SIs. Several ASIs, Head Constables and constables, woman constables, home guards, armed reserve police have been drafted for polling duty.

Seeral mobile parties, striking forces, special striking forces have been constituted.

Arrangements have been made for distribution of polling material at Indur Engineering College. Masks, face shields, gloves and sanitisers have been kept ready for distribution among polling personnel. Police personnel were deployed near strong rooms.

About 190 have applied for postal ballots, including 163 persons aged over 80 years and five who tested positive for Covid-19.

Officials appeal to voters to wear mask to exercise their right to franchise and advised them to observe physical distance.

Additional Collector Muzammil Khan on Wednesday evening visited the distribution and reception centre set up at Indur Engineering College. Voters would be let into the polling booths only after their thermal screening.



Polling staff proceeding towards their destination in Siddipet on Thursday



Officials checking arrangements in one of the polling booths in Siddipet

Free vaccination drive a historic decision: Errabelli

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Minister for Panchayat Raj, Errabelli Dayakar Rao said that the Covid vaccine will be given free of cost to all those above 18 years of age across the state from May 1 for the prevention of Corona.

He, along with MLC Kadium Srihari, made a surprise visit to the Urban Health Centre in Hanamkonda, Pochammakunta where Covid vaccination drive was being carried out, on Thursday.

He said that the state stood as an ideal for the country in the vaccination drive. He said the focus was on equipping the State government with vaccines rather than waiting for help from the central government. The Minister said that the decision of CM KCR to vaccinate for free was historic.

The minister said the Covid vaccine was given to 1,82,507 people on Wednesday through 58 centers set up for vaccination in Warangal Urban District.

He said there was no shortage of drugs, medicines and oxygen needed to treat those infected with Coronavirus. He said the government would take necessary steps to protect the people from the Covid pandemic.

Shabbir terms 'Tika Utsav' a damp squib

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former Minister Mohammad Ali Shabbir on Thursday advised the Central and State governments not to treat the vaccination as one of their electoral promises.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced 'Tika Utsav' from April 11 to 14 without even having an idea about the availability of vaccine doses across the country. Consequently, the 'Tika Utsav' proved to be a damp squib. Similarly, the Centre announced vaccination of all individuals above the age of 18 years from May 1. This too, was announced vaguely without giving a thought to the logistics and infrastructure involved in the implementation of this promise. As a result, not many states in the country are in a position to take up the vaccination drive due to shortage of vaccines, manpower or other infrastructure," he said.

He said even the websites for registration was unable to handle the rush and they crashed within hours of their launch.

The Congress leader also condemned the TRS government for the shortage of vaccine, oxygen, Remedisivir injections,

'Mask mandatory to cast votes'

PNS ■ JADCHERLA

Additional Collector Tejas Nandal on Thursday inspected the election material distribution centre at the Dr BRR College and said that all arrangements have been made to conduct municipal polls adhering to Covid-19 regulations.

Talking to newsmen, said that only those who wear masks, besides sanitising their hands, would be allowed to exercise their franchise.

To observe physical distance, circles were drawn on ground. Sanitisers have been kept at the polling booths besides providing other amenities like tents, chairs, wheel chairs and drinking water. He appealed to the voters to exercise their right to franchise freely without fear or favour.

District SP R Venkateswarlu said that there are 54 polling booths in 27 wards. There are 21 locations in the town.



other medicines and medical devices/equipment used in the treatment of Covid-19 patients. "Initially, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao did nothing to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The TRS government miserably failed in minimising the damages during the first wave and it did not change its approach even during the second wave. The health infrastructure was not improved even by one per cent after the first wave of Covid created havoc in Telangana," he said.

Shabbir Ali also demanded that KCR explain allocation of Rs 2,500 crore for the proposed free vaccination programme. He said when the entire country was opposing two different prices for the same vaccine, how could KCR agree on prices set by the vaccine manufacturers and even make the allocation.

Reinforcing capacities to fight Covid: Rajnath



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday spoke to his Singapore counterpart Ng Eng Hen about "reinforcing capacities" to fight the second wave of coronavirus that has hit India.

Singapore on Wednesday had sent a consignment of oxygen cylinders to support India's COVID-19 pandemic response.

Singapore investment firm Temasek has also sent medical equipment while India's Tata Group donated four cryogenic oxygen cylinders sourced from Singapore.

"Spoke to the Defence Minister of Singapore, Mr Ng Eng Hen about reinforcing capacities to fight against the second surge of COVID-19 pandemic," Singh said on Twitter.

"I am deeply appreciative of Singapore government's efforts and support in assisting India in these difficult times," he mentioned.

India is struggling with the infection's second wave as hospitals in several states are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

India saw a record single day rise of 3,79,257 new coronavirus infections pushing the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,83,76,524, while active cases crossed the 30-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The death toll increased to 2,04,832 with a record 3,645 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

Past Covid infection does not fully protect young against reinfection: *Lancet* study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A past COVID-19 infection does not completely protect young people from reinfection, and vaccination is still necessary to boost immune response and reduce disease transmission, according to an observational study published in The Lancet Respiratory Medicine journal.

The research was conducted on more than 3,000 healthy members of the US Marines Corps most of whom were aged 18-20 years.

The researchers from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in the US emphasised that young people should take up the vaccine wherever possible.

They noted that despite previous infection and the presence of antibodies, vaccination is still



necessary to boost immune responses, prevent reinfection, reduce transmission.

"As vaccine roll outs continue to gain momentum it is important to remember that, despite a prior COVID-19 infection, young people can catch the virus again and may still transmit it to others," said Professor Stuart Sealfon, of Icahn School of Medicine at

Mount Sinai, a senior author of the study.

"Immunity is not guaranteed by past infection, and vaccinations that provide additional protection are still needed for those who have had COVID-19," Sealfon said.

In the study, conducted between May and November 2020, around 10 per cent or 19 out of 189 participants who were previously infected with SARS-CoV-2 (seropositive) became reinfected.

This was compared to new infections in 50 per cent (1,079 out of 2,247) of participants who had not previously been infected (seronegative).

Although the study was in young, fit, mostly male Marine recruits, the researchers believe that the risk of reinfection found in their study will apply to many young people.

India focusing on procuring oxygen-related equipment

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is looking at getting around 550 oxygen generating plants, 4,000 oxygen concentrators and 10,000 oxygen cylinders from abroad to deal with the coronavirus pandemic, Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said on Thursday.

Shringla also said that India is looking at procuring 400,000 units of Remdesivir medicine from Egypt besides exploring to get it from countries like the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh and Uzbekistan.

At a media media briefing, he said over 40 countries have come forward to offer assistance to India in view of the unprecedented situation.

Tragedy unfolding in country is of 'epic proportions': CPM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Left parties on Thursday attacked the government over the handling of the COVID-19 situation, saying it has failed to provide oxygen and beds, and termed the pandemic the worst calamity since the 1943 Bengal famine in terms of human lives lost.

They also alleged that the implementation of the inoculation drive against COVID-19 has been "callous" and the Centre is encouraging "duopoly" to let two vaccine companies earn "super profits".

India, according to Union health ministry data updated on Thursday, recorded a single-day rise of 3,79,257 cases and 3,645 fatalities.

"It (COVID-19 pandemic) is the worst calamity in terms of

"In the current pandemic, disregarding the grossly underestimated official tally, at least a million have died and the toll continues to mount. This figure, however, is a conservative estimate, multiplying by five, the two lakh dead officially declared"

human lives lost since the Bengal famine of 1943 when around three million people died due to hunger, malnutrition and disease...," according to an editorial in the Communist Party of India-Marxist's (CPI-M) mouthpiece Peoples Democracy.

The COVID-19 death toll in the country stands at 2,04,832, the data showed.

"In the current pandemic, disregarding the grossly underestimated official tally, at least a

million have died and the toll continues to mount. This figure, however, is a conservative estimate, multiplying by five, the two lakh dead officially declared," the editorial in the latest issue of the Peoples Democracy said.

"It will not require any historical research to pin the responsibility for this catastrophe on (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi and his government," it said.

Centre releases revised norms for home isolation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The health ministry on Thursday issued the "Revised guidelines for home isolation of mild/asymptomatic COVID-19 cases", in which it advised against attempting to procure or administer Remdesivir injections at home, underlining that it should be administered only in a hospital setting.

The guidelines stated that systemic oral steroids are not indicated in mild cases and if the symptoms (persistent fever, worsening cough etc.) persist beyond seven days, the treating doctor should be consulted for treatment with low-dose oral steroids.

Elderly patients aged more than 60 years and those with co-morbid conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung or liver or kidney disease, cerebrovascular disease etc. shall only be allowed home isolation



after a proper evaluation by the treating medical officer, it added.

In case of falling oxygen saturation levels or shortness of breath, the person should require hospital admission and seek immediate consultation with the treating physician or surveillance team.

Elderly patients aged more than 60 years and those with co-morbid conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung or liver or kidney disease, cerebrovascular disease etc. shall only be allowed home isolation after a proper evaluation by the

treating medical officer.

According to the revised guidelines, the patients may perform warm-water gargles or take steam inhalation twice a day.

"If fever is not controlled with a maximum dose of tab. Paracetamol 650 mg four times a day, consult the treating doctor, who may consider advising other drugs like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) (ex: tab. Naproxen 250 mg twice a day).

"Tab. Ivermectin (200 mcg/kg once a day, to be taken on empty stomach) for 3 to 5 days should be considered," the guidelines stated. Inhalational Budesonide (given via inhalers with spacer at a dose of 800 mcg twice daily for five to seven days) to be given if the symptoms (fever and/or cough) persist beyond five days, they added.

The decision to administer Remdesivir or any other investi-

gational therapy must be taken by a medical professional and it should be administered only in a hospital setting, the ministry said. "Do not attempt to procure or administer Remdesivir at home. Systemic oral steroids are not indicated in mild disease. If symptoms persist beyond seven days (persistent fever, worsening cough etc.), consult the treating doctor for treatment with low-dose oral steroids," the guidelines said.

The revised guidelines stated that the asymptomatic cases are laboratory-confirmed cases that are not experiencing any symptoms and having oxygen saturation at room air of more than 94 per cent, while the mild cases are patients with upper respiratory tract symptoms (and/or fever) without shortness of breath and having oxygen saturation at room air of more than 94 per cent.

INDIA CORNER 'Missing TN fishermen being brought back to Kanyakumari'

Eleven Tamil Nadu fishermen who went missing after their boat was allegedly hit by a ship off the Oman coast last week are safe and they are being brought to Kanyakumari, the Indian Coast Guard said on Thursday. 'India Coast Guard ship Vikram escorting fishing boat Mercedes with 11 crew about 25 NM from Suheli Par Lakshadweep. Ship alongwith FB likely to arrive at Thengapattanam harbour Kanyakumari Tamil Nadu on 01 May', the Coast Guard said in a tweet on Thursday. In a tweet on Wednesday afternoon, the Coast Guard said in a sea-air coordinated operation ICG Dornier located and established communication with the missing Indian fishing boat Mercedes 200 NM NW of Minicoy. "All 11 crew safe. FB reportedly missing since 24 Apr & search by ICG and IN ships & aircraft was in progress," it had said. The South Asian Fishermen Fraternity (SAFF) said the owner of the fishing boat, Joseph Franklin, had spoken to his wife over satellite phone Wednesday morning.



6 members of family die in gas cylinder explosion in Delhi

A fire in a transformer in Delhi's Bijwasan area spread to two shanties nearby, leading to a gas cylinder explosion in which six members of a family, including four minors, were killed early Thursday, officials said. The officials said they received a call regarding a fire in a transformer at Valmiki Colony around 12.30 am, following which four fire tenders were rushed to the spot. Later, police received a PCR call regarding a cylinder explosion in Valmiki Colony. According to the officials, the transformer caught fire and flames spread rapidly to two shanties nearby, which led to an explosion in the LPG cylinder. A senior police officer said Kamlesh (37), his wife Budhani (32), their two daughters, 16 and 12, and two sons, 6 years and 3 months, died in the cylinder blast.



3 held for trying to sell Remdesivir vials filled with saline water

Three persons have been arrested for allegedly trying to cheat people by selling them saline water in vials of Remdesivir, an anti-viral used in the treatment of COVID-19, in Maharashtra's Beed city, police said on Thursday. The Shivaji Nagar police recently nabbed Santhosh Naikwade, Prakash Nagargoje and Datta Nirmal for allegedly trying to sell a vial of the injection for Rs 22,000, an official said. Investigations revealed that one of the accused, who worked as a compounder at a city-based hospital, had filled used vials of Remdesivir with saline water and tried to sell the same, assistant police inspector (API) Amol Gurle said. "We have sent a vial recovered from the accused to a laboratory for testing to ascertain the contents," the official said.



Attend to all patients reaching Covid hospitals: HC to Guj

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

The Gujarat High Court has directed the state government to make sure each and every patient reaching a designated COVID-19 hospital is attended to and given preliminary treatment even if beds are not available.

The court heard a PIL online on Tuesday and a detailed copy of its order was made available on Thursday.

A division bench of Chief Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Bhargav Karia also directed the state government to find alternatives for manufacturing medical oxygen to save coronavirus patients.

It was hearing a PIL taken up suo motu (on its own) on the COVID-19 situation in Gujarat, which has seen a sharp rise in coronavirus cases over the last few weeks.

The bench raised concern over government-run and designated COVID-19 hospitals in Ahmedabad attending only to patients coming in the EMRI (Emergency Management and Research Institute)-run '108' ambulances and ignoring those brought in private vehicles.

"The state government and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) were

aware that there is a shortage of 108 ambulances and if that was so, then what justification can there be if patients reach the hospital in their privately arranged vehicles," the court said.

"We accordingly direct that all the government, corporation, designated and private hospitals attend to all patients reaching them. Patients cannot be left unattended," the bench said in its order.

It said though the admission in a hospital would be subject to availability of beds, "a preliminary needed treatment should be given and thereafter the parties may be advised further course of action".

While noting that the Gujarat government has already sent a request to the Centre for allocation of more medical oxygen, the HC asked the state "to speed up and find other alternatives for the manufacture of oxygen for medical use".

"The PSA plants which are not functional to be made functional at the earliest...As much as possible oxygen should be made available within the state in addition to the central allocation so that there is no shortfall of oxygen," the bench suggested.

3,820 new Covid-19 cases in Thane

PNS ■ THANE

With the addition of 3,820 new cases of coronavirus, the infection count in Maharashtra's Thane district has reached 4,60,751, an official said on Thursday.

These new cases were reported on Wednesday, he said. The virus also claimed the lives of 65 more people, pushing the death toll in the district to 7,466, he said. The COVID-19 mortality rate in Thane stood at 1.62 per cent, he added.

The details of recovered and under-treatment patients were not provided by the district administration. In neighbouring Palghar district, the COVID-19 case count has gone up to 82,624, while the death toll is 1,528, another official said.

Congress ups ante against Karnataka Minister

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Upping the ante against the Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies Minister Umesh Katti for asking a man seeking more rice under the PDS to die, former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah demanded his ouster from the cabinet.

"This is not an utterance of a responsible minister. I condemn it strongly and request Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa to remove Umesh Katti from the cabinet," Siddaramaiah told reporters here.

He was reacting to Katti's reported remark to a farmer from Gadag to die for seeking more rice under the public distribution system to the economically weaker section. Slamming the BJP government, Siddaramaiah said,



"When we were in power, we were giving seven kilograms of rice to protect people but these people (ruling BJP) have gone to the extent of telling people to die by reducing the quota of rice."

Stating that Katti had no moral right to continue as a minister, Siddaramaiah said

asking people to die when asked to give more rice show arrogance and "such statement amounts to abetting the offence (suicide)."

The senior Congress leader demanded that the government should give 10 kg of rice per head during this lockdown, which came into effect in the state from April 27 night to May 12 morning. "What's wrong in giving 10 kg rice? Let them give it.

Government is meant to protect the people. I demand the government should take a decision immediately to provide 10 kg of rice per head every month," Siddaramaiah said. The minister not only drew the ire of opposition Congress and the JD(S) but also the Chief Minister who too condemned the statement.

FIR against Param Bir over cop's complaint

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra police have filed an FIR against former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh after a police inspector levelled corruption charges against him, a senior official said on Thursday.

The FIR was registered at Akola in Vidarbha region against 33 persons, including 28

policemen, an official said.

The city Kotwali police in Akola registered the FIR under various sections ranging from criminal conspiracy, destruction of evidence and sections of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989.

Those named in the FIR include DCPs Parag Manere, Sanjay Shinde and Sunil

Bharadwaj, ACPs Vijay Pulkar and D B Kamble and senior PI Dilip Suryavanshi. A former law officer and assistant chemical analyst of Forensic Science Lab have also been named, the official said.

Akola police filed a Zero FIR (mode of lodging FIR in any police station irrespective of the offence committed in that area or any other area)

at the Kotwali police station and it has been transferred to the Thane city police, the official told PTI.

Police inspector Bhimrao Ghadge in his complaint had made a series of allegations of corruption against Singh and other officers, in the period when the former Mumbai CP was posted with the Thane police.

HC to Centre: Why MP, Maha got more O₂ than Delhi?

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Friday questioned the Centre as to why various states, including Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, were being allocated more oxygen than they demanded while the national capital was not getting even the quantity necessary for treating COVID-19 patients.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli made it clear that it was by no means interested in securing more oxygen for Delhi than required and that too at the

cost of any state or Union Territory.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra, representing the Delhi government, said that while the national capital's requirement was 700 MT per day, it was allocated 480 and 490 MT and the Centre has not increased it.

Mehra and senior advocate Raj Shekhar Rao, who is amicus curiae in the case, informed the court that as per the national allocation plan, Maharashtra demanded 1500 Metric Tonnes (MT) of oxygen per day and was allocated 1661 MT; similarly,



Madhya Pradesh demanded 445 MT and it was allocated 543 MT and that the situation was similar for several other states.

The court said that if the information provided was to

be accepted, it would appear that the central government needed to explain this aspect and granted it a day to respond.

The Centre has to either show some justification for

this or "make amends" now that the situation has been brought to its attention, the high court said. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, said the government will file an affidavit on the court's query and will give the reasons for giving more oxygen to Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, if that is the case.

"There are states which received less than what they had asked for. We have been rationalising," he said. During the hearing, when the court asked a senior central government officer as to why Delhi's

supply was out of line while MP and Maharashtra were given more oxygen, Mehta said the population of MP was more than the national capital.

He then told the officer, "You cut from MP and give it to Delhi. It would be at the cost of some lives in MP but let us do it for Delhi."

This was objected to by the judges who said, "Don't give it an impression as if we are asking something extra for Delhi. Don't project like this. We don't appreciate this. We are asking this on the basis of facts and figures."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Mayday! Mayday!

As young adults enthusiastically try to register for a job, the system seems less than prepared

The maddening rush on the Co-WIN portal speaks volumes about the jitteriness among the young adults to book a slot for getting inoculated at the earliest. Within minutes after registration for the COVID-19 vaccination for those in the 18-44 age bracket was thrown open, the website crashed due to excessive load. However, it doesn't surprise anyone as internet servers in India are known to have succumbed even during the university registration process. Anyhow, the first day recorded almost 1.33 crore registrations. It is a clear inkling that the task ahead for the Centre and the State Governments would be arduous, to put it mildly. Besides, in the backdrop of several States flagging the shortage of vaccines, the drive is unlikely to cover the population it

is meant to before May 15, by when the States are expected to have a meaningful stock. The second wave of the Coronavirus tsunami has exposed the glaring incompetence and loopholes in our healthcare system which is now creaking under the weight of the pandemic. The ailing healthcare infrastructure is impacted by the sudden exponential rise in cases, shortage of medical oxygen and essential medicines like Remdesivir and availability of hospital beds. However, putting the blame squarely on the severity of the second wave and the pitiable state of healthcare setup would not be justifiable as it must be shared by the States for their lackadaisical approach

and the Centre for its insouciance after the first wave had died down.

The time which could have been utilised for ramping up the infrastructure was wasted on making conjectures of defeating the virus. As a result, we were ill-prepared and the second wave overwhelmed us. Another matter related to the non-availability of vaccines was its differential pricing, which was a cause of concern for the States and other stakeholders but that has been taken care of in a limited way, for now. Be that as it may, only time will tell how the nation emerges from the throes of affliction, confusion and uncertainty. How grim the situation can turn after May 1 can be gauged from the fact that most hospitals in States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Delhi and West Bengal have showed non-availability of slots for those less than 45 years of age. During the second phase, most people simply walked into the vaccination centres for their jab without necessarily registering at the Co-WIN portal. So, the moot question here is: Are the Governments equipped and ready to handle such huge traffic at the vaccination centres in a short span? Also, it's clear by now that the Governments have failed to rein in the black marketeers of medical oxygen and medicines when the demand is sky-high. With people hunting all around for COVID vaccines and the authorities claiming to have insufficient stocks, there's no guarantee that these won't be sold illegally at a premium by the corrupt doctor-trader-official-politician nexus, pushing these out of reach of the common man. With just a day to go for the third phase of the vaccination drive, the Governments must quickly clean up their act.

PICTALK



The Kisan Sangharsh Committee members protest against the Punjab Government over land acquisition

PTI

The real heroes

They hide behind ordinariness in everyday life but their acts of compassion make them special

Heroism is not limited to the battlefield or silver screen alone. It is present all around us but since these intrepid heroes don't make a song and dance about their noble acts, we tend to miss noticing their considerable contribution. The basic creed of heroism is to show grace under pressure and courage in the line of fire. A person's conduct and mettle to look squarely into the eyes of an adverse situation smilingly are the quintessential qualities that make her/him stand out from the rest. Another great characteristic of a gallant person is that s/he invariably does the right thing, takes the right course of action, even when nobody is watching. Such real-life women and men of honour, perseverance and diligence aren't perturbed by the lack of cameras at hand to record their heroics but they give the moment their all, and then some more, to vanquish the hardships. Of course, they do it at the cost of their time, energy, comfort and finances; sometimes even life, like Narayan Dabhalkar of Nagpur. The 85-year-old unflinchingly vacated his COVID hospital bed, secured after much effort, for a critical 40-year-old patient he didn't know ("the family's kids would be orphaned") after the hospital refused



admission to the latter because there were no vacant beds.

Opting for a discharge despite dipping oxygen levels and against medical advice, Dabhalkar returned home and passed away three days later. Similarly, businessman Ketan Rawal is providing 12 of his 50 vanity vans to the Mumbai Police free of cost to help policemen and frontline healthcare workers rest and eat as they serve during the partial lockdown. For their part, Ludhiana's good Samaritans are sending free home-cooked meals to COVID patients and pasting motivational messages, wishing them speedy recovery, on these food packets. Then there are "oxygen langars" being organised, people volunteering to deliver free food and medicines to COVID patients near their residence. To put it in Hemingwayesque fashion, these noble souls show the coolness, the grace, the courage and the discipline to rise above their sorrow, misfortune and self-interest while lending a helping hand to those less fortunate or doughty. Let's doff our hats to these unsung heroes and sincerely hope they would inspire many more people to bring fraternal care, courage and empathy to our pandemic-ravaged society and its hurting individuals.

A lesson in the Gyanvapi case

The Kashi Vishwanath temple was destroyed by Aurangzeb. So, changes to Gyanvapi mosque as per facts mustn't rile anyone



PRAFULL GORADIA

It was 1927; one Abdul Rashid murdered Swami Shradhanand, the successor of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, in his sickbed. The killer was arrested and tried. The British Government then had no qualms about the religions of the two men. Jawaharlal Nehru's friend Asaf Ali, a distinguished advocate, took up Rashid's brief. The court, nevertheless, sentenced him to death as it was a cold-blooded murder. The *janaza* (funeral) was attended by thousands of Rashid's sympathisers but there was no riot or communal disturbance. Had any riot taken place, the Government would not have flinched from suppressing it. If the British were inclined to be soft, they could not have ruled an Empire for 190 years. That Empire had 40 crore Indians, with the white men from the British Isles being never more than one lakh.

Take the case of Ayodhya. The All India Muslim Personal Law Board eventually lost its long litigation in the Supreme Court; not a single Muslim stabbed a Hindu. In Ayodhya itself, everyone favoured the temple, including the local Muslims, on the grounds that it would vastly increase the number of inbound pilgrims and the city's economy would flourish. If at all any violence took place, it was because of the firing earlier by Mulayam Singh's police in 1990. The Mulayam regime resorted to indiscriminate shooting, not sparing even boys. No violence occurred owing to any mischief by a Muslim. It has been my consistent experience that when confronted with facts, most Muslims are willing to accept them. A member of the AIMPLB confided to me that the Board contested the Ayodhya issue in the courts for so long merely to stall the Hindus' demands on other temples-turned-mosques.

Some years ago, the chief of the Jamaat-e-Islami visited Delhi for a few days and happened to spend a couple of hours at my place. His explanation for Islamic conquerors replacing temples with mosques



was that they wished to declare to the area that a change of regime had taken place. A Hindu *raja* had been replaced by a Muslim sultan or *badshah*. In response, I asked that when a Hindu Prime Minister takes over in a Hindu-majority country, would it be fair to reverse the situation? Should not the mosque be replaced by a temple? Again, as a true Muslim, the Jamaat chief promptly replied that if it was the PM's and his people's desire, so be it.

In 1961, while delivering the Azad Memorial Lecture, British historian Arnold Toynbee, especially invited by Jawaharlal Nehru, said: "In the course of the first Russian occupation of Warsaw, the Russians had built an Eastern Orthodox Christian Cathedral in the city that had been the capital of the once-independent Roman Catholic Christian country, Poland. The Russians had done this to give the Poles a continuous ocular demonstration that the Russians were now the masters. After the re-establishment of Poland's independence in 1918, about 100 years later, the Poles pulled down this cathedral. I do not



SOME SCHOLARS HAVE EXPRESSED THE FEARS OF COMMUNAL RIOTS. HOW MANY RIOTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN INDIA SINCE 2014? IN ANY CASE, HOW CAN A COURT OF LAW OR A GOVERNMENT SHUN THE ENFORCEMENT OF JUSTICE MERELY DUE TO THE FEAR OF RIOTS?

blame the Polish Government for having pulled down the Russian church. The purpose for which the Russians had built it had been not religious but political, and the purpose had also been intentionally offensive." Before reaching Delhi, Sir Arnold had taken a boat ride on the Ganga and had noticed Aurangzeb's mosque on the bank with two tall minarets. He said at his lecture that he was surprised that this mosque was standing even after the Partition of India.

To come back to the point, should not a crime be punished commensurately? If the criminal had got away at the time of commission of the crime, should he not be apprehended and punished when it is possible to do so later? If the wrongdoer has passed away, at least the act of crime should be reversed. What is the meaning of justice otherwise? And where would be the rule of law? Since 2014, quite a few intellectuals have been protesting that democracy in India is in danger and that liberals have no future here. Well, here is their opportunity to firm up democracy whose first foundation is the rule of law. One

only has to read the *Magna Carta* of English King John, 1215 AD.

Some scholars have expressed the fears of communal riots. How many riots have taken place since 2014? It is true that recently there have been a few skirmishes in Bangalore and there was a major riot in northeast Delhi when President Trump was on a visit to India. Otherwise, the scorebook as far as riots are concerned has been negative over the last seven years. In any case, how can a court of law or a Government shun the enforcement of justice merely due to the fear of riots?

It is well recorded that the Kashi Vishwanath *mandir* was destroyed on the orders of Aurangzeb after his crowning. Fortunately, a portion of its front has survived as part of the *masjid*. Where people now worship Lord Shiva was built by the great Holkar Queen Ahilyabai in the 18th century. If, therefore, the Gyanvapi mosque underwent some changes according to historical facts, no Muslim would have any objection.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

COVID ON A KILLING SPREE

Sir — How the Government is tackling the pandemic can be assessed to some extent by distinguishing between the deaths due to lack of medical care and deaths despite the medical care. It must be conceded that it is not always possible to save all patients from succumbing to a deadly disease like Coronavirus. At the same time, we can safely say that it is possible to save most of the patients, even those who are in a critical condition, by providing them timely and adequate medicare. Avoidable deaths are not the same as inevitable deaths. The occurrence of deaths due to the lack of hospital beds, medical oxygen and medications crystallises the scale of the tragedy and makes the failure of the State starkly conspicuous. Implicit in the right to life is people's right to medical care. The State cannot absolve itself of its primary responsibility to provide medical services to all those who are needy. The pandemic's second wave has laid bare how overstretched and woefully inadequate the health facilities are to meet the medical emergency. Meanwhile, Governments are in denial and under-reporting the COVID deaths for fear of loss of image. But then they cannot escape scrutiny by concealing real data or fudging the management of the pandemic.

G David Milton | Tamil Nadu

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

Sir — After the initial inertia to extend aid to India in this hour of crisis, the US has now swung into action to support us in our fight against COVID's second wave. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with leaders of the US business community and the US-India business council to mobilise support for India. In fact, the full spectrum of the American machinery has been mobilised. Around 40 top American companies have come together to create a first-of-its-kind global task force for India to provide it with medical supplies, vaccine, oxygen and other life-saving assistance. Meanwhile, raw materials are being shipped to the Serum Institute to ramp up production. All this indicates the strength and

Lockdowns are a curse



It refers to the editorial 'What's in a name?' (April 29). No matter by what name you call it, a lockdown always derails normal life. There is no end to the suffering of the common man during the restrictions and curfews as daily life is jeopardised and uncertainty looms large over the employment and livelihood aspects. The poor and labour classes are the worst sufferers. Last year, when the first wave of COVID-19 swept the nation, the migrant workers had to put up with immense sufferings. With no transport available, they walked hundreds of miles to get back home. During the journey, many lost their lives due to accidents and hunger. This year also,

durability of the US-India relationship as strategic partners. New Delhi should leverage all the help it can get from the US, hold it to its commitments, preserve the friendship and use it to alleviate the distress. Meanwhile, if the US changes its stand and focuses on fighting COVID only within its borders while the disease rages on unchecked in India and other parts of the developing world, sooner or later these variants will make their way to the US and the western world. All the countries need to fight it together.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

UNETHICAL INCOME OF KERALA GOVT

Sir — There are three sources of income for the State of Kerala. The main among these is the forex remittance by the NRIs; the others being the revenue from liquor and lottery sales. No major industries, no major

the situation is no better and the second wave has created havoc. There is lack of medical oxygen supply in hospitals, lack of medicines, beds are not available in hospitals and the overall treatment is too costly for the poor to afford. The underprivileged people and the working class have been left at their wit's end.

However, whenever the Government fails, the judiciary steps in. This time also, several High Courts and the Supreme Court have pulled up the Governments for their failure to manage the COVID crisis. Other scientific methods could have been used to arrest the spread of the disease rather than imposing strict restrictions, curfews and lockdown in States like Delhi. The situation would not have gone out of control had the Government taken the right steps at the right time. Now, a roadmap should be drawn to vaccinate the masses in large numbers and the Centre and the States must act in a planned way. Merely throwing open the vaccination drive for all those above 18 years will not serve the cause. It must be executed in a scientific and planned manner.

Pravara Ramachandran | Chennai

investments, no employment opportunities; there is nothing in the State. But everything looks fine from the outside. Successive Governments in Kerala facilitated the flourishing of the alcohol business as it is a major source of revenue for the State. The majority of the regular alcohol consumers are poor labourers and this unscrupulous alcohol sale by the State has ensured the collapse of many a family. It is true that those who consume alcohol daily can't lead a normal life.

The Government is forced the continue selling alcohol online even during the pandemic owing to its financial commitments. The State needs to either maximise the revenue in an ethical way or minimise the expense for the welfare of people.

Girish R Edathitta | Kerala

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

India must get free COVID vaccines. All citizens must receive the inoculation free of charge. Let's hope they get it this time.

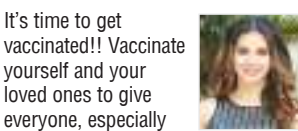


Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi



In my discussion with President Xi, I told him that we welcome the competition and that we are not looking for conflict. But I made it absolutely clear that I will defend American interests across the board.

US President — Joe Biden



It's time to get vaccinated!! Vaccinate yourself and your loved ones to give everyone, especially the frontline warriors, a fighting chance against the pandemic!!

Actor — Sunny Leone



Last season in the UAE was tough. We had a pretty bad run. We got a pretty big knock at the start of the tournament for many reasons.

CSK head coach — Stephen Fleming



The Delhi Government will expedite the process of adding oxygen beds across the national Capital in the coming weeks.

Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

FIRST COLUMN

VACCINATE ON WAR FOOTING

The Centre must come up with a decisive policy to give 6.5 million doses per day till the end of this year



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Millions of global citizens woke up to numbing images of funeral fires dotting bleak, smoky cremation grounds in India, a doomsday visual, which will continue to haunt all who are alive today and the Government in power. A COVID hurricane is sweeping across swathes of India, destabilising lives, uprooting homes and leaving indelible scars for a lifetime. Yet, despite the avalanche of (mis)information being circulated on social media and conventional channels of communication, now is not the time for finger pointing and finding a scapegoat. The war is here, brutal and unwavering. It is time to act decisively. First, India a large country with a huge population of over 135 crore, has to be given a basic shield to fight the virus. While all sorts of home remedies (most unscientific and based on faith) are being circulated, the only proven limited protection available is immunisation. India has managed to provide at least one dose of vaccine to nearly 10 per cent of its population so far and the section immunised has largely been spared the fury of the current second wave sweeping the country.



This is one area where the Centre needs to act decisively given the fact that it enjoys a robust majority in democratic polity. Remember it was for times like these that the country voted in unison for a powerful Central Government that is not subject to the taciturn volatilities of coalition partners. The Central Government has lethargically managed to vaccinate a minute chunk of India. And in the midst of an acute shortage of the precious shots, it has left the rest of the inoculation programme for the States to negotiate, procure and execute. State Governments are mostly caught in the age-old clutches of a dormant bureaucracy and are mired in corruption. Most of them did not invest in building the crumbling healthcare infrastructure. It may be a lost opportunity and a colossal damage for India, if a couple of States get body blows during the current wave of the virus.

The Central Government, facing flak for the poor state of affairs in the country, swung into action in the last fortnight but, something is amiss. The well-synched effort seen during the first wave is definitely missing in the deadliest phase of the pandemic. One of the reasons (even though it is not confirmed by any Government officials) could be that a large number of civil servants or their staff/families are themselves fighting the infection. The onus for managing the current pandemic wave, therefore, falls on the second chain of command and dropping the baton at this stage would be grievous.

One immediate decision that the Central Government has to take is to remove question marks on universal immunisation in less than a week. Questions like, who will get vaccinated on Central Government quota; will vaccine exports continue; will the Centre foot the vaccine bill for some, while leaving out a large chunk, are haunting. Add to this the confusion among the State Governments, who have less than a week to negotiate prices with the two COVID jab manufacturers in India. The manufacturers have come out with exorbitant prices for these crucial shots. Allowing vaccine makers to reap super profits at the cost of human lives, as many will not be able to afford the shots, could tarnish the well-earned image of the Government. All Central Governments including the US, first spent whatever it took to block an excessive quantity of vaccines for their citizens. Meanwhile India, for some strange reason, felt this was the time to act charitable and kept donating vaccines. At today's rate India needs nearly ₹700 billion to vaccinate all citizens above 18. Given the impact it could have, it is a small price. The Centre ought to come up with a decisive policy to administer 6.5 million doses per day till the end of this year. Any Government that is able to do it will go down in history as a saviour.

(The writer is a policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.)

Winds of political dubiety in Kerala

What adds spice to this year's Assembly poll is whether the State would see an incumbent Government returning to power?

Though Kerala has seen many electoral battles in the past, no election has generated the kind of heat and dust which we saw during the Legislative Assembly poll held on April 6 this year. The electorate of the State had only two options till now — choose either the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) or the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) which were the two main protagonists in the State's political as well as social theatre. What adds spice to this year's Assembly poll is whether the State would see an incumbent Government returning to power? This has not happened in Kerala for more than four decades. The present-day UDF came into existence in 1969 and the LDF in 1980. Except for fringe political outfits with presence in some pockets aligning and realigning with the big brothers (the Congress and the CPI-M) it could be said that the voters in the State had no other alternative. Kerala is known to vote in a peculiar manner whether it be to the Lok Sabha and the Assembly.

The election which comes to mind is that of 1977, the one that was held after the internal Emergency declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in June 1975. There was a discernible anti-Congress wave all over India. A Keralite by the name of Raveendra Varma contested the Lok Sabha election from Ranchi in Bihar and won with a big majority. He was made a Cabinet Minister in the Morarji Desai-led Government (1977-1979).

But what surprised the nation was the result from Kerala. The State which loses no opportunity to claim its intellectual superiority voted *en masse* for the UDF in the 1977 election! The UDF literally swept the 20 Lok Sabha seats that were at stake from Kerala. In the Legislative Assembly election held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha poll, the UDF won 111 out of the 140 seats, while the LDF was pulverised. This was the only time in Kerala's political history an incumbent Government managed to win the people's mandate and retain power.

Much water has flown down the Periyar River since then. Kerala saw many political churnings that led to new permutations and combinations. But the core structure of both the Fronts remained intact. The BJP was seen as a north Indian political outfit and the party failed miserably to take roots in the State. The absence of leaders of stature and the religious demography of Kerala played a significant role in keeping the Hindutva party off the State. It was the Ram Jannabhoomi agitation which paved the way for the BJP's entry into Kerala. The chieftains who dominated the political horizon of the State are gone. The lone surviving founder member of the CPI(M), VS Achuthanandan is old and bedridden. He was the most popular Marxist leader the State has seen, an equivalent to the likes of EK Nayanar and EM Sankaran Namboodiripad (both left us to meet Marx). It was Achuthanandan who tilted the balance in favour of the CPI(M) in the 2016 Legislative Assembly election. The National Highway from Kaliyikkavila in Thiruvananthapuram to Manjeshwar in Kasargod was dotted with life-size posters and flex boards of VS, who was projected as the chief ministerial candidate of the LDF. The LDF won convincingly but it shocked the party cadre and the followers of VS by declaring that Pinarayi Vijayan would be the Chief Minister. When some of the media persons asked the party's general secretary Sitaram Yechury,



THE QUESTION BEING ASKED IN KERALA IS HOW LONG WOULD IT TAKE FOR THE CPI(M) AND THE CONGRESS TO COME TOGETHER? BOTH THE PARTIES ARE ELECTORAL ALLIES IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY. EXCEPT IN KERALA. SO WHAT HOLDS BACK AN OPEN ACCEPTANCE OF THE RELATION AND A POSSIBLE MARRIAGE?

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



who declared Vijayan as the Chief Minister, what would happen to Achuthanandan, a peeved Yechury replied that he was "the party's Kerala Castro." It was a shock for Achuthanandan. His name and image were exploited by the party to the hilt only to dump him after the election. This is nothing new in the CPI(M). KR Gowri Amma, the mercurial leader from Alappuzha was projected and portrayed as the chief ministerial candidate of the party during the 1987 Assembly election. The slogan coined by the CPI(M) for that election was: "Keram thingum Kerala naadu. KR Gowri bharicheedum (Kerala, jam-packed with coconut trees would be ruled by KR Gowri)."

This was a slogan with multiple targets as coconut trees symbolised the powerful Eezhava community known for their prowess in toddy tapping and trading. Gowri Amma belonged to the same community. But once the election result was announced Nayanar, a member of the Nair community turned out to be the dark horse and was sworn in as the Chief Minister much to the dismay of Gowri Amma and the Eezhava community.

Opinion polls managed by the media houses in the State claim that the CPI(M)-led LDF is all set to return to power. But there are many unanswered questions and unasked queries. This is the first time in Kerala politics that central agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the Enforcement Directorate (ED), the Customs department and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) launched investigations against

Ministers, bureaucrats and party commissars for charges ranging from gold smuggling, hawala transactions, bribery and acts of improprieties. M Sivasankar, the then Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister as well as the Chief MO were probed with the former spending nearly three months in jail. His name was associated with a cartel of smugglers and hawala dealers. P Sreeramakrishnan, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, was questioned by the agencies in connection with the hawala transaction as a follow up to the statement given by his driver that the former had handed over a sack containing US Dollars to be delivered at the UAE Consulate.

P Sreeramakrishnan is facing a series of allegations for his liaison with Swapna Suresh, the kingpin of the smuggling cabal. Swapna herself disclosed to the agencies about Sreeramakrishnan's investment plans in the oil-rich kingdom of West Asia. KT Jaleel, Minister for Higher Education had to put in his papers after the April 6 polls as the Lokayukta found him guilty in cases of nepotism and favouritism. Kodyeri Balakrishnan, the party's State Secretary had to make way for another lightweight because of the ED raiding his house. Balakrishnan's younger son has been arrested and incarcerated in Parappana Agrahara Central Jail in connection with hawala and narco smuggling cases.

Still, the CPI(M) has the boldness to make "LDF for sure" its war cry. The Sabarimala Temple issue has hurt the sentiments of the Hindus. It was reflected in the 2019 Lok Sabha election in which the UDF swept 19 out of the 20 seats. Since

then nothing has happened in the State to turn the tables in favour of the CPI(M). Moreover, the BJP had made some politically shrewd moves, focussing in regions where the Hindus have a considerable presence. If the Hindutva party bags just five seats, the State is in for a hung Assembly, according to P Rajan, veteran scribe and Kerala's chronicler.

Kerala has seen a hung Assembly only in 1965, when no parties could reach the magic figure needed for forming a Government on its own. Alliances and coalitions were in an embryonic state those days.

The best Governance Kerala has seen is that of the 1987-1991 LDF Government led by Nayanar. There were no major scams or corruption charges against that Government. But in the 1991 election to the Legislative Assembly, the UDF sailed through easily despite the absence of any anti-incumbency factor. Marxists claim it was due to the sympathy wave generated by the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by the Tamil terrorists at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu. If there was any sympathy wave, it should have reflected in the election to the Lok Sabha held simultaneously with the Assembly polls. The Congress could score just 244 seats despite the sympathy wave. Kerala voted differently.

The question being asked in Kerala is how long would it take for the CPI(M) and the Congress to come together? Both the parties are electoral allies in the rest of the country, except in Kerala. So what holds back an open acceptance of the relation and a possible marriage?

POINTCOUNTERPOINT

THERE IS NO SHORTAGE OF OXYGEN IN ANY COVID HOSPITAL. THE PROBLEM IS BLACK MARKETING AND HOARDING, WHICH WILL BE DEALT WITH STRICTLY.

—UTTAR PRADESH CM
YOGI ADITYANATH



UP IS FACING AN OXYGEN EMERGENCY. IF YOU WANT TO LODGE A CASE OR SEIZE MY PROPERTY, GO AHEAD.

BUT UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF THE SITUATION.
—SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER
PRIYANKA GANDHI

The Sanskrit legacy of Kashmiri literature decoded

The flame of Sanskrit studies in the State was kept alive in modern times by scholars like Zadoo, Kamal and Parmanand. One hopes the current generation will keep it lit

Sanskrit is an all-India language. All parts of this land have contributed to its great ancient literature and none can claim a special place in this regard. Even so, the contribution from Kashmir over centuries is quite remarkable — in quality and variety as well as value and volume. Once well-known all over this country and beyond, it now deserves renewed notice, especially in today's conditions.

One may begin with a relatively recent work, the 'Kathakautukam' by Srivara from 15th century Kashmir. Written after the arrival of Islam, it is based on a famous Farsi or Persian love poem about Yusuf and Zuleikha, also a parable of the human seeking the divine. A remarkable example of cultural confluence, apart from prayers to Hindu gods, it also invokes the founder of Islam as 'paigambar shiromani'



AND HAKSAR

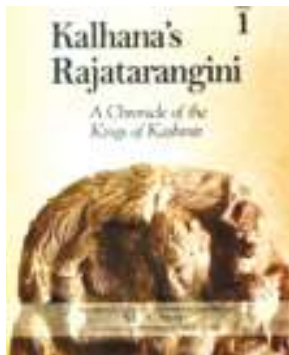
The writer is a former diplomat and a translator of Sanskrit classics. The views expressed are personal.

or the crown jewel of prophets. Its first translation has just appeared as 'A Tale of Wonder', an example of the vast range of Sanskrit literature from Kashmir.

Another example is of this literature's interaction with the rest of India. This is seen in the works by the four celebrated scholars from Kashmir: Kalhana, Bilhana, Shilhana and Jalhana. The first alone is better known at present. He lived in 12th century Kashmir where he wrote the famous 'Rajatarangini' which has had several modern translations, including one by RS Pandit, the brother-in-law of Jawaharlal Nehru. The original is a work of history, including earlier mythology but also Ashoka's patronage of Buddhism, and the later Kusana kings. From the seventh century onwards, it is mostly a factual record, also mentioning the help sent from

Kashmir to Afghan king Trilochanapala when he faced an invasion by Mahmud Ghazni.

Bilhana was also a great poet from Kashmir in the same century. But he travelled south where he was a court poet in Kalyana, in present day Karnataka. There he composed another respected history in Sanskrit, 'Vikramankadeva Charita', about the rulers of that land, as also the famous love lyrics of 'Chaurapanchasika'. Shilhana was a later poet who went to Bengal and wrote the 'Shantishataka' verses on peaceful living. Finally, Jalhana in the 13th century went from Kashmir to Ajmer where he wrote a history of its rulers upto Prithviraj Chauhan who was defeated by the Ghoris from Afghanistan. This history ends with the first battle where he was victorious and is titled 'Prithvirajavijaya', a work little



known now. These examples would indicate the spread of Sanskrit scholars from Kashmir over much of the country, as also their role as writers of history. But the history of Sanskrit there is much older. The earliest Kashmir text at present is 'Nilamata Purana' of about sixth century AD. It also shows that the language was by then already developed there.

The literature is best described in categories of works:

Historical, technical, philosophical and religious as also general. All are touched on here. Famous works of each category are still available and admired, but are little-known.

History writing in Sanskrit precedes Kalhana, who mentions several earlier writers. His own famous work was continued with the same name by four scholars at different times. The second historian, Jonaraja of the 15th century, also covers the arrival of Islam in Kashmir. The third was his pupil Srivara who further describes the golden age of king Zainul Abidin and his successors. That history was continued by the other two till the Mughal conquest.

Technical writing includes Sanskrit grammar and composition to which there were important contributions from Kashmir. In the seventh century was the work 'Kashika Vritti', the use of which by Chinese stu-

dents was noted by the pilgrim I-tsing. Another was 'Chandra Vyakarana'. The best known today is the 12th century 'Kavya Prakasa' by the Kashmir scholar Mammata, which is still in use due to its comprehensive coverage of Sanskrit poetics, with no less than 75 commentaries since it was written.

Poetics, the study of literature as an art with its merits and defects, appears to have been one where Kashmir's contribution to Sanskrit was the most widespread, with numerous distinguished names like Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta among the contributors. As for religious and philosophical works, one may mention the savants who initiated what came to be known as Kashmiri Shaivism. The chief name here is Vasugupta to whom, according to legend, 'Shiva Sutra' was revealed on a mountain. He was followed by

Somanada, author of 'Shiva Drishti' in the 12th century and his disciple Utpaladeva, who wrote the well-known 'Ishwara Pratyabhijna' still used by devotees of this idealistic monism.

Finally, it is pertinent to mention something about the general literature in Sanskrit from Kashmir. The best known today is 'Kathasaritsagara', stories written by Somadeva for the then queen in Kashmir. Others worth noting are the 11th century satires of Kshemendra on social conditions. But Kashmir's contribution to Sanskrit satire is little-known now. The flame of Sanskrit studies in Kashmir was kept alive in modern times by scholars like Jagadhar Zadoo, Janakinath Kaul Kamal and Parmanand. One hopes the present generation will take interest to keep it lit. The literary treasure house of Kashmir still needs more public recognition for the gems within it.

Global cues, bottom fishing lift equity mkts; metal stocks shine



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Global cues along with bottom fishing lifted the key domestic equity indices during Thursday's late afternoon trade session.

Accordingly, indices opened gap up to make initial highs but could not hold at these elevated zones.

Globally, Asian markets traded in the green after the Asian Development Bank had forecasted a positive recovery in the Asian markets although the current outbreak of Coronavirus remains a threat to the market.

On the domestic front, market witnessed some resistance but overall trend remained intact.

Sector wise, profit booking decline was seen in PSU Banks, Auto, FMCG whereas outperformance was witnessed in Metal and Pharma space.

Around 2.50 p.m., the S&P BSE Sensex traded at 49,877.56, higher by 143.72 points or 0.29 per cent from its previous close.

The Nifty50 on the National Stock Exchange traded at 14,920.10, up 55.55 points or 0.37 per cent from its previous close.

"At current juncture, support for Nifty is placed at 14,700 and then 14,550 zone; while on the upside hurdle is seen at 15,050, then 15,300 zones," said Jay Purohit, Technical & Derivatives Analyst, MOFSL.

"We are expecting continuation of outperformance in the Banking and Metal space and thus, one can look for buying opportunity in the same."

According to Likhita Chepa, Senior Research Analyst, CapitalVia Global Research: "The market opened with a gap up but very soon profit booking from the higher levels was observed following the global trends."

"On the sector front, there is no clear indication of the trend and a lot of sectors have also seen the correction in the market. JSW Steel and BajajFinserv are the top gainers while Heromotoco and Tata consumers are the top losers."

SBI earmarks Rs 30 cr to set up makeshift hospitals

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As part of the CSR initiative, the country's largest lender State Bank of India has decided to set up makeshift hospitals with ICU facilities for COVID-19 patients in some of the worst affected states.

The bank has already earmarked Rs 30 crore and is engaging with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and hospital management for setting up medical facilities on an emergency basis for the treatment of COVID-19 patients, SBI Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara told PTL.

He said the bank intends to put in place 1,000 beds with 50 ICU facilities in the states that are the worst affected.

So, he said, it could be 120 beds at some places, while 150 at others with adequate health-care facilities, depending on a hospital's capacity to scale up.

It is to be noted that the Ministry of Corporate Affairs last week permitted makeshift hospitals and temporary COVID care facilities to be treated as an eligible Corporate



Social Responsibility (CSR) activity. India is reeling under the impact of the second wave of COVID-19 with over 3 lakh cases being reported for the past 8 days in a row. With each passing day, the death toll is rising.

The country witnessed a record single-day rise of 3,79,257 new coronavirus infections pushing the total tally of COVID-19 cases to 1,83,76,524, while active cases crossed the 30-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

Speaking about various initiatives taken by the country's largest lender in its fight against COVID-19, Khara said SBI is

also collaborating with hospitals and NGOs to provide oxygen concentrators for the patients.

"We have put in place an action plan. We have earmarked Rs 70 crore plus out of which we are giving Rs 21 crore to 17 circles for COVID-19 related initiatives," he said.

Last year, the bank had donated to the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM CARES) Fund. SBI had contributed 0.25 per cent of annual profit, while employees collected over Rs 100 crore for the fund. In addition, Rs 11 crore contribution was towards supporting vaccination drive.

IFFCO's 4th oxygen plant being set up in Odisha to commence ops by Jun 15

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fertiliser cooperative IFFCO on Thursday said its fourth oxygen plant being set up at Paradeep (Odisha) will commence operation by June 15 and will provide the free supply to hospitals in the state and adjoining areas.

IFFCO is setting up a total of four oxygen plants in India at the cost of about Rs 30 crore. About 610 cubic meters per hour of oxygen will be produced from these four plants.

Two plants being set up in Uttar Pradesh and one plant in Gujarat will commence by May 30. In a statement, IFFCO said the cooperative has placed an order for setting up a 4th oxygen plant in Paradeep, Odisha.

The capacity of this new oxygen plant would be 150 cubic meters per hour. "The plant will commence by June 15," IFFCO Managing Director and CEO U S Awasthi tweeted separately.

The proposed oxygen plant in Paradeep will generate med-



ical grade oxygen and fill 520 big D-type cylinders daily and 200 medium B-size cylinders on demand supplied to all hospitals free from June 15.

The transposition of these plants requires some time. A dedicated separate team has been also assigned for this project in all the plants. It's an automatic cylinder filling turnkey plant, the cooperative said.

Vedanta pledges Rs 150 cr to help India fight against Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta on Thursday said its Chairman Anil Agarwal has pledged Rs 150 crore to help India in its fight against deadly COVID-19 second wave.

The amount is over and above Rs 201 crore that was spent by Vedanta Group in 2020, it said in a statement.

"Anil Agarwal...has pledged Rs 150 crore to help the country in its fight against the rapidly spreading second wave of COVID-19," Vedanta said.

The company will create additional capacity of 1,000 critical care beds in 10 cities across the country in an effort to support the Centre and states in this challenging times.

The critical care beds will be placed in state-of-the-art field hospitals which will be attached to recognised and reputed hospitals.

Each facility will have 100 beds in an air-conditioned tent with full electrical support and designed specifically for



COVID care.

The critical care facilities will have 90 beds equipped with life saving oxygen support while the remaining will have ventilator support.

"I am deeply concerned and anguished to see the impact of the second wave of COVID-19 and loss of precious lives. Vedanta Group has come forward to pledge Rs 150 crore

towards our commitment to fight the pandemic and we stand firmly with our people and the government at this difficult time," Agarwal said.

Additional capacity of critical care beds will be created in states like Rajasthan, Odisha, Jharkhand, Goa and Delhi-NCR.

The company is targeting to set up and commission the first set of facilities within two weeks and the balance facilities will be increased within a month.

Vedanta has estimated this support for a minimum six-month period.

The company said it is also working closely with the government bodies and local administration to provide medical facilities and hospital care to those in need.

At present, Vedanta is supporting around 700 beds for COVID patients across its business locations, which will be increased to 1,000 in the near term.



Inox Leisure reports Rs 93.69 cr loss in Q4

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Multiplex chain operator Inox Leisure on Thursday reported a consolidated loss of Rs 93.69 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021, as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the film exhibition business.

The company had posted a loss of Rs 82.15 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago. Revenue from operations declined 75.66 per cent to Rs 90.44 crore during the quarter under review as against Rs 371.58 crore in the corresponding quarter a year ago, Inox Leisure said in a BSE filing.

Siddharth Jain, Director – Inox Group, said the advent of COVID-19 has left a severe impact on the company's FY21 performance.

"Just when the industry had started witnessing the fervour in Q4, the resurgence of COVID-19 cases has emerged as a cause of concern. Despite the pandemic, we have continued the addition of new cinemas in FY21," he added.

Inox Leisure at present operates 648 screens across 153 multiplexes in 69 cities.

Shares of Inox Leisure were trading per cent 1.78 lower at Rs 272.50 apiece on BSE.

Gold gains marginally; silver jumps Rs 1,776

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold went higher by Rs 61 to Rs 46,472 per 10 gram in the national capital on Thursday, according to HDFC Securities.

The precious metal had closed at Rs 46,411 per 10 gram in the previous trade.

Silver also moved up by Rs 1,776 to Rs 68,785 per kg, from Rs 67,009 per kg in the previous trade.

In the international market, gold was quoting marginally lower at USD 1,777 per ounce, while silver was flat at USD 26.29 per ounce.

HDFC Securities Senior Analyst (Commodities) Tapan Patel said, "Gold prices traded marginally down with spot gold prices at COMEX (New York-based commodities exchange) trading at USD 1,777 per ounce on Thursday."

Axis Bank board approves re-appointment of Amitabh Chaudhry as MD & CEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Private sector lender Axis Bank on Thursday said its board has approved the re-appointment of Amitabh Chaudhry as its Managing Director and CEO for three years with effect from January 1, 2022.

"The board of directors of the bank.. considered and approved the proposal relating to re-appointment of Amitabh Chaudhry as the Managing Director and CEO of the bank, for a further period of 3 years, with effect from January 1, 2022 up to December 31, 2024," Axis Bank said in a regulatory filing.

Bajaj Auto Q4 net profit rises 15 pc to Rs 1,551 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bajaj Auto on Thursday reported a 15 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,551 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021 on the back of robust sales across domestic and international markets.

The Pune-based company had posted a net profit of Rs 1,354 crore in the January-March quarter of 2019-20.

Total revenue from operations rose 26 per cent to Rs 8,596 crore in the fourth quarter, from Rs 6,816 crore in the same period of FY20, Bajaj Auto said in a regulatory filing.

During the period under review, the company sold a total of 11,69,664 two-wheelers and commercial vehicles, up 18 per cent compared to 9,91,961 units in the January-



March quarter of the preceding fiscal, it added.

For the entire 2020-21, the company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 4,857 crore, down 7 per cent compared to Rs 5,212 crore in 2019-20.

The company's total revenue from operations declined to Rs 27,741.08 crore in the last fiscal as against Rs 29,918.65

crore in 2019-20.

Bajaj said it has sold a total of 39,72,914 units in FY21 as compared with 46,15,212 units in FY20, a drop of 14 per cent.

The company noted that the full-year numbers were not comparable as the first quarter of FY21 was an absolute washout due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Rupee extends gains for 4th day; rises 29 paise to 74.07 against dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee rose by 29 paise to close at 74.07 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, extending gains for the fourth straight session amid a positive trend in domestic equities.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 74.20 against the greenback and witnessed an intra-day high of 73.94 and a low of 74.23.

It finally ended at 74.07 against the American currency, registering a rise of 29 paise over its previous closing. On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 74.36.

This is the fourth straight session of gain for the rupee, during which it has appreciated by 94 paise.

Banking is essential service; allow vax for bankers on priority: ICICI

PNS ■ MUMBAI

ICICI Bank on Thursday said it is "much better" prepared to restrict the impact of the second coronavirus wave on its operations because of last year's experience but appealed for banks' employees to be allowed to take vaccinations on a priority basis as they are rendering an essential service.

The second largest lender warned that if banking services were to fail, it can have an adverse impact on the economic activity, and hence it is pertinent for ensuring that at least the branch staff is allowed to take vaccinations.

The comments come at a time when localised lockdowns are being announced across many pockets of the country in view of the rising COVID infections, which are breaching the 3 lakh mark daily and also resulting in over 2,000 official



ly counted deaths.

"We are an essential services... we are all exposed (to customers). We don't have the luxury. But we are not allowed vaccinations, not allowed to board trains, not allowed to board buses. So, what kind of essential services we are? More push should be there," its executive director Anup Bagchi told reporters.

He warned that if banking operations get affected, we may have to face an economic crisis

as well after the ongoing health crisis, and cited the case of a single automated teller machine shutting down for seven days to illustrate his point.

There is a case for "higher sensitivity" when classifying essential services, Bagchi said, stressing that there are other essential services also and bankers exposed to customers in branches should be allowed to vaccinate because they are exposed to walking-in customers.

Govt allows import of medical devices for 3 months

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday allowed import of 17 medical devices for three months with mandatory declarations immediately after custom clearance and before sale of such products in the domestic market.

To meet rising demand in the ongoing pandemic, the government has allowed import of medical devices like nebulizer, oxygen concentrators, oxygen cannister, oxygen cylinders, oxygen generators and ventilators.

An order in this regard has been issued by the Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry.

"Government under the leadership of PM@ Narendra Modi permits importers of medical devices for making mandatory declarations required under Legal Metrology Rules, 2011 after custom clearance and before sale,"

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal tweeted.

This will help fulfil the country's demand of medical devices required for COVID-19, he added. Due to the prevalent pandemic situation of COVID-19, the ministry in its April 28 order said, there is a steep demand for medical devices in these critical conditions on an urgent basis in view of the emergent health concerns and immediate supply of the medical industry.

Therefore, considering the pandemic situation of COVID-19 and to meet the demand of medical devices, the central government under the Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011 "hereby permits the importers of medical devices to import the... medical devices for three months from the date of this advisory..."

Imports of medical devices

Importers have been asked to inform the quantity of imported medical devices to state governments where import is made, immediately after the shipment, it added.

have been permitted subject to a condition that importers will make all declarations (by way of stamping or putting stickers or online printing) required under the Rules immediately after import/custom clearance and before sale of such products in the domestic market, the order said.

Importers have been asked to inform the quantity of imported medical devices to state governments where import is made, immediately after the shipment, it added.



Organic farming and farm fresh produce have always been considered a thing of the elite, with its being exaggerated. The pandemic and the learning that came from it taught people its importance and need.

The Pioneer's
SHIKHA DUGGAL
talks to experts about where it stands today.



ORGANIC PRODUCE, THE SAVIOUR AMID COVID

IMARC, the Indian organic food market reached a value of \$815 million in 2020, and is projected to witness strong growth during next five years. Founded in 2004, in an interaction with SMBStory reveals that Hyderabad-based 24 Mantra Organic, under Sresta Natural Bioproducts Pvt. Ltd, was launched by Rajashekhar Reddy Seelam to bring an organic food brand, free of toxic chemicals, to the Indian market. It directly works with the farmers and sources agricultural produce from them. This helps the business ensure the farmer community is compensated fairly with a focus on their sustainability and standard of living.

Swapping everyday food with organic produce has gained a lot of attention and support recently! Rising consciousness amongst people about the side effects of artificial chemicals in food production has further boosted the growth of organic food. There can be many reasons to it now. Organic food has come a long way since the days when it had a reputation for being grubby, ugly-looking foods only found in the darkest corners of speciality health food stores. These days you can purchase organic food almost anywhere! And now, the coronavirus pandemic has helped a lot of people realise the importance of choosing healthier options.

According to a report by



food,” explains Bala. So, with endless news about unsafe modes of cultivating vegetables and other dietary foods, it is no surprise that people are leaning towards having healthy and fresh organic foods.

With reports that antioxidants, omega-3s and other critical nutrients can help stave off diseases, many people turn to the grocery aisles to save themselves. So, we asked an expert Praveen Kumar Gupta, co-founder of Planet Organic to weigh in on one of the most hotly debated food topics: Is organic necessary for good health? “It’s unmixed, con- nate and holds so much of nutritional value. The population is in a delusion that ‘oh organic food — it’s for the elitist and is expensive.’ The presumptions are always poles apart from the



conventional thoughts and that can only be eradicated with awareness.”

Like so many new breakthroughs in the field of genetics, GMO, also known as Genetically Modified Organisms, is a development that brings with it a wide range of views in terms of how it can be put to best use!

“Gene editing” has the potential to unlock substantial benefits to nature, the environment while also helping farmers to produce healthier and more nutritious food.

Gene edited organisms do not contain DNA from different species, and instead, only produce changes that could be made slowly using traditional breeding methods. Contrast this scenario with genetic modification, which would

allow DNA from one species to be introduced into a different one. “Done with the ‘treated seeds’ while indulging in organic farming without any pesticides, radiations and food additives. Now, GMOs could make a real and positive difference when it comes to developing bespoke plant breeding solutions and offers opportunities for the future of farming,” expert adds. Producing food more efficiently and sustainably is a very obvious priority in this regard as is the need to develop land management systems that sequester carbon and circulate nutrients in the most efficient way possible. Gene editing could play an important role towards these goals!

“Organic produce has become even more popular during the pandemic as

most of us believe healthy food will keep us healthy too. Organic foods are composed of the natural and organic ingredients that are cultivated as per standards of organic farming, pesticides, weedicides, fertilisers and GMOs,” says the expert.

With the increase in population our compulsion would be not only to stabilise agricultural production but to increase it further in sustainable manner. The scientists have realised that the ‘Green Revolution’ with high input use has reached a plateau and is now sustained with diminishing return of falling dividends. Thus, a natural balance needs to be maintained at all cost for existence of life and property.

The obvious choice for that would be more relevant in the present era, when these agrochemicals which are produced from fossil fuel and are not renewable and are diminishing in availability. It may also cost heavily on our foreign exchange in future.



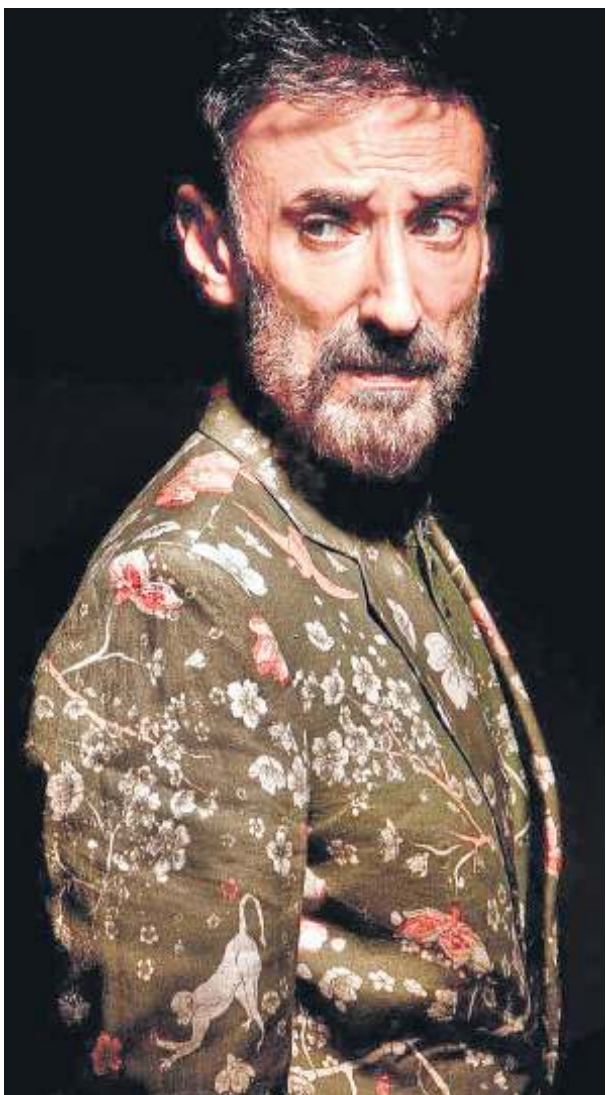
Raat Baaki Hai trailer leaves audience curious

Actor Rahul Dev will be next seen in the thriller *Raat Baaki Hai* — a story based in the badlands with everyone playing their game. The film is all set to release on one of the major online portals! The trailer, which is just out, looks extremely intriguing, and co-stars Paoli Dam, Anup Soni and Dipannita Sharma amongst others.

Rahul Dev will be essaying a central role in the film as a cop who is relentless in his pursuit to solve the mystery behind the murder having four principal suspects.

“The plot is fast paced, intriguing and multi-layered. With a kitty of flaring emotions and a false give-away shall keep everyone involved while the drama unfolds. I had a good time filming it! Shot in Ranthambore with an active crew, I am glad I was a part of this. As a big David Fincher fan, I love the genre and even as a kid, I would read a lot of thrillers. It’s over to the audience now,” shares Rahul Dev.

Reserved for the most fearless of movie fanatics, *Raat Baaki Hai* will be full of conflict, unexpected twists and tensions that will have you on the edge of your seats.



ENABLING CHANGE

An antiperspirant brand has come up with the world’s first deodorant to cater specifically to people with disabilities.

Deodorants usually come with tight caps and twist and spray functions. But the company Degree, owned by Unilever, wanted to create a product that suited the needs of customers with disabilities.

“As a brand that’s committed to inspiring confidence in everyone to move more, Degree believes no one should be held back from breaking a sweat and enjoying the transformative benefits of

movement,” Kathryn Swallow, Global

Degree Brand Vice President, was quoted as saying. The packaging of Degree Inclusive reportedly has features that are accessible and easier to use with one hand. It also features a hook design, improved grip placement, and a magnetic cap closure, making it easier to handle for those with limited mobility or sight.

Besides, instructions on the packaging are also written in braille for the visually impaired.



Mother earth needs us now, more than ever

Earth’s glaciers are shrinking at a rapidly accelerating rate, a new large-scale study has confirmed.

From 2000 to 2020, the world’s glaciers lost an average of 267 billion tonnes of ice each year — enough to submerge the entire surface area of Switzerland under six metres of water on an annual basis, the research said. Now, the rate of glacier ice loss has increased by around 30 per cent over the last 20 years, the research suggests. Over the same period, the annual rate of glacier thinning nearly doubled from 36cm a year!

The findings suggest that Earth’s glaciers have lost around 4 to 5 per cent of their total volume in the last 20 years. However, some glaciers are melting much more rapidly than others according to the

scientist who carried out the study.

Glaciers — vast rivers of ice that slowly ooze their way across land are relied upon by many millions for fresh drinking water across the world.

However, these icy rivers are particularly vulnerable to rising land and ocean temperatures. The study concludes that almost all glacier loss observed since the start of the fossil fuel era can be attributed to human-caused temperature rise.

The new research uses a vast trove of satellite and aerial images including half a million stereo satellite images to estimate the total amount of ice lost from Earth’s glaciers!

The scientists also used their data to estimate how the loss of ice from glaciers could be contributing to global sea level rise, which poses a large threat to small island and coastal populations. The results

show that ice loss from glaciers caused global sea levels to rise by 0.74mm each year. This means glacier ice loss accounted for around a fifth of the total annual sea-level rise observed over the last 20 years. Other major drivers of sea-level rise include the melting of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, and thermal expansion — a term for how seawater expands as it heats up.

It’s more necessary today than ever, to slow global warming.

This, by making conscious decisions to contribute toward lesser emissions. Make wiser choices to carpool or bicycle to work, turn off devices when not in use, choose greener options every day.

(Study lead author Romain Hugonnet is a doctoral student at ETH Zurich and the University of Toulouse)

Irrfan Khan foretold his death: ‘Said: I’m going to die’



Late actor Irrfan Khan's wife Sutapa Sikdar has opened up on the death of the actor and how she has been unable to cope with the loss. Sutapa and Irrfan met when they were both students at the National School of Drama. Irrfan died on April 29, 2020, after a long battle with neuroendocrine tumor. In an extremely emotional interview with Film Companion, Sutapa described how Irrfan was curious about death and what happens after life. She said that after he was diagnosed with cancer, he felt that maybe he had drawn death towards him. "He was very curious about death since the day

we met. He comes from a Muslim family, I come from a Hindu background but I never had a natal chart. It's all Irrfan; he made my kundali. His thing for astrology was not to know what will happen to his career but he was curious to know what will happen in the next life. He was immensely curious about it. He messaged Anup in London if he was drawing death towards him. Death had become like his play-mate," Sutapa said. Sutapa said Irrfan needed her around 24/7 as he underwent treatment. She recalled that before going to the hospital, he assured her everything is alright. "He is telling me - 'nahi theek hai.' Without any tantrum or anger. His face didn't reveal any displeasure. I so clearly remember, sitting on the edge of the bed, he had become very weak. I made him wear his trousers, combed his hair. He sat, he held my hand and got up. We



hugged each other. There was not even a second of finality in it. No intuition of him was saying that I will not come back." "For him, I don't think he thought the time has come. He was reading books and planning films with Babil. He was planning every tree we

will plant, which I am doing now. Everything. I don't know, I sometimes feel I guilty that I had so much faith which I instilled in him that 'kuch nahi hoga, main sambhal lungi'. He believed in me so much," Sutapa teased up. Babil also spoke about his last moments with his 'Baba' Irrfan Khan. "I was there in the hospital in the last two days. He was losing consciousness. He just looked at me, smiled and said, 'I am going to die.' And I said, 'No, you are not.' He smiled again and went back to sleep. But I really feel like he had surrendered completely. There are no words to achieve that kind of evolution I think." Babil said he learned to love selflessly from his mother Sutapa who gave her 24/7 of two and a half year to Irrfan. Describing her efforts, Babil got emotional and said what she did for Irrfan, no human will ever do for another.

PRIYANKA CHOPRA SETS UP A FUNDRAISER to help India fight Covid



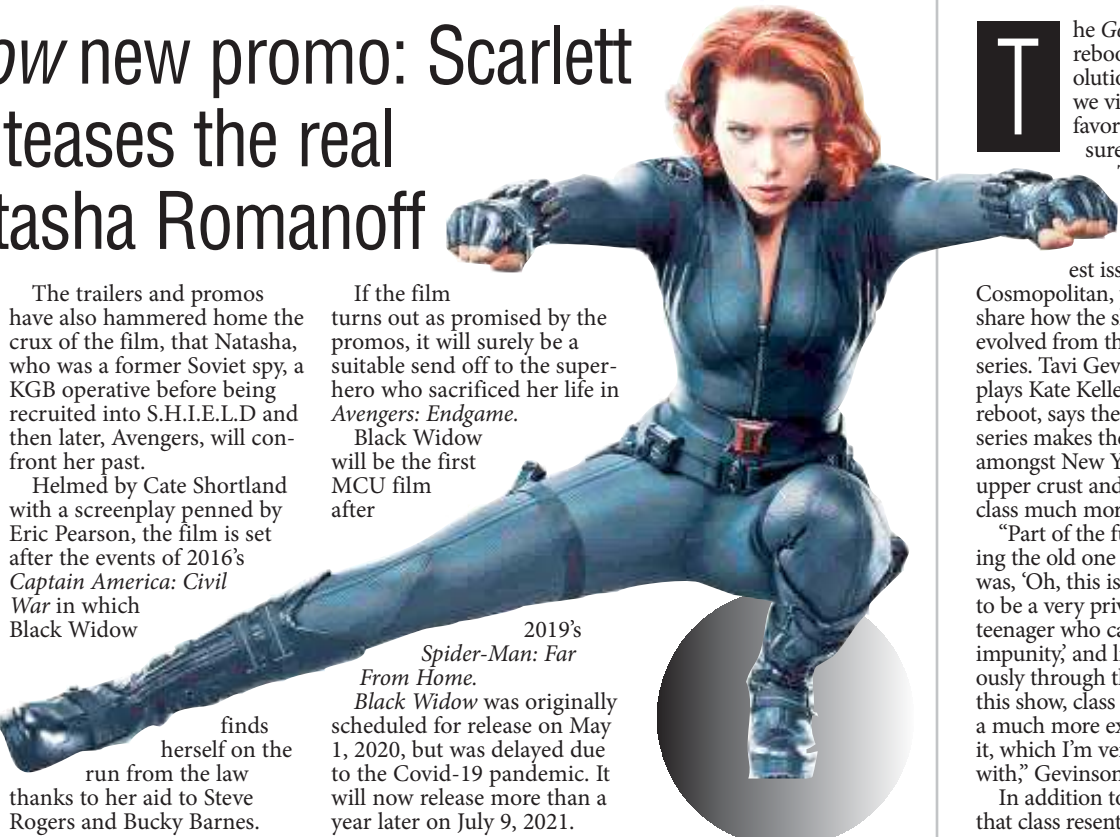
Priyanka Chopra has set up a fundraiser to help India fight the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic. Priyanka Chopra took to

her social media platforms to announce a fundraiser that she has set up to help India as the country faces the debilitating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. Sharing a video on Instagram, Priyanka said, "Why do we need to care? Why is it so urgent right now? I am sitting in London and hearing from my friends and family in India about how hospitals are at capacity, there are no rooms in ICUs, ambulances are too busy, oxygen supply is less, crematoriums having mass cremations because the volume of death is so much. India is my home and India is bleeding." The global icon also added that unless everyone is safe, no one is safe. She said, "We, as a global community, need to care. And I'll tell you why we need to care - because unless everyone is safe, no one is safe. So, please use your resources and focus your energy on helping stop this pandemic. Please donate. I understand a lot of people must be angry and thinking about, 'Why are we in this

place in the first place? Why is this happening?' We will address that but after we stop the urgency. Please donate and please use your resources as much as you can. India needs you." Urging her followers to contribute towards the fundraiser, she also shared that she and her husband Nick Jonas have already contributed and will continue to contribute. She wrote, "Please please donate. Nick and I already have and will continue to contribute. We have all seen how far and wide this virus can spread, an ocean between us makes no difference. No one is safe unless everyone is safe. It's so heartening to see so many people stepping up to help in so many ways. We need to beat this virus, and to do that requires ALL of us. From the bottom of my heart THANK YOU!" Priyanka has been quite vocal about India's need for Covid-19 vaccination on an urgent basis. Earlier this week, Priyanka sought Covid-19 vaccines for India, and tweeted about the US ordering "more vaccines than needed."

Black Widow new promo: Scarlett Johansson teases the real story of Natasha Romanoff

A featurette from the upcoming MCU movie *Black Widow* was released on the occasion of National Super Hero Day. Scarlett Johansson, who reprises the role of Natasha Romanoff, the titular superhero, also features in the clip. *Black Widow* was the original member of the *Avengers*. In the clip, Johansson teases how the film will tell the fans who Natasha really is, as despite experiencing her adventures right from the Battle of New York, in which Loki invaded with the Chitauri army, to the war against Thanos, we know precious little about her provenance.



The trailers and promos have also hammered home the crux of the film, that Natasha, who was a former Soviet spy, a KGB operative before being recruited into S.H.I.E.L.D and then later, Avengers, will confront her past. Helmed by Cate Shortland with a screenplay penned by Eric Pearson, the film is set after the events of 2016's *Captain America: Civil War* in which *Black Widow* finds herself on the run from the law thanks to her aid to Steve Rogers and Bucky Barnes.

If the film turns out as promised by the promos, it will surely be a suitable send off to the superhero who sacrificed her life in *Avengers: Endgame*. *Black Widow* will be the first MCU film after 2019's *Spider-Man: Far From Home*. *Black Widow* was originally scheduled for release on May 1, 2020, but was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It will now release more than a year later on July 9, 2021.

The *Gossip Girl* reboot aims to revolutionize the way we view one of our favorite guilty pleasure TV shows. The cast of the HBO Max series cover the latest issue of *Cosmopolitan*, where they share how the show has evolved from the original series. Tavi Gevinson, who plays Kate Keller on the reboot, says the upcoming series makes the resentment amongst New York City's upper crust and the work class much more explicit. "Part of the fun of watching the old one at the time was, 'Oh, this is what it's like to be a very privileged teenager who can act with impunity', and living vicariously through that, but with this show, class resentment is a much more explicit part of it, which I'm very in tune with," Gevinson said. In addition to highlighting that class resentment, the

Gossip Girl reboot stars on how the show has evolved



reboot brings much-needed representation and diversity to the cast that better reflects the lives to today's teens. "It's really important for a Black girl, with twists in her hair, to be able to see someone in a position of power who looks like her. And it's also important for kids in the suburbs or kids who don't have a lot of Black friends or friends of color just to generally see us depicted in differ-

ent ways" explained Savannah Smith, who plays Monet de Haan on the show. "I think this could really change things. Maybe they're not learning these things at home, but they're seeing them on *Gossip Girl*. How amazing is that?" While the cast kept many of the show's secrets close to the chest, they did assure that one of our favorite guilty pleasure TV shows will be

just that, but with a lot more representation. There are a few other changes, too. It will take place eight years after the original website went dark (and after Penn Badgley's Dan Humphrey revealed himself to be *Gossip Girl*) as a new generation of New York private school teens are introduced to the social surveillance of *Gossip Girl*. The series will address just how much social media -- and the landscape of New York itself -- has changed in the intervening years. The crux of the new *Gossip Girl* won't revolve around the mystery of who the gossip maven actually is, but rather another twist that's yet to be revealed. The show's official Twitter account announced that the reboot will be coming to HBO Max this July.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



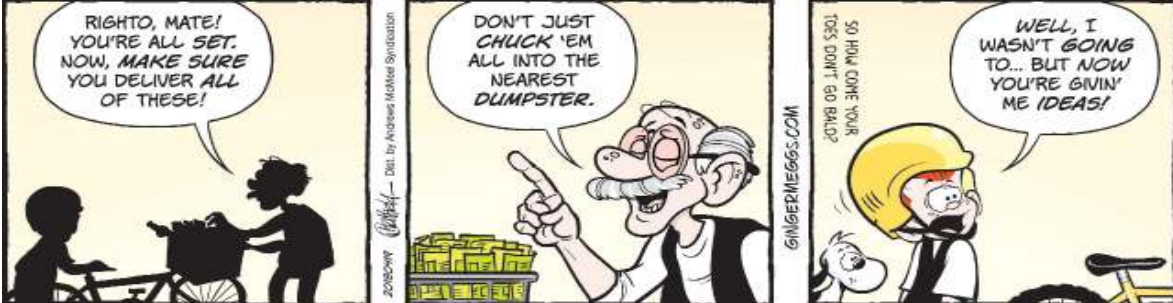
GARFIELD



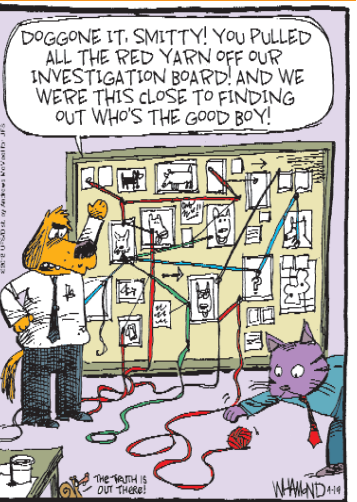
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



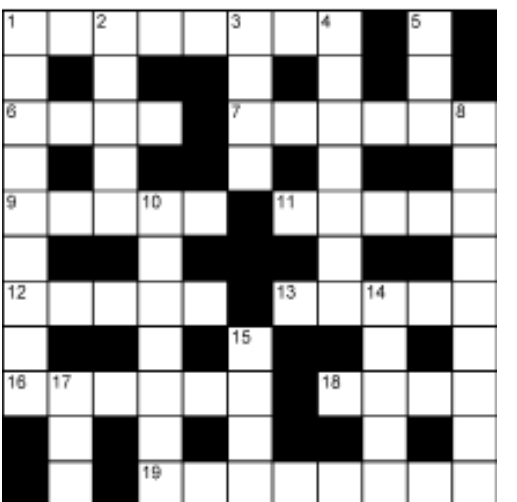
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution
9 3 4 1 6 7 8 5 2
2 8 7 9 4 5 3 1 6
5 1 6 8 3 2 4 7 9
3 4 5 6 7 1 9 2 8
7 6 2 3 8 9 1 4 5
1 9 8 5 2 4 6 3 7
6 7 3 4 5 8 2 9 1
8 5 9 2 1 3 7 6 4
4 2 1 7 9 6 5 8 3

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

- Expecting a baby
- Scraps of material
- Weigh yourself with these
- Frequently
- A row of metal rings fastened together
- Jumble together (3,2)
- Sneak
- Baby's toy
- A stinging insect
- A newspaper employee

DOWN

- Actor or singer
- An octagon's number of sides
- As well
- Instructor

5 Use your eyes

- Rub wood smooth with this
- An imaginary line around the middle of the Earth
- Precise
- Jump
- A chopping tool

SOLUTION

A	H	P	N	I
W	H	L	S	C
O	P	E	R	A
R	O	B	S	C
E	I	S	T	I
E	I	S	T	I
R	O	A	S	T
F	O	A	S	T
L	O	O	T	E

NARAPPA RELEASE POSTPONED

The Telugu remake of Tamil action-drama *Asuran*, *Narappa*, has been postponed. The makers made an official statement confirming the postponement of the film's release which was initially scheduled for a May 14 release.

"In lieu of the pandemic, #Narappa will not be releasing on May 14th. A new theatrical date will be announced once we overcome this unprecedented crisis. Stay Safe," tweeted Venkatesh Daggubati who will be headlining the film.

However, there were some rumours that the film may have a direct OTT release. With several films opting for OTT release in the pandemic times, it was also rumoured that Venkatesh's *Narappa* may also choose to go digital. But proving all those rumours to be false, it has been officially announced that the film's new

theatrical date would be confirmed soon.

It is learnt that the film's producer Suresh Babu is keen on having a theatrical release for *Narappa* and he wants to release the film only in cinemas, once the situation comes to normalcy. The film is directed by Srikanth Addala and it has Mani Sharma's music.

"*Narappa* is a film that we have made with a lot of dedication and hard work and your love towards the film has been overwhelming. However, we are all going through a turbulent time during this unprecedented global pandemic, and hence, keeping in mind the health and safety of our beloved audience, the theatrical release of the film has been postponed. We will bring *Narappa* to you just when the time is right... Until then, be safe, take care of yourself, and stay strong. We will all get through this together," reads the statement.



SIDDHARTH RECEIVES THREATS, TO LODGE COMPLAINT

Actor Siddharth has alleged that his phone number has been leaked. He has claimed that the BJP Tamil Nadu IT cell leaked his number! The actor also shared that because of this, he and his family have been receiving death threats.

Via his Twitter post, Siddharth mentioned that he has recorded all calls and is handing them to the police. "My phone number was leaked by members of TN BJP and @BJPtnITcell. Over 500 calls of abuse, rape, and death threats to me & family for over 24 hrs. All numbers recorded (with BJP links and DPs) and handing over to Police. I will not shut up. Keep trying," he wrote and tagged

Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as Home Minister Amit Shah.

Siddharth also shared the screenshots of the trolls who openly threatened him on social media. He wrote, "This is one of many social media posts by BJP TN members leaking my number yesterday and telling people to attack and harass me. *'Ivan inimela vaaye thirakka koodathu'* (this fellow must never open his mouth again) We might survive Covid. Will we survive these people?"

Actress Shreya Dhanwanthary, who played the role of a journalist *Scam 1992*, also commented on Siddharth's post.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Siddharth is busy shooting for his Telugu comeback film *Maha Samudram* in Ajay Bhupathi's direction.



Mamata Mohandas revs up a Harley



Mamata Mohandas, who has starred in several popular Telugu movies, has been out of the spotlight in recent years. Along with being a widely-loved actress, she also sang multiple songs that were eventual chartbusters. After her tryst with breast cancer in 2009, she emerged victorious but took a step away from stardom.

She returned to the screens after a break but now works in her native language of Malayalam.

Recently, Mamata Mohandas was seen riding a motorcycle abroad in a luxurious city. She sported a stylish look as she posed revving up the Harley Davidson.

"I'm busy riding a bike like no shooting during the crisis!" The actress said. This video is currently going viral on the internet. She later took to Instagram to post a picture with a caption, "Why wait for someone to take you for a ride when you've had enough.. Riding after 15 years... the most amazing thing was that I haven't lost touch!!! #musclememory. Building a career in films also meant putting away days when I used to ride a motorcycle around town freely.. oh those Bangalore days!!!"

Sumanth Ashwin turns producer

Young actor Sumanth Ashwin of *Keritha* and *Tuneega* fame, who recently entered into wedlock, is all set to step into a new phase of his career.

Sumanth Ashwin is going to make his debut as a producer and veteran filmmaker MS Raju is going to revive his popular production house Sumanth Art Productions.

Interestingly, Sumanth's debut film as producer is going to be directed by MS Raju who recently made a good comeback as a director with *Dirty Hari* that turned out to be a profitable venture.

MS Raju himself has penned the story and it is said to have shaped up well. The film is titled *7 Days 6 Nights*. Billed to be a light-hearted comedy with moments that bite, the story is said to be appealing to youth. MS Raju, who launched the likes of Devi Sri Prasad as

music director with Devi, is launching a new music director with this film and he is confident that the new music composer would reach heights. Raju has done a contract with the music director for his next 3 films.

This film is going to be formally launched soon. MS Raju is planning to make this film with his lucky actors and actresses whose names have been kept under wraps.

The film is presented by Sumanth Art Productions while it is bankrolled under Wild Honey Production in association with ABG Creations.

It is learnt that Sumanth Ashwin wants to take forward his father's legacy as producer and is planning to revive the banner that delivered several blockbusters including *Devi*, *Okkadu*, *Manasantha Nuvve*, *Varsham*, *Nuvvostanante Nenoddantana*.



tollywood

Tollywood does its bit to fight Covid



Doing their bit to help people in these tough times, celebrities stepped in to assist the public by amplifying the distress calls and messages through Twitter handles. Not just Tollywood stars but producers and directors too have started making requests and tagging authorities to get timely help to patients.

Director SS Rajamouli, who is currently helming *RRR*, on Thursday, took to Twitter to announce that the team of *RRR* will stand with people during this Covid crisis. "The times are tough and our team is doing its bit in this hour of need to provide authentic information. You can follow @RRRMovie to get some information and we might be able to coordinate and provide some help to someone around you. #CovidInfo #Covid19IndiaHelp" the actor wrote on Twitter.

He had been retweeting important tweets regarding Covid and recently wrote, "Plasma donation is the most noble thing to do. I request all those of you who recovered from #COVID19 over 3 weeks ago to rise up during this hour of need!"

Actor Naveen Polishetty of *Jathi Ratnalu* fame has been actively putting posts through his Instagram and Twitter requesting help — from plasma donor requirements to those who are in dire need of ventilator support.

Telugu producer Vivek Kuchibhotla put a post requesting plasma O+ve for his friend's 65-year-old father. Actor Shraddha Srinath of *Jersey* fame too has been retweeting the Twitter pleas from people of vari-

ous States requesting help for their loved ones, brothers or extended family members, even the general public.

Senior actor Venkatesh Daggubati has been putting posts on Twitter requesting people for verified leads. Suresh Productions had announced that it would help out people in need of medical resources like oxygen cylinders, beds, ventilators, etc. "Our country is collectively going through a distressing time. Information about the resources available is key today. Suresh Production will help in identifying and amplifying the

resources available in the best way we can. Stay safe," read the post.

A couple of days ago, Telugu Superstar Mahesh Babu urged people to get vaccinated calling it the need of the hour. "Done with my vaccination! Please get yours!! The COVID-19 second wave has hit everyone hard and getting vaccinated is the need of the hour. Those aged 18 years and above are eligible to get theirs from May 1st. #GetVaccinated. Stay safe everyone," he wrote on Twitter.



Chaavu Kaburu Challaga THRIVING ON OTT!

OTT's the star of the day, as the pandemic rears its ugly head once again, forcing people to be confined to their homes. The Telugu OTT platform *Aha* released a re-edited version of the much-awaited *Chaavu Kaburu Challaga* starring Karthikeya and Lavanya Tripathi.

The movie, to everyone's surprise, is proving to be a smash

hit, amassing over 100 million views over 3 days.

The movie is a romantic comedy directed by Peggalaipati Koushik and tells the story of a man who falls in love at first sight with a widow.

With *Sulthan* all set to be launched on April 30 on *Aha*, it sure is going to be a good time to be stuck to your TV sets and avoid going out in these testing times.



DC'S PRITHVI STORM BLOWS KKR AWAY



PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Prithvi Shaw smoked a scintillating 41-ball 82 as Delhi Capitals crushed Kolkata Knight Riders by 7 wickets in Ahmedabad. Shaw smacked 11 fours and 3 sixes during his blitzkrieg that also included six fours in the very first over from Shivam Mavi as Delhi Capitals crossed the finish line with 21 balls to spare. With the win Delhi also rose to the second spot in the points table. Kolkata Knight Riders suffered another familiar batting collapse before late fireworks from Andre Russell lifted them to 154 for six against Delhi Capitals here on Thursday.

Put in to bat, KKR were at a decent position at 69 for one in the 10th over but slumped to 82 for five in the 13th before Russell saved them with a 27-ball 45 not out. Russell's blistering innings

had two boundaries and four sixes.

Struggling opener Shubman Gill top-scored with a 38-ball 43, and his knock was studded with three boundaries and one six, but he

failed to convert his solid start into a big score.

For DC, Axar Patel and Lalit Yadav were impressive with two wickets.

KKR were 45 for one at the end of powerplay overs after Nitish Rana was stumped out for 15 in the fourth over bowled by Axar. Gill was going strong as he took on Ishant Sharma and Axar by hitting a few boundaries but lost Rahul Tripathi to Marcus Stoinis in the 10th over. KKR's familiar batting slump came to the fore as captain Eoin Morgan and Sunil Narine both got out in the space of three balls without opening their accounts.

Lalit, who replaced an injured Amit Mishra in the DC playing XI, grabbed both the wickets as KKR slumped from 69 for 1 in the 10th over to 75 for 4 in the 11th over.

Morgan holed out to Steve Smith at long-off while Narine was castled by a quick off-break from Lalit, which disturbed his stumps.

Royals pledge \$1 mn, DC ₹1.5cr to virus fight

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Capitals on Thursday pledged ₹1.5 crore in support of the national capital's fight against the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

The amount will be used to procure essential medical supplies, ranging from oxygen cylinders and concentrators to Covid wellness kits.

Earlier, Rajasthan Royals said it has raised ₹7.5 crore to

provide immediate support to people affected by the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic in India through its foundation.

"Rajasthan Royals is pleased to announce a contribution of ₹7.5 Crores (over \$1 million) towards Covid Relief to help with immediate support to people in India impacted by the surge of Covid-19 virus," the franchise said in a statement.



Mumbai Indians players Quinton de Kock and Kieron Pollard chats with Rajasthan Royals players at the end of IPL match

IPLT20.com

MUMBAI BACK IN VICTORY STRIDE

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Opener Quinton de Kock roared back to form with a blistering 50-ball 70 as Mumbai Indians beat Rajasthan Royals by seven wickets here on Thursday.

Put in to bat, Rajasthan rode on 42 by skipper Sanju Samson and Jos Buttler's 41 to post a competitive 171 for four but their efforts was overshadowed by de Kock, who struck six fours and two maximums to complete the task in 18.3 overs at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

Krunal Pandya also played a useful cameo, smashing 39 off 26 balls with the help of two fours and as many sixes.

Mumbai openers Rohit Sharma (14) and de Kock put up 49 for the first wicket. The South African fetched his first boundary, a cover drive, and then launched into left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman (1/37) for a four and a maximum. While Rohit played his trademark pull-shot to get a six in the fifth over.

De Kock hammered Chris Morris (2/33) for another maximum but Rohit perished in the sixth over, giving a dolly to Chetan Sakariya at mid-on.

Leg-spinner Rahul Tewatia (0/30) conceded three boundaries in the seventh over, two by Suryakumar Yadav (16; 3x4) and one by de Kock, as Mumbai got 14 runs.

However, Morris brought back Rajasthan by removing Surya, as Mumbai slipped to 83/2.

Krunal joined de Kock, who completed his half-century in 35 balls and then got a life. Krunal smashed a six over the sight-screen off Tewatia, in the 15th over, which fetched Mumbai 12 runs as they needed 41 runs from the last five overs.

De Kock and Krunal added 63 runs for the third wicket and brought the side closer to a win.

A profligate Morris conceded 16 runs in the 18th over, as Kieron Pollard (16 not out) and de Kock took them on the cusp of a win.

Earlier, Samson blazed his way to 42 off 27 balls as Rajasthan Royals posted a competitive 171 for four.

Put in to bat, Rajasthan openers Buttler (41 off 32) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (32 off 20) laid the foundation with their 66-run stand in 7.4 overs.

Buttler, who was in his elements, smashed Rahul Chahar (2/33) for six, but the leggie dismissed him the very next ball, stumped by de Kock.

Samson started with a boundary, a cut-shot and then hit two boundaries off Krunal Pandya in ninth over, in which RR got 12 runs. But Chahar struck again, this time removing Jaiswal, as he lobbed off a return catch.

Shivam Dube (35 off 31 balls; 2x4, 2x6) and

We feel safe inside IPL bio-bubble: de Kock

New Delhi: Mumbai Indians' wicket keeper batsman Quinton de Kock on Thursday said his team feels "very safe" inside the IPL bio-security bubble, two days after leg-spinner Adam Zampa called it one of the "most vulnerable" before taking a flight back to Australia.

"To be honest, we trust in our doctors, so we are pretty safe in our bubbles. At least we feel very safe and it is quite easy," de Kock said after winning the match against Rajasthan Royals.

"We still take precautions and I felt safe. I don't know about other guys. I am speaking for myself. It is being easy to get on with the game and practice and everything," the South African added.

Speaking about the match, De Kock said that it was "lot easier" to bat on the Kotla track after the struggles in Chennai.

"Obviously, it was a lot bit easier to bat over here. Was quite pleasant. We are just happy to win it. It feels good to score some runs again, especially in a winning cause," the southpaw said.

"Yeah, genuinely with our team, we always try and get one of our top four just bat through to the last (part) of our innings. We did that today and obviously the changes from Chennai to Delhi have helped a bit," he added.

Rajasthan Royals skipper Sanju Samson conceded that his side was 20-25 runs short.

"We played an afternoon game, but the wicket was fine and the ball was coming on the bat. I felt we were a bit 20-25 runs short. We need to play some fearless and positive cricket when we come out there and play the next game," Samson said at the post-match conference. **PTI**

Samson, who hit five boundaries, added 57 runs for the third wicket, with the *Mumbaikar* playing some aggressive shots.

Samson also kept playing shots at will, as he hit two successive boundaries, in the 16th over off Boult, which fetched his team 14 runs.

However, Boult cleaned up Samson in the 18th over and then Bumrah dismissed Dube in the penultimate over, as the Mumbai bowlers kept things tight in the last four overs. RR got 45 runs in the last five overs.

►boundarymeter

4s	684
6s	295

PLAYER	RUNS
1. Faf du Plessis (CSK)	270
2. Shikhar Dhawan (DC)	265
3. KL Rahul (PBKS)	240
PLAYER	WKTS
1. Harshal Patel (RCB)	17
2. Avesh Khan (DC)	13
3. Rahul Chahar (MI)	11
MOST SIXES	
1. Jonny Bairstow (SRH)	14
2. Andre Russell (KKR)	13
3. KL Rahul (PBKS)	11

SUMMER SLAM

MOTION PICTURE



Mumbai Indians skipper Rohit Sharma gives an autograph to Rajasthan Royals pacer Chetan Sakariya on his jersey at the end of IPL match between the two sides at Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on Thursday

@mipaltan

ZAMPA, RICHARDSON REACH AUS

Australians Adam Zampa and Kane Richardson on Thursday returned home after withdrawing from the IPL and on arrival, the leg-spinner clarified that his comments on "vulnerability" of bio-bubble had nothing to do with fear of the virus engulfing the controlled environment. "... My comments about the vulnerability of the IPL bubble had nothing to do with feeling like the virus would enter the bubble at any stage. The BCCI and RCB had many precautions to make us feel safe. I believe the tournament is in great hands and will definitely see the finish line," Zampa said.

REFEREE MANU, UMPIRE MENON OUT

Match referee Manu Nayyar left the IPL bio-bubble in Ahmedabad following the death of his mother. Nayyar had officiated in the Mumbai leg of matches before being assigned for the Ahmedabad leg. It is learnt that he reached Delhi on Thursday to join his family. Earlier in the day, India's top umpire Nitin Menon pulled out after his family was struck by a couple of Covid-19 cases, while his Australian counterpart Paul Reiffel's attempts at leaving hit a dead end because of his country's suspension of air travel with India.

VAN DER DUSSEN ARRIVES IN INDIA

South African Rassie van der Dussen, who has signed with Rajasthan Royals as replacement for Ben Stokes, has arrived in India and is in quarantine.

POINTS TABLE

		P	W	L	NRR	PTS
1	CSK	6	5	1	+1.475	10
2	DC	7	5	2	+0.466	10
3	RCB	6	5	1	+0.089	10
4	MI	6	3	3	+0.071	6
5	KKR	7	2	5	-0.494	4
6	PBKS	6	2	4	-0.608	4
7	RR	6	2	4	-0.690	4
8	SRH	6	1	5	-0.264	2

Punjab hope to shed chronic inconsistency

KEY PLAYERS

	KL RAHUL Punjab skipper is on a roll again with the bat but his captaincy is looking out of sorts
	AB DE VILLIERS Mr 360° is a vital cog in RCB's middle order and time & again he has shown what AB is capable of

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Punjab Kings will have to play out of their skins to get their stuttering campaign back on track when they face a high-flying Royal Challengers Bangalore here on Friday.

Smarting from a five-wicket defeat at the hands of Kolkata Knight Riders, it will not be an easy task for a struggling Punjab side to stand up to the challenge thrown by a RCB team, which has been firing on all cylinders.

Following four losses and two wins, Punjab are currently placed sixth in the league table with four points, whereas RCB are second with 10 points from five wins, only behind Chennai Super Kings on net run rate.

Apart from the loss against CSK, RCB have emerged as strong contenders for a maiden IPL title, with many of their players striking form as the tournament progresses.

Punjab's inconsistent batting has been a let-down so far. In their six games, the KL Rahul-led side have gone on to make the three low totals batting first — 106, 120 and 123.

Mayank Agrawal has been guilty of wasting his starts barring one game while Chris Gayle has made only two good scores in six outings.

The dynamic Nicholas Pooran is having a woeful season to say the least. The swashbuckling West Indian has managed just 28 runs in the five innings which includes three ducks. His highest was 19 against KKR. The team could replace him with the premier T20 batsman in the world, Dawid Malan.

With not enough runs on the board against KKR, the Punjab bowlers could not do much. But the bowling unit has lacked aggression.

On the other hand, RCB will be high on confidence after they held their nerves to pip Delhi Capitals by one-run. While it was Ab de Villiers who delivered once again with the bat, the bowlers put up a collective effort to give RCB their fifth win of the season.

The RCB batting is

VENUE: NARENDRA MODI STADIUM, AHMEDABAD	
HEAD TO HEAD	
Matches	26
Punjab Kings	14
Royal Challengers Bangalore	12

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

Punjab Kings defeated Royals Challengers Bangalore by 97 runs in Dubai

Punjab Kings beat Royals Challengers Bangalore by 8 wickets in Sharjah

124

Yuzvendra Chahal with 124 wickets at an average of 22.94 in 103 innings of 104 matches is the leading wicket taker for Royal Challengers Bangalore in IPL

396

Chris Gayle with 396 fours in 137 innings of 138 matches, needs four fours to become 10th batsman to complete 400 fours in IPL history

Faisel Features



top heavy and reliant on the performances of Virat Kohli, Devdutt Padikkal, de Villiers and Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell. It augers well for the team that all four players have performed well.

The RCB bowling department has been impressive led by pacers Harshal Patel, the Purple Cap holder, and Mohammed Siraj. The latter did well to defend 14 of the final over against DC, with the dangerous Rishabh Pant and Shimron Hetmyer in the middle.

OTHER SPORT

►shortpasses

BARTY MAKES PERFECT START

MADRID: World No 1 Ashleigh Barty eased past Shelby Rogers 6-2, 6-1 on Thursday in the first round of the Madrid Open.

RODGERS OUT OF SPURS JOB

LONDON: Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers said he has no interest in leaving the club for the vacant job at Tottenham. "Tottenham is a great club, but for me I'm just in a really, really happy place in my life," Rodgers said.

SL BATSMEN DOMINATE B'DESH

PALLEKELE: Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne (118) made a second straight century against Bangladesh in the second Test as the hosts dominated the opening day, closing on a commanding 291 for one.

SREEJESH & CO RECEIVE 1ST DOSE

NEW DELHI: The seasoned PR Sreejesh led the team as the Olympic-bound Indian hockey teams on Thursday received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccines in Bengaluru.

T2o MUMBAI LEAGUE DEFERRED

MUMBAI: The Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) on Thursday decided to defer the third edition of its T20 league in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases in the country.

FIVE FEMALE CANDIDATES IN FRAY

NEW DELHI: Former chief selector Hemlata Kala is among five female candidates who have applied to become the Indian women's team's head coach.

Agencies

Man City close in on 1st ever CL final

AFP ■ PARIS

Manchester City are in pole position to reach the Champions League final after coming from behind to beat Paris Saint-Germain 2-1 away in the first leg of their blockbuster semi-final on Wednesday, with Riyad Mahrez curling in the winner from a free-kick.

Marquinhos had powered in a header to give PSG an early lead and the deserved advantage at half-time at the Parc des Princes.

However, City skipper Kevin De Bruyne's cross dropped in to pull City level just after the hour and Mahrez beat Keylor Navas from a 71st-minute free-kick to complete the turnaround, giving Pep Guardiola's side the advantage going into next Tuesday's return in Manchester.

"The last 10 minutes of the first half was good and the second half was excellent in every department. We scored two goals away which is so important, but we have a hard job to do in six days," Guardiola told *BT Sport*.

"In general, so satisfied for the performance but it is halfway. We still have 90 more minutes to beat them and PSG is a team where anything can happen."

After starting so well, PSG lost their way after half-time and had



Man City's Riyad Mahrez celebrates after he scores his side's second goal against PSG

@Mahrez22

Idrissa Gana Gueye sent off in the 77th minute as a shocking tackle on Ilkay Gundogan earned the midfielder a straight red card.

Having already failed to win at home to Manchester United, Barcelona and Bayern in this season's Champions League, the Parisians face an uphill struggle in England if they are to reach the final for the second year running.

"We conceded two stupid goals," Marquinhos admitted to broadcaster *RMC Sport*. Of the return leg, he added:

"There is no point in us going there if we don't believe we can turn it around."

After all the money pumped in by their owners from Abu Dhabi, City are eyeing a first ever Champions League final, and this was their first appearance in the semi-finals since 2016, when they defeated PSG in the last eight.

However, PSG can still be optimistic about their prospects after sensational away performances against Barcelona and Bayern in the last two rounds.