

ANALYSIS 7
MAKE THE COVID JABS
FREE FOR EVERYONE**MONEY 8**
MARKETS RECOUP INITIAL LOSSES
TO END FLAT; RIL, BANKS WEIGH**SPORTS 12**
COVID BURSTS
IPL BUBBLE

HYDERABAD, TUESDAY MAY 4, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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**THALAPATHY
VIJAY TO JOIN
HANDS WITH
VAMSHI...**

Page 11

CENTRAL VISTA: GOVT SETS DEADLINE FOR NEW HOUSE FOR PM

A new home for the Prime Minister is to be built by December 2022 as part of the grand Central Vista project that has received an environmental all-clear in the middle of a raging pandemic that has halted most activities. The Central Vista project, designated an 'essential service' so that construction work in the heart of Covid-hit Delhi is uninterrupted by the virus lockdown, has taken a big step forward after the government's green clearance. Despite strong objections by opposition parties and activists, the government has worked out a strict time line for the Rs 20,000 crore makeover plan.



MAMATA: NANDIGRAM RO DID NOT ORDER RECOUNTING AS HE FEARED FOR HIS LIFE

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed on Monday the returning officer of Nandigram did not order recounting of votes even after she demanded it as he feared for his life. Addressing a press meet, Banerjee reaffirmed she will move court over the election result in the constituency where she lost narrowly to BJP's Suwendu Adhikari. Banerjee made public a purported SMS from the RO to an official in the office of the state's Chief Electoral Officer, where he voiced fear he could face dire consequences if he ordered recounting, and may even have to die by suicide.



FULL ADVANCE OF OVER RS 1,700 CR RELEASED TO SII FOR 11CR DOSES: GOVT

The Health Ministry on Monday said that 100 per cent advance of Rs 1732.50 crore was released to the Serum Institute of India on April 28 for 11 crore doses of Covishield vaccine during May, June and July. The amount, which after TDS was Rs 1699.50 crore, was received by the SII on April 28 itself, it said. As on date, against the last order of 10 crore doses for supplies of Covishield vaccine, 8,744 crore doses have been delivered till May 3, the ministry said, adding, media reports alleging that the Centre has not placed any fresh order for COVID-19 vaccines are "incorrect and not based on facts".



24 IN KARNATAKA HOSPITAL DEAD, OXYGEN SHORTAGE BLAMED

In yet another hospital tragedy in the country in recent days, 24 patients, 23 of them Covid- infected, died in Karnataka's Chamara Nagar due to alleged oxygen shortage in the district hospital in the last 24 hours, with the government warning of stringent action against those found guilty. The government ordered a probe into the matter and appointed senior IAS officer Shivayogi Kalasad as the inquiry officer. Following the incident, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa convened a meeting with oxygen producers, where a number of decisions were taken to ensure supply of allocated quantity of oxygen to the state by the Centre.


Opposition is misguided in its celebrations, it's the real loser

2

TS Covid curve flattening says Centre; experts differ

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

The Union health ministry on Monday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the country and pointed that several states are showing early signs of plateauing i.e. decrease in the number of daily new cases.

Telangana is among the 13 states in the country that are showing early signs of plateauing. "These are early signals and states have to continue efforts of containment to preserve the gains made in stopping the spread," said Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Union Health Ministry. He added that these are very early signals to analyse anything. He pointed that Nirmal is among the districts that was showing a decline in cases since the last 15 days.

Officials in Telangana Health department concurred with the plateauing trend and said, "If we see


Officials in Health dept concurred with the plateauing trend and said, "If we see last year, after 1-1.5 month it will peak, then after 15-20 days, they will decline".

last year, after 1-1.5 month it will peak, then after 15-20 days, the cases will start to decline. It is the

same trend seen in other parts of the country and other countries as well. Even in our state, the cases are not increasing and have been static over the past one week. This is a good sign as we are at the plateauing stage and now cases will start to decrease.

2


BJP hasn't lost anything, it's not a loss of face for Modi

5


CII for curbs on economic activity

8

KCR-Eatela fallout remains a mystery even for TRS leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The reasons why Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao and his long time associate Eatela Rajender, who was with him right from the inception of TRS, have fallen out with each other continues to be a mystery.

Anyone familiar with the style of functioning of the TRS supremo is aware that he will get rid of people quietly without much ado if he felt they crossed the line but what happened in the case of Eatela surprised even veteran party leaders. Usually soft spoken and humble looking, Eatela is known for making incisive speeches and convincing arguments either in the Assembly or outside to defend the party and



put the opposition in its place. It was when reports were doing rounds in the media in 2019 that KCR was contemplating a Cabinet reshuffle and that Eatela and a couple of other Ministers might be dropped.

2

Govt constitutes committee on Devaryamjal lands

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Opening yet another front against former minister Eatela Rajender, the State Government of Telangana on Monday appointed a committee of IAS officers to probe complaints of large-scale encroachments and illegal transactions of lands belonging to Sri Seetha Rama Swamy temple located at Devarayamjal village in Shamirpet mandal of Medchal Malkajgiri district.

The Endowment Department has been claiming that an extent of 1,521.13 acres belonged to the temple.

2

Respect over life: Eatela

Former Health Minister to fight land grab charges legally, stops short of resigning as MLA


ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

Stopping short of announcing his decision to resign as MLA, beleaguered senior TRS leader and former Minister Eatela Rajender, who is facing allegations of encroachment of

assigned lands in Atchamper in Medak, on Monday said he would fight the charges legally. Reiterating that baseless and unfair charges were levelled against him as part of a conspiracy to bring down his stature in the eyes of people, Eatela said he would speak to the people of his Huzurabad constituency before taking a final decision about his future course of action.

Addressing a media conference at his residence here on Monday, Eatela said TRS president K Chandrasekhara Rao who would preach about self respect and fighting against oppression during the days when he led the Telangana movement,

2

SC directs Centre to revisit vax policy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to revisit its COVID-19 vaccine pricing policy, saying it would prima facie result in a detriment to the right to public health.

A bench headed by Justice D Y Chandrachud said as of date, the manufacturers have suggested two different prices, a lower price which is applicable to the Centre and a higher price which is applicable to the quantities purchased by state governments. The apex court said that compelling state governments to negotiate with manufacturers on grounds of promoting competition and making it attractive for new vaccine manufacturers will result in a serious detriment to those in the age group of 18 to 44 years, who will be vaccinated by state governments.

2

As BJP watches, Cong walks away with Lingojiguda seat

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

The BJP, which was hoping to bag the Lingojiguda division in the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation uncontested, was left gaping in shock after voters refused to sympathise with the party and opted for the Congress candidate.

Congress candidate Daripally Rajasekhara Reddy defeated BJP's Akula Akhil Goud in the by-election necessitated due to the death of Akhula Ramesh Goud before he could even take oath.

With this victory, the Congress has increased its tally in the GHMC to three corporators.

It may be recalled that the BJP had requested TRS working president KT Rama Rao as also the Telangana Congress leadership not to field a candidate and ensure the Longojiguda by-election was unanimous.

However, the fact that BJP leaders led by former MLC N Ramachander Rao, meeting KTR led to serious differences within the party's Telangana unit.

2

Want Covid vaccine? Get net savvy

Vaccination only for those who register on CoWin, no walk-ins, says DPH

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In what can be seen as a clear clarification of the society, the Telangana health department on Monday enforced a rule stating that only allows those who register on CoWin app and are aged above 45 years to be vaccinated.

Director of Public Health G Srinivas Rao said, "Covid vaccination programme for the 45+ age group will be available in all Government Covid Vaccination Centres (GCVV) on 100 per cent pre-booking of slots basis only. There will not be any vac-



cination for persons who walk-in." Several citizens pointed that this was akin to adding another barrier to accessing vaccines. However,

DPH suggested that people who cannot do registration by themselves visit the nearest MeeSeva centre or internet centre. Urging the people to

understand and consider the situation, the DPH said "If you go without registration directly to the vaccination centre, you may not get the vaccine. Visit Cowin.gov.in and do self and slot registration for the first and second dose."

The DPH added that from May 15, the second dose will be started for people above 45 years and it (the second dose) will be given priority.

He added, "TS has only 1.58 lakh doses. GOI is showing 5.58 lakh, the State is yet to receive the allocated 4 lakh doses. We are vaccinating more than 2 lakh people every day."

Bodies pile up in TIMS wards, ICU, corridors?

ANUSHA PUPPALA
■ HYDERABAD

The mounting delay in disposing of bodies at the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS), Gachibowli is leading to scarcity of beds, say the hospital staff.

"It's chaotic in the hospital premises as a lot of patients from wards are waiting to be shifted to ICU," the employees say.

According to the healthcare staff at the TIMS, the bodies are piling up in the wards, ICU and hospital corridors. Many a time, the bodies are placed in corridors to make beds available in emergency patient

admissions in the hospital. Reportedly, the bodies are not disposed of for almost 6-12 hours. A healthcare staff said, "A lot of deaths are occurring on a daily basis in ICUs and also in wards. Delay in disposal is creating a lot of chaos in the hospital premises. Lot of patients from wards are waiting to be shifted to ICU. Delay in disposal of ICU bodies is resulting in these patients being forced to wait, so



much so that sometimes, some of them collapse and are declared dead. The reason for all is non-availability of oxygen beds because bodies from wards are not disposed of in time so the cycle repeats and scarcity of bed continues."

"The bodies are not cleared even after 6 to 9 hours due to lack of staff. A few bodies are kept in corridors to make beds available during emergencies. Bodies are not being disposed of for long hours due to lack of manpower and the persons who take the bodies turn out to be positive after disposing them.

2

Partial curfew in AP from May 5

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With the spike in Covid-19 cases, partial curfew will be imposed in Andhra Pradesh for 14 days starting from Wednesday, May 5.

Section 144 will be in force and all shops shall be allowed to remain open from 6 am to 12 pm. Only emergency services will be allowed from 12 pm thereon. The decision to impose partial curfew was taken by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy during the review meeting on Covid, vaccination,

2

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Chaitra & Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Ashlami: 01:09 pm

Nakshatram : Shrivana: 08:26 am

Time to Avoid : (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam : 03:23 pm - 04:58 pm

Yamagandam : 09:02 am - 10:37 am

Variyam : 12:33 pm - 02:12 pm

Gulika : 12:12 pm - 01:48 pm

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 10:27 pm - 12:06 am

Abhijit Muhurtham : 11:47 am - 12:38 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly sunny

Temp: 36/23

Humidity: 55%

Sunrise: 05:48 am

Sunset: 06:37 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated may 3, 2021 5:00 PM

Opposition is misguided in its celebrations, it's the real loser

There is no doubt that Congress, Left parties and pseudo-secularists form a majority of those who are celebrating the BJP's failure to post impressive victories in Assembly elections to five states in general and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inability to lead BJP to victory in West Bengal in particular.

They would not understand if one says any number of times that the BJP is based on an ideology and always tries to enlist the support of the people irrespective of electoral victories and failures.

The party workers worked with the same zeal and enthusiasm when the Jana Sangh secured only two seats or when the BJP had over 300 seats in Lok Sabha. The BJP's style of working is based on its ideological strengths rather

than anything else.

But what about the Left parties that are celebrating the BJP's electoral reverses? The Left parties that ruled West Bengal for over three-and-a-half decades did not win even one seat. Why have the people rejected the Left in spite of having an alliance with the Congress that ruled the country for over five-and-a-half decades?

When will wisdom dawn on these parties? Did the people of West Bengal reject the BJP? Going through the election results reveals that this is not so, while the truth is that the people rejected the Congress and Left parties outright.

The BJP was never in power in West Bengal. In the last Assembly elections, it won only three seats and this time, it won 77. The BJP got 38.13

The BJP was never in power in West Bengal. In the last Assembly elections, it won only three seats and this time, it won 77. The BJP got 38.13 percent of popular votes. Compared to the percentage of votes the BJP got in the Lok Sabha elections, its vote share shrank by a mere 1.5 per cent

percent of popular votes. Compared to the percentage of votes the BJP got in the Lok Sabha elections, its vote share shrank by a mere 1.5 per cent.

Bengal voters edged out the CPM (vote share 4.72 percent) and the Congress (2.94 percent) from the political scenario of the state.

In one way, the Congress and Left parties prostrated before Mamata Banerjee and destroyed themselves to halt

the victory march of the BJP. Had these parties given stiff competition to the TMC, the TMC votes would have split benefiting the BJP, if the statistics are any indication.

The BJP presented a strong development agenda to people of West Bengal, apprising them of the corruption and scams going on in the state. It raised the issues of industrialisation and quality of education.

In spite of it, the BJP was



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

portrayed as a communal party. In fact, it was the TMC that resorted to campaigning on communal lines.

Five years ago the BJP did not exist in West Bengal. Today, it emerged as the main opposition. What did the BJP lose in West Bengal?

A 70-year-old leader who

has no family and who is in no need to amass wealth is working hard day and night to take the country to the comity of developed nations and trying to make the people lead a life of dignity. But the opposition has hatched plans to deflect public attention from the good work of the leader.

It's extraordinary that the BJP retained power in Assam securing 32 percent of the popular vote. In Assam, there was a vicious campaign against CAA. In the name of Maha Ghatbandhan, the Congress joined hands with various religious and fissiparous forces and contested against the BJP. Seven parties formed an alliance against the BJP, but the people

responded to the development that took place in the BJP regime and gave it a clear majority.

In Kerala, the BJP was not a force to reckon with. For decades there was tussle between the Congress and its allied parties and Left parties and their alliance. The BJP failed to open an account in Kerala, but has polled 11.6 percent of the popular vote, an increase of 1 percent.

In Puducherry, the BJP had no existence till the other day but has polled 14 percent of the vote paving the way for an NDA government. In Tamil Nadu, the BJP had not won any seat in the last elections but has now won four of the 20 seats it contested.

On the whole, the BJP posted better results this time,

compared to the last time. It did not suffer any loss. The number of seats and vote share of the BJP have increased.

Secondly, the Congress is losing its identity in the country. It has been established that there is no leader in the country who can face Modi in elections. The regional parties, to face the BJP, have no alternative but to set their house in order.

The BJP has made its presence felt across the country. The BJP has become a terror for all other parties in the country. Therefore, leaders of the regional parties are busy safeguarding their posts.

Now that the elections are over, there is a need for all political parties to cooperate with Modi to stamp out Coronavirus from the country.

As BJP watches, Cong walks away with...

Continued from page 1

TS BJP unit chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar took the issue seriously and appointed a three-man committee with Yendela Laxminarayana, S Kumar and S Malla Reddy to probe the issue.

In the meantime, Congress leader Daripally Rajashekar Reddy, who lost in the 2020 election, filed his nomination as an Independent candidate for the by-poll. The Congress then proceeded to give the B-form Rajashekar Reddy on the day of withdrawal of nomination papers, making him its official candidate and making the election certain.

BJP candidate Akula Akhil Goud who believed he would win comfortably treated the election very casually.

The voters proceeded to give a shock to the BJP and TRS by opting for Rajashekar Reddy.

Analysts feel that the result could have been different if the TRS had fielded a candidate in Lingojiguda by-poll.

Covid bed strength to be increased in all hospitals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar on Monday directed the officials to increase Covid beds in NIMS, Sarojini Devi, Chest, Gandhi, Fever, TIMS, King Koti and other hospitals like Malakpet, Golconda, Vanasthalipuram, Kondapur in GHMC limits to extend medicare to the people.

He directed the teams consisting of municipal staff, ANMs, Asha workers to reach out to every household and identify persons with fever and other symptoms and handover medical kits to them.

The Chief Secretary held a meeting with senior IAS Officers, GHMC Zonal Commissioners and Hospital Superintendents of GHMC area at BRKR Bhavan here. He urged the officials to work with dedication to overcome the Covid situation.

The Chief Secretary instructed



ed the officials to start Covid out-patient clinics at all PHCs, Basthi Dawakhanas and other health facilities.

He also asked them to take up cleanliness drives in all the Government Hospitals, Urban

Primary Health Centres and Basthi Dawakhanas to maintain hygienic conditions.

Secretary Health SAM Rizvi, Commissioner GHMC Lokesh Kumar, CDMA N Satyanarayana, Special Secretary

Finance Ronald Rose, Secretary Intermediate Education Syed Omer Jaleel, Secretary Tourism and Culture Srinivasa Raju, TSIIIC MD Narasimha Reddy and other senior officials were present in the meeting.

KCR-Eatela fallout...

Continued from page 1

A buzz began that things were not what they seemed between KCR and Eatela.

It was then he made what later became widely reported remark that "We are the owners of the pink flag and my minister's post is not of any beneficence".

Those strong comments put a stop to the speculation and put off the cabinet reshuffle too for some time. Eatela also warned some detractors were spreading charges of corruption against him. He said he made enough money through his poultry business which he owned since several years before he entered politics.

In the recent months too, he made remarks in support of agitating farmers and that "If we ignored them for long, they could bring the fight to our doorstep too".

Similarly on another

occasion, Eatela said mere welfare schemes and fighting for reservations would not alleviate poverty and it was not what Dr Ambedkar envisaged for Dalits and the downtrodden.

Though Eatela said he did not direct his remarks against anyone and it was his nature to speak his mind on social issues, apparently they did not go down well with party leadership.

When there was frenzied speculation a couple of months ago that party working president and Minister KT Rama Rao would be appointed Chief Minister and KCR would focus on a national role and revive efforts for the formation of Third Front, it was opposition leaders who said Eatela would be more suitable for the post. Apparently that must have put the party leadership in a spot ahead of the graduate MLC elections.

Govt constitutes committee on...

Continued from page 1

The Government in its order on Monday noted that a couple of vernacular newspapers reported about encroachment of the said temple lands by Eatela Rajender, former minister and a few other individuals. The value of the said land was put at Rs 1,000 crore.

Interestingly, the committee led by M Raghunandan Rao, Commissioner, Panchayat Raj and Rural Development and comprising Prashanth Jeevan Patil, Nalgonda Collector, Bharathi Hollikari, Mancherial Collector and Swetha Mohanty, Medchal-Malkajgiri Collector was constituted even as Eatela was referring to Devaryamjal lands and sought a committee to determine the nature of the lands.

Respect over life:

Continued from page 1

Trampled on the very values after he became Chief Minister. He was riding roughshod over those who valued their self-respect and commitment to democratic values, Eatela alleged.

"I would rather give up my life than compromise on my self-respect," he affirmed.

Making it clear that the Chief Minister misused his power and threw norms to winds, Eatela said before the government officers took up the inquiry, they did not even serve a notice to seek his explanation and hundreds of policemen were deployed around his house to create panic that he would be arrested.

"The Revenue and ACB officers deputied by KCR will give what he wants as reports. While the road was laid in five acres of assigned lands with the

permission of assignees, it was shown in the report as 66 acres in a survey number that did not belong to me," he said.

An inquiry by a sitting Judge should be ordered to bring out the truth, Eatela said.

The former Minister said the series of actions that unfolded in the last two days – first coaching some villagers to level false charges of land encroachment and then giving orders at lightning speed ordering inquiries by Revenue and Vigilance and Enforcement officials and calling for preliminary report within 24 hours – reeked of vindictive intention.

Eatela said the report of the Medak Collector did not reach him officially. But he pointed out several glaring errors in the hurriedly submitted report that showed his wife Jamuna as the wife of his son.

Continued from page 1

In another 15-20 days we are expecting a downward trend to appear".

However it is important to note that the tests in the state have decreased significantly, which possibly has led to a decline in the number of cases.

Telangana had been boasting of 1 lakh tests per day, on Sunday conducted 58,742 tests of which 5,695 have tested positive. However the Centre states that the sample case positivity rate of Telangana is lowest in the country.

As per the Centre, Telangana's case positivity is at 1.13 percent, the lowest in the country. But experts suggest that this is not the case and differed with the early signs of

'SOS Children's Villages' opens doors for distressed

HYDERABAD: SOS Children's Villages India has announced that it is ready to provide short or long-term care to vulnerable children across the country whose safety, security, and well-being have been affected because of losing parental care due to Covid and have no caregivers left to provide for them.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ 48,000 (10 gm)	
₹ 870	↓
SILVER	
₹ 72,800 (1kg)	
₹ 1800	↓
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹119
Without Skin	₹135
Broiler at Farm	₹82
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	367
VIJAYAWADA	365
VISAKHAPATNAM	355
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹3.67

Partial curfew in...

Continued from page 1

Nadu-Nedu (Health) and YSR Kanti Velugu at his camp office here on Monday.

The decision was taken in view of the spike in the number of new infections due to the second wave of the pandemic. The decision was taken balancing the daily needs of the people and ensuring that economic activity is not hit. The Chief Minister directed officials to focus on identifying the primary contacts at the earliest possible, by conducting more tests.

He also instructed the authorities to see that there was no shortage of doctors and paramedical personnel in the government empanelled hospitals.

Further, the Chief Minister directed them to ensure that all hospitals should have enough oxygen supplies to treat the

patients. "In the worst case scenario, import oxygen and make suitable arrangements to store it," Jagan said, adding that no hospital should report oxygen shortage.

The officials informed that so far, a total of 1,66,02,283 tests have been conducted across the state at an average rate of 3,10,915 tests per month. There are currently 558 Covid hospitals in the state, with a total of 44,599 beds, of which 37,760 are occupied with Covid patients. Besides these, around 3,597 patients were being treated on ventilators, and 1,01,204 were in home isolation, officials said.

As on date, there are 41,780 beds in 81 Covid Care Centres (CCCs) across the state, of which 9,937 patients have received treatment till May 2, officials said.

SC directs Centre to revisit...

Continued from page 1

The social strata of this age group also comprises persons who are Bahujans or belong to other underprivileged and marginalised groups, like many in the other population age groups. They may not have the ability to pay.

"Whether or not essential vaccines will be made available to them will depend upon the decision of each state government, based on its own finances, on whether or not the vaccine should be made available free or should be subsidised and if so, to what extent. This will create disparity across the nation. The vaccinations being provided to citizens constitute a valuable public good," the bench said.

The bench, also comprising

Justices L Nageswara Rao and Ravindra Bhat said, discrimination cannot be made between different classes of citizens who are similarly circumstanced on the ground that while the Central government will carry the burden of providing free vaccines for the 45 years and above population, state governments will discharge the responsibility of the 18 to 44 age group on such commercial terms as they may negotiate.

"Prima facie, the rational method of proceeding in a manner consistent with the right to life (which includes the right to health) under Article 21 would be for the Central Government to procure all vaccines and to negotiate the price with vaccine manufacturers," the court said.

The apex court said that once quantities are allocated by it to each state government, the latter would lift the allocated quantities and carry out the distribution.

"While we are not passing a conclusive determination on the constitutionality of the current policy, the manner in which the current policy has been framed would prima facie result in a detriment to the right to public health which is an integral element of Article 21 of the Constitution.

"Therefore, we believe that the Central Government should consider revisiting its current vaccine policy to ensure that it withstands the scrutiny of Articles 14 (equality before law) and Article 21 (Protection of life and personal liberty) of the Constitution," it said.

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Many labs still charging patients more than double for RAT, RTPCR

ANUSHA PUPPALA
■ HYDERABAD

Some diagnostic centres in the city are charging Rs 1,400 for Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) and Rs 1,500 for RTPCR tests, where as maximum rates for RTPCR test is Rs 500 for sample collection at the labs or hospitals while it is Rs 750 for sample collection from home as per the rates fixed as per the GO No. 539 dated December 12, 2020 by state government and Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

According to city residents, apart from charging more for the RAT and RTPCR tests, the diagnostic centres are not even providing bills as well.

Diagnostic centers collecting excess amounts than the government fixed rate which is a clear violation of the law. City residents alleged that they are being exploited by diagnostic centers openly without any fear of law.

Vinay Vangala, a city based activist said, "One of my friends



who had symptoms called me for a diagnostic centre near Miyapur. I suggested him Hafeezpet PHC, since there is rush over there suggested Apollo Drive in center, it was closed by the time he reached the spot in the afternoon, he

gave his sample at Sree Krishna Diagnostic centre at Miyapur. He was charged with Rs 1,400 for a rapid and his primary contact also paid the same who was tested negative in rapid. Most of the private diagnostic centres are exploiting the

affected and suspected persons who come for testing. Officials of Health and Police departments should take stringent action against the centers who are violating the rules and stop this unfair trade practices during this pandemic."

Srikhande Umesh Kumar, a resident of Attapur said, "I was experiencing symptoms on April 7, 2021 and went to Lucid medical diagnostic center for RTPCR. They have charged me Rs 850 instead of Rs 500. As per GO 539, they should charge Rs 500 only. Here, they have collected Rs. 250 extra than the govt fixed rate. People are being exploited openly. I also given a WhatsApp complaint to the Director of the Health Department, Dr G Srinivas Rao on April 25, 2021 but no response yet."

He further added, "Action should be taken against such diagnostic centres under Section 188 of IPC, Section 51 to 60 Disaster Management Act and also cheating case can be

booked. Health department should come forward and cancel licences of the labs and Hospitals who charge extra for RTPCR test.

I was also given a complaint on the WhatsApp number provided by the state government of Telangana to file a complaint. However, till now my message is not read. I request the concerned authorities to take action as per law against the above-mentioned diagnostic center for exploiting people."

However, the GO stated that all NABL and ICMR approved labs are instructed to follow the guidelines issued by ICMR from time to time. All hospitals, institutes, labs are instructed to display the revised tariffs prominently and strictly comply with the orders issued by the government.

Non-compliance of these orders shall attract action as per the provision of law. All the District Health and Medical officers are directed to monitor, enforces the prices strictly.

Citizens, healthcare personnel seek strict lockdown in T'gana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With Andhra Pradesh government imposing two weeks of partial lockdown in the state from Wednesday, doctors and citizens in Telangana also demand strict lockdown in the state in lines of AP and other states like Odisha, Karnataka etc. Citizens and healthcare staff question Telangana government's delay in implementing lockdown to contain the spread of Covid cases in Telangana.

Andhra Pradesh government on Monday has taken a key decision to impose partial curfew across the state for 14 days from Wednesday. All the shops will be open from 6 am to 12 noon and only emergency services will be allowed later. 144 Section will be imposed from 6 am to 12 pm.

According to the doctors in Telangana, infection rate leading to increase in death rate in the state is high during Covid second wave which makes it compulsory to impose lockdown to break the chain. Hence, they demand to impose lockdown in Telangana.



Representational picture

Dr Naresh, Senior Resident at Chest Hospital said, "During the second wave of Covid, infections are increasing exponentially along with death rate. In March Covid deaths were nearly 5,000, while in the month of April it increased to 45,000 in India, which is a 10 times more."

He further adds, "Currently, there are nearly 4 lakhs people infected in the country and there is severe shortage of oxygen supply and ventilator with maximum cases turning out to be oxygen dependent and requiring admission in hospitals. Due to lack of infrastructure like testing kits, ven-

tilators and exhausted hospital staff, who are continuously working since last one year due to Covid, the situation has turned worse. Some even lost their precious lives while performing Covid duties due to which there's shortage of doctors in hospitals now. It's high time that the state government impose lockdown as it will be really effective for decreasing transmission rate and decreasing the hospital load and also decrease death rate. We demand Telangana government to immediately impose lockdown on lines of other states like Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Karnataka."

CITY LIGHTS

Sonu Sood gets virus patient airlifted from Jhansi to Hyd

Actor Sonu Sood arranged for a critically-ill Covid patient to be airlifted from Jhansi to Hyderabad after doctors at the local hospital said treatment wouldn't be possible in Jhansi any longer. The patient, Kailash Agarwal's CT score was just a point below the highest permissible limit and the family, while searching for a hospital with better infrastructure, put in a request to Sonu. The actor and his team got into action, which led to availability of an ICU bed with ventilator facility in Hyderabad. "Doctors had asked the patient to be shifted to a bigger hospital, and the challenge was to get the necessary permissions from the District Magistrates in order to get the air ambulance and get the transfer done. As there are no airports at Jhansi, the air ambulance had to pick up the patient from Gwalior, and it was another major challenge to bring the patient from Jhansi to Gwalior. But the team came through and got everything set up so that no time was wasted."



Students of Narayana School dominate in INMO '21 results

Narayana students have performed brilliantly in the INMO 2021 results and covered themselves with glory in the prestigious competitions. There was keen competition among students and Narayana students bagged 6 Selections from South India in Mathematical Olympiad Orientation Camp 2021. Narayana Group have once again proved their supremacy in Olympiads by producing superlative results at school & college level in INMO Camp results. These prestigious Olympiad exams were organised by MTA(I), IAPT and HBCSE, Government of India for the year 2021. Dr Sindhura Narayana, Managing Director of Narayana Group, expressed happiness at the sensational success of Narayana students. Narayana Schools had the unique distinction of having the largest number of students selected, she said that no other school comes near to the staggering results of Narayana Schools. It proved that whatever the competitive examination, Narayana students always excelled with their performance. Speaking at a press conference arranged to celebrate the stupendous success, Dr Sindhu reminded that Narayana students get the advantage of scientifically developed programs like CO-Spark, Olympiad, E-Techno, Medi-Spark, which gives them the confidence to tackle any competitive examination with ease.



Cyberabad Police Commissioner launches 'Don't waste food' site

Cyberabad Police Commissioner VC Sajjanar on Monday launched a website for the Don't Waste Food Foundation apart from flagging off a food pickup van. Appreciating the generosity of philanthropist Chakradhar Goud and his associates for feeding thousands of hungry people for free every day for the last nine years, Sajjanar said under the initiative, volunteers would distribute leftover eatables among the poor. "The food is also distributed among the kin of patients outside government hospitals," he said. "Presently, we distribute food to around 2,000 people daily. If we can utilise the food being wasted in hotels of Hyderabad every day, no one will sleep hungry in the city," Goud said. To donate food, one can login to <https://dontwastefoodfoundation.org/> or call 72071 03539.



NIGHT CURFEW

In violation of the night curfew announced by the Telangana government, people were seen moving around the city unperturbed even after 9 pm. The night curfew from 9 pm to 5 am was announced to break the chain of Covid transmission. However, the shops and pushcarts which were supposed to be close by 8 pm remain open in city.

Power utilities in TS gear up for 24x7 power supply

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As per the directions of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, CMD of TSGENCO and TSTRANSCO Prabhakar Rao conducted a review meeting with the directors of Discoms at Vidut Soudha on Monday.

Prabhakar Rao informed that continuous power supply will be maintained throughout the state, even during the pre-

vailing spread of second wave of Covid pandemic and assured that power utilities are fully geared up to combat the spreading of Covid.

In order to maintain uninterrupted power supply, a control room is established at TSTRANSCO Head Office at Vidut Soudha.

Further, directions were issued to all the zonal and circle heads to open control

rooms at their respective offices to attend the emergencies and to minimise the downtime during this period apart from taking care of necessary precautions of Covid protocol in respect of power sector employees and their families. A special vaccination camp is planned to be arranged soon for enabling the electricity employees in co-ordination with Health Department.

GHMC ropes in docs to take calls from patients

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The GHMC on Monday strengthened its Covid Control Room and roped in doctors to assist callers.

The Control Room provides information on issues related to Covid-19 and also on measures being taken to contain the pandemic. People will get assistance over the phone by dialling 040-24111111, the civic body's helpline number.

Woman cheated of Rs 10.50 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The decision about the room was rolled out after an orientation programme held in the GHMC head office exclusively for staffers who will work in the Covid Control Room. Secretary for Health SAM Rizvi, GHMC commissioner DS Lokesh Kumar and other officials were present in the programme. "To contain the spread of the Covid-19 virus, the State government is taking up several measures on war footing," said Rizvi.

A woman, who posted her profile on a matrimonial site, was duped of Rs 10.50 lakh. A person, claiming to be working in the US, contacted her and after evincing interest in marrying her he told her he had purchased a property and asked her to send Rs 10 lakh for registration. Believing him, she transferred the money. Realising she was duped, the victim approached the police.

Seer of Kanchi releases book on Andhra Valmiki Ramayana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Seer of Kanchi Sri Kama Koti Peetham Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi has underlined the need to propagate Telugu Bhakti literature.

Releasing the book 'Andhra Valmiki Ramayana Rasa Ramya Gathalu' written by Chief Minister's Chief PRO Vanam Jwala Narasimsha Rao on Sunday, Kanchi Seer said that Ramayana was very much

part of the Hindu way of life. Its message and essence, its emphasis on 'Dharma', character and all aspects of life was worth following.

Ramayana taught the world both equanimity and discipline and devotion to Rama was all pervading, he said.

The seer congratulated Narasimsha Rao for compiling the Andhra Valmiki Vasudasa Mandara in the form of story telling with critical analysis.

Cops send seized Remedisivir to hospitals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The city police officials have been conducting raids to check black marketing of Remedisivir injections as Covid patients are ready to buy them at any cost in view of the shortage of the medicine.

Taking advantage of the huge demand, some vested interests have been trying to create artificial shortage and selling the injections in black market.

The police authorities have been seizing the Remedisivir injections and sending them to the government hospitals to bring relief to the patients.

The police appeal to the people to give a call dialling either 100 or call on WhatsApp of Rachakonda police - 9490617111 or Cyberabad on 9490617444 to give information about diversion of the injections into the black market. On Saturday night, the Malakpet police arrested

Mohammad Abdul Nayeem, Mohammad Munavar Quadri and Mohammad Abdul Osman while selling the Remedisivir in Musarambagh at exorbitant prices. With the help of the South Zone task force police the trio was arrested and injections were recovered from them.

In another case, the Malkajgiri SOT police arrested an IT employee Gubbala Varun of North Kamala Nagar in AS Rao Nagar division and

arrested him while selling the Remedisivir in black market. Three injections were recovered from him. The IT employee tried to sell the injections in black market to overcome his financial problems.

In yet another case, the Malkajgiri SOT police have arrested Koppula Charan of Bharat Nagar in Old Safilguda while trying to sell Remedisivir in black market.

The police recovered three injections from him.

PROPERTY REGISTRATION

RR district earns Rs 195.5 crore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In spite of the rise in Coronavirus cases, there is no let up in registration of properties in Rangareddy district, which earned Rs 195.50 crore through registering 22,912 properties in April through its 22 sub-registrar offices.

According to Rangareddy district registrar Shitha Pragana, the registration department earned Rs 136.01 crore through stamps and duties, while it earned Rs 43.08 crore through transfer of duty. It earned Rs 16.41 crore through registration fees. The Rangareddy sub-registrar office earned the max-



imum amount of Rs 61.89 crore by way of registering

properties, the Kodangal sub-registrar office earned only Rs

4 lakh by way of registering only 72 properties, figuring at the other end of the spectrum.

The revenue earned by sub-registrar office at Gandipet was Rs 34.70 crore, while the one at Rajendra Nagar earned Rs 12.77 crore.

The Serilingampalli sub-registrar office earned Rs 19.70 crore. The registration activity is going on at the sub-registrar offices adhering to the Coronavirus protocol. The officials have been ensuring that people observe physical distance and allowing only those who wear masks. Sanitisers have been kept ready at the sub-registrar offices.



Parts of city see rainfall

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As predicted by the India Meteorological Department, several areas under the GHMC limits in the capital region saw light to moderate rainfall, ranging from 0.8 mm to 14.3 mm on Monday.

The highest rainfall in the GHMC area till 4 pm was 34.8mm in Chandanagar,

while Madhapur recorded 18.8mm and Gachibowli recorded 17.3mm. While the highest temperature recorded was 37 degree Celsius at Nagole, temperature dropped a bit because of the rainfall.

The city may see rain in the same manner till May 7, with the maximum temperature to be in the 36-38 degree Celsius range.

Errabelli thanks Warangal voters for reposing their faith in TRS

PNS ■ WARANGAL URBAN

Thanking the voters for voting to the TRS, Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao asked the BJP leaders to stop lying and ensure release of funds from the Centre if they are truly committed to the development of the State.

Speaking to the media here on Monday, he said the people of Warangal had once again reposed faith in the leadership of Chief Minister K Chandrashekhara Rao and Minister for Municipal Administration and IT KT Rama Rao by voting for TRS candidates in the GWMC elections.

"The TRS won the GWMC elections with a good majority. As we promised during the election campaign, we will strive to change the face of Warangal. You can see the change in six months," he said.

Stating that the BJP leaders tried to mislead the people with their false propaganda, he said the Centre had



not sanctioned sufficient funds to the State, but the BJP leaders claimed that they had ensured sanction of hundreds of crores of rupees for the development of Warangal city.

"At least now, the BJP leaders should strive to bring more funds to the State. They should also ensure help from the Centre to check the Covid pandemic," he added.

He also said that the team work under the guidance of the Chief Minister and development works taken up by the government had helped the TRS retain the GWMC. Minister for Tribal Welfare Satyavathi Rathod, MLAs Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar, A Ramesh, Challa Dharma Reddy, MLC Kadiyam Srihari and others were present.

TRS wins 23 seats in Jadcherla municipality

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

The TRS bagged 23 seats out of the 27 in Jadcherla municipality, while the BJP and Congress won two seats each. TRS activists predict that the eighth ward member Dorepalli Lakshmi Ravinder is all set to become the municipal chairperson.

Party workers also predict that Narasimha Goud, who has been elected from the 15th ward, is likely to be elected chairman of Atchampet municipality. Additional collector Tejas Nandlal declared that the counting was completed without any scope for irregularities.

Counting for the municipal polls commenced at BRR College here at 8 am on Monday with the counting staff first counting the postal ballots. In the first round,

postal ballots pertaining to 19 wards were counted. Later, votes polled in ballot boxes were counted. After declaring the result of the first round, the votes polled in the rest of the eight wards was taken in the second round. Additional collector Tejas Nandlal supervised the counting right from the beginning. Counting observer Sudarshan Reddy monitoring the counting and issued necessary directions to the counting staff.

Municipal Commissioner Sunita and tahsildar Lakshmi Narayana were present on the occasion. Earlier, officials implemented Covid regulations strictly in view of the High Court and SEC directions. Only those contestants, their agents and media representatives, who tested negative, were let in to the counting hall.

TRS retains power in Achampet municipality

PNS ■ NAGAR KURNOOL

The TRS captured Achampet municipality by winning 13 seats, while the Congress won six wards, according to results declared after the counting of votes here on Monday. The TRS is gearing itself to take the reins of power of the municipality for the second time in a row.

The BJP has finished third in the triangular contest. It has to contend with winning just one ward – the ninth ward. In fact, the BJP made its electoral debut in the municipal polls. It appears to have failed to feel the pulse of the voters.

Out of the 20 wards in the town, TRS candidates won second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, 12th, 13th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th wards, while the Congress nominees won the first, seventh, eighth, 10th, 11th and 14th wards.

The TRS was disappointed for not able to make a clean sweep in the municipality winning all the wards as it did in the 2016 elections. However, it retained power in the municipality by winning 13 wards.

The main drawback with the

- The main drawback with BJP state leaders, who campaigned during the elections, is not make any promises for development of the town
- They confined themselves by criticising the TRS for its omissions and commissions. In fact, their campaign failed to woo voters, if the results are any indication



BJP state leaders, who campaigned during the elections, is not make any promises for the development of the town. They confined themselves by criticising the TRS for its omissions and commissions. In fact, their campaign failed to woo voters, if the results are any indication.

The leaders, who campaigned on behalf of Congress

candidates, aimed at winning five or six wards in the town and they fulfilled the target.

Meanwhile, TRS ward members-elect have been lobbying with the top leadership of the party for the municipal corporation chairman and vice-chairman posts.

The people are curious to know who is going to become their municipal chairman.

Panel visits sheds erected in Eatala's lands

PNS ■ MEDCHAL/MALKAJGIRI

The four-member committee appointed by the government on Monday started probe into the Devarayamjal temple lands in Sharmirpet mandal of Medchal district.

The committee immediately rushed to the sheds erected in 12 acres under the possession of Eatala. The committee inspected the sheds, which are built in an area of over one lakh sq ft. It also inspected a liquor godown in the area and gathered evidence

Harish Rao strategy pays off in Siddipet

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Upset at the electoral reverses in Dubbaka by-elections and also in the GHMC elections, the Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao saddled ministers and MLAs with specific responsibilities to woo voters in the Siddipet Municipal elections. Finance Minister T Harish Rao has implemented a strategy to contestants calling on voters of various communities to capture the municipality for the third time in a row.

The election result boosted the morale of the TRS rank and file as the Congress and BJP candidates have forfeited their deposits.



Overwhelmed at the Dubbaka electoral victory, the BJP felt that it was the end of the road for the TRS as there were many ticket aspirants in the Dubbaka by-election caused by death of sitting MLA Ramalinga Reddy. There was lack of coordination in the TRS during the by-elections.

The BJP felt that it would be no Herculean task to capture the MLC graduates' assembly seats, but the TRS upset their apple cart.

The Dubbaka election result has become a blot in the career of T Harish Rao. Learning from Dubbaka, Greater Hyderabad

Municipal elections, the CM entrusted various responsibilities to MLAs and ministers.

Acting on directions from the CM, Harish Rao shouldered responsibility of ensuring victory of the ward members of the party. He marshalled the party workers at the field level to ensure the party candidates victory. As part of the strategy, he issued several suggestions to party workers to attract voters of various communities. The contestants followed his suggestions to ensure TRS win from 36 wards out of the 43. Independents won in five wards, while the MIM and the BJP has to content with winning one ward each.

Declare health emergency, says Sravan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC Spokesperson Dr Sravan Dasoju on Monday dashed off an open letter to Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao demanding that declare a health emergency in the state.

The Congress leader has also urged KCR to take necessary steps to revamp the overall healthcare system in the state to make Telangana a role model state, which can effectively fight the existing pandemic.

He criticised KCR for keeping the Health Ministry with him and making it inaccessible to the common man and lamented that the people were unable to get Remdesivir injections unless KTR was intervening through Twitter. Instead, he asked the state to buy the life saving drugs by investing Rs 100 crore and distribute them through Army canteens to avoid any black marketing.

In order to make it happen, Sravan asks for setting up 24/7 Covid war room at state and district level and constituting a special Task Force headed by Chief Minister, Health Minister, doctors, industrialists, government officers, NGOs, Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) to provide guidance and direction. According to him, CM KCR has paid attention only to lopsided fantasies and unwanted priorities of building ultra modern Secretariat buildings with Rs. 1000s of crores and focused on elections etc., rather than anticipating the need for ramping up the health infrastructure and protecting the people.

Revanth demands CBI probe into Deverayamjal lands

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy alleged that the Namaste Telangana management has taken loans worth crores of rupees mortgaging the Deverayamjal temple lands. He demanded that the government order a CBI inquiry into the issue.

He said that he will lodge a complaint with Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy on the irregularities of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao in regard to Deverayamjal temple lands. He also demanded that the BJP state leaders to respond on temple land encroachments.

He alleged that Minister for Municipal Administration and IT KT Rama Rao and MD of a vernacular daily Damodar Rao has been holding land in the 437 survey, which was on the banned list.

He claimed that the Namaste Telangana publications have 2.8 acres in the same controversial lands and added that the daily paper was being published from the same premises. He demanded that the government disclose the details of the lands occupied by Namaste Telangana in the controversial lands.

He said that Survey Number 437 is in prohibited lands list. He questioned the government to tell as to why it didn't list the survey numbers, which belong to the Endowments department on the Dharani portal. Why the government didn't upload



the details of the Rangareddy district's Endowments department's lands.

He demanded that the Chief Minister remove Ministers KT Rama Rao and Ch Malla Reddy if the government wants to conduct an inquiry into the Deverayamjal temple lands.

Speaking to the media at his office on Monday, "Minister Malla Reddy constructed a farmhouse encroaching seven acres in Survey No. 658. The government has to demolish the illegal constructions in Deverayamjal temple lands. KTR purchased lands in 2015 with Rs 11 lakh per acre. How KTR had purchased lands worth crores of rupees with throw away prices. Why the government hiding only Rangareddy district Endowments lands by keeping remaining nine districts Endowments lands open", he questioned?

He said that he would visit Deverayamjal to find facts, along Civil Society bodies and JACS.

Covid-hit at mercy of private hospitals

● Injections, oxygen are being sold in black market in erstwhile Medak

A CHANDRASHEKHAR
■ SANGAREDDY

Corona was burning a hole in the pockets of the victims in the erstwhile Medak district. On one hand, bills were rising in private hospitals and on the other hand there was a shortage of oxygen and Remdesivir injections, which must be given urgently to those who are in critical condition.

Some hospitals and pharmacies were selling those at double the price, thereby creating an artificial shortage in the market. It was alleged that Remdesivir injection scarcity was created. It is learnt that some hospitals were making money by importing the injection from companies under the pretext of the need for Covid patients and then were selling those at a high rate to those in need of the medicine.

Corona positive cases are being reported at a record level daily in the district. If Covid is diagnosed in a patient and his/her condition does not improve, the patient should be given a Remdesivir injection. However, only government hospitals in the districts have set up ICU wards, along with oxygen wards for critically ill patients. The government has also given powers and permissions of procuring Corona medicine to some private hospitals.

The Victims are heading towards private hospitals as beds in government hospitals are filled up. Managers of some private hospitals, who think this is an additional avenue of income, have started fleeing the patients. However, the government did not allow the injection to be supplied to the external market. Only three companies in the state are manufacturing it. The government allowed private hospitals to take supply directly from companies. With

this, the operators of some private hospitals in the erstwhile district are placing orders in the name of the Corona patients and supplying them to the institutions concerned. Hospital managers are reportedly procuring injections for Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 from the company and private hospitals have to charge the same price from patients. But, that is not happening. They are creating an artificial shortage. While some of the victims had to shell out Rs 4,000 for an injection, the hospital management is alleged to be making money by selling it for Rs 25,000 to Rs 35,000. The Victims are complaining that giving two or three doses will cost them over a lakh.

There is a severe shortage of oxygen for Covid patients across the country. Many patients had died from oxygen deprivation. Taking advantage of the situation, some merchants are making money as demand increases. A small oxygen cylinder is usually supplied to private and public hospitals for Rs 600. But now, a small oxygen cylinder is being sold for Rs 3,000, as there is an artificial scarcity. Medium size cylinder costs up to Rs 4,000 and large size cylinder up to Rs 5,000. Oxygen bills for those receiving treatment range from Rs 15,000 to 20,000 per day. The Victims are stuck in debt as traders act unilaterally in the name of oxygen shortage. District officials and the government are being asked to take steps to control the high bills of private hospitals and make oxygen and injections available.

"There is no shortage of oxygen for Covid patients in the Sangareddy district. Drugs control authorities need to take action against those who are selling the injections at a higher price," said In-charge DMHO Gayatri Devi.

COVID PATIENTS' TREATMENT

Pvt hospital should charge rate fixed by govt: DMHO

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

The government has fixed the fees to be collected by private hospitals in the state for the services they provide to Covid patients. Sangareddy District Medical Health Officer Dr Gayatri Devi said that private hospitals must adhere to GO No. 248, which was released in 2020.

She said charges have been fixed for services in different categories for Covid patients

per day in private hospitals in the district like blood test, urine test, HIV, HCV, Hepatitis-B, serum creatine, ultrasound scanning, 2D echo, X-Ray, ECG, medications, diet and bed-- hospitals should charge Rs 4,000 for the general ward, Rs 7,500 for ICU patient and Rs 9,000 per ICU ventilator patient.

She further stated that chemoprot, bronchoscopic procedure, biopsy and pleural

tapping should be charged as stated in the rack released on December 31, 2019.

Rs 2,200 has been fixed for the Covid test while CT Scan, MRI, PET scan and other lab tests will be charged according to the rack rates set fixed in December 2019, she said. Charge boards should be set up to make private hospitals accessible to the public and if not, action would be taken as per law, she warned.



TRS MLA Gudem Mahipal Reddy enquiring about the facilities being provided at the Government Area Hospital in Patancheru on Monday

70 oxygen beds available in Patancheru Area Hospital

PNS ■ PATANCHERU

In all, 70 oxygen beds have been made available for Covid-19 patients in Patancheru Area Hospital indicating that the hospital is offering treatment to Covid patients. Local legislator Gudem Mahipal Reddy on Monday visited the hospital, along with doctors and officials

of various other government departments and went around the Covid-19 ward enquiring them about the facilities being provided to them. He appealed to people to make good use of the facility and directed officials to ensure sanitisation of the hospital premises regularly. The hospital provides quality treatment, free food and accommo-

dation for attendants. The serious patients are being referred to Hyderabad.

Continuous monitoring is going on to rule out the shortage of oxygen, he said asking the people to adhere to government rules. Hospital superintendent Vasundhara, officials of various departments and others were present.

Isolation centre opened at Sundaraiah Vignana Kendram

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

For the first time in the state, a political party has come forward to open an isolation centre for Covid patients. The CPM's Telangana state unit has readied to open an isolation centre at Sundaraiah Vignana Kendram located at Bagh Lingampally to serve the poor Covid patients. CPM Politburo member BV Raghavulu and CPM state secretary Tammineni Veerabhadram will open the isolation centre on Monday.

According to CPM office secretary J Babu Rao, the party is opening the centre for those who are not in a position to bear the Corona treatment expenses and who have no facility of home isolation as lakhs of poor live in single rooms in the city.

Speaking to The Pioneer, J Babu Rao said that they are starting the centre with 20



beds. They will increase the bed number up to 40 depending upon the number of patients. He said that they are appointing nurses to look after the patients and the doctors will give advice online.

If the patient's condition turns serious in the centre, they will shift the patient to

the government hospital. The party already spoke to the government in this regard and if there are any serious problems the government will take care of the patient, he said. He further stated that the party will provide free meals, snacks and medicine following the Covid protocol.

BJP hasn't lost anything, it's not a loss of face for Modi

Why is the anti-Modi-Shah brigade rejoicing and reveling in joy in the aftermath of the declaration of election results in the five States? The BJP has, in fact, lost nothing. I just waited for the dust to settle down. Even at the risk of being branded as pro or anti someone, I would like to be subjective and assert that Modi has actually lost nothing in the five states that went to the polls.

The stellar performance of Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress has in no way diminished the image of the BJP. Wordsmiths may have been boisterously claiming that Didi has stopped the BJP juggernaut in its tracks. My response to this is an emphatic no. The BJP, with its 77 seats from a niggardly three in the outgoing Assembly, has actually posted a historic gain by increasing its number of

seats by more than 2,500 per cent.

Mamata Banerjee's party did extremely well. It has garnered 47.94 per cent of votes as opposed to the BJP's 37.19 per cent. The Left that ruled the State for an unbroken three and a half decades until Mamata's rise was wiped out and Siddharth Shankar Ray was perhaps the last Congress Chief Minister who demitted the office on April 30, 1977.

If the Centre handled the Covid crisis diligently and effectively, the BJP's gains could have been better.

So, big deal? The BJP has indeed made inroads into the Communist bastions and emerged as the most powerful challenger to the champ, Mamata di.

The party retained Assam with a dignified number and its



A SAYE SEKHAH
senior journalist

politics of CAA worked there. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won 75 seats as opposed to the 50 UPA in Assam. While NDA lost 11 seats, UPA doubled its tally compared to its previous performance in 2016.

The BJP has gained five seats

Leaders like KCR have a view of their own and cannot be mollified so easily. In fact, KCR was the one who propounded the idea of the Federal Front in 2019. But, he couldn't take it forward because of leaders like Mamata Banerjee

in Tamil Nadu Assembly by joining hands with AIADMK, which is voted out of power now, from zero. No mean achievement, here too.

Kerala remained what it is known for and the LDF under Pinarayi Vijayan achieved a rare feat by retuning power that was always elusive to the UDF and the LDF. The BJP lost the lone seat and Metro Man E Sridharan, who contested on

behalf of the BJP, was derided by critics as "the man who took millions for a ride in metro rail could not do the same in elections." Pondicherry became a cherry on the BJP's cake, albeit, the cake did not have any icing on it.

MAMATA CANNOT COBBLE UP AN ALTERNATIVE

Now, look at the suggestion by political pundits that Mamata Banerjee becoming a

rallying point to lead the alternative to the BJP.

With Naveen Patnaik, YS Jagan, KCR, MK Stalin, Pinarai Vijayan, Thackeray, Pawar, Amarinder Singh, Ashok Gholat, Akhilesh Yadav and Farooq Abdullah.

Will Sonia and Rahul Gandhi agree to be backbenchers by joining hands? Jagannathan Reddy would not be part of a coalition that comprises Sonia and Rahul.

Even if a coalition can be stitched, it remains an ironic combo. For, the BJP may spin the wheel in an anticlockwise direction to its own advantage by wooing some of these leaders who don't share ideological similarities.

Leaders like KCR have a view of their own and cannot be mollified so easily. In fact,

KCR was the one who propounded the idea of the Federal Front in 2019. But, he couldn't take it forward because of leaders like Mamata Banerjee. KCR has clear ideas on how a national alternative to the Congress and the BJP should be built. Will he agree to Mamata's leadership becomes a moot question.

Ms Banerjee's loss in Nandigram Assembly seat in the hands of a protégé-turned-foe Suwendu Adhikari of the BJP remains a blot in her long and chequered political career. What if someone rejects her leadership on this pretext? The defeat of the Chief Minister cannot be condoned.

How M K Stalin, who is poised to become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu,

would be handled by the BJP becomes interesting what with the fact that the DMK was part of the NDA in the Vajpayee regime, before it aligned with the UPA. If, for any extraneous reasons, Stalin chooses to remain neutral or tilts in favour of the BJP, the Mamata-led coalition would be a stillborn baby.

The BJP has actually not done badly in the five-State polls. It's a case of new learnings for the BJP which always believed in a high decibel campaign with ostentation as its core. If it makes a course correction by minimising the rhetoric, it can contain the anathema against it even among some traditional sections. The next round of litmus test for the BJP is the elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

INDIA CORNER

Chhattisgarh: Two dead, two ill after consuming hand sanitiser

Two persons died and as many others fell sick after consuming hand sanitiser in Raipur district of Chhattisgarh, police said on Monday. The incident took place late Sunday night in a locality near a multi-specialty hospital under Gole Bazaar police station limits, they said.

Prima facie, the four men consumed the sanitiser due to unavailability of liquor during the curbs imposed here to contain the spread of COVID-19, a police official said. They fell sick and were rushed to the Dr B R Ambedkar Memorial Hospital where two of them died, he said. The deceased were identified as Raju Chura and Vijay Kumar Chouhan, both aged around 40, he said. The two others were undergoing treatment at the hospital and their condition was reported to be stable, the official said.



Pakistan opens fire along IB in Jammu & Kashmir's Samba

Pakistani Rangers violated the ceasefire by opening fire along the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district on Monday, a senior BSF officer said. A BSF spokesman said this is first-ever ceasefire violation by Pakistan along the IB after the two countries signed a fresh agreement to maintain calm along the border on February 25 this year. "Pakistan Rangers resorted to unprovoked firing along IB at 0615 hours in Ramgarh sector", Inspector General of BSF, Jammu frontier, N S Jamwal, told PTI here. There was no casualty in the firing. The BSF spokesman said Pakistani troops opened unprovoked firing on a patrolling party ahead of the fencing. India and Pakistan had agreed to strictly observe all agreements on ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC) and other sectors in the February agreement. The two countries had earlier signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003, but it was hardly followed in letter and spirit with more violations than observance of the pact.



V-P wishes journalists on World Press Freedom Day

Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on Monday wished the media fraternity on World Press Freedom Day, and lauded journalists for working tirelessly to bring information to the people amid a pandemic.

In the age of information, media professionals play a critical role in bringing out reliable and verified facts, and act as a protective shield to our society against disinformation, Naidu said. "While urging media professionals to always remain committed to the cardinal principles of journalism like truthfulness, objectivity, accuracy, impartiality and fairness, I commend them for working tirelessly in bringing information to the people during this pandemic," the Vice President Secretariat tweeted, quoting Naidu. The United Nations General Assembly had declared May 3 as World Press Freedom Day to raise awareness about freedom of the press.



SC raps Jharkhand electricity board, says it has to be fair

The Supreme Court has rapped the Jharkhand State Electricity Board for laying its own terms and conditions in the supply of electricity saying it has to be fair and reasonable towards consumers. A bench comprising Justices L Nageswara Rao and Vineet Saran made the observation while dismissing an appeal filed by the board against the decision of Jharkhand high court. The high court had allowed the plea filed by a small scale industry, Ramkrishna Forging Limited, challenging the decision of the board refusing its request to reduce the sanctioned load of electricity from 4000 KVA to 1325 KVA. "It is noteworthy that the Jharkhand State Electricity Board is a monopoly supplier of electricity which has laid down its own terms and conditions, regarding which the consumer has no say or choice but to sign on the dotted lines, if it wants electricity load varied for running its industry. "The Board is an instrumentality of the State. It has to be fair and reasonable," the bench said. The top court said that if the Regulations provide for contract load to be varied even through a written communication, then through fresh agreements it may have been done.



BJP hits a six in Puducherry, helps NDA ride to power

PNS ■ PUDUCHERRY

The Bharatiya Janata Party will be part of the government in Puducherry for the first time ever after having annexed six seats to grab power as part of the NDA in the April 6 assembly polls. The saffron party won six of the nine seats it contested while its ally AINRC led by former chief minister N Rangasamy bagged 10 as the NDA emerged victorious in 16 segments in the 30-member territorial Assembly.

Sixteen is the number required for a simple majority in the Puducherry assembly. The BJP, last had representation in the assembly in the 1990s.

Among the prominent winners for the BJP was former PWD Minister A Namassivayam, who till recently was with the Congress.

Namassivayam contested from Mannadipet, a new constituency for him as he all along fought electoral battles either from Villianoor or Uzhavarkarai.

He had quit the Congress on January 25 and shifted his allegiance to BJP in the presence of the BJP national president J P Nadda here. His defection from the Congress to the BJP paved the way for a good number of then Congress legislators to quit and move to the Saffron party or the AINRC. The other BJP nominees who were successful at the hustings were A John Kumar (Kamaraj Nagar) his son Richards John Kumar (Nellithope), P M L Kalyanasundaram a former AINRC legislator (Kalapet), 'Embalam' Selvam (Manavelly) and Ak Sai J Saravanan Kumar (Oussudureserved).

CM reconstitutes Covid task force, appoints Dy CM as its chief

PNS ■ BENGALURU

With an alarming surge in Coronavirus cases and deaths in Karnataka, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday reconstituted the COVID-19 task force to examine measures taken to curb the pandemic and create awareness among the public on its management. The four member task force will be headed by Deputy Chief Minister Dr C N Ashwath Narayan.

Karnataka has been hit hard by the second wave of Covid-19, reporting over 35,000 cases daily, while active cases have breached the four lakh mark and infections gone past 16 lakh.

"The reconstituted task force will examine measures taken to curb the pandemic and create awareness among the public on its management, an official release said.

PIL seeks all Remdesivir makers be allowed to sell in domestic market; HC asks for Centre's reply

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Monday asked the Centre and various pharma majors to respond to a PIL seeking that all drug firms making Remdesivir, used in COVID-19 treatment, be allowed to sell it in the domestic market.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh issued notice to the Health Ministry, Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, Director General of Foreign Trade and various pharma companies, like Cipla, Zydus and Cadila, seeking their stand on the plea which



claims only a handful of such firms are allowed to sell the medicine in the domestic market.

The remaining companies were involved in manufacturing the drug for export, petitioner Dincur Bajaj said, adding that since

export of Remdesivir has been banned by the Centre, the companies which were producing it for export be permitted to manufacture and sell it in the domestic market.

Bajaj, who is a lawyer and the Joint Secretary of the Delhi High Court Bar Association, has claimed that there are more than 25 companies in India which manufacture the medicine, but only six to eight of them are permitted to sell it in the domestic market and the rest were producing it for exports alone.

The plea, filed through advocate Amit Saxena and Imran Ali,

has said, "It is pertinent to mention that the scarcity of Remdesivir is causing its extensive black-marketing and the black marketers are charging prices up to Rs 1,00,000 per vial, due to its non-availability.

During the hearing, the central government said that the Supreme Court in its order dated April 30 has dealt with the issue of sale of essential medicines and has issued directions to the Centre in this regard.

Saxena, opposed the contention, saying the apex court's order primarily deals with sale of vaccines.

Thane reports 2,774 new COVID-19 cases, 42 more deaths

THANE: With the addition of 2,774 new cases of coronavirus, the infection count in Thane district of Maharashtra has reached 4,72,794, an official said on Monday. These new cases were reported on Sunday, he said. The virus also claimed the lives of 42 more people, raising the death toll in the district to 7,685, he said.

Coronavirus positive mother-daughter found dead in Wardha

WARDHA: The decomposed bodies of a woman and her daughter, both COVID-19 patients, were found in a home in Samudrapur tehsil of Maharashtra's Wardha district, police said on Monday. The mother and daughter, 80 and 45 years of age respectively, were living in a house in Sawangi village separately from the rest of the family, a Samudrapur police station official said.

Sikkim reports 27 new Covid cases, one more death

GANGTOK: Sikkim's COVID-19 tally rose to 8,468 as 27 more people tested positive for the virus while one new fatality pushed the death toll to 150, a health department bulletin said on Monday. The new Covid-19 cases were reported from East Sikkim district (13), West Sikkim (10) and South Sikkim district (4), it said.

Exploring feasibility of converting nitrogen plants to produce O2

NEW DELHI: The government on Tuesday said it is exploring the feasibility of converting existing nitrogen plants to produce oxygen. It said 12 states have over one lakh active COVID-19 cases, seven states have 50,000 to one lakh cases, and 17 states have less than 50,000 such infections.

BJP loses lone seat in Kerala; 'Metroman', state prez fail

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The BJP-NDA, which fought the April 6 assembly polls with the fancy claim of winning at least 35 seats in Kerala, on Sunday came a cropper as it failed to retain even its lone segment Nemom, even as all its major contestants, including 'Metroman' E Sreedharan and party state chief K Surendran fell by the wayside. The saffron party's poll ride came to a grinding halt in the state as former Mizoram Governor Kumanam Rajasekharan, who was entrusted to retain Nemom in the state capital, failed to repeat the magic created by party veteran O Rajagopal there in 2016 assembly elections. Ruling CPI(M) leader and LDF candidate V Sivankutty wrested the segment back by a margin of 3,949 votes. The success was also sweet revenge for Sivankutty this time as he had suffered an unexpected blow during the last assembly election when BJP opened its maiden account in Nemom. Rajagopal had defeated Sivankutty by 8,671 votes during the 2016 Assembly polls.

Delhi airport handled 25 flights carrying Covid relief cargo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi international airport handled 25 flights carrying 300 tonnes of COVID-19 relief cargo in the last five days, its operator, DIAL, said on Monday. The airport has set up a 3,500 square metre dedicated logistics facility, called 'Jeevodaya warehouse', for interim storage and distribution of the relief materials, the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) said in a statement.

India is struggling with the second wave of the coronavirus infection as hospitals in several states are reeling under a severe shortage of drugs, oxygen and beds. In a span of just 5 days – April 28 to May 2 – Delhi airport has handled around 25 COVID relief flights totalling around 300 tonnes cargo, originating from various countries like the US, United Kingdom, UAE, Uzbekistan, Thailand, Germany, Qatar, Hong Kong, China etc," the statement noted.

‘Single Covid vaccine dose boosts protection against variants’

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A single dose of Covid-19 vaccine boosts protection against SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus variants, but only in those previously infected with the disease, according to a study.

The researchers looked at the UK and South Africa variants, however, they think it possible that the findings will apply to other variants in circulation, such as the Brazil (P.1) and India (B.1.617 and B.1.618) variants.

The findings, published in the journal Science, show that in those who have not previously been infected and have so far only received one dose of vaccine, the immune response to coronavirus variants of concern may be insufficient.

The researchers at Imperial

College London, Queen Mary University of London and University College London, looked at immune responses in UK healthcare workers at Barts and Royal Free hospitals following their first dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

They found that people who had previously had mild or asymptomatic infection had significantly enhanced protection against the Kent and South Africa variants, after a single dose of the mRNA vaccine.

In those without prior Covid-19, the immune response was less strong after a first dose, potentially leaving them at risk from variants.

"Our findings show that people who have had their first dose of vaccine, and who have not previously been infected with SARS-CoV-2, are not fully protected



against the circulating variants of concern," said Rosemary Boynton, Professor of Immunology and Respiratory Medicine at Imperial College London, who led the research.

"This study highlights the importance of getting second doses of the vaccine rolled out to

protect the population," Boynton said.

The researchers analysed the blood samples for the presence and levels of immunity against the original strain of SARS-CoV-2, as well as the Kent (B.1.1.7) and South Africa (B.1.351) variants of concern.

Along with antibodies, the researchers also focused on two types of white blood cell: B-cells, which 'remember' the virus, and T cells, which help B cell memory and recognise and destroy cells infected with coronavirus.

They found that after a first dose of vaccine, prior infection was associated with a boosted T cell, B cell and neutralising antibody response, which could provide effective protection against SARS-CoV-2, as well as the Kent and South Africa variants.

However, in people without previous SARS-CoV-2 infection, a single vaccine dose resulted in lower levels of neutralising antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 and the variants, potentially leaving them vulnerable to infection and highlighting the importance

of the second vaccine dose.

It remains unclear precisely how much protection is offered by T cells.

The mutations in the Kent and South Africa variants resulted in T cell immunity which could be reduced, enhanced or unchanged compared to the original strain, depending on genetic differences between people.

"Our data show that natural infection alone may not provide sufficient immunity against the variants," Boynton said.

"Boosting with a single vaccine dose in people with prior infection probably does. As new variants continue to emerge, it is important to fast track global rollout of vaccines to reduce transmission of the virus and remove the opportunities for new variants to arise," she said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Emphatic victory

The BJP lost the plot when it focused more on damning Mamata than advancing its core agenda

It's a classic case of "glass half full" battle of jibes for both the BJP backers and their critics. For the supporters of the saffron outfit, the victory in Assam and Puducherry and the massive rise in both the vote percentage and the number of seats in West Bengal are a reflection of the BJP's unmatched electoral management and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity. The saffron baiters have their own arguments. They contend that the BJP's victory against the Congress in Assam was predictable because the latter is no more a potent political force. Similarly, in Puducherry, it's the personal victory of All India NR Congress (AINRC) leader N Rangasamy and the BJP has merely benefited from the alliance. But in Bengal, where the real battle of 2021 took place, the BJP came a cropper. After all, it had thrown in everything it had in its ever-growing kitty of resources — political, financial and others. The Prime Minister himself addressed 18 rallies and Home Minister Amit Shah held dozens of massive road shows. Several other Chief Ministers, MPs, MLAs and party president JP Nadda camped in Bengal for months together and tried to create the necessary media buzz to defeat the TMC in the psychological space. Coincidentally, several initiatives of the CBI and the I-T department against the TMC leaders also came in handy for the BJP. Mamata and her supporters also kept alleging that the Election Commission was acting as a player rather than an arbiter.

On the other hand, Mamata got little support from the anti-BJP bandwagon. Though the Congress-Left alliance threatened to cut into her Muslim votes, a few erstwhile UPA leaders came in to campaign for her. Devoid of any serious policy and programme narratives, the campaign became highly personalised with Modi greeting Mamata with "Didi o Didi" catcalls and the TMC supremo hurling the choicest invectives at Shah. The BJP lost the plot when it focused more on damning Mamata than advancing its core political agenda. The Bengali-identity politics turned out to be far more assertive and lethal for the BJP which didn't realise that lord Ram would not threaten a woman who epitomised goddess Durga for millions of Bengalis. In fact, the more the BJP leaders ridiculed Mamata, the more sympathy she drew from the people of the State. The presence of a leader who could give a face to identity politics cost the saffron party in a big way. Most of the borrowed players — described as "rotten eggs" by Prashant Kishor — were seen as opportunists even by the BJP's own supporters. It's obvious that any cadre-based party can't assimilate such an overnight influx without alienating a section of its own supporters. The lesson for the BJP is loud and clear: Wherever the party is pitched against satraps, it would need to focus more on local issues and identity politics. The record of the last seven years shows that the BJP has not been successful in winning against powerful regional players in the State-level elections.

PICTALK



People buy vegetables at a crowded market during the lockdown in Jalandhar

PTI

Crunch time

The Centre must plan meticulously before it agrees to the SC's advice for another lockdown

Devastated by COVID-19's second wave, the nation is anxiously looking for solutions but seemingly can't find any. The Prime Minister, who had last year announced a hard lockdown, is now advocating a "micro-containment" strategy while the Supreme Court recently asked the Centre to consider imposing another lockdown. But considering the ferocity of the second wave — the exponential rise in cases, mounting death toll, shortage of medical oxygen, vaccines and hospital beds — and the loss of crucial time in the conduct of the Assembly elections and the Mahakumbh, the moot question is: Would another lockdown help contain the infection? There has been no significant improvement in Delhi even after a two-week lockdown — now extended for a third week — as the positivity rate continues to be alarmingly high. Further, even if a pan-India lockdown is imposed as a knee-jerk reaction to the court's suggestion, its impact on breaking the transmission chain is debatable. There's no doubt, however, that it would be a death blow to millions of underprivileged citizens already facing an existential crisis. We have seen how the hapless migrant workers again rushed back home from big cities fearing a lockdown, even before it was announced.

It is the duty of the Centre to make adequate arrangements for the return of these workers if it plans to enforce another lockdown. It must ensure that these people are not stuffed into trains or buses like last year because that would be another super-spreader. A reasonable period, at least two weeks, must be allowed for their safe return before the lockdown is effected. The Government should also transfer some funds via the DBT schemes into their bank accounts. Also, with the Supreme Court observing that no person shall be denied hospitalisation for lack of identity proof, the Centre must now consult States and formulate a national policy within two weeks. The situation is already out of hand and the entire population must be vaccinated as early as possible. With vaccine shortage and an uneven pricing policy haunting the States, getting the desired outcome from the inoculation drive is easier said than done. With reports that the second wave may hit its peak between May 11-16 before declining by May end, we must be prepared for the worst.

Ignoring the warning signs

We were wilfully unprepared for this tsunami of an outbreak of COVID-19, though the telltale marks were all in plain sight

Anybody who has seen videos of the horrific 2004 tsunami that killed an estimated quarter of a million people, and there are several of these on YouTube, might have noticed in some videos that as much as 10-15 minutes before the tsunami actually hit the shore, water had started withdrawing from the beach. The students of middle-school geography will remember that it is taught as a classic warning sign of an impending tsunami; and we are actually taught at a very early age that one needs to find higher ground in such a situation. This lesson is redoubled in many coastal areas. Maybe some people did seek shelter when they noticed this, many did not. Yes, the tsunami might have gotten many of those who escaped anyway; it was so devastating that running away could do only so much. But even if it saved a few lives, the lessons in school would have been worth it.

That was a real tsunami, what we have in India right now is not a second wave of COVID-19 infections. We have an overwhelming tsunami of COVID-19 infections and, in Delhi and in many other cities across India, the healthcare system is overwhelmed. We know that at least 3,500 people are dying every day, at least in official statistics. India is inching up to 2,50,000 deaths and almost every family in Delhi at least knows either a loved one or a close friend who has died from the Coronavirus Tsunami. While the authorities now struggle with managing the situation, we have to start taking into account as to why we all ignored the warning signs.

And these were there. These were there for all of us to see and read about in the news. We knew there was a deadly new British variant doing the rounds; we knew that there was a new "double mutant" variant. Even with limited testing, we knew that there were hotspots emerging in and around Mumbai and Pune. But instead of herding



people to a higher ground and safety, like we should have if this were a real tsunami, we were mesmerised and walked into the exposed seafloor, trying to pick up coral and seashells. We travelled to Goa, crowded planes and airports and instead of managing travel from hotspots like the United Kingdom, or even domestic travel, we "celebrated" the rising numbers of air passengers through tweets. Instead of restricting air travel, either within India, from India or into India, we allowed hundreds of people to come in likely carrying new and exotic variants of the virus. The world, however, is scared of the new variants emerging from India and has pretty much closed its doors to India.

Some of us had read about the sudden rise in cases in Brazil, starting with the Amazonian city of Manaus and spreading across that South American country, and wondered whether India too could see such a tremendously debilitating tsunami of cases. Instead, we were told stories of Indian exceptionalism, how India had beaten



INSTEAD OF UNDERSTANDING WHY INDIA WAS SPARED THE 'FULL' IMPACT OF THE ORIGINAL CORONAVIRUS, WE ROLLED OUT A GRADUAL VACCINE PROGRAMME AND INDEED MADE A SONG AND DANCE ABOUT EXPORTING MILLIONS OF VACCINES ABROAD

back the virus and taking a cue from our leaders, across fields from politics to sports, we all let our guard down. Instead of understanding why India was spared the "full" impact of the original Coronavirus, we rolled out a gradual vaccine programme and indeed made a song and dance about exporting millions of vaccines abroad. Nothing against India's generosity to the world, but maybe here following a more selfish American philosophy might have ensured that more people in India were vaccinated and the death toll from this outbreak might have been less.

Yes, a large majority of those who have died were elderly and had led full lives, and while many of them might have died in this tsunami also, the issue is that a large number of people who died need not have died had the arrangements for more beds and oxygen been made earlier. Yes, the system might still have been overwhelmed, meaning that those who caught the disease early benefited from more resources but if the special COVID-19 hospitals in Delhi and

Mumbai had been established a week earlier, if a proper logistical programme had been thought out for oxygen transport a month earlier, many lives might have been saved. The Government is going around tom-tomming India's "low" COVID-19 Fatality Rate; in fact, with a bit of planning and organisation, it could have been lower still.

The fact of the matter is that we saw the warning signs but chose to ignore these; we all bought into the story of Indian exceptionalism. We blithely chose to ignore what was happening elsewhere in the world and believed that once we all start getting vaccinated, things will get even better. We went ahead and planned for massive religious functions like the Mahakumbh, we had parties on Holi and we put ourselves at risk. We ignored the warning signs, even though these were in plain sight for all of us to see. No wonder, now we find ourselves drowning in a tsunami.

(The author is Managing Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal.)



KUSHAN MITRA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MATCHES ARE AN OASIS THESE DAYS

Sir — The Indian Premier League (IPL) match between archrivals Mumbai Indians (MI) and Chennai Super Kings (CSK) recently was a perfect entertainer and certainly the match of this season so far. Kieron Pollard's stunning onslaught took the Mumbai Indians to an improbable win in a run-fest. The defeat also ended the Super Kings' five-match winning streak.

The MI came out with flying colours in a last-ball thriller. With 138 needed from the last 10 overs, they knew there was just one way to go about it and, in Pollard, they found the man to pursue the Herculean task. He muscled Jadeja for three sixes in the 13th over before smashing two more off Lungi Ngidi in the next. By the end of 14 overs, Mumbai were 130 for three. At the same stage in their innings, the Super Kings were 126 for four. Pollard raced away to 50 in 17 balls, the fifth joint-fastest in the IPL, and reduced the equation to 66 required from the last five overs. A match that witnessed an equal number of fours and sixes (30 each) is absolutely a bad memory for the bowlers. Remarkably, both teams displayed true teamwork to arrive at such a mammoth total. But Ravudu and Moeen Ali from CSK and Pollard and Krunal Pandya from MI deserve special applause. Let's hope the richest cash league will offer the best entertainment in the remainder of the series.

Satish Reddy Kanaganti | Nalgonda

IT'S TIME TO BE HOPEFUL, CAREFUL

Sir — Winning over the first wave of COVID-19 was no mean feat for India. Buoyed by it, New Delhi started vaccine diplomacy to help other nations during the crisis. However, things turned upside down as the second wave hit us hard and sent our healthcare system reeling. Some sceptics applaud other countries for beating the second wave and compare it with India's "failure". However, we must keep in mind that we have a huge population and there are several other barriers. Despite all the constraints, our recovery rate is far better and mortality rate is too low. Even the US and Russia, among the developed

BJP should introspect its failure



In the West Bengal Assembly elections, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) fell way below its expected number of seats. But in a surprise turn, Mamata Banerjee lost to Suwendu Adhikari, her former party colleague who switched sides months earlier and joined the BJP. It's time for the BJP and its leaders, who were earlier claiming to win more than 200 seats, to introspect about what led to their defeat. In an embarrassment for the BJP, its stalwarts such as Union Minister Babul Supriyo, former Rajya Sabha MP Swapna Dasgupta and Lok Sabha MP Locket Chatterjee fell like ninepins. The Assembly election

result is a dampener for the BJP if compared with the outcome of the 2019 Lok Sabha election. It had won 18 of the 42 seats and taken a lead on 121 of the 294 Assembly segments by garnering 40.2 per cent vote share. However, in this election, it won 77 seats — 44 seats less than the lead it had taken in the 2019 Lok Sabha election.

The people of West Bengal chose to rally behind Mamata Banerjee despite the vigorous canvassing against her by tall BJP leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. It seems that the Trinamool Congress was successful in consolidating the Muslim votes and that had a direct impact on the election results. In Kerala, the LDF Government got due recognition from the voters for its efficient management of the State during the severe flood and its proper handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. It's good for the BJP to be ambitious but the recent Assembly results have shown that over-ambition is counterproductive.

Katuru Durga Prasad Rao | Hyderabad

nations with top medical infrastructure, were devastated by the second wave.

The Centre and State Governments are doing their best to fight the pandemic and utilising their resources to the optimum. The services of final-year MBBS students can be utilised for providing services like tele-consultation and monitoring of mild COVID cases after due orientation by and under supervision of faculty. It's time for all of us to work together and overcome the pandemic. The darkness will soon go away if every citizen follows the rules and precautions at individual level.

Aman Jaiswal | New Delhi

TAMIL NADU'S DRAVIDIAN ICONS

Sir — These Tamil Nadu Assembly elections were the first time in the last five decades without the towering presence of the icons of Dravidian politics. This time, the State may well have seen the emergence

of one, perhaps two, new icons. Now the State has newly elected MLA and to-be-Chief Minister M K Stalin who is well suited for this new generation and for the DMK. He is 68 years old and has finally reached where he wanted to be for five long decades in the shadow of his father and one of the leading lights of the Dravidian movement, the late Muthuvel Karunanidhi.

However, the AIADMK hasn't done as badly as was expected, especially with the weight of an alliance with the BJP which was more like a liability. Stalin, because of his genealogy, long years in politics and two successive wins, in 2019, when the DMK-led grouping won 38 of the 39 Lok Sabha seats in the State, and now, can stake claim to being the next Dravidian icon.

Anshita Rochwani | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

So far, refrained from ordering a sweeping lockdown. But if the people do not comply with the restrictions, harsher steps might have to be taken.

Punjab Chief Minister — Amarinder Singh



What we've witnessed over the last several years is China acting more aggressively abroad.

US Secretary of State — Antony Blinken

Everybody is building more and more oxygen plants, getting tonnes and tonnes of oxygen cylinders. How are we compensating for all the oxygen that we are forcefully drawing from the environment?

Actor — Kangana Ranaut



Yeah, Sanju Samson is good fun to bat with. We all know he is a chilled fun character. He walked in and smacked his first ball for a six, which was quite amazing.

Rajasthan Royals opener — Jos Buttler

Nirvachan Sadan is the new crematorium in Delhi. Constitutional bodies (are) burnt here.

TMC leader — Mahua Moitra

FIRST COLUMN

TIME FOR COURSE CORRECTION




SHIVAJI SARKAR

Economic activities have been hit so hard by the lockdown that traders have cried for deferment of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and other taxes. According to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), the daily loss of business owing to the lockdown in Delhi is likely to be around ₹600 crore while the total loss across the nation could be nearly ₹30,000 crore if full and partial lockdowns, night curfews and other forms of restrictions are taken into account. CAIT's secretary general Praveen Khandelwal says that non-compliance with these tax stipulations will attract huge penalties on traders across the country. There is no policy or revival plan and the economy is shrinking as people's incomes are in a tailspin, markets have sagging demand and activities are at a virtual thaw. A hard lockdown was imposed on March 24, 2020 without giving a simple thought on how 130 crore Indians would survive if their livelihoods were snatched away. It happened and the next three months revealed that the decision to close down all activities, except those centered around COVID-19, had led the country to a devastating path. Lakhs of the 18 crore migrant workers hit the road amid loss of work and dignity. Nearly 13 months down the line, the Government should have come out with a road map till now but, alas the nation became complacent about having conquered COVID-19 only to realise too late that the virus has not gone and has hit us with greater ferocity. Consequently, there has been an exponential surge in infections, a mounting death toll, lack of medical oxygen and medicines.

The State has largely remained a mute spectator compelling the courts to intervene and stop the administration from smothering voices being raised against the Government's monumental failure. Despite its massive failure to deal with the crisis, the Centre has claimed that all arms of the Government are working unitedly and rapidly to deal with the situation. The nation is still expecting some decisive action against the pandemic but with its ailing healthcare system and mounting death toll the situation is becoming grim day by day. Reports from the countryside say that half-baked hospitals are doing more harm and how the bodies are cremated remains a mystery. "The State has failed in its fundamental obligation to protect the basic fundamental right that is the right to life under Article 21", said Delhi High Court on April 30. The Bench, earlier during the same hearing, had noted the "complete failure of the State" when dealing with other pleas.

We have not suddenly plummeted into such a state. It appears that the nation was in euphoria of collecting brownie points and has given up all thoughts about the lives of its own people or the state of its economy. The latest indicators from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) about the banking system do not bring any comfort. The bank losses or Non Performing Assets (NPA) are mounting. In such a scenario, credit squeeze is obvious. The Rupee is plunging and petrol prices are at an artificial high. The time for correction has come. The Government needs to own up to failure on its part to control the pandemic. Further, it must also admit that it failed to provide employment and prevent loss of jobs following the demonetisation exercise and pushed the country into severe social and economic crisis. The Centre must reformulate the plan for resurgence of the country with the help of the Opposition, religious leaders and social groups not merely for Gross Domestic Product figures but for survival of the informal sector and the free flow of cash. It must give up all political ego. Healthcare should now become the bedrock of the nation's resurgence, supported by a prudent economic policy, even if that means forming a national Government.

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



MARKANDEY KATJU

The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal.

Make the COVID jabs free for everyone



UTTAM GUPTA

There is a dire need to vaccinate at least one billion people within a short time and, given the pitfalls of differentiated pricing, the Centre should opt for inoculating everyone free of cost

Under the 'Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy (LPANCVS)', announced on April 19, which was kicked off from May 1, the Centre has plans to vaccinate all adults above 18 years of age. Before this, the inoculation drive that was launched on January 16, covered healthcare and frontline workers and people above 50 years of age and those with comorbidities. In the second phase of the drive the age limit was brought down to those above 45. Vaccine manufacturers were giving all their supplies to the Government of India (GOI) and charging ₹150 per dose even as the latter was arranging for inoculation of eligible people free at Government vaccination centres (GVCs). However, those opting to get vaccinated at private hospitals needed to pay ₹250 per dose. The GOI incurred a subsidy on vaccination done at GVCs equal to ₹150 per dose, plus the cost of administering it. It was funded from the Union Budget.

Even as the above arrangement involved differential pricing, like free for those who got vaccinated at GVCs and others getting the jab at private hospitals for a price, the proposed system from this month is much more complex. Under it, of its total supply, the vaccine manufacturer would give 50 per cent to the GOI at the rate of ₹150 per dose and make the remaining 50 per cent available to State Governments, private hospitals, industrial establishments at a price to be declared in advance (the price charged for vaccination by private hospitals would be monitored). People can make an "informed" choice at the time of booking an appointment at a private vaccination centre.

The vaccines will not be available for sale at pharmacists or chemist shops in the open market. The present system of private hospitals inoculating those above 45 years for ₹250 per dose will cease to exist as they will no longer be getting any supplies from the GOI quota and will have to procure directly from vaccine manufacturers at the price notified by the latter.

Meanwhile, the manufacturers have announced prices they intend to charge from the State Governments and private hospitals. The Serum Institute of India (SII), the maker of Covishield, will charge ₹300 per dose on supplies to States and ₹600 per dose from private hospitals. Bharat Biotech, the maker of Covaxin, will charge ₹400 per dose from States and ₹1,200 per dose on supplies to private hospitals. Both will continue to supply to the GOI at the rate of ₹150 per dose (this is as per a statement issued by Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare).

Putting all pieces together, there will be a minimum of five prices for the COVID-19 vaccination dose i.e. zero, ₹300, ₹400, ₹600, ₹1,200 (the cost to the recipients will be higher by an amount equal to the "service charge" levied by the State Governments/private hospitals to cover the cost of administering the vaccine) depending on the vaccine type and the channel through which it is done.

Meanwhile, more vaccines like Sputnik V, Nasal Covaxin and so on, are expected to get approval shortly. But those are likely to be priced even higher. The earlier arrangement was far from optimal as it entailed differential treatment of eligible people depending on the place they got the jab. While, those going to GVCs got it free, others opting for private hospitals, paid ₹250 per dose. Even as the involvement of private hospitals was justified in view of the need to cover a large number (there are 300 million in the 45 plus group) within a short time frame, putting a price tag to it and that too ₹100 over and above the price they paid to manufacturers militated against this objective. Indeed, this was a potent factor behind dismal results thus far with only about 20 million in a total of 300 million having got both the shots (even as other factors such as the initial vaccine hesitancy among the public at large as also supply constraints were equally responsible).

Under the new regime, even as the facility of getting a jab for ₹250 per dose at private hospitals for persons in the 45 years plus category has been withdrawn, the Central Government wants over 500 million people (50 per cent of about one billion of the adult population i.e. over 18 years whom it expects to get jabs from States and private hospitals' quota) to pay a price high enough to destabilise the budget of even a middle income family.

Consider the following two scenarios: First, let's take the lowest in the price spectrum i.e.

Covishield — supplied for ₹300 per dose to States. Add service charge of ₹200 per dose (67 per cent of the price; this is the mark-up applied to ₹150 per dose being the price billed to private hospitals under the erstwhile dispensation), the recipient will pay ₹500 per dose. For two doses, this comes to ₹1,000. A family of four will have to shell out ₹4,000.

At another extreme, consider Covaxin supplied for ₹1,200 per dose to private hospitals. Plus service charge, the recipient will pay ₹2,000 per dose. For two doses, this will be ₹4,000. In this case, the dent on this family's budget will be ₹16,000.

Given the high prices at State centres and much higher at private hospitals and considering that vaccination from the GOI quota (50 per cent of total supply) is for free, people will tend to gravitate towards the latter. The clamour for getting vaccinated at GVCs will be so pronounced as to cause a complete breakdown of this network. This could be averted if only the State Governments decide to do free inoculation even out of the paid quota; however, this will require them to give heavy subsidy from the State Budget.

Already, some States like Maharashtra, Delhi and so on have announced their intent to give it all free and others are likely to follow suit. If, it has to be free for all involving subsidisation by the Centre or States then why go through such a cumbersome route?

Considering that the crisis is of an unprecedented magnitude (once in a lifetime) afflicting the entire population, there is a dire need for vaccinating at least one billion within the shortest possible time frame and given the pitfalls of differentiated pricing, the Centre should opt for inoculating everyone free of charge.

Apart from GVCs, all other stakeholders like the State health facilities, private hospitals, industrial establishments and so on should be involved in the vaccination drive. They can pick up their requirements directly from the manufacturers even as the GOI does overall coordination, negotiates a good price and makes payment.

Given the mammoth numbers i.e. two billion doses, a price of ₹200 per dose should be good enough to cover the cost and give good return to the manufacturers (here, it is pertinent to recall a statement by Adar Poonawalla, CEO, SII, "the firm was making a profit even at a price of ₹150 per dose"). The cost of purchase i.e. about ₹40,000 crore can be met from the allocation of ₹35,000 crore made in the Union Budget for 2021-22 (an additional ₹5,000 crore would be needed to make up for the deficit). As for the "service charge" for vaccination, this cost may be paid by the States from their Budgets.

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The writer is a New Delhi-based policy analyst. The views expressed are personal.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

I THINK THAT THE PEOPLE OF BENGAL MADE A HISTORIC MISTAKE BY NOT GIVING THE BJP A CHANCE AND BY RE-ELECTING THIS CORRUPT AND CRUEL LADY. —BJP MP BABUL SUPRIYO



IT IS THE VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE OF BENGAL AND THE VICTORY OF DEMOCRACY. BENGAL HAS SAVED INDIA TODAY. THIS VICTORY HAS SAVED HUMANITY. —WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE



The mysterious end of the quest for knowledge in India

What happened that made the development of science and technology less important after the great burst of scientific creativity in ancient India?

Joseph Needham a brilliant British bio-chemist who had obtained a doctorate from Cambridge University in 1925, visited China several times. In his book 'Science and Civilisation in China' Needham posed the problem, known as "Needham's grand question", in respect of China, but which applies equally to India.

The question is this: Why did China (and India), which were far ahead of Western countries in science and technology at one time, later fell behind, did not have an industrial revolution, became backward and consequently victims of imperialism and colonisation?

There is no doubt that both India and China were at one time far ahead of the Western countries in science and technology. China invented gunpowder, the magnetic compass, paper and printing,

which, according to Francis Bacon, were the three most important inventions facilitating Europe to pass from the dark Middle Ages to the Modern age. But why did China's progress in science and technology stop thereafter? According to Needham it could have been the Confucian philosophy, which was incompatible with scientific development, which was responsible for this. But is this explanation not superficial?

As for India, it was far ahead of the West in ancient times. Indians invented the decimal system in mathematics, which was one of the revolutionary inventions in history. The numerals in the decimal system were known as Arabic numerals by the Westerners, but the Arabs called them Indian numerals. Were they really Arabic or Indian? To answer this we may note that the languages Arabic, Persian, and Urdu are written from right to left. But if we ask an Arab, Persian, or Urdu writer, to write any number (say 259 or 1,379) he will write it from left to right. This indicates that these numbers were taken from a language which is written from left to right. And now it is accepted universally that the decimal system and the number zero, was invented in India.

The importance of zero can be understood by considering the following: The ancient Romans built a great civilisation of Caesar and Augustus. But if we were to ask an ancient Roman to write the number one million he would have been stumped. The reason for this is that the ancient Romans wrote their numbers in alphabets, V standing for five, X standing for ten, L for 50, C for 100, D for 500, and M for 1,000 (or millennium). There was no alphabet expressing a number greater than 1,000. So if an ancient Roman had to write 2,000 he would have to write MM and if he wanted to write one million he had to write M a 1,000 times.

On the other hand, according to the system invented by Indians, to write one million they had only to write one and then put six zeros after that. The ancient Greeks and Romans just did not have the imagination to conceive of a number called zero. By using zero our ancestors could conceive of astronomically large numbers. Thus, 1,000 had three zeros after one. If we add two more zeros we get one lakh and so on.

Aryabhata, who reputedly lived in the 5th Century AD worked on quadratic equations, the binomial theorem and calculated the value of pi to a fairly accurate degree. He also made significant contributions to astronomy, being perhaps the first person in the world to prove that the Earth rotates on its axis, thus causing day and night.

Brahmagupta and Bhaskar also made great contributions in mathematics and so on. In medical science India was at least 1,000, if not 1,500, years ahead of any country. Thus, Sushrut, the father of surgery, invented plastic surgery in the 6th century BC while the Britishers discovered it only towards the end of the 18th century AD during the Anglo-Mysore wars, and that too, from a traditional physician who lived near Pune.

The harbour at Lothal in Gujarat, which is regarded as quite modern in its construction, was built around 5,000 years ago, and is regarded as part of the Indus valley civilisation. Why, then, did we fall behind the West? Why did we not have an industrial revolution? Why was our advance in science and technology blocked, while Europe produced Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Descartes, Robert Boyle, Cavendish, Priestly, Lavoisier, Maxwell, Gauss, Max Planck, Rutherford, Heisenberg, Pauli,

Niels Bohr, Einstein, Schrodinger, Chadwick, Madam Curie, Otto Hahn in physics, chemistry and mathematics, William Harvey, Ross, and so on in medicine, Edmond Halley and so on in astronomy, James Hutton in Geology, Linnaeus, Buffon, and Darwin in biology, and so on. No doubt we produced CV Raman, Srinivasa Ramanujan, Chandrasekhar, S Bose and so on but these are just a handful

What happened that made in the history of India the development of science and technology less important (after the great burst of scientific creativity in ancient India), while in the West it became more important? This mystery is yet to be solved. Were there cultural, economic, or historical factors involved in this deceleration in learning? A lot of scientific investigation is called for.



MARKANDEY KATJU

The writer is a former judge of the Supreme Court of India. The views expressed are personal.

Markets recoup initial losses to end flat; RIL, banks weigh

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark Sensex staged a smart recovery from the day's low to end with marginal losses on Monday, propped up by robust buying in FMCG and telecom counters. Reliance Industries and banking stocks accounted for most of the losses, while a rebounding rupee also provided support, traders said. After plunging over 750 points in early trade, the 30-share BSE index made a U-turn to finish 63.84 points or 0.13 per cent lower at 48,718.52. In similar movement, the broader NSE Nifty closed 3.05 points or 0.02 per cent higher at 14,634.15. Titan was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, shedding 4.58 per cent, followed by IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, Axis Bank, Kotak Bank, ITC, SBI, ONGC and ICICI Bank. On the other hand, Bharti Airtel, HUL, Maruti, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, NTPC and Nestle India were among the gainers, climbing up to 3.98 per cent. Domestic equities recovered

sharply from day's low despite weak global cues. While growing uncertainties about collection efficiency and asset quality of banks/NBFCs dragged heavy weight financials, strong buying in FMCG and Metals supported recovery in markets," said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities. While persistent rise in second wave of COVID-19 cases has weighed on investors' sentiments, steady corporate earnings with positive managements' commentaries offered support to markets, he noted. On the macroeconomic front, India's manufacturing sector activity was largely flat in April, as rates of growth for new orders and output eased to

eight-month lows amid the intensification of The seasonally adjusted IHS Markit India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) was at 55.5 in April, little changed from March's reading of 55.4. Sectorally, BSE consumer durables, energy, bankex, oil and gas, com, metal, FMCG, industrials and basic materials closed in the green. Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices outperformed the benchmark, spurring as much as 1.57 per cent. The daily COVID-19 cases in India showed a slight dip with 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, taking the total tally of cases to 1,99,25,604, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday. The death toll increased to 2,18,959 with 3,417 daily new fatalities. Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong and Seoul ended on a negative note. Stock exchanges in Shanghai and Tokyo were closed for holidays. European markets were largely trading with losses in mid-session deals.

reality and finance indices fell up to 1.99 per cent, while tele-

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IGST waived on import of relief material received as donation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Monday waived Integrated GST (IGST) till June 30 on the import of COVID-related relief material donated or received free of cost from outside India for free distribution. The Finance Ministry in a statement said the government had received a number of representations from charitable organisations, corporate entities, and other Associations/entities outside India seeking exemption from IGST on the import of Covid-19 relief material, donated/received free of cost from outside India for free distribution. "Accordingly, the Central Government has ... granted exemption from IGST on import of such goods received free of cost for free distribution for covid relief," it said, adding the exemption would be applicable till June 30. This exemption would also cover goods already imported but lying uncleared at the Customs ports. The Government has already exempted from customs duty import of a host of COVID-related relief materials, including Remdesivir injection and its APIs, Inflammatory diagnostic (markers) kits, medical grade oxygen, oxygen therapy related equipment such as oxygen

concentrators, cryogenic transport tanks, etc, and Covid vaccines. The IGST exemption given on Monday would be subject to nodal authorities, appointed by the state governments, authorising any entity, relief agency or statutory body, for free distribution of such relief material. The said goods can be imported free of cost by a state government or, any entity/relief agency/ statutory body, authorized in this regard for free distribution anywhere in India. The importer shall before clearance of goods from Customs produce a certificate from the said nodal authorities that goods are meant for free distribution for Covid relief. After imports, the importer shall produce, to the Deputy or Assistant Commissioner of Customs at the port within a period of six months from the date of importation or within such extended period not exceeding nine months, a statement containing details of goods imported and distributed free of cost. This statement shall be certified by the said nodal authority of the state government. This exemption shall thus enable import of the Covid relief supply imported free of

Government received representations from charitable organisations outside India seeking exemption from IGST on the import of Covid relief material received free of cost from outside India for free distribution.

cost for free distribution without payment of IGST (up to the 30th June, 2021). As customs duty is already exempt, these imports will not attract any customs duty or IGST," the ministry added. India's single day COVID infections had crossed a record 4 lakh mark last week. On Monday, 3.68 lakh new infections and 3,417 deaths were reported. Last week, the government slashed IGST rate on import of oxygen concentrators for personal use to 12 per cent, from 28 per cent, for two months till June 30.

SBI allocates ₹71 cr for fight against virus

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's largest lender SBI on Monday announced allocating Rs 71 crore towards the fight against Covid a part of which will be used to set up a makeshift 1,000-bed hospital for the treatment of patients in some of the worst-affected states. SBI has allocated Rs 71 crore to undertake various support initiatives to combat the second wave of Covid, SBI said in a release. The state-owned lender has allocated Rs 30 crore for a makeshift hospital while Rs 21 crore will be used to support



initiatives such as procurement of life-saving healthcare equipment, oxygen supply to hospitals, Covid-care centres, ambulances, PPE kits, masks as well as food relief efforts. Besides, Rs 10 crore will be used to supplement government's effort in genome sequencing, and Rs 10 crore will be earmarked to collaborate with NGOs to address the community needs, SBI said.

MAHAGENCO to ramp up oxygen supply for patients

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra State Power Generating Company (MAHAGENCO) has decided to boost the supply of medical oxygen for Covid patients from its various plants, state Energy Minister Nitin Raut said. On April 30, the Khaparkheda Power Station of MAHAGENCO handed over 25 of its oxygen cylinders to the Bhandara district collector for COVID-19 patients, he said in a statement issued on Sunday. Considering the possibility of a third COVID-19 wave in near future, the state-owned power utility has undertaken



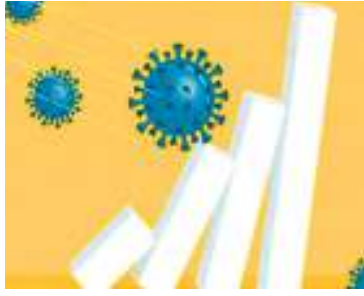
this comprehensive dynamic programme as per the government directives, Raut said. Rapid steps are being taken to supplement the oxygen supply from the MAHAGENCO's ozonation plants at Khaparkheda, Koradi (both in Nagpur district), Paras (Akola) and Parli (Beed), he said. In the first phase, the

MAHAGENCO's new Parli power station has set up an oxygen plant at the Swami Ramanand Tirtha Rural Hospital in Ambejogai with a capacity of 288 jumbo cylinders per day and 95.2 per cent purity. The commissioning of this plant on April 27 is a big boost for treating COVID-19 patients in Parli and Beed, the minister said. A similar plant with a capacity of 84 cubic meters per hour of oxygen is also being set up at the Parbhani Zilla Parishad's COVID-19 Hospital and will be operational next week, he said. Under the second phase,

Barclays cuts FY22 GDP growth forecast to 10%

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Blaming the slow pace of vaccinations and uncertainty around the number of those infected and dead in the second COVID-19 wave, global brokerage firm Barclays cut India's FY22 GDP growth estimate to 10 per cent from earlier 11 per cent. If the ongoing localised lockdowns continue till June, it will lead to economic losses of USD 38.4 billion, it said. In a more pessimistic scenario of the pandemic not being brought under control soon and mobility restrictions continuing till August, the growth can



fall to 8.8 per cent, Barclays warned. The country's economy is estimated to contract by 7.6 per cent in FY21 as the pandemic-induced lockdowns led

to chilling of economic activity, hurt jobs and demand. The lower base is set to help the economy in posting a faster growth in FY22, but the ongoing second wave and resultant localised lockdowns have led many analysts to review down their forecasts. The RBI is maintaining that the economy will grow at 10.5 per cent this fiscal. "As India's second COVID-19 wave continues, there is growing uncertainty around the number of cases and fatalities. Slowing vaccinations are also hurting India's recovery prospects. We lower our FY 2021-22 GDP growth forecast by 1 per cent to 10.0 per cent

to reflect this uncertainty," analysts at Barclays wrote. India is in the "unwelcome position" of being the centre of the global pandemic now, with infections rising at over 4 lakh a day, it said, pointing out that the geographical area of infections is widening with positivity rates surging in many states. "At the same time, India's vaccination programme has slowed, weighed down by rising supply constraints and logistical challenges," it said, adding that the move to liberalise vaccinations is unlikely to have any impact in the short term.

Sugar production reaches 29.91 MT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's sugar production has reached 29.91 million tonne till April of the ongoing 2020-21 marketing season, industry body ISMA said on Monday. With regard to sugar exports, mills have contracted for shipments of 5.4 to 5.5 million tonne so far. Out of which, 3.5 million tonne has been exported, while another 1 million tonne is expected to be done by this month, it said. On ethanol, Indian Sugar

Mills Association (ISMA) said mills have supplied 117.72 crore litres of ethanol to oil marketing companies till April 19 of this year against the total contracted quantity of 302.53 crore litres, it added. Releasing updated production figures, ISMA said mills across the country have produced 29.91 million tonne of sugar during the October-April period of the 2020-21 marketing season (October-September). ISMA has estimated sugar production to be 30.2 million tonne in the 2020-21

marketing season, higher than 27.42 million tonne achieved in the previous season. As per the ISMA data, Sugar production in Uttar Pradesh, the country's largest sugar-producing state, remained slightly lower at 10.56 million tonne till April of this year, as against 11.65 million tonne in the year-ago period. Whereas the output in Maharashtra, the country's second-largest sugar producer, rose substantially to 10.56 million tonne from 6.09 million tonne in the said period.

Godrej Properties posts ₹191.6 cr loss

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Godrej Properties on Monday reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 191.62 crore for the quarter ended March on lower income, even as it achieved record sales bookings of Rs 2,632 crore. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 102.39 crore in the year-ago period. Total income fell to Rs 576.08 crore in

the fourth quarter of last fiscal, from Rs 1,288.17 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, Godrej Properties said in a regulatory filing. In FY2020-21, the company reported a net loss of Rs 189.43 crore, as against a net profit of Rs 273.94 crore in the previous fiscal. Total income declined to Rs 1,333.09 crore in the fiscal, from Rs 2,914.59 crore in the previous year.

IDBI posts profit of ₹1,359 cr after 5 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

LIC-controlled IDBI Bank turned profitable in the fiscal ended in March 2021 after five years, posting a net profit of Rs 1,359 crore for the year. In 2019-20, the lender had posted a net loss of Rs 12,887 crore. IDBI Bank is back in black after five years, said the lender. In the last quarter of the fiscal year 2020-21, the bank reported a nearly four-fold jump in its net profit to Rs 512 crore, IDBI Bank said in a release. The bank had posted a profit of Rs 135 crore in the year-ago quarter.



The bank, which came out of the RBI's prompt corrective action (PCA) framework earlier in March this year, said its turnaround strategies led to the transformation. Total income during Q4FY21 rose to Rs 6,969.59 crore from Rs 6,924.94 crore in the same period of 2019-20. The full year income, however, was down at Rs 24,557 crore as against Rs 25,295 crore.

CII for curbs on economic activity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body CII has urged the government to take "strongest" national steps including curtailing economic activity to contain the spike in COVID-19 cases in the country. CII President Uday Kotak has asked for highest-level response measures to address the rising wave of COVID-19 cases, as currently safeguarding lives is key to cut the transmission links. "The healthcare infrastructure and supply build-up are being undertaken on an emergency basis by the governments at the centre and states, but will take time. "At this critical juncture



when the toll of lives is rising, CII urges the strongest national steps including curtailing economic activity to reduce suffering," the President has said in a statement. The chamber said that the current pace of daily case-loads, the requirement for hospital beds and ICU beds, oxygen, and medicines will continue to escalate. "Healthcare and frontline workers are giving their best

efforts to tackle the influx of patients, but it may not be possible to manage escalating case-loads with the present medical talent availability. We must heed expert advice on this subject - from India and abroad. Highest response measures are needed to break the chain of contagion and also use the time to rapidly build up capacity," Kotak added. CII also suggested certain measures such as deployment of armed forces and central security forces for logistics, infrastructure and personnel; security at hospitals for medical personnel; tapping manpower sources such as retired medical personnel, doctors and nurses; and distribution of vaccination supplies to states

according to well-defined criteria. "Nursing and medical students who have finished GNM/BSC training and who are awaiting exams can be roped in and this can be counted for future requirements/credits after one year of COVID ICU work," CII suggested. Further, it asked for scaling up RT-PCR testing to double the current daily numbers both in urban and rural India. The daily COVID-19 cases in India showed a slight dip with 3,68,147 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, taking the total tally of cases to 1,99,25,604, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

MONEY MATTERS

TVS Motor company sales drop by 26 per cent in April



TVS Motor Company on Monday said its total sales stood at 2,38,983 units in April, down by 26 per cent from 3,22,683 units in March. TVS had exported 9,640 two- and three-wheelers in April 2020. The company's total two-wheelers sales in April stood at 2,26,193 units compared to 3,07,437 units in March. In April 2020, the company had exported a total of 8,134 two wheelers, TVS Motor Company said in a statement. Domestic two-wheeler sales of the company last month stood at 1,31,386 units, down 35 per cent as compared to 2,02,155 units in March this year. There were no sales in the domestic market in April last year due to nationwide lockdown.

Suzuki Motorcycle reports sales of 77,849 units in April



Suzuki Motorcycle India Pvt Ltd on Monday reported sales of 77,849 units in April 2021, a growth of 11 per cent from 69,942 units sold in March this year. The company's sales of April this year are not comparable with that of the same month last year when sales were hit due to the nationwide lockdown imposed to curb the outbreak of coronavirus pandemic. SMIPL said in April this year its domestic sales were at 63,879 unit sales, while exports were at 13,970 units. "It is very satisfying that despite all the challenges associated with the second surge of Covid in the month of April, we have posted of 12 per cent growth in domestic and an exceptional 57.5 per cent growth in our exports volumes vis-à-vis same month in 2019," SMIPL MD Koichiro Hirao said.

6% interest per annum on deposits of over Rs 1 lakh



At an increased interest rate of 6 per cent per annum on savings account deposit of over Rs 1 lakh. The move follows Airtel Payments Bank becoming the first payments bank to implement an enhanced day-end savings limit of Rs 2 lakh, as per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines, the company said in a statement. Airtel Payments Bank has over 5.5 crore engaged users across its operations, the statement added. The interest rate is at 2.5 per cent per annum for a deposit up to Rs 1 lakh. Announcing the higher interest rate on savings account deposits of over Rs 1 lakh, Anubrata Biswas, CEO of Airtel Payments Bank, said, "RBI's increased savings deposit ceiling is a major milestone for payments banks as this was a key ask from customers". With an "attractive" interest rate on deposit sums above one lakh, Airtel Payments Bank is making banking proposition even more rewarding, Biswas added.

THE SILVER LINING WE WANT TO SEE



Covid-19 has changed the world! The pandemic has caused devastation, pain, and loss with no corner of the globe untouched. But for climate activist Aakash Ranison, the unprecedented disruption has also brought about a previously unimaginable opportunity. The dramatic fall in air pollution that accompanied countries going into lockdown has provided a unique natural experiment, enabling many sustainable advocates to probe some of the long-standing mysteries surrounding cloud formation.

Did you know that over 70% of the surface water resources in India are polluted? Did you know that over one million people in India die every year as a result of outdoor air pollution? Did you know that India is the third-highest emitter of CO₂ in the world? The well-known climate change activist and sustainability influencer explains it all as he launched his eBook *Climate Change Explained - For One And All*.

The book focuses on the serious topic of climate change and how it can affect every individual's life. "I was just a happy person living my life, and all of a sudden, I receive a comprehensive point that the whole world belongs to us and we're all one — there's no Delhi or Mumbai, because we belong to nature. I saw plastic everywhere! Global citizens come to India to see the Himalayan beauty but there's so much plastic there. I thought we can reduce it either by recycling or collecting prevalent waste material, but when I researched deeper about this persisting issue, it was brought to my notice that it's all about climate change. In the process, I also turned vegan and stopped purchasing and contributing to textile waste," shares Aakash.

With public transport shut down, schools, universities, and workplaces closed, and people confined to their homes, the streets became silent and air pollution plummeted in our country. Satellite data revealed that nitrogen dioxide had fallen by as much as 70% and as the virus swept, the atmosphere responded with smog being replaced by blue skies in New Delhi, the Himalayan mountain chain

When the world was locked in, the skies became clearer, smog disappeared and we breathed easy in 2020, one of the very few good things the Covid virus did to the planet. Climate activist Aakash Ranison talks to **The Pioneer's SHIKHA DUGGAL** about his recent book on climate change and how the book can help change things for the better.



years and city skylines being brought to sharp relief! "The history of the scientific discovery of climate change began in the early 19th century. Then why is it that even after centuries, and with technology in every hand where information travels at the speed of light, humans still don't seem to understand a crisis caused by our choices, consumptions, and daily actions?" asks the author. Aakash, in his book, spotlights such topics as the greenhouse effect, global warming, carbon footprint, and its effect on the earth in the near future. He not only focuses on the problem but also provides easy solutions that can be adopted in our day-to-day life and can help to reduce the outcome of climate change.

Aakash proves that climate change is not a complicated topic to speak about and can be explained in mere simple words and illustrations! "As technical as it may sound, I tried my best to explain crucial topics such as carbon footprint or plastic related to crude oil in the most creative manner. I've built three different art installations

Climate Risk Index 2020 and the risk factor for the country is increasing every year through rising temperature, there is an increase in sea level around Mumbai every year, forest fires, plastic waste generations, etc. Among other hard-hitting facts, the book also states that every year more than 1 million people die as a result of outdoor pollution. Whatever I have penned down in the book isn't to blame the authorities but to let the readers know 'kaunsi gali mein, kiske saath bura hua tha' and what do I have to do now to resolve complications," he added. Aakash has been working in the climate space for over five years now, advocating the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 of climate action. Making changes in his lifestyle such as going vegan, not taking flights, not buying single-use plastic packaged products, limiting textile consumption, and educating others for the same, he strongly believes in the importance of 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Upcycle' because lesser the consumption, lesser the waste, lesser the pollution. Just as a small amount of sugar can make a cake taste very different, so can small changes in the composition of the climate trigger a chain reaction of interesting climate effects concocting new chemicals, make or break up clouds, and potentially change the weather at the surface!

Expressing his concerns further, he says, "Humans harming nature is one aspect of the climate change story. The other aspect is, climate change being a threat to humans' survival on earth. By destroying nature, we are creating an imbalance in the earth's functioning and if we continue to do so, sooner or later, the earth's atmosphere won't be able to support humans or any other life for that matter. Today, people might know the term 'Climate change' but they don't really know how we humans are causing it and what we can do to stop it. With my book, this is the gap I am trying to bridge. My journey of sustainability has been about spreading awareness about climate change and with this project supporting United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13, I hope I can make a difference and we all get to learn about how our daily habits are leaving an impact on climate change."

While coronavirus has not and cannot completely solve the issues of climate change, it has been able to provide insight into how the world can approach the global crisis of climate change. So, here's a book that motivates the masses to take their first step towards contributing to the fight against climate change and adopt sustainable living!



becoming visible from parts of northern India for the first time in 30

across India from Spiti Valley, Calicut to Rishikesh! According to the research conducted by my team for the book, India ranks 5th in the Global



COLOUR-BLOCKING TO RELEASE VIBRANCE



Imagining the renowned American artist Ellsworth Kelly within a garden in Mexico is where 'Kellee' finds its inspiration! With Mexican motifs embedded in its prints that include marigolds, hydrangeas, anthuriums, along with birds such as toucans and the hornbill, this collection whisks you off and transports you to a tropical reverie with touches of Kelly's classic colour-blocking. The prints are bold and lively enough to make you feel like you're in one of his artworks.

Drawing further inspiration from Mexico, their 'Otomí' embroidery has been given a modern twist in this eclectic collection integrating Kelly's take

on dressing down figures to their simplest forms. Kelly's artwork was known to adopt shadows cast by architecture and has inspired the structured yet chic 'ARCO' series adding an air of graphic minimalism to an otherwise vibrant collection. With the prints being named as 'RGB', 'HSB', and 'CMYK', the collection is a homage to the artist, and his inter-pre

tation of nature — a true Kelly orchestrated drama!

"It's known for its prints and that has been an integral part of the label since its inception and this has only gained further significance with each moving year. It's interesting to note that the prints are all initially hand developed by working with artists in Bengal, and then they are digitally converted for printing and are printed onto fabrics.

Each print is developed keeping the collection in mind, be it the Malagasy and Mozambique prints of Saigon or the latest collection that has been developed by reimagining Kelly's colour-block approach envisioned in a Mexican garden. Flowers like hydrangeas, anthuriums have been given a colour-blocked feel in a very contemporary twist," shares designer Kshitij Jalori.

Jalori is a passionate designer who focuses on working with Indian textiles while giving them a con-

temporary perspective. Converging primarily on working with traditional design elements of Benaras looms, his unique take on art motifs and modern weaving techniques gave a brand-new dimension to conventional craftsmanship. 'Documenting art' would be an appropriate phrase to characterise the label where the designer forms a union of his artistic inspirations and antique weaving crafts.

On the other hand, embroideries are something that we have been extremely focused on developing a very unique language of modern zardozi using the absolute finest techniques. The focus has been on developing statement-looking engineered embroidered pieces rather than an overall embroidered piece.

The collection has embroidered trim details to lend a more athleisure lounge feel to it!



CHINESE AMBASSADOR TO INDIA RESPONDS TO SONU SOOD'S PLEA FOR OXYGEN CONCENTRATORS



Chinese Ambassador to India Sun Weidong has assured actor Sonu Sood of “smooth functioning of export channel of materials to India”. Weidong’s reply came after Sonu Sood

called out China for blocking consignments of oxygen concentrators being transported to India. Both Sonu and Weidong had a conversation over a series of tweets. Sonu took to Twitter and wrote, “We are trying to get hundreds of oxygen concentrators to

India. It’s sad to say that China has blocked lots of our consignments and here in India we are losing lives every minute. I request @China_Amb_India @MFA_China to help us get our consignments cleared so we can save lives.”

In his reply, Weidong wrote back to Sonu, “@SonuSood Noted your twitter info. Mr. Sood. China will do its utmost to support India fighting Covid-19. To my knowledge, freight air routes from China to India are operating normally. The past two weeks have witnessed 61 freight flights from China to India in operation. We’ve provided convenience in customs clearance & transportation for India to transport medical supplies from cities in China. Will continue to ensure smooth functioning of export channel of materials to India.

Pls let us know any problem you met (or email to hinaemb_in@mfa.gov.cn) so that we could try our best to help accordingly.” Sonu later thanked the Chinese authorities for their prompt response. “Thanks for the prompt response sir. I am in touch with your office to solve the problems. Appreciate your concern. Warm regards,” he tweeted. Sonu Sood has been at the forefront of helping people arrange for a hospital bed or oxygen as the cases of Covid-19 surge across India. The Bollywood star has also been doing much ever since the spread of coronavirus pandemic last year, helping thousands of migrant workers reach their hometowns when the lockdown came into force in 2020.

Superstar Rajinikanth to team up again with Annaatthe makers



Superstar Rajinikanth is currently working for a family drama *Annaatthe*, directed by Siruthai Siva. The shooting of the film is currently happening in Hyderabad, which will wrap in the next ten days. Meanwhile, as per reports, superstar Rajinikanth has agreed upon teaming up again with *Annaatthe* makers and the producer has always kept the actor in his comfort zone.

So, the duo has reportedly planned to team up again for the fourth time, and the announcement might arrive once the director is finalised. Rajinikanth’s next film will be his 169th film, and fans are excited to know who will handle the camera for the film. *Kannum Kannum Kollaiyadithal* director Desingh Periyasamy and Karthik Subbaraj have reportedly narrated their stories to Rajinikanth, but the expert actor is yet to choose the

director for ‘Thalaivar 169’. Let’s wait to see whether Rajinikanth picks one from these two or someone else to direct his next. Rajinikanth is reportedly playing the role of a fun-loving village president in *Annaatthe*. The film also has popular faces like Nayanthara, Keerthy Suresh, Meena, Khushbu, Sathish, Soori, and several others, while the music is scored by D Imman.

Iron Man 3 poster a rip-off: Canadian comic book company

A copyright infringement lawsuit was filed in Canada against Marvel Entertainment on Monday, which claimed the company ripped off the design of their movie poster for *Iron Man 3* and *Avengers: Infinity War*, featuring Robert Downey Jr. Marvel Entertainment has earlier won a lawsuit in the US that claimed the company copied the design of their movie poster for *Iron Man 3* featuring Robert Downey Jr from a Canadian comic. The Montreal-based comic book company had claimed that there were striking similarities between the armoured costume worn by Robert Downey Jr. and “the suit worn by a Caliban, one of the characters portrayed in




Horizon’s Works Radix 1.” A US District Judge had ruled last year that Horizon failed to prove that the two posters were “strikingly similar,” despite sharing some “noteworthy similarities.” The judgement said that while

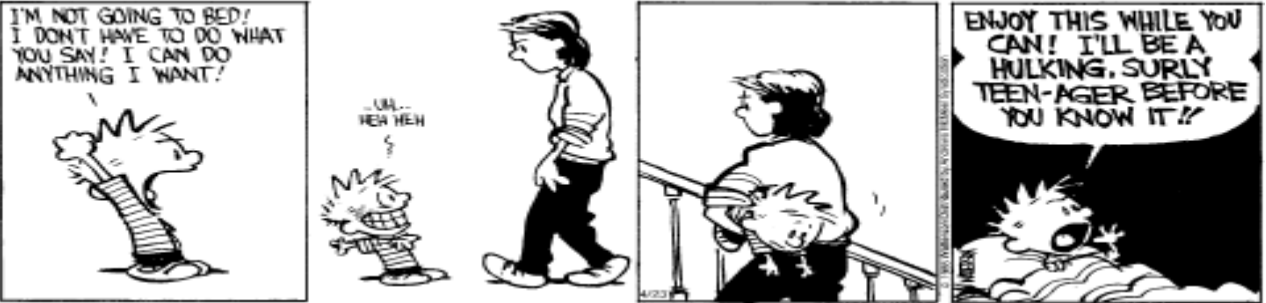
Horizon produced no evidence of copying, Marvel proved the poster was independently created. The Canadian company had then cited the high legal costs and said it was unable to continue the fight. The new lawsuit, filed in a Quebec civil court by Horizon, claims more Marvel movies featuring *Iron Man*, including *Avengers: Infinity War*, have continued to appropriate its works. It claims that the *Iron Man* suit in *Infinity War* closely resembles the one worn by the Radix character Maxwell. “In sum, not only are the distinctive features raised by Justice Oetken in the American proceeding no longer present in the *Infinity War* suit, but several additional strikingly similar features to the Radix suit were added,” the suit reads.

FUN


ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

JUNIOR CROSSWORD 842

1	2		3	4	5
			6		
7			8		
			9		
10					
			12		
11					
			13		
14					
			17		
16					
			19		
18					

ACROSS

1 Thief

3 Tidy your hair with this

7 Young woman

8 A dairy product

10 To turn round and round

13 Glean

16 Truthful

17 Bitter-tasting

18 Thick cord

19 Defeated

5 A light wind

6 Trembles with cold

9 Find north with this

11 Book writer

12 Nearly

14 Cut something with scissors

15 This metal goes rusty

DOWN

1 Great anger

2 A round wooden container with flat ends

4 Above

SOLUTION

R	E	C	T	A	N	G	L	E	
K	A	I	O						
A	P	R	I	L	E				
N	O	R	T	H	S	A			
T	U	R	N	S	T	R	E	E	
I	C	S							
Q	U	I	V	E	R	M	A	R	E
U	D	N	L	M	N				
E	L	E	C	T	A	D			
A	S	S	E	M	B	L	E	D	



VARUN SANDESH MAKES A COMEBACK WITH *INDUVADANA*

Actor Varun Sandesh has been off the radar of Tollywood for a long time. Varun was part of hit films such as *Happy Days*, and *Kotha Bangarulokam*. But here's good news for

fans of the actor. He is now making a comeback with a new film titled *Induvadana* and the film's first poster is out.

The poster has Varun Sandesh and newcomer Farnaz Setti hugging passionately, with each of them

sporting a topless avatar. The first look has a periodic touch and certainly looks striking.

The lead pair is seen in retro-garments and that could be indicative of the film's plot.

The title also indicates that

the movie is going to be different from what Varun has acted so far.

Induvadana is directed by MSR and produced by Madhavi Adurthi. More details about the film's plot are to be unveiled along with the film's teaser and trailer.

Chay to head to Ladakh when he lands in India

As reported yesterday, actor Naga Chaitanya Akkineni is currently in Italy, for the shoot of *Thank You*. The actor might return to India sometime later as there are restrictions on travel to India. The crew of Vikram Kumar-directed *Thank You* is among the last to be able to shoot during this second surge of Covid. The latest we hear is that he will head to Ladakh as soon as he lands in the country, for the shoot of his Bollywood debut film titled *Lal Singh Chaddha*. The Hindi film is the official remake of Hollywood classic *Forrest Gump*. Amir Khan and Kareena

Kapoor Khan will be seen playing the lead roles in the movie.

Sources say that the makers of *Lal Singh Chaddha* planned a new schedule in Ladakh which will begin soon. They planned it for a non-stop 45 days where the battle sequence will be shot. Naga Chaitanya will reprise the role played by Mykelti Williamson in the original and his role is based on Benjamin Buford Blue aka Bubba.

Chay will be seen as Aamir's close friend in the military. The schedule will comprise of scenes on both the actors.

Advait Chandan is the director of the movie. The complete details of the film will be out soon.



Thalapathy Vijay to join hands with Vamshi Paidipally for Telugu film?

Tamil star Thalapathy Vijay, compared to his contemporaries like Suriya and Karthi, arrived late to Tollywood with the dubbed versions of his respective Tamil films. However, most of the 46-year-old actor's films in recent years like *Master*, *Thuppakki*, *Policeodu*, *Adirindhi*, *Sarkar*, and *Whistle* performed exceedingly well in the Telugu states. *Master* is easily one of the first hit films the Telugu film industry saw post the lockdown last year.

Meanwhile, if the ongoing speculations are anything to go by, Vijay will be joining hands with *Maharshi* fame Vamshi Paidipally for a Telugu-Tamil bilingual and it will go on floors once the actor is done with his present commitments. Popular producer Dil Raju will reportedly bankroll the big-budget project on a large scale. Sources suggest that Vijay was mighty impressed with the script narrated by Vamshi and gave a nod. However, a confirmation on the same is awaited.

Remember, back in February, it was widely speculated that Vijay received a huge advance from Mythri Movie Makers for their future collaboration. The reputed production house is currently bankrolling big-ticket films like *Pushpa* and *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*.

Vijay headed to Georgia in the second week of April and finished the maiden schedule of his upcoming film popularly referred to as *Thalapathy 65*.

Bankrolled by Sun Pictures, the Nelson Dilipkumar directorial will feature Pooja Hegde as the leading lady with Anirudh Ravichander composing music.



Anupama Parameswaran trolled for *Vakeel Saab* tweet, apologises



Actress Anupama Parameswaran recently dropped a post praising Power Star Pawan Kalyan's *Vakeel Saab*, but little did she know what was coming. The actress was trolled mercilessly by fans of the star for not addressing him as 'sir' but choosing to call veteran actor Prakash Raj that.

But as soon as she dropped the post, Pawan Kalyan fans started trolling the actor.

While one of Pawan Kalyan's fans mentioned, "Oh, is Prakash Raj the only 'sir' for you?", another follower asked Anupama if she is comparing Prakash Raj with Pawan Kalyan and calling the former better than the other.

Soon, the *Sathamnam Bhavati* actress apologised to Pawan Kalyan fans via a tweet.

"So sorry guys... just now I realised @PawanKalyan gaaaru' with all respect and love," she mentioned. Going by their replies, the actress' damage control tweet did calm the fans.



Kajal's new hobby to beat Covid anxiety

homes. Now, actress Kajal Aggarwal, who got married last year, revealed her newfound hobby that she's using to beat Covid-19 anxiety.

The *Magadheera* actress, who was last seen in Jayam Ravi-starrer *Comali* in 2019, shared about the new hobby that has been truly therapeutic and helping her to beat anxiety.

Sharing a photo of a bundle of wool and knitting pins, Kajal Aggarwal posted, "KNIT. PRAY. LOVE. While the situation is very grim, there is a general feeling of helplessness and anxiety around us. It is very important to focus and apply our minds to something, it can be anything- The idea is to feel purposeful/ creative and

establish a sense of usefulness, productivity, and achievement." (sic)

"I have taken up knitting very recently and it helps me relax, it helps with mental well-being! I believe the act of creating something for others is truly therapeutic! What are you doing to stay occupied at home in your free time?", added Kajal Aggarwal.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Kajal Aggarwal has recently wrapped up the shooting of *Hey Sinamika* directed by Brinda master. While she awaits the shoot of director Shankar's *Indian 2* to resume, she is currently shooting for *Ghosty*, in which she will be playing a cop.



