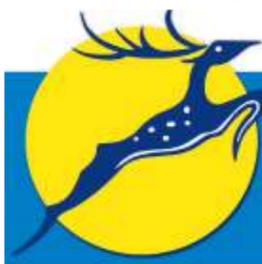


**ANALYSIS 7**  
FALLOUT OF THE US TROOP  
DRAWDOWN WILL BE BIG

**MONEY 8**  
SENSEX SKIDS FOR THIRD DAY;  
RELIANCE, HDFC TWINS TOP DRAGS

**SPORTS 12**  
IPL  
CALLED OFF

HYDERABAD, WEDNESDAY MAY 5, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



# the pioneer



ALLU ARJUN TO  
WORK NEXT  
WITH MAHARSHI  
DIRECTOR?

Page 11

www.dailypioneer.com

## Bill and Melinda Gates to divorce

Bill and Melinda Gates, who for decades have overseen one of history's greatest fortunes and philanthropic operations, said they plan to divorce.

The announcement Monday that the couple is splitting after 27 years of marriage has the power to ripple through the technology industry, a vast portfolio of business and real estate holdings and into the realms of global health, climate change policy and social issues including equality for



women. The pair, who command an estimated \$146 billion, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, made no public hint of their financial plans, though they emphasized that they will cooperate on continuing their philanthropy.

## DMK chief Stalin to be sworn in on May 7

DMK president M K Stalin was on Tuesday unanimously elected as legislative party leader and he is to be sworn-in as Chief Minister on May 7.

"Party president @mkstalin was elected leader of the DMK legislature party," DMK said in its official twitter handle. The party said a resolution was adopted unanimously electing Stalin as the legislative party leader.



The meet to elect him was held at headquarters 'Anna Arivalayam' and it witnessed participation of 133 DMK MLAs, which includes eight from alliance parties like the DMKM.

## Kangana's Twitter acct blocked permanently

Twitter on Tuesday permanently suspended Bollywood actor Kangana Ranaut, saying she had repeatedly violated its rules on hateful conduct and abusive behaviour. The 34-year-old actor's handle @KanganaTeam now displays the message: account suspended.

A Twitter spokesperson said in a statement that Ranaut's account has been "permanently suspended for repeated violations". It, however, did not specify the



tweet(s) that triggered the action. Ranaut, known for her often inflammatory tweets, had posted several messages following the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress' win over the BJP in West Bengal and incidents of post-poll violence.



## The Pioneer loses its shining star to Covid

There is no tougher task than writing the obituary of a colleague, especially one who had his heart in the right place, who worked hard and was always popular with his co-workers due to his friendliness and kindness.

On Tuesday, Sumit Kumar Onka, reporter with The Pioneer based at Vizag lost his fight against Covid-19, leaving his family and colleagues devastated. He was 34.

Sumit was a native of Jeypore in Odisha and had shifted to Vizag in 2015 to pursue a career in journalism. Before his stint in journalism he had briefly worked in a BPO at Delhi.

His first job as a reporter was with the Deccan Chronicle and later he joined The Pioneer team in Visakhapatnam. He was tested positive for Covid on April 22 and was admitted to a Covid Care Centre.



Will ejection of Eatela bring BC matters to a head for KCR?

2

## HC faults survey of Eatela's land, seeks fresh probe as per law

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court has found fault in the manner in which the government surveyed the lands of former minister Eatela Rajender. The court heard the urgent petition filed by family of former minister Eatela Rajender and said that the Collectors report on enquiry in a champet assigned lands is invalid and not acceptable as it is not according to law.

Justice Vinod Kumar conducted the hearing at the residence on Tuesday. He expressed dissatisfaction at not being given notice before conducting the survey and outraged that the authorities had seriously violated natural laws. Court issued interim orders not to interfere in lands and businesses of



Jamuna Hatcheries. It ordered the government not to take coercive action against the company.

Senior advocate Desai Prakash Reddy appeared for the Eatela family and explained to the court that they had not been given notice before conducting the survey and that authorities had infiltrated into their lands. They said that the collector did not even give the report of enquiry to them.

2



Post-poll violence in Bengal reminiscent of Partition: BJP

5

## 'KCR empowered BCs, Dalits': Ministers

ML MELLY MAITREYI ■ HYDERABAD

Quick on the uptake, TRS Ministers and leaders, after keeping mum for three days following the ejection of Eatela Rajender from the state cabinet, on Tuesday gave a strong counter to his allegations against Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao.

According to them, it is Etela "who has the mindset of feudal lord", and who opposed welfare schemes for BCs and weaker sections. He never strove for their uplift. Eatela claimed to be a BC in his constituency (Huzurabad) and an OC in Hyderabad, alleged Minister Gangula Kamalakar.

Individuals would come and go, but the party would be permanent and persons like Eatela, who cared only for self interest, would be taught a lesson by people, Kamalakar added.

Addressing a media conference at Telangana Bhavan here on Tuesday, Kamalakar launched a diatribe against Eatela, along with Minister Koppula Eswar and State Planning Board Vice Chairman Vinod Kumar. They warned that they would not tolerate Eatela's 'loose talk' against the Chief Minister. They said they would soon go to Huzurabad and meet party leaders as well as cadre there.

2



Soulful, meaningful tunes to vibe to

9

## FDC to supply free firewood to Covid crematoriums

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Forest Development Corporation has decided to provide 1,000 tonnes of firewood to COVID-19 specific crematoriums free of cost, an official release said on Tuesday.

Vaneru Pratap Reddy, chairman of the Forest Development Corporation, said the decision was taken following reported high number of deaths and shortage of timber available for crematoriums.

The timber would be supplied through local bodies in the city and elsewhere, the release said.

2

## Covid downs IPL 2021

League suspended after multiple cases; BCCI assures safe return to foreign players

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A barrage of COVID-19 cases forced the IPL's indefinite suspension on Tuesday, a move that was welcomed by the franchises even as the league's jittery foreign recruits waited for BCCI's plan of action to ensure their return amid some strict travel restrictions.

The decision to postpone the league was announced after SunRisers Hyderabad batsman Wriddhiman Saha and Delhi Capitals spinner Amit Mishra joined the infected players' list, which already had Kolkata Knight Riders' Varun Chakravarty and Sandeep Warrier.



Chennai Super Kings' bowling coach L Balaji was among the prominent non-playing staff to test positive.

"The Indian Premier League Governing Council and BCCI in an emergency meeting has unanimously decided to postpone IPL 2021 season, with immediate effect," a statement from the IPL read after the development was confirmed by its chairman Brijesh Patel to PTL.

"The BCCI does not want to compromise on the safety of the players, support staff and the other participants involved in organising the IPL. This decision was taken keeping the safety, health and well-being of all the stakeholders in mind," it added.

2

## 549 cab drivers, 311 delivery boys test positive

ANUSHA PUPPALA ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 549 Ola/Uber drivers, 311 Swiggy/Zomato/Amazon delivery boys tested positive for COVID-19 and five among the drivers lost their lives due to the virus in Telangana State in the second wave.

Members of Telangana's app-based driver and rider communities, who have been reeling under rising fuel prices, are now experiencing the devastating impacts due to the second



wave of COVID-19. However, no help has been provided by either the government or app-based companies, the App-based Drivers Association said. With no restrictions on movement of individuals, gig and platform workers, app-based companies running their operations in various parts of India

to ensure their own safety and the safety of the customers they interact with, while forgetting to provide adequate PPEs to them so that they could protect themselves and their families from COVID-19.

Shaik Salauddin, founder State President of Telangana Gig And Platform Workers Union, said, "The promise of providing vaccines for frontline workers like Gig and Platform Workers has been forgotten again."

2

## Govt nudges pvt centers to procure vaccine for 45 plus

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government on Tuesday allowed private Covid vaccination centers to conduct inoculation only for the cohort of those aged 45 years and above.

The subsidized vaccines that the Central government is allotting will be administered only through government centers, while private centers will charge new rates decided by manufacturer.

TS Director of Health Dr G Srinivas Rao said: "The beneficiaries shall be vaccinated by 100 per cent registration and prior booking of slots on the CoWIN portal. The



private vaccination centers are required to procure vaccine on their own, directly from the manufacturers."

However, there is no word from official quarters about when the vaccination drive would be taken

for the 18-45 age group. There is no cap as yet on the price of the vaccine to be taken at private vaccination centers.

The DPH reiterated that Covid vaccination for the first and second dose shall be administered to all those in the cohort of 45 yrs plus by 100% prior registration and booking of online slots on the Cowin Portal. For booking of slots, the portal may be accessed www.cowin.gov.in.

The DPH said: "Vaccinations will not be administered to walk-ins. Beneficiaries will not be entertained offline."

So far, 48,14,784 have been administered vaccine.



## Hyd Zoo Lions have SARS-CoV2, not Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Eight Asiatic lions housed in the Hyderabad Zoo have been diagnosed with respiratory distress after contracting the SARS-CoV2 virus. All eight have been isolated and are responding well to treatment, the Forests and Environment Ministry said Tuesday.

The virus detected in the lions is not of concern to humans, and there is no evidence of transmission from animals, the centre added, as it urged media to remain cautious while reporting on the matter. "On April 24, with an abundance of caution, Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad shared samples (collected from nose, throat, and respiratory tract, under anaesthesia) from eight Asiatic lions housed in the zoo

that had showed signs of respiratory distress," the release said.

"Based on detailed diagnostic tests it has now been confirmed that the lions have tested positive for SARS-CoV2 virus," it added.

Further analyses revealed the infection was not due to any "variant of concern" to human beings.

The lions are behaving normally and eating well. Preventive measures are already in place for all staff, with the zoo being closed to minimise external contact, the centre explained.

The Central Zoo Authority has taken pre-emptive measures, and issued guidelines and advisories to zoos in light of the increasing number of SARS CoV-2 case.

2

**TODAY**

**ALMANAC**

**Month & Paksham:** Chaitra & Krishna Paksha  
Panchangam

**Tithi:** Navami: 01:21 pm

**Nakshatram:** Dhaniষ্ঠha: 09:10 am

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

**Rahukalam:** 12:12 pm - 01:48 pm

**Yamagandam:** 07:27 am - 09:02 am

**Variyam:** 04:47 pm - 06:28 pm

**Gulika:** 10:37 am - 12:12 pm

**Good Time:** (to start any important work)

**Amritakalam:** 02:55 am - 04:37 am

**Abhijit Muhurtham:** NIL

**HYDERABAD WEATHER**

**Forecast:** Mostly sunny

**Temp:** 31°C

**Humidity:** 55%

**Sunrise:** 05:48 am

**Sunset:** 06:37 pm

**Current Weather Conditions**  
Updated may 4, 2021 5:00 PM

# Will ejection of Eatela bring BC matters to a head for KCR?

Will the image of Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao take a beating because of the calculated, timed ejection of Health Minister Eatela Rajender? Will Eatela's social background as a popular Backward Class leader propel his plans? What are the reactions of Telangana protagonists on the removal of Eatela, who has played a vital role in the state administration while holding key portfolios like finance and health? These are some of the searching questions in the public domain.



are largely at the mercy of their political bosses who value their leadership quality on the basis of their hold on BC communities.

If anything goes wrong on the part of such representative, he or she has to pay a heavy price, which includes being stripped of their post without notice. This explains why Eatela had to go.

Telangana's social fabric comprises sizeable backward and weaker sections. Due to lack of political representation and death of strong leaders within communities, power has not gravitated to these sections. Still, some representatives of the Backward Classes have managed to get plum posts, though they

In his first innings as Chief Minister of Telangana, KCR sacked then health minister & pediatrician by profession Dr. T. Rajaiah of the combined Warangal district for reasons which were not perceived by others as serious. The grapevine has it that KCR considered setting up a University of Health Sciences at Warangal. However, before KCR could himself make a formal announcement, Rajaiah jumped the gun and revealed the CM's plans. So, KCR got rid of

**In a way, Eatela has been humiliated by two chief ministers on two separate occasions. If it was 'arrogance' of YSR then, how can it be 'not arrogance' of KCR now? Is it acceptable for Telangana protagonists to set aside the humiliation of a son of soil?**



M D RATNA KUMAR  
Senior Journalist

him, while people thought that Rajaiah was being taken to task for the high number of swine flu deaths recorded then. In political parties, particularly in regional outfits, the fate of ministers and legislators can change overnight.

The sacking of Rajaiah did not affect KCR as the head of the government, though he had reneged on his promise of making a Dalit the chief minister of India's youngest state. This promise rallied the community

and brought them under the TRS umbrella during the movement for statehood to Telangana. The talk of a 'dalit CM' is now a closed chapter.

For KCR, things may not be so easy with regard to Eatela's ejection because of the latter's social background. Eatela is believed to be in touch with various sections of Backward Classes.

Eatela has previously spoken about his being among those who 'own' the Telangana state-

hood movement as well as the Telangana Rashtra Samiti, while characterizing people of TS as 'shareholders' of the movement. This comment singularly disturbed KCR's mind. So, despite being a staunch follower of KCR for over two decades, Rajender got distanced.

Perhaps, the overall outcomes of elections for ULBs and RLBs,

including the bye-election for the Nagarjunasagar Assembly constituency, may have emboldened KCR to take on those flexing muscles within the party.

Eatela, one among them, has created a sensation by stating that he would not hesitate to resign from the Assembly after having consultations with his constituents in Huzurabad -- his home turf since 2004. Should he resign from the Assembly, it would necessitate a bye-election at Huzurabad. In such eventuality, the split, if any, among Telangana forces that had fought to achieve statehood for T-region would be wide open.

Eatela's removal would have a tremendous impact on those who had worked for separate T-state under the leadership of KCR. Persons like Prof. Kodandaram, of course, have always described it as 'collective leadership'. Prof. Kodandaram steered T-joint action committee and KCR himself followed its

line, particularly during the period he weathered 'continuous disturbances' created by the then Congress government headed by Dr.YS Rajasekhara Reddy. On one occasion, YSR ridiculed Rajender, who was floor leader of TRS then, for his claims of public support in Telangana region. Pointing out that TRS had won only 10 seats out of the 50 it contested then, YSR suggested that Eatela should feel ashamed! This high-voltage political scene unfolded on the floor of the House, and Telangana protagonists, including KCR, came down heavily on YSR's remarks.

In a way, Eatela has been humiliated by two chief ministers on two separate occasions. If it was 'arrogance' of YSR then, how can it be 'not arrogance' of KCR now? Is it acceptable for Telangana protagonists to set aside the humiliation of a son of soil?

Eatela has good rapport with

the Reddy community. He is married to a Reddy woman and got alliances for his two children from the same community. Naturally, he could get support from the powerful Reddy community. The Congress party, which granted Telangana State, had faced electoral debacles at the hands of KCR in two successive elections - 2014 and 2018. The grand old party needs considerable support from BC communities. The Congress may be weighing the pros and cons of the emerging political situation!

It would be a gripping political drama if, in the days to come, the Eatela episode paves the way in Huzurabad for a situation akin to the 2006 Karimnagar bye-election!

Remember that KCR's TRS got rejuvenated following the resounding victory in the Karimnagar Lok Sabha constituency in 2006. That win altered the course of T-movement!

# NRIs throw their weight behind Eatela

ML MELLY MAITREY  
HYDERABAD

**Fight for restoring self-respect of Telangana, they say**

In what appears to be a shot in the arm for former health minister Eatela Rajender, dropped from the state cabinet on Sunday under a cloud, scores of NRIs from Telangana have thrown their weight behind him, saying he should lead the fight for restoring the self-respect of people of Telangana.

Over 60 NRIs, who participated in a Facebook chat with Eatela Rajender from the US on Tuesday, said many of them were associated with the Telangana Development Forum and had contributed for the Telangana statehood movement. "Did we achieve Telangana State to restore pride and self-respect of people or establish family rule," they asked.

Terming the charges against Eatela as a political conspiracy to send him out, they said time had come to agitate again for "Telangana which values self-respect of people".

"You are a Telangana fighter and we stand with you for your contribution to the Telangana movement and now for establishing democratic Telangana," they told Eatela.

The NRIs, with individual affiliations to TRS, TDP, BJP and Congress, urged other Telangana fighters in the TRS to stand up for self-respect, and requested Ministers not to stick to their protocol positions and extend their support to Eatela.

An NRI said, "We started

losing our respect for TRS as a party after 2014 when it started buying MLAs from other parties."

Some of them advised Eatela not to position him as BC leader alone, but as a leader of all sections, and continue with his liberal values. They said he should contest as an Independent to garner support from all forces. They motivated him to have faith in judiciary and said law would take its course. Some others urged him not to join hands with 'communal forces', saying both KCR and Modi were of the same mindset. A feudal mindset was prevailing both in the State and at the Centre, doing harm to people.

Eatela said people were aware of his track record of past 19 years and recalled that the Telangana movement was fought on the plank of self-respect and against oppression and inducements offered by the then Andhra rulers to weaken the movement. "Even today I bank on people, justice and my self-respect. We expected Telangana State to be governed with people's participation, but what we got was highly centralised rule. Development was not constructing projects alone. Even Britishers constructed projects," he said.

He said he wished democracy functioned in the State and within the party, with the leadership being accessible to people and respecting their views. However, there was no atmosphere in the State for people to live with self-respect.

"This is not good for any State or country. Democratic aspirations and traditions are important forever. It is not leaders but people who make history. Individuals with autocratic traits may gain an upper hand temporarily," he said.

As he could not adjust in the party with no value for an individual's self-respect, he was targeted with wild allegations in K Chandrasekhar Rao's family-owned media organisations, Eatela said, adding that his demand for an inquiry by a sitting judge into all his properties was not considered.

Thanking the NRIs from Telangana for their support and advice, Eatela, who is camping in Huzurabad, said, he would take a call after discussions with all sections of people. The fight for self-respect will continue with renewed vigour, he asserted.

# Another bypoll may be in the offing

K VENKATESHWARLU  
HYDERABAD

**The developments taking place for the last four days have been paving way for another by-poll. The by-poll series, which started in Huzumagar, is looking at the Huzurabad constituency now.**

The people and the political parties might have heaved a sigh of relief after the Nagarjuna Sagar by-poll thinking that there would not be any more by-poll in near future. However, things took a different turn on the day the Nagarjuna Sagar by-poll result came out. Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's action against Health Minister Etela Rajender has created another election atmosphere in the state. The developments taking place for the last four days have been paving way for another by-poll. The by-poll series, which started in Huzurabad, is looking at the Huzurabad constituency now.

The dismissal of Health Minister Etela Rajender from the Cabinet heated the political atmosphere for the last two

days. On other hand, though the TRS leadership is too preoccupied with other developments, yet they are getting ready for the by-poll. Already, Civil Supplies Minister Gangula Kamalakar stated that the party leaders would go to the Huzurabad constituency within a day or two to protect the party there. He said that the party will win easily in Huzurabad with the photo of KCR as has been the case in the Nagarjuna Sagar by-poll.

Both Eatela and TRS sides are indicating that another bypoll will take place shortly in the state. However, the bypoll would take place within six months after Eatela's resignation. The High Court interim verdict came on Tuesday giving some relief to Eatela, who is discussing with his followers the opportune time to tender his resignation as an MLA.

# The Pioneer loses its shining star to Covid

Continued from page 1

As his condition deteriorated, Sumit was shifted to VIMS, where the virus claimed one more noble soul. Remembered by his friends and colleagues as an affable and down-to-earth person, Sumit had a keen interest in photography, reading and travelling. He studied at JELC High School in Jaypeore and graduated in BSc from VD College. He also got a masters degree in journalism from Central University at Koraput in Odisha.

His last post on Facebook on April 25 read "In His service forever and ever...". His friends were shocked to know the news about his sudden demise. Media fraternity, officials and people's representatives of Visakhapatnam expressed their condolences over the untimely demise of Sumit.

He has been working from home since last March due to Covid induced situation. His close associates will always remember Sumit as a kind-hearted soul who was passionate about journalistic ethics and values.

# 'KCR empowered BCs, Dalits': Ministers

Continued from page 1

Kamalakar said that, right from 2001, TRS party had seen committed ZPTCs, MPTCs, sarpanches and cadre in every village in Huzurabad constituency. Eatela entered the constituency that had been strengthened by party workers. He won six times as MLA only on the strength of TRS flag, party symbol car and with KCR's photo. Yet, Eatela was under the mistaken impression that he had won polls on his own merit and strength and was speaking beyond his level.

It was KCR who had been helping BCs, SCs and STs for

their empowerment with several welfare schemes, Kamalakar said. Citing an example, he said Eatela did not do anything for the Mudiraj community (to which Eatela belongs) but KCR, under Mission Kakatiya, gave fish ponds to members of the community.

Telangana people were thankful to KCR for supplying piped drinking water and quality power supply. TRS, by virtue of its schemes, had become a household name in the State.

Kamalakar alleged that it was Eatela who did not allow BC leaders in the constituency to grow at local and State

level, since he saw them as threat to his own growth and position. Now, he had the audacity to claim that the party was trying to crush him. He also charged Eatela with working to defeat BC candidates in the 2018 elections. He was conspiring to split the party by conspiring with opposition parties, he alleged.

It was Eatela who had deceived KCR, Kamalakar said. Eatela had amassed wealth with the help of posts he got through TRS and resorted to misuse of power. After encroaching on assigned and endowment lands, how he could ask BCs to support him, he asked.

# BC-Reddy combo party shaping up

Continued from page 1

The new political party, with the combination of BC and Reddy, will become a major political force in Telangana to fight the TRS, political observers feel. At present, the Telangana Congress has no future. The Bharatiya Janata Party does not have cadre strength to fight the TRS, they say. So, if the present situation continues till the next Assembly elections, retention of power by TRS is certain.

At this juncture, if a new political party is floated, prominent leaders from other political parties will join the new party, apart from dissidents in TRS, said a senior political leader who is involved in launching the new political party.

In Telangana, Backward Class and Reddy leaders will come on one platform and leaders of other castes and anti-TRS forces will join the

new political party. In some areas, the Communists have some strength and they are also opposing the TRS government; so, they may also extend support to the new political party.

Telangana Jana Samithi (TJS) president Kodandaram commented two days ago that if Etala floats a new political party, ouster of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao is certain.

It may be recalled that former MP Konda Visveswar Reddy recently said that he was planning to float a new political party. He also said that should TRS chief K Chandrasekhar Rao make Eatela Rajender or T Harish Rao as the Chief Minister, he would join TRS.

When contacted, Konda Visveswar Reddy told The Pioneer: "The era of caste politics in India is over; the politics are now emotion-, sentiment- and religion-based".

# Hyd Zoo Lions have SARS-CoV2, not Covid

Continued from page 1

"Based on experience with zoo animals elsewhere in the world that have experienced SARS-CoV2, there is no factual evidence animals can transmit the disease to humans," the CZA said. "Media is therefore requested to exercise extreme caution while reporting..." it added.

Although the terms have become intertwined over the course of the pandemic, SARS-CoV2 refers to the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease.

There are a few documented cases of animals - large felines - contracting coronavirus. In April last year four tigers and three lions at a zoo in the United States tested positive. All of them recovered.

# HC faults survey of...

Continued from page 1

Advocate General (AG) Prasad on behalf of the government explained to the court that the trial was being held because of serious allegations against Eatela. After hearing the arguments, the High Court asked "isn't it necessary to give notices to conduct the survey? how the survey was completed overnight? Can I go to anyone's house and investigate if there is a complaint?".

The High Court commented that the officers seemingly created the report "sitting in a car". Responding to this, the Advocate General explained that a full inquiry had not taken place and only a preliminary inquiry had been conducted. Government said that the Collector's report stated that the next steps would be

taken up as per the law.

Court ordered that the enquiry of May1-2 should not be considered and a fresh enquiry duly issuing notices should be done. Court asked the government to Give notices and give time as per rules and said it should not be given on Friday and seek reply on Monday. Court advised to take straight route instead of taking back gate during the enquiry. The High Court commented that the authorities could act in accordance with the law in this matter. The AG sought to direct the petitioners to cooperate in the investigation, to which the court clarified that they could be dealt with legally if they did not co-operate. Court adjourned the next hearing to July 6, ordering the government to file a counterclaim with full details.

# Covid downs IPL 2021

Continued from page 1

The IPL said BCCI will do all it can to ensure that players in the event get back to their homes safely.

IPL features cricketers from England (11), Australia (14), South Africa (11) and New Zealand (10) among other countries. The event also featured nine West Indians, three Afghans and two players from Bangladesh. Several former foreign players, especially from Australia, were also a part of the support staffs and commentary teams.

"These are difficult times, especially in India and while we have tried to bring in some positivity and cheer, however, it is imperative that the tournament is now suspended and everyone goes back to their families and loved ones in these trying times," the IPL stated.

"The BCCI will do everything in its powers to arrange for the secure and safe passage of all the participants in IPL 2021."

The cricket boards of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa backed the deci-

sion and expressed confidence in BCCI's planning for their players' safe return. But Australia made it clear that it won't seek exemption from the travel ban which is in place till May 15 for flights from India.

"Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers Association respect the decision of the Australian Government to pause travel from India until at least May 15 and will not seek exemptions," a joint release from CA and ACA stated.

The Board, apart from mulling the way forward, was also counting its losses, which could run into Rs 2200 crore, according to a senior official.

The 52-day 60-match tournament would have concluded in Ahmedabad on May 30. However, only 24 days of cricket was possible with 29 completed games before the virus halted proceedings.

"We would be losing anything between Rs 2000 to Rs 2500 crore for the midway postponement of this season. I would say something in the range of Rs 2200 crore will be closer to accurate estimation," the BCCI official said.

# FDC to supply free firewood...

Continued from page 1

Reddy said with the increase of timber prices becoming a burden to the poor, the cor-

poration has come forward to provide timber worth Rs 20 lakh free of cost. The FDC would also supply bamboo for the funerals, the FDC said.

# 549 cab drivers, 311 delivery...

Continued from page 1

We demand to provide vaccines to all the Gig and Platform Workers and app-based workers working with companies like Ola, Uber, Swiggy, Zomato, Dunzo, Porter etc. Companies should provide proper and adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitizers, disinfectants etc. and also plastic screens/shields between the driver and passenger in all app-based vehicles as has been provided by the companies for leased vehicles only. "In a call of solidarity, the Indian Federation of App-based Transport work-

ers (IFAT) and the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Union with app-based transport, delivery and logistics workers across India, we demand the government to advise app-based companies to provide health insurance coverage to all its drivers/riders. We request the government and app-based companies to immediately act on our demands so that we win in our united fight against the Coronavirus and also ensure that the lives and livelihoods of Gig and Platform Workers, app-based drivers, and food delivery riders in the country are protected," he added.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	₹ 48, 220 (10 gm)
SILVER	₹ 72, 800 (1kg)
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹119
Without Skin	₹135
Broiler at Farm	₹82
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	365
VIJAYAWADA	365
VISAKHAPATNAM	355
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹3.67

**GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**

MIT No. GHWC/ND/14/02/21-22 Dt: 04-05-2021

Name of Work: Civil Work-01 Estimate Amount (Rs. in Lakhs): 4.85 Start Date & Time: 05-05-2021 @ 03:00 PM Last Date & Time for receipts of Bids: 10-05-2021 @ 3:00 PM Name & Address Officer Cell No. Sd/O. Koteswara Rao, E.E. Kapra Div-1, GHMC Cell: 9889294468 Further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.tendersprocurement.gov.in

R.O. No.: 11599-PP/CL/NDVT/1/2021-22 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER, KAPRA DIV-1, GHMC

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**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA, ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT**

Sl. No. 31/2021/TO/RR/MSD/02/1-2022 Dt: 23.04.2021

Construction of 2 BHK Houses in Mahabubabad District, Total No of Works (12) TOTAL ECY:1486.80 Lakhs. Bid Submission Starting Date: 01.05.2021 Closing Date: 11.05.2021. Further details can be seen @ https://tenders.telangana.gov.in

Sd/- District Roads & Buildings Officer (Executive Engineer) Mahabubabad Dist.

DPR No. 119-0P/CL-AGENCY/NDVT/1/2021-22

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**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
Off. Dir. P.R. Engineer, PU Division, Mahabubnagar

Tender Notice No. T.O./JHDSAMB/R/2021-21 Dt: 30.04.2021

No. of works (15) Name of the Works: Preparation of Kilo-litro court with required specification and other works in undersigned. TOTAL ECY: 95.36 Lakhs. Receipt of application last Dt: 17.05.2021 upto 5.00 PM. Issue tender schedule last Dt: 18.05.2021 upto 5.00 PM. Receipt of tenders at 3.00 PM on Dt: 19.05.2021. Tenders Opening Dt: 19.05.2021 at 3.30 PM. Further details can be obtained from office.

Sd/- District P.R. Engineer, PU Division, Mahabubnagar

DPR No. 114-0P/CL-AGENCY/NDVT/1/2021-22

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**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA PANCHAYATH RAJ ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT**  
O/o The Superintending Engineer, P.R. Khammam

E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

Online tenders are invited for the MIT No 04/2021-22 to 22/2021-22, Dt: 03-05-2021 from the eligible registered contractors for (19) works sanctioned under PMGSY-III with an estimate cost of Rs.9084.46 Lakhs. Description of items ECY, EMD, availability of tender documents, important dates, tender conditions, eligibility of tender and all other details are available from 05-05-2021 onwards on https://tender.telangana.gov.in. The last date for online tender is: 13-05-2021. No. Ms. 103-3P/CL-48/PC/NDVT/1/2021-22, Dt: 04-05-2021 Sd/- Superintending Engineer, P.R. Khammam

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# Covid patients at King Kothi hospital violate protocol

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Covid patients at King Kothi hospital here are not being monitored effectively due to shortage of doctors, staff nurses, attendants and class four employees. Therefore, some of the recovered patients have been going out for coffee or to take shelter under the trees increasing the risk of the virus spreading to others.

Allegations are levelled that the patients are going out at their will, thanks to the poor monitoring of the patients' movement.

In one instance, one of the patients who left the hospital in the morning did not turn up even by 7 pm recently. The hospital had to lodge a complaint with the police. The incident was reported in a section of the media too.

In fact, the patients are going out, informing the patients of their next beds, and having a cup of coffee or tea and relaxing under the shade



of trees for sometimes without the knowledge of the hospital superintendent, nodal officer, staff nurses or any other employee. This reflects the poor state of monitoring of the patients' condition.

The hospital has 350 beds, including 50 ICU beds and 33 ventilator beds. The rest of them are oxygen beds. In the ICU, there should be at least

one doctor for every five beds. But the situation in the hospital is different.

In fact, the hospital has only 28 doctors, including superintendent, assistant superintendent, nodal officer, senior doctors, junior doctors and those who are posted in the hospital on deputation basis.

Because of this monitoring of patients is apparently absent.

**In one instance, one of the patients who left the hospital in the morning did not turn up even by 7 pm recently. The hospital had to lodge a complaint with the police. The incident was reported in a section of the media too.**

Some of the senior doctors openly say how some of the recovering patients are going out, unable to say in the wards, to have a beverage or two and passing time before they return to the ward.

Even though the incident is brought to the notice of the police, the police express their inability to identify who is a patient and who is not.

The hospital conducts 350-400 RT-PCR tests and rapid antigen tests at the out patient department. In phases, over 35 hospital staff tested positive for the virus. However, they have recovered from the virus and reporting for work. Meanwhile,

some more staff have tested positive for the virus.

When the incident was brought to the notice of the hospital superintendent Dr Rajendranath, he said that he had experienced incidents like attendants of the patients are asking the hospital authorities about the whereabouts of the patient. A week ago, a patient called Sankar left the hospital in the morning around 7 am and returned to hospital by night. A complaint has been lodged with Narayanaguda police. The hospital is contemplating measures to prevent recurrence of such incidents in future.

# Authorities insist on slot booking to administer vax, anger citizens

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The medical and health department insisting on slot booking to administer Covid-19 vaccine has caused much indignation multitudes of people who are yet to receive their first dose of the vaccine. Currently, the slot is not easily available and if booked now one will get a slot only after 20 days. Only 15 lakh people have received their first dose in Hyderabad, Rangareddy and Medchal districts out of the 1.20 crore. Over three lakh have been waiting eagerly to receive their second dose.

Hitherto, the medical personnel administered the vaccine to people approaching the CVC with Aadhaar card duly registering their names.

Because of the shortage of the vaccine, the vaccination programme has been suspended for three days in the city. The medical and health authorities have adopted a new system in administering the vaccine. They want the people to open the CoWIN link and register their details and book slot to receive the vaccine. Upon registering,



message is generated in their mobile phones indicating date and time. Accordingly, people should get themselves vaccinated. People complain of the relevant link not working in CoWIN application. Even if gets opened, there are many technical issues. To get oneself registered in the mobile application one should have a mobile phone. But the poor in the city did not own a mobile. So, they are registering the

name in the application is ruled out.

If anyone goes to Mee Seva centres, one should pay money. Nearly, three lakh people are approaching their date to receive the second dose. To register name online, there is no slot available before 20 days. If the tenure expires, the first dose will become useless. Moreover, there are not enough doses for all those who booked slot on a given day.

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
REVENUE DEPARTMENT  
Proc. No. G1/680/2021 Office of the Collector, Karimnagar, (201-05-2021).  
**FORM - VII**  
(see subrule (1) of rule -19 and Section -111(i) of the Act - 36(2013))  
**PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION**

Whereas it appears to the Government of Telangana, Collector, Karimnagar that a total of Ac. (1-33 1/2) guntas of land is required in Pokedda village of Chigurumamidi Mandal an extent of 1-18 acres for excavation of UT Tail Channel at KM 55.446 of MMR R/S canal from KM 0.000 to 0.175, UT Tail Channel at KM 57.475 from KM 0.000 to 0.010 and UT Tail Channel at KM 56.935 of MMR R/S canal from KM 0.000 to KM 0.075 and Cherleru village of Marakondur Mandal, Karimnagar District an extent of 0.15 1/2 gnts for public purpose to fill for excavation of 13R Minor of 4L distributor from KM 1.500 to KM 1.575 under MMR Right Side Canal. The Government of Telangana through G.O.Ms.No.41, 18CAD (LA R&R/2) Department dt. 22.07.2017 has issued notification exempting the provisions of Chapter-II and III of the RFLTLARR Act, 2013 to the Indriamma Flood Flow Canal Project from SRSP. Therefore it is notified for the above said project in the Pokedda & Cherleru villages of Chigurumamidi & Marakondur Mandal, Karimnagar District a piece of land measuring more or less 1-33 1/2 acres of standard measurements, whose detail description is following under the acquisition.

**SCHEDULE**

Sr No	Village	Particulars & Details of the land (Dns, Wet, etc.) Type of title (Patta/ Govt.)	Area under acquisition in acres	Name(s) of Paddar(s) with Father's/Huband's name	Name(s) of Employer(s) with Father's/Huband's name	Details of structure, trees, etc	
118	Patta/ Dry	0.31	Pokedda Sorenga Devi (Mauzhi Feet Dampapothu Rajamma (Sammala)	Pokedda Sorenga Devi (Mauzhi Feet Dampapothu Rajamma (Sammala)			
119	Govt Land	0.11	Government Lands (Government of Lands)	Government Lands (Government of Lands)			
929	Patta/ Dry	0.01	Angola Elash (Panna sanyasi) Doda Thirupathi Reddy (Pichusa Reddy/Siddi Narsamma (Mabadi) Angul Suresh (Mabadi)	Angola Elash (Panna sanyasi) Doda Thirupathi Reddy (Pichusa Reddy/Siddi Narsamma (Mabadi) Angul Suresh (Mabadi)			
958	Patta/ Dry	0.15	Anjithi Thirupathi Reddy (Odreddy) Sorena Mohammad (Arauddi) Shabuddin Mohammad (Rajpota)	Anjithi Thirupathi Reddy (Odreddy) Sorena Mohammad (Arauddi) Shabuddin Mohammad (Rajpota)		2- Pipeline	
430	Patta/ Dry	0.15	Bola Kanukemra (Shanki) Bola Kanukemra (Komusudi) Mohanreddy Ai (Shak Ai) Shoukth Ai (Shak Ai) Rajamath Ai (Shak Ai)	Bola Kanukemra (Shanki) Bola Kanukemra (Komusudi) Mohanreddy Ai (Shak Ai) Shoukth Ai (Shak Ai) Rajamath Ai (Shak Ai)		2- Plastic water tanks on cement bedding, 1 - Pipeline	
<b>Total</b>		<b>0.16</b>					
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1.33</b>					

This Notification is made under the provisions of Section 11(1) of 'The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Act No. 30/2013)', to all whom it may concern. A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the District Collector, Karimnagar Special Deputy Collector, L.A. and R&R, Irrigation Projects, Karimnagar on any working day during the working hours. Under Section 12 of the said Act the Government of Telangana District Collector, Karimnagar is authorized the Special Deputy Collector, L.A. and R&R, Irrigation Projects, Karimnagar and his staff and workmen to enter upon and survey land, take levels of any land, dig or bore into the sub-soil & do all other acts required for the proper execution of their work. Under section 11(4) of the said Act, no person shall make any transaction or cause any transaction of land i.e. sale/ purchase, etc., or create any encumbrances on such land from the date of publication of such notification without prior approval of the Collector. Objections to the land acquisition, if any, may be filed by the person interested with in 60 days days from the date of publication of this notification as provided U/s 15(1) of the Act, before District Collector, Karimnagar Special Deputy Collector, L.A. and R&R, Irrigation Projects, Karimnagar.

Land Acquisition Officers  
Special Deputy Collector(FAC)  
L.A. and R&R Irrigation Projects, Karimnagar

Additional Collector, Karimnagar

District Collector, Karimnagar

DPR No. 01/ 98/LA/R&R/Inv/Pub/2020-21

## Frontline warrior status sought for journalists

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Indian Journalists' Union (IJU) and Telangana Union of Working Journalists (TUWJ) have expressed concern over death of many journalists in Telangana due to Covid and termed it as unprecedented in the country and wanted the state government to regard journalists as frontline warriors on the lines of the Centre and extend them necessary financial support.

In a joint statement issued here on Tuesday, IJU president K Srinivas Reddy and Secretary Y Narender Reddy and TUWJ president Nagunuri Sekhar and secretary K Virahat Ali said that over 55 journalists, including 29 in April, were dead due to Coronavirus in the first as well as the second wave in Telangana.

Since the outbreak of the corona virus, so far 3,800 journalists and their family members contracted the virus so far. They said that only a few journalists, who are under isolation, are getting financial support and delaying extending assistance to journalists applying from time to time is not advisable.

They said that the Rs 2 lakh assistance being paid to the bereaved families of journalists, who died due to Covid is insufficient and wanted the government to increase the assistance to at least Rs 10 lakh.

They urged the government to treat journalists as frontline warriors like governments of Punjab, West Bengal, Bihar and Odisha and sought special medical treatment facilities for journalists and their families. They sought a life cover of Rs 50 lakh for journalists. Further, they wanted the district authorities to conduct special camps at constituency level to administer vaccine to journalists.

## Rat snakes rescued at CP's residence

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two rat snakes were rescued from the CPL Ground near City Police Commissioner Anjani Kumar's residence in Amberpet here on Tuesday. The non-venomous snakes were spotted by the staff, who further alerted Venkatesh Naik, a constable from the Malakpet Traffic police station, who is also an expert in handling snakes.

Naik immediately rushed to the spot and caught the snakes and handed them over to the zoo authorities. Anjani Kumar, who appreciated Naik, honoured him with a memento and announced a cash reward to him.

## Reel-life scene creates problem for a man in real life

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A scene in reel life has created a problem for a person in real life. According to police, a man approached the police complaining that he was flooded with phone calls as his phone number was flashed in a scene in the Pawan Kalyan starrer 'Vakeel Saab'.

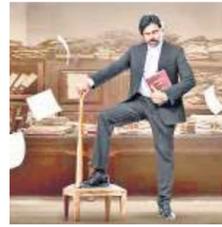
Sudhakar, a resident of the man, lodged a complaint with the Punjagutta police alleging that the producers of the movie had used his mobile phone number 'illegally' during a scene in the film following which he was getting numerous phone calls causing mental agony.

Sudhakar said that in the movie during a scene, his phone number was mentioned

Sudhakar, a resident of the man, lodged a complaint with the Punjagutta police alleging that the producers of the movie had used his mobile phone number 'illegally' during a scene in the film following which he was getting numerous phone calls causing mental agony.

below an image. "People who watched the movie are noting down the phone number and calling me. It is resulting in a lot of inconvenience. The callers are also abusing me in vulgar language," he stated in the complaint.

He also alleged that the producers used his mobile phone



number without seeking his permission and demanded a case be registered against them for allegedly defaming him. The Punjagutta police accepted the complaint from him.

"We have sought legal opinion and will decide on further course of action after that," said M Niranjan Reddy, SHO (Punjagutta).

## Police arrest Olx fraudster in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Petbasheerabad police arrested a person belonging to Ramakrishna Nagar for having defrauded a private company employee to the tune of several thousands of rupees by offering to sell Play Station-5 through Olx.in.

According to the police, the person was identified as Ranjit, who on April 20 offering to sell the play station by placing an advertisement Olx.in. Responding to it, a resident of Krishnamurthy Nagar in Suchitra Junction shared his phone number. Ranjit called him up on his mobile and offered to send the equipment if the customer sends Rs 15,000 to his bank account. He also shared his Aadhaar card photo. Therefore, Raju sent the money to the advertiser. Later, he asked the customer to send Rs 6,500 towards transportation costs. Raju complied with the request transferring money online. Ranjit, later sent a phone number as the mobile



phone number of the delivery boy.

Raju realised that he was duped by the seller since the play station is not being delivered in spite of waiting for long. He lodged a complaint with the police on April 25. On the basis of the phone number and Aadhaar card, he was identified as Ranjit and was taken into custody. Later, he was produced before the magistrate on Monday who remanded him in judicial custody.

## Constable found dead at his residence

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A constable working in Madannapet police station was found dead in a room of his house in Musarambagh with his throat and wrist slit. His body was found lying in a pool of blood, reports said on Tuesday.

He was identified as Abhilash who is living with his family in Musarambagh. Two days ago, he left his wife and two children in his in-laws house in Kodad.

According to reports, Abhilash went inside his room and bolted it from inside. His family members suspected something fishy as he did not come out of the room and broke open the doors only to find Abhilash's body was found lying in a pool of blood.

The family members informed about it to the police, who rushed to the scene of offence. According to the preliminary investigation report, Abhilash committed suicide by slitting his throat and wrist. His body was sent to OU for autopsy.

## CITY LIGHTS

### JEE Main session deferred

**Hyderabad** : With the rise in the Covid across the country, the National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday postponed the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Main 2021 May session, which was scheduled from May 24 to 28. The NTA had earlier postponed the JEE Main April session, which was to be conducted on April 27 to 30 due to the pandemic. The rescheduling of the April and May sessions will be done subsequently and registration for the May session will also be announced at a later stage, the NTA said in a public notice. To support the student community the NTA had drawn out plans for organising the JEE Main in four sessions this year. Two sessions were completed in February and March. A total of 6,20,978 candidates for the February session and 5,56,248 for the March session had appeared. The NTA has advised candidates to use the time to prepare themselves better for the examination. They can also take practice tests on the NTA Abhyas app from the comfort of their homes, it said. It also advised candidates to visit the official website of the NTA www.nta.ac.in and https://jeemain.nta.nic.in/ for the latest updates. For further clarification related to JEE Main 2021, candidates can contact on 011-40759000 or email at jeemain@nta.ac.in.

### Skill development an integral part of kids' growth

**Hyderabad** : Skill development is an integral part of a child's overall development. Before closing for the vacation, the Pre-Primary, Delhi Public School, Nacharam, organised a four-day skill development boot camp to nurture the kids with experience, enjoyment and the skills they deserve. A well-planned curriculum is designed to keep our children engaged given the difficult times we are living in. On Day 1, the session was started on a high note with action rhymes, followed by a virtual trip to experience the underwater aquatic life. During the session kids also enjoyed the 'Penguin Zumba' and the Oyster making craft activity which in turn helped them in developing fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination and show their creativity. The skill development programme was very fruitful and kids were all excited for being part of event.

### SBTET declares summer vacation

**Hyderabad** : In view of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, the State Board of Technical Education and Training (SBTET) has announced summer vacation for all government, aided and private unaided polytechnic colleges, including second shift polytechnics in engineering and pharmacy institutions from May 5 to 31. A revised academic schedule will be intimated in the due course, the SBTET said in an order issued on Tuesday.

### Woman who drank sanitiser succumbs

A woman, who allegedly drank a sanitiser after a heated argument with a pal three days ago, died while undergoing treatment on Monday. The victim was identified as K Pratyusha, a resident of Dattatreyanagar under the Petbasheerabad police station limits, who worked at a private company. She was into a friendship with one Jagadeesh for the last couple of years. According to the police, on Friday, the two had an argument over a petty issue and after returning to her residence, she consumed sanitiser. Family members rushed her to a hospital where she died on Monday. The Petbasheerabad police registered a case and are probing.

## US fiat to students on classes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The United States Consulate General Hyderabad on Tuesday said student visa holders would be able to enter the US if their classes start on or after August 1 this year. "Under the current Presidential Proclamation, student visa holders are able to enter the United

States if their classes start on or after August 1, 2021. We are unfortunately unable to approve exceptions for F visa holders with a program start date before August 1, 2021," said a tweet from the official handle of the US Consulate General in Hyderabad. The US Consulate asked the students to contact their respective educational institutions to discuss options if their start date is before August 1, 2021 and asked students to check the link, https://rb.gy/q78s8u.

The US Consulate asked the students to contact their respective educational institutions to discuss options if their start date is before August 1, 2021 and asked students to check the link, https://rb.gy/q78s8u.

# Jeevan Reddy, VH demand probe into encroachments

K VENKATESHWARLU  
HYDERABAD

After TPCC working president and Malkajgiri MP A Revanth Reddy's attack on the government regarding Deverayamjal temple lands, the Congress leaders - MLC T Jeevan Reddy and former PCC chief V Hanumantha Rao - launched their attack on the government regarding Deverayamjal temple lands and land encroachments done by TRS leaders.



**Former PCC chief V Hanumantha Rao asked the Chief Minister as to why the latter initiated action only against former minister Eatela Rajender, who was the only minister working hard to control the Coronavirus and let others off the hook.**

On Tuesday, T Jeevan Reddy alleged that all the Deverayamjal temple lands encroachers were TRS leaders only. However, the government had taken up an inquiry into the assigned land issue only to show former Minister Eatela Rajender as a culprit, he alleged. He demanded that the government ordered an inquiry into all the assigned land encroachments.

Stating that the assigned land beneficiaries were poor, hence they had failed to hold on to their lands, Jeevan Reddy said that the assigned lands exchange had been taking place after the introduction of the new Pattadaar policy in 2018. He alleged that the government had given a word that it would appoint a com-

mittee on the assigned lands issue, however, not a single step had been taken in that direction even though years passed. Jeevan Reddy demanded that the government identify the encroached assigned lands details and handed over the same to the real pattadaars.

Demanding that the government order an inquiry into all the Endowments lands, Jeevan Reddy asked the government to provide judiciary powers to Wakf Board. He demanded

that Chief Minister ordered an inquiry into all the assigned lands if he was sincere about solving the problem.

On the other hand, former PCC Chief and former MP V Hanumantha Rao expressed happiness over the speedy inquiry on corruption, but questioned why the government was not ordering an inquiry in the same manner as there were many allegations against several ministers, MLAs and other TRS leaders.

Speaking to the media at his residence, VH said that there was no action taken against Ministers Ch Malla Reddy and Puvvada Ajay Kumar and MLC Palla Rajeshwar Reddy though they had been facing land encroachment allegations. Whether justice was different for different people, he asked.

VH asked the Chief Minister as to why the latter initiated action only against former minister Eatela Rajender, who was the only minister working hard to control the Coronavirus and let others off the hook. VH said that he would be addressing a letter to the Chief Minister seeking action against other Ministers, MLAs and MLCs who were facing land encroachment allegations.

VH warned that Congress would wage a movement against the government if the Chief Minister failed to initiate the same action against the other Ministers, MLAs and MLCs as the action taken against Eatela. VH also made it clear that it didn't mean that Congress was backing Eatela Rajender. He said that the government had to punish not only Eatela Rajender but also others if they had committed wrongs.

## TO REIN IN SECOND WAVE OF CORONA

# Minister seeks cooperation of people

PNS ■ MAHBUBNAGAR

Minister for Excise V Srinivas Goud sought the cooperation of people to rein in the second wave of the Coronavirus in the district on the lines of controlling the virus first wave with teamwork.

Addressing District Collector S Venkata Rao and revenue and health authorities through a video conference here on Tuesday, he appealed to the district officials to work with a humanitarian perspective.

Last year, an oxygen plant, RT-PCR testing centre and a 250-bed hospital for Covid patients were set up. This year the government sanctioned another hospital with 250 beds and asked the officials to start work on the hospital in a week completing tender formalities. The number of beds in ICU is going to be increased soon.

Advising the officials to increase the bed strength in the government hospital and also in SVS Hospital, he directed them to take over SVS Dental Hospital and make arrangements for oxygen beds in various function halls. He told them to recruit doctors if necessary.

He wanted people not to neglect symptoms and get themselves checked up if symptoms of fever or cough



exist. He wanted private hospital doctors to sensitise people to get treatment in case they have fever, cough and cold.

He asked officials to submit him a report on bed strength in SVS, Mallika, Navodaya, Neha, Sunshine and other hospitals about the total number of beds and oxygen beds and other amenities.

The district administration made arrangements for providing treatment at the doorstep of non-Covid patients through mobile clinics. He asked officials to recruit nurses and lab technicians. He asked them to gather informa-

tion about people having symptoms, those who tested positive for the virus and those who died due to Covid-19.

Later, the minister asked officials to speed up land acquisition for completing the fly-over at Appanapalli in five months and told them to clear hurdles for the widening of the road in the town especially at Ashok Theatre crossroads, Ambedkar crossroads, R and B cross ads, Pillalamarri crossroads in the town. Furthermore, he asked them to hasten up Bharat Mala project works and groundworks on the development of the second by-pass road. He asked the

District Collector to name the airport sanctioned to the district after Manyamkonda.

Earlier, District Collector S Venkat Rao told medical and health authorities to see to it that government and private hospitals work with a human face to wriggle the district from the pandemic. He warned of initiating measures under Disaster Management Act and the Epidemics Act against private hospitals if found indulging in irregularities. He said that people of Mahabubnagar living in other districts also might come here for receiving treatment for Covid. Therefore, he told the authorities to purchase hospital cots to increase bed strength in the Mahabubnagar district.

ZP CEO and Drug inspectors are saddled with the responsibility of maintaining oxygen stocks. Covid treatment facilities are provided at Bala Nagar, Koilkonda and Devarakadra. Services of paramedical staff employed in residential schools and KVGB schools are being used to treat Covid. There is no shortage of Remedisivir and oxygen in the district.

Additional collector Tejas Nandlal Pawar, Medical college director Putta Srinivas, DMHO Dr Krishna, district government hospital superintendent Dr Ramkishan and others were present.

# Steps sought for revival of Congress

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress Loyalists' Forum has decided to write a detailed letter to the party high command highlighting the present state of the party affairs in the state where no corrective steps have been taken after a series of defeats--Assembly elections in 2018, Lok Sabha in 2019, ZPTC and MPCT, Cooperative Societies, municipal, Assembly byelections and GHMC elections--the latest

being the defeat in the Nagarjunasagar bypoll and mini-municipal polls.

It has also been decided that they would suggest that immediate remedial measures be taken to save the party in the state.

Leaders of Congress Loyalists' Forum on Tuesday met via Zoom app to take stock of the present political situation in the state and the prevailing disappointment among the Congress cadre after one more

round of electoral loss in Nagarjunasagar byelection and mini-municipal elections.

The Forum thanked senior leader K Jana Reddy for putting up a brave fight following his vigorous campaign, irrespective of his age and prevailing Covid situation. The Forum leaders congratulated him for getting 70,932 votes despite the misuse of power and distribution of money on a large scale by the ruling TRS.

The leaders also congratulat-

ed Daripally Rajasekhar Reddy, a Congress candidate from Lingojiguda in GHMC for wresting the seat from the BJP and said this was a good sign. Congress leaders urged the Congress cadre to observe the present ongoing political trends in the country and recent political developments in the state and not to lose hope as the Congress party would certainly come out of its bad patch and will revive its past glory.

## BREAKTHROUGH IN SBI GUNAPADUGU BRANCH ROBBERY CASE

# Police nab one of the gang members

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

The Ramagundam police arrested a member of the nine-member gang, that looted the Gunjapadugu SBI branch in March this year, in Uttar Pradesh and recovered from him 20 tolas of gold. While five members are in the custody of Maharashtra police for their involvement in bank robberies there, three others are at large.

The arrested was identified as Adesh Sharma, a hamali in vegetable market and resident of Hasanpur village of Badayu district of UP. The police search party that went to UP produced him before the magistrate there and obtained a transit warrant to produce him before the Manthani first-class magistrate here on Tuesday.

It may be recalled that the gang members removed the window grills in the rear of the bank and cut the bank lockers

using gas cutters and decamped with six kg of gold and Rs 18 lakh cash in the robbery that took place on March 24 this year.

The Ramagundam Commissioner of Police and senior officials visited the crime scene and suspected it to be the handiwork of the UP and Maharashtra gangs.

On a tip off that similar modus of operandi in Maharashtra, three teams have been constituted and one team was sent to Maharashtra and two teams to UP.

The Maharashtra police, upon questioning the gang members, they put the total number of gang members involved in the heist at nine. The police there recovered some of the ornaments stolen from the SBI in Gunjapadugu from the arrested.

According to the police, in March, gang members



Nawabul Hasan, Danveer, Adesh Sharma, Guddu, Bhure, Jahangir of UP and Raju Vasant Rao Warbhe, Devadas Ropchand kapgate and Sanket Tejram Urke (Maharashtra gang members) took shelter in the house of Vasant Rao in MIDC industrial area of Chandrapur for 15 days in March.

Later, they have stolen a gas cylinder, regulator and gas

cutter from a welding shop in Gondia district of Maharashtra. Afterwards, they targeted banks located on highways for robbery.

On March 24, seven members Nawabul Hasan, Danveer, Adesh Sharma, Guddu, Bhure, Jahangir and Sanket committed the robbery while the two others were waiting in a Bolero at some distance.

Around midnight, they entered the bank through breaking the doors of the window in the rear and removing the grills. They cut the CCTV camera wires, opened the locker and looted 6 kg of gold ornaments and Rs 18 lakh and left the bank around 2 am.

Around 4.30 am, they boarded the Bolero vehicle and left for Chandrapur and where they distributed the booty among themselves. Later, six gang members left for UP by bus.

## SHORT TAKES

### Man attacks parents, sister; mother dies

**WARANGAL URBAN:** In a shocking incident, a man attacked his parents and sister with a knife in an inebriated condition on Monday at Vikas Nagar in Parkal town in the district. While the mother succumbed to the injuries, the father and sister suffered serious injuries, and have been shifted to the MGM hospital for treatment. The deceased was identified as Rokandla Padma (48) and the injured Rokandla Ramchander and Neeraja. According to police, Neeraja, who is five months pregnant, came to her parents' home for delivery. It is said that the accused, Rajesh nee Ramesh, who works as a van driver, committed the crime due to alleged dispute on handing over the house to him. Rajesh, who lives in a rented house, has been allegedly demanding that his parents vacate the ancestral house and hand it over to him. The Parkal police registered a case and shifted the body to a local government hospital for post-mortem. Inspector Mahender Reddy and his team visited the spot and collected evidence.

### No meetings in Sangareddy district till further orders

**SANGAREDDY:** Orders have been issued to the officers of all the departments in the district to cancel the meetings and conferences held under the auspices of various departments as per the instructions of the government, District Collector Hanumantha Rao said. He said public meetings, Gram Sahas where people gather, Gram Panchayat meetings, MPP meetings, Zilla Praja Parishad plenary session, Standing Committee meetings, Municipal Council meetings and public hearings will not be conducted. The Collector directed that the House and the relevant meetings are adjourned till further orders are issued. He clarified that officials of all the departments in the district, revenue divisional officers, municipal commissioners, MPDOs, tahsildars and other officials should not hold any public meetings.

### Birdipur panchayat imposes lockdown till April 15

**ZAHEERABAD:** The Birdipur village in Jharasangam mandal of Sangareddy district resolved to impose a 12-day lockdown in the village till May 15, said sarpanch Sivalakshmi Krishna and panchayat secretary Prabhakar. The lockdown came into effect from Tuesday evening, they said adding that the resolution was adopted in the presence of the villagers. If anyone found violating the lockdown, stern action would be initiated against them, they said. They advised villagers to stay indoors following the precautions. Advising the villagers to wear masks, the panchayat asked people to not to venture out unless it is absolutely essential. The panchayat has been implementing preventive measures like spraying of sodium hypochloride at various places in the village. However, the villagers can take part in agricultural operations as usual.

### Burglar arrested

**HYDERABAD:** A property offender, who entered a house in Meerpet and attempted to steal, was arrested by the police on Monday. According to the police, Gundla Raju (32), a painter from Addagutta in Secunderabad, entered the house of one Renu Kumar Reddy at Balapur on Sunday. Reddy's wife Prasanna, who was cooking, saw the intruder and alerted her husband. "She rushed outside and tried to bolt the main door from outside, but Raju saw this and pushed her aside before running away," police said, adding that he was nabbed later.

## CLP's virtual meeting today

**HYDERABAD:** The Congress Legislature Party (CLP) has decided to conduct an emergency meeting to discuss the prevailing Corona pandemic severity and on the issue of encroachment of assigned lands and Endowments lands. The meeting will be held through the ZOOM app on Wednesday. According to sources, the CLP may chalk out an action plan to exert pressure on the government demanding that it control the spiking Corona virus cases. The CLP would discuss how to mount pressure on the government in regard to lack of beds, oxygen, Remedisivir injections and vaccines. The CLP would also discuss how to make the government to order an inquiry into all encroached assigned and temple lands, it is learnt.

## Appoint new Health Minister, demands Komatireddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MP from Bhongir Komatireddy Venkat Reddy flayed Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for removing Health Minister Eatela Rajender, who was always available to the Health Department officials.

He opined that KCR removed Eatela from the Ministry in a vengeful manner as he had stated he was also the owner of the TRS. He said that the Health and Medical Ministry will be destroyed if the Ministry is in the hands of KCR, who stays 24-hours in the farmhouse.

He said that the Chief Minister has to protect the lives of people by appointing a new Minister within 24-hours to contain further spread of the

Corona and provide treatment to those who tested positive for the virus.

Speaking to the media at Bhongir on Tuesday, Komatireddy alleged that the TRS has been doing petty politics when people are suffering from Corona.

Questioning the Chief Minister to tell as to why there were no actions against other TRS leaders, who encroached assigned lands, Komatireddy warned that Congress will not keep mum if the Chief Minister does injustice to Deverayamjal farmers.

He questioned the government to tell whether it is right, or wrong to hand over 19,000 acres to private companies in the name of Pharma City in the Rachakonda area.

## 2 sarpanches, two deputy sarpanches suspended

PNS ■ PATANCHERU

Sangareddy District Collector Hanumantha Rao on Tuesday ordered placing two sarpanches and two upa-sarpanches under suspension for encouraging illegal construction activity. The collector ordered Indresam village sarpanch Narsimlu, upa-sarpanch Sivakumar Goud and Kistareddy Sarpanch Krishna and upa-sarpanch Faheem for failure to stop illegal constructions in their village.

The officials identified construction of 120 structures without any permission and are being demolished for the past 15 days. He asked the people not to purchase houses and housing plots which have no necessary clearances.



## Cops launch drive to enforce Covid protocol

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR  
BHUPALAPALLY

District Additional Superintendent of Police V Srinivasulu on Tuesday asked the people to observe precautions in the wake of spurt in Covid cases under the impact of the second wave. He was supervising the special drive conducted by the police at Ambedkar Centre in the town.

He warned people of stern

action if found not wearing masks. He counselled the people roaming around by not wearing masks.

Stringent measures have been put in place in containment zones in the district, he said advising the people against venturing out, spitting in public places and not wearing masks.

Bhupalapally DSP A Sampat Rao, CI Vasudeva Rao, SI Abhinav and others were present on the occasion.

## Youth place bets on Ludo game using mobiles



P ANAND KUMAR  
NARSAPUR

Several youth and employees are indulging in gambling and losing money in the name of playing Ludo in their mobile phones in Narsapur, Sivvampet, Hatnura, Koudipalli, Veldurti, Kolcharam mandal of Medak district.

People have been placing bets in the game, which in several parts of the district became a craze for the youth.

The game is played in hotels and play grounds. Generally, people throng hotels to sip a cup of tea. But by evening a large number of two-wheelers

are parked near hotels as the punters congregate there. Police are well aware of the unlawful activity, but for reasons best known to them have ignored.

Police are well aware of the unlawful activity, but for reasons best known to them have ignored.

Several have appeal to the police to stop the activity as those who have lost money might indulge in crimes to earn back the lost money.

In Narsapur Assembly constituency, cricket betting through mobile phones has assumed feverish pitch. Now, the ball is in the police court to take remedial action.

## Ryots agree to give lands to Kondapochamma Sagar canal

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Farmers of Upparapalli, Guvalegi, Sherpalli Bandharam, Mubharasapur and Surampalli villages have agreed to their lands for the construction of Upparapalli distributary canal of Kondapochamma Sagar and conveyed the same to District Collector Venkatrami Reddy at a meeting held at the latter's camp office here on Tuesday.

The Collector impressed on the farmers the benefits that would accrue to the farmers by the construction of the distributary canal. To convert the parched lands in the district into fertile soil, the state government contemplated the execution of irrigation projects. Currently, the construction of canals would be implemented in phases to provide an irrigation facility.

The collector thanked the farmers and offered to help them to get the compensation and other assistance payable to them by the state government. Several government officials, including the tah



# Post-poll violence in Bengal reminiscent of Partition: BJP

PNS ■ KOLKATA

BJP president J P Nadda on Tuesday said the widespread post-poll violence in West Bengal is reminiscent of the atrocities people had to face during the country's Partition, and exhorted party workers in the state to democratically fight the "savagery". Nadda, who arrived on a two-day visit to Bengal, said BJP workers across India have expressed solidarity with their activists in the state, who are "facing violent attacks". "We are committed to democratically fight this ideological battle and the activities of the TMC, which is full of intolerance," he told reporters at the NSC Bose International Airport here. "I had heard of the immense atrocities committed during the Partition, but I have never seen such post-poll violence that is occurring in West Bengal after the declaration of election results (on May 2)," the senior BJP leader said.

Nadda said he will visit the residences of BJP workers "killed" in attacks in South 24 Parganas district and speak to their kin. "We want to give this message that crores of BJP workers across the country are with them," he said. The BJP has claimed at least six of its workers and supporters, including a woman, were killed in violence allegedly unleashed by the Trinamool Congress following its victory in the assembly elections.

## Party is with workers facing atrocities by 'TMC goons': BJP Bengal chief

KOLKATA: The BJP's West Bengal president Dilip Ghosh on Tuesday said that the party is with the workers who, he claimed, are facing atrocities at the hands of goons owing allegiance to the Trinamool Congress after the announcement of assembly election results two days ago. The state is in the grip of post-poll violence that allegedly left several BJP workers dead and injured, prompting the Centre to seek a report from the state government on the incidents of attack on opposition workers. "I have not done the politics of running away in adverse situations. We have fought a daunting battle," Ghosh told reporters here. Ghosh said that the BJP has won record seats in the West Bengal election, bagging 77 constituencies. The TMC, on the other hand, emerged victorious in 213 seats and will form the government for the third time in a row. Claiming that attacks are taking place at places where the TMC won with a huge majority, Ghosh said that the BJP leadership is with the workers who have fought the election risking their lives. "We are fighting and will continue to do so in future. Today or tomorrow, Bengal will witness change at the hands of the BJP," the party's state president said. BJP national secretary Rahul Sinha said that it is time for the party to stand by the workers who are facing attacks. "We can analyse the results later."



## TMC worker stabbed to death in Ketugram, three injured: Police

KOLKATA: A 54-year-old TMC worker was stabbed to death in West Bengal's Purba Bardhaman district, police said on Tuesday. Srinivas Ghosh (54), a TMC panchayat member of Ketugram's Agardhanga area, was stabbed allegedly by members of the BJP on Monday night when he was returning home, they said. Ghosh was declared brought dead when taken to a nearby hospital, they added. Three people were also injured in the incident and are undergoing treatment, a police officer said. BJP denied the charges and said their members were in no way connected to the incident. Tension was palpable in the area after the incident. Police said a huge contingent of personnel was deployed to prevent any further flare-ups. Four persons were detained in connection with the incident, they said. Incidents of violence were reported from other parts of the state as well. In Coochbehar district, the house of BJP activist Bharati Nandy in Dinhatra was set on fire allegedly by TMC supporters, a police officer said. Incidents of violence were also reported from Tufanganj where houses of several BJP workers were vandalised, he said. At least 15 houses of BJP workers were vandalised in Howrah, police said. A probe has been started into the matter, they said.

## No place for violence in democracy, Mamata should control it: Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After the BJP and the CPI-M, the Congress also condemned the post-poll violence in West Bengal by TMC cadres, saying such incidents were unacceptable and people of the state have not voted for lawlessness. Congress' West Bengal in-charge Jitin Prasad alleged on Tuesday that his party cadres were attacked by Trinamool Congress workers and even women and children were not spared. "The post-poll violence that

has been unleashed by the TMC on the Congress workers is unacceptable. Even women and children are not spared. I'm sure the people of West Bengal did not vote for this lawlessness," Prasad said on Twitter. He said the duty of every politician or public servant is to speak up against "all wrongs and stand by their cadre irrespective of which ideology one belongs to". Asked about the post-poll violence taking place in West Bengal after the Trinamool Congress' victory in the state,

Congress spokesperson Shaktisinh Gohil said his party never condones such violence. "Congress has never supported any kind of violence. The Congress party never condones or supports any kind of violence. There is no place for violence in a democracy," he said. "We expect that if Mamata Banerjee has received so much love and votes in Bengal, she should control the violence," he said. The Congress leader said, "Even if those who have died are BJP workers, our

condolences are with their families". The BJP has charged that the state is burning due to state-sponsored violence and several of its workers have been assaulted and murdered. The Left has also claimed that its workers have been targeted. "Are these reports of gruesome violence in Bengal TMC's 'victory celebrations'?" Condemnable. "Will be resisted & rebuffed. Instead of focusing on combating the pandemic TMC unleashes such mayhem," CPI(M) leader had Sitaram Yechury tweeted.

## 'Foreign aid allocated to states, UTs for Covid management'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Tuesday said that aid received from other countries has been distributed in different states to help deal with the rising number of COVID-19 cases.

Based on the criteria and principles laid out by the ministry, depending on each state's requirement, 24 different categories of items numbering nearly 40 lakhs were distributed to 86 institutions in different states, the ministry said in a statement. Major categories of equipment include BiPAP machines; oxygen (concentrators, cylinders, PSA Oxygen plants and pulse oximeters); drugs (Favipiravir and Remdesivir); and PPE (coveralls, N-95 masks and gowns).

Since grant in aid is limited in quantity, it has to be optimally utilized by allocating it to high burden states [states with higher number of active cases], where the requirement for such equipment/medicines is more, according to the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for allocations.

Spreading such aid thinly each time over a large number of states may not bring forth the desired results, the ministry said, adding it will also lead to small packages travelling large distances, high turnaround times and possible wastage of resources.

The requirement of the high number of persons admitted in hospitals and prior distribution done by the central government resources would also be considered.

Special focus can also be on states considered as medical hubs of the region, which have a patient in-flow from neighbouring states/cities. In some cases, resource low



**"Accessibility and the immediate use of resources to save the lives drives the need for immediate allocation of short-notice incoming consignments. The materials from abroad are currently coming in different numbers, specifications and at different times"**

consignee is the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS). Upon receipt of the papers outlined in the process flow chart, IRCS issues the necessary certificates immediately to HLL for processing customs and regulatory clearances at Airports. IRCS also ensures liaison with MoHFW and HLL so that delays are reduced and quick turnarounds are achieved, the ministry said. The HLL Lifecare Limited (HLL) is the customs agent for IRCS, and the distribution manager for MoHFW.

The consignments are processed at airport and transported for distribution by HLL. In case of consignments arriving at military airports, or bog items like oxygen plants, Dept of Military Affairs (DMA) assists HLL.

"Accessibility and the immediate use of resources to save the lives drives the need for immediate allocation of short-notice incoming consignments. The materials from abroad are currently coming in different numbers, specifications and at different times," the statement said. "Hence there is a need to reconcile the distribution logistics with the need to reach the materials as expeditiously as possible to the states," it added.

states such as North Eastern and hill states where tankers etc don't reach, can also be covered to shore up their needs, the ministry said.

The 31 states and UTs which have either received or where the equipment has been dispatched include -- Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and Karnataka. As the different tranches are coming in, the rest of the states and UTs will also be covered in the coming days.

For all consignments received via MEA and coming as donations from foreign countries, the

## INDIA CORNER

### Muslim youth help cremate Hindu man who died of Covid

A group of Muslim youth helped cremate a 60-year-old Hindu man, who died of COVID-19 here, as his family members were hesitant to go ahead with the ritual for fear of contracting the disease.



Mukund Mohan Pandey (60) died on Monday but his family members were hesitating on his cremation as his elder brother, Lalit Pandey, too succumbed to the virus on April 30, local people said. Nagar Palika chairman Shaban Ali said when he came to know about this, he had some of his friends, Tariq, Anas, Guddu and Shafiq, make all the arrangements and take the body to the cremation ground. After the arrangements were made, Pandey's son consigned him to flames, Ali added.

### Encounter between security forces and militants in J&K

An encounter broke out between militants and security forces in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, police said. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation at Nathipora in Bomai area following information about the presence of some militants in the area, a police official said. He said the search operation turned into an encounter after militants opened fire on the security forces who retaliated. "One foreign terrorist involved in killing of two councillors and a policeman is trapped in the encounter," Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Vijay Kumar said in a tweet. No casualties have been reported so far from either side, police said.



## Oxygen tankers fitted with GPS to track movement

PNS ■ MUMBAI

All tankers carrying liquid medical oxygen (LMO) in the state are being fitted with GPS devices in order to track their movement and ensure better management of supply of the life-saving gas to COVID-19 patients, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Speaking to PTI, state transport commissioner Avinash Dhakane said currently, 250 tankers are being used for the supply of LMO, demand for which has surged with the rise in COVID-19 cases.

"Nearly 50 per cent of the 250 tankers are already fitted with GPS, while the remaining will be fitted with it within a few days. Once all the tankers fitted with these devices, their movement can be tracked from the control room," Dhakane said.

A control room has been set up for monitoring the movement of tankers supplying oxygen across the state and officials from the Road Transport Offices have been deputed to get the GPS devices fitted, he said, adding that LMO is being supplied from 19 different plants through tankers.

The Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA) has funded the work of installing GPS on oxygen tankers, the official said.

### 'Delhi got 393 MT oxygen last week against requirement of 976 MT'

NEW DELHI: AAP MLA Raghav Chadha on Tuesday said 41 hospitals with around 7,000 people on oxygen support sent SOS calls to the Delhi government on May 3. He also said that the national capital received an average of 393 metric tonnes (MT) of oxygen a day last week against the requirement of 976 MT. "Forty-one hospitals, with 7,142 people on oxygen support, sent SOS calls to the Delhi government on Monday," Chadha said, adding that "Team Kejriwal" promptly responded to all the SOS calls and delivered 21.3 MT of oxygen to these hospitals. The AAP leader also riled that "Delhi received an average of 393 MT of oxygen a day last week against the requirement of 976 MT". He noted that 393 MT is just 40 per cent of the total demand. Chadha said the city got 433 MT of oxygen, just 44 per cent of the total requirement, on Monday. Several hospitals here continue to grapple with the shortage of medical oxygen, as coronavirus cases continue to spike every passing day.

## Ex-J&K Guv Jagmohan passes away

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Union minister and Jammu and Kashmir governor Jagmohan, whose tough measures as an administrator in various roles won him many admirers but also drew criticism from some quarters, passed away following a spell of illness.



He was 93. President Ram Nath Kovind and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday paid tributes to Jagmohan and described him as an exemplary administrator and devoted politician. He passed away on Monday.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration has announced three days of state mourning

from Tuesday to Thursday on the demise of the former governor.

"Saddened to hear about the demise of Shri Jagmohan Ji, former governor of J&K. He was a great visionary, dynamic and effective administrator. Jagmohan Ji will be remembered for his great contributions, reforms in J&K and untiring efforts to serve the society," the office of the Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor tweeted.

A civil servant who made his name as a town planner while serving as the Delhi Development Authority's vice chairperson in the 70s, Jagmohan steered the controversial beautification drive in Delhi as the trusted man of Sanjay Gandhi during the Emergency but his image as a no-nonsense officer and doer endured, earning him key positions, including of governor and Union minister, in the later decades.

"In the demise of

Jagmohanji, the nation has lost a unique town planner, able administrator and man of letters. His administrative & political career was marked by unparalleled brilliance. His death leaves a void that will be felt forever. My condolences to his family and friends," Kovind tweeted.

Prime Minister Modi said in his tribute, "Jagmohan ji's demise is a monumental loss for our nation".

"He was an exemplary administrator and a renowned scholar. He always worked towards the betterment of India. His ministerial tenure was marked by innovative policy making. Condolences to his family and admirers.

## Matuas choose to split votes despite wooing by BJP, TMC

PNS ■ KOLKATA

The Bharatiya Janata Party in its electoral mathematics for Bengal had counted on the 3 million strong Vaishnavite Matua community spread over the districts of Nadia, South and North 24 Parganas as a major vote bank, with the Prime Minister taking time not only to pay repeated visits to Matua dominated constituencies but even to a Matua shrine in neighbouring Bangladesh.

However actual voting patterns showed that the Matuas did not vote en-bloc for any one party and preferred to split their vote between both the ruling TMC with which many in the commu-

nity had good relations them as well as BJP which had launched a charm offensive aimed at the community. The saffron party had left no stone unturned to win the Matua community's favour. Besides Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior leaders held a series of public meetings in Matua areas.

The community has the highest concentration in North 24 Parganas and Nadia, along with some places in South 24 Parganas district, but has adherents in other districts and in large parts of western Bangladesh too. Hailing from the Namashudra, a scheduled caste, adherents of this Vaishnavite sect are followers of

Harichand Thakur a 19th century Vaishnavite reformer. While the original seat of the Matua Mahasangha was in Oraikandi in Bangladesh where Thakur was born, Indian Matuas have set up their sects inner sanctum in a new township called Thakurnagar, in North 24 parganas, near the border with Bangladesh.

However, despite the BJP launching a campaign blitzkrieg in North 24 Parganas, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah holding public meetings to win the hearts of the Matuas, the party could win only five seats out of 33 seats in North 24 Parganas, with TMC accounting for an overwhelming 28 seats.

## Security for Nandigram constituency R0

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The West Bengal government has informed the Election Commission that it has provided security to the returning officer of the Nandigram assembly constituency which saw a cliffhanger between TMC chief Mamata Banerjee and BJP's Suvendu Adhikari, sources said on Tuesday.

Banerjee lost by 1,956 votes to former protegee-turned-BJP adversary Adhikari. On Monday, the Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader had alleged that the returning officer of Nandigram did not order recounting of votes even after she demanded it as he feared for his life.

## Museums, planetarium, zoos, national parks closed in Bengal

With the spike in COVID-19 cases, museums, planetarium, zoos, national parks have been closed in West Bengal to avert contamination. The Alipore Zoological Gardens in the city had recorded 400 visitors on an average in April and only 150 people on April 30 before closing down indefinitely from May 1, Director Asis Samanta told PTI on Tuesday. "As decided by the state government, all forest department run zoos in state, national parks and sanctuaries remain closed for public from May 1 till further notice. We had recorded over 1,000 visitors on an average in February which gradually went down to 400 in April with report of spread in infection," Samanta said. Director of M P Birla Planetarium and well-known astrophysicist Debiprasad Duari said the popular spot for students and others interested in cosmic world had to be closed since April 17 for fear of contamination of the pathogen despite taking all Covid control measures and reducing the audience capacity to one third.



## Insufficient infra caused more deaths in Delhi: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A more virulent strain of coronavirus, insufficient infrastructure to handle critical cases and hoarding of essential drugs has led to more deaths in Delhi, experts said on Tuesday.

They also said the number of deaths could be more as many patients die outside hospitals waiting for a bed.

Dr Jugal Kishore, the head of community medicine at Safdarjung Hospital, said the "insufficiency of infrastructure" to handle critical patients is leading to more deaths.

"The virus is not causing so many deaths, it is the insufficient resources and facilities. This is the

major reason," he said. Critical cases are piling up but there are no beds available for them. Many patients have died on the way to hospitals or outside healthcare facilities waiting for a bed, while many have died due to unavailability of oxygen, Dr Kishore said.

Critical patients spend 10 to 20 days in ICU or on oxygen support. So, the beds remain occupied for this period, even as the number of critical cases keep increasing every day, he said.

Black-marketing and hoarding of essential drugs being used to treat critical patients is another reason.

"This has limited the people's access to these drugs," he said.



Sudhanshu Bankata, the Executive Director of Batra Hospital in Tughlakabad Institutional Area, said a critical patient succumbs to the virus

after 14 to 15 days of testing positive.

"So, if there are more cases today, the number of deaths will be high on the 14th or the 15th

day," he said. Bankata also said that a large number of patients are being treated at home, as hospital beds are full.

"In many cases, patients require high oxygen flow which can only be provided at hospitals and not through concentrators or cylinders. By the time a bed becomes available, their situation has already deteriorated sharply," he said.

Dr D K Baluja, medical director of Jaipur Golden Hospital, said, "The quantum (of infections) is very high. The number of cases has increased from 8,000 to 25,000. So, the absolute number of deaths will be three times more."

"Your logistics, manpower,

everything crashes in such a situation. The way the load is increasing, your capacity is not able to match up to it," he said. Of the 17,414 COVID-19 deaths in Delhi since the pandemic began, more than 5,050 have occurred in the last two weeks.

Delhi logged 448 deaths due to the deadly coronavirus on Monday, the highest in the city since the pandemic began ravaging countries.

The capital reported 407 deaths on Sunday, 412 on Saturday, 375 on Friday, 395 on Thursday, 368 on Wednesday, 381 on Tuesday, 380 on Monday, 350 on last Sunday, and 357 on Saturday last week, according to government data.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Sticky wicket

### The SP, and even the Independents, are breaching the BJP's citadel in rural UP

The political wind blowing across Uttar Pradesh (UP) may not be very soothing for the ruling BJP. The results of the recent panchayat elections give the first indication of the emergence of a challenge for the saffron outfit in rural UP. The Opposition, led by the Samajwadi Party and Independents, has made significant inroads in the village politics of the State. Though Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath still remains well-entrenched and the BJP continues to enjoy enormous appeal among the masses, one has to keep a close eye on the change in popular perception about the Government in the wake of the COVID-19 surge as it can pose a serious challenge to Yogi's bid to retain power in 2022. Both the BJP and its rivals are claiming victory in the polls, but reports trickling in from the counting booths clearly indicate that the saffron outfit has not done as well as its leaders might have planned while plunging the State into such a massive exercise in the dreaded Corona era. The panchayat elections were being treated as a referendum on the Yogi Government's work. These elections are not contested on any party symbol, but the BJP named its candidates. This was done with the belief that its candidates would win the elections and then the party would go to town claiming its hegemony in rural politics. Sadly for the BJP, the Independents stole the march in the *gram sabha* polls while the SP exceeded expectations in the district panchayat elections.



Many relatives of the BJP leaders lost to the SP or Independents. Take the case of Lucknow where Sarita, the daughter-in-law of BJP MP Kaushal Kishore lost the district panchayat election in Mohanlalganj. Kishore's wife Jaya Devi is the MLA from Malihabad. Vijay Laxmi, the wife of SP MLA Ambrish, won this segment. The reports from other districts like Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Ayodhya, Kanpur and Kannauj, too, do not augur well for the BJP. In Ayodhya, of the 40 District Development Council seats, the SP won 22, the BJP eight, the BSP four and the rest of the seats went to Independents. In Varanasi, the BJP failed to reach double digits while the SP won 17 seats. In Etawah, the SP swept the polls, winning 18 seats. In Mainpuri, Sandhya Yadav, the niece of SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav who contested on the BJP's ticket, lost to the SP-backed candidate by 1,905 votes. In Mathura, the BJP-supported Chanda Devi lost to Devati, an Independent, by over 12,000 votes. The panchayat elections are important as they help gauge the influence of political parties in the rural areas. It is believed that a *gram pradhan* can sway 10-15 per cent votes in any *gram sabha* while the BDC and DDC members can influence the block and district voters, respectively. The DDC chairman is considered the 'first person' of the district. The poll outcome shows that the BJP will have to revise its political strategy while Akhilesh Yadav needs to strengthen his party organisation to replicate this success in the 2022 Assembly elections.

polls while the SP exceeded expectations in the district panchayat elections. Many relatives of the BJP leaders lost to the SP or Independents. Take the case of Lucknow where Sarita, the daughter-in-law of BJP MP Kaushal Kishore lost the district panchayat election in Mohanlalganj. Kishore's wife Jaya Devi is the MLA from Malihabad. Vijay Laxmi, the wife of SP MLA Ambrish, won this segment. The reports from other districts like Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Ayodhya, Kanpur and Kannauj, too, do not augur well for the BJP. In Ayodhya, of the 40 District Development Council seats, the SP won 22, the BJP eight, the BSP four and the rest of the seats went to Independents. In Varanasi, the BJP failed to reach double digits while the SP won 17 seats. In Etawah, the SP swept the polls, winning 18 seats. In Mainpuri, Sandhya Yadav, the niece of SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav who contested on the BJP's ticket, lost to the SP-backed candidate by 1,905 votes. In Mathura, the BJP-supported Chanda Devi lost to Devati, an Independent, by over 12,000 votes. The panchayat elections are important as they help gauge the influence of political parties in the rural areas. It is believed that a *gram pradhan* can sway 10-15 per cent votes in any *gram sabha* while the BDC and DDC members can influence the block and district voters, respectively. The DDC chairman is considered the 'first person' of the district. The poll outcome shows that the BJP will have to revise its political strategy while Akhilesh Yadav needs to strengthen his party organisation to replicate this success in the 2022 Assembly elections.

# The Myanmar crisis lingers on

## The General has to decide whether to escalate the conflict or seek a temporary pact through a mediated political dialogue



ASHOK K MEHTA

The most effective means of foiling a coup is a counter-coup. In Myanmar, that will not happen as the military is rock solid and led by an officer corps that considers itself elite and the guardian of Myanmar's core values.

As the coup in Myanmar enters its fourth month with multiple centres of resistance taking root, it will take more than an Asean summit and its five-point consensus agreement to unlock the impasse. Senior Gen Ming Aung Hlaing will not ride into the sunset anytime soon. Signs of a third front, after Kachins in the north and Karens in the east have battled central forces, are developing at Meiktila in the central plains after rocket attacks struck the military base there. Meanwhile, the protestors have taken to flash marches that will enable people to disappear before confrontation with the police. The Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) activists are asking people to start non-cooperation campaign by stopping payment of electricity, taxes and repayment of loans.

In its 73-year history, the Myanmar Army has never fought foreigners but its own people in internal wars. The coup has marked the battle lines between an Army led by the Burman-dominated officer corps and a range of opposition forces — the CDM consisting of youth aged 20 or below who have tasted a decade of democracy: the Committee representing National Parliament that has morphed into a National Unity Government. This organised resistance has the potential to explode into a civil war when some of the 20 Ethnic Armed Organisations (EAOs) like Karen or Kachin join the NUG to challenge the Tatmadaw, the primary centre of power. A call has been made by a Karen, General Baw Kyaw Heh, to all ethnic groups to unite to fight the Burmese military dictatorship. This could be a game changer.

The General has to decide whether to escalate the conflict into a bloodier phase or seek a



*modus vivendi* through a mediated political dialogue. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy had won a clear and outright political victory trouncing the military-backed USDP. It seems inconceivable that the NLD's victory can be set aside by the military on grounds of fraudulent voting. It will be unconstitutional. Can the clock be set back to January 31?

Hlaing is from the Army's elite 77 Light Division. He was the mastermind of the ruthless operations against the Rohingyas in Rakhine in 2017 where this Division was employed. In the 1988 coup, 77 LID was used and 3,500 protestors were killed. But that was 30 years ago. The General's aim is for Myanmar to return to 2011-16 when the USDP was in power and when he took over as the C-in-C in 2011. He does not have much time if he is to return Myanmar to his vision of a disciplined democracy. This goal is a bridge too far even for the Tatmadaw to achieve, especially in 2021. The General has to weigh in the consequences of the coup and preserving the gains the military has secured in the 2008 Constitution. By

travelling out of Myanmar, attending the Asean summit, meeting UN envoy Christine Burgene and returning to his citadel, Hlaing has scored a diplomatic victory. Never before has a coup leader been treated with such respect and circumspection. Had he been in Europe, he would have been arrested for alleged genocide against the Rohingyas. The widespread violence has threatened the economy and encouraged criminal activity. In the 1950s, Burma's per capita income was higher than Thailand's and Malaysia's but today it is at the bottom of the Asean GDP. People have been fleeing from townships like Mandalay, Bago and Yangon into the interiors. A new transnational criminal activity hub — comprising small arms, narcotics and wildlife, coupled with an underground financial system reminiscent of the Golden Triangle of yore — has come up. It is a shame that a country which was the hot favourite of foreign investment and growth is suddenly moving in reverse gear. It is estimated the economy will shrink by 20 per cent in 2021-22. The latest UNDP report paints a grim

picture: That 12 million people could fall into dire economic strait as businesses remain shuttered in a standoff between the junta and the CDM. The hardest hit will be the poor urban populations and the female heads of households will be the worst hit.

India has learnt to play ball with more than one power centre in Myanmar. It has welcomed the Asean initiative and will continue to play a constructive role in resolving the current situation through steadfast support of the democratic process. The end of this political process — when it is started, and a UN Civil Protection Force is accepted by the General — will mark a political milestone in conflict resolution. Some Asean leaders are privately suggesting keeping Myanmar out of the grouping till the coup is undone. The consensus brief is either the first step towards reining in the Generals or, more likely, letting them buy time. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and former member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views expressed are personal.)

## PICTALK



The Alster Swans are accompanied by boats towards the Outer Alster area in Hamburg, Germany

PTI

## The bubble bursts

### Finally, COVID-19 has breached the IPL franchises' 'safe and secure' bio bubble

So, the ongoing edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) has been suspended indefinitely. Officially, they tell us, the reason is that the bio-secure bubble was inexplicably breached and then, before we knew it, the cricketers and support staff started falling prey to the accursed virus one after another. Since the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is quite concerned about the "health and wellbeing" of the IPL players, it was left with no option but to suspend the matches. Well, cutting clear of all the jargon



that is being thrown at us, and more of it will come our way in the coming days, here's a simpler, possible narrative. The greed of the cricket authorities managing the show — namely the BCCI, the various State cricket Boards and the IPL governing council — is mainly responsible for the current fiasco. Remember, even when the situation wasn't dire last year, they arranged for the matches to be held in the UAE and even roped in a company, renowned globally for its expertise in creating and maintaining bio-secure bubbles.

So, especially this year when the situation has rapidly worsened in terms of the exponentially rising cases and the healthcare personnel and equipment are stretched thin, what was the need to organise the tourney in India? And that, too, without re-engaging the bio bubble firm which had performed its duties last year with aplomb and finesse. Only because the cricket authorities wanted to save cheap pennies, even though it was crystal clear even before the start of the tournament that COVID-19's second wave, with its more virulent and burgeoning strains and mutants, was a definite risk to everybody associated with the cash-rich league. Another point: Just as they now started contemplating moving all the machinery and paraphernalia from Ahmedabad and Delhi back to the Wankhede and DY Patil stadia in Mumbai, why weren't the authorities content to host all the matches in Mumbai and Pune in the first place; something that would have helped the teams avoid air travel and significantly cut their exposure risk? But, no, the State cricket associations also needed to be kept in good humour with a slice of the profits' pie! Hopefully, the cricket authorities won't plan to resume the IPL in a hurry. In this hour, when our nation needs all possible help from all quarters, let's not get busy listening to the tinkle of silver and neglecting human life. Basically, let it not boil down just to the lure of lucre.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### KARNATAKA HAS LOST THE COVID BATTLE

Sir — Karnataka's fight against COVID-19 has faced many pitfalls right from the start, with Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa failing to rein in his warring Ministers during the initial days. Then his inability, along with that of the Ministers concerned to evolve a strategy to counter the second wave, explains the lack of strong political leadership in this hour of crisis. Authorities insist that the deaths in Chamarajanagar were not linked to non-availability of oxygen and that the deceased had comorbidities. But the fact remains that all the dead were on oxygen support and it is unlikely that they all succumbed to ailments within 24 hours.

The Government has repeatedly assured that there is no scarcity of medical oxygen but the ground reality is completely different. Many deaths are being reported from across the State due to oxygen shortage, and the hospitals and common man face immense difficulty in procuring oxygen cylinders and concentrators. While Kerala exports surplus oxygen to other States, it is baffling that Karnataka lacks basic facilities like ICU beds, COVID Care Centres, vital medicines or vaccines. The States like Karnataka are responsible for the worsening of COVID-19 crisis — the deaths have become mere numbers for the insensitive politicians.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

### BENGAL VIOLENCE IS UNFORTUNATE

Sir — It's quite unfortunate that violence erupted in West Bengal in the aftermath of the announcement of the Assembly election results in which at least eight people have died. The BJP said that six of its workers were among those killed and that the TMC goons attacked and vandalised several of its offices, including one in Nandigram. Political animosity is the cause of this bloodshed and it's shameful, to say the least. Such incidents are a blot on our democracy and make us wonder whether we are living in a civilised democratic society or a lawless State ruled by barbarism.

That deadly weapons were used in the clashes is a cause for concern. The goonda raj should not be re-established since

## Make vaccine prices uniform



In the absence of a regulated vaccine policy by the Government, the country is in chaos and uncertainty. The Centre should have framed a national policy on vaccine procurement and pricing that should have been applicable across India so as to effectively manage the vaccination drive. Currently, the bulk of the responsibility of vaccination has been passed on to the States and private players. Further, procurement of vaccines from a limited number of manufacturers can result in confusion and conflict of interest among the States and private players. The manufacturers will be lured into maximising the profits by selling the

vaccines to the highest bidder rather than the State Governments. The bigger States may get preference over the smaller ones.

Further, the Supreme Court has called upon the Centre to revisit its vaccine procurement policy, stating it would "prima facie result in a detriment to the right to public health which is an integral element of Article 21 of the Constitution". In early 2020, it was well known to Indian manufacturers that excessive dependence on a single source could prove to be disastrous. But we have failed to learn valuable lessons. Sadly, our active pharmaceuticals ingredients and raw materials still come from China and America, due to which Indian drug manufacturers are facing adverse circumstances. The idea of allowing other vaccine manufacturers to expand the production capacity by invoking compulsory licence of vaccine technology can cater to the needs of a large and populous country like India. For instance, countries like America, England and Israel have successfully rolled out vaccines in a short span of time as a case in point.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

many more innocent people could lose their lives in the coming days. At a time when the pandemic has devastated the country, political parties should set aside their differences and help the people win the war against COVID-19. We must not fight among ourselves but against the virus. Further, as Mamata Banerjee has been given a fresh mandate, she should take the State towards development and shun violence. All political parties should join hands to mitigate the sufferings of the people.

Sravana Ramachandran | Chennai

### STOP BLACK MARKETEERING OF DRUGS

Sir — During the ongoing second wave of the pandemic, the non-availability of COVID drugs and oxygen is the main issue the country is facing. Mainly due to the hoarding of drugs like Remdesivir, their prices have skyrocketed in the black market. Long queues

can be seen at the places selling these in black. Black marketers are charging exorbitant prices from hapless citizens. Though there are contradictory opinions on the efficacy of this drug, hospitals do prescribe it due to its purported benefit on improving mortality.

It is inhuman and criminal if intermediaries exploit the patients at such critical times. The Government should curb it by promulgating an ordinance immediately, categorising hoarding of any medicine or oxygen as culpable homicide amounting to murder, and make the applicable punishment valid for these offences. Considering the gravity of the situation, the Supreme Court may also consider passing *suo moto* orders.

M Raghuraman | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## SOUNDBITE

A murder case should be initiated against Arvind Kejriwal and his Government for not giving Delhi a robust healthcare system. They even did not complete those hospitals which were initiated by the previous Government.

Former Congress MP — Sandeep Dikshit

The Senate Republicans will not support the mega \$4.1 trillion spending package proposed by President Joe Biden.

US Senate minority leader — Mitch McConnell

We have sent a request to the Maharashtra CM to allow us to purchase COVID-19 vaccines for 30,000 registered members of the film industry's federation in Mumbai at the earliest.

Filmmaker — Aditya Chopra

Our focus will be on maintaining our fitness levels and avoiding any injuries in our practice sessions.

Indian hockey player — Lalit Upadhyay

I urge all panchayats and municipalities to open essential services 100 per cent or, else, they will face trouble and so will the people of the State. The people will indulge in panic buying.

Goa Chief Minister — Pramod Sawant



## FIRST COLUMN

### CHARITY IS NOT A ONE-STOP SOLUTION

India can encourage philanthropy by incentivising it on a tax and individual level and offering tax deductibility



ANURADHA PRASAD

Philanthropy is not a novel concept in India as Indians most often part with wealth in the name of faith, charity or nation-building. A 2020 Charities Aid Foundation report recounts that "the most popular causes for donation remain the same as previous years: Helping the poor (54 per cent), supporting religious organisations (51 per cent) and supporting children (49 per cent)," in India. Unfortunately, charity in our nation is largely either faith-based, or is a response to a natural disaster or relief effort like the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, it remains insufficient for addressing the longstanding social issues.

In this context, philanthropic capital from the private sector has become a lifeline for the development sector over the last few years. According to a 2021 Bain-Dasra Report, private-sector funding was about ₹64,000 crore in 2020, which is almost 23 per cent more than the previous year. The money primarily comes from foreign donors, corporate entities, retail (or crowdfunding), high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) and families. The report highlights that HNWI contributions



account for a quarter of all funding, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) donations account for 28 per cent and retail investors or everyday charity account for another 28 per cent. The remaining 20 per cent comes from family philanthropy — the biggest source of growth — that accounts for nearly two-thirds of the increase in funding since 2019. With these numbers in place, it's not surprising that non-profits in India have directed their energies into unlocking philanthropic capital coming from HNWIs and families. After all, the number of ultra-high-net-worth individuals (UHNWIs) in India will grow 73 per cent in the next five years. It is estimated that the number of UHNWIs will double by 2024. While India prides itself on being home to more than 200 billionaires, the country has also been in the news for topping the world-wide income gap indices.

So, where does philanthropy feature in the larger scheme of things? The easy answer would be that the growing wealth (of a few) in India should automatically translate into more charity. Unfortunately, the reality is not so simple. India still ranks very low on philanthropic giving in comparison to other countries. As per the "World Giving Index 2019", "India was the least generous of the seven South Asian countries in the index, behind its neighbours Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka."

In India, particularly, the concept of giving is an altruistic and value-driven act, rather than an obligation or economically-incentivised. Interestingly, the developed world — particularly the US, has seen a rise in demand for a progressive tax regime by the HNWIs and UHNWIs. Walt Disney and Co heiress Abigail Disney, former BlackRock Inc. managing director Morris Pearl, and Danish-Iranian entrepreneur Djaffar Shalchi are petitioning for higher taxes on the rich to help pay for the billions in new Government programmes made necessary by the pandemic. Alternatively, in India, there has been a shortfall in the overall collection of taxes by the Indian Government.

Another effective method to increase charity is by incentivising it on a tax and individual level. For larger philanthropic donations, the Government can offer tax deductibility. For instance, in the face of the COVID crisis, the US Government increased their allowance for deductible donations of any individual's annual gross income to 100 per cent from 60 per cent the previous year. Creating a national charity platform or offering major tax breaks for donations is an effective impetus for charity. Perhaps a crucial step would be Government-supported recognition and honour for citizens, incentivised charity, changing the culture and a progressive tax regime.

(The writer is founder and director, India Leaders for Social Sector. The views expressed are personal.)

# Fallout of the US troop drawdown will be big



ANIL GUPTA

While the Afghans will have to prepare themselves for a possible civil war, the global community must get ready for a renewed and more vigorous threat from extremist Islam

US President Joe Biden has announced September 11 as the final cut-off date for the complete withdrawal of the US troops from war-torn Afghanistan. Earlier, he had denounced his predecessor Donald Trump's decision for a complete drawdown by May 1 as "impractical." As per the new blueprint the pull out which began on May 1 must terminate by September 11 this year. Significantly, September 11, 2022 will mark the completion of two decades of invasion of Afghanistan codenamed 'Operation Enduring Freedom' (when the twin objective of overthrowing the ruling Taliban regime and decimating Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda was partially achieved) and 'Operation Freedom's Sentinel' thereafter, the longest-running war in American history. At a time when the US and allies are leaving, Afghanistan is in turmoil due to the internal war for control over the country continuing between the elected Government of President Ashraf Gani and the insurgents led by the Taliban, who already control more than 40 per cent of the country.

A Pakistan-brokered peace agreement between the US and the Taliban reached in February 2020 succeeded only to the extent that the Taliban stopped attacking the foreign troops. It failed to achieve the main purpose of a negotiated settlement and permanent ceasefire with the Afghan Government. The Taliban had also agreed to ensure that its soil would not be used as a launch pad for the global jihadi terror groups, which also has been violated many times. In fact, the violence has surged in Afghanistan ever since the beginning of peace talks, with the deaths of civilians and the security forces recording an upward trend as deadly terror attacks increased.

In a nutshell, Afghanistan continues to be in a quagmire and the melting pot for global jihadi terror. The question arises, what did the US achieve even after spending over \$2 trillion and losing 2,216 precious lives? Billions in "aid" are said to have gone down the drain, with the bulk invested in the Dubai property market. The cost to Afghan civilians has been equally appalling, put at between 50,000 and 1,00,000 deaths over the last two decades. Many analysts believe that the present regime in Kabul is unlikely to hold on for long after the Americans leave. It could hardly govern with American help and is unlikely to succeed without the US.

Come September, Afghanistan is likely to be back with the Taliban, a scenario dreaded not only by the Afghans, particularly the women, but India as well. Afghanistan has once again lived up to its reputation of "the graveyard of the Empires." Yet another power is leaving Afghanistan in ruins and without ushering peace in the war-torn nation. This is straightforward abandonment. Kabul faces a threat not only from the Taliban but from the Islamic State (IS) as well, which is reported to have formed an affiliate IS in Khorasan province.

The country has witnessed a sea change with regards to infrastructure development under the 'Reconstruction of Afghanistan' programme, to which India is a major contributor. Will it have any value for the radical Islamists for whom the rule of Sharia is ultimate, even if it means a return to the Medieval Era? The Taliban have already announced themselves as the winners. "We have won the war, America has lost," they say. That the



THE GOODWILL OF THE AFGHANS EARNED BY INDIA SHOULD ALSO BE EXPLOITED BY NEW DELHI TO SOFTEN THE TALIBAN APPROACH TO US. THE EMERGING SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN WOULD DEFINITELY TEST OUR POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC METTLE IN THE DAYS TO COME

The author is a Jammu-based veteran, political commentator, columnist, security and strategic analyst. The views expressed are personal.



Taliban see themselves as a government-in-waiting, speaks volumes of their plans to overthrow the current regime after the Americans leave. They have already decided to rename the country as the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.'

"This is jihad, it is worship. We don't do it for power but for Allah and His law. To bring Sharia to this country. Whoever stands against us we will fight against them," says Haji Hekmat, Taliban's shadow mayor in Balkh District. The statement reflects the mindset of the Taliban leadership. However, some elements feel that with the passing of time and change of mindset among many Muslim countries, a group of moderates has also emerged among the Taliban. How much they would be able to influence the new Government or how the new Islamic Government will accommodate them, only time will tell.

India has both, strategic and internal security issues with the American abandonment of Afghanistan. While India's arch rival in the region, Pakistan seems to be in a win-win situation, India will have to face many challenges. Though,

New Delhi has been included, at Washington's insistence, in the United Nations' supervised talks for ensuring intra-Afghan peace, it is not going to make much of a difference, as any positive outcome of the talks is almost ruled out. As and when the Taliban assume power, Pakistan would emerge as a major

player. While Pakistan will not like any Indian influence in Afghanistan, New Delhi can ill-afford to lose all the goodwill and strategic leverage it has gained through huge investments in its economic uplift. Afghanistan is as strategically important to India as it is to Pakistan.

The major threat that would emerge to India, is the likelihood of the situation as it prevailed in the 1990s and early 2000s in relation to jihadi terror. A pliant Government in Afghanistan will allow Pakistan to continue to adhere to its policy of using terror as an instrument of State policy. To avoid international pressure and the fear of watchdogs, it is likely to shift the terror infrastructure to the badlands of Afghanistan.

Jihadi terrorists who would become surplus to the internal need in Afghanistan may well be diverted across the border by Pakistan, as in the past. The security of the infrastructure built by India, including the alternate road route via the Sistan Baluchistan of Iran and the Indian personnel deployed there, would be another major concern.

To ensure that the gains made by India are not buried along with the anticipated change in regime post-September, New Delhi needs to formulate and put in place a robust response based on a long-term strategy. Without losing time the Government must appoint a special representative for Afghanistan reconciliation with the mandate to

open communication channels and negotiations with all stakeholders, including the Taliban and the IS. Putting boots on the ground has been opposed by India till now and hopefully New Delhi will stick to its stance hereafter. A greater outreach to strengthen the Afghan forces, including training and equipping them, must continue with increased emphasis on capacity-building.

India would need to leverage its good relations with Iran and Russia to keep Pakistan and Turkey away from harming our interests. The emerging threat from radical Islamists will have to be highlighted to China, since it is very sensitive to such threats in its Xinxiang province.

The goodwill of the Afghans earned by India should also be exploited by New Delhi to soften the Taliban approach to us. The emerging situation in Afghanistan would definitely test our political and diplomatic mettle in the days to come.

While the Afghans will have to prepare themselves for a possible civil war, the global community must get ready for a renewed and more vigorous threat from extremist Islam. The epicentre of the new global 'Great Game' may be shifting to the Indo-Pacific or the South Caucasus, but Afghanistan will continue to be the epicentre of global jihadi terror, rejuvenated and resurrected. The US may abandon Afghanistan but it would not be able to abandon its war on terror.

## POINT COUNTERPOINT

AFTER A DISCUSSION WITH THE ASSOCIATE MINISTERS AND OFFICIALS, IT HAS BEEN DECIDED TO IMPLEMENT THE LOCKDOWN IN BIHAR TILL MAY 15. —BIHAR CHIEF MINISTER NITISH KUMAR



AT LEAST ONE ORDER HAS BEEN COMPLIED WITH. WE HAVE ALL FAILED. ALL OF US FEEL ASHAMED FOR WHAT WE HAVE DONE. —ADDITIONAL JUDGE, PATNA HIGH COURT JUSTICE CHAKRADHARI SHARAN SINGH

# Breach of fundamental duties led to the spread of Corona

The top court has asserted that under Article 47, the State shall regard the improvement of public health as among its primary duties. Here, it seems to have failed us

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has stipulated certain public health and social measures to contain the spread of the Coronavirus after taking into account the levels of COVID-19 transmission. One of the major measures stipulated is to maintain social distancing and avoid congregations.



CHITTARVU RAGHU

There is an obligation on the State to adhere to the measures stipulated by the health watchdog which has also played a vital role in eradicating small pox, polio and so on. As the world, particularly India, witnesses an unprecedented health emergency, it is vital to adhere to the COVID-protocols. Historically, the second wave of any pandemic has proven to be more intensive and dangerous than the first one and India is learning this bitter truth the hard way.

The writer is a senior advocate in the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana High Courts. The views expressed are personal.

to protect the health of the people. In this context, the State has to regulate all social and religious events which involve congregations so as to prevent the spread of the virus. Apart from the State, every individual has an obligation to regulate his/her conduct and see to it that their behaviour does not result in any adverse impact on society. We Indians have failed in both these aspects.

Permitting road shows and massive rallies during the conduct of the Assembly elections in various States, particularly West Bengal and allowing the conduct of the Kumbh Mela at Haridwar in the middle of the Coronavirus outbreak clearly demonstrates the same. Consequently on April 15, Uttarakhand recorded its highest upsurge in COVID-19 cases. The Centre was fully conscious of the fact that such large congregations would definitely

spread the virus, but failed to prevent the same. The State ought to have realised that the "Right to Life" guaranteed under the Indian Constitution overrides the rights conferred by the Constitution in relation to a religious activity.

Article 21 of the Constitution mandates that no person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. The Supreme Court has held that the "Right to Life" guaranteed under Article 21 includes within its ambit the right to health and medical care. Article 47 a directive principle of State policy stresses on the improvement of public health and so on.

The apex court had expanded the concept of "Right to Life." It was held that it derives its life breath from the directive principles of State policy. When the constitution-



al right to manage religious affairs came up for discussion before the drafting committee, the Chairman had proposed to make the said right, subject to public order, morality and health. It was accepted without any debate. This proves the vision of the founding fathers of the Constitution. But we are failing miserably to act in a proper perspective to protect the constitutional rights being enjoyed by us. Lack of preven-

tive measures and the callousness of the general citizens reflect the same.

The State cannot remain a silent spectator when massive congregations, either political or religious, are being organised, which will result in exacerbating the health emergency that we are currently facing. In this context it's also relevant to examine Article 26 of the Constitution. It contemplates that the freedom to manage religious affairs is subject to public order, morality and health. Therefore, it is not an absolute right. It is conditioned by Article 21 of the Constitution when it relates more particularly in relation to the aspect of public health.

We failed in adhering to the social distancing norms which is a major cause for the spread of the virus. Mahatma Gandhi had said on the aspect of a person's duty towards society that

"the true source of right is duty." If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If we neglect our duties and run after rights, they will elude us.

The Supreme Court, too, in the Minerva Mills Vs Union of India case, held that there may be a rule which imposes an obligation on an individual or authority and yet it may not be enforceable in a court of law and, therefore, not give rise to a corresponding right in another person. But it would still be a legal rule because it prescribes a norm of conduct to be followed by such an individual or authority.

The law may provide a mechanism of enforcement. A rule imposing an obligation or duty would not cease to be a rule of law because there is no regular judicial or quasi-judicial machinery to enforce its command. Such a rule would exist despite any problem relating to

its enforcement. Otherwise the conventions of the Constitution and even rules of international law would no longer be liable to be regarded as rules of law.

This shows that an individual plays a vital role in a State and its welfare. Fundamental duties were introduced in part IV A by the 42nd amendment and were based on the recommendations of the Swaran Singh Committee.

The Supreme Court in the Javed Vs State of Haryana case, held that fundamental rights are not to be read in isolation. They have to be read along with directive principles of State policy and fundamental duties enshrined in Article 51A. The top court also asserted that under Article 47, the State shall regard the improvement of public health as among its primary duties. Here, it seems to have failed us.

# Sensex skids for third day; Reliance, HDFC twins top drags

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmark Sensex surrendered early gains to finish in the red for the third consecutive session on Tuesday following brisk selling in frontline stocks. The grim COVID-19 situation and continued selling by foreign funds has sapped risk appetite, traders said.

After a gap-up opening, the 30-share BSE index succumbed to profit-taking in afternoon trade to finish at 48,253.51, down 465.01 points or 0.95 per cent. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty slumped 137.65 points or 0.94 per cent to close at 14,496.50.

Dr Reddy's was the top loser among the Sensex constituents, retreating 2.26 per cent, followed by Reliance Industries, Sun Pharma, HDFC twins, Infosys, M&M and Bharti Airtel.

On the other hand, ONGC, Bajaj Finance, TCS, SBI, Kotak Bank and Nestle India were among the gainers, climbing up to 1.86 per cent. "Indices lost a percentage on Tuesday as the street punished earnings disappointment in several high-quality midcaps. Afternoon trade witnessed profit-taking in metals and pharma names as the street exhibited nervousness on regional lockdowns which accentuated the weakness."

While a persistent increase in daily case-load in several states is still a matter of concern, visible modest decline in new cases in many parts like Maharashtra and Delhi offers comfort, he added. The total tally of coronavirus cases in the country

mounted to 2,02,82,833 with 3,57,229 new infections being reported in a day, while the death toll increased to 2,22,408 with 3,449 new fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

Sectorally, BSE healthcare, energy, telecom, consumer durables, auto and basic materials indices lost as much as 1.50 per cent, while oil and gas, utilities and capital

goods ended with gains. Broader BSE midcap and small-cap indices fell up to 0.57 per cent.

Global markets were mixed as investors wagered on a strong economic rebound even as many countries see an unabated rise in COVID-19 cases.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong and Seoul ended on a positive note. Stock exchanges in Shanghai and Tokyo were closed for holidays.

Equities in Europe gave up initial gains to trade mildly lower in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 1.79 per cent higher at USD 68.77 per barrel.

The rupee gained for the second straight day and closed 10 paise higher at 73.85 against the US dollar on Tuesday.

# Move to amend National Electricity Policy criticised

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All India Power Engineers Federation on Tuesday condemned the central government's move to amend the National Electricity Policy "to facilitate privatisation".

According to a statement by the AIPEF, the proposed changes require extensive discussions as such time for submission of comments should be six months.

When fundamental changes are being introduced by way of privatisation of the power sector, there is no basis to rush through more so under extreme distress caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it said.

"All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPEF) condemns the government of India's move to amend the National Electricity Policy to facilitate the privatisation of the power sector," the statement said.

The body alleged that this is a clear attempt to introduce privatisation through the backdoor and deserves to be scrapped.

The purpose of the central government is not to review or



revise the existing National Electricity Policy but the total replacement of existing policy with a new policy to be recommended by the expert group so as to achieve privatisation, the body alleged.

As per Electricity Act 2003, National Electricity Policy is to be prepared in consultation with the state governments and Central Electricity Authority, a statutory body. However, the body said that the CEA is not included in the proposed schedule of discussion.

Further, only 5 states have been included in an expert group instead of all the states, it added.

K Subramanian, Chief Economic Adviser, has stated that India is the only country that readily implemented a slew of reforms and used this crisis to herald a change in India's economic thinking, it said.

The strategy of government seems to be "never waste a crisis" and use the crisis of pandemic to streamroll so-called reforms by way of privatizing, it alleged.

The draft proposal is of serious nature for which the present situation of a pandemic is a serious constraint, it stated.



# Godrej Properties clocks record sales

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Godrej Properties' sales bookings grew by 14 per cent to an all-time high of Rs 6,725 crore during the last financial year, despite a slowdown in the property market due to the pandemic.

In an investor presentation, the Mumbai-based company said it has achieved sales bookings of more than Rs 1,300 crore each across four major markets -- Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Bengaluru and Pune. "Godrej Properties Ltd is amongst India's largest developers by booking value. Total booking value in FY21

grew by 14 per cent YoY (Year-On-Year) to Rs 6,725 crore," the company said in the presentation. The residential segment contributed Rs 6,663 crore, while commercial projects Rs 62 crore in the overall sales bookings during the 2020-21 financial year. Of the total sales bookings, Godrej Properties said the sales from existing inventory stood at Rs 4,550 crore, while sales from new launches stood at Rs 2,175 crore. "Sold 9,345 homes (YoY growth of 27 per cent) with a total area of 10.8 million sq ft (YoY growth of 23 per cent) in FY21," Godrej Properties said.

# Singapore expands facility to revive aviation, hospital sectors

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Complimenting the Singapore government's broader efforts to reinvigorate aviation and local hospitality sectors in a safe and calibrated manner, a state-funded COVID-proof facility has expanded by four-fold to 600 guest rooms and 160 meeting rooms for visiting international business executives to manage their deals through the city state.

Each in-person meeting at Connect@Changi, without the need for quarantine upon arrival, represents a small but concrete step towards the resumption of business and economic activities. Aloysius Arlando, CEO, SingEx-Sphere Holdings, one of the consortium partners led by the state-owned Temasek Group that is behind the facility, said on Tuesday.

"Connect@Changi is a pilot short-stay facility built to support the resumption of business and economic activities while safeguarding the local



community," he said about the facility, a 10-minute drive from Singapore's Changi international airport.

It is uniquely designed to meet the immediate needs of business travellers who have to conduct in-person business meetings and other engagements with their Singapore-based counterparts, while being in a safe and contained environment, Arlando said.

It offers the same integrated 'test-stay-work-meet' experience for inbound business travellers with the addition of enhanced amenities to help guests unwind during their stay, he said.

"Connect@Changi is ready to host guests who are welcome to use the facility for any business activity that they see

fit, and they might include small-scale or side meetings and presentations as part of a larger regional or international event or conference," said Arlando.

The 150 guest room facility started in February but has been expanded to 600 guest rooms from this month, responding to over 100 confirmed bookings from international guests.

In the three months of its operation, the facility facilitated over 150 in-person meetings and hosted guests from regional countries such as Indonesia and Japan, as well as guests from the Americas, Europe and the Middle East.

"The facility made possible face-to-face business engagements like job interviews for senior management, product demonstrations, confidential business negotiations and contract signings from a diverse slate of business sectors and industries such as manufacturing, finance and engineering," it said.

# Alembic Q4 net profit up by 12 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Drug firm Alembic Pharmaceuticals on Tuesday reported an 11.60 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 250.70 crore for the quarter ended March 2021, mainly on account of robust sales.

The company had posted a net profit of Rs 224.63 crore for the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, Alembic Pharmaceuticals said in a filing to BSE.

Consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 1,280.39 crore for the quarter under consideration. It was Rs 1,206.83 crore for the same period a year ago, it added.

For the fiscal year ended March, the company posted a net profit of Rs 1,178 crore as against Rs 829 crore in 2019-20, Alembic Pharma said.

# MONEY MATTERS

## BSE STAR MF registers 1.11 cr transactions worth ₹33,735 cr



Leading stock exchange BSE on Tuesday said its mutual fund distribution platform STAR MF has processed a record 1.11 crore transactions worth Rs 33,735 crore in April. It surpassed its monthly record of 1.10 crore transactions achieved in March 2021, the exchange said in a statement. In spite of the nationwide pandemic and lockdown, BSE STAR MF has helped asset management companies (AMCs) members and their clients in smooth paperless transactions. The platform has clocked 1.11 crore transactions in April 2021, a sharp increase of 75 per cent from 63.17 lakh registered in April 2020. Overall, the platform achieved 9.38 crore transactions in the financial year 2020-21. Besides, the platform registered 4.99 lakh new systematic investment plans (SIPs) amounting to Rs 129.95 crore in April 2021, the exchange said.

## Gold gains Rs 97; silver jumps Rs 1,282



Gold gained Rs 97 to Rs 46,758 per 10 gram in the national capital on Tuesday, according to HDFC Securities. In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 46,661 per 10 gram. Silver also

jumped Rs 1,282 to Rs 70,270 per kilogram from Rs 68,988 per kilogram in the previous trade. In the international market, gold was trading marginally lower at USD 1,788 per ounce and silver was flat at USD 26.90 per ounce. "Gold prices traded marginally down with spot prices at COMEX (New York-based commodities exchange) trading at USD 1,788 per ounce on Tuesday," according to HDFC Securities, Senior Analyst (Commodities), Tapan Patel.

## Rupee gains 10 paise to end at 73.85, rises for second day



Rising for the second day in a row, the rupee closed 10 paise higher at 73.85 against the US currency on Tuesday on dollar selling by traders. A stronger dollar in the global markets, losses in the domestic equities and high crude oil prices, however, restricted the gain in the local

unit. "The Indian Rupee appreciated for the 2nd successive session against the US Dollar this Tuesday as traders trimmed their dollar long positions," said Sriram Iyer, Senior Research Analyst at Reliance Securities. At the interbank forex market, the rupee opened at 73.83, and hit an intra-day high of 73.76 and a low of 73.97. On Monday, the rupee had settled at 73.95 against the American currency. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, surged 0.42 per cent to 91.33.

# Accenture pledges \$25 mn for Covid relief efforts in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global IT and professional services company Accenture on Tuesday said it has pledged USD 25 million (about Rs 185 crore) for pandemic relief efforts in the country.

This is in addition to the company's ongoing investments in people and communities, Rekha M Menon, Chairperson and Senior MD of Accenture in India, said in a blog post on LinkedIn.

Local and global efforts are already underway including providing ventilators, oxygen concentrators, and medical kits, she added.

"Accenture stands in solidarity with India. We have made



a fresh pledge of USD 25 million (about Rs 185 crore) for pandemic relief efforts in addition to ongoing investments in our people and communities... Additionally, we will be augmenting existing hospitals with beds and ICUs and setting up portable hospitals," she noted.

Menon - who was recently appointed as the Chairperson of Nasscom - said Accenture is also engaging with the government to support vaccination camps and provide local lan-

guage call-centre support. To support its over 2,00,000 employees and their families in India, the company has built several resources including 24/7 telemedicine, care-at-home services, enhanced insurance coverage, virtual childcare, mental health support, and support for testing and vaccinations.

"Across the globe, our people have expressed their support. In addition to their time, they are also donating funds, and Accenture will match 100 per cent of our people's contributions for Covid relief efforts. Sharing gratitude for our ONE Accenture family - the 5,37,000 people standing with us every day," Menon said.

# 'MFIs to witness asset quality pressures'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

With increasing Covid cases and the resultant restrictions in movements imposed by many states, the microfinance industry is likely to see an impact on their collections and may witness asset quality pressures in the near term, says a report.

However, good on-balance sheet liquidity and sizeable provisions created by most of the Microfinance Institutions in 2021 will provide a cushion for absorbing shocks, Icr Ratings said in a report on Tuesday.

# FADA raises ₹10L to procure O2 tankers

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra unit of automobile dealers body FADA has raised Rs 10 lakh to support the state's transport department to procure 250 oxygen tankers fitted with GPS devices.

Federation of Automobile Dealers' Association (FADA) Maharashtra chapter has decided to make its contribution to strengthening the hands of the state administration in battling the second wave of Covid which is proving more fatal and health care battling to reach out to people in the state, a release said.

The federation said it has raised the required contribution of Rs 10 lakh and placed

the order, it said.

The fitment of the GPS devices in these tankers has already commenced from Monday, FADA Maharashtra said, adding it has roped in MOBA Mobile Automation (India) for the necessary technological know-how and expertise to deliver the same in a time-bound manner.

"FADA got an opportunity to strengthen the hands of Maharashtra state administration. We have tried to do our best as this is a small contribution towards enabling the transport department to monitor oxygen tankers movement on a single dashboard. This will definitely help save the lives of patients," FADA President Vinkeesh Gulati said.

# IIT-M, UK researchers develop paper-based sensor to detect AMR

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Researchers at the IIT-Madras and hailing from the United Kingdom have developed a paper-based sensor that can detect antimicrobial pollutants which induce antimicrobial resistance in water bodies.

According to IIT-M, the sensor works on a 'see and tell' mechanism that makes it logistically effective for wide implementation. Scientific communities were engaged in the study of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the water bodies were the major source for the dissemination and

transfer of AMR. Underlining the need for periodic monitoring of antimicrobial pollutants in water bodies, antibiotic resistant genes was the key to assess the current situation of Antimicrobial Resistance in the country.

The research on developing the paper-based sensor to detect anti-microbial pollutants was funded by the department of science and technology in collaboration with the United Kingdom's Natural Environment Research Council under the Indo-UK Water Quality Research programme.

# Auto sales witness impact of lockdowns

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Auto sales in April have started showing the impact of lockdowns that has put the brakes on the recovery of the sector, a report said on Tuesday.

With more states announcing lockdowns and some more OEMs expecting to go for maintenance shutdowns, as many as 50 per cent of the dealers are likely to be impacted by the move, it added.

However, the full-year prospects remain positive if the COVID wave recedes in the April quarter and the vaccination drive goes as planned, brokerage firm Centrum said in the report.

The opportunity cost was higher in April as it had a mini-festival period and weddings that fell after Holi. Two-wheeler sales were higher in this period and hence channels



were stocked up. However, the lockdowns happened in the states that contributed 25-30 per cent of the sales, it added.

Centrum said the passenger vehicles sales started in the month with low inventory and hence stocked up before the production shutdowns in May.

The commercial segment was the worst hit and lagged the registrations, indicating low channel inventory now,

while tractor sales have also declined sequentially hinting at the pandemic impact in the hinterlands, it said.

"We expect May to be subdued with more states taking lockdowns and as OEM's take maintenance shutdowns," Centrum Broking said. Noting that April was anticipated to be a good month for two-wheelers on the back of mini-festivals at the regional

level and marriage season demand in the rural areas, the OEM's had prepared their channels with stock.

However, with the rising COVID cases, states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Delhi started imposing lockdowns as a result of which, the wholesalers of domestic two-wheelers got impacted especially in the lower cc-segments, with month-on-month sales of Hero MotoCorp, Bajaj Auto and TVS Motors declining by 37 per cent, 30 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively, in the domestic market.

Bajaj Auto's management expects 50 per cent of dealers to be shut in May as compared to 30-35 per cent in April on the back of lockdowns, the report said, adding inventories are also higher than normal for the industry.

## SOULFUL, MEANINGFUL TUNES TO VIBE TO

SHIKHA DUGGAL

When Jaani Tere Naa released, every diehard fan of Punjabi music was asking one another whether if they heard this new bombarding track or not. That was the kind of effect of the popular actor and singer from the Bollywood industry Sunanda Sharma.

With every new track that she releases, it's bound to create ripples in the Punjabi music industry! Things slowly turned wild and frantic for her when she seized an opportunity to be featured in a Hindi music video opposite Sonu Sood — she couldn't control her excitement, it was way beyond her. *Pagal Nahi Hona* with India's new Covid hero had listeners hooked on so much that there she was with a new music video having promising actor of our era Nawazuddin Siddique shaking a leg with her while going through diverse nuances of emotions in one single music video!

Sunanda's song *Baarish Ki Jaaye* sung by B Praak has received a lot of love and praise from fans. Inspired by a true story, the music video for *Baarish Ki Jaaye* tells the tale of a gangster who falls in love and marries a woman with mental health issues. *Baarish Ki Jaaye* has received over 111 million views on YouTube with over 2 Million likes so far and Sunanda Sharma can't contain her elation anymore! Despite being restricted because of a pandemic, the singer came on board only to accelerate the change to an amplifying benefit. It was no music video with a lavish production budget but only a new sensation coming from the land of five rivers which is always spilling over with artists competing for liveliness and stardom.

"What's the primary job of a *kalakaar* (artist)? It's to delve deep into the character they have been asked to play or sing, regardless of which film/music industry they belong to. It's a talent pool! It's the modern era, everyone is busy collaborating either for a web-show, music video or movie and we all know, each

to its own, we are entitled to our own fan-base and wherever we go as a *kalakaar*, our fandom will come along. It's a world of experiments and there's an increasing consensus of new normal changes, hence we as artists are also adjusting to the novel norms. As far as revenues are concerned, '*muh-maange paise milte hai*' so why not take it up!" she says.

Media reports quoted her talking about playing a girl with mental health issues — "It wasn't the usual glamorous girl showing how pretty she is. The character has this real side to it and a lot of people will agree. It needed intense work and that became the deciding factor for me. I play a girl who is a special child, has no idea about the world. She doesn't even know what love is but is getting married to this gangster played by Nawazuddin, who cares for her."

While one was a top-notch romantic track that she did, the new music video is a complete contrast to it, while both of them bring two souls together. Adding to that she says, "Everyone goes through a stage where they get attracted, fall in love and even get to experience a heart-break, while what I have noticed is that for every song there will definitely be a strata of people who resonate with whatever track I come up with. If music can bring cultures together, so can it bring souls together! When we share music, it gets a meaningful glimpse into another way of life as you can also witness in *Baarish Ki Jaaye*. On a personal note, whenever I am caught up with a hectic schedule on set, I turn on music for a while and loosen up. That's how it plays an important element even in my life because it takes me into another *duniya*. Music has spirituality! When an interaction seems to be closed, music helps."

The moment Sunanda got the news that she'll be collaborating with Sonu Sood for a music video, as mentioned earlier, she couldn't contain that moment of exhilaration because she could feel the *theth punjabi* vibe already! She already knew the vibe on the set is going to be world class and more importantly, she built an unspoken regard for

him as a philanthropist who's giving his blood and sweat for the nation's progress in the times of crisis where one can't even take the risk of venturing out from their homes. Asserting firmly that '*kalakaar ko pehle kaam chahiye*', she as a singer certainly first associates with how meaningful a song is, instead of who's in the video.

The 28-year old self-taught musician further says, "Both the actors are immensely humble! The kind of chivalry they had shown was something that clenched onto my heart. Punjabi music is on a heady rise these days because it's being loved by the masses and how! The atmosphere, while shooting in Mumbai, gets a tad bit authoritarian and back in Punjab, it's all slackening. I was literally following a 9-5 shift in

Mumbai because they keep professionalism a priority!"

The state that she belongs to has a long-standing tradition of music and live performance! Punjabi music has a diaspora of its own that's even far-fetched to overseas, one can imagine now. At the moment, Bollywood is also being deeply influenced by Punjabi culture and they can't get enough of those songs. Music gives Sunanda Sharma a sense of emotional power! Like any other individual, music impacts her in ways that other sounds don't. Fond of listening to Pakistani music whenever having a dull moment around, the singing sensation finally discovered that music can inspire such strong feelings and bind us so tightly to other

people! In today's success, one thing she has noticed is that music industry has placed a pathway for singers to be featured in their own music video! Sunanda doesn't want to do a playback for any popular actress but rather be the face of her own music video as it provides more dynamism. "Nobody would better know on how to act on a song sung by me but me! I

there's no need to transform it!" she concluded.

Instagram reels are filling the gap of Tiktok these days and Sunand's song *Baarish Ki Jaaye* is one of the trending reel trends on it, leave



### VISIT ACCINATE ACAY!

Where did most Indians escape to, once they thought the Covid surge has come down? Where did our celebs go for a vacay in the past few months, to put behind their stress and tensions? The Maldives! This tourist destination is easily on everybody's 'favourite list'. But with the increase in the influx of tourists, came an increase in the number of covid cases, to the point of the country having to shut its door on India!

National News, 'Visit Maldives' has collaborated with the country's ministry of tourism for this campaign. The messaging is such that it comes across as attractive for international tourists looking to travel somewhere that the island archipelago has undertaken some initiatives which make it one of the safest destinations in the world for tourists.

on to '3V' tourism," Mausoom had said.

Maldives had already announced plans to offer tourists the Covid-19 vaccine. Its tourism minister Abdulla Mausoom in an interview with CNBC had announced a '3V' plan that stands for 'Visit', 'Vaccinate', 'Vacation', as an incentive to visit the country.

Now, it wants visitors to feel a sense of safety and comfort amid the pandemic. For them to visit a place where they can not only socially distance themselves but also interact with the first fully vaccinated tourism workforce. As per the report, at present, 65 per cent of eligible people in the Maldives have been vaccinated and 90 per cent of those eligible in the tourism industry in the country have received their doses, too. Additionally, all members of the tourism industry, who have been vaccinated, will wear a dedicated 'I'm Vaccinated' badge. Maldives, at the moment, is accepting tourists with a negative PCR test report, taken less than three days before travel, or those who are fully vaccinated with no quarantine requirements.

The main idea of tourism being open is to provide reasonably safe tourism with minimum inconvenience. So, once the country gets vaccinated, then we will move



### Awareness key to tackling mid-life crisis

If you are, or know a middle-aged man, you sure know of the perils of the mid-life crisis that they could already be going through. And if the man grapples with feelings of loneliness, problems tend to get serious. But here's worse news: Findings of a recent study by

the University of Eastern Finland researchers suggest that loneliness among middle-aged men is associated with an increased risk of cancer! "It has been estimated, on the basis of studies carried out in recent years, that loneliness could be as significant a health risk as smoking or overweight. Our findings support the idea that attention

should be paid to this issue," Project Researcher Siiri-Liisi Kraav from the University of Eastern Finland says.

According to the researchers, taking account of loneliness and social relationships should thus be an important part of comprehensive health care and disease prevention. The findings were published in *Psychiatry Research*.

The study was launched in the 1980s with 2,570 middle-aged men from eastern Finland participating. Their health and mortality have been monitored on the basis of registered data up until the present day. During the follow-up, 649 men, i.e., 25 per

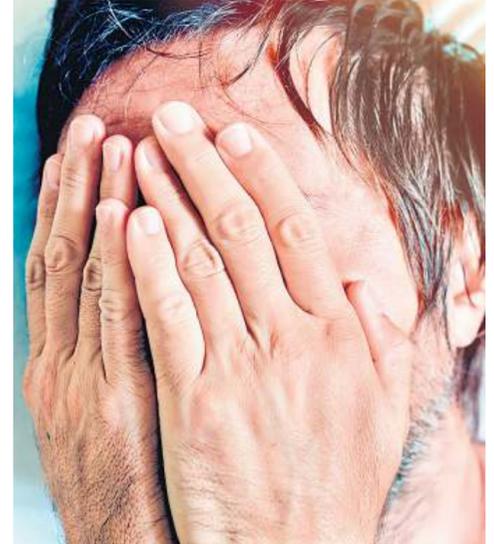
cent of the participants, developed cancer, and 283 men (11 per cent) died of cancer.

Loneliness increased the risk of cancer by about ten per cent. This association with the risk of cancer was observed regardless of age, socio-economic status, lifestyle, sleep quality, depression symptoms, body mass index, heart disease, and their risk factors. In addition, cancer mortality was higher in cancer patients who were unmarried, widowed, or divorced at baseline.

"Awareness of the health effects of loneliness is con-

stantly increasing. Therefore, it is important to examine, in more detail, the mechanisms by which loneliness causes adverse health effects. This information would enable us to better alleviate loneliness and the harm caused by it, as well as to find optimal ways to target preventive measures," researchers say.

There's hope: Increased awareness helps to deal with problems better. Researchers hope the study will equip more people to notice, identify and address warning signs early on.



# Kangana's Twitter account suspended permanently



**K**angana Ranaut's Twitter account has been permanently suspended after she commented on the alleged violence in West Bengal following the assembly election results. In a series of provocative tweets, the actor also commented on the victory of the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress (TMC) for the third consecutive term in West Bengal. Her Instagram remains functional.

Responding to the suspension, Kangana told a news agency, "Twitter has only proved my point they're Americans & by birth, a white person feels entitled to enslave a brown person, they want to tell you what to think, speak or do. I have many platforms I can use to raise my voice, including my own art in the form of cinema." She went on to add, "But my heart goes out to the people of this nation who have been tor-

mented, enslaved, and censored for thousands of years, and still, there is no end to the suffering."

Commenting on the development, a Twitter spokesperson said as per a news agency, "We've been clear that we will take strong enforcement action on behavior that has the potential to lead to offline harm. The referenced account has been permanently suspended for repeated violations of Twitter Rules specifically our Hateful Conduct policy and Abusive Behaviour policy."

The spokesperson said that the rules were applied judiciously, "As explained in our abusive behaviour policy, you may not engage in the targeted harassment of someone, or incite other people to do so. We consider abusive behavior an attempt to harass, intimidate, or silence someone else's voice."

The actor retweeted a video on Instagram titled, "Distressed, beyond words, death of democracy. important message for our government." She asked for President's rule in the state in the video. Kangana Ranaut is notorious for her outrageous, no-filter

posts on social media.

Earlier, Kangana's sister Rangoli Chandel's Twitter account was also suspended for violating the regulations of the platform. Kangana's account was also restricted for a few hours earlier this year after the actor's incendiary tweets against the web series *Tandav*. The tweet was deleted later.

"We take action on any account that violates the Twitter Rules. We welcome people to freely express themselves on our service, however as outlined in our Abusive Behaviour Policy, you may not engage in the targeted harassment of someone, or incite other people to do so," Twitter had said in a statement to a news channel at that time.

Responding to the move, Bollywood actor Kubbra Sait of said the suspension of the account was a permanent relief. She wrote, "Amen! I was in a mental state of tripping her with my left foot if I ever met her. But, this is way better. I hope a permanent relief. Social media can be better without her."



# Met Gala to return in September

**T**he star power is back. When the Met Gala returns in September, it will feature a heavy-hitting contingent of celebrity co-chairs: Actor Timothée Chalamet, musician Billie Eilish, poet Amanda Gorman and tennis star Naomi Osaka.

Honorary chairs for the evening will be designer Tom Ford, sponsor Instagram's Adam Mosseri, and Vogue's Anna Wintour.

The museum made the announcement on the traditional day of the Met Gala — the first Monday in May. Those plans, of course, were upended by the pandemic. The September 13 gala will be a more intimate affair, to be followed by a larger one on May 2, 2022. Both will launch a two-part exhibition, a survey of American fashion to be on view for almost a year.

In America: A Lexicon of Fashion, opening September 18, will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the museum's Costume Institute and "explore a modern vocabulary of American fashion," the museum has said. Part two, In America: An Anthology of Fashion, will open in the museum's popular American Wing period rooms on May 5, 2022, and will explore American fashion, with collaborations with film directors, by "presenting narratives that relate to the complex and layered histories of those spaces." Both parts will close on Sept. 5, 2022.

Filmmaker Melina Matsoukas (Queen & Slim) has been commissioned to create an open-ended film to project in the galleries, with content changing during the course of the exhibition.

The gala, which was canceled last year, is a major fundraiser, providing the Costume Institute with its primary source of funding.

As always, the exhibits will be the work of star curator Andrew Bolton. In a video preview Monday, Bolton noted how challenging the past year had been for the fashion community. "It's been incredibly inspiring to see how designers have responded to the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, how they've found new outlets to express their creativity and new ways to present their collections," he said.

Bolton added that many designers had been at the vanguard of the discussion about diversity and inclusion: "The social justice movements of last summer reinforced their commitment to these issues and also consolidated their leadership in advancing the conversation."

In addition to Matsoukas, other confirmed collaborators from the film world include cinematographer Bradford Young, whose projects have included Selma and When They See Us; production designers Nathan Crowley and Shane Valentino; and Franklin Leonard, film executive and founder of The Black List, a listing of top unproduced screenplays.

# Radhe gets U/A certificate, becomes shortest Salman Khan film with 114 minutes runtime

**S**alman Khan's *Radhe - Your Most Wanted Bhai* has been cleared by the Central Board of Film Certification with no cuts. The actioner has been given a U/A certificate which means it can be watched by people of all age groups but under parental guidance. The board gave the certificate to the film two weeks ahead of its release.

Helmed by Prabhudheva, *Radhe* is scheduled to release on multiple platforms on the occasion of Eid on May 13. While it will be screened in cinema halls in over 40 countries, it will have its digital premiere on ZEE5's pay per view platform ZeePlex. It will also be available to watch on DTH services, including Dish TV, D2H, Tata Sky and Airtel Digital TV. The advance booking for *Radhe* has already begun in UAE, informed Salman.

Taking to Twitter, *Dabangg* Khan wrote, "#Radhe ki advance bookings ho gayi hain shuru for the UAE. Milte hain theatres mein. Stay safe! (The advance booking of *Radhe* has begun in UAE. Will meet in the theaters)." *Radhe*'s CBFC certificate also mentions that the film's runtime is only 114.24 minutes, making it the shortest Salman Khan film ever.

In a career spanning over three decades, the actor has never acted in a film that has been shorter than 120 minutes.

Besides Salman, *Radhe* also stars Randeep Hooda, Disha Patani, Jackie Shroff and Gautam Gulati in prominent roles.

In an earlier statement, Shariq Patel, CBO, Zee Studios had shared why *Radhe* is releasing on multiple mediums. He said, "The ongoing pandemic forced us to innovate, and we are proud



to be the first to embark upon this new distribution strategy. While we all love to catch the latest movies at the nearest theatres, we realized we'd be doing a disservice to Salman's fans nationwide if we aren't able to release theatrically in all Indian states. We sensed the need for a pay per view solution along with theatres, which gives the consumers flexibility and convenience of viewing the film."

# Will Smith says he is in 'the worst shape' of his life, reveals dad bod

**S**actor Will Smith does things differently, even if it means embracing the "worst shape" of his physique. The versatile Hollywood star, in his impeccable style, confessed about his body shape through an Instagram post on Monday. Smith posted a candid click where he's flaunting his dad bod. In this caption, he wrote, "I'm gonna be real wit yall — I'm in the worst shape of my life."

Smith's post received reactions from several global celebs like Joel Kinnaman, Ava DuVernay, DJ Steve Aoki, Ludacris, Harry Hudson, Sonna, DJ Lana Michele Moorer and many more.

They either laughed at his unique comic timing, or left fun emojis for him. Will Smith's co-production martial-arts comedy drama *Cobra Kai* is set to release its fourth season by the end of 2021, Netflix confirmed recently.

## FUN

### ARCHIE

### CALVIN AND HOBBS

### GARFIELD

### REALITY CHECK

### SPEED BUMP

### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6				
7				
8	9		10	11
		12		
13				
14	15	16		18
19				

### NANCY

### SUDOKU

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

### GINGER MEGGS

### ACROSS

6 Speed up  
8 Elephant tusk material  
10 Leather belt  
13 Performer  
14 Keep your money in this  
17 Large group of singers  
19 Avalanches

### DOWN

11 The upper part of your leg  
12 Pig pen  
15 Ladder step  
16 Compass direction  
17 Small bed for a baby  
18 Finished

**SOLUTION**

R	O	B	B	E	R	C	O	M
A	A	S	V	R				
G	I	R	L	C	H	E	S	E
N	E	V	E	L	E			
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H	O	N	E	S	T	S	O	R
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**Rules**

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

# Allu Arjun to work next with Maharshi director?



**S**tylish Star Allu Arjun and *Oopiri* director Vamshi Paidipally's possible collaboration has been in news for a while now. However, things haven't moved forward since then. According to the latest news, it is being learnt that Bunny and Vamshi are actively discussing a story. If all goes as planned, the film may soon materialise. Vamshi is said to be working on the story further and fine-tuning the script to suit Allu Arjun and

his fans' taste. Vamshi hasn't done a movie after his National award-winning film *Maharshi*. Although he was supposed to team up with Mahesh Babu for a film, it didn't take off. With this, Vamshi has been working on stories and scripts.

An official confirmation about the actor-director collab is yet to be made. Meanwhile, Bunny has an interesting line-up of

projects with Prasanth Neel and Koratala Siva. As Koratala Siva would be working with NTR, Allu Arjun is also keeping other collaborations ready.

After *Pushpa*, Allu Arjun has huge plans. He is aiming to work on pan-India films depending on *Pushpa's* success. Let's see where Vamshi's film fits in!



## Nithya Menon replaces Sai Pallavi



**W**e already knew that Power Star Pawan Kalyan and Rana Daggubati are all set to star in the much-awaited Telugu remake of the Malayalam blockbuster movie *Ayyappanum Koshiyum*. Initially, sources say, that the makers of the film had roped in Sai Pallavi to pair up with Pawan Kalyan in the movie. But according to the latest reports, talent house, Nithya

Menen has replaced Sai Pallavi in the film. A source from the unit reveals that Sai Pallavi has apparently demanded a whopping amount of 3 crores as remuneration to play the female lead in the movie. It was then that the makers approached Nithya Menon who agreed to play the role, and that's how the *Fida* actress was replaced. However, there hasn't been an official confirmation on the same.

## KGF beauty to dance with Prabhas?

**S**rinidhi Shetty is one of the most popular Kannada film actresses who gained fame in Tollywood as well. The actress shot to fame with the superhit film *KGF: Chapter 1* starring Rocking Star Yash. The Miss Supranational 2016 and former model is now all set to come up with her next project *KGF: Chapter 2* which is going to be the much-awaited sequel of *KGF: Chapter 1*. Directed by Prashanth Neel, the audience is super excited about this project.

We know that Prashanth Neel is going to join hands with Young Rebel Star Prabhas for his next movie titled *Salaar*. Touted to be an action drama, the director is said to have recently



approached *KGF* beauty, Srinidhi Shetty, to shake her leg in a special song in the film. The official announcement regarding the same is yet to be released. Shruti Hassan will be playing the female lead in this movie which is gearing up for a grand release in April 2022.

## Family Man 2 coming this June?



who celebrated her birthday recently, is also an integral part of the show. She is said to be playing an antagonist in the show. Raj and DK had taken to social media recently to wish their 'Raji' from *The Family Man 2*.

**P**opular Hindi web series, *The Family Man*, needs no special introduction as this action-thriller was binge-watched by many in 2019. Season 1's concept was a novelty with fast pace incidents, giving us a zeal to watch all episodes at a go. Starring Manoj Bajpayee, Sharib Hashmi and Priyamani, *The Family Man's* season 2 is long-awaited by a huge masses. The teaser for the second season was unveiled in January this year and ever since then, fans are waiting for the makers to announce the date of the release. The makers' Raj Nidimoru and Krishna DK announced that season 2 will be unveiled in summer. "We know you have been

eagerly waiting for the new season of *The Family Man*. We are truly grateful and humbled by all the love! We have an update for you. The *Family Man Season 2* will premiere on *Amazon Prime Video* this summer! We have been working super hard to get you a kickass season. And we are pretty sure you will love it. Can't wait to bring it to you," the statement read. However, we now have a new update on this much-awaited show. "*The Family Man 2* is absolutely ready and will be released in June. *Amazon Prime Video* along with Raj and DK will be announcing the final release date soon," announced a source close to the development. Samantha Akkineni,



## Chiranjeevi demands Padma award for Dasari

**D**asari Narayana Rao was undoubtedly one of the prolific filmmakers in India. He made more than 150 films and many of them were blockbusters at the box office. Dasari's films had received many national and international awards as well.

Sadly, many lamented that despite contributing so much to the field of cinema, the celebrated director was not conferred with a Padma award. On the birth anniversary of Dasari, Megastar Chiranjeevi requested the government to propose Dasari's name for the upcoming Padma Awards. Chiru tweeted, "Remembering Darshakaratra Dasari Narayana Rao on his birth anniversary. His contribution towards films and film industry will be remembered forever."

"It is quite sad that an eminent filmmaker like



Dasari has not been conferred with a Padma Award till now. I feel it would be great if the government confers him with the posthumous Padma Award at least now. #RememberingALegend #DrDasari #Padma ForDrDasari," added Chiru. Many other celebrities and fans too joined the chorus supporting Chiru in amplifying this request.

## Pawan Kalyan's daughter's first time on TV



**R**arely do we get to see Power Star Pawan Kalyan's children with actress Renu Desai — Akira Nandan and Aadhyaa Nandan in public. Both the children live with their mother and never make any public appearances. At least, in the past few months, fans of the star actor have been able to catch a glimpse of son Akira at mega family functions these days. But Aadhyaa has managed to never come in front of the camera. But looks like the wait is over! The little mega princess has finally made her first public appearance on a television show. Akira participated as a special

guest in the TV show *Drama Juniors*, which airs on Zee Telugu. Her mother, and former actress, Renu Desai is also one of the judges of this show. The promo of the episode featuring Aadhyaa was released earlier Tuesday morning by the broadcasting channel. Renu was pleasantly surprised by Aadhyaa's appearance on the show. She is shown walking up to the stage and hugging her daughter and calling her the best, to which Akira responds, "Mummy's the best Mummy in the world," to a set full of cheers. Fans are now eagerly waiting to witness them together on the small screen. The episode will be aired on May 9 at 8 pm.



# IPL CALLED OFF



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Premier League was on Tuesday suspended indefinitely after multiple Covid-19 cases were reported in its bio-bubble, ending a month-long relatively smooth run for cricket's most glamorous and cash-rich event in the middle of a raging pandemic.

"The tournament has been suspended indefinitely. We will try to conduct the event in the next available window but this month is unlikely," league chairman Brijesh Patel said.

The announcement came after Sunrisers Hyderabad's wicketkeeper-batsman Wriddhiman Saha tested positive for Covid-19 along with Delhi Capitals' veteran spinner Amit Mishra. Hours after the postponement, CSK batting coach Michael Hussey also tested positive for the dreaded virus.

"...We will take stock if we can find a suitable window later during the year. It could be September but these are all speculations. As of now we are not conducting it any further," BCCI vice-president Rajiv Shukla said.

On Monday, Chennai Super Kings bowling coach Lakshminath Balaji along with Kolkata Knight Riders bowlers Sandeep Warrier and Varun Chakravarthy had also returned positive results.

The spread of infections had led to postponement of two IPL games earlier.

The league organisers also issued a formal statement and said that safety of its play-

**ONE THING I WANT TO MAKE VERY CLEAR — IPL HAS NOT BEEN CANCELLED. IT HAS BEEN POSTPONED, SUSPENDED AND DEFERRED. THE REMAINING PART OF THIS IPL WILL HAPPEN. IN DUE COURSE, WHEN THE COVID SITUATION IMPROVES, A DECISION WILL BE TAKEN ABOUT IT.**

— RAJEEV SHUKLA  
(BCCI VICE-PRESIDENT)

ers and staff is paramount.

"The Indian Premier League Governing Council (IPL GC) and Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) in an emergency meeting has unanimously decided to postpone IPL 2021 season, with immediate effect," the statement read.

"The BCCI does not want to compromise on the safety of the players, support staff and the other participants involved in organising the IPL. This decision was taken keeping the safety, health and well-being of all the stakeholders in mind," it added.

The IPL said BCCI will do all it can to ensure that players in the event get back to

their homes safely. IPL features stars from England, Australia, and New Zealand among other countries.

"These are difficult times, especially in India and while we have tried to bring in some positivity and cheer, however, it is imperative that the tournament is now suspended and everyone goes back to their families and loved ones in these trying times," the IPL stated.

"The BCCI will do everything in its powers to arrange for the secure and safe passage of all the participants in IPL 2021."

The tournament began on April 9 and ran smoothly before KKR's Covid-19 cases caused the initial jitters on Monday. The tournament final was planned for May 30.

There was cause of concern in Delhi too as a few groundsmen at the Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium tested positive even though DCCA chief Rohan Jaitley asserted that "none of the groundsmen on duty" were among the infected.

#### REMAINING MATCHES IN SEPT?

According to Cricbuzz, an official said that the board could look at the September window after England's tour of India is complete and before the T20 World Cup scheduled in India for October-November.

"A September window is being considered. By then the England-India series would be over and the foreign players would be ready for the T20 World Cup. That small window is being explored," said a franchise official who is in know.

## We'll find way to send back foreign players: IPL chairman

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IPL chairman Brijesh Patel on Tuesday said the BCCI will "find a way" to send the league's foreign recruits back to their respective countries after the event was suspended indefinitely due to a Covid-19 outbreak in its bio-bubble.

"We need to send them home and we will find a way to do that," Brijesh told PTI when asked how will the foreigners return home but did not elaborate beyond that.

The foreigners involved in the lucrative league are concerned about returning to their respective countries due to travel restrictions.

imposed in the wake of a deadly resurgence of the pandemic in India.

The BCCI had assured foreign players of a safe return earlier as well.

The IPL had 14 Australian players left, after three pullouts a few days ago, along with 10 from New Zealand and 11 Englishmen. South Africa had 11 players in the league, which also featured nine West Indians, three Afghans and two from Bangladesh.

In a joint statement, Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers Association said they respect their Government's decision to suspend flights operating out of India due to the Covid surge here and will not seek exemptions for its players stuck in the country ravaged by a deadly second wave of the pandemic.

"CA is in direct contact with the BCCI as they work through plans to ensure the safe accommodation and repatriation of Australian players, coaches, match officials and commentators back home to Australia."

— CRICKET AUSTRALIA

"The players are in a relatively safe environment and those within affected teams are in isolation. We'll continue to liaise with the BCCI, the ECB and New Zealand Government authorities in terms of managing their situation."

— NEW ZEALAND CRICKET

"CSA has made contact with all of the relevant franchises to ensure the expedited travel of all South African players and support staff back to our shores. Those travelling back to South Africa will undergo home quarantine in line."

— CRICKET SOUTH AFRICA

tion of Australian players, coaches, match officials and commentators back home to Australia.

"CA and the ACA respect the decision of the Australian Government to pause travel from India until at least May 15 and will not seek exemptions."

They further stated, "CA and the ACA thank the BCCI for their efforts and cooperation for the safe repatriation of all participants at the IPL."

Reacting to the big BCCI move, Cricket South Africa said it is in contact with its players who will need to home quarantine on arrival from India as per the World Health Organization recommendations. "Those travelling back to South Africa will undergo home quarantine in line with the current World Health Organization recommendations," it said in a release.

"CSA and the South African Cricketers Association (SACA) are in contact with all players and are assured of their safety and comfort in their

respective locations."

CSA said it supported the BCCI decision to suspend the league keeping in mind the current situation and thanked the Indian board for looking after its players.

"CSA supports the decision to put the health and safety interests of all involved in the tournament first and foremost and has made contact with all of the relevant franchises to ensure the expedited travel of all South African players and support staff back to our shores."

New Zealand Cricket expressed faith in BCCI's ability to handle the situation.

"The players are in a relatively safe environment and those within affected teams are in isolation," read an NZC statement posted by ESPNcricinfo. "We'll continue to liaise with the BCCI, the ECB and New Zealand government authorities in terms of managing their situation — but at this juncture it's too early to discuss potential options."

## Oz players, support staff might fly off to Maldives

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With their country shut for all those flying from India, the now suspended IPL's Australian contingent, comprising players, support staff and commentators, is expected to head to Maldives before taking a connecting flight home.

There are 14 Australian players along with coaches and commentators who might now take a detour as the Australian Government has imposed strict sanctions for people returning from India.

"A mass exodus of Australian players, coaches and support staff to the Maldives is the expected remedy to a dilemma created by the postponement of the 2021 IPL and the current closure of the Australian border to citizens



Ricky Ponting, Simon Katich and company are expected to join commentator Michael Slater, who had already headed to the Maldives as a temporary post."

Premier pacer Pat Cummins, who is contracted with KKR, called the situation unprecedented.

"Once we flew out of Australia we knew we'd signed up for 14 days quarantine coming home so you feel a bit further from getting home, but when the hard border shut no one has ever experienced that before," Pat Cummins told *The Back Page* on Fox Sports.

"(It has) added a bit of anxiety for the Aussies over here but we signed up to play the tournament until the start of June so hopefully it all reopens on May 15 and we can get back," Cummins added.



'Daddy, come home'

New Delhi: Australia opener David Warner shared an emotional message sent to him from his family back home after IPL 2021 was postponed indefinitely on Tuesday. Warner took to social media to share the message with his followers.

"Please daddy, come home straight away. We miss you and a lot and love you. Love from Ivy, Indi and Isla," the message in Warner's post read. PNS

## BCCI set to incur losses of over ₹2000 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI stands to lose over ₹2000 crore of the broadcast and sponsorship money earmarked for this year's Indian Premier League which was indefinitely postponed on Tuesday.

"We would be losing anything between ₹2000 to ₹2500 crore for the midway postponement of this season. I would say something in the range of ₹2200 crore will be closer to accurate estimation," a senior BCCI official told PTI.

The 52-day 60-match tournament would have concluded in Ahmedabad on May 30. However, only 24 days of cricket were possible with 29 completed games before the virus halted proceedings.

The biggest loss for BCCI is the money it gets from Star Sports for the broadcast rights of the tournament.

### Players' payment would be based on duration

In case players are available only for a part of the tournament, the salaries are paid on pro-rata basis which means "assigning an amount to one person according to their share of the whole."

However, a senior player said that pro-rata is only

applicable when a player voluntarily makes himself available for only a part of the tournament based on the matches available.

In this case, the organisers have halted the event so the franchises are likely to pay for at least half of the season.

Star has a five-year contract worth ₹16,347 crore which is ₹3269.4 crore per year. If there are 60 games in a season, the per match valuation comes to approximately ₹54.5 crore.

If Star pays per match, then the amount for 29 matches would be ₹1580 crore approximately out of what would have been ₹3270 crore for a full tournament. This

means a loss of ₹1690 crore for the Board.

Similarly, mobile manufacturers VIVO, as tournament's title sponsors, pay ₹440 crore per season and BCCI is likely to get less than half of that amount because of the postponement.

Add to it, associate sponsor companies like Unacademy, Dream11, CRed,

Upstox, and Tata Motors, who pay in the range of ₹120 crore each. Some subsidiary sponsors are also there.

"Slash all the payments by half or a bit less and you will be reaching a loss in the range of 2200 crore. The actual losses could be much more but this is a back of the hand calculation for the season," the official said.

The loss of a substantial amount of money will also reduce the central revenue pool for the season (the money that BCCI distributes among eight franchises) to nearly half.

The official, however, didn't divulge how much each franchise would lose due to the suspension of the tournament.

"It is difficult to say what kind of sponsorship and co-sponsorship money they earned this season as the economic climate has been pretty hostile," he said.

## T20 World Cup set for UAE shift

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

This year's T20 World Cup is set to be moved from India to the UAE with the BCCI acknowledging that none of the participating teams would be "comfortable" coming here because "a third wave" of Covid-19 cases is expected at the time of the event.

While a final decision will be taken in a month's time but it is understood that even the Indian cricket board is jittery about holding the 16-team tournament in October-November after the ongoing IPL had to be suspended because of multiple Covid-19 cases inside the bio-bubble.

It is learnt BCCI officials have had very recent discussions with some of the top decision-makers in the central Government and a shift to the UAE has been more or less agreed upon. The dates of the marquee competition, which was planned across nine venues, have not yet been finalised.

"The suspension of IPL within four weeks is an indicator that it's not really safe to host a global event of that magnitude at a time when the



country is fighting its worst health crisis in last 70 years," a senior BCCI source privy to development said.

"There is a chance of a third wave hitting the Indian

shores in November. So while BCCI will remain the hosts, the tournament will probably shift to the UAE," he added.

Health experts have warned of a third wave in India

in September.

The dire situation in India, where a daily addition of over 3 lakh new cases has continued for the past many days, has shaken most of the member boards and the ICC is unlikely to take a risk with safety of International cricket teams.

"You can be rest assured that most of the top nations wouldn't like to tour India within next six months unless the situation comes to normalcy. The players and their families would be very wary to travel if they are in the middle of another surge."

"So expect BCCI to agree with shift of tournament to UAE," another source also chimed in.

He said IPL's suspension after a string of positive cases has made the officialdom very jittery of taking any more risks.

"The IPL in India was a platform to prove to the world as well as participating nations that it is safe to host a tournament even when the second wave is hitting its peak."

"It was going well but the bio bubble has now become porous. What's the guarantee it won't happen again in

October-November. Nations like Australia, England and New Zealand are almost certain to have travel advisories in place," he argued.

One of the biggest reasons for conducting the tournament in the UAE is that it can be kept to three grounds — Sharjah, Dubai and Abu Dhabi — and there is no air travel.

"Look six venues for IPL was always a dangerous proposition when they successfully managed with three during the last edition," the source said.

"In UAE, all of them were in one bubble from start to finish while here each team was travelling to three bubbles. Most of the positive cases emerged after bubble travel."

"Therefore even if you reduce the number of venues from 9 to 5 in October, still there will be air travel unlike UAE. Also for players, they would not be mentally in a space to play in India unless the situation drastically improves," he added.

There is an ICC meeting in June where a final decision will be taken but retaining the tournament in India after cancellation of IPL seems far-fetched at this point.

### shortpasses

#### HALEP KNOCKED OUT

MADRID: World No 3 Simona Halep was dumped out of the Madrid Open, losing 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 in the round of 16 to Elise Mertens.

#### 4 INDIANS IN 'THE HUNDRED'

NEW DELHI: The BCCI has granted NCCs to four Indian women cricketers, including T20 captain Harmanpreet Kaur, to play in the inaugural 'Hundred' tournament in the UK.

#### BFI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEAD

NEW DELHI: The Boxing Federation of India's Executive Director R K Sacheti died on Tuesday after battling Covid-19. He was 56.

#### INDIA'S MATCHES POSTPONED

LAUSANNE: India's upcoming FIH Hockey Pro League away fixtures against Spain & Germany later this month have been postponed due to the international travel restrictions.

#### SEVILLE'S TITLE HOPES DENTED

SEVILLE: Sevilla's chances of winning La Liga could be over after they suffered a 0-1 defeat by Athletic Bilbao on Monday night.

#### WEST HAM STAY IN TOP 4 HUNT

LONDON: West Ham maintained their bid for a place in next season's CL as Michail Antonio scored twice to beat Burnley 2-1.

#### 26-PLAYER SQUADS FOR EUROS

LAUSANNE: UEFA said on Tuesday it would allow expanded 26-man squads at Euro 2020.

#### PARMA RELEGATED

TURIN: Parma were relegated from Serie A on Monday after a 1-0 defeat at Torino. Agencies



## Mourinho takes Roma job

Rome: Jose Mourinho is back.

The Portuguese manager, who was sacked by Tottenham Hotspur in late April, will return to the touchline next season after being introduced as the new manager of AS Roma, the Serie A club announced on Tuesday.

Mourinho agreed to a three-year contract and will officially take charge ahead of the 2021-22 campaign.

"After meetings with the ownership and Tiago Pinto, I immediately understood the full extent of their ambitions for AS Roma," Mourinho said.

"It is the same ambition and drive that has always motivated me and together we want to build a winning project over the upcoming years. "The incredible passion of the Roma fans convinced me to accept the job and I cannot wait to start next season."

Mourinho will replace Paulo Fonseca, who will leave at the end of the season after two years in charge. AP

OTHER SPORT