

ANALYSIS 7

NEP: A BUNDLE OF
PIOUS INTENTIONS

MONEY 8

TOTAL VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS
SLIPS 30 PC TO 1.52 CR UNITS

SPORTS 12

DOUBT IPL 2021 WILL
CONTINUE IN INDIA: NEESHAM

HYDERABAD, TUESDAY MAY 11, 2021; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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JR NTR TESTS
POSITIVE FOR
CORONAVIRUS

Page 11

NEPAL PM LOSES CONFIDENCE VOTE
AMID SURGING PANDEMIC

Nepali Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli lost a confidence vote in parliament on Monday, the speaker said, pitching the country into political turmoil at a time when it is battling a major second wave of coronavirus infections. Oli's moderate communist party split from former Maoist rebels in March after differences cropped up over its power-sharing deal, wiping out their governing majority. Political parties will now try to cobble together a new ruling coalition. Parliament speaker Agni Sapkota said that of 232 lawmakers present, 93 voted in favour of Oli while 124 were against him and 15 did not vote.

USERS NOT ACCEPTING PRIVACY TERMS
TO FACE LIMITED SERVICE: WHATSAPP

WhatsApp will not delete any account for not accepting its new privacy update, but users not agreeing to the controversial terms after "several weeks" will not be able to access their chat list, and eventually, will not be able to answer incoming phone or video calls over the app. Last week, the Facebook-owned company had said users not accepting its privacy policy update by its May 15 deadline will not face deletion or lose functionality of their accounts on the said date. WhatsApp, on its website, said it is continuing to remind those who haven't had the chance to review and accept the terms, and after a period of several weeks, "the reminder (that) people receive will eventually become persistent".

MALICIOUS COVID VAX SMS SPREADING
COMPROMISING ANDROID PHONES

A fake COVID-19 vaccine registration SMS that "maliciously" gains entry into a users' Android phone leading to compromise of individual contact list is in circulation, the federal cyber security agency has alerted. The harmful SMS has been identified by at least five variants. "It has been reported that a fake SMS message is in circulation that falsely claims to offer an app to let users register for COVID-19 vaccine in India." "The SMS carries a link that installs the malicious app on Android-based devices, which essentially spreads itself via SMS to victims' contacts," the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team or CERT-In said in a public advisory issued on Saturday.

CVC CHIEF POST ASPIRANTS TO
WRITE 300-WORD ESSAY

The Centre has sought applications for the post of chief of anti-corruption watchdog CVC from eligible candidates who have to write a 300-word essay to explain their suitability for it. Incumbent Central Vigilance Commissioner Sanjay Kothari completes his term next month. Kothari joined the probity watchdog in April last year. "It is proposed to appoint the Central Vigilance Commissioner in the Central Vigilance Commission, against the vacancy due to arise in June, 2021, as the incumbent Central Vigilance Commissioner will demit office on completion of tenure," an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

Some leaders are
focused on politics,
not Covid

2

India fastest country
globally to administer
17cr Covid vax doses

5

Sensex jumps 296
points; Nifty ends
above 14,900

8

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:
Chaitra & Krishna Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi : Amavasya: 12:28 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram : Bharani: 11:31 pm

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

Rahukalam : 03:24 pm – 05:00 pm

Yamagandam : 09:00 am – 10:36 am

Variyam : 07:15 am – 09:04 am

Gulika : 12:12 pm – 01:48 pm

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritakalam : 06:06 pm – 07:54 pm

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

HYDERABAD
WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly sunny

Temp: 34

Humidity: 58%

Sunrise: 05:46 am

Sunset: 06:39 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated may 10, 2021 5:00 PM

CABINET MEETING TODAY

LOCKDOWN?

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

After staving off a decision on imposing lockdown in the State for the last few weeks, Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has called for a Cabinet meeting at Pragathi Bhavan on Tuesday to take a final decision.

The Cabinet will meet at 2 pm and discuss the surge of the Covid cases even after night curfew was imposed since April 20.

Reports that suggest that despite certain States imposing lockdown, there is no significant decrease in Covid positive cases. But some sections of society have been arguing strongly in favour of lockdown to slow down the spread of the pandemic and ease the pressure on hospitals and medical personnel.



The government also initiated measures to temporarily recruit

50,000 students who completed their MBBS degree and other nursing and technicians to support the doctors and other staff in various government hospitals.

Steps are also afoot to increase bed strength in different hospitals, particularly oxygen and ICU beds.

2

Cong puts off party
president election,
courtesy Covid

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress Working Committee unanimously decided on Monday to defer the crucial election to the post of party president until the COVID-19 situation in the country improves, sources said.

After a section of leaders had last year pressed for an organisational overhaul, the Congress had decided to hold elections for the new party president by June-end and its central election authority chaired by Madhusudan Mistry proposed June 23 for the exercise.

The CWC, the apex decision-making body of the Congress which met in the backdrop of the recent drubbing in four assembly polls, considered the schedule for electing the AICC president prepared by the party's election authority.

However, top Congress leaders at the meeting were of the view that holding the election right now would not be proper as the coronavirus situation in the country was very grim, the sources said.

2

10 die at RUIA hospital,
O₂ shortage blamedS BHANU PRAKASH
■ TIRUPATI

At least ten people passed away and five were in a critical condition, allegedly due to inadequate oxygen supply at SVR RUIA Government General Hospital in Tirupati on Monday.

According to reports available, the oxygen pressure began dipping at around 7.30 pm on Monday. An oxygen tanker that was supposed to reach the hospital by afternoon arrived late in the evening. By the time adequate supply of oxygen was restored, about 20 minutes later, as many as 10 Covid-19 positive patients breathed their last.

According to reports, six of the deceased were undergoing treatment in ward No 1, 2 and 3, while four of the dead were in the ICU.

As news spread of the deaths of patients, an angry mob, allegedly comprising relatives of the deceased, vandalised the furniture in the ICU and in the hospital wards. Some



According to reports, six of the deceased were undergoing treatment in ward No 1, 2 and 3, while four of the dead were in the ICU

protested in front of the hospital. Sensing danger, duty doctors and nurses fled from the hospital.

The police, knowing about the situation, rushed to the hospital and tried to calm down the protesters.

Meanwhile, efforts to contact the hospital superintendent failed.

TS bars entry of Covid+ve
from neighbouring States

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State government, which has proudly been projecting Hyderabad as the capital of medical treatment with patients from several States coming to State capital for Covid and non-Covid treatments is now compelled to restrict the number of patients coming into the city.

It particularly tightened the entry of a large number of Covid patients from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, besides other States, in wake of increasing demand for hospital beds from local residents in the city hospitals.

Telangana Police set up check posts and stopped ambulances coming from Andhra Pradesh towards Hyderabad from Monday morning at the inter-state border in Ramapuram of Kodad mandal



in Suryapet district and at Pulluru toll gate in Gadwal district.

They sent back ambulances with Covid patients if they did not have confirmed hospital admissions in Hyderabad hospitals. Other essential services vehicles however were allowed to continue on.

2

It's time to act
decisively: Yechury

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As a devastating second wave of COVID raged across the country, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah of being on "silent mode" at a time when they need to "act decisively". In a Facebook post, the Left leader alleged that the prime minister and the home minister "are hiding in their silent mode". It is time to act decisively and not take refuge under silent mode, he said.

2

Regular ivermectin use cut risk of Covid: study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Regular use of the oral antiparasitic drug ivermectin may significantly reduce the risk of contracting Covid, according to a review of available data by researchers who claim the medicine can help end the pandemic. The research, published in the May-June issue of the American Journal of Therapeutics, is the most comprehensive review of the available data on ivermectin taken from clinical, in vitro, animal, and real-world studies, its authors said.

"We conducted the most comprehensive review of the available data on ivermectin," said Pierre Kory, president and chief medical officer

Deadly fungal infection
found in city hospitalsNAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

Government and private hospitals in Telangana are reporting a rise in the number of black fungus cases among patients.

A private hospital in the city found at least 18 patients suffering from mucormycosis, a deadly fungal infection, and a silent killer.

In the state-run Chest hospital, two cases of black fungus were reported, of which one patient succumbed to the infection in the past month.

Mucormycosis cases were also reported at Gandhi Hospital in the first Covid-19 wave.

2

Black fungus infection
can maim and kill

Health officials in India warned about a fungal infection seen in some COVID-19 patients which can disfigure facial features and even kill, as the country continues to grapple with the world's fastest-growing coronavirus outbreak. Mucormycosis, also called the "black fungus" infection, can damage the sinuses or lungs when the spores are inhaled, the Indian Council of Medical Research said in a health advisory issued on Sunday.



2

HC RAP FOR ECI

Doubts over MLC polls in Telangana

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

The TRS government in Telangana is in a fix over the Madras High Court's stinging remarks against the Election Commission of India.

By about mid-June, elections would be due for seven seats to the State Legislative Council — six MLCs elected from the MLAs quota are due to retire on June 3 while one more MLC from the Governor's quota would complete his term on June 16.

For these seven seats, elections should be conducted before the end

of this month. Accordingly, the Election Commission has to issue the poll schedule in the next two or three days.

However, the state government officials are unsure whether the EC would announce the election schedule. Politically, these elections are important to the TRS leadership as they would help remove the unrest among some of the party leaders by sending them to the Legislative Council.

It may be recalled that Madras High Court observations over the way the recent elections to five Assemblies were conducted were

sharp and stinging.

In fact, they were so stinging that they led to one of the Election Commission members resigning.

Coming down heavily on ECI, the Madras High Court said, "for not stopping political parties from violating Covid protocols during their campaign rallies for Assembly elections in four states and an Union Territory, murder charges should probably be imposed on the Election Commission for being the institution responsible for the situation that we are in today".

2

1,952 staff dead,
1,000 infected
daily, says Railways

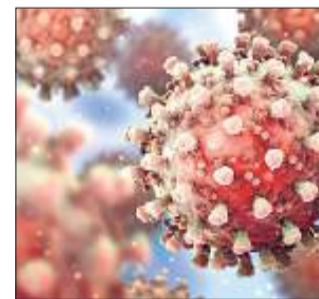
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 1,952 employees of the Indian Railways have succumbed to coronavirus so far and around 1,000 are getting infected on a daily basis, a senior official said on Monday.

The Railways is one of the largest employers in not just the country but the world with around 13 lakh employees.

"Railways is not different from any other state or territory and we are also getting COVID cases. We are in the business of transport and have to move freight and people. Around 1,000 (COVID) cases are reported daily," Railway Board Chairman Suneet Sharma said.

2



age group 45 and above was started on April 1.

However, since April 2, the percentage of positive cases across all age groups has remained the same.

2

"We applied the gold standard to qualify the data reviewed before concluding that ivermectin can end this pandemic," Kory said in a statement



of the Front Line Covid Critical Care Alliance (FLCCC), a group of medical and scientific experts, which led the study.

"We applied the gold standard to qualify the data reviewed before concluding that ivermectin can end this pandemic," Kory said in a statement.

2

Some leaders are focused on politics, not Covid

The general tendency in politics in India is to sling mud on others to escape responsibility instead of finding a scientific solution to a crisis.

This is due to politics gaining precedence over administration.

What is annoying is State Governments, when faced with a crisis like that of Covid-19, instead of putting the health machinery in the state on the highest state of alert, try to do politics in spite of the fact that the Indian statute is federal in spirit.

Instead of working with team spirit and solving the problem by taking part in meetings convened by Union Government authorities, states express helplessness and shift the blame to the Centre. Some don't even hesitate to move court against the Centre. This is the situation in the country.

The fact is that there is no oxygen shortage in the country — the problem is transporting oxygen to places where it is required since there are not enough cryogenic tankers. States with plants are not willing to supply oxygen to other states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the Chief Ministers not to stop the tankers on their way to other states. The MHA also released certain guidelines in this regard. The Centre has deployed special trains and Indian Air Force planes to transport oxygen on a war-footing.

Besides the problems in oxygen transportation, lack of adequate maintenance of oxygen stocks is posing problems. Only a few states are able to maintain oxygen stocks properly.

For example, MP is a bigger state compared to Delhi.

Instead of working with team spirit and solving the problem by taking part in meetings convened by Central authorities, states express helplessness and shift the blame to the Centre. Some don't even hesitate to move court against the Centre.

There is no single oxygen plant in MP. In spite of it, the MP government is able to save lives with the available oxygen. This is attributed to streamlining the medical oxygen availability.

The MP Government constituted a team with four top officials.

One officer — P Narahari of Telangana — is made in-charge of oxygen supply and transport. He is successful ensuring there are no hiccups in supply and transport of oxygen. The team has set up an oxygen control room link-

ing all districts. An oxygen emergency number is dedicated and it was given to district and nodal officers.

The control room has officers to receive calls day and night. IAS and IPS officers monitor activities of the control room and are ready to face any emergency situation.

Because of the efficiency of the team, MP is able to manage with less oxygen compared to Delhi.

Till April 1, MP received only 180 trucks of oxygen. But, through its internal



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

resources, MP succeeded in mobilising 680 MT of oxygen till May 6.

However, a small state like Delhi moved court seeking allotment of 900 MT. But MP proved that such high quantities of oxygen are not needed, provided an efficient oxygen audit is put in place.

Though there is spurt in Covid-19 cases in MP, effi-

cient oxygen audit helped reduce deaths due to oxygen shortage.

Adoption of best management methods and strong political will would rule out problems due to oxygen shortage.

The need of the hour is appointing efficient officers in vantage positions and reviewing the situation regularly. Maintaining cordial relations with Centre and efficient officials will help solve crisis situations.

For example DRDO chairman Satish Reddy who acted with alacrity, responding to oxygen needs of a hospital in Nellore, and got it supplied from ISRO.

Two days after Satish Reddy started helping the hospital with oxygen supply, AP principal health secretary

AK Singhal wrote to the Centre requesting oxygen supply from ISRO.

Under Satish Reddy's supervision, a number of Covid care hospitals with modern amenities have been set up in the country.

The DRDO acted with speed and set up oxygen plants in important hospitals and ruled out any scope for shortage.

To arrest wastage of oxygen from cylinder leaks, DRDO has put in place regulatory systems. DRDO laboratories have supplied over 1000 cylinders to hospitals across the country.

Meanwhile, the nuclear medicine research wing of the DRDO has developed 2-DG to treat Covid and started production. The CMs of Telugu states, instead of using officials efficiently, are using

them to play politics like foisting cases against political rivals, resorting to victimisation measures and so on.

At a time Covid is creating havoc, the AP government's initiating action against Amara Raja Batteries and Sangam Dairy indicates the mind of the rulers.

The way the Government of Telangana used officials to dismiss the Health Minister from the State Cabinet reflects the style of functioning of the modern day dictators in a democratic setup. It's high time the CMs introspect and use all their resources to check Covid spread.

In such a scenario, state leaders would not mind even if people were to die in large numbers due to Covid.

If they think that the people would forgive their omissions and commissions if they abuse Modi, they are completely at fault.

TS procures 26L tonnes of paddy

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

All safety measures should be taken for speedy procurement of paddy at a time Covid pandemic was surging across the state, said Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy.

Government set up 6,366 paddy purchase centres in the State based on the arrivals of the paddy after harvest and so far 26.02 lakh tonnes of paddy has been procured as against 35 lakh tonnes around this time last year. More purchase centres would be set up depending on requirement, he said.

The value of the paddy procured is Rs 4,906 crore and so far farmers have been paid Rs 1,635 crore.

The procurement was comparatively slow because of the intensity of the pandemic, shortage of hamalis. This year the total estimated arrivals of paddy is about 94 lakh tonnes.

He said there were requests from some districts about maize procurement and it



would be taken to the notice of Chief Minister.

In a zoom meeting with the department officers and District Collectors here on Monday, Niranjan Reddy said for technical lapses in registration, paddy should not be rejected. Action could be taken after departmental inquiry. It was important to be alert near border districts to enable farm-

ers from the State alone sell their produce at the PPCs, he said.

The Minister said that more transport vehicles and local workers should be deployed for faster loading and unloading. Once the load reached the rice mills, there should not be any delay in unloading. If there was storage problem in any rice mill, the stock should be stored

in godowns of nearby rice mills, he instructed.

When the government came forward to procure paddy from famers, the department should speed up the process so that the stakeholders would not have to crowd the place or make repeat visits or spend longer duration at the designated centres.

Shortage of hamalis due to pandemic was another issue that is hampering the loading process and Collectors and Civil Supplies officials of respective districts should take measures and engage local workers for loading work. Workforce should be engaged based on quantity of paddy arrivals, weightment and transport requirement.

There are also complaints about deduction in the quantity of paddy measures on the pretext of moisture and district officials should take immediate steps to ensure that farmers were not exploited.

The Minister asked the Collectors of Gadwal, Waraparthi, Nagar Kurnool

and district officials to create awareness among farmers to complete the harvesting of second crop of paddy by March 31 every year now that there was assured irrigation facilities. This would prevent paddy getting damaged in the unseasonal rains or hailstorms common in summer months.

The Minister sought about the status of Covid cases and the response and feedback from people about fever survey and what kind of help they were expecting from government. Collectors said that the cases were on decline for the last four days.

Minister said effort should be to provide better treatment at district level itself without the patients having to travel to Hyderabad. He appreciated the services of Asha workers and ANMs for their service. All the departments should work with coordination to complete paddy procurement as well as measures to tackle Covid in the next two months to tide over the pandemic, he said.

Cong puts off party...

Continued from page 1

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot proposed that there should be no election to the post of Congress president in view of the COVID-19 situation and senior party leader Ghulam Nabi Azad seconded him.

Azad, a prominent member of the group of 23 leaders who had demanded organisational elections, said at the meeting that no one in the party was seeking an election right now and it should be postponed, the sources said.

"In view of the nationwide emergent conditions prevailing on account of unprecedented Corona pandemic, the CWC was unanimous that all our energies should be channelised towards saving every life and helping every COVID affected person.

"CWC, therefore, unanimously resolved to defer the elections temporarily in the

midst of these challenging times," said a resolution passed at the meeting.

Mistry had earlier proposed that the election be held on June 23 and counting on June 24. He proposed that the notification for the election be issued on June 1 and nominations be accepted between June 2 and 7.

Asked till when the election has been deferred, Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said it has been put off temporarily till the next two-three months by when the situation is expected to improve.

Sonia Gandhi took over as the interim Congress president in August 2019 after Rahul Gandhi resigned in the wake of the party's Lok Sabha debacle in May 2019.

There have been demands from a section of the Congress leaders for having a full-time and active party president and an organisational overhaul.

It's time to act...

Continued from page 1

"...You wasted public money on superstition and dhongis, rejecting scientific advice. You prioritise building a palace for yourself over public hospitals. You ignored all warnings about the pandemic. You invited people to super-spreader events and organised mega election rallies in this second wave. You failed to manage flow of oxygen properly. You let foreign aid lie in godowns for weeks. You did not buy enough vaccines," Yechury alleged.

After recording over four lakh fresh cases for four consecutive days, India witnessed a single-day rise of 3,66,161 COVID-19 cases on Monday, which pushed its infection tally to 2,26,62,575, according to the health ministry.

The death toll due to the viral disease climbed to 2,46,116 with 3,754 more people succumbing to it, the ministry's data updated at 8 am showed.

Lockdown?

Continued from page 1

Under these circumstances, the State Cabinet would discuss the pros and cons of the situation and also the adverse impact it might have on the ongoing procurement of paddy and take a decision.

So far 16 States have declared lockdown while Andhra Pradesh went for an extended curfew of 18 hours.

The Telangana High Court, a few days ago suggested why the State was not imposing lockdown though the cases were spiralling. The fall in positive cases could be due to less number of tests being conducted per day, it said and wanted the government to consider weekend or partial lockdown.

However, the Chief Minister had a review meeting recently and felt the cost of lockdown would be even severe on peo-

ple with loss of wages and livelihood and fall in revenue and devastating impact on the economy.

While the Central Government left it to the States to take a decision depending on local situation, the Prime Minister said lockdown should be the last resort. Meanwhile, the daily bulletin released by the Director, Public Health showed a decline in the number of positive cases on Monday with 4,826 positive cases and 32 deaths. With this the total positive cases registered in the State so far crossed five lakh at 5,02,187 and the total death toll so far at 2,771.

The number of recovered cases on Monday were at 7,754 and total recovered cases at 4,36,619 with a recovery rate of 86.94 percent as against the national average of 82.3 percent.

Investors' wealth jumps...

Continued from page 1

"We note that favourable global cues, steady March quarter earnings along with favourable commentary, liquidity support announced by RBI and absence of nationwide lockdown have aided domestic equities to shrug off rising COVID-19 cases in the country," Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities, said.

He also noted that elevated daily caseload, higher positivity rate and rising COVID-19 cases in hinterlands of the country are expected to weigh on investors' sentiments and will prevent market to take any decisive up-move.

On Monday, among the 30-frontline companies list, L&T was the top gainer, rallying nearly 4 per cent, followed by Dr Reddy's, Sun Pharma and NTPC.

1,952 staff dead...

Continued from page 1

"We have our hospitals... We have augmented the number of beds, we have built oxygen plants in rail hospitals. We take care of our staff. As of now, we have 4,000 beds occupied by staff and their families. Our effort is to see that they recover quickly. As of yesterday, 1,952 rail employees have died due to Covid since March last year," he added. A couple of days ago, the All India Railwaymen's Federation, a rail union, had written to Railway Minister Piyush Goyal demanding compensation at par with frontline workers for railwaymen who lost their lives while working during the coronavirus crisis. In the letter, they said the men deserved Rs 50 lakh as compensation, same as that announced for frontline workers and not Rs 25 lakh which is paid to them.

TS passes of same data...

Continued from page 1

If there is an impact of vaccination the percentage should have changed but since a month, the number of persons above 40 years who are infected has remained at a steady 43.6 percent.

Across the world studies point that people who are vaccinated, even after the first dose, make up for fewer hospitalisations.

However this is not reflected in the bulletin. Even the number of symptomatic cases has remained at a steady 20.1 percent since April2, despite the beds being occupied.

In the past one month, many families witnessed devastating loss to Coronavirus but when it comes to deaths as well, the number of deaths due to Covid is 44.31 percent and with comorbidities it is 55.69 percent since April 4 up to May 9.

Several times in the past month, a record number of deaths have been declared, yet the percentages remain constant. Since April 4, when the data on deaths was updated, the state witnessed nearly 1,016 deaths. However, for some mysterious reason, the percentage has remained the same. Irrespective of the number of cases being tested, the number of primary contacts remain at 49 percent while secondary

contacts tested will be at 12 percent with a variation in the decimal.

With the government going ahead with the "Treatment First" strategy, setting aside, 'test, track and treatment', the 'status of contacts' section in the media bulletin is apparently obsolete.

Evidently, the bulletins are being released just to be right in the eyes of the judiciary but the constants in the bulletin reflect the lax attitude.

It may be mentioned here that in February, the Telangana government stopped the media bulletin and after intervention from the High Court on February 26, it resumed releasing it.

It may be recalled that the Telangana High Court had on February 25 observed that providing information to people was important, especially when there is an upsurge in cases in some states.

Meanwhile, since the status of hospital beds from the bulletin has been removed as a dashboard was created. But this dashboard has remained static and has not been of any use for persons looking for a bed.

Experts urge setting up a 'statewide real time dashboard' on availability of beds by category and geography and have written to the government as well.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
₹ Rs.48, 670(10 gm)	
SILVER	
₹ 76, 500 (1kg)	
CHICKEN RATES ₹/kg	
Dressed/With Skin	₹164
Without Skin	₹186
Broiler at Farm	₹113
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	446
VIJAYAWADA	426
VISAKHAPATNAM	355
RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)	₹4.46

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No dignity in death: Irrational fears obstruct Covid funerals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Can the novel Coronavirus spread from a patient's dead body to people living around the cremation or burial site? Both international and national guidelines have a clear response to this question.

"Cadavers do not transmit disease", say the World Health Organisation guidelines for managing bodies of those who die of Covid. Health Ministry guidelines state that "there is unlikely to be an increased risk of Covid infection from a dead body to health workers or family members who follow standard precautions while handling body".

For healthcare workers, mortuary staff and others directly handling bodies, these standard precautions involve wearing protective gear like gloves and masks, maintaining good hand hygiene and sanitising everything that the body has touched. For family members, priests and mourners, they involve not touching the body, wearing basic protective gear, and not gathering in groups to pray.

Fear-struck people are on many occasions not claiming the body of the dead from the hospital authorities. However, experts feel that there is no



Representational picture of people praying after the death of their loved one caused by Covid

need to panic over the bodies of relatives, who have died due to Corona. They say such panic among people is unwanted and the last rites can be performed adopting suitable precautions.

Generally, we come across reports of near and dear ones not claiming the bodies of dead in hospitals leading to GHMC disposing of the bodies like those of orphans, carrying bodies on tractor trolleys and JCBs as none come forward to act as pall-bearers. People, on many occasions, are not coming forward to catch the last glimpse of the dead,

putting bodies directly on the funeral pyre or dumping them in the ditch which leave one and all disturbed.

The multiplication of virus in bodies of the dead stops following the death of the person, however, the virus remains in the bodily fluids of the dead. Directly touching the body, weeping on the dead bodies, crying keeping the head and other parties of the body in the lap and such other acts are likely to spread virus to the humans from the dead.

If the zip-lock bag containing the body is not opened, there is no chance for the

virus to spread. There had been no instances of people getting affected from the dead. But the virus spreads due to asymptomatic people taking part in funerals. Assembling at one place, crying hugging the near and dear ones out of anguish caused by the death, not observing physical distance, not wearing masks are some of the factors that can spread the virus to others.

Surveillance officer for Hyderabad district Dr Sriharsha indicate that the hospital authorities should take steps to clean the body with sodium hypo chloride and put

it in a zip-lock bag and send it out of the hospital. The family members wearing PPE kits, masks and gloves can act as pall bearers. However, they should not open the zip bag under any circumstances. Pouring milk in the mouth of the dead or feeding the body with rice and putting a coral in the mouth are strictly prohibited. Not more than 20 persons should take part in the cremation. Near and dear ones can pay tribute to the dead by staying away at a distance of three to six metres.

According to Gandhi Covid Centre nodal officer Dr Prabhakar Reddy, blood thinners are given to Covid patients. Even after the death, blood is seen coming out of escape routes of the body. Though the body is cleaned there is scope for bodily fluids coming out of the body. Therefore, people are advised against touching the body and opening the zip bag. People can cremate their dead observing Covid-19 protocol. There should be no funeral processions taken out. Body should be taken to cremation ground directly from the hospital and cremation completed as per the tradition. More people should not gather to prevent spreading of the virus from one to another.

Decoction that can boost immunity can do harm too

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

It is said that everything is bad. Nothing is more perfect than necessary. Then, even if they are food and drink items, consuming too much can prove to be harmful. If you want to keep your body healthy, then consume as much as is necessary, otherwise it can cause harm rather than benefits.

There is fear inside the coronavirus epidemic. Everyone is taking various measures to keep themselves healthy. To increase immunity, many people are drinking daily brew. Immunity is strengthened by drinking decoction. Drinking decoction is very important in Ayurveda. People are advised to drink decoction to avoid seasonal diseases. But do you know that drinking too much brew can also be harmful for you.

If you drink decoction every day in an affair to increase immunity, it can also cause harm to you. Experts believe that it depends on a person's



health, age, season and the ingredients of making the decoction. Whether or not you should drink a daily decoction. If you are drinking decoction every day and you are having some problems, then stop immediately and seek the advice of a doctor.

Government Ayurvedic College vice-principal Dr Uma Srinivas has advised people against consuming decoctions as it would pose other health problems to them and advocates that people should not do anything without proper awareness.

The health professional said that the people should try home remedies and suggests them to use Ayurvedic health tips and techniques. She said that there are many drugs

available in Ayurvedic medicine to improve immunity, which is essential in the combat against the Coronavirus.

Mostly hot tasser items are used to make the decoction. In which hot ingredients like black pepper, cinnamon, turmeric, Giloy, Ashwagandha, cardamom and dry ginger are added. All these things produce heat in the body. If you use them more during the summer season then it can be harmful for your body. If you have phlegm disorder then you can drink brew regularly. By doing this, the phlegm ends. But people with Pitta and Vata dosha should avoid hot things. You should add less hot things like black pepper, cinnamon and dry ginger to make the decoction. Consuming too hot things may cause you trouble. There are many troubles with drinking brew daily which include burning sensation, nose bleeding, dryness, acidity, indigestion problem, mouth sores, frequent urination and burning sensation.

You don't have to struggle in silence: Rachakonda cops

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJIGIRI

In a move to prevent suicides and keep people away from depression and anxiety during Covid pandemic times, Rachakonda police on Monday launched psycho-social counselling services for citizens of Telangana.

Those coping with stress during Covid pandemic can contact the psycho-social counselling centre at 040-48214800. The centre will function from 9 am to 9 pm from Monday to Saturday.

Rachakonda CP Mahesh Bhagwat launched the centre which is aimed at giving confidence to those in distress due to Covid-related health and social-economic problems.

"You don't have to struggle in silence. You can be Un-silent. You can live well with a mental health condition as long as you open up to somebody about it," the police officials say.



NO HUSTLE BUSTLE

Roads and streets in Hyderabad and the rest of Telangana were deserted look on Monday night in view of the night curfew imposed by the government from 9 pm to 5 am in Telangana to contain the spread of Covid pandemic. The usual hustle bustle on main thoroughfares in Hyderabad was missing while police personnel set up check posts to restrict the movement of people.

Snooker parlours make a killing amid night curfew

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As Coronavirus cases continue to rise in Telangana's Hyderabad, the police have been taking strict measures to ensure people are adhering to the guidelines in view of the night curfew in city.

While the state government has issued directions to all offices, firms, shops, restaurants and others to close down by 8 pm during curfew nights.

Wearing masks, using sanitizers and practising social distancing are some more rules formed by the state government for the public which needs to be followed religiously to control the spread of the contagious virus.

However, despite the authorities taking strict measures to ensure the implementation of all the regulations, people are still not following the guidelines seriously.

On Sunday night, at least 40 people were taken into custody from a snooker parlour in Masab Tank for violating night curfew and Covid regulations.

The task force unit raided the snooker parlour on Sunday night and detained 40 people for violating night curfew in order across the state and organising their activities unhindered.

The supervisor of the parlour was also detained by the task force for further investigation.

Last year too, the parlour owner violated the lockdown guidelines, leading to the police raiding the parlour and taking eight people into custody then.

Some snooker shops are running illegally during night time in the city. Earlier, the police had raided a couple of snooker parlours and detained people for not following the guidelines in Hyderabad.

Quarantine must for all passengers from TS to Delhi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

People arriving in the national capital from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will have to undergo 14 days of mandatory institutional quarantine, said an order issued by the Delhi government.

This order is applicable for people travelling by flights, trains, buses or cars.

"All persons arriving from the state of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in NCT of Delhi by airlines, trains, buses, cars, trucks or any other mode of transportation shall have to undergo mandatory government institutional quarantine or paid quarantine for 14 days at facilities established by the concerned district magistrate," stated the order.

However, those who have been administered both doses of any Coronavirus vaccine or carry a negative RT-PCR test report not older than 72 hours prior to undertaking the journey, will be required to be home quarantined for seven days, it said. People who have received the two doses will have to present the vaccination certificate, it said.

T'gana cops follow protocol to apprehend Covid +ve accused

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police are not hesitating to apprehend criminals in important cases and effecting their arrests whether the criminals test Covid positive or negative. The police have been adopting special measures while dealing with the accused, who test positive for the virus.

While apprehending the criminals, the police have been following Covid-19 protocol. The police get the criminals tested for the virus. Whether the criminals test positive or negative, they are being presented in court following the Covid protocol and later police are getting them admitted to hospitals.



The police get the place where the accused positioned himself or herself sanitised

first and give them masks. They take steps to observe physical distance in police stations. Later, they make accused wear PPE kits before presenting them in courts.

Prior to sending them to remand as per the judge's orders, those who test positive are being sent to hospitals.

A gangster resorted to opening fire in Jammu and Kashmir and later fled to Mahabubnagar district to evade detection. But the gangster was apprehended and tested for the virus. He tested positive for the virus. The criminal was handed over to the J and K police observing the Covid-19 protocol.

Govt working to bolster medical services: Kavita

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJIGIRI

Telangana MLC Kavita has inaugurated a 200-bedded Covid isolation center at NAC dormitory, Art of Living Foundation at Madhapur on Monday.

Inaugurating the isolation centre, Kavita stated that the Telangana government is working on strengthening the medical services in state.

The Medchal Malkajigiri district Collector has allocated duty doctors and staff nurses. Free breakfast, lunch and dinner will be provided to the patients.

State reports 4,826 fresh Covid cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has reported 4,826 new Covid infections and 32 fatalities till Monday evening, taking the cumulative number of deaths to 2,771 and the total number of positive cases to 5,02,187.

The number of active cases in Telangana, as on Monday evening, has reached 62,797.

Between Sunday and Monday, authorities conducted 65,923 Covid tests and results of 2,345 samples are awaited.

On Monday, 7,754 individuals have recovered from the virus with a recovery rate of 86.94 per cent. So far, a total of 1,36,78,927 Covid-19 tests have been conducted in



the State out of which 5,02,187, have tested positive and 4,36,619 persons have recovered.

The Covid-19 positive cases reported from the districts included 57 from Adilabad, 99 from Bhadradi,

723 from areas under GHMC, 129 from Jagtial, 54 Jangaon, 79 from Bhupalpally, 75 from Gadwal, 49 from Kamareddy, 207 from Karimnagar, 205 from Khammam, 57 from Asifabad, 126 from Mahabubnagar, 117 from Mahabubabad, 142 from Mancherial, 65 from Medak, 324 from Medchal-Malkajigiri, 50 from Mulugu, 208 from Nagarkurnool, 295 from Nalgonda, five from Narayanpet, 42 from Nirmal, 78 from Nizamabad, 144 from Peddapalli, 54 from Siricilla, 302 from Rangareddy, 87 from Sangareddy, 161 from Siddipet, 191 from Suryapet, 182 from Vikarabad, 94 from Wanaparthy, 86 from Warangal Rural, 242 from Warangal Urban and 97 from Bhongir.

Cyberabad CP flags off free ambulance service

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJIGIRI

Cyberabad Commissioner of Police and ADGP VC Sajjanar, launched free ambulance service at CP Office in the presence of Cyberabad traffic DCP SM Vijay Kumar and others on Monday.

Sajjanar appreciated the generosity of Vennepusa Foundation for providing free ambulance services to the needy. He advised us to operate the free ambulance service in sub-urban areas of Hyderabad as there is a need for ambulances in those areas.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
PANCHAYATI RAJ ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT
O/o. Superintending Engineer, PR Region, Warangal
NT No:140,145, 143, 144,159-162,165/CE-CP/PMGSY/2021-22, 2nd call Dt.04.05.2021
Total 9 works: Package Road works for Rs. 128.37 Crores including (5) years Routine Maintenance in PR Warangal Region, sanctioned under PMGSY - III, Batch-2 FY 2020-21, vide GO RT No. 172 of the PR & RD (Roads) Dept. Dt.09.04.2021. Tenders shall be uploaded from the date of uploading and publishing of the NITs online from 10.05.2021 to 18.05.2021. Every NIT/Bid will be having time of (7) clear working days, from the date of publishing by the Department. Other details can be up had from eprocurement place https://tender.telangana.gov.in. Email ID : seprwg1496@gmail.com, Office Land line No.0870-2570154
Sd/- Superintending Engineer
PR Region, Warangal

Junior doctors to boycott their duties from May 25

ANUSHA PUPPALA
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Junior Doctors Association (TJUDA) announced on Monday to boycott their services from May 25, 2021 if Telangana government failed to fulfill their demands, which they were asking for since the first wave of Covid-19.

TJUDA has demanded clearance of 15 percent pay hike file for senior residents (SRs), junior residents (JR) and interns pending effective from January 2020, 10 percent incentive as announced by Telangana government, ex-gratia to the family of those martyred in line of duty as assured by Telangana



Chief Minister and circular for treatment for Covid healthcare workers and their families in NIMS.

According to TJUDA, 15 percent hike of the stipends for PGs and interns is due from January 2020. The file is due for

final approval of CM and 15 percent hike file is pending for approval.

Dr V Naveen, president, TJUDA said, "Infected healthcare workers and their family members are not able to find bed anywhere. NIMS Hospital

is always occupied, so we urge the state government to increase the bed capacity and issue circular for free treatment for HCWs and their family members and also insurance to medical students up to PGs as per GO MS No. 74. Ex-gratia

of 50 lakhs for doctors and 25 lakhs for nurses and supporting staff was promised by Telangana CM but not implemented till date."

He further added, "We are asking the state government to fulfill our demands since Covid-19 first wave but our demands are yet to be fulfilled by the state government. We regularly pursued for approval of pay hike with officials since last six months hoping for its approval but no clear response till date. If the government fails to fulfill our demands we will boycott our services from May 25, 2021."

Vijay, general secretary, TJUDA said, "In view of this

pandemic, we doctors are working day and night and government has not taken our hard work into consideration. They have passed the GO regarding 15 percent hike which should be implemented from 2020 but till now there's no response to it despite asking since many days. We were told that they will implement but that didn't happen yet. Now as it's very late we have given a representation to the health minister and the DME that we will boycott our duties after next two weeks if our genuine demands are not met. We hope that government takes action on our demands instead of letting us boycott our duties."

Kishan Reddy assures of beds, oxygen to AIIMS

- The Centre succeeded in stopping the first wave. However, the number of cases has increased in the second wave. He sounded optimistic when he said that the government would face it efficiently with people's support.
- The DRDO will launch its Covid-19 vaccine soon spending not much time.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy visited the AIIMS at Bibinagar on Monday, on the outskirts of the city, and said that 50 to 200 beds would be ready in the hospital within a week. AIIMS will soon be receiving ventilators and oxygen.

He assured the hospital to supply PSA equipment as the Centre has sanctioned 1,100 such equipment to various hospitals. The Centre gives full freedom to rein in Coronavirus. Not a single case of Covid is reported from 180 districts for the past week. He enquired about the medical and health services being provided to Covid patients, vaccination programme and other medical services being provided at the hospital.

Reviewing the Covid situation with AIIMS director Vikas Bhatia, Director of Medical and



Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy during his visit to AIIMS at Bibinagar on the outskirts of Hyderabad inspecting the food service on the hospital premises on Monday

Health Ramesh Reddy and other officials, the Minister asked them to immediately solve the problem of shortage of oxygen.

He spoke to Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan over the phone and sought ventilators and other medical amenities to the AIIMS. He distributed fruits among people who reached the AIIMS to get themselves vaccinated.

He went around the emergency wing, Covid ward in the hospital. None, including the WHO, predicted that Covid-19 poses such a huge threat to humanity.

The Centre succeeded in stopping the first wave. However, the number of cases

has increased in the second wave. He sounded optimistic when he said that the government would face it efficiently with people's support.

The DRDO will launch its Covid-19 vaccine soon spending not much time.

The vaccine, medicines for Covid and oxygen are being produced domestically round-the-clock and also being sourced from other nations.

The PM said that journalists are being treated as frontline warriors. The state government should also identify them as front-line warriors and give due importance to them.

He wanted the state government to take stringent mea-

sures to rule out an artificial shortage of Remedisivir and vaccine. The AP government brought Covid-19 treatment under the purview of Aarogyasri. The state government should take steps to ensure that the oxygen and medicines, being given by the Centre, supplied to all hospitals.

Later, he visited RVK Covid Centre at Ghatkesar and spoke to patients there. He appreciated some Civil Society organisations also establishing isolation centres. The patients being treated there are being provided with hygienic food. He appreciated the RVK efforts to treat patients at isolation centres.

Komatireddy urges PM to impose lockdown in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to impose a lockdown in Telangana and increase the quota of vaccination for the state. On Monday, he addressed a letter in this regard.

He mentioned in his letter that he would like to draw the attention of the Prime Minister towards the appalling situation in Telangana where in hundreds of Covid patients are dying due to negligence of the State government. "I am requesting you to save Telangana from the health crisis. Please do not trust the words of the Chief Minister, who is bluffing about the state of affairs in Telangana concerning the pandemic situation," he said.

Komatireddy stated in his letter that to cover their failures and inefficiency, the government was suppressing the facts about the Covid deaths. There is a huge shortage of beds, oxygen cylinders, RTPCR kits and N-95 masks, he said. The second dose vaccination drive is also going on at a slow pace. There is an immediate need to control the situation, otherwise, Telangana may turn into a graveyard, he said. In my parliamentary constituency, lakhs of people are eagerly waiting for the second dose of vaccination. The District Collector has already expressed his inability to provide vaccination.

Today the Health department in Telangana is functioning without a Health Minister and an inefficient Chief Minister is monitoring the situation, he alleged.

To everyone's dismay, Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan recently applauded the efforts of the Telangana government where as the whole state was in a health crisis and the administration had miserably failed to control the pandemic situation, Komatireddy said.

An exemplary life in public service - A tribute to Dr B Prasada Rao

Words can never convey the intensity of grief one experiences when an exemplary public servant, an outstanding police officer, a role model and inspiration to lakhs of people, suddenly leaves us forever. The death of B Prasada Rao, an officer of the 1979 batch IPS, is a shock and a great loss to everyone whose lives he had touched during his life and career.

Prasada Rao was the rarest of rare IPS officers. He was the embodiment of an ideal public servant by virtue of his character, temperament, sincerity, passion, integrity, and competence. Humane in heart and soul, authentic in and out, humble to a fault, with profound empathy for fellow human beings, he stood tall and strong.

During my long stint as Finance Secretary, I came to know Prasada Rao as an outstanding professional with a passionate commitment to public service. He was a role model not only to All-India Service and IPS officers but to every public servant who shares a concern for the society and seeks to make it a better place for all.

Eloquent in articulating the needs of the police force, he successfully persuaded the government to sanction the much-needed benefits to the police force, including additional posts, recruitment, promotions, increased remuneration for home guards, regular payment of TA/DA. He was a natural leader, not by command and control, but by his personal and professional example. He was the epitome of the ideal police officer or for that matter any public servant.

On May 31, 2014, a couple of days before Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated, he, as the DGP, organised a get-together of all AIS officers and non-IPS police officers, who were exhausted after managing agitations, elections, state reorganisation etc.

It was a unique and unprecedented event with bonhomie, camaraderie, goodwill, and



inter-service fraternity. That was the first and perhaps the last time that senior officials of all services came together and celebrated the fraternal kinship in the service of the state.

His professional career would be the envy of any IPS officer; SP of three major districts, DIG of two important ranges, head of Vizag and Hyderabad city Police Commissionerate, head of ACB, DGP, home secretary, and head of police force (HoPF). A police professional of the highest order, he was an epitome of quiet efficiency, who excelled in all his postings.

Post-bifurcation, when he was transferred from the post of HoPF to that of home secretary, I was surprised to see him unaffected, unruffled, with the calm composure of a yogi. He was grateful for the opportunity he had to work for the welfare of the police force of both the Telugu states.

He was the embodiment of humility, simplicity, grace, and above all empathy. He used his authority and power to protect the weak and help those who would not receive justice in the usual course. He tried to enhance and empower his colleagues and subordinates. It's inconceivable for him to talk ill of anyone, let alone indulge in gossip.

Bayyaru Prasada Rao, eldest of three siblings, was born in Sanivarpet of West Godavari district, where his father started his career as a police constable. My wife's

cousin, who was his school-mate and remained one of his closest friends, says 'Prasada Rao was a very sincere, hard-working, and highly disciplined student who consistently stood at the top of his class throughout their schooling in Kolluru of Guntur district.'

While his friends gravitated to engineering, Prasada Rao pursued his passion in physics, first in Andhra Loyola College and later post-graduate studies in IIT Madras. Thereafter he joined IPS with a strong commitment to public service.

Even while he was breathlessly busy policing, he continued to pursue his passion for quantum physics that finally earned him the doctorate for his research on Wave-Particle Duality. One of the few DGPs to obtain a PhD while leading a large police force.

Despite his scholarship, serious research and his mastery of the English language, he was almost shy about his extraordinary talents.

On the day of his retirement, he was euphoric. He said he would devote his entire time to advanced research. He had a fully equipped laboratory at home; his focus was on Quantum physics, dynamics of light, Big Bang theory, etc.

He told me once that he had more than enough empirical data to contest some of the theories of Albert Einstein. He continued to pursue his passions as a researcher, teacher, mentor and continued to engage in public service.

In the end, it seems to have been his heart, generous and full of compassion that he kept in good form through a lifetime of rigorous exercise, that let him down. We agreed to meet after his return from the USA. It's heartbreaking to think that would never happen. I will miss his smile, his wise counsel, his gentle warmth, his tender affection.

*Dr PV Ramesh
Former Member of
the Indian
Administrative Service*

SHORT TAKES

Recognise scribes as frontline warriors: Komatireddy

HYDERABAD: Recognise journalists as frontline warriors as it was done in 15 other states, demanded Congress MP from Bhongir Komatireddy Venkat Reddy. He urged Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao to extend Rs 25 lakh to the bereaved families of journalists. Komatireddy addressed a letter to the Chief Minister on Monday in this regard. In his letter, Komatireddy stated that 100 journalists lost their lives waging a fight against Corona. Already 15 states recognised journalists as frontline warriors. They are providing not only free treatment but also extending financial assistance for the bereaved families of journalists. He sought Rs 25 lakh government aid to a television reporter Chelukula Venkat Reddy, who died of Corona. The government has the responsibility of protecting their lives in these critical times, he opined. He asked the government to allocate special beds to the journalists and provide free treatment in private hospitals.

Sitting of Special Tribunal held to hear land dispute cases

PEDDAPALLI: A sitting of Special Tribunal was held here on Monday to dispose of land dispute cases in virtual mode at the Collector camp office. District Collector Sangeeta chaired the sitting. Earlier, the district collector passed the order in 307 land dispute cases. Some of the farmers who are not happy with the verdict approached High Court. On directions of the HC, applications were received from 85 eligible, out of 105, applicants on April 15 and 16. Adhering to Covid-19 precautions, an online session of the sitting of the Special Tribunal was held to go through the land disputes cases related to Antargam, Dharmaram, Kamanpur, Odela, Muttaram, Peddapalli mandals. The advocates argued their cases in virtual mode. The tribunal heard 16 cases on Monday. Additional Collector Lakshmi Narayana, Collectorate superintendent Anupama Rao, EDM Kavita and others were present.

Ensure there is no shortage of Covid kits, says Collector

MULUGU: District Collector Krishna Aditya on Monday asked government officials to ensure medical teams undertake door to door survey in all habitats and give people with Covid symptoms Covid kits and monitor their condition regularly. He asked DMHO Sudhaar Singh to ensure that there is no shortage of the isolation kits in the district. Addressing a meeting of the mandal special officials, medical and health authorities, tahsildars and MPDOs through video conference, he asked that at least 100 people should be vaccinated in each PHC and keep 108 and 104 ambulances ready at all times. If necessary, additional directors should be appointed on an ad hoc basis. He asked Tahsildar Narayana Swamy to see to it that there is no disruption of power supply and drinking water at the quarantine centre in Jakaram. He asked the officials to ensure that NREGS workers are deployed in good numbers in various employment guarantee works and take steps to desilt irrigation canals, approach canals, SRSP canals. Additional Collector Adarsh Surabhi, ITDA Project officer Hanumanthi, DRO Ramadevi, ZP CEO Prasuna Rani, and others were present on the occasion.

Cyberabad CP flags off free ambulance service

MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI: Cyberabad Commissioner VC Sajjanar launched a free ambulance service by Vennapusa Foundation at the Cyberabad Commissioner of Police office in the presence of Cyberabad Traffic DCP SM Vijay Kumar, Vennapusa Foundation chairman Subba Reddy and others on Monday. Cyberabad Commissioner VC Sajjanar lauded the generosity of the Foundation for providing free ambulance service to the needy. He advised them to operate the free ambulance service in sub-urban areas of Hyderabad as there is a need for ambulances in those areas. Vennapusa Foundation chairman Subba Reddy said reports about private ambulance operators charging extremely high rates had prompted such a service. This is a permanent free ambulance service, may be used for all emergency cases by calling a dedicated contact number 7710872108.

VHP leader's death condoled

HYDERABAD: Himachal Pradesh Governor Bandaru Dattatreya on Monday condoled death of VHP Dharma Jagaran Vibhag state general secretary Rajgopal Naidu due to heart attack. He recalled how Rajgopal Naidu recovered from Covid recently. In statement, Dattatreya said his death was a shock to him. He described Rajgopal Naidu as a honest, sincere and straight forward leader.

Interrogation of Putta Madhu, wife continues for 3rd day

PEDDAPALLI: Peddapalli ZP Chairman Putta Madhu was questioned on the third day at Ramagundam police commissionerate here on Monday in connection with the murder of lawyer Gattu Vaman Rao and his spouse recently.

The police are understood to have obtained crucial information from Putta Madhua nd his

spouse Sailaja over the cell phone conversations the couple had with the murders and on certain video clippings.

The police also questioned couple on the bank withdrawal of funds and payments made. The police are likely to make complete disclosure of the case details either on Tuesday or on Wednesday.

K VENKATESHWARLU
■ HYDERABAD

The announcement of a new TPCC chief by the party high command may take time as the Congress Working Committee (CWC) postponed the election of AICC chief due to the surge of Corona across the nation. The CWC postponed the election of the AICC president in the CWC meeting held on Monday. It is for the third time that the CWC postponed the election of AICC president.

The CWC announced that it has been postponing the AICC president's election because of the Covid surge. The Congress Central Election Authority has recommended CWC to conduct the AICC president's election on June 23. However, the majority of CWC members opposed the



election on June 23 because of the Covid surge in the nation. The Congress Central Election Authority then stated that it is postponing the elections and it will announce dates later.

Sonia Gandhi took the responsibilities of AICC temporarily after Rahul Gandhi tendered his resignation in 2019 owning up the responsibility of the party's debacle in general elections. The party decided to conduct elections for AICC in 2020, however, the CWC decided to continue with Sonia

Gang selling Remdesivir in black busted

PNS ■ WARANGAL RURAL

A five-member gang was busted by the Geesugonda police for selling Remdesivir vials at a higher price in the black market. They seized 42 vials of Remdesivir, Rs 1.69 lakh cash, a car, a two-wheeler and five mobiles from their possession.

The accused were identified as Chanda Vijay Kumar, a lab technician from Boduppal in Hyderabad, Chintam Rajesh, Urugonda village in Damera mandal of Warangal rural district, Mundati Gopal, a medical representative of Hanamkonda, Gattu Avinash, a lab technician of Dharmaram, and Vavila Suresh, a medical shop owner in Hanmakonda.

According to East Zone DCP Venkatalakshmi, the accused were purchasing the Remdesivir at MRP from Shamshabad locality and were selling the same in Warangal and surrounding areas at exorbitant prices to the needy.

'Cong will fight against Minister's encroachments'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy made it clear that the Congress will wage a fight against Minister for Labour Ch Malla Reddy over his land encroachments. He alleged that Malla Reddy had constructed his medical college encroaching the lake land in Suraram. He said that it is clearly mentioned in the

revenue records that the lands encroached by the Minister are 'Shikam'. He condemned the arrest of NSUI activists by filing false cases though they staged the dharna in a democratic manner. He said that the party will stand by the jailed NSUI activists.

However, Congress leaders felt the TPPC chief would have stated that Congress will wage a fight against all encroachers

mand may not announce the new TPCC chief.

On the other hand, the high command may not heed to the recommendations of Telangana Congress Affairs In-charge Manickam Tagore and AICC Organising General Secretary KC Venugopal. Manickam Tagore's uncle lost his election in recent Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. In the same manner, the party faced bitter experiences in the recent elections in KC Venugopal's own state Kerala.

Before that, they may not initiate any steps regarding the new TPCC chief's announcement. With these developments, the present TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy may complete his tenure. However, one of the party senior leaders opined that anything could happen in the party at any time.

revenue records that the lands encroached by the Minister are 'Shikam'. He condemned the arrest of NSUI activists by filing false cases though they staged the dharna in a democratic manner. He said that the party will stand by the jailed NSUI activists.

However, Congress leaders felt the TPPC chief would have stated that Congress will wage a fight against all encroachers

Practice yoga to keep diseases at bay

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Minister for Finance T Harish Rao has advocated the regular practice of yoga to remain hale and hearty. He was speaking in connection with the inauguration of online classes for teachers on Monday to improve their immunity by practising yoga and pranayama.

He appreciated the education department's initiative to launch a yoga training camp for teachers in the backdrop of Covid-19 spreading virulent form.

He said that practising yoga daily would help one to face any health problems. Since Coronavirus impacts the breathing process, one should improve their breathing capacity through yoga to defeat the virus.



Minister for Finance T Harish Rao speaking after inaugurating online classes for teachers in Siddipet on Monday

Strange are the ways of the virus, he said expressing concern over the heavy toll due to it. Stating that the Covid problem is universal, he advocated allot-

ting one hour to practice yoga, which is inexpensive. He suggested practising yoga daily to keep diseases at bay.

Siddipet DEO Ravi Kanta Rao said over 2,000 have registered their names for the training programme, which is not limited to teachers alone but open to all.

People, who cannot attend the programme can watch it on Siddipet Vidya Methra YouTube channel from 7 am to 8 am daily till May 19. Sectoral officer Ramesh and others spoke.

Siddipet District Yoga Association honorary president Komuravelli Anjaiah, president Thota Ashok, general secretary Nimma Srinivas Reddy and others were present. Yoga guru Thota Satish conducted the training session.

HC CJ urged to direct govt to set up task force to curb Covid

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At a time when the government has allegedly failed in curtailing the second wave of Covid, AICC National spokesperson Sravan Dasoju on Monday knocked on the doors of the High Court of Telangana. The senior Congress leader wrote an open letter to Chief Justice of Telangana Justice Hima Kohli appealing for the High Court's intervention and the necessary directions to the government to immediately set up an empowered Task Force similar to the Supreme Court's directions given to the Central government.

According to him, this committee must be constituted with subject matter experts and various stakeholders, who can effectively lead the state in the prevailing crisis. In his letter addressed to the Chief Justice, Sravan also urged the High Court to accept his letter as a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) and urged the court for asking the government to curb black marketing of life-saving drugs like Remdesivir, Tocilizumab and to regulate the brazen loot

of private hospitals.

To settle his political scores, the Chief Minister has the audacity to remove the Health Minister and has not appointed a Health Minister so far. There has been a huge scarcity of hospital beds, oxygen and ventilators, severe shortage and black marketing of life-saving drugs. All these are coupled with hiding the original number of Covid-19 positive cases, the death toll and reducing the number of tests to showcase the situation is under control. On Sunday, three persons died in a government hospital due to the non-availability of oxygen. Almost 25,000 medical staff posts, including that of doctors and nurses, are vacant for the past many years," Sravan pointed out.

While criticizing the government, the AICC leader said that the Government of Telangana had been following a hide and seek model ever since the Covid-19 outbreak in the country and also in the state and blatantly neglecting in "tracing, testing, treating and vaccination", the key activities in containing the virus.

Minor fire breaks out at zoo

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Minor fire broke out in Zoo Park on Hunter Road in the city on Sunday. On a tip off, the fire brigade personnel rushed to the zoo park and brought the flames under control.

Loss of property due to the fire mishap cannot be ascertained now. Hanumakonda fire brigade personnel Janardhan, Rajender, Srinivas and Nagaraju and other stood part in the operation.

India fastest country globally to administer 17cr Covid vax doses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is the fastest country globally to administer 17 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses, the Union Health Ministry said on Monday.

China took 119 days while the US took 115 days for reaching the same landmark. The vaccination drive in India was rolled out on January 16 with healthcare workers getting inoculated and vaccination of frontline workers started from February 2. Subsequently, it was opened for different age groups. The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed the landmark of 17 crore.

A total of 17,01,76,603 vaccine doses have been administered through 24,70,799 sessions, according to the provisional report till 7 am.

These include 95,47,102 healthcare workers (HCWs) who have taken the first dose



and 64,71,385 HCWs who have taken the second dose, 1,39,72,612 FLWs who have received the first dose, 77,55,283 FLWs who have taken the second dose and 20,31,854 beneficiaries in the age-group of 18-44 age group who have taken the first dose. Besides, 5,51,79,217 and 65,61,851 beneficiaries aged

45 to 60 years have been administered the first and second dose respectively, while 5,36,74,082 and 1,49,83,217 beneficiaries above 60 years have received the first and second dose.

Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Bihar and

More than 6.8 lakh vaccination doses were administered in a span of 24 hours

Andhra Pradesh account for 66.79 per cent of the cumulative doses given so far in the country. The ministry said 2,46,269 beneficiaries of the age group 18-44 years received their first dose of COVID vaccine in a span of 24 hours and cumulatively 20,31,854 across 30 states and UTs so far.

More than 6.8 lakh vaccination doses were administered in a span of 24 hours.

As on Day-114 of the vaccination drive (May 9), 6,89,652 vaccine doses were given. Across 5,685 sessions, 4,05,325 beneficiaries were vaccinated for the first dose and 2,84,327 beneficiaries received their second dose of vaccine, the ministry said.

Hosptials directed not to refuse admission to Covid patients for lack of valid ID

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

All Central and state government hospitals managing covid patients have been directed to ensure that no patient is refused admission due to lack of a valid identity card and a positive test report for coronavirus, the Centre has told the Supreme Court.

In an affidavit on the points raised by the top court, the Centre submitted that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has intimated all state governments regarding the policy of setting up three-tier Health infrastructure for appropriate management of suspect/ confirmed covid-19 cases.

As the vaccination of the entire country is not possible in one stretch due to the very suddenness of the pandemic and limited availability of vac-

cine doses, the vulnerability is the prime consideration, it said.

The Centre's affidavit was submitted late Sunday night in a suo motu case by the apex court for ensuring essential supplies and services during the covid-19 pandemic.

It further said that the guidance document issued in this regard on April 7, 2020, envisages/mandates setting up of Covid Care Centre (CCC) for mild cases and these have been set up in hostels, hotels, schools, stadiums and lodges, both public and private.

Functional hospitals like Community Health Centres (CHCs), which may be handling regular, non-Covid cases may also be designated as COVID Care Centres as a last resort. Dedicated Covid Health Centre (DCHC) that shall offer care for all cases that have been clinically assigned as moderate.



'States must ensure clamp down on black marketing of drugs'



NEW DELHI: All states must ensure special teams at different levels to "mercilessly clamp down" on hoarding and black marketing of drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic and send a clear message that "trading in human miseries" shall not be

tolerated, the Centre has told the Supreme Court. In an affidavit filed in the apex court, the Centre has said the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) had communicated to all state drugs controllers (SDCs) that there should be zero tolerance to any kind of hoarding or black marketing of drugs and also to instruct their enforcement staff to keep strict vigil and take stringent action. It said the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has requested the state governments to take all necessary measures to stop black marketing or hoarding of drugs under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, The Essential Commodities Act and other applicable rules and regulations. "The question of black-marketing is essentially dealt with sternly by use of police administration and local state administration. Law and order being a state subject all state governments must ensure special teams at state, district and taluka levels to mercilessly clamp down on any illegal hoarding or black marketing and send a clear message that trading in human miseries shall not be tolerated under any circumstances," the Centre has said in its affidavit.

INDIA CORNER

Fake call centre targeting US citizens busted; 3 held

Police have busted a fake call centre being operated from Ahmedabad and targeting US citizens on the pretext of providing them quick loans, and arrested three persons in this connection, officials said on Monday. Based on a specific tip-off, a cyber crime team raided the call centre located in Jagatpur area on Sunday and nabbed the trio, identified as Bharatsinh Mandola (35), Akhilesh Nair (23) and Ajay Sonavane (28), all residents of Ahmedabad. The accused used to call unsuspecting Americans by identifying themselves as representatives of the 'USA Speedy Cash Loan Centre' and lure people by offering them quick loans, a release by the cyber crime branch said. To win the trust of people and project their firm as genuine, they used to make calls using a specialised software, and persons on the other side would see a US telecom number on their phone screen rather than an Indian number, it said. Once the victims expressed willingness to take loan, the accused would tell them that the loan could not be disbursed because of less credit score.



Strict measures taken to curb Covid spread: West Bengal CM

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday asserted that strict measures have been taken to control the spread of COVID-19 in the state, while also maintaining that a total lockdown, if imposed, will hamper livelihood of people. She urged the central government to facilitate free-of-cost vaccination for all. "We have taken strict measures, a total lockdown will hamper livelihood of people," Banerjee said, addressing a press conference at the state secretariat following the first cabinet meeting of her newly formed government. The CM further said that her government has sought three crore vaccine doses from the Centre for West Bengal, of which one crore will be distributed among private hospitals.



Vistara to start Delhi-Tokyo flights from June 16

Vistara said on Monday it will start flights on the Delhi-Tokyo route from June 16 under the air bubble arrangement formed between India and Japan.

The airline will fly once a week between the two capital cities, said its statement. Vistara's announcement comes at a time when India and its aviation sector have been badly hit by the second wave of coronavirus infections. During the last few weeks, several countries such as Australia, the US and the UK have restricted travel to and from India. Vistara said it will use its Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft with three-class cabin configuration to serve the Delhi-Tokyo route. "Vistara has also trained its cabin crew in the Japanese language to extend the warmth of true Indian hospitality to travellers from Japan," the airline's statement noted.



Count of active Covid cases falling in Uttar Pradesh

The number of active COVID-19 cases in Uttar Pradesh is showing a downward trend and the recovery rate in the state has improved, an official spokesperson said here on Monday. The highest single-day spike of over 38,000 infections was reported on April 24, and since then, there has been a steady decline, he added. "With test, trace and treat strategy, the state machinery is conducting an average of over two lakh tests daily. With this aggressive approach, the number of active cases, which was around 3.10 lakh on April 30, has come down to about 2.33 lakh now, a fall of nearly 77,000 in nine days (till Sunday)," the official said. The number of people recovering from the disease is increasing every day. According to the spokesperson, 23,333 new cases of the coronavirus were reported in the state on Sunday, while the number of recoveries was 34,636. There are currently 2,33,981 active cases of the disease in the state, and the number of people who have recuperated stands at 12,54,045. According to the spokesperson, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has described the decline in the active case and the improved recovery rate as satisfactory and instructed the "Team-9" to further increase the state's testing capacity.



43 TMC legislators sworn-in as ministers at low-key ceremony

PNS ■ KOLKATA

At least 43 members of the third cabinet of the Mamata Banerjee-government were on Monday sworn-in as ministers during a low-key ceremony at the Raj Bhawan, amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic. Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar administered the oath of office and secrecy to the ministers.

Three TMC leaders Amit Mitra, Bratya Basu and Rathin Ghosh were sworn-in virtually. Mitra is unwell and both Basu and Ghosh are recuperating from Covid-19.

Other elected legislators like Partha Chatterjee, Subrata Mukherjee, Firhad Hakim and Sadhan Pande also took oath at the ceremony, where Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was present along with other state government officials.

Covid: Indian Navy brings large amount of medical supplies from abroad

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Three Indian Navy warships are bringing to India on Monday 80 tonnes of liquid oxygen, 20 cryogenic oxygen tanks, 3,150 cylinders and a large amount of other medical supplies from abroad as the country reels under a severe second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

The medical supplies being brought by the ships included 900 oxygen-filled cylinders and 10,000 rapid antigen COVID-19 test kits, 54 oxygen concentrators, 450 PPE (personal protective equipment) kits, Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said.

Indian Navy ship Airavat is reaching Visakhapatnam from Singapore carrying eight cryogenic oxygen tanks each having a capacity of 20 metric tonnes of oxygen and other supplies. Another warship, INS



Kolkata, is arriving at New Mangalore port carrying 40 metric tonnes of liquid oxygen, 400 Oxygen cylinders and 47 oxygen concentrators from Qatar and Kuwait, Commander Madhwal said.

INS Trikand is reaching Mumbai with 40 tonnes of oxygen from Qatar, he said.

Last week, the Indian Navy deployed nine warships to bring liquid medical oxygen and other supplies from several countries in Persian Gulf and south-east Asia.

The Navy said it has stepped up its efforts as ships from all three naval commands in Mumbai, Visakhapatnam and

Aim to make Assam a top state: CM

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Newly sworn-in Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said the aim of his government is to make the state one of the top five in India in the next five years.

"We will start working from tomorrow to achieve this objective," Sarma told reporters here after taking oath.

The NEDA convenor said the prime focus of the second BJP government in Assam will be to control the COVID-19 pandemic, fulfil all poll promises and make the state free from the annual flood havoc.

"The COVID-19 situation in Assam is alarming. Our daily cases have crossed the 5,000-mark. In our cabinet meeting tomorrow, we will discuss it from all perspectives, and take measures," Sarma said.

Covaxin doses unavailable for second day in Mumbai

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Vaccination centres in Mumbai did not administer Covaxin for the second consecutive day on Monday because of lack of stock, leaving citizens fuming as many of them are due for their second dose of the vaccine against COVID-19.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), through its Twitter handle, released a list if 105 vaccination centres that would be functional on Monday, but informed that these would be administering only the Covishield vaccine.

On Sunday also, the BMC had not administered Covaxin to the beneficiaries due to unavailability of the vaccine. Several citizens expressed anger and frustration at the state of affairs as many of them are due for their second dose since they had taken the first jab over 42 days back.

As per the government guidelines, the recommended gap between two doses of Covaxin is four-six weeks and for Covishield the suggested interval is four-eight weeks.

Local resident Rupesh



Lingayat took to Twitter to express his frustration.

"My father took 1st dose of Covaxin, now it is impossible to get 2nd dose of Covaxin and its been 43 days since took 1st dose. He is 63. Please help," he tweeted. Another resident Param Sampat also tweeted that his sister had got a booking on Saturday for 3-5 pm slot, but when she reached at 2.45 pm, authorities told her they were out of stock gave her a token for Monday.

"Today when she reached at 8, she was denied a vaccine. This is absolutely irresponsible," he tweeted. The BMC's executive health officer, Mangala

Gomare, did not respond to calls or text messages on the lack of Covaxin doses in the city.

According to a BMC report, a total of 1,76,505 people have been administered Covaxin doses in the city, including 1,20,167 who have received the first dose and 56,338 who have got the second dose as well.

Till Sunday evening, 27,00,431 people were vaccinated in Mumbai against COVID-19. These included 20,52,963 beneficiaries who have taken the first dose and 6,47,468 people who have received their second dose, the report said.

Transplant recipients vulnerable even after vaccination: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Although two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine confer some protection for people who have received solid organ transplants, it's still not enough to enable them to dispense with masks, physical distancing and other safety measures, according to a study.

This is a follow-up study to an earlier one in which the researchers reported that only 17 per cent of the participating transplant recipients produced sufficient antibodies after just one dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine regimen.

"While there was an increase in those with detectable antibodies after the second shot, the number

of transplant recipients in our second study whose antibody levels reached high enough levels to ward off infection was still well below than in people with healthy immune systems," said study lead author Brian Boyarsky from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in the US.

"Based on our findings, we recommend that transplant recipients and other immunocompromised patients continue to practice strict COVID-19 safety precautions, even after vaccination," Boyarsky said.

The researchers noted that people who receive solid organ transplants, such as hearts, lungs and kidneys, often must take drugs to suppress their immune systems and



prevent rejection.

Such regimens may interfere with a transplant recipient's ability to make antibodies to foreign substances, including the protective

ones produced in response to vaccines, they said.

The latest study, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), evaluated this

immunogenic response following the second dose of either of the two mRNA vaccines -- made by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech -- for 658 transplant recipients, none of whom had a prior diagnosis of COVID-19.

The participants completed their two-dose regimen between December 16, 2020, and March 13, 2021.

The researchers found that only 98 of the 658 study participants -- 15 per cent -- had detectable antibodies to SARS-CoV-2 at 21 days after the first vaccine dose.

This was comparable to the 17 per cent reported in the March study looking at immune response after only one vaccine dose.

At 29 days following the second dose, the number of participants with detectable antibodies rose to 357 out of 658 -- 54 per cent, the researchers said.

After both vaccine doses were administered, 301 out of 658 participants -- 46 per cent -- had no detectable antibody at all while 259 -- 39 per cent -- only produced antibodies after the second shot, they said.

The researchers also found that among the participants, the most likely to develop an antibody response were younger, did not take immunosuppressive regimens including anti-metabolite drugs and received the Moderna vaccine.

Hope floats

Can Mamata's win spur the Opposition into unity? More importantly, will the Congress be the nucleus?

The resounding victory of Mamata Banerjee against the BJP's concerted effort to wrest power in West Bengal has allowed the languid Opposition to dream afresh of an anti-BJP alliance well in time for 2024. Such buoyed spirits were seen in the past, too, but the current one stands out. One, the West Bengal victory following the never-seen-before hype created by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah left a strong message in its wake. Two, the satraps hailed Mamata, but of greater import was a congratulatory tweet by JD(U) parliamentary board chairman Upendra Kushwaha about Mamata breaching the BJP's "chakrayuh" (a circular, military formation). The tweet by the BJP's ruling ally in Bihar caused its own ripples and raised eyebrows. Three, Shiv Sena's Sanjay Raut took the narrative forward not only by asserting that the shrivelling Congress continued to be the "soul" of any Opposition alliance, but also by presenting Maharashtra's Maha Vikas Aghadi as a model of a political alliance against the BJP at the national level. The positive reception to Mamata's victory in the Opposition-ruled States will not automatically lead to a common national front; it merely points to such a possibility. There are many pre-conditions to be met first: The next round of Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, for example. Can the SP and the BSP reach an electoral understanding? Will the Left, AAP and even the Trinamool Congress allow a straight fight



between the Congress and the Akali Dal and/or the BJP in Punjab? Both States will test the Opposition's resolve, while the UP result will be the clincher.

The regional leaders are coming to terms with their shared problems of one-upmanship, a Congress snapping at their heels and a BJP trying to poach their brood. Will the prospect of a united fight against the BJP prompt them to adopt the jointly-at-the-Centre-and-severally-in-States formula of decentralised unity? One way to find out is for them to overcome the COVID-19 challenge by opening two-way communication channels among themselves. The Congress cannot automatically stake claim to be the "soul" just because its leadership may favour a default principle that the index of Opposition unity will work in its favour and it can seek the top post by getting most seats in the Opposition camp. It has shown maturity to be the junior-most partner in Maharashtra. It may believe that the satrap's inability to leave their States for a national role for fear of political backstabbing will leave the Congress as a default alternative. The MVA model has worked because the Shiv Sena, NCP and the Congress were compelled to bury their differences. Noticeably, the Sena did not interfere with the Anil Deshmukh case and left it to the NCP to sort it out. Also, all the partners fared reasonably well in the State elections without having to be a drag on the alliance. The question therefore is: Should the Opposition search for a leader first or an alliance? To date, six Prime Ministers have come from the Congress and an equal number from the formerly Congress but non-BJP fold. Who can break the tie?

PICTALK



A man blows a conch shell as part of an exercise to strengthen his lungs, near Taj Mahal

PTI

In the slow lane

Experts say that vaccinating all against COVID is the only way out but the drive is spluttering

The world applauded us for supplying indigenous COVID vaccines under the "Vaccine Maitri" initiative. Well, that was before the second wave hit home. When it comes to dealing with the pandemic in our own backyard, our vaccination efforts run into a wall of challenges — from manufacturing to pricing to supply chain bottlenecks. Several States had expressed inability to start the vaccination drive for 18-44 years, citing shortage of vaccines. The situation hasn't improved yet; if anything, inequitable vaccine prices have only exacerbated it. No doubt, there exists a wide demand-and-supply gap and India needs to ramp up its vaccine production capacity manifold. While the nation faces a vaccine deficit, how logical is it for the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) to plan to pump 240 million pounds (₹2,400 crore) for making vaccines in the United Kingdom? This huge amount should have ideally been spent on increasing the production capacity in India. In the looming shadow of a more lethal third wave, achieving herd immunity seems to be the only way out. However, going by the current pace — India fares poorly on the index of percentage vaccination — achieving herd immunity is easier said than done.

Since most of the predictions by our scientists with respect to the nature and peak of the second wave have fallen flat, there is no point relying on their predictions on the timing and intensity of the third wave. Adding to these woes are disturbing reports that a "black fungus" is maiming those who have recovered from COVID. The rare infection, called "Mucormycosis", has an overall mortality rate of 50 per cent. Doctors believe it may be triggered by the use of steroids that are given as life-saving drugs to critically ill COVID patients. If that is true, fighting SARS-CoV-2 virus and its variants is not the only challenge that we face. We must also get ready to face the fungal infection that severely damages our skin, lungs and brain. The crisis is certainly deepening as the Government's best efforts to contain the pandemic notwithstanding, the desired results are nowhere in sight. The Centre has claimed in the Supreme Court that its vaccine policy is "just, equitable and non-discriminatory" and there is no need for the courts to interfere. However, this explanation doesn't agree with the situation on the ground. Far from reaching even the halfway point in the fight against COVID, the Government must employ sincere, coordinated and gigantic efforts to deal with the crisis.

Apocalypse and the leadership

The handling of the pandemic, both by the Centre and the States, since the first wave leaves much to be desired



DEEPAK SINHA

Despite the darkness and the chaos that currently engulf us, one can say with certainty that this, too, shall pass. Undoubtedly, the cost has been tragically unconscionable, and nothing could have prepared us for the trauma and heartbreak that confronts us on a daily basis.

The fact is that we had expected to be overwhelmed by the pandemic's impact during the first wave, given the state of our health infrastructure and the Government's apathy. Especially, since the latter's complete focus was on Donald Trump's visit, the opposition to the Citizen's Amendment Act and the Delhi riots. For reasons that we still do not fully understand, that did not happen and we got away lightly, believing for some reason that our generally poor standard of hygiene and prevalence of disease had made us immune to the virus. Clearly a combination of inverse snobbery, arrogance and complacency gripped us, allowing us to forsake common sense and ignore basic science in an effort to quickly regain our pre-pandemic lives.

Suffice it to say, the handling of the first wave by those mandated to do so was apathetic in the initial stages and panic-stricken subsequently, especially after they saw it decimate Europe, the US and South America. We locked ourselves in, at a moment's notice, without any consideration for our less fortunate brethren, the daily wage earners, whose livelihoods disappeared overnight. The inability of the State to anticipate the consequences or mitigate their suffering resulted in the largest migration of population seen since Partition. The migrants attempted to get back to the safety of their villages, treks on foot involving thousands of kilometres for some.

To compound their misery, the Centre as well as most State Governments responded, as the Governments here invariably do, with inherent savagery, totally bereft of empathy or compassion. As a result, thousands died by the wayside. The Government



was seemingly unaware that even in the tragedy that was Partition, the fledgling Government of the time utilised the military to establish the Military Evacuation Organisation to coordinate the movement of all refugees and helped them reach their destinations in relative safety.

In complete contrast, despite the grave nature of the threat confronting the Government, the military remained a mere bystander, utilised for such "critical" tasks as serenading hospital staff and other frontline workers by showering hospitals and police memorials with flowers from helicopters! Even now, there are allegations that the military has been used to establish field hospitals in the constituencies of a few VIP politicians.

Clearly, in hindsight, it was not our systems and processes in place to deal with just such a contingency that were found wanting, as Kerala showed us, but the lackadaisical approach of most Ministers and bureaucrats whose responsibility it was to ensure their implementation. They, in their wisdom, or rather the lack of it, treated the NDMA's detailed guidelines and SOPs with contempt, leaving it to their min-



THE HANDLING OF THE FIRST WAVE BY THOSE MANDATED TO DO SO WAS APATHETIC IN THE INITIAL STAGES AND PANIC-STRICKEN SUBSEQUENTLY, ESPECIALLY AFTER THEY SAW IT DECIMATE EUROPE, THE US AND SOUTH AMERICA

ions to handle the problems.

Inherent arrogance and a belief that we had put the pandemic behind us ensured that the Narendra Modi Government took its eyes off the ball, even going so far as to ignore advice, received in early March from its own advisory group, on the likelihood of a second wave impacting us with even more ferocity. As a result, it didn't bother to make up for the infrastructural and procedural deficiencies observed earlier but, worse, refused to hold accountable for acts of omission and commission those responsible for the lapses and delays that led to unnecessary and avoidable deaths of thousands. In short, it was a Government more focused on garnering power and prestige than ensuring the well-being of its citizens. An uncaring civil society, a divided and defunct Opposition spearheaded by a party in the death throes and a pro-Government media preferred to remain silent on these issues. By doing so, we enabled them to cover up their misdeeds and perpetuate false narratives and bold-faced lies.

While Modi may have excellent reasons for not venturing outside his bio-bubble at the Race Course Road, prefer-

ring to lead from within, he should note that leaders need to be seen, otherwise they are redundant. Interestingly, such an absence in a war zone on the part of a military leader would result in his immediate removal from command, probably on grounds of incompetence, if not sheer cowardice.

Whatever the spin this Government may attempt to push, Modi has been completely shorn off all the gloss and charisma he earlier projected. His unwillingness to take responsibility for the disaster implies that he lacks the moral fibre. The question that arises is if he will do the right thing and fall upon his sword. One way or the other, we will know the answer soon. But let us be totally clear that his reputation is done and dusted, forever connected to his handling of the pandemic and what it has wrought. As the Bard, insightful as ever, wrote: "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones."

(The writer is a military veteran, who is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PM HAS FAILED TO HANDLE COVID CRISIS

Sir — Prime Minister Narendra Modi faces growing criticism across the political spectrum for holding large election rallies as the country's health system reels under the deadly wave of COVID-19, forcing the citizens to beg for oxygen and hospital beds. Modi, at a campaign rally in West Bengal, said he has never seen such huge crowds at any event. Leaders of key States lashed out at Modi as the Congress and the Left called off campaigning in West Bengal due to the virus surge. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, whose State includes India's financial centre, tried calling Modi to address the shortages of oxygen and the drug Remdesivir but was told the PM was too busy addressing rallies. India now has the world's fastest-growing COVID-19 caseload, leaving it behind only the US in terms of total numbers.

The growing gap between Modi's optimism in fighting the virus and the reality on the ground is particularly evident in Delhi, among the worst hit in India.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

GOVT MUST TAP ONLINE EDUCATION POTENTIAL

Sir — Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, degree colleges and universities have resorted to complete online methods of conducting semester examinations. They also believe that online examinations are the way forward because the pandemic has made it difficult to conduct offline examinations. In addition, the use of advanced technology and digital software has made it easier to conduct examinations virtually, do complete assessment and declare results faster. Till now, degree colleges conducted the last two semester examinations online after the COVID-19 pandemic hit India in March, 2020. Currently, degree colleges, the University of Mumbai (MU) and major universities in Maharashtra are conducting the final-year last semester examinations online.

With the second wave of COVID-19 lashing the country, the Government has closed the schools and colleges to contain the spread of the virus. Classes are suspended and examinations are either cancelled or

Govt must help prison inmates



Very few in the Government — the Centre and the States — would have given a second thought to the plight of the inmates in India's overcrowded prisons, especially in relation to the pandemic. In the times of distress, it is only the Supreme Court that the hapless inmates can turn to for some type of succour. The top court of the land had, in 2020, freed prisoners, nearly 60,000 of them, on interim bail to decongest the prisons. Subsequently, 90 per cent of them returned. The SC has again ordered that those released on parole during the first phase of the pandemic be freed on a repeat parole for 90 days.

postponed indefinitely. The new academic year which began late, but with lots of hopes for the students, was disrupted once again. The online education has once again acquired a new urgency during this period.

C K Subramaniam | Mumbai

THE ASSAM CM MUST ACT URGENTLY

Sir — This refers to the editorial 'Fair deal?' (May 10). The elevation of Himanta Biswa Sarma as the Chief Minister of Assam has been an inevitable choice for the BJP's top brass. Ever since he crossed over to the BJP from the Congress in 2014, he has been instrumental in increasing the BJP's footprint not just in Assam but throughout the Northeast. As the convener of the North East Democratic Alliance, Sarma has been BJP's main troubleshooter and strategist in the region. Even when the party in Assam was hit by anti-CAA

According to the apex court, it is important to save the lives of the prisoners and the personnel guarding and interacting with them. Obviously, because States cannot have one rule for the public and another for the prisoners, it is not as if every person would jump at the idea of going home albeit for a short period.

Fear, anxiety and apprehension rule many prisoners. Those hesitant to spend a brief period with their loved ones need to be tested in the prison premises and taken care of. Also, the law enforcers would do well to avoid unnecessary arrests during the pandemic. In the case of Armesh Kumar versus the State of Bihar, the SC had ruled that arrests should be an exception in cases where the offences are punishable with less than seven years' imprisonment. Quite understandable, because 'humane attitude' should be the cornerstone of criminal jurisprudence. Several verdicts of higher courts have advised the subordinate courts to bear in mind that Article 21 of the Constitution speaks about protection of life, and public liberty, is a fundamental right of a citizen.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

protests and COVID crisis last year, it was Sarma who was at the forefront of navigating the troubled waters for BJP.

With a huge political clout, Sarma has played a big role in changing the political calculus of Assam by engineering an unspoken electoral alliance between Assamese and Bengali Hindu voters of the State. All of this has seen Sarma achieve a bigger stature than Sonowal in Assam. And with most new MLAs in BJP supporting Sarma, it would have been risky for the party central leadership to overlook him for the CM's post.

However, Sarma takes over at a challenging time for Assam. With the rising number of cases, Sarma clearly has his task cut out and must hit the ground running.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

The Government's repeated chest-thumping at receiving foreign aid is pathetic. Had GOI done its job, it wouldn't have come to this.



Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

Russia consistently defends international law. At the same time, we will steadfastly defend our national interests and ensure the security of our people.



Russian President — Vladimir Putin

My mother was very gentle. I can be many things in my work and in my life, but I am very warm and gentle with my children.



Actor — Angelina Jolie

I think we've already seen plans for the T20 World Cup to move out of India...and they're going to be ultra-cautious about that sort of a thing.



New Zealand cricketer — James Neesham

We are in a health emergency. We have repeatedly urged the Government to call an all-party meeting to demonstrate resolve.




Congress interim president — Sonia Gandhi

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S PATH TO CARBON NEUTRALITY

A decarbonised economy will also be knowledge-based and knowledge-driven



SANJAY GUPTA

As the Glasgow Conference of the Parties (GoP) meeting draws near, there is considerable discussion and speculation on India's future commitments and plans; not just on further reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions but to offer a date by when the country would achieve carbon neutrality or net-zero emissions. While India is the only G-20 country on track to meet its Paris Climate Agreement goals, it is also being projected as a big emitter. With recent date announcements made by China, the EU and the USA to achieve carbon neutrality, both the domestic and international climate community are now looking to India to declare its deadline.

There are two issues to consider. One, is it in India's medium and long-term interests to become a carbon neutral economy, gradually moving towards decarbonisation of all the sectors? As the past experience of economic history shows, countries and economies that adopted newer technologies and approaches have benefited socially, economically and in geostrategic terms. The difference between a "future" green economy and non-green economy will be the same as an industrialised and non-industrialised economy in the current scenario. Further, the Global Commission on Adaptation avers that investments in adaptation consistently deliver higher returns and create more jobs than traditional investments. Second, should the country declare a date for achieving the net-zero carbon emissions status, what should be that date? Given the current global mood, it will be strategic for India to declare its intent on achieving carbon neutrality but only on its own terms. The path to India's green economy should not emerge out of Paris or Glasgow but rather out of every village, town and city in the country. Its net-zero emissions date should be a time band such as from 2065-2085. The later date should be offered as a more likely target. However, if there is adequate green finance made available, supported by development and availability of appropriate technologies, the earlier date of 2065 or thereabouts could be possible. What can India hope from countries that are less than supportive of a Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver on COVID-19 vaccines and medicines to avert an ongoing global tragedy? How much support will the same set of rich countries provide to India and other developing countries to address a "wicked" problem such as climate change?

India will have to forge its own unique path towards decarbonisation. It has achieved immensely in areas such as energy efficiency and solar power. By 2030, it aims to install 450 gigawatt of renewable energy capacity, far exceeding its Paris targets. But these are low-hanging fruits compared to the long and arduous path ahead. The process to achieve carbon neutrality will be integrated and interconnected across geographies, people and multiple sectors of the economy. Inclusion of the voice and choice of the socioeconomically underprivileged and climate-vulnerable groups will be critical to success of the "green" transition and inclusive growth. Farmers will need to adapt, innovate and improvise to achieve climate resiliency while also attaining higher productivity and profitability. India should proactively seek Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in green technologies for that is what it will take to obtain access, not just international climate negotiations that have largely ignored the needs and aspirations of the developing countries. The list of current and future technologies will be long but each one will need to be judged and imbibed based on its social relevance, economic viability and the ability to solve critical problems. A decarbonised economy will also be a knowledge-based and knowledge-driven economy.

(The writer is an independent consultant and expert in climate issues. The views expressed are personal.)

NEP: A bundle of pious intentions

The Government should avoid overambitious targets that will result in gross underutilisation or even scrapping of the assets already created



UTTAM GUPTA

In yet another attempt to improve the power sector, the Modi Government has come up with a new draft National Electricity Policy (NEP), the major objectives being to promote clean energy such as power based on renewable and gas without debunking coal; revitalise power distribution companies (discoms) and developing an efficient market for electricity distribution.

All the three objectives are laudable. These are crucial to development of an efficient, competitive and sustainable power sector to meet the needs of the economy on a high growth trajectory while at the same time, meeting the environment goals (especially India's commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change). What is being done on ground zero to achieve these goals?

At present, India has a total generation capacity of about 360 GW (one gigawatt equals 1000 megawatts or MW) including 63 per cent based on fossil fuels, of which coal alone accounts for 54 per cent and nearly 22 per cent based on renewable energy, viz., solar, wind, bio-mass, small hydro, etc. and gas-based capacity accounting for another seven per cent. However, only 50 per cent of this installed capacity is currently utilised.

This has to do with indiscriminate setting up of capacity on coal (to some extent on gas) much before Prime Minister Narendra Modi started giving a boost to the renewable energy sector. Many of those plants were set up without ascertaining whether or not power produced by them would find any takers (the promoters could not even sign power purchase agreements or PPAs) while others did not even have fuel supply tie-ups (several gas-based plants fall in this category). Many coal-based plants have been impacted by availability of much cheaper power, at about ₹2.4 per unit from renewable-based plants (against ₹5 to ₹66 per unit from coal) prompting Discoms not to buy power from the former. In turn, renewable-based plants are affected as some State Governments (for instance, Andhra Pradesh) are not honoring PPAs.

Meanwhile, Modi has more than doubled the original goal of renewable-based power capacity from 175 GW by 2022 to 450 GW by 2030.

The current capacity being 80 GW, to reach the scaled up target, the country will need to add 370 GW. Plus an additional 50 GW from coal-based projects already under implementation, the total capacity will go up to 780 GW by 2030. Against this, the projected demand being about 320 GW (on the basis of an average six per cent annual Gross Domestic Product growth), this would imply utilisation of mere 40 per cent.

The Government should avoid over-ambitious targets which will result in gross under utilisation or even scrapping assets already created.

It overarching focus should be on ensuring optimum utilisation of every megawatt of capacity created and viability of all efficiently run power generation plants. This brings us to the second objective, namely revitalising Discoms. In this regard, the Modi Government has taken numerous steps, the latest being the ₹300,000 crore electricity distribution reform program unveiled by the Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, in the Union Budget for 2021-22.

Christened 'Reforms-Linked, Result-Based Scheme for Distribution' (RLRBSD), the scheme

sets targets for losses and efficiency of Discoms. The aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses and shortfall in the average revenue realisation (ARR) from the sale of electricity *vis-a-vis* the average cost of supply (ACS) or the ACS-ARR gap are major causes behind the losses of Discoms and their financial stress. Accordingly, the scheme aims at reducing AT&C losses to 12-15 per cent and ACS-ARR gap to 'nil' by 2025.

When viewed in the backdrop of Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY), launched in November 2015, wherein the targets were missed by a huge margin, this scheme does not inspire. Under UDAY, Discoms were required to reduce AT&C losses from 20.7 per cent during 2015-16 to 15 per cent by 2018-19. Further, they were to reduce the ACS-ARR gap from ₹0.59 per unit during 2015-16 to 'zero' by 2018-19.

Simultaneously, the Government gave them a financial restructuring package (FRP) under which their entire debt of about ₹400,000 crore was condoned. This led to a dramatic impact on their losses which declined from ₹52,000 crore during 2015-16 to a low of ₹17,000 crore during 2017-18. However, Discoms did little to set their house in order.

During 2019-20, their AT&C losses were 18.9 per cent against the 15 per cent target for 2018-19. The ACS-ARR gap during 2019-20, stood at ₹0.42 per unit against target of 'zero' for 2018-19.

During 2020-21, discoms reported a staggering loss of ₹58,000 crore.

Correspondingly, their debt galloped to about ₹450,000 crore by the end of 2020-21 and is estimated to reach ₹600,000 crore mark by the end of current fiscal. The collateral damage is a pile-up of their dues to power generators to over ₹150,000 crore (current). This is despite a special loan of ₹90,000 crore promised by Nirmala Sitharaman under 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' in May 2020 (the loan amount has since been raised to ₹130,000 crore).

Against this backdrop, the latest talk, of achieving those targets which should have been achieved by 2018-19 by March 2025 under RLRBSD, is laughable.

At the root of persistent and increasing losses of Discoms are the orders issued by State Governments to sell electricity to some preferred consumers viz., poor households and farmers, either at a fraction of the cost of purchase, transmission and distribution, or even free. On the units sold to these groups, these companies incur colossal under-recovery. This is aggravated by AT&C losses - most of it plain theft.

Inflated tariff allowed to generators under purchase agreements adds to the revenue shortfall. Unless, these three fundamental factors are addressed, any other attempt to revitalise Discoms - as intended in the NEP - will be a non-starter.

As for developing an efficient market for electricity distribution - as promised in the policy - it is easier said than done. When an overwhelming share of power generated in the country is procured by

Discoms under PPAs (mostly under long-term contracts), distributed by them at tariff controlled by States/owners of Discoms (regulatory commissions merely approve what is proposed by them) and a mere five per cent of the electricity is traded, it will take ages before one can hope to see 'efficient' and 'competitive' markets.

Meanwhile, under the draft Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2021, in sync with the intent to develop an efficient market under NEP, Modi Government proposes to de-license the distribution business, bring in competition, and give the consumer power to choose supplier. If only the States give subsidies directly to farmers and households, rein in power theft and improve efficiencies in purchase, wheeling and distribution, will help in revitalising the Discoms.

In view of the entire distribution network viz., transmission lines, feeder lines, transformers etc that caters to households, industries etc in an area being owned and controlled by the Discoms, any talk of letting private license is a misnomer. Instead of indulging in such rhetoric, Modi will do well to get States resolve the basics.

If only the States give subsidies directly to farmers and households (instead of riding piggy back on Discoms), rein in power theft and improve efficiencies in purchase, wheeling and distribution, this will help in revitalising the Discoms and also give relief to industries which are currently paying exorbitant charges for cross-subsidising the preferred customers.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE PM IS TAKING EVERY STEP TO SAVE LIVES. TODAY, MOST OF THE COUNTRIES ARE STANDING WITH US DUE TO HIS EFFORTS. — UNION MINISTER ANURAG THAKUR



THE GOI'S REPEATED CHEST-THUMPING AT RECEIVING FOREIGN AID IS PATHETIC. HAD IT DONE ITS JOB, THINGS WOULDN'T HAVE COME TO SUCH A PASS. — CONGRESS LEADER RAHUL GANDHI

States vote for new economy; will Mamata lead the Oppn?

The West Bengal Chief Minister has virtually challenged the dazzling development model that has put India's public sector on sale

The recent Assembly election results reflect more than politics. Indian voters have larger issues and economy is at the core of their concern. Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal have separately endorsed a new economic course for the nation.

The eastern State definitely remains at the centre of attention. A *hawai-chappal* wearing and white sari-clad Mamata Banerjee has virtually challenged the dazzling development model that has put India's public sector on sale and is engaged in a visual extravaganza of over ₹30,000 crore (in reality possibly over ₹50,000 crore) to change Delhi's central vista. Nobody explains why that should be a priority instead of creating a strong healthcare sector and hospitals capable of producing their own oxygen.



SHIVAJI SARKAR

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

Populist largesse of Mamata for women, youth and *Duare sarkar* (Government at the doorstep), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK's) welfare policies in Tamil Nadu or the Left alliance in Kerala, when studied closely, virtually refutes the "aggressive privatised development" model of the Centre. All these States have voted against farm Bills that seek to create large house monopolies, junk scrapping policy of poor man's vehicles, high fuel prices, fares, tolls, taxes and so-called user charges. The vote endorses that the country has more poverty to address than create cosmetic central vista that serves none but a few, big corporate houses. They have together rejected 'Manmohanomics' — that ended up in a political disaster for its proponent, the Congress, and its follower, the BJP. The people are pitted against the disinvestment of prime banks, LIC, financial institutions, defence establishments and others with a target of ₹1.75 lakh crore in 2021-22. This is lower than ₹2.1 lakh crore it hoped to garner through divestment in 2020-21; an admission of failure of the Government bid. This failed economic concept is rejected now by the voters.

While in Tamil Nadu the change was inevitable, Kerala not very surprisingly voted for the Left front, following people's perception that the Government was delivering. The voters equally perceived that the Congress-led UDF was incapable of opposing the BJP's onslaught for privatisation, now a national concern. So, the LDF has returned with a bigger mandate.

The massive vote surge in West Bengal for the Trinamool Congress was not possible if the people did not perceive the Centre's economic policies as a grave threat. The Left-Congress, the TMC and even a section of the BJP voted for economic policy changes that, ironically, Mamata Banerjee symbolises. The 47.93 per cent votes for TMC up from 43.3 per cent in 2019 and reduced numbers of votes for BJP to 38.13 per cent from 40.2 per cent in 2019 says a lot. The loss of all other parties was a gain for the TMC. It has also busted the myth that West Bengal votes along communal lines. The wash out of the Left and Congress for its alliance with the highly communalised ISF is enough testimony. This also proves that West Bengal votes for social and economic issues and rejects any polarisation, barring some exceptions, either for Furfura or Ram. Another noticeable aspect is the vote for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose whose anniversary the BJP celebrated as *Parakaram Diwas* and Mamata as *Deshnayak Diwas*.

Surprisingly, nobody pointed out this incongruity which Mamata aptly encashed with a heightened nationalistic presentation - a message went out strong that the Centre is not only disrespectful to Netaji, but is also blatantly promoting some private houses. No wonder that some days later the Rafael bribery charge revived as an issue following a French Government exposure. India is not against private companies. Many have contributed significantly; many enjoy people's trust and have set standards. The nation, however, is against overt domineering by any group. The present elections have exposed that. The country wants privatisation neither at the cost of the public sector nor does it want to get it enslaved to any private player.

In the UP's panchayat elections, the BJP gets only 580 against Samajwadi Party (SP) 782, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) 361, Congress' 61 and 1266 others. So, will this election lead to an overt cry for economic changes? The rightist centrist party is too inclined towards the corporates and may not bring about the changes. But the opposition though too has its corporate connections and may try to forge an alliance to clinch a political change. Its leadership is not yet obvious. Mamata may emerge as one but her all-India acceptability may not be easy.

Some like Akhilesh Yadav have spoken for her. Either way, a change of guard may be inevitable. The combine would have to come out with a new economic policy - against privatisation and for strengthening the people's economy; one may call it socialist or by any other name. It has to be contrary to a centrist, aggressive privatisation that the present rulers are trying to dispense. India is at the threshold of an economic and political change. It may gel before the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections next year.

Sensex jumps 296 points; Nifty ends above 14,900

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Extending its gains for the fourth consecutive session, equity benchmark Sensex surged about 296 points to recapture the key 49,500-level on Monday, led by intense buying in pharma and energy stocks. At the closing bell, the 30-share BSE index quoted 295.94 points or 0.60 per cent higher at 49,502.41. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty jumped 119.20 points or 0.80 per cent to 14,942.35. L&T was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, rallying over 4 per cent, followed by Dr Reddy's, Sun Pharma, NTPC,

IndusInd Bank, PowerGrid, ONGC and M&M.

On the other hand, UltraTech Cement, Infosys, Reliance Industries and HCL Tech were among the laggards.

"Domestic equities continued to defy concerns of rising COVID-19 cases and extended mobility restrictions by several states by extending gains for the fourth consecutive trading day," said Binod Modi Head-Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Notably, sharp rebound in metals, pharma, auto and PSU banks

supported market's rally. Most of key sectoral indices traded in green.

"Favourable global cues, steady March quarter earnings along with favourable commentary, liquidity support announced by the RBI and absence of nationwide lockdown have aided domestic equities to shrug off rising COVID-19 cases

in the country," Modi noted.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Shanghai, Tokyo and Seoul ended on a positive note, while Hong Kong was in the red.

Stock exchanges in Europe were largely trading with losses in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.53 per cent higher at USD 68.64 per barrel.



Gold gains Rs 179; silver up by Rs 826

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold in the national capital on Monday rose by Rs 179 to Rs 47,452 per 10 gram helped by strong buying in the global precious metal, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 47,273 per 10 gram. Silver also jumped Rs 826 to Rs 71,541 per kg, from Rs 70,715 per kg in the previous trade.

Honda earmarks Rs 6.5 cr to support relief efforts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Honda India Foundation, the corporate social responsibility arm of all Honda group companies in India, on Monday said it has earmarked Rs 6.5 crore to support the government's ongoing efforts against Covid. The foundation is closely working with government authorities in Haryana, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat and has earmarked a sum of Rs 6.5 crore towards the relief measures. "This second wave of COVID-19 pandemic has



impacted all of us adversely. At this hour of need, it is imperative that more individuals and organizations come forward to help in cohesion and we do our best for the community we operate in and for the country, at large. "We hope that these efforts by the government and the industry can help families as they tide through this calamity," Honda India Foundation Chairman Atsushi Ogata said in a statement. The foundation is working with various stakeholders to ensure that on-ground efforts can run seamlessly, he added. "It is time to stand together for each other, with the belief that we will sail through this," Ogata noted.

Bharat Biotech begins direct supply of Covaxin to 14 states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech has commenced direct supply of its COVID-19 vaccine 'Covaxin' to 14 states, including Delhi and Maharashtra, with effect from May 1, according to the company's Joint Managing Director Suchitra Ella.

The Hyderabad-based firm has started supplying its COVID-19 treatment vaccine to the states based on the allocations received by the central government. 'Bharat Biotech confirms direct supplies of COVAXIN to the following state govt's since 1/5/21, based on the allocations received by GoI. Requests have been



received from other states, & will be processed for distribution based on availability of stocks 24x7," Ella tweeted.

The company is supplying vaccines to Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

On April 29, Bharat Biotech announced a cut in the price of 'Covaxin' for states to Rs 400 per dose from the earlier Rs 600 per dose.

SSWL wins orders worth Rs 54 cr from US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Auto components maker Steel Strips Wheels Ltd (SSWL) on Monday said it has bagged orders worth around Rs 54 crore from the US and Europe. The company has received export orders of over 5,25,000

wheels for the US and EU caravan trailer market, US mobile home and US truck trailer market, SSWL said in a regulatory filing.

The new orders are valued at over USD 7.25 million (about Rs 54 crore), it added. SSWL will complete execution of the orders by early July 2021 from its Chennai and Dappar plants, the company said. "Orders of similar capacity are anticipated in coming months from similar customer base as businesses continue to recover rapidly," the company added.

DBS announces aid worth Rs 10 cr for relief efforts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Singaporean lender DBS, which operates a wholly-owned subsidiary in the country, on Monday said it is pumping COVID relief aid worth over Rs 10 crore into India including three cryogenic oxygen cylinder tanks.

Foreign banks operate in India either as a wholly-owned subsidiary or through branch model.

DBS has tied up with Singapore High Commission in India and High Commission of India based in Singapore to import three cryogenic oxygen tanks having capacity of 20,000 litres each to support the ongoing relief efforts, an official statement said.

The tanks will be donated via the Singapore Red Cross to India and will be deployed for use through the Ministry of Health, India, the statement

said. It has partnered with 'Doctors For You' to support the setting-up of a 300-bed oxygen equipped facility in Mumbai, along with the installation of mini oxygen plants, procurement of oxygen concentrators, and provision of medical personnel, the bank said. Similarly, a tie-up with 'United Way Mumbai' is aimed at facilitating ICU unit beds and equipment, oxygen con-

centrator devices and other medical supplies to enhance existing capacity at public healthcare facilities in Mumbai and Pune, it said.

Additionally, its employees across Asia have started a fundraising initiative to donate funds towards healthcare support and vaccination for the underprivileged through GiveIndia, the statement said, adding that the bank will make a matching contribution.



UltraTech shares decline over 2 pc after Q4 earnings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of UltraTech Cement on Monday dipped over 2 per cent after the company reported a 45.2 per cent decline in consolidated net profit for the fourth quarter ended March 2021.

On NSE, it went lower by 2.34 per cent to Rs 6,330.

Aditya Birla Group firm UltraTech Cement on Friday reported a 45.2 per cent decline in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,774.13 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021 on account of reversal of deferred tax liabilities.

Economic activity down in April, May: Fitch

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Fitch Ratings on Monday said the shock to economic activity from the latest wave of COVID-19 pandemic will be less severe than the one in 2020, but recovery is likely to be delayed as economic activity dropped in April-May.

The global rating agency said there are growing indications that the latest wave of COVID-19 infections will add to risks among financial institutions (FIs) and anticipates that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may introduce additional measures to support the financial sector if indications of economic stress mount.

"We expect the shock to economic activity from the latest wave of the pandemic in India to be less severe than in



2020, even though caseloads and fatalities are much higher... Nonetheless, indicators show activity dropped in April-May, which is likely to delay the country's recovery, and the number of newly recorded cases remains extremely high," Fitch Ratings said in a report. It said currently authorities are implementing lockdowns

more narrowly, and companies and individuals have adjusted behaviour in ways that cushion the effects.

"There is a risk that disruption could persist longer and spread further than our baseline case assumes, particularly if lockdowns are introduced in more regions, or nationwide," it added.

India is facing the world's worst outbreak of COVID-19 cases with more than 3 lakh new daily COVID-19 cases being reported for two weeks now and the new cases reached more than 4 lakh new daily cases over the weekend.

Over 2.46 lakh people in India have died from the virus infection. Public health system is buckling under the weight of surging infections and deaths with several parts of the country reporting shortage of hospital beds, medical oxygen, medicines and vaccines.

"India's slow pace of vaccination means that the country could remain vulnerable to further waves of the pandemic even once the current surge subsides. Just 9.4 per cent of the population had received at least one vaccine dose as of 5

Total vehicle registrations slips 30 pc to 1.52 cr units

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The total vehicle registrations in India fell by 29.85 per cent to 1,52,71,519 units in financial year 2020-21, the lowest in the last eight years, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said on Monday.

Total vehicle registrations were at 2,17,68,502 units in fiscal year 2019-20.

All categories of vehicles, except tractors were in red in FY21 with two-wheeler (2W), three-wheeler (3W), commercial vehicles (CV) and passenger vehicles (PV) falling by 31.51 per cent, 64.12 per cent, 49.05 per cent and 13.96 per cent respectively -- the lowest in last eight years and way below the FY13 levels, FADA said in a statement.

Passenger vehicles (PV) registrations were at 23,86,316 units last fiscal, as against 27,73,514 units in FY20, down 13.96 per cent, while those of two-wheelers dipped 31.51 per cent to 1,15,33,336 units as compared to 1,68,38,965 units in the previous fiscal.

Three-wheeler registrations in FY21 were down 64.12 per



cent at 2,58,174 units, as compared to 7,19,594 per cent in FY20, while CV registrations were at 4,48,914 units as against 8,81,114 units, a decline of 49.05 per cent, FADA said. Tractor registrations, however, grew by 16.11 per cent last fiscal at 6,44,779 units as compared to 5,55,315 units in 2019-20, it added.

As for April 2021, FADA said since India was under complete lockdown in April 2020 and not a single vehicle could be sold, a year-on-year comparison is not possible.

When compared to the previous month of March, FADA said in April 2021 total vehicle registrations were down 28.15

per cent at 11,85,374 units versus 16,49,678 units.

PV registrations were down 25.33 per cent at 2,08,883 units in April, as against 2,79,745 units in March this year, while those of 2W declined by 27.63 per cent at 8,65,134 units, as against 11,95,445 in the previous month, it added.

Registrations of CV were at 51,436 units in April as compared to 67,372 units in March, down 23.65 per cent. Tractor registrations also witnessed a dip of 44.58 per cent last month at 38,285 units, as compared to 69,082 units in March this year, the automotive dealers body said.

MONEY MATTERS

Vivimed Labs gets DGHS nod to manufacture, market Favipiravir



New Delhi, May 10 (PTI) Drug firm Vivimed Labs on Monday said it has received approval from the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) to manufacture and market Favipiravir tablets in India, used for the treatment of mild to moderate cases of COVID-19. Vivimed Labs in receipt of Government of

India (DGHS) approval to manufacture and market Favipiravir tablets in the strengths of 200 mg and 400 mg under Vivimed's own brand name 'Favilous' across India, the company said in a regulatory filing. It is used for the treatment of mild to moderate cases of COVID-19. Favipiravir is one of the leading oral anti-viral treatment approved in various countries for the potential treatment of patients with mild to moderate COVID-19 disease. Ramesh Krishnamurthy, CEO of Vivimed Labs said, "With huge spike in COVID-19 cases being reported daily in India, there is an urgent need to provide more treatment options to healthcare professionals."

Isuzu launches BS-VI compliant versions of V-Cross and mu-X



Isuzu Motors India on Monday said it has launched BS-VI compliant versions of V-Cross and mu-X range in the country, priced between Rs 20.06 lakh and Rs 35.34 lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). The company said it has also introduced a new model Hilander, tagged at Rs 17.04

lakh. The V-Cross trim with automatic transmission and two-wheel drive system is priced at Rs 20.06 lakh, while the four-wheel-drive variant with manual transmission is tagged at Rs 21.07 lakh. The four-wheel-drive version with automatic transmission is priced at Rs 24.59 lakh. Similarly, the BS-VI compliant version of its seven-seater SUV mu-X, which comes with a two-wheel drive mated with automatic transmission is tagged at Rs 33.37 lakh. The four-wheel-drive trim with automatic transmission is priced at Rs 35.34 lakh.

Greenply Industries to set up Rs 75-crore plant in UP



Greenply Industries on Monday said it will invest at least Rs 75 crore to set up a plywood and allied products manufacturing unit in Uttar Pradesh. The company's board at its meeting held on May 10 approved setting up of a new unit at Sandila Industrial Area

in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh for manufacturing of plywood and its allied products through a wholly-owned subsidiary in India, it said in a regulatory filing. The incorporation of the wholly-owned subsidiary has also been approved by the board, it added. Investment required to set up the plant is approximately Rs 75 crore (excluding cost of land and licence of approximately Rs 40 crore), it said, adding the plant is expected to be operational by the fourth quarter of 2021-22. The new project would be financed through debt and equity, the company said.

Zydus Wellness Q4 net profit surges 92.6 pc to Rs 133 cr



Zydus Wellness on Monday reported a 92.66 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit to Rs 133.13 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2021 on account of robust sales. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 69.10 crore for the corresponding period of the previous fiscal, Zydus Wellness said

in a BSE filing. Consolidated sales of the company stood at Rs 600.75 crore for the quarter under consideration. It was Rs 484.76 crore a year ago, it added. For the fiscal year ended March this year, the company posted a net profit of Rs 118.73 crore as against Rs 141.72 crore for the previous fiscal year, Zydus Wellness said. Consolidated sales of the company for 2020-21 stood at Rs 1,853.66 crore. It was Rs 1,734.19 crore in the year-ago period, it added. Five of its brands, Glucon-D, Sugar-Free, EverYuth Scrub, Peel Off Face Mask and Nycil maintained their leadership positions in their respective categories as of March 2021, Zydus Wellness said.

RASIKA DOES IT 'OUT OF LOVE'

Rasika Duggal once again perfectly slips into the shoes of Meera both as a mother, who is trying hard to understand her son, and as a lonely wife who misses her husband and his presence makes her uncomfortable. She talks to *The Pioneer* about what one can expect from the second season of *Out of Love*.

Meera played by Rasika Duggal manages to single-handedly carry the *Out of Love* series on her shoulders! In the first season, Meera was this fine balance of vulnerability and grit. Rasika says that we will see a very different Meera at the beginning of Season 2! "At the end of the first season, she's still vulnerable and she's still finding her way around with respect to what's happened to her. She's still trying to deal with what not having Akarsh in her life means." When Purab Kohli reappears desperate for payback, her world cracks in ways she never could have predicted. In fact, the trailer was an indication that one is in for a twisted tale where everything is fair in hate and war. She added that she's trying to find a life for herself without him, and also deal with the humiliation she's had to suffer. "The beginning of season 2 shows a Meera who's put a lot of that behind her and is very comfortable in the space that she's in. She has made some meaningful relationships with people who live around her. I have largely seen her as a very quiet person. She's sort of changed a little bit and realises she

needs meaningful relationships. She's happy to be a single mother. But then, Akarsh comes back to Coonoor. And then it kind of transitions into psychological warfare between the two. His entry disturbs her in a way that makes her realise that what she thought she had already dealt with, in reality, she had not really dealt with," she adds.

When asked how taxing was it for her to play Meera this time, she says, "There are sides of Meera that I understand and then there are some sides that I don't. There is a side of her that doesn't easily ask for help, she doesn't exhibit vulnerability and that's an aspect I don't relate to. I am the kind of person who will pick up the phone and say, 'Listen, I am having a really hard day. I need to talk'. Meera is not like that, she believes that finding her own way in a difficult situation is a mark of strength. I remember reading the script and wondering, 'Why isn't she asking for help? Why is she trying to manage this all on her own?' That is a side of her I had to work towards understanding. I am not like that, but I do have the sensitivity to understand why she's like this. The side of her that I do understand is the one that's evoked many times in season 2. It stems from a kind of person who suddenly behaves uncharacteristically. I do understand that because I don't find it hard to be that way."

Opening up more about the same, Rasika says that the part that she really emotionally connected with, in Season 2, was the kind of love that one feels for

their child and the need to protect the child. "I am not a parent in real life, but the events of Season 2 made me understand the difficulties of parenting, and how vulnerable you are when you are a parent. That really moved me. I remember someone telling me once, 'You only understand fear when you become a parent'. As a reasonably sensitive human being, I can understand that logically, but to truly experience what that makes you feel is something that happened to me while shooting this season. It also made me realise that your children can be your whole world, but they are their own people and they will make decisions that can often conflict with what you feel is good

that the most satisfying bit would have to be the diversity of the work that came out meaning the thrill was having *A Suitable Boy* and *Mirzapur 2* come out on the same day. "The variety of two different pieces of work coming out on two big platforms in which I played dramatically different characters, gave me a big thrill as an actor. It gave me a lot of confidence in my own range as an actor. That meant a lot to me while things have changed now. It's psychologically more taxing this time around. Last time, we were still trying to understand what it really means to be living in a pandemic. Now, it's come back stronger. There is a sense of complete loss of hope and a feeling of



for them. And being a parent also means letting go."

Given the original British series, *Doctor Foster*, had two seasons, Rasika didn't know would have a second season! "I didn't know whether they would make it, because that's something that's determined by the business side of things, which is something I like to keep myself distanced from! But they commissioned season 2 pretty quickly. That encouraged me because it made me realise that season 1 had done well for the platform. But as an actor, I try not to get influenced by these things because I want my decision regarding a project to be based purely on my instincts as an actor," she shares.

She has done some impactful work over the last one year. When asked about the most fulfilling and creatively satisfying bit about that journey, she asserted

despondency, which I think everyone is going through."

Rasika further adds that she has never been the kind of person to say, 'Let's not listen to the news.' "Because I have believed that is always a cop-out. But right now, I am honestly trying to balance it because I don't want to not know what's happening around me, but at the same time, sometimes it becomes very overwhelming. A very interesting article that I read recently, which has been shared a lot because of its relatability, talks about what we are feeling and calls it 'languishing', which is the space between flourishing and depression. And it's okay to accept that there are some days when I am 'languishing'."

The idea that work is coming out and the satisfaction that she has been a part of creating something, keeps her going!

USE YOUR sense of scent



Have you always wished you could make your own perfume? The right mix of not-too-loud fragrances and a humble amount of this one strong vanilla or rose, etc.? Well, read on to know how that's possible now!

Indie perfumers like the 160-year-old Lucknow-based perfume house Isak are quin-

tesentially Indian! Since many clients are staying at home and ordering online despite the vaccine, the artisanal perfumery house decided to think out of the box. The result was a box. Isak's do-it-yourself (DIY) perfumery kit aims to turn customers into perfumers at home. The little lab of olfactory experimentation is both fun and educative. It is a

home-delivered rediscovery affair for making both unisex perfumes and gender-oriented fragrances!

"It's important to get as close as possible to a customer's perfume preferences, and who knows it better than the customer?" asks Vidushi Vijayvergiya, a descendant of Isak founder Chhunnamal Vijayvergiya. Vidushi had been looking to create legacy handicraft perfumes of her own. "Perfumery is heavy art. It requires time, expertise and study. We created a test group to shortlist ingredients and identified the ones that were simple to understand, memorise and connect to. Some of them are bergamot, lavender, vanilla, rose, citrus, aquatic, and oriental. The activity allows you to understand the art of making perfumes by testing out the top, middle and base notes in the box," she says. After pursuing her MBA from SCMHRD, Pune, and Luxury Management course from IIM-Ahmedabad, she spent time in Europe researching innovations in perfumery. It helped her

understand the world market.

Decently priced, the DIY box contains 12 ingredients, two glass beakers, two empty spray bottles with labels, droppers, smell strips, and coffee beans. With it comes a workbook with notes and formula sheets, in addition to instructions that guide you through every step of the fragrant process.

Vidushi wishes people were more receptive towards Indian fragrances. They have confidence in international brands, despite the domestic market showing enormous potential. "Having said that, social media has been a boon for us. It allows us to tell our story and educate customers about new products," she says.



ROHIT PENS EMOTIONAL NOTE ABOUT JOURNEY THUS FAR

Actor Rohit Bose Roy celebrated *Mumbai Saga's* success with an emotional post. On Monday, the actor posted a still from the film and revisited his journey in the industry.

Expressing his "gratitude," Rohit said that he is thankful about the fact that he is still a part of the film business. In a post on Instagram, he revisited his "difficult childhood" but said he has no "sob stories" to tell.

"Yes, I had a difficult childhood.. Yes, my mom had to teach the neighbourhood kids to make ends meet after my Dad passed when I was hardly 15 years old. Yes, I had to really struggle for whatever lil success I have achieved. Yes I had to spend countless sleepless nights.. I still do! BUT....I have no SOB STORIES!!! It's all good! I'm still here!" he wrote.

As soon as he dropped the post, a couple of his friends commented praising his role in *Mumbai Saga*. "You did very good," wrote casting director Mukesh Chhabra. Raj Kundra wrote, "You were brilliant in the movie. Your achievements are all thanks to the struggles." Filmmaker Nadeem Shah praised Rohit, in response to which the actor wrote, "Thank you for your help all through, especially in my placements. It's our secret."

Mumbai Saga, which is currently streaming on *Amazon Prime Video*, released at the theatres on March 19, before the second wave of the coronavirus forced theatres to shut down once again.



Rohit Roy was recently seen getting vaccinated at a Mumbai hospital. He shared a picture of the same and advised people to get vaccinated whenever they get an appointment. He also asked people to follow the Covid guidelines and not pay heed to information offered by random people.

BIG B URGES PEOPLE GLOBALLY TO HELP INDIA FIGHT COVID



Actor Amitabh Bachchan shared a mini glimpse from the Vax Live event on his social media where he could be seen

avirup. In the video, which he shared on his Twitter handle, the veteran actor urged global citizens to rise and help India in fighting the deadly second wave of Covid-19. The event also emphasised the importance of vaccination.

"Namaskar, this is Amitabh Bachchan. My country India is battling with the sudden surge of the second wave of Covid 19. As a global citizen I appeal to all global citizens to rise up, speak to your governments, pharmaceutical companies and ask them to donate, to give, to extend a helping hand, to the public that needs it the most. Every effort counts. As Mahatma Gandhiji said: 'In a gentle way you can shake the world'. thank you," he was heard saying.

Along with sharing the video, Bachchan also tweeted "Privileged to be a part of the concert .. and the fight for India .."

The second wave of coronavirus has infected many people, and

the number of Covid-19 positive cases has been rapidly rising. In Bollywood too, a number of celebrities like Kangana Ranaut, Arjun Rampal, Manish Malhotra among others got infected within a span of a few weeks.

On the work front, Amitabh Bachchan was recently cast for the Indian adaptation of *The Intern* opposite Deepika Padukone. Apart from that, he has films like *Jhund*, *Brahmastra*, *Goodbye, May Day*, and several others in the pipeline.



Kangana 'eagerly waiting' to be banned on Instagram

After Instagram deleted her post in which she threatened to 'demolish' Covid-19, actor Kangana Ranaut has now said that it will be a 'badge of honour' for her to be banned by the photo-sharing platform. She added that she will remember herself as one who dared to ask questions and 'made them uncomfortable'.

Taking to Instagram Stories on Monday, Kangana wrote, "On Instagram everybody is a victim of capitalism an entire generation of youth eaten up by the termite of capitalism and consumerism their indifference and disdain for the nation and its crisis is appalling, lack of human values empathy and nationalism makes them ugly shallow and useless..... this platform never

appealed to me and I am eagerly waiting to be banned here , it will be a badge of honour."

"When I look back I will remember I did not fit in I made them uncomfortable I asked questions and pushed them to go beyond buying and selling when you look back what will you see yourself as? Meek obedient sheep in a herd waiting to exploit or get exploited?" she added.

On Sunday, Kangana said that she might not last on Instagram for 'more than a week', after her post announcing her Covid-19 diagnosis was taken down.

"Instagram has deleted my post where I threatened to demolish Covid because some were hurt. Matlab terrorists and communists sympathisers suna tha twitter pe lekin (I had heard of terrorist

and communist sympathisers on Twitter but) Covid fan club awesome... It's been two days here on insta but don't think will last here more than a week," she wrote on Instagram Stories, adding several laughing emojis.

Earlier this month, Kangana's Twitter account was permanently suspended after her incendiary posts on the recent West Bengal assembly election results and their aftermath.

M/ 7 team worked '7 days round the clock' amid the pandemic

In the yet-untitled seventh *Mission: Impossible* movie, Tom Cruise will once again don the hat of IMF operative Ethan Hunt who is on another of his world-saving trips.

While speaking to a news agency, Cruise has opened up about the experience of shooting the seventh iteration in the iconic action-spy-thriller series during Covid-19. Not only these movies are big-scale shoots full of elaborate practical effects and death-defying stunts, they are also set in multiple countries, in actual locations.

How did Cruise and the team achieve all that amid a global pandemic? Cruise said, "I've produced 30 to 40 movies. I am responsible for thousands, if not tens of thousands, of jobs. All my friends in the industry, people that are in distribution, and my crew were like, 'What are we



going to do? I could lose my house!' So I told the studio and I told the industry, 'We're going back. We're going to get everyone back to work. We're going to start shooting in the summer. And we're going to figure out how to do it safely.'"

Naturally, the job was not easy, not by a long shot. Cruise added, "It was seven days a week, it was around the clock, just dealing with a lot of high emotions with

people, and helping them through it," Cruise says.

There was social distancing, there were masks, there were bubbles of crew members – one make-up artist for every two actors, plus heads of departments staying in hotel rooms on their own, driving to set, shooting the scene, and then returning to the hotel until needed – and pods of five people, ready to quarantine if anyone within one contracted the virus."

According to media reports, it has been a struggle to keep trespassers out of the *Mission Impossible* sets. "The set is so large and open that it has been impossible to close it all off. So trespassers have been getting in and attempting to scale the rigs and equipment set up for the stunts. It is a health-and-safety nightmare. Police were called to one incident last week and then Tom was forced to take action when it happened again," a source told a news agency. "This time two intruders were spotted clambering up the set, leading to security rushing to get them down. Extra security might have to be drafted in. Along with it being a safety nightmare, Tom and the team don't want any delays to filming."

In the film, Ethan Hunt and his allies face a new enemy who is endangering the world. *Mission Impossible 7* is scheduled to be released on May 27, 2022.

Gal Gadot confirms Joss Whedon threatened her career during *Justice League* reshoots

Wonder Woman actor Gal Gadot has said in a recent interview that Joss Whedon threatened her career while they were working together on the set of 2017's *Justice League*. This revelation comes in the wake of more than a year of reports talking about Whedon's less than ideal behaviour on the sets of the movie.

In an interview with Israel's N12 News, Gadot said, "What I had with Joss basically is that he kind of threatened my career and said if I did something he would make my career miserable. I handled it on the spot."

While there were various reports circulating that Whedon misbehaved with Gadot, but this was the first time the actor herself has con-



firmed it.

One report in The Hollywood Reporter had said that Gadot had concerns with the direction the movie and her character was taking. The report also said Whedon disparaged Patty Jenkins, Wonder Woman's director.

Ray Fisher, who played the role of Victor Stone or Cyborg, was the first actor to open up about Whedon's alleged misconduct with cast members. On July last year, he tweeted, "Joss Wheadon's on-set treat-

ment of the cast and crew of *Justice League* was gross, abusive, unprofessional, and completely unacceptable. He was enabled, in many ways, by Geoff Johns and Jon Berg. Accountability>Entertainment."

Johns and Berg were two of the producers on *Justice League*. Joss Whedon was also accused by various cast members of Buffy the Vampire Slayer. In February this year, Charisma Carpenter, who played the role of Cordelia

Chase, said Whedon has a "history of creating toxic and hostile work environments."


Following Fisher's accusations, Warner Bros conducted an investigation and later said remedial action was taken. Though not disclosed, it is said that Whedon losing the HBO fantasy series *The Nevers* was part of it.

Whedon was brought to *Justice League* by Warner Bros executives as they did not like the darker tone Zack Snyder's original cut had. When Snyder had to leave the project altogether due to a personal tragedy, Whedon was handed the reins and went on to do extensive reshoots.


The finished version that hit theatres in 2017 was said to be his cut of the movie. The film was panned by critics and was also a commercial disaster and also derailed the DCEU.

FUN


ARCHIE




GARFIELD



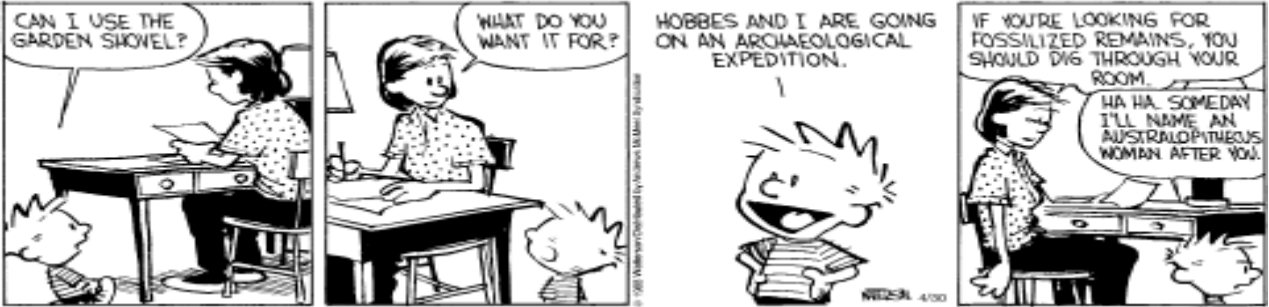
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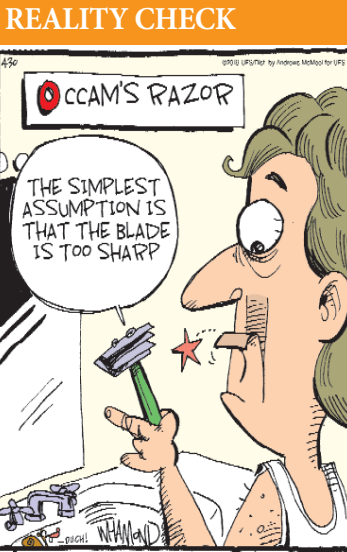
GINGER MEGGS




CALVIN AND HOBBS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



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Yesterday's solution

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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.

CROSSWORD

JUNIOR CROSSWORD 848

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ACROSS

- A maker of horseshoes
- Wanders
- Office tables
- He wrote the play "Romeo and Juliet"
- Gets closer to
- Go by bike
- Somewhere to go out for a meal

DOWN

- This bites a dog
- Divisions in a play
- Second-hand
- Comes first in a race
- Spoke very quietly
- People in jail

9 Manufacturer

11 The other side in a war

12 Something left after a fire

15 As well

16 Male deer

17 Be concerned

18 Metal containers for drink, food

SOLUTION

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JOURNALIST AND ACTOR TNR DIES OF COVID

Popular Telugu YouTube host, film journalist, and character actor TNR aka Thummala Narsimha Reddy passed away on Monday morning in Hyderabad due to Covid-related complications.

He had been battling covid for a while and was admitted to a private hospital in Malkajgiri. His health deteriorated after his oxygen levels dropped, despite being under the supervision of expert doctors.

TNR set a new trend in Tollywood with his unique style of interviews with film personalities and also reviews on his iDream Channel. Recently, he even started acting in films and featured in some pivotal roles in quite a number of films like *Nene Raju Nene Mantri*, *Subrahmanyapuram*, *Falaknuma Das*, *George Reddy*, *Savaari*, *HIT*, *Uma Maheswara Ugra Roopasya*, and *Jathi Ratnalu*.

Actor Nani expressed his condolences on social media. He wrote, "Shocked to hear that TNR *gaaru* passed away... have seen few of his interviews and he was the best when it came to his research and ability to get his guests to speak their heart out. Condolences and strength to the family."

Expressing his condolences, producer Bandla Ganesh wrote, "Shocked to hear that my friend TNR passed away... Condolences and strength to the family."



Director Maruthi too expressed his shock upon hearing the demise of TNR. On his Twitter page, he wrote, "Unbelievable and shocking. It's very hard to digest and painful to know my friend TNR is no more. My deepest Condolences to their family. #corona show some mercy. We can't take this any more."

Calling TNR as a "soft spo-

ken gentleman," F3 director Anil Ravipudi tweeted, "It's really Disturbing to hear that TNR's sudden demise..He is such a soft spoken gentleman... We miss you sir.. #RIP. My deepest Condolences and strength to the family"

Following TNR's demise, a video of his asking people to stay home and safe during the lockdown is now going

viral. In the video, TNR is seen accepting the #StayHome challenge and he added that by being home, he got to spend the best time with family, reading books, watching movies, and many productive things.

"Like they say 'Search for good even in bad and in these challenging times, I learned a good habit. I started doing Pranayamam and

Yoga. I'm practising it daily and even got my kids to do it. By staying at home, teach your kids good things and also teach them to do their own work so that in future, they can face any challenge and will learn to be independent," TNR said in the video.

The video has several comments lamenting the passing away of such a genuine personality.

Jr NTR tests positive for coronavirus

The coronavirus pandemic has taken a heavy toll on not only common people but also celebrities. Many of them tested positive and while a few of them recovered, a few lost their precious lives.

Actor Jr NTR announced that he tested positive for coronavirus on Monday. The actor and his family members are currently under home quarantine, following all the Covid-19 protocols. In a tweet, Jr NTR also urged his fans to not worry about his health.

Raghava star tweeted, "I've tested positive for Covid19. Plz don't worry, I'm doing absolutely fine. My family & I have isolated ourselves & we're following all protocols under the supervision of doctors. I request those who've come into contact with me over the last few days to pl get tested. Stay safe. (sic)"

On the professional front, Jr NTR is working on the magnum opus *RRR* - *Ranam Roudram Rudhiram* with director SS Rajamouli. The film, which marks his first collaboration with Ram Charan, is slated for an October 13 release in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, and Hindi.

After finishing *RRR*, NTR will join hands with director Koratala Siva for a social drama. It is his second collaboration with the director after the blockbuster film *Janatha Garage*. Well-wishers and fans of the actor have been wishing him a speedy recovery.

The Aravinda Sametha Veera



What is *Radhe Shyam*'s connection to covid treatment?

The coronavirus second wave has resulted in the loss of many precious lives and there is a growing resentment that the government authorities have failed and the health system collapsed totally. Under these circumstances, people are left wondering what is Prabhas' film *Radhe Shyam* got to do with covid treatment.

It is known that Prabhas' *Radhe Shyam* directed by Radha Krishna Kumar is a romantic period entertainer with a 1970s Italian backdrop. The makers who shot important scenes in Italy couldn't complete the remaining due to the first wave. At that time, they erected an extravagant hospital set in a studio in

Hyderabad. They have dismantled the set after they wrapped the shoot.

Now art director Ravinder Reddy revealed that they have donated the hospital set to a private hospital for the treatment of coronavirus patients. He said he found that hospitals are in short of beds and so he decided to donate 50 custom beds, stretchers, personal protective equipment, medical equipment stands, and oxygen cylinders. The gesture has earned the praise of many on the internet.

Besides Prabhas, *Radhe Shyam* also stars Pooja Hegde, Sachin Khedekar, Bhagyashree, Priyadarshi, Kunaal Roy Kapur, Jagapathi Babu, and Jayaram. The film is scheduled for a worldwide release on July 30



The stardom and facilitating of Mega Star Chiranjeevi and Young Rebel Star Prabhas is unmatched. While Chiranjeevi has been the undisputed emperor of the Tollywood kingdom, Prabhas turned *Baahubali* to attain international stardom. One can



imagine how it would be if Mega Star Chiranjeevi and Young Rebel Star Prabhas share screen presence. The thought itself drives everyone crazy.

Even before one could get to the terms, rumours have spread on social media that Mega Star Chiranjeevi would be seen as the God Father for Young Rebel Star Prabhas

soon. It is known that Prabhas is starring in the high octane action entertainer *Salaar* under the direction of Prashant Neel.

Sources say Prashant created a powerful role of a God Father and he is planning to cast Mega Star Chiranjeevi in it. This increased the speculation as Chiranjeevi and Prabhas' were recently seen posing for a photo.

However, the excitement of the fans turned futile as the Mega compound made it clear that no one approached Mega Star Chiranjeevi for a role in *Salaar* and Chiranjeevi will not do special roles in other stars' films but others can very well do.

But this still means Prabhas can share screen presence in Chiranjeevi's film, so there's that!



Rajamouli- Mahesh Babu's next to have an African jungle?



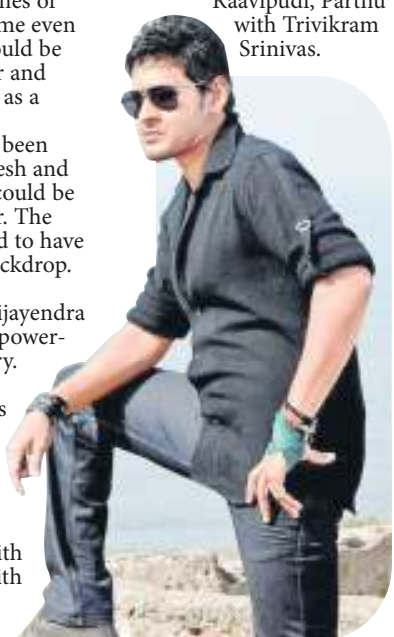
The moment Mahesh Babu confirmed his project with star director Rajamouli, speculations increased about the film's backdrop and how Rajamouli would present Mahesh Babu on the silver screen. Some speculated that Rajamouli would show Mahesh Babu as Lord Rama and the film will be on Ramayana.

Another rumour spread that Rajamouli will show Mahesh Babu as a stylish action hero on the lines of Hollywood stars. Some even said that the film would be an action entertainer and Mahesh will be seen as a cowboy!

Now reports have been coming in that Mahesh and Rajamouli's project could be an action entertainer. The film's storyline is said to have an African jungle backdrop.

The buzz is that Rajamouli's father Vijayendra Prasad is penning a powerful script for the story. There will be extensive usage of graphics and VFX and the film would be shot in the exotic locations of African jungles. Currently, Rajamouli is busy with *RRR* multi starrer with Ram Charan and

NTR, while Mahesh Babu is busy with *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* and projects with Anil Ravipudi, Parthu with Trivikram Srinivas.



Allu Arjun's *Pushpa* stroke for national fame

Allu Arjun has been reinventing himself with each passing film and created a niche for himself with his expressions and emotions, leaving aside his stylish dances and stunning stunts. After *Ala Vaikuntapuramuloo*, his stakes increased and he decided to race ahead of his contemporaries.

He is currently working on *Pushpa* with Sukumar and the remarkable transformation for his role is already becoming the talking point. Allu Arjun convinced Sukumar to turn the film into a pan-India film. Now he is said to have convinced Sukumar to release the film in two parts. Many feel this is a strategic move by Allu Arjun to capture the pan-India market.

The upcoming enter-



tainers like Rajamouli's *RRR* with NTR and Ram Charan is a period entertainer with patriotic flavour while Prabhas' *Radhe Shyam* is a period romantic entertainer. Allu Arjun feels *Pushpa* is an action entertainer on the lines of *KGF* and it could drive movie lovers across the country crazy. Allu Arjun plays the role of a lorry driver, while Rashmika Mandanna plays his wife in *Pushpa* which revolves around red sandalwood smuggling.



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BABAR ICC PLAYER OF MONTH
DUBAI: Pakistan skipper Babar Azam and Australian women's team wicketkeeper Alyssa Healy were on Monday declared the ICC players of the month for their stellar performances during the month of April.

WEST BROM RELEGATED
LONDON: West Brom was relegated after one season back in the Premier League after losing 3-1 at Arsenal, ending Sam Allardyce's record of never having taken a side down from England's top division as a manager.

VIRAT, ISHANT GET FIRST DOSE
MUMBAI: India captain Virat Kohli and senior pacer Ishant Sharma on Monday received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccination. While Kohli, who now lives in Mumbai, posted a photo on Instagram, Ishant and his wife Pratima, a former India hoopster, also uploaded their selfie in front of a vaccination centre.

VARUN, WARRIER BACK HOME
NEW DELHI: KKR leg-spinner Varun Chakravarthy and pacer Sandeep Warrier, who were the first to test -ve for Covid-19 in the currently-suspended IPL's bio-bubble, have returned to their respective home cities after completing 10 days of mandatory isolation.

CAVANI EXTENDS MAN UTD STAY
MANCHESTER: Edinson Cavani has agreed to extend his contract by one year and will remain with Man United until June 2022.

GORETZKA COULD MISS EUROS
MUNICH: Bayern Munich midfielder Leon Goretzka will be ruled out for the rest of the season and could miss the start of Euro 2020 after picking up a thigh injury.

SRH OWNERS DONATE ₹30 CR
NEW DELHI: Owners of IPL team Sunrisers Hyderabad, Sun TV, on Monday donated ₹30 crore towards Covid-19 relief work being undertaken by the state and central Governments along with various NGOs.

SHAFALI TO PLAY FOR BIRMINGHAM
NEW DELHI: India's teen batting sensation Shafali Verma is set to play for Birmingham Phoenix in the inaugural edition of The Hundred and might also turn up for a Sydney franchise in the Women's Big Bash League.

SINNER SETS UP NADAL CLASH
ROME: Jannik Sinner booked a second-round showdown with nine-time champion Rafael Nadal at the Italian Open after a 6-2, 6-4 win over Frenchman Ugo Humbert on Monday.

BACH'S JAPAN VISIT POSTPONED
TOKYO: IOC chief Thomas Bach has been forced to postpone a visit to Japan, organisers said on Monday, after a coronavirus state of emergency was extended less than three months before the Tokyo Games.

FLICK AGREED GERMAN DEAL
BERLIN: Hansi Flick, who is stepping down as Bayern Munich coach at the end of this season, will take over the German national team after this summer's Euro, a German newspaper reported on Monday.

MEDVEDEV RETAKES 2ND SPOT
PARIS: Daniil Medvedev reclaimed the world number two spot from Rafael Nadal in the latest ATP rankings released on Monday, with no Americans in the top 30 for the first time.

MURRAY TO COMPETE AT QUEEN'S
LONDON: Andy Murray will warm up for this year's championship at Queen's, where he has lifted the trophy five times.

Zverev wins Madrid title

AFP ■ MADRID

Alexander Zverev recovered from a set down to defeat Matteo Berrettini 6-7 (8/10), 6-4, 6-3 and win the Madrid Open for a second time on Sunday as he clinched a fourth Masters 1000 title.

The German fifth seed recorded his third consecutive top-10 victory this week, having eliminated five-time Madrid champion Rafael Nadal and Dominic Thiem to reach the final.

Zverev, last year's US Open runner-up, added to his 2018 Madrid triumph as he denied Berrettini successive titles following the Italian's win in Belgrade last month.

"It is great (to win this



title), especially after losing my last three finals I played at Masters 1000 events," Zverev said. "This is definitely special and I just want to enjoy this one."

Zverev is now targeting a second Rome title at the Foro Italico this week. He captured his first Masters there in 2017 before also winning in Montreal later that year.

"Rome is also an event I like and enjoy, so I hope I can perform in the same way as I did here and we will see how it goes there. I feel awesome," said Zverev.

After Rome, the German star will target a maiden Grand Slam title at Roland Garros. However, he has yet to get beyond the quarter-finals in Paris.

"To play well at Roland Garros, you have to play well during the season on clay. In that sense, it's (Sunday's win) important to me," said Zverev.



Pak seal series

AP ■ HARARE

Pakistan quickly took the one wicket it needed on Monday for another innings victory over struggling Zimbabwe in the second Test and a 2-0 series sweep.

It took only five overs on Day 4 for Shaheen Shah Afridi to end it by having Luke Jongwe caught behind by wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan for 37.

Pakistan won by an innings and 147 runs at Harare Sports Club to go with the innings and 116-run win in the first Test at the same venue.

Pakistan also claimed a slice of history with Afridi's 5-52 making him the third Pakistan bowler in the Test to take a five-wicket haul. He and Nauman Ali (5-86) took five each in the second innings after Hasan Ali's five in the first.

It's the first time Pakistan has had three bowlers with five wickets in a match, and the first time it has happened in Tests since 1993.

Zimbabwe continued on 220-9 in its second innings, on the brink of defeat and still 158 runs short of making Pakistan bat again. The home team added only 11 more runs to be all out for 231.

Malinga could return to play World T20

Kandy: Sri Lanka fast bowler Lasith Malinga could return to the national team for the T20 World Cup, said the national selection committee chairman Pramodya Wickramasinghe.

"We will talk to Lasith soon. He is in our plans for the forthcoming T20 tours, including the T20 World Cup coming up in October," said Wickramasinghe.

With back-to-back T20 World Cups scheduled in 2021 and 2022, Sri Lanka would need an experienced bowler like Malinga to marshal the attack.

"Lasith is in our plans. We always should not forget that he is one of the greatest bowlers in our country even in his present form. His records speak for that. There are two back-to-back T20 World Cups that are coming up, this year and next year. We are going to discuss our plans with him when we meet him in the next couple of days," Wickramasinghe added.

Malinga said he is "looking forward" to meeting the selectors.

"I have retired from both Test and ODI cricket but not from T20s. I am keen to know how the selection committee is going to get the services of a senior player like me for the national side. In my career, I have proved on many occasions that I can come back after a long break and perform well for my country," he said.

No point in comparing yourself with anyone: Nagwaswalla

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Left-arm pacer Arzan Nagwaswalla, who will fly to the UK with the Indian team as a stand-by player, says shutting down comparisons, staying patient and focussing on routine played a key role in yielding the desired outcome for him.

Only a few Parsi cricketers have made the cut for the national team and Nagwaswalla is hoping to join the list after his stellar performance for Gujarat has placed him at the doorstep of the Indian team.

"The grind in domestic cricket has helped me understand the importance of routine. How to practice, how to bowl during practice and how to focus on the process and keep following the same, without

thinking too much about the result," Nagwaswalla told *bcci.tv*.

"If you follow the process correctly, you will surely get the desired outcome. In addition to that, it is important to be patient. There is no point comparing yourself with anyone and ponder over why someone else is selected and not me," the 23-year-old added.

The left-arm pacer was Gujarat's leading wicket-taker with 41 scalps in the 2019-20 season when his side made the Ranji Trophy semifinals.

The youngster said he was mighty impressed with the way the Indian team played and won in Australia and he just can't wait to see the senior players in flesh and bone, whom he has so far watched only on TV.

"I am excited to meet and

AC Milan push Juve out of top 4

AFP ■ TURIN

AC Milan pushed Juventus out of the Serie A top four with a 3-0 win at Allianz Stadium on Sunday which increases their hopes of Champions League football for the first time since 2014.

Brahim Diaz put Milan ahead just before the break with Ante Rebic and Fikayo Tomori adding two more in the second half after Franck Kessie had missed a penalty.

Milan move up to third, equal on 72 points with second-placed Atalanta, with Napoli a further two points behind in fourth and the final Champions League berth.

Juventus are now fifth, one point behind the top four with three games left to play, including next weekend's clash with newly-crowned champions Inter Milan.

"We had a great game, a victory over a direct rival at this moment in the champi-



onship is very important," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli whose side lost 3-1 to Juve in the San Siro in January.

"We still have to fight. But I have a very young team, that is maturing as this evening proved."

PSG HOPES DENTED

Neymar was on target the day after signing his contract extension but Paris Saint-Germain were held to a 1-1 draw at Rennes on Sunday that leaves Lille a step closer to a remarkable Ligue 1 title triumph.

PSG led at half-time after Neymar converted a controversial penalty award, but they were pegged back in the second half as Serhou Guirassy headed in the equaliser.

Presnel Kimpembe was later sent off for Mauricio Pochettino's side, who could not get back to winning ways on their return to domestic action following their Champions League semi-final exit against Manchester City.

PSG are now three points adrift of Ligue 1 leaders Lille, who know they will be champions for the first time since 2011 by taking four points from their remaining two matches of the season.

Real salvage dramatic draw

Madrid: Eden Hazard's 94th-minute equaliser salvaged Real Madrid a dramatic 2-2 draw against Sevilla on Sunday as an extraordinary penalty decision swung La Liga's title race back in Atletico Madrid's favour.

Zidane's side had levelled through Marco Asensio midway through the second half and thought they had a penalty when Karim Benzema was brought down after rounding Sevilla goalkeeper Yassine Bono.

But VAR prompted referee to check an Eder Militao handball a few seconds before, with a huge decision seeing Madrid's penalty cancelled and a spot-kick awarded to Sevilla instead.

Ivan Rakitic converted and while Madrid still managed to hit back in injury time, Toni Kroos' shot deflecting in off Eden Hazard's foot, the draw hands the advantage back to Atletico at the end of another dramatic weekend in the Spanish title race.

AFP