

**ANALYSIS 7**  
THE RENEWABLE  
ENERGY-LAND CONFLICT**MONEY 8**  
SENSEX, NIFTY SNAP FOUR-SESSION  
RALLY AMID GLOBAL SELLOFF**SPORTS 12**  
DHAWAN LIKELY TO  
LEAD IN LANKA

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



the pioneer

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SARKAARU VAARI  
PAATA FORCED  
TO CANCEL  
CELEBRATIONS

Page 11

# Telangana announces 10-day LOCKDOWN

## Appalling fever survey results led to lockdown?

NAVEENA GHANATE  
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's u-turn on lockdown is attributed mainly to the appalling findings of a door-to-door fever survey conducted by the authorities as well as multiple reports that highlighted public discontent over the non-imposition of lockdown despite rising cases amid lockdowns in 20 states. Sources pointed out that some of the Covid-hit people have started making irrational decisions out of their unfounded fears and hyper anxiety. Further, there was the pressure due to lockdowns imposed by 20 other states. In south India, TS was the only state dodging lockdown. So, the Chief Minister wanted to avoid negative publicity on this score in his progressive state. In particular, the fever survey suggested that lakhs of citizens were showing coronavirus-like symptoms across the state.

ML MELLY MAITREYI  
■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has become the latest state to join the 20 States that have chosen to impose lockdown to contain the raging second wave of the Covid pandemic.

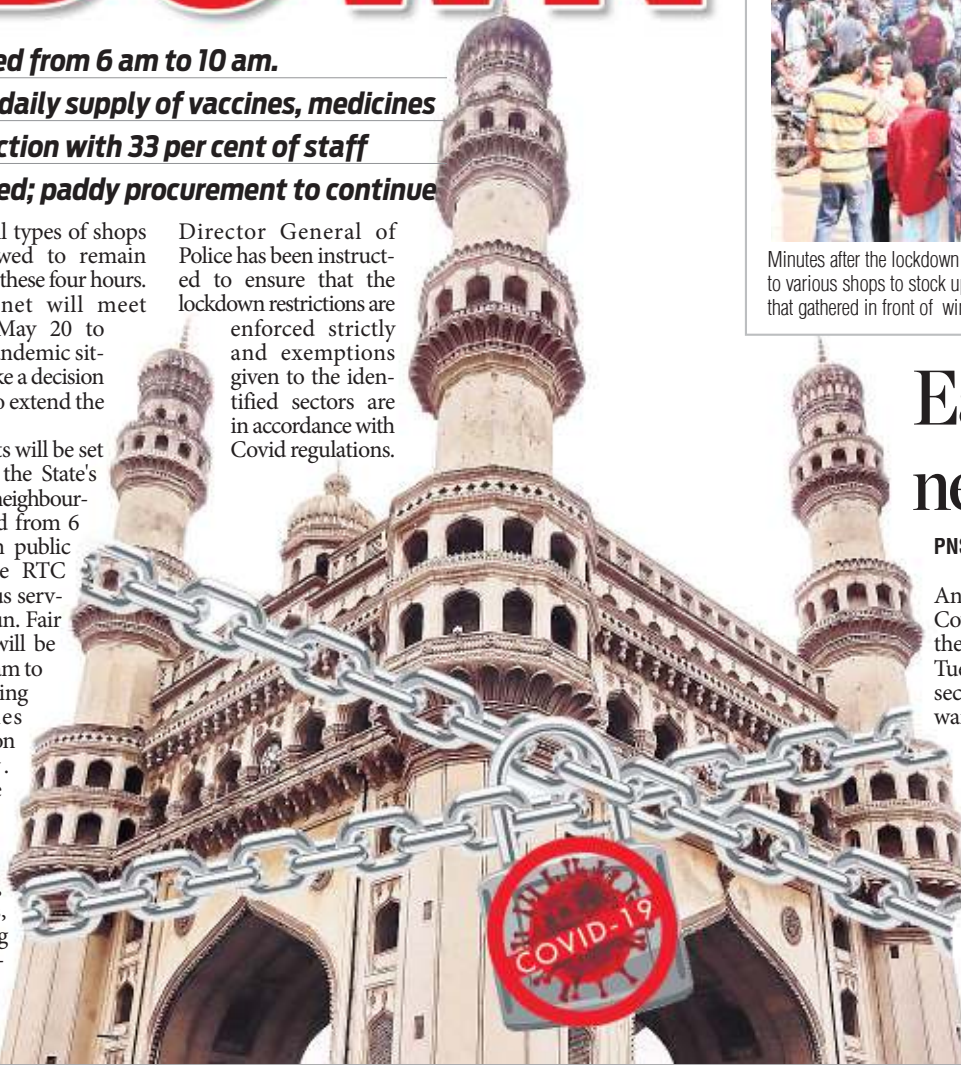
At a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on Tuesday, it was decided to impose lockdown from Wednesday for 10 days. The lockdown, however, will be relaxed for four hours every day from 6 am to 10 am to help meet the general needs of

people. So, all types of shops will be allowed to remain open only for these four hours.

The Cabinet will meet against on May 20 to review the pandemic situation and take a decision on whether to extend the lockdown.

Check posts will be set up on all of the State's borders with neighbouring States and from 6 am to 10 am public transport like RTC and Metro bus services will be run. Fair price shops will be open from 6 am to 10 am. Cooking gas agencies would function normally. However, the Cabinet decided to shutter cinema halls, clubs, gyms, swimming pools, amusement parks, and sports stadia. The

Director General of Police has been instructed to ensure that the lockdown restrictions are enforced strictly and exemptions given to the identified sectors are in accordance with Covid regulations.



## CROWDING FOR A KICK, NOT JAB



Minutes after the lockdown was announced on Tuesday, people rushed to various shops to stock up on essentials. Curiously, spirited crowds that gathered in front of wine shops beat the throngs at all other shops

## Early trend of decline in daily new Covid cases, deaths: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

An early trend of decline in daily new Covid cases and deaths has been noted in the country, the government said on Tuesday, indicating that the devastating second wave of the pandemic is on the wane. According to the government, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Chhattisgarh were among 18 states and union territories showing continued plateauing or decrease in daily new Covid cases.

Addressing a press conference, a senior official, however, said Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Punjab were among 16 states and union territories showing continued increasing trend in daily new Covid cases.

Thirteen states have more than

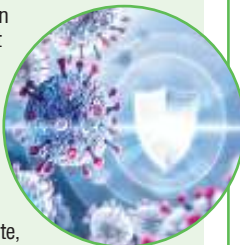
1 lakh active Covid cases each and 26 states have a positivity rate of over 15 per cent, the government said.

India has been reeling under a calamitous second wave of the coronavirus infection. However, the daily numbers of deaths and infections have started to go down. New cases of coronavirus in India fell to 3.29 lakh after 14 days, taking the infection tally to 2,29,92,517, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Tuesday.

A total of 3,29,942 infections were reported in a span of 24 hours, while the death toll climbed to 2,49,992 with 3,876 fresh fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed. After registering a steady rise for two months, the active cases have reduced to 37,15,221, accounting for 16.16 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid recovery rate was recorded at 82.75%.

## COVID ANTIBODIES LAST 8 MONTHS AFTER INFECTION: STUDY

Antibodies against coronavirus remained in the blood of patients with Covid-19 for at least eight months after they were infected, Italian researchers said Tuesday. They were present "regardless of the severity of the illness, the age of the patients or the presence of other pathologies," according to a statement from the San Raffaele hospital in Milan. The researchers, working with Italy's ISS national health institute, studied 162 patients with symptomatic coronavirus who turned up at the emergency room during the country's first wave of infections last year. Blood samples were taken in March and April and again at the end of November from those who survived.



## 'SHARE VACCINE FORMULA', KEJRIWAL SUGGESTS TO PM MODI AMID SHORTAGE

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday urged the centre to share COVID-19 vaccine formulas and allow more companies to manufacture doses - of which there is an acute shortage as the Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech scramble to match demand. At present, India has two vaccines and only two companies making them - Covishield (by the Serum Institute) and Covaxin (by Bharat Biotech) - and both have struggled to raise output. A third - Russia's Sputnik V - has been cleared but not yet rolled out; this will be produced by five companies.



## BODIES FOUND FLOATING IN GANGA IN UP DAY AFTER BIHAR HORROR

Dead bodies washed up on the banks of Ganga were sighted for a second straight day today -- this time in Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh. The spot is around 55 km upriver from Bihar's Buxar, where more than a hundred bodies were found yesterday, evoking shock and anger. The Bihar authorities had argued that the corpses had floated down from Uttar Pradesh, as their state has no tradition of consigning bodies to water. With Covid rapidly spreading through the rural parts of north India, the bodies in the river are suspected to be of Covid patients.



## NEARLY 90% INDIA HAS HIGH POSITIVITY, RURAL AREAS A WORRY: CENTRE

Close to 90 per cent of India is witnessing a high Covid positivity rate as 640 districts out of the 734 are above the national threshold level of 5 per cent positivity rate, the centre said on Tuesday. The skyrocketing active caseload during the deadly second wave of coronavirus has overwhelmed the hospitals and crematoriums. There is an acute shortage of medical oxygen and key drugs needed to treat the critically ill Covid patients. Last month the centre widened the vaccine net to include everyone over the age of 18. However, most states have struggled to vaccinate their people due to vaccine shortages.

**'Active Covid cases down by 30,000 first time in 61 days'**

5

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

#### Month & Paksham:

Chaitra &amp; Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Pratipada: 03:05 am (Next Day)

Nakshatram : Krittika: 02:40 am (Next Day)

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

Rahukalam : 12:12 pm - 01:48 pm

Yamagandam : 07:24 am - 09:00 am

Variyam : 01:05 pm - 02:54 pm

Gulika : 10:36 am - 12:12 pm

Good Time : (to start any important work)

Amritkalam : 11:57 pm - 01:45 am

Abhijit Muhurtham : NIL

### HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly sunny

Temp: 38

Humidity: 39%

Sunrise: 05:45 am

Sunset: 06:39 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated may 11, 2021 5:00 PM

## COVID EFFECT

# SEC halts election process in PR bodies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State Election Commission (SEC) has put on hold further election process to fill the casual and ordinary vacancies in Panchayat Raj bodies in view of the prevailing pandemic situation.

Citing Article 243-K of the Constitution, the SEC issued an order on Tuesday putting on hold further election process to fill the vacancies of sarpanch, ward members as well as MPPTC and ZPTC members. Accordingly, the election process will now be on hold till the pandemic situation improves and conditions become conducive to hold elections.

The Commission had initiated action to conduct elections to the ordinary vacancies and casual vacancies in Gram panchayats and

**The Commission had initiated action to conduct elections to the ordinary vacancies and casual vacancies in Gram panchayats and mandal parishads in March, 2021**

mandal parishads in March, 2021.

Overall, there are ordinary vacancies in 20 Gram Panchayats (20 sarpanches + 186 wards) and casual vacancies of 104 sarpanches and 2,094 ward members. There are also ordinary vacancies in two MPPTCs with 26 MPPTCs and 34 casual MPPTC and one ZPTC.

## TS places global tenders for procuring vaccines

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Giving priority for the vaccination programme, the Cabinet approved a proposal to place global tenders for procurement of vaccines on a war footing. It decided to make Remdesivir injections, oxygen and other medicines to treat Covid-19 available in public as well as private institutions to address their shortage. The State Cabinet gave instructions to this effect to Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar.

The Cabinet approved the appointment of a Task force headed by Industries and IT Minister KT Ramarao and with Industries Principal Secretary Jayesh Ranjan, GAD Principal Secretary Vikas Raj, Panchayat Raj Principal Secretary Sundeeep Sultania,

# No break in second dose of vaccination due to lockdown

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State government's vaccination centres delivering Covid-19 vaccine to people will function normally even during the lockdown period, according to Dr.G.Srinivasa Rao, Director of Public Health. He said that all medical and health services, including all government and private hospitals, diagnostic and testing centres would function normally. The lockdown would not affect any of the health services anywhere in the State of Telangana.

At the government centres, as announced previously, only those eligible for getting their second dose will be administered the vaccine. Those seeking the second dose should show proof of having taken the first dose, either in the form of a partial vaccination certificate that they can download from cwin.gov.in portal, or the



message they may have received confirming their having taken their first dose. Those eligible should also take their Aadhaar card with them, according to DPH.

Anyone suspecting that they have been infected by Covid-19

can go to their nearest testing centres and avail the services.

The Police Department has been informed to allow free movement of citizens seeking to get their vaccine shots or wanting to get themselves tested for Covid-19 at their nearest available centres.

# India might see 'serious livelihood crisis'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India might be heading towards a "serious livelihood crisis" as the situation seems to be worse this time for the working class amid the COVID crisis and local restrictions by states already add up to something close to a nationwide lockdown, according to noted economist Jean Dreze.

In an interview to PTI, he also said the government's target to make India a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25 was never a "feasible target" and was just to pander to the "super-power ambitions" of the Indian elite.

About the impact of the second

## Says noted economist Jean Dreze



**"The economic consequences of local lockdowns may not be as destructive as those of a national lockdown. But in some respects, things are worse this time for the working class," he opined**

wave of COVID on the Indian economy, the eminent economist said the situation today is not very

different from what it was around this time last year as far as working people are concerned.

"The economic consequences of local lockdowns may not be as destructive as those of a national lockdown. But in some respects, things are worse this time for the working class," he opined.

Further, the eminent economist said the fear of infection is more widespread and that will make it hard to revive economic activity.

"Despite mass vaccination, there is a serious possibility that intermittent crises will continue for a long time, perhaps years.

"Compared with last year, many people have depleted savings and larger debts.

# TS to award grades to Class X students

ANUSHA PUPPALA  
■ HYDERABAD

The School Education Department, Telangana on Tuesday announced that all SSC or Class 10/ OSSC/ Vocational students are to be declared to have passed.

According to an official note, the government reviewed the Covid-19 pandemic situation in the state and it is "hereby decided to declare the results as pass for all the students of Class 10 as a one-time measure, duly considering their performance in internal assess-

ments for 20 per cent (one formative assessment was conducted, instead of two formative assessments due to Covid-19), the department decided scaling up of 20 per cent of internal assessment marks to 100 per cent marks."

Therefore, all schools under various managements during academic year 2020-21 have to announce the SSC results.

The order issued on Tuesday by the Telangana School Education Department reads,



# No politics please, when people are dying for vaccine!

People in Telugu states are panicky and waiting anxiously for their turn to get a vaccine for Covid -19 as early as possible. They literally have nothing else on their agenda for the days ahead. However, the authorities in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are as helpless as their people, considering that they do not have as yet the required number of vaccines for the targeted people. No doubt, the two Telugu states are making vain bids to get adequate number of vaccines by contacting manufacturers of vaccines for Covid -19 directly.

As per experts, there are variations in the time gap required to administer the doses with regard to the two types of vaccines that are presently available all over the country: Covaxin and



**PIN POINT**

Covishield. As for the former, the second dose should be administered to a particular person immediately on completion of one month time period. The latter should be repeated after 6-8 weeks' time. Otherwise, the vaccination would be in vain. Those who have taken Covishield have some kind of relief as there is still time to get the vaccine and they hope to get their second dose in time.

Primary health centres and government hospitals are crowded by those seeking vaccine. It is a tough time even for the police to control the swelling crowds at the vaccine centres. There are fears that people at these centres may also be asymptomatic carriers of the virus.

Acquiring vaccines to meet the requirement seems to be an uphill task for the author-

**Primary health centres and government hospitals are crowded by those seeking vaccine. It is a tough time even for the police to control the swelling crowds at the vaccine centres. There are fears that people at these centres may also be asymptomatic carriers of the virus**

ities in both states. The Andhra Pradesh government is desperately looking for 10 lakh vaccines per day. There is strong belief among restive people that the authorities are not giving the correct picture relating to Covid-19 deaths. They point to the piles of bodies at graveyards! Recently in Gujarat, 230 ads relating to local obituaries had to be carried in 6 pages in a newspaper on a single day. This happened on the

day when the state government claimed there were only 25 deaths.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was criticized by Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemanth Soren after Modi's virtual meeting with Chief Ministers of various states, including Soren. Springing a surprise in political circles, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy battled for Modi, and advised his Jharkhand coun-



**M D RATNA KUMAR**  
Senior Journalist

terpart that it was time for supporting the PM, keeping aside political differences. Surprisingly, none of the other non- BJP Chief Ministers in the country reacted on Hemant's comments on Modi and none of them came forward in support of Modi. Some say Jagan sought to send positive sig-

nals to Modi. Others ask: Is Jagan cautiously stepping forward on his political journey in future? He has already set a goal for himself to retain power in 2024. For achieving that goal, he has to see that Naidu goes to polls alone in 2024. Splitting anti-government vote will be the motto for Jagan, rather than joining hands with Modi. Jagan has already invited his poll strategist Prasanth Kishor to work for him in 2024 also. He described Prasanth, while introducing him to party cadre in a meet held at Guntur, as "the person who would steer them (YSRCP) to power".

It may be mentioned here that Kishor, who worked for the resounding victory of Mamata Banerjee of TMC in West Bengal, later announced that he would be distancing himself from such work. Nobody knows whether he

has other plans for YSRCP.

There is strong criticism from Jagan's political detractors that he deliberately came forward in support of Modi in the name of fight against Covid-19 considering his delicate position in the DA cases filed against him by CBI & ED. The rank and file of YSRCP is praying the Almighty for 'favourable situation' in courts in the event of any move for cancellation of his bail.

All political strategies can be kept aside for a while in the interests of people who are crying for attention from the governments. If Jagan's designs to impress Modi really work, he would get sufficient stocks of vaccines for Covid -19. Noticeably, some states like Maharashtra, whose government is at loggerheads with Modi, are getting more stocks of vaccines than states like AP.

Amidst all this, it is heart-rending to note that ambulances carrying Covid -19 patients from AP are not being allowed to reach Hyderabad by the Telangana police ostensibly due to non-availability of beds in hospitals there. VIPs and rich people from AP are free to go to Hyderabad for Covid-19 treatment, whereas middle-class and poor people are badly treated at the borders.

At the end of the day, people of AP have a right to use the health infrastructure available at Hyderabad, at least considering that Hyderabad is the joint capital for both states of TS&AP for 10 years as per the provisions of AP Reorganisation Act -2014.

The ugly incidents on AP-TS border areas suggest that the status of Hyderabad as a joint capital is just on paper!

## TS to award grades to...

*Continued from page 1*

"The government has already cancelled SSC Public Examination and declared all students of Class X (SSC/OSSC/Vocational) studying in government, Zilla Parishad, aided and private unaided and all schools under various managements during the academic year 2020-21 to have passed as a one-time measure due to the Covid-19 pandemic second wave".

"To award grades duly considering their performance in the internal assessment, marks for 20 per cent (one formative assessment was conducted instead of two formative assessments due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation) ... would be scaled up to 100 per cent marks," reads the order.

In view of the surge in second wave, the Telangana government on April 15 announced cancellation of the SSC exams, originally scheduled to be held from May 17, 2021. Around 5.5 lakh students were to appear for the SSC exams.

# Why the government changed its mind on lockdown in state?

**ML MELLY MAITREYI**  
■ HYDERABAD

The state government of Telangana was not inclined to impose lockdown as it was not convinced that lockdown will curb the spread of the pandemic.

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao and earlier Chief Secretary too argued that it was not lockdown but better medical treatment, early medical intervention, accelerated vaccination programme and Covid appropriate behaviour are better solutions to tackle the pandemic.

But there was no explanation to the change of mind from the government today.

Even as several states chose lockdown and some others went for extended curfew, Telangana stuck to its guns so far even as High Court observed that lockdown or at least week-end lockdowns should be enforced to bring down the Covid cases.

But strangely Telangana government chose to impose lockdown at a time when its positive cases and deaths were coming down consistently on a daily basis for more than last 10 days. Even on Tuesday the positive cases were 4,801 and deaths at 32. The recovery rate further improved to 87.5 per cent. The number of recovered cases on Tuesday were 7,430, much more than the positive cases registered.

This led to speculation whether the government decided to impose lockdown in deference to Court observations or it knew something which the general public did not know even after the number of cases were on clear downtrend.

But no explanation was offered by the Chief Minister for his sudden change of mind on lockdown.

Sources said that the government could have opted for lockdown for 10 days mainly to give a breather to the gov-



ernment hospitals and doctors and nurses who were stretching themselves. It would also give time for the government to improve and augment facilities, human resources and organise oxygen, injections and other essential drugs in a better manner.

A lockdown will act as deterrent to general public not to step outside with malls and recreational places too closed down for 10 days. Only

essential services and sectors would function these 10 days and it would stop congregation of people on the roads with no urgent work.

With a section of people besides High Court believing that lockdown will help in slowing down the spread of the Covid, government apparently decided not to be rigid in its decision and try this option too. If it would further bring down the positive cases, it would be good news for the State. If there is no change, it would give an opportunity to State to defend its view point.

The State however this time kept the public transport, all general shops open for four hours every day including liquor shops and no restriction on transport of goods on the National Highways. This should neither affect the revenue nor wages totally and keep the trade and businesses working partly instead of a total shut down of standalone shops and establishments.

## India might see...

*Continued from page 1*

Those who borrowed their way through last year's crisis may not be able to do it again this time," he observed.

Dreze also pointed out that last year there was a relief package and today relief measures are not even being discussed. "On top of all this, local lockdowns may give way to a national lockdown relatively soon. In fact, they already add up to something close to a country-wide lockdown.

"In short, we are heading towards a serious livelihood crisis," he said. On how the government could have missed seeing the second COVID-19 wave coming, Dreze said the Indian government has been in denial all along.

"Remember, the government refused to admit about any 'community transmission' of COVID for a long time, even as

recorded cases were counted in millions. "When an early analysis of official data exposed the collapse of health services, the government retracted the data," he said.

He pointed out that misleading statistics have been routinely invoked to reassure the public that all is well. "Denying a crisis is the surest way to make it worse. We are now paying the price of this complacency".

India has been reporting more than three lakh new COVID cases daily in recent weeks and the death toll due to the infection is also rising.

Noting that India is also paying the price of a long history of neglect of the health sector, especially public health, Dreze said nothing is more important than health for the quality of life, yet public expenditure on health in India has hovered around a measly 1 per cent of GDP for decades.

## Appalling fever survey results led...

*Continued from page 1*

Although the government has not been disclosing data on how many got infected, the findings of the fever survey raised eyebrows in official circles.

In GHMC alone, a total of 3,37,253 houses have been surveyed; of which it has been estimated that close to 20% people are showing symptoms. In every district, thousands of people are showing Covid-like symptoms.

So, it has become imperative for the state to break the chain and allay fears among the public.

## No Eid prayers in mosques due to lockdown

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

There will be no Eid prayers in Telangana mosques as the state government has ordered closure of all places of worship during the 10-day lockdown beginning Wednesday.

A Government Order issued on Tuesday night following the Cabinet decision makes it clear that religious gatherings/congregations shall not be permitted.

The restrictions were imposed on the eve of Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival marking the culmination of Ramadan.

Eid is to be celebrated on Thursday or Friday, depending on the sighting of the new crescent.

Daily five time Namaz and special prayers (Taraveeh) were being regularly offered in mosques in Hyderabad and

the rest of Telangana since the beginning of Ramadan. The management committees of the mosques were ensuring adherence to Covid guidelines like wearing of masks and social distancing.

After the imposition of night curfew on May 23, the mosques had advanced the timing of night prayers (Isha) and Taraveeh to complete worship by 9 pm.

All the mosques had cancelled late night prayers (Tahajjud) in view of the night curfew.

Political and religious leaders had already appealed to people to offer Eid prayers in local mosques instead of Eidgahs to prevent large congregations. However, the lockdown was imposed just when the fasting month was coming to an end.

## SEC halts...

*Continued from page 1*

It issued notification for preparation and publication of electoral rolls. The final electoral rolls were published on April 12 and 15. The list of final polling stations was published on April 14.

The Commission, which earlier got the government's concurrence to hold the elections, however, wrote to the government on April 18 asking it to revisit the green light in view of the subsequent surge in the Covid-19 case-load.

The Commission, after examining the intensity of the second wave of Covid-19, felt it was not appropriate to hold elections now. The Commission said it would take a decision later at an appropriate time in future, after taking inputs from the health authorities and in consultation with the State government.

## TS places global...

CMO Secretary and Covid Special Officer Rajashekhar Reddy as members. The Task force will monitor and ensure speedy procurement and supply of medicines and vaccines on a daily basis.

The Cabinet decided to constitute committees in every district. These panels will be headed by Ministers and comprise District Collector, DMHO, District headquarters hospital Superintendent and Drug Inspector as members. The Chief Minister gave instructions that the Ministers of districts concerned should review the Covid-19 situation at the district headquarters every day.

KCR telephoned Remidesvir injection manufacturers directly during the Cabinet meeting and requested them to supply adequate number of vials to the State.

The government exempted the agricultural and other sectors from the lockdown. These include works related to agricultural production and that of allied sectors, rice mills and transport related to food grains and other crops; transport of paddy to FCI; fertiliser, seed shops, and seed manufacturing units.

The Cabinet also decided to continue paddy procurement,

keeping in view the interests of farmers.

In the medical sector, special passes will be given to pharmaceutical companies, medical equipment manufacturing companies, medical distributors, medical shops, providers of all kinds of medical services, government and private hospitals and their employees, staff and their vehicles will be allowed.

In the rural and urban areas, drinking water supply, sanitation and maintenance works, power generation and distribution companies in the power sector and activities of their associate offices would function as usual.

The government also made it clear that the transport of goods on National Highways would continue as usual and petrol and diesel bunks would be open on national Highways.

The government also gave exemption from lockdown to cold storage, warehousing activities, print and electronic media, and employment guarantee works.

The government offices would function with 33 per cent of staff. Banks and ATMS would function normally as they did during the lockdown last year.

HYDERABAD BULLION RATES	
<b>GOLD</b>	
₹ 48,770 (10 gm)	
<b>100 SILVER</b>	▲
₹ 76,000 (1kg)	
<b>500</b>	▲
CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹167
Without Skin	₹190
Broiler at Farm	₹115
EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	451
VIJAYAWADA	426
VISAKHAPATNAM	355
<b>RETAIL PRICE (IN HYDERABAD)</b>	<b>₹4.51</b>

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday pulled up state authorities for stopping ambulances carrying Covid-19 patients from Andhra Pradesh to Hyderabad.

The court took serious note of reports that Covid patients coming to Hyderabad for treatment were stopped at inter-state border and were turned away. A division bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayen Reddy questioned the authorities as to how can they stop ambulances when there are no restrictions on inter-state movement.

"Is this humanity," the court asked. It wanted to know who gave the order to stop ambulances.

The court on Tuesday took



up hearing of petitions relating to Covid situation in Telangana. Police commissioners of Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda and commissioner of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) appeared before the court.

The court voiced its unhap-

piness over ineffective implementation of night curfew. The bench wondered if the state government plans to take further measures for Covid control after Ramzan.

It wanted to know why the gatherings at religious places were not being controlled.

The court expressed disap-

pointment over the drop in number of Covid tests. It observed that while the court is directing for ramping up testing, the authorities are further cutting down on the numbers. It remarked that flouting court order is unfortunate and warned that officials may have to face contempt of court proceedings.

Advocate General Prasad informed the court that the state cabinet is meeting Tuesday afternoon to take decision on Covid control measures. The bench asked him to convey its concern to the cabinet. The court asked the government to submit a report with details of all proposed Covid control measures. It adjourned the hearing till the cabinet meeting. The cabinet meeting to be

presided over by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao will discuss that the surge in the Covid cases and take a decision on the imposition of lockdown in the State.

"There are reports that suggest that despite certain states imposing the lockdown there is no decrease in the number of cases. Against this backdrop, different opinions are emerging on the lockdown. Some sections are arguing in favour of the imposition of lockdown.

Under these circumstances, the State cabinet would discuss the pros and cons and also the adverse impact the lockdown may have on the ongoing procurement of the Paddy and it will take a decision," said Chief Minister's Office on Monday.

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# Men embrace bachelors' lifestyle, send their families to native places

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The pandemic has altered lifestyles of people, especially the employees. The employees, who are accustomed to luxurious life, are now leading a down-to-earth life. They have been sending their family members to their native places while they stay back in the city. Number of such cases is on the rise as exposure to city life has the increased risk of testing positive for the virus.

Many employees have sent their wives and children to their native places, while they stayed back in the city experiencing the bachelors' life again.

Out of love for wives and children, the employees have been going through temporary separation as the impact of Covid is not that great in villages.

Several have lost their jobs due to the impact of Covid. Many consider sending families to their native places a safer option than asking for trouble staying back in the city. The employees are attending to



their daily chores like cooking, cleaning house, washing clothes and so on. Owner of a medical store, Raghu, said that his family had been living in his native place since lockdown imposed last year.

The employees, who have sent back their families to their native places include

police, doctors and other government employees. Constable Yadagiri sent his wife home ever since the lockdown was imposed as he had the highest risk of contracting the virus as part of discharging his duty.

A businessman Rajiv Williams said that he sent his family to his native place for

fear of Covid-19. He says he is living here all alone for the past two months. In spite of precautions, the number of Covid-19 cases is on the rise, he said. "Since I am alone in the house, now I need not worry about my family even if I were to be tested positive for the virus," he says.

## MURDER FOR GAIN

## Woman found dead in house

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A woman was found murdered in her house at Chintal in Jeedimetla here on Monday night. Jewelry worth Rs 5 lakh has been reported missing from the house, with the police suspecting it to be a murder for gain.

The victim, identified as Suvarna, 48, was alone in the house when unidentified assailants are suspected to have entered and strangled her to death with a saree. Her husband, who returned home in the night, found her lying dead on the floor with a saree tied around her neck.

"The house was ransacked and when he checked the almirah, a gold chain and other ornaments were missing," the Jeedimetla police said.

The CLUES team and Dog Squad have examined the spot while the body was shifted to the Gandhi Hospital for autopsy.

Footage from surveillance cameras in the surroundings is being examined. Police suspect the murderers could be known to the victim.

# ‘High spirits’ in Hyd after lockdown announcement

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Within minutes of the Telangana government announcing a 10-day lockdown from Wednesday in view of surge in Covid-19 cases, hundreds of people queued up at liquor shops in Hyderabad.

Huge crowds gathered at liquor outlets in several parts of the city and its outskirts, throwing to wind all the Covid precautions like wearing of masks and social distancing.

There were utter chaos and traffic jams at several places as the tipplers parked vehicles on the roads to stand in queues for the booze.

There was hardly any wine shop without mad rush of tipplers frantically looking to stock liquor for the lockdown period.

As soon as the word spread on various social media platforms that the state Cabinet decided to impose the lockdown from May 12 (Wednesday), people started thronging liquor shops in "panic buying". Though the brief statement from Chief



Minister's Office (CMO) stated that there would be relaxation for all activities from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. daily, tipplers were not sure if the relaxation would also cover liquor and hence began to swarm the shops before they run out of stocks.

Shopkeepers had tough time in controlling the crowds. Their appeals for maintaining queue with social distancing fell on deaf ears as the customers jostled with each other to grab their bottle. A trader said the madness by the tipplers could be because of their

experience during the lockdown last year.

Reports of long queues at liquor shops were also pouring in from other parts of Telangana. There are more than 2,000 liquor outlets in Hyderabad and 32 districts in the state.

Similar scenes were witnessed in the first week of May last year when liquor shops had reopened after a gap of 43 days. The government's decision to hike the liquor prices by 16 per cent had also failed to dampen the spirits of the people.

## CITY LIGHTS

## Rachakonda CP urges youth to donate blood during pandemic

To help the patients in the pandemic period, the Rachakonda Police has organised blood donation camp in coordination with Indian Red Cross Society in LB Nagar Division. As many as 57 units of blood was collected during the blood donation camp organised at Rajadhani Gardens in Chaitanyapuri from 10 am to 3 pm on Tuesday. Several youth from LB Nagar Division, LB Nagar voluntarily walked into the camps to donate blood. Indian Red Cross Society stated that donated blood would be used for saving the lives of Thalassemia patients, emergency and accident victims across the Telangana State. Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Mahesh M Bhagwat, appealed the youth to donate blood for Thalassemia patients during the pandemic. As many as 57 units of blood was collected from donors at LB Nagar Division and handed over to Red Cross Society. So far 332 units blood donated in Rachakonda limits for Covid patients.



## Former OU Professor Radhe Shyam Sharma passes away

Prof Radhe Shyam Sharma, former Head of English Department, Osmania University and former Dean, Humanities, Osmania University, passed away on May 10 after a brief illness. Born in Tinsukia Assam, Prof Sharma graduated from Gauhati University in 1962 in the throes of the Chinese aggression in India's North East. Through a special provision of the Government of India, which facilitated students from Assam to pursue studies in Indian universities, Prof. Sharma obtained his post graduate degree in English Literature from Osmania University and bagged the William Shakespeare Gold Medal in 1965. He joined the University as a Lecturer in English in 1965 and was instrumental in organising the Young Lecturers Association. He pursued a second Master's degree in Shakespearean Studies for his thesis on King Lear and later completed his PhD at Osmania for his thesis on DH Lawrence. Prof Sharma was recipient of the British Council Scholarship in 1973 and the scholarship of the American Council of Learned Societies under the Fulbright programme. He lectured in several American Universities and in Mexico. He was proactive in restructuring the former American Studies Research centre going through a financial crisis by planning inter disciplinary courses.



## CP Mahesh M Bhagwat launch emergency ambulance services

Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh M Bhagwat flags off emergency ambulance services, facilitated by Lions Eye Hospital to carry Covid patients, dead bodies for last rites on Tuesday. The facility was provided by Kishan Rao of Lions eye Hospital under the Lions Clubs International District 320B programme. The ambulance services can be obtained by calling on +91- 94906 17234 Covid Control Room or Dr Karthik 8008943220/ 9666555296 or Kiran +91 88865 55063. The Rachakonda Commissioner of Police inaugurated the emergency vehicles in the presence of K. Shilpavali, ADCP Admin, RI Vijayanand, District Governor Elect Lion Vidhyasagar Reddy, First District Vice Governor Elect Lion Kamal Kishore Agarwal, Lion Dr Karthik of VCARE Multi Speciality Hospital, Lion Dr Sindhuja, Lion Dr Raghuveer from, RKSC, Lion Dinesh K Gilda.



# TS lockdown note in Urdu creates furore

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Several purported BJP supporters tried to whip up an anti-TRS frenzy likening the Telangana government to those running the shows in Pakistan and Afganistan over a note on lockdown published officially by the Telangana CMO of the state in four languages, including Urdu on Tuesday. The other languages the note was published included English, Telugu and Hindi.

While some invoked the name of Pakistan, while running down the state government officials. Officials said that media releases in Urdu had been done even in the past. The digital media wing of the Telangana government said that tweets had been done in four languages, more so because this was an important message which everyone had to understand. Several citizens however, pointed that Urdu was an official language and not everything had to be linked to a different country



The frenzied reaction to a mere note released in Urdu has stunned the state government officials. Officials said that media releases in Urdu had been done even in the past. The digital media wing of the Telangana government said that tweets had been done in four languages, more so because this was an important message which everyone had to understand. Several citizens however, pointed that Urdu was an official language and not everything had to be linked to a different country

## TS Guv: It is high time we redesign healthcare system

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On the occasion of International Nurses Day-2021, the Telangana Governor Dr Tamilisai Sounderarajan conveyed heartfelt greetings and wishes to all the nurses.

"It is also an occasion to express our immense gratitude to the nurses, who are working round-the-clock with utmost compassion and are giving the best care in these difficult times of Covid pandemic," the Governor said.

In the true spirit of International Day of Nurses-2021 theme, "A Voice to Lead: A Vision for Future Healthcare", it is high time that we redesign the healthcare system with nursing, the largest healthcare profession, as the central in shaping the future of the healthcare, Dr Tamilisai Sounderarajan said.



# 4,801 new Covid cases, 32 deaths in Telangana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana logged 4,801 new Covid-19 cases and 32 deaths during the 24-hour period ending 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday.

The fresh cases pushed the state's cumulative tally to 6,06,988 while the death toll climbed to 2,803.

The case fatality rate stands at 0.55 per cent against the national average of 1.1 per cent. According to the daily media bulletin by the Health

Department, the state continues to see more recoveries than the new cases.

As many as 7,430 people recovered from Covid during the period, taking the cumulative recoveries to 4,44,049.

The recovery rate, which had plunged to almost 80 per cent a few days ago, has now improved to 87.58 per cent. The number of active cases dipped to 60,136. The authorities conducted 75,289 tests during the period.

# TSIC creates world-class social innovation ecosystem in T'gana

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC) has entered into an agreement with the Kautilya School of Public Policy and Gitam deemed University, to enable a conducive administrative and regulatory environment for social innovation to flourish in the state.

Under the agreement, both the partners will combine their resources to create a robust, world-class 'Social Innovation' ecosystem in the state. The MoU focuses on research areas pertinent to social innova-



tions to facilitate state-of-the-art understanding of SI business models and decision making. They will also identify and explore mutually beneficial opportunities through annual and bi-yearly work plans for engagement through on-ground pilot projects to gen-

erate a solid evidence base for aiding the creation, rollout, and diffusion of the SIs.

Sridhar Pabbisetty, Founding Director, Kautilya School of Public Policy, said, "With the student-learning dynamics evolving at a constant pace, providing students with a hands-on experience will encourage practical thinking and analytical knowledge. We are elated to join hands with an expert organisation where transitions from traditional learning to the first-hand experience will be inculcated."

1

# CP's intervention forces driver to return Rs 1.6 lakh to patient's kin

ANUSHA PUPPALA ■ HYDERABAD

An ambulance driver from Hyderabad who had refused to drive unless the son paid him Rs 1,60,000 for taking his dad to hospital was forced to return the money after Rachakonda Commissioner's intervention in the issue.

The ambulance driver had demanded Rs 1,60,000 from Nageshwaran for plying his 71-year-old dad to the hospitals. Despite the anxiety and pain they were suffering due to unavailability of beds in the hospitals, the ambulance driver had refused to drive the vehicle unless they paid him the money immediately, alleged Nageshwaran.

Nageshwaran Gopal a resident of Yaprall said, "The ambulance driver had caused us a lot of pain during a life and death situation that my father was in

on Monday night. The ambulance driver had refused to drive unless we paid him Rs 1,60,000 for taking us to hospital. My family had contracted Covid and had been suffering since past one week. My father, 71-year-old Gopal Krishna, is a heart patient. His oxygen level had dropped to 85 percent yesterday due to covid, and we had taken him to Vijaya Hospital, Nagaram. But the hospital had refused to admit due to lack of beds, so we had to search for other hospitals. We had called an ambulance and he had taken an advance of Rs 5,000 for taking us to Mahavir Hospital, Masab Tank".

He further added, "Due to lack of beds, we had to go back and forth to various hospitals in search of ventilator bed and finally got an oxygen bed. We paid him Rs 5,000 as first advance on May 10, Rs 50,000 on May 11, Rs 15,000 again on

May 11, Rs 35,000 on May 11 and Rs 55,000 again which is total Rs 1,60,000. Under such pressure, I had to request my friends for money and we all pooled in money to pay the driver, who wouldn't start the vehicle unless we transferred money."

Mahesh Bhagwat, Commissioner of Rachakonda Police Commissionarate told The Pioneer, "We received the complaint through DIG Sumati and ACP Kushaiguda Shiva Kumar and SHO Keesara Narendra on my instructions intervened and have done the job. They warned the driver and told him that his vehicle would be seized and a case would be booked against him if he didn't return the money and they returned the money immediately because they knew they exploited the patient's family as they were in an emergency situation."



## GEARING UP

In the Eid markets in Hyderabad's older parts, hundreds are gathering for festival shopping, violating the Covid protocols with no physical distancing and masks. The heavy rush for shopping was especially in view of lockdown to be imposed from Wednesday.



# Eatala-Bhatti meet raises many eyebrows



K VENKATESHWARLU  
■ HYDERABAD

“There are no permanent friends and enemies in politics in a democratic country. Everyone is entitled to have his or her own opinion and pursue their own profession, subject to certain restrictions. Many politicians switch over their loyalties taking a cue from the aforesaid quote.”

Former minister Eatala Rajender is no exception as he called on Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka here on Tuesday at the latter's residence. They reportedly discussed the political developments taking place in the state.

It may be recalled that as he had stated in Huzurabad that he will discuss with all political leaders before taking a decision on his future of course of action. It is learnt that Eatala Rajender reportedly narrated the alleged injustice rendered to him in the TRS to the CLP leader. The discussion took place between the two leaders on the sorry state affairs in the state and how AICC chief Sonia Gandhi's aim of providing equal opportunities for all sections of society was not fulfilled after carving out a separate for Telangana.



It is learnt that they also reportedly discussed whether the Congress will extend its support to him in the by-election for Huzurabad in the case he tenders his resignation.

While speaking to The Pioneer, Bhatti Vikramarka said that Eatala Rajender calling on him was a courtesy call. “No discussion was held in particular as it is our first meeting. There will be another meeting between us. Eatala said to me that he will meet me again.”

When asked whether Eatala will join the Congress after quitting the TRS, Bhatti said that definitely he will quit the TRS, but not sure whether he will join the Congress, or not. “But meeting a CLP leader means there would be something in Eatala's mind,” Bhatti said.

However, Congress leaders have already made it clear that they will wage a movement on the issue of TRS leaders' encroachments. While Bhatti demanded that the government order an inquiry into the encroachment allegations against Ministers and give back their lands to the poor. He said that Congress will not leave the encroachers and it will continue its fight against them.

## Impose lockdown for 15 days: Bhatti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka blamed Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for the rise in Corona cases in the state. He demanded that the Chief Minister impose at least 15 days lockdown setting up a Monitoring Committee to control the Corona spread with senior IAS officers at state and district levels.

He also demanded that the government include Corona treatment in Arogyasri and transform the PHCs into 30-bed hospitals. He also asked the government to take over the hotels and set up quarantine centres there.

Speaking to the media through Zoom meeting on Tuesday, Bhatti informed that scientists, doctors and IMA stating that the Corona chain link will break if the government imposes a lockdown for minimum quarantine days, hence,

CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka demanded that the government include Corona treatment in Arogyasri and transform the PHCs into 30-bed hospitals

He also asked the government to take over the hotels and set up quarantine centres there

the government should impose a lockdown for at least 15 days.

He alleged that the poor facing a lot of troubles as Corona reached the nook and corner of the state. The Chief Minister conducted municipal elections though the opposition parties asked him not to conduct. Therefore, Corona cases and deaths increased massively in Warangal and Khammam districts after the elections. The Chief Minister assured that he will examine the inclusion of Corona treatment in Arogyasri in the last budget suggestion, however, he didn't take any decision even after one year.

Bhatti demanded that the government appoint a committee with senior IAS officers to control Corona in the state. The government has to assign the committee to monitor the vaccination, Corona tests, treatment, beds, oxygen and others, he suggested to the government. There should be a special system to monitor the Covid conditions round-the-clock.

The government has to launch an app similar to the Delhi government to know the Covid conditions. The app has to provide information about the details of the hospitals, oxygen, ventilators and beds, he said.

## Shabbir slams CM for creating confusion on lockdown

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

“The High Court has made serious remarks against the government for not taking adequate measures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus in the state. While the High Court was in favour of taking strict measures since the beginning, KCR, the then Health Minister Etela Rajender, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and

other leaders kept misleading people by saying that there would be no lockdown or night curfew. However, citing High Court orders, initially, the night curfew was imposed and now a 10-day lockdown has been announced. People would have prepared themselves men-

tally if CM would've been a little realistic,” he said. Shabbir Ali said that the CM has habituated to keeping people in the dark. “KCR speaks lies with so much comfort and flow that innocent people take them for truth. When the first case of Covid was reported, he took it in a lighter vein and even claimed

that it could be cured with a paracetamol tablet. He kept on changing his statements, but never told the reality to people. Consequently, crores of people have been suffering due to his lies and wrong decisions,” he said. The Congress leader demanded that the government provide financial assistance to all the BPL and middle-class families during the lockdown.

## Bandi wants govt to step up vaccination

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP state unit president Bandi Sanjay welcomed the government's decision to impose lockdown in the state from May 12 for 10 days and said that it is better late than never.

In a statement here on Tuesday, he said the Centre left the decision to the states, but all states and UTs in the country, except for Telangana, imposed lockdown long ago.

The lockdown should not affect medical services and movement of patients, he said adding that Covid testing and treatment should continue without any hiccups. The vaccine alone can rein in the virus, he said adding that it was proved. Therefore, vaccination should be stepped up.

The Centre sent Remedisivir injections and oxygen cylinders required for the state, he said suggesting setting up of a nodal system for distribution of these among the hospitals.

Care should be taken to ensure that there is no shortage of oxygen in private and government hospitals. All medicines required for Covid-19 should be made available, he said asking the government to solve the problems of private hospitals in providing treatment to Covid patients.

He called upon BJP activists to observe lockdown rules as was done last year and provide food to the starving. He directed them to



The Centre left the decision to the states, but all states and UTs in the country, except for Telangana, imposed lockdown long ago, said BJP state unit president Bandi Sanjay

Care should be taken to ensure that there is no shortage of oxygen in private and government hospitals. All medicines required for Covid-19 should be made available, he said asking the government to solve the problems of private hospitals in providing treatment to Covid patients

extend necessary support to the poorest of the poor under the jurisdiction of their respective areas.

### SHORT TAKES



Mancherial DCP Uday Kumar Reddy visits Mustayala oxygen plant on Tuesday and requested the plant authorities to supply oxygen cylinders to hospitals which are facing shortage

### Police solve oxygen shortage problem in Ramagundam

**RAMAGUNDAM:** The timely intervention of the Ramagundam police averted a major disaster and earned them kudos from relatives of many a Covid-19 patient. The police are working at night to enforce a curfew and also working to resolve a major crisis like oxygen shortage. On a tip-off from Dr Balaji, Ramagundam Commissioner of Police V Satyanarayana and DCP Uday Kumar Reddy came to know that many hospitals in the Mancherial district are turning away patients for want of oxygen. The top police officers immediately ascertained the oxygen situation in the hospitals and spoke to Mustayala oxygen plant authorities for oxygen supply. The Commissioner sent Mancherial DCP to the plant and requisitioned 20 oxygen cylinders to address the immediate shortage of oxygen in various hospitals. Out of 150 cylinders needed, 20 cylinders have been procured and supplied to hospitals where there is a shortage of oxygen. Several opine that if the oxygen was not supplied it would have led to a major catastrophe. The relatives of the patients also thank the police for their gesture.

### Lightning claims life

**MULUGU:** An elderly man died when lightning struck him while he was working in a field on Tuesday. The deceased was identified as Md Ramzan (65) of Kasimdevpet village in Mulugu district. He is survived by two daughters and a son. Multiple lightning strikes took place due to untimely rains here. Kasimdevpet sarpanch Md Ahamed Pasha demanded Rs 10 lakh ex-gratia to the bereaved family. Tonnes of paddy and chili crops were damaged due to hailstones in the district. Mulugu MLA Seetakka demanded that the government purchase the wet paddy and mirchi with MSP rates.

### 25 Home Guards who tested positive given Rs 5,000 each

**RAMAGUNDAM:** Acting on directions from Ramagundam Police Commissioner V Satyanarayana, ACP of Armed Reserve Police Sundar Rao and Reserve Inspector Vishnu Prasad met families of Home Guards, who tested positive for the virus and gave Rs 5,000 to each of the 25 Home Guards, who acquired the virus. They asked the Home Guards receiving treatment under isolation to be mentally prepared to face the problem and take medicines and food as advised by doctors. They advised the Covid patients to practice Pranayama regularly. Police officer will get feedback regularly on the progress of the police personnel. If they have any health problems, they should bring them to the notice of higher authorities to help them provide better treatment.



ACP of Armed Reserve Police Sundar Rao and Reserve Inspector Vishnu Prasad giving a cheque for Rs 5,000 to a home guard in Ramagundam on Tuesday

## Cong faults CM for sudden announcement of lockdown

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC official spokesperson G Niranjana found fault with Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao for his contradictory statements on lockdown. He reminded that earlier he had stated that lockdown is waste and people will suffer with it and the State economy will collapse, but all of a sudden he declared lockdown.

With the statement of KCR as lockdown is waste, people were under the impression that there will be no lockdown and they are not prepared for this sudden imposition of lockdown.

Is there no need to give people an advance intimation and time to plan themselves? he

questioned. “Ramzan is within two days and the government did not think about preparations for the festival by the Muslim brethren. The government is unfortunately in such a state, which is unable to act unless there is a High Court direction. Everyone is admonishing the inhuman attitude of the government, which obstructed the entry of ambulances on the state border,” he pointed out.

KCR should realise that he cannot single-handedly deal with the present critical situation involving the lives of people. He should immediately convene a meeting of all parties to discuss and take their cooperation in dealing with the present situation, he said.

## Case registered against Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Another case has been registered against TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu in Guntur. Arandalpeta police registered a case following a complaint lodged by advocate Pachala Anil Kumar. He said in his complaint that N Chandrababu and TDP leaders were creating fear psychosis among people on Corona. The police registered cases against N Chandrababu under Sections 188, 505 (1) b and 505 (2) following a complaint by lawyer Anil. It may be recalled that earlier a case has been registered against N Chandrababu Naidu in Kurnool by lawyer Subbaiah alleging that he is making statements on Corona, which are creating panic among people.

## Mayor pays surprise visit to assess door-to-door survey

The Mayor counselled people not to be disheartened by testing positive for the virus and make good use of the Covid kit being presented by the survey staff.

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Warangal Mayor Gundu Sudharani and District Collector Ragivgandhi Hanumanthi paid a surprise visit to Puppallagutta, Rangasaipeet, Chintal and Siva Nagar in 35th and 42nd divisions of the city and interacted with teams conducting a door-to-door survey to identify Covid-19 patients and enquired about the progress of the survey from the staff on the survey.

The Mayor counselled people not to be disheartened by testing positive for the virus and make good use of the Covid kit being



District Collector Ragivgandhi Hanumanthi interacting with one of the team members, who is conducting a door-to-door survey in Warangal on Monday. Mayor Gundu Sudharani looks on

presented by the survey staff. Warangal Urban District Collector Ragivgandhi Hanumanthi asked resource persons to survey all houses without fail.

ASHA workers, resource persons are undertaking the door-to-door survey and giving medical kits to those who have the virus symptoms.

Earlier, Rajiv Gandhi

Hanumanthi monitored the progress of the survey in Jawahar Nagar in Hanmakonda. In-charge Municipal Commissioner Satyanarayana, corporators Somisetty Praveen, Gundu Purnachander, DMHO Lalita Devi, MEPMA Project Director Bhadrar Naik, Deputy DMHO Krishna Rao, DE Ravinder and others accompanied the District Collector.

## Liquor smuggling flourishing on Telangana-Maha border

Predicting that liquor would not be sold for the next 10 days, the bootleggers purchased lakhs worth of liquor at the three outlets.

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Even as the government declared lockdown from Wednesday, serpentine queues were seen in front of liquor shops everywhere those in Mahadevpur, Palimela and Kaleshwaram are no exception. The government has permitted two shops each in Kaleshwaram and Mahadevpur and one in Palimela. There are allegations of liquor smuggling into neighbouring Maharashtra from these shops where prohibition was imposed. Complaints have also been lodged with the excise authorities, who allegedly turned a blind eye with an eye on receiving bribes from the



Liquor bottles being loaded in an auto-rickshaw in Jayashankar Bhupalapally district on Tuesday for smuggling into Maharashtra where prohibition is in vogue

liquor lobby.

In fact, the remote places like this would have no major demand for liquor. The liquor traders vie with each other to bag licence for liquor shops so that they can supply liquor to belt shops in Maharashtra. These shops sell each quarter bottle and beer bottle at Rs 40 more. Other bottles are being sold at Rs 100 to Rs 120 more per bottle.

Up to a distance of 100 km deep in Maharashtra from the inter-state border, hundreds of belt shops have been operating

illegally. Complaints have been lodged with excise official that each liquor shop has been supplying Rs 3-5 lakh worth liquor per day to these belt shops.

Locals question, why there is no action, has been taken so far across the border smuggling.

The moment the lockdown has been declared. The organisers of various illegal belt shops in Maharashtra, where prohibition is in force, and smugglers are taking liquor across the border transporting it on auto-rickshaws with their hired henchmen.

Predicting that liquor would not be sold for the next 10 days, the bootleggers purchased lakhs worth liquor at the three outlets.

Social activists Mohammad Rafi, Srinivas, Ramesh Reddy and others appeal to the government to check the smuggling of liquor. When excise superintendent Sasidhar Reddy was contacted, he did not respond.

## Putta Madhu questioned again

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

In the sensational double murder case (High Court advocates), the Ramagundam police questioned the Peddapally Zilla Parishad chairman Putta Madhu on Tuesday about withdrawal of money from his bank account and spending one week underground.

The police said that a clear picture on the payments made to others out of funds withdrawn from the bank have to come out.

The police questioned him till Monday night on various aspects of his alleged involvement in the

double murder case. Earlier, in the wee hours of Tuesday, the police served notice on Madhu asking him to appear before authorities for questioning on Tuesday. The police have to ascertain speaking over mobile with the accused and payment of supari to the murders and other aspects.

Putta Madhu was in police custody for three days since Saturday. He returned home only on Monday night. Again the police called him for questioning. Political circles are agog giving vent to various doubts in the case. The result of the questioning of Putta Madhu would be made known only on Wednesday.



Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy launching sanitiser spraying vehicles in Hyderabad on Tuesday

## Two sanitiser spraying vehicles launched

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP Boudh Nagar corporator contestant Mekala Keerti Harsha Kiran on Tuesday got two vehicles that spray sodium hypochlorite flagged off by Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy at a function held here on Tuesday. Later, with the help of the vehicles, they sanitised various slums in the area. Addressing a gathering, Kishan Reddy said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's work earned him appreciation from global nations.

He said the Centre alerted people and advised State governments and supporting them in all respects. He appreciated the service-mindedness of BJP activists, who are serving all private and government hospitals.

BJP leader Shyam Sunder Goud, Rajasekhara Reddy, Mekala Sarangapani and others were present.



# States to get 7L addl Covid vax doses within three days

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 90 lakh COVID-19 vaccine doses are still available with states and UTs which will receive over 7 lakh additional doses in the next three days, the Union Health Ministry said on Tuesday.

The Centre has so far provided more than 18 crore vaccine doses (18,00,03,160) to states and UTs free of cost.

Of this, the total consumption including wastages is 17,09,71,429 doses.

"More than 90 lakh COVID Vaccine doses (90,31,691) are still available with the states and UTs to be administered. States with negative balance are showing more consumption (including wastage) than vaccine supplied as they have not reconciled the vaccine they have supplied to Armed Forces," the ministry said.

States and UTs will receive 7,29,610 additional vaccine doses in addition within the



next three days. The ministry said the Government of India has been supporting the nationwide vaccination drive by providing COVID vaccines free of cost to states and UTs. Implementation of the Liberalized and Accelerated

Phase 3 Strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination has started from 1st May 2021. In the strategy it is made clear that every month only 50 per cent of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be

procured by the Centre. The Centre would continue to procure its share of 50 per cent of the monthly CDL cleared vaccines and would continue to make it available to state governments free of cost as was being done earlier.

# Active Covid cases down by 30,000 first time in 61 days: Health ministry

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The total active Covid-19 cases in the country dipped to 37,15,221 on Tuesday with a net decline of 30,016 cases being recorded in a span of 24 hours for the first time after 61 days, the Union health ministry said on Tuesday.

The total recoveries in a span of 24 hours too outnumbered the daily new Covid-19 cases after 61 days. The total active cases now comprise 16.16 per cent of the country's total coronavirus infections.

Thirteen states -- Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh cumulatively account for 82.68 per cent of India's total active cases, the ministry said.

The ministry said 24.44 per cent of the total active cases in the country have been reported from 10 districts including

Bengaluru Urban, Pune, Delhi, Ernakulam, Nagpur, Ahmedabad, Thrissur, Jaipur, Kozhikode and Mumbai.

Ten states -- Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi -- reported 69.88 per cent of the 3,29,942 new Covid-19 cases registered in a day, the ministry said.

Karnataka has reported the highest daily new cases at 39,305. It is followed by Maharashtra with 37,236 cases and Tamil Nadu which reported 28,978 new cases.

India's cumulative recoveries have surged to 1,90,27,304 with 3,56,082 recoveries being registered in a span of 24 hours.

Ten states account for 72.28 per cent of the new recoveries, the ministry said.

The National Mortality Rate currently stands at 1.09 per cent, it said.

A total 3,876 deaths were



reported in a span of 24 hours and 10 states account for 73.09 per cent of the new fatalities, it said.

Karnataka saw the maximum casualties (596) followed by Maharashtra (549), it said.

Meanwhile, the cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has increased to 17.27 crore.

A total of 17,27,10,066 vaccine doses have been administered through 25,15,519 sessions, according to the provi-

sional report till 7 am.

These include 95,64,242 healthcare workers (HCWs) who have taken the first dose and 65,05,744 HCWs who have taken the second dose, 1,40,54,058 frontline workers (FLWs) who have received the first dose and 78,53,514 FLWs who have taken the second dose and 25,59,339 beneficiaries in the age group of 18-44 years who have been administered the first dose.

Besides, 5,55,10,630 and 71,95,632 beneficiaries aged 45 to 60 have been administered the first and second dose respectively while 5,38,06,205 and 1,56,60,702 people aged above 60 have taken the first and second dose.

According to the ministry, 5,24,731 beneficiaries in the 18-44 age group have received their first dose of covid vaccine in the last 24 hours and cumulatively 25,59,339 across 30 states and UTs since the start of the phase-3 of vaccination drive.

## INDIA CORNER Maha to divert 3 lakh Covaxin doses for 45-plus age group

Amid a shortage of COVID-19 vaccine doses, the Maharashtra government on Tuesday decided to divert three lakh vials of Covaxin meant for the 18-44 age group for the use of the people aged 45 years and above. Speaking to reporters, state Health Minister Rajesh Tope also said more than five lakh people above 45 years are awaiting the second dose for the want of the vaccine. "Efficacy of the vaccine is largely affected if the second dose is not administered in a stipulated time. To avoid such health crisis, the state government has decided to divert three lakh vials (of Covaxin) purchased for the 18-44 age category for the people above 45 years," Tope said. He said only 35,000 vials of Covaxin are currently available with the state government for administering the second dose to the people above 45 years. According to the Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy, COVID-19 vaccination is free at government vaccination centres that receive doses from the Centre for eligible population groups comprising healthcare workers, frontline workers and people above the 45 years of age.



## TMC leader shot at in Bengal's Hooghly district

A TMC leader was shot at by unidentified miscreants in West Bengal's Hooghly district on Tuesday when he was buying vegetables at a local market, a police officer said. Aditya Niyogi, former vice chairman of Bansberia Municipality, was taken to a nearby hospital in a critical condition, but the doctors there referred him to a clinical establishment in Kolkata, he said. BJP sources claimed the incident was a fallout of factional feud within the ruling party. Denying the charge, TMC MLA and former minister Tapan Dasgupta said, "Saffron party workers carried out the attack, aided by a group of traitors within the Trinamool who have been exposed after the just-concluded assembly elections". Several TMC activists hit the streets in Bansberia during the day in protest against the incident.



## Three LeT militants killed in Jammu & Kashmir encounter

Three Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militants were killed in an encounter with security forces in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday, police said. Security forces launched a cordon and search operation at Vailoo in Komernag area of the district early on Tuesday following information about presence of militants there, a police official said. "During the search operation, as the presence of terrorists got ascertained they were given an opportunity to surrender. However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated leading to an encounter," the official said. He said the joint teams of security forces also rescued all the civilians trapped in the gunfire and halted the operation for the time to ensure safe evacuation of people from the area of gunfire.



## 7-day total lockdown in Nagaland from May 14

The Nagaland government on Tuesday decided to clamp total lockdown in the state for seven days from May 14 amid the surge in COVID-19 cases. State government spokesperson on COVID-19 and Minister Neiba Kronu said that the High Powered Committee (HPC) on COVID-19 decided to impose a state-wide total lockdown for one week starting from 6 pm on May 14 till May 21. The decision was taken during the HPC meeting held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Tuesday, he said. The HPC decided that the week-long total lockdown will be enforced with a view to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission, said Kronu. He also said that existing restrictions will continue till total lockdown is in place while New SOPs would also be issued. However, Kronu said that essential services including agricultural activities will be exempted from the purview of the lockdown. Nagaland government on May 3 announced containment zones in some areas of the state capital Kohima and commercial hub Dimapur for seven days from 7 pm of May 5 following surge in COVID-19 cases, which will end at 7 pm on Wednesday.



# TN CM Stalin, newly elected MLAs take oath

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, his Cabinet colleagues, AIADMK top leader K Palaniswami, who is set to be the Leader of Opposition on Tuesday took oath as MLAs in the Assembly.

As soon as the House convened with pro-tem Speaker K Pitchandhi in the chair, Stalin was the first to take oath.

Following him, other ministers, beginning with senior legislator and Water Resources Minister Duraimurugan took the oath. Two Ministers, S S Sivasankar (Backward Classes Welfare) and M Mathiventhan (Tourism), did not take the oath as they were being treated for COVID-19.

Former Chief Minister K Palaniswami who will be the leader of opposition, took the



oath following the ministers. While Stalin, his Cabinet colleagues and DMK MLAs made a solemn affirmation, most AIADMK members including Palaniswami and former Deputy Chief Minister

O Panneerselvam took the oath in the name of God.

Some other members including AIADMK's K P Munusamy, who resigned his Rajya Sabha membership following his win in the Assembly polls, made the affirmation in the name of their conscience.

A total of 224 MLAs out of the total 234, took the oath from 10 am to 2 pm. The MLAs who did not take oath today are expected to do so in the Speaker's chamber in the days to come.

Also, Stalin proposed the names of DMK legislators M Appavu and K Pitchandhi for the posts of Assembly Speaker and Deputy Speaker. It was seconded by Duraimurugan, also the Leader of the House in the nominations for the May 12 election for the two posts.

## Graph of Covid cases on decline in MP: Minister

PNS ■ BHOPAL

The graph of COVID-19 infections in Madhya Pradesh is on the decline, state Home Minister Narottam Mishra said on Tuesday, a day after the daily infections dropped to 9,715.

"It is a matter of relief to see that the new cases fell to four digits from the five digits. Since last three to four days, cases are showing a downward trend in the state," Mishra, also a spokesperson of the state government, told reporters.

He said Madhya Pradesh recorded 9,715 new cases on Monday while more than 8,400 people recovered from the viral infection on the same day.

"The infection is declining in cities. Infection continues in rural areas but it is being brought under control thanks to the efforts undertaken by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan," Mishra said. The state home minister further said 150 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were wasted because members from the age group of 18 to 44 years who had booked slots didn't turn up for inoculation.

# ATCs should undergo random breath analyser test: Delhi HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed that air traffic controllers (ATCs) and five per cent of pilots and cabin crew on duty would undergo random breath analyser (BA) tests for the next three months in view of the prevailing pandemic.

Justice Prathiba M Singh further directed the ATCs, pilots and cabin crew to give an undertaking that they have not consumed any alcohol or psychotropic substance within the 12 hours prior to a flight.

It made it clear that if a pilot, cabin crew or ATC is found to have consumed such substances and had given a false undertaking, such personnel would be "off-rostered" and appropriate action would be taken against such individuals.

With regard to the procedure to be adopted for carrying out the tests, the court said it would be held in a big and open space and the doctor and medical staff conducting the test would have to undergo a Rapid



Antigen Test everyday.

The court further directed that no more than six persons would be tested in a span of one hour and prior to each test the BA machine would be sanitised by UV radiation.

It asked the aviation regulator, DGCA, to issue guidelines with regard to the testing protocol to be followed and to communicate the same to all the airlines and airports in the country.

The directions came on the separate pleas by the ATC Guild and Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) opposing the conduct of BA tests during the prevailing pandemic.

The Directorate General of

Civil Aviation (DGCA) had on April 27 issued an order stating therein that 10 per cent of flight crew and cabin crew members involved in domestic operations shall be subjected to random preflight BA test.

DGCA had also told the court that undertakings are required to be furnished by flight and cabin crew that they have not consumed any alcohol or psychotropic substance in the 12 hours prior to a flight.

In March last year, the high court issued an interim order suspending BA tests through the tube process for ATCs.

Subsequently, in September 2020 it had modified the interim order and allowed BA tests through the tube process on the basis of the recommendations by a medical board.

The board had recommended that one machine would be used per next 12 hours.

The court, while allowing the BA tests, had said that DGCA would be bound by the June 16, 2020 recommendations of the medical board.

# No Eid mass prayers due to Covid: Assam Masjid committees

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Masjid committees in Assam have decided not to have mass prayers in their premises during the upcoming Eid ul-Fitr festival due to the COVID-19 pandemic and state government guidelines.

Clerics of the masjids have appealed to the faithful in their area to offer prayers at their respective home to celebrate the festival at the end of the month-long Ramadan fasting.

An office-bearer of the Burha Jame Masjid Committee in Guwahati said there will be no mass gathering of people as usual during Eid at the masjids or Eidgah fields for offering prayers, traditional shake of hands with one another or exchange of embraces due to the pandemic protocols of social distancing.

As per the government

guidelines for all religious places, congregation of only five persons was allowed at either masjids or Eidgahs, the office-bearer said.

To avoid large congregations and for crowd management, most masjids have been kept locked by their committees since the pandemic last year, he informed.

Only five persons, including Maulana and the staff will offer prayers in Masjid premises this holy festival, he added.

Meanwhile, the clerics have asked the believers to not crowd mosques and to follow the state government's recent guidelines allowing congregation of only five persons at a time at all religious places.

The Burha Jame Masjid Committee member further said that Eid celebrations will most likely be on Friday but it would depend on the sighting of the moon either on that day or earlier on Thursday.

# Experts against 'non-scientific use' of convalescent plasma

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Some clinicians and scientists have written to Principal Scientific Advisor K Vijay Raghavan, cautioning against the "irrational and non-scientific use" of convalescent plasma for COVID-19 in the country.

The public health professionals said the current evidence on plasma therapy in COVID-19 and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) guidelines are not based on the existing evidence.

They also pointed out some very early evidence that indicates a possible association between emergence of variants with "lower susceptibility to neutralising antibodies in immunosuppressed" people given plasma therapy.

This raises the possibility of

more virulent strains developing due to irrational use of plasma therapy which can fuel the pandemic, the letter signed by experts like vaccinologist Gagandeep Kang and surgeon Pramesh C S said.

"We are writing to you as concerned clinicians, public health professionals and scientists from India about the irrational and non-scientific use of convalescent plasma for COVID-19 in the country," it said.

"This has stemmed from guidelines issued by government agencies, and we request your urgent intervention to address the issue which can prevent harassment of COVID-19 patients, their families, their clinicians and COVID-19 survivors," said the letter which was also marked to Director General of the Indian Medical



Council of India Balram Bhargav and AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria.

The concerns were raised after the Union Health Ministry last month issued an updated revised

'Clinical Guidance for Management of Adult COVID-19 Patients' under which it recommended off-label use of convalescent plasma only in the early moderate disease preferably within

seven days of symptom onset.

It also stated that "no use after seven days" and only on availability of high titre donor plasma.

"The current research evidence unanimously indicates that there is no benefit offered by convalescent plasma for treatment of COVID-19. However, it continues to be prescribed rampantly in hospitals across India," the letter said.

Families of patients run from pillar-to-post for getting plasma, which is in short supply. The desperation of patients and their families is understandable because they like to try the best for their loved ones, when a doctor has prescribed this, the public health professionals said.

In the plasma therapy, antibodies from the blood of a patient who has recovered from COVID-

19 are used to treat serious patients.

They said the current evidence on plasma therapy in COVID-19 and the ICMR guidelines are not based on the existing evidence.

They cited the ICMR-PLACID trial which was the world's first randomised controlled trial on convalescent plasma in 39 public and private hospitals across India.

It found "convalescent plasma was not associated with a reduction in progression to severe COVID-19 or all-cause mortality. This trial has high generalisability and approximates convalescent plasma use in real life settings with limited laboratory capacity".

The large trial of 11,588 patients found no difference in death or proportion of patients discharged from hospital, the clinicians said.



## Two to tango

Just like the Governments, the citizens are also responsible for the spurt in COVID-19 cases

American TV personality Wally Amos put it succinctly: “There are two reasons why people fail. One is irresponsibility. The second is fear.” The Governments at the Centre and in the States take a fair share of blame for the inadequacies in medical infrastructure, resource management and planning even though the second COVID-19 surge continues unabated. But what about the citizens of the country? They are equal shareholders in the system and must equally share the blame for the behaviour that crosses all borders of civic responsibility. The visuals of a big crowd attending the funeral of a Muslim cleric in Uttar Pradesh’s Badaun went viral on Monday. The cleric had died on Sunday and his body was kept in a local mosque for public viewing. Within hours, people began to converge near the mosque. It became an unmanageable crowd in no time, the people — most of them maskless — throwing all caution to the winds. There was no question of maintaining social distancing. There was no question of anyone asking them to at least wear masks. In fact, there was no mechanism available to either control the crowd or enforce safety guidelines. What does this show apart from the blatant neglect of the anti-COVID guidelines in public places? It is impossible to know how many among them were COVID positive or were recovering/had recovered or might contract

the virus due to transmission in a fortnight from now. The crowd has the potential to turn into a super-spreader by the end of May.

That the massing of people took the administration by surprise is one half of the story. The death of a prominent cleric should have automatically alerted the police department and the office of the district magistrate. The administration will now initiate action, file FIRs and maybe even order a probe. But the horse has bolted. If the officials had the latest contact tracing measures available, they would know how mammoth a task it is to contain the infection transmission. The other half of the story is the sad, thoughtless and irrational actions of the people who appear willing to put themselves and families at risk. Should we blame religious orthodoxy or obscurantism or retrograde beliefs for such irrational behaviour? No. Take the liquor shops, for instance. One will find longer queues outside liquor vendors than at COVID hospitals, oxygen refill plants or vaccination centres. Marriages and other functions continue to take place with far more people in attendance than the permitted limit of 50. The families and friends of COVID patients continue to throng hospitals and often crowd the ICUs where their kin are admitted. Even now, very few people wear double masks and face shields are a rarity. It takes two hands to clap and if the people refuse to let common sense guide their actions, it may be the case of — to cannibalise a Marquez title — a chronicle of an unfolding, avoidable tragedy.



## Stand united

It’s time for the political class to stop bickering and fight against our common enemy

At a time when the nation is besieged with an unprecedented human tragedy, India’s political parties have miserably failed to rise to the occasion. The daily war of words raging among headline-grabbers of our political class has given the impression that they are only bothered about consolidating their vote bank. Take the example of West Bengal. Both Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the BJP leadership have been blaming each other for the Corona bomb that has pulverised the State’s health system and seen an alarming positivity rate. But the fact remains that during the Assembly election campaigning, both sides brazenly flouted the COVID protocols and held massive road shows and rallies with thousands of unmasked people in attendance. It was the same scene in Uttar Pradesh, where a massive mobilisation took place during the panchayat elections. Once again, our political class showed a blatant disregard for the health risks that such campaigning posed for the common man. It’s not only a violation of the COVID norms, but the bigger issue is the absence of even a symbolic concern for coming together to providing succour to the masses by way of health infrastructure, oxygen and life-saving drugs.

Be it at the State level or the Centre, the political class is bitterly divided even as India’s hapless people are watching it with despair. The situation is so pathetic that even within the NDA, the alliance partners are blaming each other for the half-hearted measures being taken to control the pandemic. Anyone following the Bihar developments and noticing the attacks and counter-attacks by the JD(U) and BJP leaders, will feel nothing but shock. It’s time Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the initiative and invited the senior leaders of all political parties to keep aside their differences and stay united in the fight against the pandemic. The PM should also ensure that all senior leaders, including the MPs and MLAs, are accessible to their constituents at all hours. It’s unfortunate that many of them have remained locked inside their bungalows and flats in Delhi while, back home, those who voted them to power are running helter-skelter for a hospital bed or oxygen cylinders. At a time when profiteers and black marketeers are thriving on misery, the political class should mobilise the people to wage a war on such unscrupulous elements. Much can be done to help the people if only our political leaders show a collective resolve.

# Francophobic in ‘land of the pure’

Incited by an ultra-religious outfit, Pakistan is protesting France’s views on the freedom of speech and radical Islam

The difference in the governance impulses and compulsions between the Fifth Republic, ie France, and the ostensible “land of the pure”, ie Pakistan, could not be more glaring. Like all nations who have a mixed bag of heroes and villains to define its preferred narrative — France chose intellectual liberals likes Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau, whereas Pakistan has seemingly come under the irrefutable grip of illiberal like Mumtaz Qadri, Saad Hussain Rizvi and the likes of Baitullah Mehsuds. Genealogically also, La France espoused *Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite* (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity) whereas Pakistan invoked *Iman, Ittihad, Nazam* (Faith, Unity, Discipline), and the religiosity in the latter has only increased over time. It was only a matter of time before the sovereign sensibilities clashed directly, as they recently did, with the ensuing protest by the ultra-religious Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) which is protesting France’s views on the freedom of speech, radical Islam and blasphemy and, therefore, seeking the expulsion of the French ambassador.

The history of the two unlike nations had been surprisingly robust, despite their foundational and fundamental anchorages though, in recent times, the crevices have sharply widened. The Pakistan Air Force had been France’s largest aerospace customer, having got Mirage fighter aircraft, Exocet missiles, reconnaissance and civil aircraft, whereas the Pakistani Navy had ordered the Daphne-class and Agosta-class submarines — as also agreements to transfer civilian nuclear technology. But the recent strategic-bind in the Indo-French realm (including the much-banded Rafale fighters) has led to a definitive shift in the French preferences. But it did not go unnoticed across the restive Line of Control (LoC), especially since France also took a particularly hard line on terror (owing to its own unrest with Islamist extremism and violence)



and in openly siding with India at multilateral forums.

Beyond the visible optics, France was the only western power to support India after the latter conducted the nuclear tests in 1998 and was instrumental in facilitating India’s entry into the non-proliferation regimes of Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement and the Australia Group. In reciprocal bonhomie, Delhi took an unusually assertive stand to condemn Turkish President Recep Erdogan’s (Pakistan’s closest ally along with China) diatribe against French President Emmanuel Macron, after the French leader had openly called out “Islamist separatism” in the case of beheading a French school teacher. India’s Ministry of External Affairs explicitly stated: “We strongly deplore the personal attacks in unacceptable language on President Emmanuel Macron in violation of the most basic standards of international discourse.”

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s patented double standards on religious extremism, dangerous dalliances and co-option of the clerical lot allowed for the



DESPITE IMRAN’S POSTURED MODERATION AND CLAIMS OF PROGRESSIVE OUTLOOK, HE HAD WILLINGLY DROPPED RENOWNED PRINCETON ECONOMIST ATIF MIAN FROM HIS ECONOMIC ADVISORY COUNCIL UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE LIKES OF THE TLP, OWING TO ATIF’S BELONGING TO THE AHMADIYYA FAITH

dangerous drift towards morphing the French beheading incident, into an uncompromisable *ummah* issue, triggering calls for the boycott of French products and expelling the French ambassador from Pakistan. Continuing to play to the electoral gallery simultaneously, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan kept reiterating and reminding that no one had done more than him in internationalising the issue of blasphemy — this whilst dealing with a supposedly “terrorist” organisation with a violent position and dubious track record on “blasphemy” in Pakistan. Despite Imran’s postured moderation and claims of progressive outlook, he had willingly dropped renowned Princeton economist Atif Mian from his Economic Advisory Council under pressure from the likes of the TLP, owing to Atif’s belonging to the Ahmadiyya faith.

France is moving in an exact opposite direction with counter-accusations of weaponising its famed policy of segregating the State and religion, a secular ideology known as Laicite. A new law called “Strengthening Respect for Republican Principles” has been introduced in the wake of

recurring Islamist violence to “free Islam in France from foreign influences”! Many accuse the same for right-wing populism with an electoral intent that will further the divide, suspicion and marginalisation of the minority community and the French State. The fact is that the right-wing parties led by Le Pen have gained enough traction to threaten Macron and, therefore, his competitive ‘right-wing’ stand have more to do with winning the next elections as opposed to concerns on dealing with extremism or personal conviction in free speech. It is this pandering, invocation and inflaming of the basest instinct of the masses that vitiates the popular emotions towards revisionism and “othering”, be it in Paris or in Islamabad. That the intrinsically liberal French sensibilities will militate culturally with the conservative moorings of a society like Pakistan is a given, yet it need not spiral to the violent extent that it has, only if the political leaderships didn’t play emotions selectively, in both countries.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal.)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### IRRATIONAL PRICING OF ANTI-COVID VACCINES

Sir — A frustrated Centre has justified the differential COVID vaccine pricing, telling the Supreme Court that the three-slab “liberalised, market-driven” rates for the Centre, States and private hospitals will incentivise demand, lead to higher production, competition and attract overseas investors.

In my view, however, the claim is without any evidence or rationale. Why is the Centre procuring the vaccines at one rate and the States have to buy the same vaccines for double the price or more? The Centre submitted in the Supreme Court that judicial intervention on the issue may have serious consequences. “Any overzealous, though well-meaning, judicial intervention may lead to unforeseen and unintended consequences in the absence of any expert advice,” the Centre told the top court, adding that in such a “grave and unprecedented” crisis, the “wisdom of the Executive should be trusted”. The Serum Institute of India, which is producing Covishield, is selling it to the Centre for ₹150 a shot. But the State Governments are paying ₹300 a shot, and private hospitals have to shell out ₹600 per vaccine. Bharat Biotech, which is also selling each shot of Covaxin to the Centre for ₹150, is charging the States ₹400 a dose while the private hospitals have to cough up ₹1,200 for each dose. With this, the Centre has not been able to justify the vaccine pricing.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### A DISTANT DREAM

Sir — This refers to the editorial, “Hope floats” (May 11). There is no doubt that the regional parties have performed well in the latest Assembly elections. At the same time, the BJP hasn’t ceded any political space to its opponents. Rather, it is the demolition of the remaining vestiges of the Congress’ ability to present itself as a viable alternative to the BJP. The BJP’s defeat in West Bengal seems spectacular because of the hype its leadership had created over its poll prospects. Minus the hype, the party’s performance is alright. Over the last five years, its vote share has climbed from 10 per cent to 38 per cent; it has replaced the Congress and the Left as

## Time gap between the shots



Amid the non-availability of slots and long queues for getting vaccinated, there exists some confusion over the duration before the second shot of Covishield. When this particular vaccine was first administered, the interval between the first and second doses was 28 days. In March, the Union Government sent revised guidelines that, based on experts’ recommendation, the gap be increased from 28-42 days to 42-56 days. All States were advised to follow the new schedule.

Surprisingly, the first-dose certificate continued mentioning that the second dose was due after 28 days; the Aarogya Setu app mentions the interval between 28-56 days and

the FAQs on the CoWin website claim the recommended interval is 28-56 days but 42-56 days’ gap gives enhanced protection, with the rider that people can opt for their choice as per their convenience. As a result of this confusion, only those in the age group of 45 and above who have waited 42 days are being allowed to take their second shot in Telangana. The others are being made to wait until 42 days but the special vaccination drive would already be over by May 12. Therefore, those who took their vaccine on or after May 1 would have to wait beyond 56 days of their having taken the injection.

The Government of India needs to address this confusion and end it before it spreads to other States and before the 18-44 age group starts getting its first dose of vaccination in right earnest. It is still a matter of conjecture as to why the Government, while accepting the experts’ advice, tampered with the minimum interval of 28 days. Instead, it could have simply increased the maximum interval to 56 days as per the experts’ suggestions.

N Nagarajan | Secunderabad

the principal Opposition party and set the political agenda for the State.

In Kerala, too, the BJP has changed the societal discourse, forcing the CPI(M) to repent its stand on women entering the Sabarimala shrine and emboldening a candidate in one constituency to declare that he did not want Muslims to vote for him. The party has also wrested Puducherry from the Congress. In this context, it would be premature to speak about the possibilities in 2024. Importantly, the third front experiments in the past have resulted in chaos and disasters. The consensus on leadership is a mirage and it instantly collides with the Congress’ ambition of being the primary Opposition force.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

### ENSURE A DECENT BURIAL AT LEAST

Sir — The ongoing pandemic has exposed to the world the extent of India’s poor sys-

tems, be it healthcare or cremation grounds. The people have already paid a heavy price for the Government’s poor preparedness to tackle the second wave. But even if the Government can’t provide a decent life to its citizens, a decent cremation is not too much to expect or ask for.

For the Government, there is no dearth of funds for wrong priorities such as building statues, the Prime Minister’s residence and a new Parliament building. But there’s no money to be seen for free universal vaccination programme. India currently holds a whopping forex of \$580 billion but its citizens are dying on the streets for want of hospital beds, oxygen or medicine.

Girish R Edathitta | Kerala

## SOUND BITE

We should not be dependent on just one or two companies. I suggest the Centre should collect the formula and give it to firms who can produce vaccines.



Delhi Chief Minister — Arvind Kejriwal

From May 17, pubs, bars and restaurants in England will be permitted to open indoors. But this does not mean we should throw caution to the wind. We must remain vigilant.



UK Prime Minister — Boris Johnson

We have all been reading about the COVID crisis in India. They have been hit with 3,00,000 new cases a day.



Hollywood star — Drew Barrymore

Our fast bowling unit is a great package where everyone works really hard while also understanding the other counterparts really well.



Indian pacer — Mohammedi Shami

This is not the time for anyone to violate the guidelines. Be it police or people, both must show some rationality in approach.



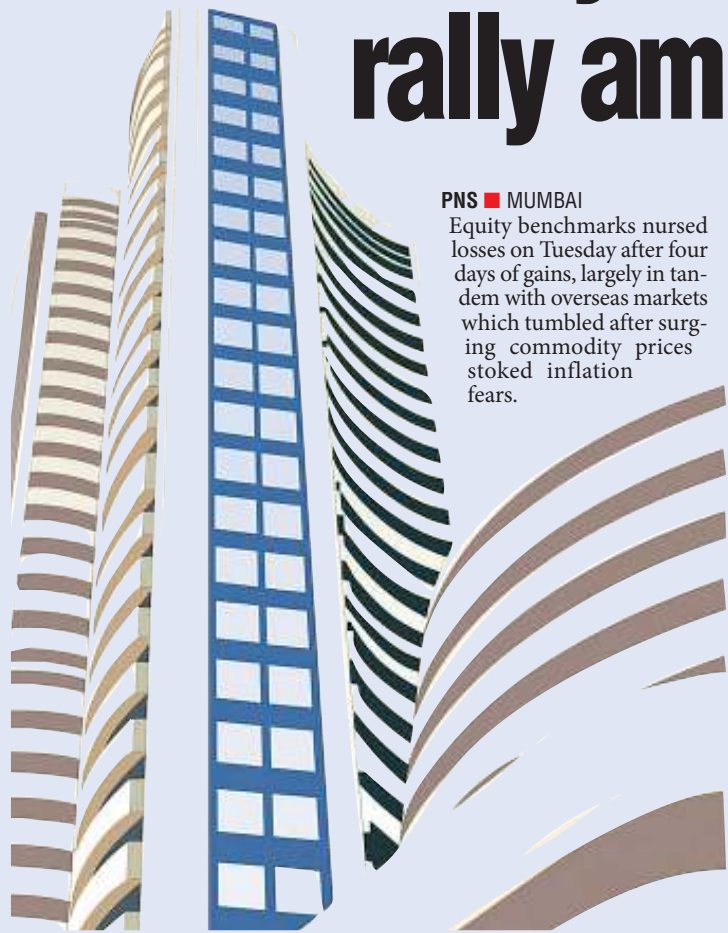
Karnataka Home Minister — Basavaraj Bommai







# Sensex, Nifty snap four-session rally amid global selloff



**PNS ■ MUMBAI**  
Equity benchmarks nursed losses on Tuesday after four days of gains, largely in tandem with overseas markets which tumbled after surging commodity prices stoked inflation fears.

Profit-booking in banking, finance and metal counters further weighed on bourses, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex opened on the backfoot and stayed in the negative territory throughout the session, ending 340.60 points or 0.69 per cent lower at 49,161.81.

Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty slumped 91.60 points or 0.61 per cent to close at 14,850.75. Kotak Bank was the top loser in the Sensex pack, shedding 3 per cent, followed by HDFC, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, Titan, Bajaj Finserv, HUL and Axis Bank. On the other hand, NTPC, ONGC, PowerGrid, Sun Pharma, UltraTech Cement and SBI were among the gainers, climbing up to 4.60 per cent.

"Rising commodity prices, like international steel price, are at a record high which has instilled a fear in the world market of rising inflation. Global markets are retreating in anticipation of future interest rates hikes, in which the technology sector will be heavily impacted as it has benefitted the most during a pandemic."

"Indian metal stocks witnessed

mild profit booking while buying interest is seen in PSE stocks," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. China inflation data also weighed on sentiments. However, domestic benchmark indices outperformed its Asian peers today, said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Sectorally, BSE metal, finance, bankex, IT and teck indices lost up to 1.07 per cent, while utilities, oil and gas, power, energy and industrials indices advanced as much as 2.74 per cent.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Tokyo and Seoul ended on a negative note, while Shanghai finished with gains. Stock exchanges in Europe were trading with significant losses in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.66 per cent lower at USD 67.87 per barrel. The rupee pared its early losses to close almost flat at 73.34 against the US dollar.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) remained net buyers in the capital markets, as they purchased shares worth Rs 583.69 crore on Monday, as per provisional data.

## Mining, construction equipment industry may grow by 20% in '21

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

ICRA on Wednesday said the mining and construction equipment industry is likely to grow by 15-20 per cent in the calendar year 2021 but stressed that the economy, in the grip of a pandemic, could throw up sudden negative surprises.

The first quarter of 2021 is estimated to have reported a strong equipment demand growth of 45-50 per cent, ICRA said in a statement.

"Following a 10-12 per cent contraction in CY2020, dragged down primarily by the 39 per cent decline in H1 CY2020, the mining and construction equipment (MCE) industry is poised to grow by 15-20 per cent in CY2021 (5-10% in FY2022)," it said.

However, the economy in the grip of a pandemic could throw up sudden negative surprises, as witnessed in April 2021, when demand was relatively subdued.

While overall equipment demand will be strong in 2021, partly due to the low base of 2020, volatility in demand is likely, with a strong first quarter, a relatively subdued second quarter in the



grip of the second wave, and the emission related pre-buy pick-up and post-buy slump in the third and fourth quarter of 2021.

While the second wave throws up challenges, particularly in the manpower-intensive construction sector, ICRA said that it expects a better prepared ecosystem, buffered by ample liquidity to limit stoppage of work, provided the lockdowns are limited to a relatively narrow window and are more localised, preventing a massive wave of reverse migration.

"Support to ICRA's equipment demand estimates originates from - the GoI (Government of India) continuing its 'Build India' momen-

tum to counter the economic slowdown and the ample liquidity in the ecosystem. Tailwinds from any pick up in state capex, compared to the pullback in FY2021, and strong construction activity picking up in other sectors like ports, metros, and airports, could aid demand.

"On the contrary, demand can be hit by the Covid second wave restricting mobility and equipment utilisation for a prolonged period, which in turn could result in an increase in delinquencies and lender pull-back and a likely equipment price increase of 5-10% for the emission norm change," Pavethra Ponniah, Vice-President and Co-Group Head, ICRA said.

## World shares skid after tech sell-off on Wall Street

**Bangkok:** Shares dropped Tuesday in Asia after selling of several Big Tech companies pulled US benchmarks lower.

Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo and Hong Kong declined while Shanghai advanced.

Despite reassurances from the Federal Reserve and a much weaker than expected US jobs reading last week, investors have refocused on

the potential for surging prices to pressure central banks into tapering off on their massive stimulus and ultra-low interest rates, analysts said.

"Investors seem to look past the jobs report and continue to place their focus on the inflation narrative with rising commodities prices and chip shortages in play,"

Jun Rong Yeap of IG said in a commentary.

Germany's DAX sank 2% to 15,101.18 while the CAC 40 in Paris gave up 1.8% to 6,272.36. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 2% to 6,980.62. US futures also augured losses, with the contract for the S&P 500 down 0.6% and that for the Dow industrials 0.4% lower.

China reported its strongest increase in producer prices since October 2017 last month, as supply constraints cascaded into manufacturing.

China's economy was the first to recover from the pandemic and the central bank, or People's Bank of China, has been adjusting policies to keep inflation in check.

The producer price index jumped 6.8% in April from a year earlier, up from a 4.4% increase in March. So far, though, the feed-through to consumer prices is relatively subdued, Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a commentary, adding that "we doubt that inflation is about to become a key driver of PBOC policy".



## J&K Bank defers meet on Rs 500 cr-capital infusion from state govt

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Jammu & Kashmir Bank (J&K Bank) has postponed its board meeting to discuss the proposal of Rs 500 crore capital infusion from the state government.

The meeting of the board of directors of the bank scheduled for Wednesday, May 12, 2021 to consider/discuss the proposal of capital infusion by the government of Jammu &

Kashmir to the tune of Rs 500 crore in the bank stands postponed, the bank said in a regulatory filing.

The bank has not given the reason behind the postponement. The new date for the said meeting shall be communicated separately, it added.

Stock of J&K Bank traded at Rs 26.10 apiece on BSE, up 2.76 per cent from previous close.

## IFFCO Kisan sells 1 lakh tonne of cattle feed worth Rs 160 cr in FY21

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Fertiliser major IFFCO's arm IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd on Tuesday said it has sold one lakh tonnes of cattle feed worth Rs 160 crore in financial year 2020-21 and is considering setting up its own plant to meet the rising demand.

IFFCO Kisan Sanchar had entered the compound cattle feed business on a pilot basis during 2019-20 financial year. It has currently partnered with third-party manufacturers.

The FY21 was its first full year of operation for the cattle feed business. IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd said in a statement that it sold 1 lakh tonnes of cattle feed valued at Rs 160 crore during fiscal 2020-21.

The cattle feed business now contributes about 30 per cent of its total business, the company added. New Delhi-based



IFFCO Kisan is now looking at widening its tie-up with third-party manufacturers and is also considering setting up its own feed manufacturing facilities.

IFFCO Kisan Sanchar National Sales Head Ganesh Dash said, "We already have tie-ups with seven cattle feed manufacturers. As the customers have put in lots of faith in our products, we are now looking to tie up with five more manufacturers."

He said the company is also contemplating setting up its

own manufacturing plant or take plants on lease for meeting the rising demand for cattle feed.

"IFFCO Kisan cattle feed is getting a tremendous response from customers because our entire focus is on quality."

"Our cattle feed is manufactured from the best of the raw materials using the highest standards of manufacturing and as per the guidelines given by the Bureau of Indian Standards," Dash added.

The raw material is sourced directly from the farms.

"Our cattle feed maintains the right amount of urea composition. As per the standards, the urea composition in cattle feed should not be more than 1 per cent," Dash said. He added that high urea feed available in the market increases milk productivity.

## Piaggio adds 100 dealerships pan-India in commercial, PV biz in 100 days

**PNS ■ MUMBAI**

Piaggio Vehicles on Tuesday said it has added 100 dealerships in both its commercial and passenger vehicle businesses across India in 100 days despite challenging times.

The company also said its two-wheeler business grew over 90 per cent in the first quarter of 2021 and has seen growth in market share in the commercial vehicle and two wheeler spaces, helped by an expanded network.

Piaggio Vehicles is Italian



auto major Piaggio's wholly-owned domestic subsidiary.

Besides having the largest network in the three-wheelers space, Piaggio has a strong presence in the two-wheeler segment as well.

The addition of 100 dealer-

ships takes the dealer network to over 725 dealerships and 1,100 touch points across the country, Piaggio Vehicles (PVPL) said in a release.

The company said it has increased its reach in the three-wheeler and two-wheeler business and expanded further in the commercial vehicle space by opening up electric experience; and the aim is to increase the presence further to various parts of the country.

The addition of 100 dealerships is part of this strategy, it said.

## HCL to provide 21 oxygen plants to Delhi

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Tech firm HCL on Tuesday said it is supporting the Delhi government with 12,000 oxygen cylinders and 21 oxygen plants.

In a statement, HCL said each cylinder has a capacity of 40 litres oxygen whereas 21 oxygen plants will generate 8,800 litres of oxygen per minute.

## Public procurement of goods touches Rs 6,894 cr on GeM

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

Public procurement of goods and services touched Rs 6,894 crore on government buying portal GeM in April alone on account of steps taken by the platform such as rapid onboarding of buyers and sellers across India and development of custom features for large players, a senior official said on Tuesday.

The Government e-Market (GeM) portal was launched on August 9, 2016, for online purchases of goods and services by all the central govern-

ment ministries and departments.

"The total gross merchandise value of the orders placed on GeM platform in April was Rs 6,894 crore," Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of GeM Prashant Kumar Singh told PTI.

Singh said this value exceeds the value of procurement done over the platform in June quarter and September quarter of the previous financial year, and is a milestone in GeM's journey as the national public procurement platform for India.

## India contracts for 56 lakh tonne sugar export: AISTA

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

India has contracted to export 56 lakh tonne sugar so far in the ongoing 2020-21 marketing season, and is expected to conclude deals for shipment of the rest 4,00,000 tonne soon, trade body AISTA said on Tuesday.

The government has fixed a mandatory export target of 60 lakh tonne surplus sugar for ongoing the 2020-21 season (October-September). This export policy was, however, approved only in January.

During the 2019-20 season, India -- the world's second

largest sugar producing nation after Brazil -- had shipped 59 lakh tonne of the sweetener.

Releasing latest data, All India Sugar Trade Association (AISTA) said out of 56 lakh tonne export contracts undertaken, 34.78 lakh tonne of the sweetener has been already shipped to top 12 countries till May 6 of this season.

About 35 per cent of the total export quantity has been shipped to Indonesia (12.17 lakh tonne) so far this season, followed by Afghanistan (4.33 lakh tonne) and the UAE (3.66 lakh tonne) in the said period.

## China warns of substantial damage to relations if Bangla joins Quad alliance

**PNS ■ DHAKA**

China has warned Bangladesh against joining the US-led Quad alliance, saying that Dhaka's participation in the anti-Beijing "club" would result in "substantial damage" to bilateral relations.

The unusual warning from Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming came weeks after visiting Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe emphasised to Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid that Beijing and Dhaka

should make joint efforts against powers from outside the region establishing a "military alliance" in South Asia and practising "hegemonism".

"Obviously it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four (Quad) because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship," Ambassador Li said at a virtual meeting organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh on Monday.

Reacting to the Chinese envoy's controversial remarks,

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said Dhaka maintains a non-aligned and balanced foreign policy and it will decide what to do according to those principles.

"We're an independent and sovereign state. We decide our foreign policy. But yes, any country can uphold its position," he told reporters on Tuesday.

"Naturally, he (Chinese ambassador) represents a country. They can say what they want. Maybe they don't

want it (Bangladesh joining the Quad)," Momen said, adding that no one from the Quad has approached Bangladesh yet.

The comment has been preemptive, the United News of Bangladesh (UNB) news agency reported, quoting said the foreign minister as saying.

Initiated in 2007, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, Quad for short, is an informal grouping of India, the US, Australia and Japan.

Quad is a "small group of elites" working against China, Ambassador Li said.

## Rupee pares losses to close flat at 73.34 against US dollar



The rupee pared its early losses to close almost flat at 73.34 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday amid a lacklustre trend in the domestic equity markets. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened lower at 73.47 against the greenback and declined to the day's low of 73.53. The rupee later cut losses and finally ended at 73.34, registering a rise of 1 paise over its previous close of 73.35 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.07 per cent to 90.14. On the domestic equity market front, the BSE Sensex ended 340.60 points or 0.69 per cent lower at 49,161.81, while the broader NSE Nifty declined 91.60 points or 0.61 per cent to 14,850.75. Forex traders said concerns over rising COVID-19 cases weighed on investors' sentiment.

## Crude oil futures dip on weak spot demand



Crude oil prices on Tuesday fell Rs 62 to Rs 4,716 per barrel after the participants reduced their positions. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude oil for the May delivery dropped by Rs 62, or 1.3 per cent, to Rs 4,716 per barrel with a business volume of 5,977 lots. Analysts said the fall in crude oil futures was mostly due to trimming of positions by traders amid weak spot demand. Globally, West Texas Intermediate crude oil was trading 1.12 per cent lower at USD 64.19 per barrel. Meanwhile, Brent crude, the international benchmark, fell 1.07 per cent to trade at USD 67.59 per barrel in New York.







# AMIT KUMAR: DIDN'T ENJOY INDIAN IDOL 12 KISHORE KUMAR SPECIAL



In last week's episode of Sony TV's singing reality show, *Indian Idol 12*, the contestants and the judges paid tribute to the legendary singer and actor Kishore Kumar. They sang 100 songs of the singer over the two episodes, and the makers also invited his son and singer-composer Amit Kumar as a special guest. However, the viewers got upset with the quality of the episode. Many complained that the contestants and the judges of the show, Neha Kakkar, Himesh Reshammiya, and Anu Malik, ruined Kishore Kumar's songs.

The son of the legendary singer Amit Kumar agreed with the netizens and said he also wanted to stop the episodes midway. Like the viewers, he too didn't enjoy how the creators of the show decided to pay tribute to his father.

In a recent interview with an English daily, Kumar was asked about his views about the episode and he replied, "Frankly, I wanted to stop the episode," adding that he was asked to praise every contestant irrespective of how they performed. "I did what I was told. I was told *sabko praise kamana hai*. I was told *jo jaisa bhi gaaye usko uplift karna hai* because it's a tribute to Kishore *da*."

I thought it will be a homage to my father. But once there, I just followed what I was asked to do. I had told them to give me portions of the script in advance, but nothing of that sort happened," Kumar said.

On Monday, a Twitter user shared he felt Anu Malik and Neha Kakkar sang Kishore Kumar's awfully. He tweeted, "#IndianIdol2021 #indian-idol #SonyLiv please spare

Kishore Kumar's songs.. this is a worst singing I've ever witnessed of Kishore's songs.. all my favorite songs are screwed by @iAmNehaKakkar @The\_AnuMalik and all participants." Another user wrote, "Neha Kakkar do whatever you want to do with your songs, please don't even think to spoil Kishore Kumar Sir's songs #IndianIdol#100SongsOfKishoreKumar."

When asked about Kakkar and Reshammiya's poor singing, Amit Kumar responded by saying, "I didn't enjoy the episode at all."

Hosted by singer-actor Aditya Narayan, *Indian Idol 12* is being shot in Daman since shooting is not permitted in Mumbai.

Besides Kakkar and Reshammiya, Vishal Dadlani judges the show but has been replaced by Malik until the team returns to Mumbai.

Malayalam screenwriter-actor Madampu Kunjukuttan passed away on Tuesday. He was 81. The acclaimed writer was taken to a private hospital in Thrissur after he developed high fever. He was later diagnosed with the coronavirus.

A native of Thrissur, Madampu Kunjukuttan was a multi-talented person. He had studied Hasthyayurvedam (treatment of elephants), taught Sanskrit at school, and even worked as a priest at a temple. He also worked at Akashvani (All India Radio) and television channels. He entered the film industry as a screenwriter with *Ashwadhnam* in the year 1979. In 2000, he bagged the prestigious National Award for best screenplay for *Karunam*, which was directed by Jayaraj.

His film, *Parinamam* had won the award for the best screenplay at the Ashdod international film festival in Israel in 2003. Some of his other noted works as a screenwriter include *Makalkku*, *Gourisankaram*, *Saphalam* and *Deshadanam*. Besides



## Screenwriter-actor Madampu Kunjukuttan dies of Covid-19

writing, he has also acted in a slew of movies, including Mohanlal's *Aaram Thampuram*, director Shyamaprasad's *Agnisakshi* and Jayara's *Shantham*. He is survived by his two daughters Jaseena Madampu and Haseena Madampu.

The Malayalam film celebrities have conformed the demise of Madampu Kunjukuttan.

Actor Prithviraj said that his social media timeline has started to look like an obituary column. "RIP! Folded hands

#MadambuKunjukuttan Sir. PS: Social media timelines are beginning to look like obituary columns. Prayers for the departed and their families..and hope that times change for the better soon (sic)," Prithviraj wrote on his Twitter page.

Madampu Kunjukuttan's demise comes at a time when the Malayalam film industry is still mourning the death of iconic screenwriter-director Dennis Joseph. The filmmaker passed away last night following a heart attack.

## NBC won't air Golden Globe Awards amid outcry

Amid growing pressure on the Hollywood Foreign Press Association from studios, stars and large swaths of the film industry, NBC said Monday that will not air the Golden Globes in 2022, putting in doubt the viability of one of Hollywood's oldest and most-watched award shows.

Criticism of the HFPA, which puts on the Globes and has been denounced for a lack of diversity and for ethical improprieties, reached such a pitch Monday that Tom Cruise returned his three Globes to the press association's headquarters, according to a person who was granted anonymity because

they weren't authorized to speak publicly about the decision.

In a statement, NBC said it believes the Hollywood Foreign Press Association — which is facing possible boycotts over the inclusiveness of its membership from Netflix, Warner Bros. and many Hollywood actors — is committed to reform. But change can't come quickly enough for next year's Globes.

"However, change of this magnitude takes time and work, and we feel strongly that the HFPA needs time to do it right," the network said. "As such, NBC will not air the 2022 Golden Globes. Assuming the organization executes on its



recounted the organisation's questionable record on diversity — including, presently, no Black members among its roughly 90 voting members.

The press association has pledged to thoroughly reform, and last week approved a plan to, among other things, diversity its membership. But that hasn't stopped several studios from threatening to pull out of the Globes.

Last week, Netflix and Amazon Studios both said they would cut ties with the HFPA if it didn't swiftly enact more drastic changes.

The outcry against the Hollywood Foreign Press Association has gathered force over the last six weeks, as a film industry where racial and gender inequity long went unchecked has grown newly intolerant of the ways of the group, made up of mostly little-known journalists who profit considerably from the annual telecast.

plan, we are hopeful we will be in a position to air the show in January 2023."

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, long a subject of ridicule from even its own telecast hosts, has come under fire following an investigative report in February by The Los Angeles Times that

## Solos trailer: Exploring how humans connect strangely

Though we all feel alone in different ways, in feeling alone, we are somehow all together." When Academy Award-winning actor Morgan Freeman utters these words in the trailer of *Solos*, you get goosebumps. That's not just because they are coming from the thespian, but because deep down, we know we are still connected, despite the isolation and quarantine that the pandemic has forced on us.

In the season of anthologies, Amazon Prime Video released the trailer of its upcoming seven-part original series titled *Solos*, created by David Weil. The anthology explores things that make us human, and our strange, beautiful, heart-breaking and sometimes hilarious emotional journey.

The trailer has been voiced by Morgan Freeman where he explains in a voiceover, "A memory isn't simply a thing you have. It's a promise." The video cuts between shots of its ensemble cast, giving a

glimpse into each of their happy-stories.

*Solos* intends to highlight how even in our most isolated moments, we are connected through human experience.




*Solos* is loaded with a stellar star cast comprising of award-winning actors like Anne Hathaway, Helen Mirren, Uzo Aduba, Nicole Beharie, Anthony Mackie, Dan Stevens, and Constance Wu. While






Weil makes his directorial debut, helping three episodes, Sam Taylor-Johnson has directed and executive produced two episodes. Zach Braff and Tiffany and the remaining directors.

Talking about *Solos*, Weil said in a statement, "I am beyond thrilled to be bringing *Solos* to life alongside this group of artists who I so deeply admire. I created this piece with a desire to capture stories about connection, hope, and the search for that common hum of humanity that binds us all. I'm immensely grateful to Jennifer Salke and my incredible partners at Amazon for their unwavering support and collaboration on this special project."




ARCHIE




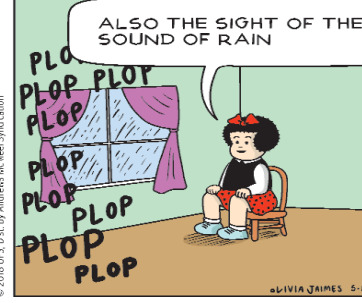

CALVIN AND HOBBS






GARFIELD




NANCY




GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

JUNIOR CROSSWORD 849

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ACROSS

1 The lightest gas  
6 Bang this in with a hammer  
7 Cleaned with water  
9 Egg centres  
11 Very unkind  
12 Leaves out  
13 The first letter in the Greek alphabet  
16 A male relation  
18 A hired car  
19 A famous French emperor

DOWN

2 Bore a hole with this tool  
3 Robe  
4 A hole in your nose  
5 Tell a fib  
8 A type of spotted dog  
10 Cook in this room  
14 Tranquility  
15 Exchange  
17 Finish

SOLUTION

P	A	U	W
B	L	A	K
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N	E	A	R
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S	O	G	E

SUDOKU

Yesterday's solution

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

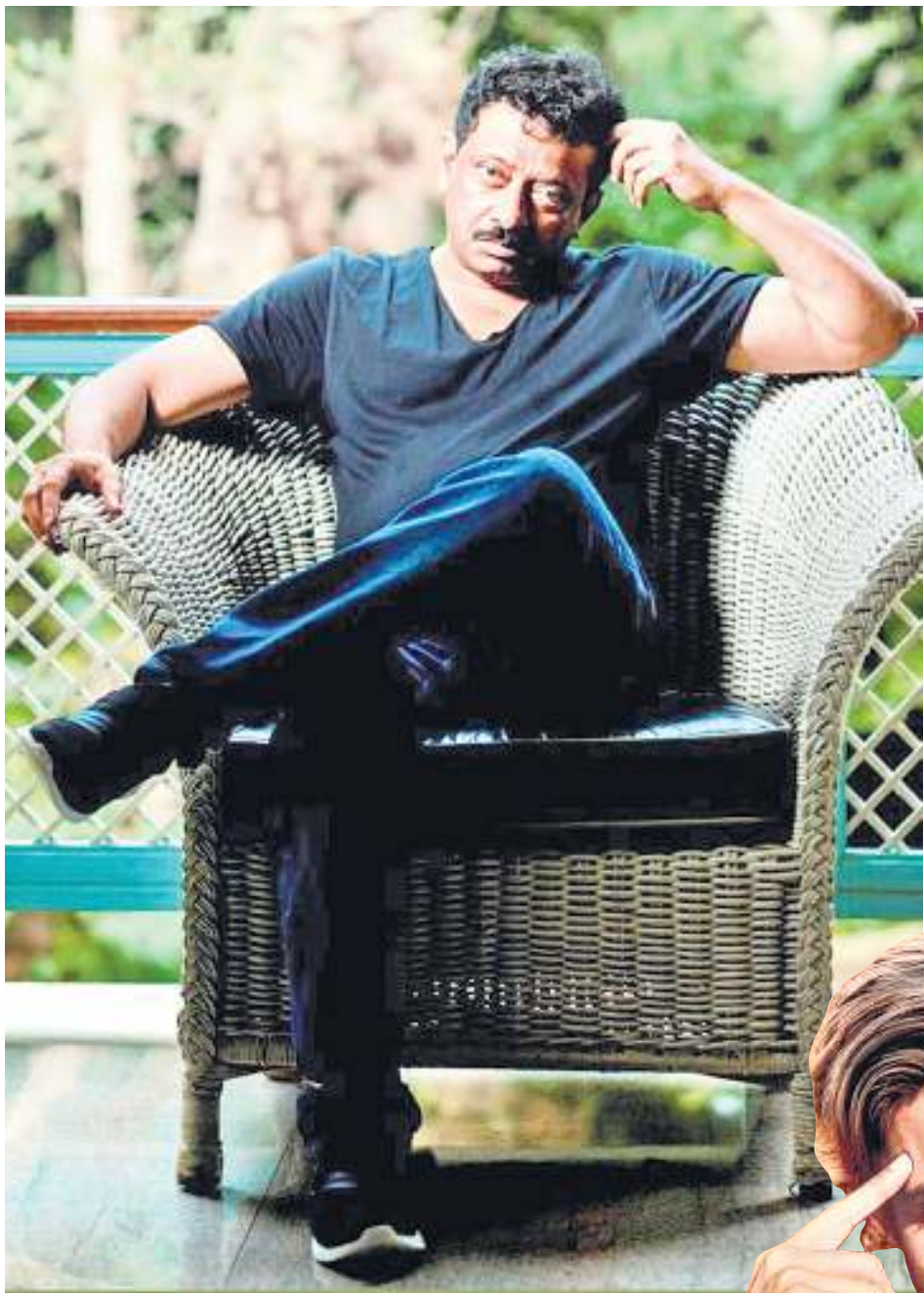
Rules

• 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.



# RAM GOPAL VARMA eyeing ‘Spark’ revolution

The advent of OTTs on digital media opened up a new mode of entertainment for movie lovers. With almost all the OTTs offering entertainment at affordable prices, people decided to prefer watching on OTTs than go to theatres. The coronavirus pandemic increased OTT subscribers as filmmakers started releasing their films on digital media with theatrical releases stalled.



# SARKAARU VAARI PAATA FORCED TO CANCEL CELEBRATIONS

Fans have been eagerly awaiting Super Star Mahesh Babu's upcoming entertainer *Sarkaru Vaari Paata* directed by Parasuram that has become the talk of the town. Fans have been expecting a grand treat from the makers on Super Star Krishna's birthday on May 31. A couple of days back, reports came in that the makers are planning to release the teaser to delight everyone.

But now news has come out that the makers decided not to release the teaser owing to the grim situation in the country, due to the second wave of Covid. According to an insider, the makers will now release a new poster of Mahesh Babu and also the making of the film's video to assuage fans' feelings.

Mahesh Babu plays the role of a bank manager in the film

and he will be seen unearthing one of the biggest banking scams in the country. Actress Keerthy Suresh will be seen playing the role of Mahesh Babu's subordinate in the film. Apart from *Sarkaru Vaari Paata*, Mahesh is also starring in the direction of Trivikram Srinivas and the film is tentatively titled *Parthu*. Mahesh also has a crazy project under the direction of S.S Rajamouli. Mahesh is on the successful run with hits like *Bharat Ane Nenu*, *Maharshi* and *Sari Leru* Neekevvaru at the box office.



# SONU SOOD BRINGS IN oxygen plant from France

Actor-turned-philanthropist Sonu Sood has been giving in oxygen cylinders and oxygen concentrators to varied hospitals and organisations to help save people amidst the ongoing pandemic. Now, Sonu is bringing oxygen plants from France and other nations for installing at varied places in India. The *Dhookudu* actor is trying to prepare the country for the third wave of the pandemic. Sonu Sood plans to install at least four of the oxygen plants he is bringing in for the people in the worst-hit Covid-19 states of India. "We are bringing in oxygen plants for the people in need. We have

seen a lot of people suffering because of the unavailability of oxygen cylinders. We have got it now, and are already giving it to people. However, these oxygen plants will not only supply to entire hospitals but will also get these oxygen cylinders filled up, which will solve a major problem of the people suffering from Covid-19," he adds. Sonu Sood informs that the first plant has already been ordered and it will be arriving in 10 – 12 days from France. The *Julayi* actor further adds, "Time is the biggest challenge for us at the moment and we are working our best to make sure everything comes in time and we don't lose more lives".

# tollywood



# Sridevi Soda Center celebrates Sudheer Babu's birthday

Sudheer Babu, talent actor, former sportsman and brother-in-law of Mahesh Babu tasted his first success at the box office with *Prema Katha Chitram*. He went on to entertain movie lovers with films like *Sammohanam*, *V*, and

even made his Bollywood debut locking horns with Tiger Shroff in *Baaghi*. The actor recently celebrated his birthday and on its eve, the makers of his upcoming entertainer *Sridevi Soda Center* released a special video that gives us a glimpse of what the actor's role would look like, in the film. In the video, Sudheer Babu surprised

fans with his well-toned and chiselled body. It at once went viral on social media. Sudheer plays the role of Lighting Sooribabu and in the film, he decks events and celebrations in nearby villages. Karuna Kumar of *Palasa 1978* fame is directing the film for which Manisharma is the music director. Vijay Chilla and Shashi

Devireddy are producing the film on 70mm Entertainments banner. Sudheer Babu is also starring in his dream project, a biopic on badminton player Pullela Gopichand and *Aa Ammayi Gurinchi Cheppali* along with Kriti Shetty under the direction of Indraganti Mohana Krishna. Looks like the actor has his hands full this year.

# Akhil enters Bangarraju?

Nagarjuna's forgotten project *Bangarraju* is once again making noise during the last couple of days. It is known that *Bangarraju* is the planned prequel of his hit film *Soggade Chinna Naayana* directed by Kalyan Krishna. Right after the success of the film, Kalyan Krishna announced prequel to for the film and Nagarjuna also is said to have shown great interest. But when Nagarjuna went on to star in other films and most recently in *Wild Dog*, many felt that the project has been called off because Nagarjuna didn't like the story. But a few days back, rumours began spreading that Kalyan

Krishna contacted Bollywood beauty Sonakshi Sinha to be cast opposite Nagarjuna and she showed seemed to have liked the idea. Now another rumour too has been doing the rounds that Nagarjuna's son Akhil will be seen as *Bangarraju*'s grandson in the film. The first half of the film will be all about *Bangarraju* and after the interval, Naga Chaitanya will be introduced as his son. It shows how Ramyakrishna pampers her son Naga Chaitanya and later in the climax Akhil will appear as *Bangarraju*'s grandson in an inconsequential role. One has to wait for an official confirmation but Akkineni fans are thrilled about the very idea.





# Dhawan likely to lead in Lanka

## First-choice Iyer's injury open door for Shikhar to captain India

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Veteran opener Shikhar Dhawan and flamboyant allrounder-turned specialist batsman Hardik Pandya will be locked in a two-way fight for India captaincy if Shreyas Iyer doesn't get fit in time for the white-ball tour of Sri Lanka in July.

India's limited overs specialists will be playing three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs in the island nation during the second half of July, when big guns like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be in England for a marquee five-match Test series.

"It is still not clear if Shreyas will recover fully and will be match-fit in time for tour of Sri Lanka. Normally, a surgery of this scale along with rest, extensive rehab and training to get back in shape takes around four months," a senior BCCI source privy to selection matters said.

"In case Shreyas was available, he would have been the automatic choice for captaincy."

It's only logical that the two contenders for captaincy are 35-year-old Dhawan, who has had good "one and half IPLs" in last two seasons and Pandya junior, who is one of the most accomplished match-winners.

"Shikhar has had two very good IPL including this curtailed one and being the senior



most among those who are available for selection, he is a very strong contender. Also he has been a solid performer for India for past eight years," an

official said. As far as Hardik is concerned, his reputation as a white-ball match-winner can't be discounted either.

"Yes, Hardik hasn't been regularly bowling for MI or India in recent times. However, he is the man with x-factor and among options available. He is

INDIA'S LIMITED  
OVERS SPECIALISTS  
WILL BE PLAYING  
THREE T20  
INTERNATIONALS  
AND AS MANY ODIs  
IN THE ISLAND  
NATION DURING  
THE SECOND  
HALF OF JULY

miles ahead of his peers in terms of being an impact performer. And who knows, may be extra responsibility brings the best out of him."

Pandya was included in the four-Test series at home against England so that his bowling workload is increased keeping the England tour in mind but it is learnt that the Baroda man is unlikely to bowl more than an odd over or two in the shortest format or ODI in near future.

"Hardik, after his back surgery to cure stress fracture, is not the same bowler anymore. He was a fast medium bowler before injury but to bowl at a brisk 135 kmph plus pace consistently, it could impact his back.

"So he is focussing more on

his match finishing skills," a person in the know of things said.

### MATCHES IN COLOMBO

Colombo's R Premadasa Stadium will host all the matches in India's upcoming limited overs series against Sri Lanka.

"We plan to host the entire series at one venue. As of now, it has been decided that the Premadasa Stadium will host the fixtures. Obviously, it depends on how the situation is around that time," Arjuna de Silva, Sri Lanka Cricket's (SLC) Administrative Committee chairman, told *Sportstar* on Monday.

"With the Covid situation fluid, we cannot allow fans yet, so all the matches will be closed-door affairs," De Silva said.

India are reportedly set to arrive in Sri Lanka for the series on July 5 and, after the team completes its week-long quarantine, will play the ODI series starting on July 13. The T20I series will begin on July 22.

"As of now, we will stick to the protocol where the players will have to undergo hard quarantine for the first three days and in the next four days, they will be allowed to train. However, if there are any revised guidelines by the Health Ministry around that time, we will have to follow that," he added.

# India missed trick by not picking wrist spinner: Kaneria

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria reckons India has missed a trick by not picking a wrist spinner for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand as young Rahul Chahar would have added another dimension to their attack.

Last week, India announced the squad for next month's World Test Championship final against New Zealand, to be held from June 18 in Southampton, and a five-match series against England from August 4.

"India has selected quite a strong team. Overall, their squad of is good. But the thing to note is that they have not selected a wrist spinner," Kaneria said from Karachi.

"They have finger spinners — Ashwin, Washington Sundar, Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja — but they don't have a wrist spinner, a right arm leg spinner," the leg spinner added.

Kaneria, who represented English county side Essex, said that the conditions in England is conducive for leg break bowlers.

"When you play in England, and I have a lot of experience playing there — eight years of county cricket in different conditions — there is moisture.

"When the season starts the county matches are going on and after that the sun comes out and the wicket gets baked and the moisture stays."

"Where there are seam conditions, a leg spinner is very useful and that's why I had a successful tenure when I played county cricket. So, it is a little concerning that there is no leg spinner in the team.

"Finger spinners can contain but having finger spinner and a wrist spinner can make an impact on the team," he added.

The 40-year-old, feels Chahar could have been a useful addition in the Indian team.

"Rahul Chahar, his height, the way he delivers the ball, he should have been in the team. New Zealand has Ish Sodhi, a tall leg spinner and Virat Kohli always struggles against a leg spinner as we saw it with (Adam) Zampa.

"So, I feel if there is place open for a leg spinner than Chahar, who has played for Mumbai Indians and India and has performed well, has googly, flipper and leg spin, could have been useful."

India head to the UK on the back of series victories against Australia and India but Kaneria cautioned that New Zealand are also a formidable side that has a strong bowling line up.

"Indian is playing good cricket, they have won series in Australia and then against England but NZ will not be an easy opponent as they are very tough in this type of condition where the ball seams. They have a very strong bowling line up.

"India's batting needs to deliver like Rishabh Pant did well in Australia but Ajinkya Rahane and Cheteshwar Pujara couldn't score many runs that is as cause of concern.

"You win Test cricket because of bowlers, once you have five top bowlers in your rank who can take 20 wickets there is a change of winning a Test match."



# Some Indian players didn't like restrictions: Pamment

PTI ■ AUCKLAND

Mumbai Indians fielding coach James Pamment has claimed that some senior Indian players did not like being subjected to restrictions inside the currently-suspended IPL's bio-bubble but it felt completely safe till the time cases from participating teams hadn't come to light.

Pamment did not elaborate on his assertion about the Indian players and did not take any names either.

"Some of the senior Indian guys don't like being restricted and told what to do," he was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

"But we did feel safe — at no point did we feel the bubble would be compromised... We felt the travel was always going to be a challenge."

The New Zealanders, said he and the MI players started to feel apprehensive shortly before the competition was halted.

"It was when cases started to come with the teams. They were a little more fearful, a little more apprehensive," said the 52-year-old, who returned home on Saturday.

"Chennai (CSK)

announced their cases and we'd played Chennai at the weekend, so straight away, the dynamic changed. I certainly noticed from within my group. I'd spend most of my time with the Kiwis and the Aussies, their mindset had changed.

"We started to get Indian guys in our environment whose families were sick. There were bereavements as well and we were taking a bit of a cue from those guys who were saying 'no, we want to carry on' and the messages were coming back that this is a good distraction."

Pamment said at no stage did he feel his health was going to be put in jeopardy within the bubble set up by MI at a Mumbai hotel.

He said long before the suspension of IPL, he was aware of the pandemic getting worse in India and the event should not have been spread across six venues.

"If it (IPL) had been held solely in Mumbai, perhaps it'd have been easily managed."



# India covered all bases for WTC final: Parthiv

PIANS ■ NEW DELHI

India have all the bases covered for the World Test Championship (WTC) final against New Zealand, said former wicketkeeper Parthiv Patel. Parthiv said that the fact that a batsman like KL Rahul is not finding a place in the squad shows how strong the batting lineup is.

"If we talk about batsmen — Rohit Sharma, Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Rishabh Pant — there's a proper band of proper bats-



men who can bat well in England. Everyone scored runs, and there is a spare batsman in KL Rahul. Imagine KL Rahul not finding a space in the Test squad, so how strong this squad could be," Patel told *Star Sports*.

The former Indian stumper from Gujarat said that India have a strong base of fast bowlers and spinners to pick from.

"You talk about fast bowlers, we've got (Jasprit) Bumrah, Ishant (Sharma), (Mohammad) Shami and if

either of them is not fit then there's Mohammad Siraj and Umesh Yadav. There's enough depth in the squad," he said.

"Then there is Axar Patel, who was probably been the man of the match in a lot of matches against England. He came in place of Ravindra Jadeja and it felt like Jadeja will be out. Now Ravindra Jadeja and (Ravichandran) Ashwin will be back, so I think this squad looks really strong," said Patel.

# Eng players to skip remainder of IPL: ECB

PTI ■ LONDON

England have a busy international schedule from June onwards and the players are unlikely to be available for the remainder of the suspended IPL if the T20 tournament is rescheduled this year, says ECB Director of Cricket Ashley Giles.

The IPL was suspended last week after multiple COVID-19 cases inside its bio-bubble. There are two windows for the T20 event to be resumed this year — one is in the second half of September and before the T20 World Cup (October-November) and the other is



after mid-November.

But England's top players will be in action at both times. They have tours to Bangladesh and Pakistan in

September and October, while they will compete with Australia at the Ashes right after the T20 World Cup.

"We're planning on

involvement of England players in England matches. We've got a full FTP schedule. So if those tours to Pakistan and Bangladesh are going ahead, I'd expect the players to be there," Giles said as quoted by *ESPNcricinfo*.

There were 11 Englishman in various franchises in the suspended IPL.

"None of us knows what a rearranged IPL looks like at the moment, where it's going to be or when. But from when we start this summer against New Zealand, our programme is incredibly busy," Giles said.

"We've got a lot of important, high-profile

cricket including the T20 World Cup and the Ashes. And we're going to have to look after our players."

Giles dismissed suggestion that this signals a change in approach from the ECB as the management had earlier allowed up to a dozen players to miss the Test series against New Zealand at the start of June due to their involvement in the IPL.

"The New Zealand scenario was very different. Those Test matches were formalised at the end of January, by which time all those contracts and NOCs (no objection certificates) were signed for full involvement in the IPL."

# 'Windies may never return to dominate world cricket'

PTI ■ KINGSTON

Pace legend Curly Ambrose believes the current lot of Caribbean youngsters doesn't really understand what cricket means to the West Indies and so the two-time world champions will never be able to relive the glory days again.

West Indies had lifted first two World Cup titles in 1975 and 1979 and it took 33 years for the team to claim another ICC title when Darren Sammy had guided them to the 2012 T20 World Cup crown and repeated the feat four years later.

"Most of the youngsters we have now probably don't quite understand what cricket means to West Indians in the West Indies and abroad because cricket is the only sport that really unites Caribbean people," Ambrose told *Talk Sports Live*.

"This is no disrespect to the players we have now because we have a couple of guys who have some quality in them and can become great, but what we



have to understand is that I don't think we will ever see those great, exceptional glory days again."

The 57-year-old, who claimed 405 wickets in 98 Tests between 1988 and 2000, said it is difficult to find talented cricketers from the island nation nowadays.

"It's going to be difficult to find another Viv Richards or a

(Demond) Haynes and (Gordon) Greenidge, a Brian Lara, Richie Richardson, you know, a Malcolm Marshall, Curtly Ambrose, Courtney Walsh, Michael Holding, Andy Roberts, and the list goes on and on, Clive Lloyd," Ambrose said.

"It's going to be extremely difficult to find those quality players again."

Ambrose said West Indies team can improve their ICC rankings but won't be able to dominate the way it did in the 80s and 90s.

"When we were the best team in the world, West Indians all over the globe could walk and boast about how good we were because we were the best, so it's going to be difficult to see those glory days again," he said.

"Yes, we can be competitive and climb up the ICC rankings and be a force to be reckon with again, but those glory days, I don't think we will see them again."

# Nadal casts doubts over Olympics participation



Rome: Two-time Olympic champion Rafael Nadal on Tuesday became the latest top tennis player to admit that he had not yet decided whether he would participate in the Tokyo Games this summer, still giving himself time to decide according to "circumstances."

The 34-year-old Spaniard won Gold in the singles in Beijing in 2008, adding another Gold in the doubles with Marc Lopez in Rio de Janeiro five years ago.

"In a normal world I would never consider missing the Olympics. There is no doubt about that," he said. "Everybody knows how important the Olympics are for me.

"Under these circumstances, I don't know. Let's see what's going on in the next couple of months. But I need to organise my schedule."

Nadal is the latest top tennis star to voice his concerns about the Tokyo Games. On Monday, Serena Williams said she was undecided about going to the Olympics. AFP

# Indian shooters leave for training-cum-competition tour of Croatia

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Olympic-bound Indian shooting team on Tuesday left for Croatia for a two and a half months training-cum-competition tour, its final tune-up to the upcoming Tokyo Games.

With coaches and support staff in tow, a 13-member Indian shooting team took off for Croatian capital Zagreb, where it will undergo a training camp before leaving for Osijek to take part in the European Championships (May 20 to June 6) followed by the combined ISSF World Cup (June 22 to July 3).

"Team India takes off in 20 mins. Bon Voyage, Get the nose to the ground and work hard for your inevitable success team," Raninder Singh, president of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) tweeted just before the team's departure.

The two Olympics bound skeet shooters Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Mairaj Ahmad Khan will be based in Italy.

The Indians, including Gurjoat Singh Khangura, took part in the ongoing shotgun World Cup in Lonato, where they could not make

the final of the men's skeet event on Monday.

The team left in a chartered flight arranged by the NRAI.

After the stint in Croatia, the team will directly leave for Tokyo to participate in the Olympics, beginning on July 23.

The ISSF World Cup in Osijek is being organised in place of the earlier scheduled in Baku, Azerbaijan (from June 21 to July 2), which got cancelled due to a surge in Covid-19 cases in that country.

There will be nine coaches for the 13 rifle and pistol shooters but some coaches like Samareesh Jung, Jaspal Rana and Ronak Pandit could not travel with the team for various reasons.

Foreign rifle coach Oleg Mikhailov was also a part of the travelling contingent but longtime pistol coach Pavel Smirnov could not leave on Tuesday as he did not get his visa. He is likely to join the team next week.

As per the standard Covid-19 protocols in Croatia, the Indian contingent will serve a mandatory quarantine before starting the training.

## ► shortpasses

### MENDY SUFFERS TIBIA INJURY

MADRID: Real Madrid's hopes of clinching the La Liga title have been hit by another injury after the club confirmed that defender Ferland Mendy has a problem in his tibia.

### VERRATI OUT FOR UP TO 6 WEEKS

PARIS: PSG midfielder Marco Verratti will miss the rest of the season because of a right knee injury. The Italian will be sidelined for four-to-six weeks, possibly forcing him to also miss the European Championship.

### BUFFON TO QUIT JUVE

TURIN: Gianluigi Buffon said on Tuesday that he will bring the curtain down on his time at Juventus after nearly two decades at the end of the season, but will look to prolong his trophy-filled career elsewhere at the age of 43.

### INIESTA EXTENDS KOBE STAY

TOKYO: Andres Iniesta celebrated his 37th birthday on Tuesday by signing a contract extension that will keep him at J-League side Vissel Kobe for two more years.

### LÖW SET TO RECALL MÜLLER

BERLIN: Germany coach Joachim Löw has reportedly contacted Thomas Müller and is poised to reverse the forward's 2019 exile by naming him in his Euro 2020 squad.

### BAUMGART TO COACH COLOGNE

COLOGNE: Relegation-threatened Bundesliga club Cologne on Tuesday named Steffen Baumgart from second-tier side Paderborn as head coach for next season — whether or not his new club remains in Germany's top flight.

### IBRA TO MISS AT LEAST 2 GAMES

MILAN: Zlatan Ibrahimovic will be out for at least two matches with a knee injury, just a month before the start of Euro 2020. AC Milan coach Stefano Pioli said on Tuesday.

### GUYANA RETAIN POORAN, HETMYER

ST KITTS: Nicholas Pooran, Shimron Hetmyer and Brandon King will be back in action for Guyana Amazon Warriors in the 2021 CPL after the franchise announced that it had retained 11 players from the last edition.

### HUSSEY TESTS +VE AGAIN

CHENNAI: CSK batting coach Michael Hussey has tested positive for Covid-19 again. He had earlier got a negative result in his second test but tested positive in the third round and is now set to undergo another test on Thursday.

### FULHAM RELEGATED

LONDON: Fulham were relegated from the Premier League with a 2-0 loss at home to Burnley on Monday that assured the Claret's of their top-flight status. Agencies