

AGENDA 7
THE FIGHT FOR
SANITY**MONEY 06**
COVID PUSHES PHARMA INDUSTRY
GROWTH TO 59 PER CENT IN APRIL

sunday pioneer

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FOOTBALLER
JEJE
PATROLLING
RIVER TO
PREVENT
OVERFISHING

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LOCKDOWN IN BENGAL FOR TWO WEEKS FROM TODAY

The West Bengal government today announced that the state will go under a near lockdown for two weeks starting tomorrow. Looking to curb the spread of COVID-19 infections, all offices and educational institutions will be shut down during this period. Even transport services, including Kolkata Metro, will come to a halt, the government has said. Only emergency services will be allowed, the state's notification says, adding that groceries and shops selling essential items will stay open between 7 am to 10 am, West Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said today. Interestingly, sweetmeat vendors will be allowed to function between 10 am and 5 pm.

**KEJRIWAL ANNOUNCES DELHI OXYGEN CONCENTRATOR BANKS, HOME DELIVERY**

Oxygen concentrator banks have been set up in every district in Delhi to give a boost to the fight against coronavirus, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said today. Coronavirus patients in home isolation can ask for home delivery of these oxygen concentrators at their doorstep. "From today, we are starting a very important service - we're setting up oxygen concentrator banks. In every district, there will be a bank with 200 oxygen concentrators. It has been seen that Covid patients often need to get admitted to ICUs when they're not given medical oxygen when needed. Sometimes patients even die."

**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DROPS SAT SCORES FOR ADMISSION**

The University of California won't consider SAT and ACT scores that are submitted with admission and scholarship applications under a settlement of a student lawsuit that was announced Friday. The 10-campus system, which has more than 280,000 students statewide, decided not to continue fighting a judge's injunction issued last fall that barred it from considering the scores for admission even when they were submitted voluntarily, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. Activists have long argued that standardised tests put minority and low-income students at a disadvantage. Critics say test questions often contain inherent bias that more privileged children are better equipped to answer.

**WEST BENGAL CM MAMATA BANERJEE'S BROTHER DIES OF COVID**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's brother Ashim Banerjee died of Covid-related complications in Kolkata on Saturday. He was 60. Ashim was undergoing treatment at a private hospital since contracting the virus. The last rites will be conducted on Saturday as per Covid protocols. The state on Friday recorded its highest single-day spike of 20,846 fresh Covid-19 cases, taking the tally to 10,94,802, the health department said in its bulletin. The death toll rose to 12,993 after 136 more people succumbed to the infection.



Covid turns public opinion against ruling parties in Telugu States

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

These days, the general public is looking at the performance of the Central and State governments through the perspective of Covid-19, or rather the handling — or mishandling — of the epidemic, and not through the populist schemes implemented by them.

The widespread grief that Covid has brought in its wake has resulted in a negative mindset among the public about Central and State governments, irrespective of how popular they were before the pandemic started creating havoc.

Now, the public is rating the performance of the Central and State governments as 'Before Covid' and 'After Covid'.

The lethal Covid-19 second wave has created an opinion among the masses that both the Central and State governments have miserably



Now, the public is rating the performance of the Central and State governments as 'Before Covid' and 'After Covid'.

failed in dealing with the crisis.

What is worse is that almost all political parties are using the misery of the people to try and gain an upper hand over their opponents instead of putting up a united fight against the pandemic.

Govt, admin, public - all dropped guard: RSS chief Bhagwat

NEW DELHI: After the first wave of Covid, the government, administration and public dropped their guard which led to the current situation, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Saturday and urged people to stay positive and proactive to fight the pandemic.



Telangana in top 5 states showing decline in cases

- **Telugu States in diametrically opposite positions in a fortnight**
- **Negative growth in TS**

NAVEENA GHANATE
■ HYDERABAD

During the first fortnight of May, Telangana has risen to be among the top 5 states in the country showing decline in Covid cases, whereas Andhra Pradesh has receded to be among the top 5 states showing a rise in corona cases.

From 78,888 active cases on May 1, Telangana witnessed a significant drop in cases to 54,832 by May 15. Telangana is preceded by Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh,

Delhi and Gujarat respectively.

Andhra Pradesh, which recorded 1,22,980 active cases on May 1, witnessed an incremental rise to 2,03,787 cases by May 15.

Andhra Pradesh is preceded by Kerala and Karnataka in respect of rise in cases; it is succeeded by Tamil Nadu and Odisha. East Godavari, Kadapa and Vishakapatnam are among the AP districts showing continued increase in cases over the past two weeks.

OXYGEN EXPRESS

8,700 MT of liquid oxygen delivered in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Railways has delivered over 8,700 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen in more than 540 tankers to various states since April 19, the national transporter said on Saturday. So far, 139 'Oxygen Express' trains have completed their journey, bringing relief to many oxygen-starved states, it said.

Six loaded 'Oxygen Express' trains are presently running with more than 475 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen in 35 tankers, the Railways said. 'Oxygen Express' trains have been delivering nearly 800 tonnes of LMO on a daily basis in the last few days, it said. Andhra Pradesh received its first 'Oxygen Express' train in Nellore with 40 tonnes of LMO on Saturday,



Insurance sector and the common man in India

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AI airlifts zeolite used in O₂ production from Rome

5

TODAY**ALMANAC****Month & Paksham:**

Chaitra & Shukla Paksha
Panchangam

Tithi : Chaturthi: 10:00 am

Nakshatram: Ardra: 11:14 am

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

Rahukalam: 05:01 pm - 06:37 pm

Yamagandam: 12:12 pm - 01:48 pm

Varjyam: 12:18 am - 02:02 am

Gulika: 03:25 pm - 05:01 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: NIL

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 am - 12:38 pm

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Scattered thunderstorms

Temp: 31/23

Humidity: 76%

Sunrise: 05:43 am

Sunset: 06:41 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated may 15, 2021 5:00 PM

OBTUSE ANGLE

TS government issues SOPs to DMHOs, private hospitals'

P 3

Localised containment need of hour: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for augmenting healthcare resources in rural areas to focus on door to door testing and surveillance, and asserted that localised containment strategies are the need of the hour, especially in states with high positivity rate in districts.

Chairing a high-level meeting, Modi said states should be encouraged to report their COVID-19 numbers transparently "without any pressure of high numbers showing adversely on their efforts", remarks that come amid reports that many states have been under-reporting their case and fatality tallies.



Centres increases TS quota of oxygen and Remdesivir

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

The Union Government has decided to increase the supply of liquid medical oxygen and Remdesivir injections to Telangana State.

Union Railway Minister Piyush

Union Minister Piyush
Goel calls CM KCR to convey PM's decision

Rao and conveyed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision in this regard on Saturday.

Evidently KCR is keeping the cards close to his chest on who would be the next Health Minister. But he has roped in all the ministers for the fight against corona.

Of course, officials have been repeatedly mentioning to the media that the Chief Minister has been

Put off 'reunion' with 'friends': Mumbai police

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Tapping into the buzz generated by the coming 'Reunion' episode of the American sitcom 'Friends', Mumbai Police have put across a message: Reunite with your friends but only when COVID is over.

Friends: The Reunion, a special episode starring original stars of the popular comedy show 'Friends' is going to stream later this month.

As a teaser of the episode released on Thursday, #FriendsReunion began to trend.

Not to miss the opportunity, Mumbai Police posted their take on Instagram with hashtags #FriendsForever #FriendsOfSafety #TakingOnCorona.

"Reunite with your F.R.I.E.N.D.S - but only after the final season of #COVID19, please? Till then, online meet-ups will 'be there for you,' the city police said.

The Instagram post garnered around 53,000 likes in seven hours and hundreds of comments.

The post on Twitter handle of Mumbai Police also won thousands of likes.

Covid makes living and dying costly

It costs a bomb now for an average family with a Covid patient, whether the patient lives or dies. Ashok Khondare, a 39-year-old vegetable seller in Pune, had already borrowed money to pay for his sister's treatment, though she ultimately died in a private hospital two weeks after contracting COVID-19. While trying to overcome the tragedy, he also had to deal with money problems that increased with his sister's death.

The only available hearse driver charged Rs 5,000 for a 6-km journey to the nearest crematorium - five times the going rate. When Khondare reached there, there was a long queue of dead bodies, requiring waiting periods of more than a day. He agreed to pay another Rs 7,000 to jump the queue.

"I had been experiencing a terrible situation for a fortnight," he



said. "I couldn't sleep or eat properly. I wanted to end this as early as possible and didn't mind paying an irrational amount."

India's second wave of the coronavirus has not only created shortages of oxygen, medicines and hos-

pital beds, but also of wood for funeral pyres, hearses and crematorium slots, forcing people like Khondare to pay exorbitant amounts to perform the last rites of loved ones.

India is reporting by far the highest number of new daily cases glob-

ally, and over 4,000 deaths per day - figures that are almost certainly under-reported, according to experts.

Hindus cremate their dead. The huge numbers of deaths are creating backlogs at cremation grounds and shortages of manpower and raw materials.

"There is huge demand for firewood used for funeral pyres at crematoria, but supplies are not sufficient," said Rohit Pardeshi, a firewood merchant in Satara, Maharashtra.

Due to a local lockdown designed to curb the pandemic, there is a shortage of people to cut trees and those workers who are available are asking for higher wages. "This has created a shortage of firewood and lifted prices," Pardeshi said.

Insurance sector and the common man in India

A popular advertisement says that insurance is a matter of solicitation. Be that as it may, most of the insurance products, both life and general (medical, agriculture, fire, motor vehicle insurances, etc); have been designed for those who can afford to pay the premium. This market-driven approach obviously excludes a large number of people living at the margins without any financial security in the country. To start with, agricultural labourers, construction workers, daily wage earners, workers in other unorganised sectors as well as contractual employees with a little or no financial security could be considered as a combined category

of the 'common man'. As the cost of insurance services increases e.g., during a pandemic, some more categories of people will require public support. The story of insurance in India formally begins with the Life Insurance Corporation set up on 1 September, 1956. It was followed by the General Insurance Corporation formed on 22 September 1972. In comparison to the banking sector, the insurance sector is relatively younger in India. Besides, the public sector companies, many private insurance companies are also now operating in India. Recently, the Government of India enhanced the FDI limit in the insurance sector

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from 49 to 74%, making it more attractive for them to start operations in India. Enhanced FDI limits are not sufficient to attract them, unless it is accompanied by the ease of doing business in India. Coming to the market penetration, barely 2.74 % of the total population of India is covered under life insurance.

This trajectory of low insurance coverage compelled the government to design special schemes for the economically weaker/underprivileged sections, who cannot afford market-based instruments. Amidst a large number, some of the insurance schemes, all beginning with the two words Pradhan Mantri, are; Suraksha Bima Yojana (acci-



DR SHAILENDRA JOSHI, Advisor of Telangana govt and former chief secretary of Telangana

dent insurance, 2015), Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (life insurance worth Rs.2 lakh at a premium of Rs.330 per annum), Jan Dhan Yojana (financial inclusion, affordable access to

financial services such as bank accounts remittances, credit insurance and pensions), Fasal Bima Yojana etc. Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (health insurance program for the poor, 2008) had been converted into Ayushman Bharat in 2016 bearing cost of medical emergencies and to avail health-care treatment in authorised public and private institutions. The combined result of all these insurance schemes is that around 50 crore Indians are covered by either one or more schemes. Undoubtedly, this is a great achievement by any yardstick in the world. One should not rest with the past laurels. The following are the challenges/next steps. One, there is a need to

link individuals and households with various schemes implemented by different ministries. Two, ensure universal coverage of eligible individuals and households. Three, improve the quality of implementation (provide flexibility- farmers deserve a better choice of insurance products to meet the specifics of each crop in a region. For this, insurance companies should be offered more freedom to operate) and reduce delays (bring down average time taken to settle the accidental claims resulting into death from 2 years to under a month). Four, minimise type one and two errors. Five, improve the ease of doing business for insurance companies and ease of

living for policy holders. To sum up, it is not the number of schemes but how effectively these schemes are implemented, that is important. In case of democracies, there is a law of diminishing returns on the ongoing public schemes. The longer a scheme runs, the fewer votes it fetches. The tendency is to start new schemes. In case of the above-stated schemes, they are inherently good, but need improved implementation. We, therefore, need to consolidate the gains by adopting a flexible and decentralised approach. Of course, the biggest challenge is to find out an ideal co-relation between the premiums and claims.

T'gana only state procuring paddy despite pandemic to help farmers

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

Taking note of complaints from several areas, Agriculture Minister Niranjan Reddy said that rice millers shouldn't exploit farmers at a time when the state government was procuring paddy to help farmers.

Telangana is the only state in the country that is purchasing paddy from the farmers to help them during the pandemic. Every state gave up paddy procurement in the wake of pandemic but Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had taken a decision to help the farming community despite the challenging times. Rice millers should not short shrift the farmers in weighing of paddy, he warned.

Addressing a video conference on paddy purchases and transport in Wanaparthy district from Ministers' Quarters here on Saturday, Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy said that rice millers should follow the instructions of the officers and not the other way round.



The meeting was attended by Zilla Parishad Chairman Loknath Reddy, Additional Collector Venugopal, District Rythu Coordination Committee President Jagadishwar Reddy, District Civil Supplies officials and other officials and people's representatives including man-

dal parishad presidents, ZPTCs, Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies' chairmen, farmers coordination committee chairmen, millers and transport agencies. It was not fair to subject the hard working farmers to unfair treatment when they brought the produce to sell. The officers

should not be lenient towards rice millers under any circumstances, he said. If the millers under weighed the paddy at their end after it was weighed, action should be taken immediately against them by the officers. If required their licenses should be cancelled immediately, he

said. If some one went to a farmer's field, he would give extra paddy on his own but if one tried to undercut him after the paddy was weighed, a farmer would never agree, the Minister said.

He said that half of total paddy yield in the country was coming from Telangana. Officers should utilize every facility including Rythu Vedikas and other godowns for paddy storage and there should be no delay between paddy procurement and transport. When the yield was high, arrangements should be made accordingly to complete the procurement fast.

Those who had taken contract for paddy transport should provide adequate vehicles and submit the bills to the agencies.

The Minister also advised farmers to cooperate with the government and be aware that the government was procuring paddy even though facing a crisis because of pandemic. The people's representatives should be proactive in finding problems at the field level and address them.



Family members of people infected with Covid lining up to replace empty oxygen cylinders in New Delhi

Centres increases TS quota of oxygen and Remdesivir

Continued from Page 1

Goel said that an additional 200 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen would be supplied to Telangana State. Besides, the quota of Remdesivir injections would be increased from the present 5,500 to 10,500 from Monday. The Union Minister conveyed to KCR that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given instructions to

supply immediately oxygen, Remdesivir and vaccines to Telangana in the wake of the Telangana High Court's direction to the State that treatment should be extended to all patients. The decision to augment supplies was taken by the Prime Minister so that Telangana State would not be burdened in its efforts to curb the spread of the Covid-19. The Union Minister also

said that oxygen would be supplied from Bhilai in Chattisgarh, Angul in Odisha and Durgapur in West Bengal to Telangana and he asked the Chief Minister to coordinate the supply. Goel responded positively to the request of the TS Chief Minister to increase the quantum of vaccines to the State and suggested that the State should give priority to the second dose of vaccine.

8,700 MT of liquid oxygen delivered in...

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While another train is currently on its way to Kerala with 118 tonnes of oxygen to boost supply in the region, the Railways said. Gorakhpur and Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh have also received 40 and 80 tonnes of oxygen respectively. So far, 521 tonnes of oxygen has been off-loaded in Maharashtra, nearly 2,350 tonnes in UP, 430 tonnes in Madhya Pradesh, 1,228 tonnes in Haryana, 308 tonnes in Telangana, 40 tonnes in Rajasthan, 361 tonnes in Karnataka, 200 tonnes in Uttarakhand, 111 tonnes in Tamil Nadu, 40 tonnes in Andhra Pradesh and over 3,084 tonnes in Delhi.

Marriage proposals fail, depressed woman hangs self

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A young woman, who was reportedly depressed over marriage proposals for her failing, died while under treatment in hospital on Saturday after

attempting to hang herself on Friday. The victim was identified as T Kavya, 22, a resident of Sri Krishna Nagar in Banjara Hills. She lived with her parents and two younger siblings.

According to the police, Kavya's parents were searching for a suitable match for over a year now. With two proposals being rejected recently, she was depressed. On Friday, she attempted to die by suicide by

hanging from the ceiling fan with a dupatta in her bedroom. Family members saw her and shifted her to a nearby private hospital, where she died while under treatment in the early hours of Saturday.

Localised containment...

Continued from Page 1

Modi also directed that a distribution plan for ensuring oxygen supply in rural areas should be worked out, including through provision of oxygen concentrators, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said. He said necessary training should be provided to health workers in the operation of such equipment, and power supply should be ensured for smooth operation of such

medical devices, it said. Unlike the first wave of COVID-19 cases last year when rural India was not badly hit, the region has been seriously affected by the second wave in several states. Prime Minister Modi sought empowering ASHA and anganwadi workers with all necessary tools. Testing needs to be scaled up further, with use of both RT-PCR and rapid tests, especially in areas with high test positivity rates, he added.

Covid makes living and dying costly

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Retail prices for firewood are up by at least 30 per cent, and have more than doubled in some areas, said another firewood seller in the city.

In Uttar Pradesh, 24-year-old Mukul Chaudhary faced similar problems after his mother died in the state capital Lucknow.

The ambulance driver who dropped his mother off at the hospital for Rs 5,000 charged even more to take her body to

the crematorium. "We had to beg him not to overcharge us further," Chaudhary said.

Firewood for the cremation cost double the normal rate, while the priest who performed the last rites charged the family Rs 5,000 - two to five times the usual amount. Rohit Jangam, a Hindu priest in Satara, said many priests there were refusing to enter crematoriums out of fear, and those who were willing were charging higher prices. "It is too risky to perform the last

rites of those who died of coronavirus," he said. "If someone asks, I do, but I charge more since I am taking the risk." He declined to disclose how much more he was charging.

For Covid patients who manage to survive, black marketing of medical supplies is rampant, with desperate relatives paying huge sums. In New Delhi, oxygen cylinders have changed hands for as much as Rs 70,000, according to interviews with relatives - twenty times the usual

price and many times the monthly salary of the average Indian.

Police there have made more than 100 arrests in cases connected with overcharging, including for drugs, ambulance services and hospital beds. Arveena Sharma, a 28-year-old lawyer from Noida, a satellite city of New Delhi, has helped more than a dozen Covid patients who are friends and relatives get oxygen and medical supplies in the last month.

Telangana in top 5 states showing decline in cases

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All the 13 districts are showing positivity of more than 10 per cent, with the overall positivity being 25.3%.

According to Union Joint Secretary Lav Agarwal, Andhra Pradesh, along with seven states and UTs, is showing continued increasing trend in daily new cases. There is no more plateauing of cases in Andhra Pradesh and the cases are only increasing.

Telangana is among the 20 states that have shown a decline in new cases over the past one week; in fact, negative growth.

Women abused...

Continued from Page 1

However in 2021, in March-April 37 cases were filed and in the first fortnight another 7 cases were registered. In Telangana, maximum cases were related to the right to live with dignity and protection of women against domestic violence.

Complaints under the right to live with dignity category include cruelty, domestic violence, and harassment. In AP and TS, 4 and 5 cases respectively were registered for police apathy against women.

Ever since the coronavirus pandemic started there has been a clear increase in violence against women, exposing a serious issue regarding violence meted out to women confined to their homes during the pandemic.

Cyber crime knows no state borders

DUGGU RAGHU
■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

The Covid outbreak presents a global challenge not just for the medical fraternity and society, but for law enforcement agencies also. Cyber crime, like a pandemic, knows no state borders. A few people are attempting novel ways of defrauding innocents using information and technology. Money is being siphoned off using fake accounts and exploiting vulnerabilities of various applications.

Cyber fraudsters are taking the advantage of relationships to cheat innocent public in various ways. The threat of impersonation has hit popular messaging platform WhatsApp as well.

Earlier, fraudsters used tricks and techniques to gain illegal access into WhatsApp accounts by calling the actual owner and collecting the WhatsApp registration OTP saying various reasons. Using the compromised WhatsApp account, they used to request financial help from the friends and family members of the victim citing medical emergencies.

But now, fraudsters were hacking mobile numbers of people staying abroad and then communicating with friends and family in India and requesting them for financial help. With the number of complaints on the rise, the police

ADVISORY TO CITIZENS

- Don't respond for any calls or messages from strangers.
- Don't share any OTP used for registering WhatsApp.
- Don't believe in WhatsApp messages seeking financial help for medical emergency through ISD or local contacts
- Don't transfer money to any one basing on a mere WhatsApp message without confirming in person or voice calls
- Don't reveal or share banking credentials with anyone for any reason

have also issued an advisory.

The Cyberabad Cybercrime wing recently received two complaints of cheating by impersonation of WhatsApp accounts. In one case, a youngster identified as Sriram from Gachibowli was cheated to the tune of Rs 2 lakh. He received a message on WhatsApp purportedly from his cousin Sujatha, from the USA, seeking money for medical emergency. Without verifying, he transferred the money and later

realised that it was not his cousin but an impersonated account.

In another incident, a man identified as Narendra from Kukatpally received a message from friend who lives abroad, through WhatsApp seeking Rs 10.98 lakh for medical help. He sent the required money and was cheated.

Basing on the complaints, cases are registered at the Cyber Crimes Police Station and are being investigated.

Fraudsters create fake emergencies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Cyber criminals have devised various means to loot the gullible people taking advantage of the Covid situation. They sent spoof mails and sought money on the pretext of medical emergencies. Similarly, they promise Covid vaccines and relieved the innocent of their money. They promised jobs to the unemployed and collected money emptying their bank accounts. Thus, several have become targets of the cyber fraudsters.

According to complaints lodged with the cyber crime police, cyber criminals called upon people claiming themselves to be traders from Secunderabad and sought money from the people to attend urgent medical emergencies. They sent spoof mails to the banks on their letter heads, which gave their account numbers, urging them to credit money into their bank accounts. The bankers transferred Rs 28.60 lakh giving credence to the spoof mails. Upon realising

facts, the banks approached police officials.

An unidentified fraudster called upon Sai Silk Kala Mandir in Film Nagar and cheated it to the tune of Rs 1.1 lakh on the pretext of giving Covid vaccine to the show room employees.

Another unidentified person called up Shaheera Begum in the Old City and convinced her that she got Rs 25 lakh prize money in a lottery. To claim the money, she had to pay tax and collected Rs 1.1 lakh from her.

Srinivasa Murthy of DD Colony had gone to the USA. He has had an account in SBI branch in Amberpet. Upon checking it online, he found some unidentified persons withdrew Rs 23 lakh. He lodged a complaint online with the cyber crime police.

From a house wife who is a resident in NCL Raghavendra Nagar in Jeedimetla Division, cyber criminals relieved her of Rs 2.52 lakh saying that she got job in Naukri.com. Pet Basheerabad police registered a case against the criminals.

TS government issues SOPs to DMHOs, private hospitals

Preventing 'Black fungus' disease among Covid patients

ML MELLY MAITREYI
■ HYDERABAD

In the light of the incidence of 'Black fungus'/mucormycosis among Covid patients in various parts of the country, including Telangana, the state government has taken preventive steps and alerted DMHOs as well as private hospitals.

Three cases were reported in Gandhi Medical Hospital and many private hospitals too reported a few such cases.

Dr G Srinivasa Rao, TS Director of Public Health, said on Saturday that these cases were reported in the post Covid follow-up phase.

While issuing guidelines to control mucormycosis, he said that it would be better to control the patient's sugar level during Covid with or without steroids. Steroids should be used judiciously; observing correct time, dose and duration. The same applies to antibiotics and antifungals. "It is important to use clean and sterile water for humidifiers during the oxygen therapy," he said. The DPH directed all the District Medical and Health Officers as well as Medical Superintendents of all private

GANDHI, ENT HOSPITAL TO TREAT PATIENTS WITH 'BLACK FUNGUS'

The state government of Telangana has made arrangement in ENT Hospital, Kothi and Gandhi Hospital for the free treatment of patients affected by black fungus. Dr G Srinivasa Rao, Director, Public Health, said that instructions were given to all the DMHOs and private hospitals about the proper maintenance of humidifiers used in oxygen therapy to prevent black fungus or mucormycosis among patients who recovered from Covid. He however said that it was not a new disease and reported in patients who underwent organ transplantation surgeries and diabetics with high sugar levels. This would be treated with antifungal drugs and surgical debridement.

hospitals in the State to ensure strict implementation of the following Standard Operating Procedures.

Often mucormycosis is reported due to poor maintenance of humidifiers.

It is mandatory to use sterile or distilled water always and one should never use unboiled tap water or mineral water.

Humidifiers should be filled to about 10 mm below the maximum fill line. The water level should be checked twice daily and topped up as necessary. The water in the humidifier should be changed daily. Components of the humidifier should be washed in mild soap water, rinsed, and dried in air before reuse.

Once a week (for the same patient), and in between patients, all the components of the humidifier should be soaked in a mild antiseptic solution for 30 minutes, rinsed with clean water, and dried in air.

At a time when hospitals are facing shortage of doctors, nurses and para-medical personnel and given the influx of Covid patients, it will be a challenge to ensure proper maintenance of humidifiers.

Hence, the government issued the SOPs and also wrote to the chiefs of THANA, THASA, and IMA-Telangana to prevent the incidence of black fungus in patients who have recovered from Covid.

CITY LIGHTS

Docs save life 45-yr-old man with non surgical pump tech

A 45-year-old man got a new lease of life after a team of cardiologists at Medicovert Hospitals, performed a critical heart procedure using US FDA approved non-surgical pump technology. Madhu had undergone a renal transplant in 2002. He was diagnosed to have a failing transplant and failing heart pumping in 2018 for which he underwent a coronary angiogram. After going through the entire clinical information, the team of doctors led by Dr A Sharath Reddy, Director-Interventional Cardiologist, and Dr Kamal Kiran, a Nephrologist decided to perform percutaneous intervention for his heart blood vessel blockages using hemodynamic support with a percutaneous Left ventricular assist device (Impella). The team performed percutaneous intervention for more than 5 hours by placing a novel percutaneous LV assist device-Impella CP-prior to the procedure, which maintains the steady cardiac output of more than 3.4 L giving the interventionist enough time to meticulously work on his occluded blood vessels. Post-procedure the doctors observed him for one and half days in the hospital and then discharged with regular medication.

Cyberabad cops pay respects to departed DGP Prasada Rao

The Cyberabad Commissioner of Police VC Sajjanar along with Traffic DCP Vijaykumar, Additional CAR DCP Manikraj, Shmshabad ACP Bhaskar and RGIA Police Inspector Vijaykumar received the mortal remains of late former DGP Prasada Rao at RGIA airport on Saturday. Prasada Rao, who was former DGP of undivided Andhra Pradesh had passed away in the USA due to heart attack. Receiving the mortal remains, VC Sajjanar condoled the grieving family of Prasada Rao and said the Telangana Police stands with the family in time of grief. Remembering the services of Prasada Rao, VC Sajjanar said that he was an epitome of perfection and always kept his duties first ahead of anything in his life. He performed all his duties with much dedication.



5K police personnel monitoring lockdown situation: CP Sajjanar

In order to ensure that the lockdown orders are completely being followed, Cyberabad Commissioner of Police VC Sajjanar took a stock of the lockdown implementation on Saturday from ground zero on the day four. He visited several check-posts including Gachibowli, Miyapur and Madhapur. The Police Commissioner spent time with the field level police officers and supervised their functioning at the check-posts on roads. The Cyberabad Police Commissioner said that there are almost 5,000 police personnel from Cyberabad Police on the ground monitoring the lockdown situation. He reiterated the need to be very vigilant as the pandemic is still rampant and expressed satisfaction that the citizens have been voluntarily following the lockdown orders and that the police on ground are actually trying to help all the citizens who are moving emergency services.



CP inaugurates 'Prana Vayu Seva' oxygen cylinder bank

Rachakonda Commissioner of Police launched webpage https://donate.plasma.rksc.in, which was developed in association with Rachakonda Security Council on Saturday. The donors can register themselves and those who require plasma also can register their request in the link provided above. Rachakonda Covid Control Room and volunteers of RKSC will match the donor with the request and address the need. In this regard, a short film in Hindi, directed by Sudheer and produced by Laxvi Productions has also been released by CP Rachakonda which busts the myths about plasma donation. Meanwhile, Mahesh Bhagwat and Additional Commissioner of Police Sudheer Babu launched Oxygen Cylinder Bank on Saturday. The joint initiative of the Rachakonda Police and Rachakonda Security Council has been named Prana Vayu Seva. The needy can call Covid Control room at 9490617234 and fill in request form duly uploading documents and obtain the cylinder for a limited period.



ESSENTIALS

As the lockdown entered the fourth day on Saturday, people appear to be slowly getting accustomed to the restrictions, with only thin crowds seen at vegetable markets during the relaxation hours. Initially, when the lockdown began on May 12, people thronged vegetable markets, supermarkets and kirana stores to stock up on essential commodities. However, as the lockdown moved into the fourth day, there is not much of rush seen in shops during the relaxation hours.

— SV Chary

T'gana reports 4,298 new cases, 32 deaths

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has reported 4,298 new Covid infections and 32 fatalities on Saturday taking the cumulative number of deaths to 2,928 and the total number of positive cases to 5,25,007. The number of active cases in Telangana, as on Saturday evening, is 53,072.

Between Friday and Saturday, authorities conducted 64,362 Covid tests of which results of 1,639 samples are awaited. On Saturday, 6,026 individuals have recovered with a recovery rate of 89.33 per cent. So far, a total of 1,40,16,740 Covid-19 tests have been conducted in the State out of which 5,25,007 have tested positive and 4,69,007 persons have recovered.

Two express trains with 140 tns of O₂ on their way to TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The first Oxygen Express for Andhra Pradesh on Saturday reached the Krishnapatnam Port in the state.

The express with two containers of 40 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen reached the port while another is on its way, SCR said.

The SCR said two additional trains with a combined capacity of 140 tonnes are on their way to Telangana.

The Oxygen Expresses are being operated by the Railways across the length and breadth of the country as per the request of the state governments.

AIIMS Bibinagar to get 2 oxygen plants: Director

PNS ■ MEDCHAL MALKAJGIRI

AIIMS director Vikas Bhatia and former MP of Bhongir Bura Narsaiah Goud on Saturday visited the AIIMS at Bibinagar and said that two oxygen plants would be set up in the AIIMS.

The plants would solve the oxygen shortage in the AIIMS, he said ruling out shortage of doctors in the institute. There are 80 speciality doctors and enough number of para-medical staff in the institute, he added.

Efforts are being made to set up oxygen and ventilator beds in the hospital. The former MP said that he would strive to set up 100-200 oxygen beds and 10 ICU beds with donors' support.

DENGUE ERADICATION DAY

City sees dip in dengue cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A multi-pronged approach adopted by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) coupled with extensive disinfectant drives due to Covid-19 pandemic has helped in controlling the seasonal diseases, especially in registering a considerable drop in dengue and malaria cases in the city this year. This is despite the unseasonal rains in the city.

Since January this year, only one malaria case and 39 dengue cases were reported in the city. This is against more than 50 dengue cases that were reported during the same period i.e., January - May last year. The innovative 'Every Sunday 10 Minutes at 10 am' programme initiated by the



Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister KT Rama Rao, is also seen as having helped in bringing down the number of vector borne diseases. Other measures taken up by the authorities to control mosquito menace such as identification of disease hot spots, removal of water hyacinth and Musi rejuvenation. Meanwhile, GHMC has adopted an innovative and modern technology of using IT

enabled devices to improve efficiency of fogging machines in the city.

Ahead of National Dengue Eradication Day observed in India on May 16, the GHMC appealed to people to continue the '10 Minutes at 10 am' programme which is aimed at encouraging community participation in containing the vector borne diseases. As a part of it, citizens are involved in clearing water stagnation.

Begumpet airport stirring back to life again

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Even as the city lies silent, courtesy the lockdown, there is a flurry of activity at the Begumpet airport these days with the movement of helicopters, air ambulances and aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The Begumpet Airport again became abuzz with activity with planes bringing oxygen and medicines and air ambulances touching down and taking off at the airport in the heart of the city.

In fact, the airport stopped commercial operations since 2008 when the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) at Shamshabad became operational.



The airport is being used for export and import of vaccines and Covid medicines.

State government has been using the airport to extend support to Covid patients- like bringing medicines, vaccines

and oxygen on a war-footing. Following spurt in Covid cases, the oxygen shortage problem surfaced in the state. To address it, the state government procured oxygen from Angul in Odisha.

Further, air ambulances from states have been landing at Begumpet airport bringing Covid-19 patients to Hyderabad. Last year, many patients were shifted to Hyderabad by air.

In all, over 100 personnel are working in Begumpet airport

Recently, six 15-ton capacity tankers have been airlifted to Odisha by IAF planes.

These tankers reached Bhubaneswar by air and later travelled to Angul by road. After getting filled with oxygen, they would reach the city by road in three days.

This is in addition to sending four tankers earlier.

Recently, the Madhya Pradesh Government airlifted medicines to Hyderabad.

Further, air ambulances from states have been landing at Begumpet airport bringing Covid-19 patients to Hyderabad. Last year, many patients were shifted to Hyderabad by air.

In all, over 100 personnel are working in Begumpet airport

till early hours of 1.30 am to ensure smooth operations.

Ever since the Begumpet airport stopped its commercial operations, it is being used to transport food and for emergency services during natural calamities like floods.

The airport is useful in airlifting essential equipment to the flood-affected areas.

The Wings India's biennial civil aviation exhibition Air Show-2020 was held here in March.

Government's helicopters, chartered flights being used by VIPs, political leaders take off and touch down at the Begumpet airport, which is currently being used as the training facility for the Indian Air Force Cadets.

Cong leaders making a mockery of Eatela issue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress has attained the dubious distinction of giving too much freedom to their leaders and as a result they will have a difference of opinion on every issue and air their statements openly much to the chagrin of the high command.

Surprisingly, the leaders are divided in giving support to former minister Eatela Rajender while one group is supporting the former minister, the second one opposing and the third is keeping mum. When the TRS was maintaining silence on the issue the Congress leaders are raking up the issue regularly.

While the TRS was moving the pawns strategically against sacked minister Eatela Rajender. It is learnt that party chief and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has directed the party leaders not to speak about Eatela's issue except assigned leaders. Following the directions of KCR no TRS



leader is speaking on the Eatela issue except a few Karimnagar leaders. The TRS is almost maintaining silence on Eatela's issue.

However, the Congress is in confusion regarding Eatela Rajender. The party leaders

TRS chief and Chief Minister K Chandra sekhar Rao has directed the party leaders not to speak about Eatela's issue except for assigned leaders

Reddy, who is a close relative of TPCC chief N Uttam Kumar Reddy, has been alleging that Eatela had troubled Congress activists of the Huzurabad constituency and levelled encroachment allegations against Eatela.

On the other hand, leaders like TPCC working president A Revanth Reddy, SA Sampath Kumar, T Jeevan Reddy, V Hanumantha Rao and several other Congress leaders, who raised Eatela's issue, keeping

mum of late instead, they are paying their attention to the Corona issue.

Meanwhile, the High Court found fault with the TRS government regarding its inquiry into Eatela's land issue. However, the issue has been boiling silently within the Congress party with the TPCC working president Ponnamp Prabhakar dashing off letters to TPCC Chief and Telangana Congress Affairs In-charge Manickam Tagore demanding that they disclose the party's stand on the issue.

One of the party leaders opined that instead of troubling the TRS government regarding Eatela's land issue, the party leaders are fighting against each other with differences of opinion on the issue. He said more freedom in the party is creating such troubles. However, the party has to discuss the issue and make a decision immediately, he opined.



Govt hospital hands over wrong body to Covid patient's kin

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Government hospitals' negligence while treating patients is not new while staff handing over the wrong dead bodies hogged the limelight many a time.

One more incident came to the fore and they proved their negligence yet again. The family of a patient, who died of Covid, was agast as the government hospital staff in Karimnagar district handed over a wrong dead body to it.

According to sources, Janapatha Machaiah(55), a native of Kothagattu village in Shankarapatnam mandal of Karimnagar district, was test-

ed Covid positive. When his condition has deteriorated, he was admitted to the Government Hospital in Karimnagar on Thursday and he died while undergoing treatment on Friday.

The hospital staff packed the body of Machaiah following the Covid rules and handed over it to his family. Later, his family members buried the body in their native village. When the deceased kin was mourning his death they received a call from the hospital staff stating that a wrong body was given to them and Machaiah's body is being shifted to their village. The grief-stricken family condemned the hospital apathy.

Implement Ayushman Bharat, Raja Singh demands government

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Gosha Mahal BJP MLA Raja Singh has accused the TRS government of not allocating additional funds to provide free Covid treatment to the poor, middle class and trying to save itself from additional financial burden.

In a statement here on Saturday, he alleged that the government has been denying the benefits passed by the Centre to the Covid patients and taking steps to benefit corporate hospitals alone.

Furthermore, he alleged that the government did not include the Covid-19 treatment in Aarogyasri neither it implemented the Centre's Ayushman Bharat in the state and playing with the lives of people.

People are forced to sell their properties to pay lakhs of rupees of hospital bills or to borrow funds heavily. He demanded that Chief Minister KCR include Covid treatment in Aarogyasri and implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme. He demanded that the government clear pending bills of private network hospitals of Aarogyasri. Later, he asked the government to include it under Aarogyasri.

Those who undergo treat-



ment in at least 21 corporate and private hospitals are paying fees on an average of Rs 50,000 per day. Daily these hospitals earn at least Rs 100 crore.

KCR announced seven months ago on the floor of Assembly to include Covidtreatment in Aarogyasri, but did not keep up his promise. Even if people want to join Ayushman Bharat scheme, there is no trace of it.

He said that beds in private hospitals are not easy to get by. Even if there are beds, one has to pay lakhs of rupees towards advance. Daily the hospital bill runs into several lakhs of rupees. There are no proper amenities in government hospitals, he

alleged. Over 5,000 complaints have been lodged with toll-free number on the looting of private and corporate hospitals, but there was no government response, he said accusing the government of becoming a mere spectator. No action was taken against a single hospital. The government has backtracked as corporate hospitals mounted pressure on it on including Covid treatment in Aarogyasri. The government is not ready to bear the financial burden if the scheme were to be included in Aarogyasri. The government owed at least Rs 500 crore to the network hospitals for treating various other diseases.

Revanth alleges hoarding of Covid medicines by corporate hospitals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Covid patients have been deprived of oxygen and Remdesivir injections as the corporate hospitals are hoarding them to create artificial scarcity, alleged TPCC working president and Malkajigiri MP A Revanth Reddy.

He questioned Minister for Municipal Administration KT Rama Rao, who heads the Task Force Committee, to tell whether the shortage of oxygen and Remdesivir didn't come to his notice.

What the Task Force Committee is doing when Corona was spreading rapidly across the state, he questioned? He alleged that the Committee is collecting crores of rupees from the corporate companies under CSR and convening meetings at Pragati Bhavan, but the same Committee is not discussing on providing medical and basic facilities.

He alleged that Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao has become a puppet in the hands of corporate hospitals. He demanded that the Chief Minister include Corona treatment in Aarogyasri immediately and extend Rs 5,000 to people, who lost their employment due to the lockdown.

He launched a free food service for 1,000 people at Gandhi Hospital on Saturday keeping Corona patients in view. Speaking on the occasion, he said that the government is not even providing food for doctors and nurses working at Gandhi Hospital.

"When it came to our notice, we are arranging 1,000



TPCC working president and Malkajigiri MP A Revanth Reddy and others serving food to patients at Gandhi Hospital in Secunderabad on Saturday

He launched free food service for 1,000 people at Gandhi Hospital keeping Corona patients in view. He said that the government is not even providing food for doctors and nurses working at Gandhi Hospital

meals for all. It will be continued till lockdown is on. There are no basic facilities at Gandhi Hospital. No drinking water to attendants of patients. We launched this programme as the government is not coming forward to run the Annapurna canteens during the lockdown," he said.

Malkajigiri MP said that the Youth Congress has been taking up several programmes. However, police are arresting the Youth Congress activists and obstructing their services in the name of inquiry. He alleged that the Central and

State governments failed in the vaccination drive and increased the gap between the first and second doses as they failed to chalk out an action plan. He demanded that the State government provide food by restarting Annapurna canteens at Covid Hospitals.

He alleged that several patients are dying at TMS due to lack of oxygen. He demanded that the government provide oxygen to all floors at TMS as it is learnt that some floors are not being provided oxygen.

SHORT TAKES

Synthetic track works going on at brisk pace in Siddipet

SIDDIPET : Works related to the laying of synthetic walking track around Komati Cheruvu in Siddipet are going on at a brisk pace. Minister for T Harish Rao is supervising the works from time to time. The necklace road around the Komati Cheruvu has acquired a new look. The minister got the synthetic track is being installed as it would improve the health of people by walking and running on the track. The athletic synthetic track being laid is akin to the track laid in major cities.



Kishan Reddy condemns curbs on media by AP govt

Delhi : Union Minister of State for Home G Kishan Reddy on Saturday felt that it is not right on the part of the State governments to gag the freedom of the press and vowed to take the government placing curbs on press freedom to the notice of Minister Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar. It is not acceptable to indict media organisations in Andhra Pradesh with sedition for political reasons unless there is a threat to the unity and integrity of the country. Despite media organisations levelling serious allegations against the Centre, the Centre did not place any curbs on them, he pointed out. So far either any BJP government or Centre did not place any curbs on media organisations. He said that he would take up the curbs on media organisations by the Government of AP with the ministry concerned.



e-Pass mandatory to cross inter-state borders

JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY: Kataram DSP Bonala Kishan suggested to inter-state travellers to seek permission from the government to enter Telangana. He checked the vehicles at Kaleshwaram inter-state bridge in Jayashankar Bhupalapally where travellers hail from Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. He ordered the police to allow the vehicles, which are having e-Pass from the Telangana government. He created awareness among travellers about Coronavirus and police personnel at the check post. Mahadevpur CI Kiran and Kaleshwaram SI Balakrishna accompanied the DSP.



Dengue prevention should start from home,says DMHO

MULUGU: Prevention of dengue should start from the home itself, said Mulugu district health and medical (DMHO) officer Dr Appaiah to mark the national Dengue Eradication Day on Saturday. He organised the dengue awareness programme with a main to eradicate dengue. "We are educating people in villages under the jurisdiction of all the Primary Health Centres in the district about the outbreak of dengue and insect-borne diseases and the severity of diseases," he said. Dr Sitharamaraju, District Disease Control Officer, said, "We are creating awareness among people about the precautions to be taken to eradicate the pests caused by insects."



‘Instil confidence among Covid patients’

PNS ■ WARANGAL

The government hospitals should provide better services to Covid patients and instil confidence among them, said Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao.

Addressing a review meeting on Covid control and purchase of agriculture produce with Jangaon District Collector, MLAs and officials at the Collectorate in Jangaon on Saturday, the Minister said that the Covid positive rate in the district was put at 20 per cent and asked doctors, district authorities and public representatives to work in coordination for the control of Covid.

He said 5,510 people were found Covid positive in a survey and health kits containing



Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao checking a register during a review meeting on Covid control in Jangaon on Saturday

medicines were delivered at their doorstep. Covid outpatient services are being provided at each Primary Health Centres and began administering steroids to people, who did not have symptoms, for four days despite taking medication.

He said seven ambulances

are available to transport patients to hospitals in case of emergencies. The minister said there was no shortage of beds, oxygen and remedial injections in the district. Immediate steps have been taken to increase the oxygen beds. He said Isolation Centres

have been set up in every zone and all facilities have been provided.

The Minister said hygiene was very important and villages should maintain cleanliness. He said the Chief Minister was taking steps to further strengthen the govern-

Take measures to save paddy from rains: Bandi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJP president Bandi Sanjay expressed concern over farmers suffering due to rains playing spoilsport with his harvested Rabi paddy. Sanjay demanded that the government respond on a war-footing and immediately implement remedial measures as rains are predicted in the next three days.

There should be enough tarpaulins and gunny bags. The paddy should be weighed round-the-clock and the procured paddy should be immediately transported to rice mills.

The farmer has been reeling under the impact of the Covidvirus like people of the

country and yet he is uncertain when his paddy is going to be lifted waiting endlessly for weeks altogether in his drying yards. These problems recur annually, but the government is not learning from its mistakes, he said.

In a statement on Saturday, he said that there was no plan with the government to procure Rabi paddy from farmers. It was unfortunate that the agriculture department has no assessment of the approximate Rabi paddy yield. There were no enough gunny bags to procure the paddy. He sought to know why there were no enough number of tarpaulins in the farm yards as unseasonal rains are quite normal during the summer.

Food delivery at Covid patients’ doorstep launched

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

No one in-home isolation need not worry about food, the government will help and provide food packets to the needy, who are in-home isolation, disclosed Sangareddy District Collector Hanumantha Rao.

He discussed providing food to the patients and family members in-home isolation with officials concerned in the district through a teleconference from his office on Saturday.

He said the Collectorate had started a food service centre considering the issues in home isolation as children in the houses starving with hunger as

Sangareddy District Collector Hanumantha Rao announced a toll-free number to people for registration and said the callers have to register their name, mobile number, house number, locality and other information for delivery.



their parents infected with Covidvirus while in some cases the entire family is being test-

ing Covid positive are unable to cook in their homes.

He said two superintendent

level officers have been appointed to register names at the food service centre and

WG govt to impose total lockdown from today

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal will go under a complete lockdown from Sunday till May 30, the state government announced, as it put in place a host of stringent measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, including prohibiting vehicular movement and disallowing all kinds of gathering.

Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said the lockdown will take effect from 6 am on Sunday till 6 pm of May 30.

"Additional restriction measures to cut down mobility of people and limiting human contact through assembly and congregation is essential to cut the transmission chain of the virus and to contain the pandemic," he said.

AI airlifts zeolite used in O₂ production from Rome

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India said it was airlifting 35 tonnes of zeolite mineral used in oxygen production plants on two flights from Rome to Bengaluru on Saturday.

has been badly hit by the second wave of the novel coronavirus infection as hospitals in several states are reeling under the shortage of health workers, vaccines, oxygen and drugs.

"The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is the charterer for the zeolite consignments," Air India said in a statement.

Additionally, the national carrier is going to airlift zeolite mineral for DRDO from multiple locations across the world during the coming weeks.

"Seven charter flights have been scheduled between May 15-18 from Rome to Bangalore. This will be followed by eight



charter flights from Korea to Bangalore between May 19-22.

"Further, we have uplift from USA through our existing scheduled flights from EWR (Newark Liberty International Airport) between May 20-25. Next part of this exercise is from Brussels, Tokyo and again USA,

in the following weeks," the statement stated. Zeolite is used in oxygen production plants that are based on pressure swing adsorption (PSA) technology. India in a day recorded 3,26,098 COVID-19 cases that took the tally to 2,43,72,907, while 3,890 new fatalities pushed the death

toll to 2,66,207, according to Union health ministry data updated on Saturday. The active cases have reduced to 36,73,802 and comprise 15.07 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 83.83 per cent, it stated.

GPS tracking ambulances for quick shifting of Covid patients

PNS ■ BHUBANESHWAR

Putting technology to use for better COVID management and quick transfer of patients to the Dedicated COVID Hospitals (DCH) and COVID Care Centres (CCC), the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has started GPS tracking of ambulances.

While the city authorities have a fleet of 64 ambulances under the COVID management programme, 40 has already become GPS enabled and the rest will be fitted with the tracking devices very soon, a senior official said.

Bhubaneswar Smart City Ltd (BSCL) is looking after the technological up-gradation part of the ambulances engaged on COVID duty, the official said.

When a patient is referred for shifting to a DCH or CCC after due teleconsultation at BMC COVID care 24x7 Helpline '1929', operating from Smart



City office, BMC allocates available bed in one of the COVID hospitals or CCC.

An ambulance is alerted to pick the patient from his/her residence. These ambulances are now fitted with onboard GPS units for real time tracking. This provides an estimated time of arrival of the ambulance to the patient's residence just like we know the location of a taxi when we book

mobile phones, he said. Of the 64 ambulances, three each are with respective three administrative zones under BMC. This number will be increased by seven in each zone to make it 10 ambulances at each zone under the zonal control room for ambulance operation.

Thirty-four ambulances are at Capital Hospital in the heart of the city under a Central Ambulance Control Room.



Cyclone Tauktae: Goa gears up to tackle situation

PNS ■ PANAJI

The government machinery in Goa has put in place necessary measures to tackle the situation in view of the warning about cyclone Tauktae, officials said on Saturday. As per the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) prediction, Konkarni and Goa are expected to receive heavy to very heavy rainfall on May 15 and 16 as the weather condition is very likely to intensify into cyclonic storm Tauktae. The Goa Fire and Emergency Services said it has kept its personnel ready to tackle the situation.

"We have kept our force ready to face any kind of eventualities arising out of the cyclone," its director Ashok Menon told PTI.

The Emergency Services, with its force of 800 personnel, have taken proactive steps in this regard, he said.

"The cyclonic winds and rains that lashed the state on Friday did not cause much damage," Menon added.

The disaster management response forces of the state's two districts - South Goa and North Goa - led by the respective collectors, held meetings on Friday to check the preparedness.

Cyclone Tauktae to cross Guj coast around May 18: IMD

PNS ■ GUJARAT

The deep depression over the Arabian Sea has intensified into cyclonic storm Tauktae and is likely to cross the Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Naliya around May 18, the IMD said on Saturday.

It said Tauktae will be a very severe cyclonic storm from May 16-18. In a bulletin released at 1:45 PM, the IMD said, "It is very likely to intensify further into a severe cyclonic storm during the next six hours and into a very severe cyclonic storm during the 12 hours.

It is very likely to move north-northwestwards and cross the Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Naliya around 18th May afternoon/evening."

Both the Centre and states have been gearing up to deal with the cyclone that has been building up over the Arabian Sea for days now.

Shiv Sena hails MP govt for its 'humanity' to orphans

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Shiv Sena on Saturday praised the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh for its decision to provide a monthly pension of Rs 5,000 and free ration to children orphaned due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the editorial in the party mouthpiece 'Saamana', the Sena also questioned the need for spending on projects like Central Vista, which it said will "deface" Delhi, or for the PR machinery of ministers in the time of the pandemic.

The Sena's comments are viewed as a veiled swipe aimed at Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in view of the state government's decision to allocate nearly Rs 6 crore for appointing a private agency to handle his social media accounts.

Under fire over the decision, Ajit Pawar had ordered the cancellation of the government order in this regard.

"It is often debated how children orphaned after losing their parents to COVID-19 should be taken care of. This



issue is discussed in Maharashtra as well. But Madhya Pradesh didn't stop at discussions but took a decision to financially support such children," Sena said.

On May 13, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan announced that the state government will provide free education, ration and a pension of Rs 5,000 per month to children whose parents have died of coronavirus.

"The Madhya Pradesh government has shown the path of humanity to the rest of the country. This decision shows politicians still have humanity," it said.

A former ally of the BJP, the Sena heads the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government comprising the NCP and the Congress.

Chhattisgarh asks districts to extend lockdown till May 31

PNS ■ RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh government has asked authorities in all the 28 districts to extend the COVID-19 lockdown till May 31 even as it granted more relaxations in economic and other activities, an official said on Saturday.

The lockdown, currently in force in all districts of the state, was set to end in most regions at May 15 midnight.

"The lockdown will not be lifted in the state. Only certain relaxations will be granted, depending on the COVID-19 situation and risks in each of the districts," the official from the public relations department said.

The restrictions and relaxations will be applicable till May



31, he said.

The state government had on May 4 asked all the districts to extend the lockdown, which was imposed in early April, till May 16 while giving some relaxations, the official said.

As per the new guidelines, all government and private construction activities will be allowed and they can be carried out in compliance with all standard operating procedures (SOPs) and labour safety measures, he

said. Standalone shops including those selling groceries, essentials, vegetables and fruits can function till 5 pm, he said.

"Shops located in established markets can operate, but with an odd-even system, under which they will be allowed to open on alternate days. Collectors and superintendents of police can decide modalities after consulting local traders' associations," the official said.

All shops and establishments shall remain shut after 5 pm on working days, he said.

On Sundays, only petrol pumps, hospitals, medical establishments, medicine shops, PDS shops will be allowed to function. Home delivery of essential commodities will be permitted, he said.

Delhi govt fixes rates for hearse services

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi government has fixed the rates for hearse services provided for deceased COVID-19 patients, according to an official order on Saturday.

A committee was constituted under the chairmanship of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation commissioner, which recommended the rates for hearse/mortuary services to be provided to deceased coronavirus patients, it said.

On the recommendations of the committee, the rates have been fixed, the order by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority said.

Palaniswami seeks more oxygen supply

PNS ■ CHENNAI

With the COVID-19 cases in Tamil Nadu showing a steady increase, AIADMK Joint Coordinator and Leader of Opposition K Palaniswami on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking increased allocation of oxygen and Remdesivir drug, used in treating coronavirus infected.

In his letter, the former Chief Minister said that the second wave of coronavirus has affected a large number of people all over the state, which was showing an "increasing trend" day by day with nearly 32,000 single-day cases. Though the



state government has implemented several restrictions for the movement of people, including lockdown, "due to increase in the number of cases, there is a huge demand for beds, oxygen supported beds and ICU beds in both government and private hospitals," he told Modi.

"There is also long queue of patients waiting for admission in hospitals, all over Tamil Nadu," he pointed out.

Tiger found dead in Madhya Pradesh

PNS ■ BHOPAL

A tiger was found dead in the buffer zone of the Bandhavgarh reserve in Madhya Pradesh, which took the number of tiger fatalities reported in the state to three within a week, an official said on Saturday.

The decomposed carcass of the tiger was found near a drain in the buffer area on Friday, Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve's field director Vincent Raheem told PTI over phone. "As the carcass was highly decomposed, the tiger's tongue and an internal organ were sent for testing to ascertain the cause of the death. The report is awaited," Raheem added. The carcass has been dis-

posed of as per the guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), he said.

Last Saturday (May 8), a tiger was found dead in Kanha Tiger Reserve of the state, officials said.

A day before that, a dead sub-adult tiger (aged between 18 and 24 months) was found floating in a canal of an interstate water project in Balaghat's Waraseoni tehsil, they added.

Madhya Pradesh is home to a number of tiger reserves, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura and Panna. The central Indian state had regained the top slot in the 2018 census with a population of 526 tigers.

Delhi sees fall in Covid cases due to lockdown

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

On Friday recorded 8,506 Covid cases, the daily count dipping to below the 10,000-mark again after a month, with medical experts believing the lockdown to be the main factor behind the dip amid the second wave of the pandemic.

The national capital had registered 7,897 coronavirus cases on April 10 with 39 deaths, as per official data.

The fatality count stood at 289 on Friday, with experts cautioning that even over 8,500 daily cases was "still a huge figure" and "severity of cases were still the same as before".

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal had said the city's COVID-19 cases count in the last 24 hours, just over 8,500, was much lower than the figures reported on April 20, when it had crossed the 28,000-mark. Doctors at leading govern-



ment and private hospitals in Delhi said there is a relative fall in the number of cases and "still a long way to go" before the daily count falls below the 2,000-mark, as it was a few months earlier.

"Lockdown, I would say is the biggest factor in arriving at a situation where we are now, when daily cases from 28,000 have come down to about 8,500.

However, it is still a huge figure, and there should be no room for complacency, on any front," Medical Director of Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital (RGSSH), B L Sherwal, told PTI.

RGSSH is a Delhi government-run 650-bed facility, and about 500 beds are earmarked for treating COVID patients, and 350 are currently occupied,

most of them being ICU patients, he said.

Asked about the number of daily fatalities at the facility located in east Delhi, Sherwal said, about 10-12 patients per day, out of the 350 beds occupied as of now, which would soon be expanded to full capacity.

"While daily cases have come down, the severity of infection is still the same, and new patients are being brought to our hospital in the same condition as before. Many of them are brought dead or die shortly after being brought to emergency. So, we must understand the gravity of the situation," he added.

Delhi had been reeling under a brutal second wave of the pandemic that is sweeping the country, claiming a massive number of lives daily, with the recent oxygen supply shortage issue at various hospitals adding to the woes.

INDIA CORNER

350 Covid patients shifted to super-speciality block in Goa



At least 350 Covid patients have been shifted to the Goa Medical College and Hospital's new super-speciality block, state Health Minister Vishwajit Rane said on Saturday. The super speciality block was commissioned last week to reduce the burden on the hospital, where several

wards are being used to treat infected patients. "In our unabated efforts, our team of doctors, nurses and all healthcare workers are ensuring seamless transition of patients to the new block along with providing the best healthcare facilities to reduce mortalities," Rane tweeted. Currently, 350 patients have been shifted to the super-speciality block in coordination with GVK EMRI 108, he said. "We have assured people that we will commission the Super Speciality Block at the earliest under the guidance of the Chief Minister @DrPramodPSavant. It is the largest hospital built under PMSSY," the minister said on Twitter. Goa on Friday recorded 2,455 new COVID-19 cases and 61 casualties that raised the tally of infections to 1,32,585 and toll to 1,998.

Covid: 6,430 new cases, 337 more deaths in Delhi



The national capital recorded 6,430 new COVID-19 cases and 337 fatalities on Saturday while the positivity rate dipped to 11.32 per cent, even as Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal asserted that the cases are "slowly and steadily" reducing in Delhi. This is the

second consecutive day when Delhi has recorded less than 10,000 cases in a day. However, the lesser number of fresh cases recorded on Saturday came from a relatively smaller number of tests -- 56,811 -- conducted on Friday. According to the latest health bulletin, 6,430 fresh cases were recorded, while the 337 new fatalities pushed the death toll here to 21,244. Earlier in the day, Kejriwal said, "Today, even lesser cases of coronavirus have been recorded in Delhi. In the past 24 hours, about 6,500 cases have come up.

Delhi govt announces Rs 1,051 cr for corporations to pay salaries



The Delhi government on Saturday announced a fund of Rs 1,051 crore for the three municipal corporations here to pay salaries of healthcare workers and other employees amid the ongoing second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Deputy

Chief Minister Manish Sisodia, in an online briefing, said despite constrained circumstances due to the lockdown, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has taken this decision as those people who are helping fight the COVID-19 pandemic should get their salaries. Doctors and other employees of the civic bodies are not getting their salaries due to "mismanagement and corruption in MCD (municipal corporations of Delhi)", the Aam Aadmi Party leader alleged. The South Delhi Municipal Corporation, East Delhi Municipal Corporation and North Delhi Municipal Corporation are all BJP-led civic bodies.

Delhi police arrests 15, lodges 17 FIRs over posters critical of PM



Delhi Police has registered 17 FIRs and arrested 15 people for allegedly pasting posters critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in connection with the vaccination drive against COVID-19, officials said on Saturday. The posters reading "Modiji humare bachon ki vaccine videsh kyu bhej diya (PM why did you send vaccines of our children to

foreign countries?)" were pasted in several parts of the city, they said. On Thursday, police received information about the posters following which senior officers of the districts were alerted. And based on further complaints, as many as 17 FIRs were registered under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code and other relevant sections including section 3 of the Prevention of Defacement of Property Act across various districts of the Delhi Police, the officials said.

Covid pushes pharma industry growth to 59 per cent in April

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The fresh wave of Covid-19 in the country has pushed up sales of medicines and resulted in exponential growth for the pharmaceutical sector. According to total sales audit data from world's largest pharmaceutical market research firm IMS Health, the Indian Pharma Market (IPM) grew

59 per cent yoy in April, 2021 vs 16 per cent yoy in March, 2021 due to the low base effect in April, 2020 and sharp surge in Covid-19-related sales. On the MAT (moving annual turnover) basis, IPM grew 9.6 per cent, primarily driven by pricing growth of 4.3 per cent and new product launch growth of

4.6 per cent. Volume growth was muted at 0.8 per cent. According to a report from Emkay Global Financial Services, all major therapies posted high double-digit growth in April 21. Within Chronic therapies, Cardiac therapy grew 22 per cent. Similarly Anti-diabetic therapy grew 10 per cent. VMS (vitamins, minerals and supplements) posted record growth of 80 per cent in April 21 vs 27 per cent in

March 21. The growth in respiratory therapy rebounded sharply at 64 per cent in April 21 after falling for nine consecutive months. As per the brokerage, DRL grew the fastest at 79 per cent yoy followed by Cipla (77 per cent yoy) and Cadila (53 per cent yoy). Sun Pharma, Lupin and Ipca Labs reported growth of 30-52 per cent yoy. Other notable out-

performers are Glenmark (172 per cent), Aristo (77 per cent), Macleods (69 per cent), and Alkem (82 per cent). While IPM growth could be strong in the next couple of months, driven by surging Covid-19-related sales and likely impact of stocking up, we believe growth could normalize as Covid-19 would delay normalization, Emkay said.



Airtel rolls out Covid support initiatives for customers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharti Airtel has rolled out a range of Covid support initiatives for customers by leveraging its digital platform. With this, the telco joins a growing list of companies that have introduced digital tools to help people amid the deadly second wave of the pandemic.

Airtel has integrated easily accessible bouquet of Covid support resources and related information in the Airtel Thanks app's Explore section, the company said in a statement. "Covid SOS aggregates verified and updated contacts

for important supplies such as medicines, oxygen, plasma donors, ambulance, hospital beds, and testing centres. With a few clicks, the platform connects users to these service providers/resources and tries to ensure that users do not have to waste precious time to access this data," the statement said. The information available on 'Covid SOS' is verified by their teams, it said and added the platform is powered by Airtel IQ. "Airtel Thanks users can also book a vaccination slot for themselves and their loved ones through the app," the statement said.

Penna Cement files Rs 1,550 crore IPO papers with Sebi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Penna Cement has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise Rs 1,550 crore through an initial share-sale. The initial public offer (IPO) comprises fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 1,300 crore and an offer for sale of up to Rs 250 crore by the promoter, according to draft red herring prospectus. Proceeds from fresh issue will be used to pay debts of Rs 550 crore. Besides, Rs 105 crore will be utilised for funding capital expenditure requirements for its KP Line II Project and Rs 80 crore towards upgrading its raw grinding and cement mill in Talaricheruvu. In addition, the company will use Rs 130 crore and Rs 110 crore towards setting up a waste heat recovery plant in Tandur and Talaricheruvu respectively. Hyderabad-based Penna Cement has a strong brand recall in southern and western states of the country. It oper-



ates out of four integrated manufacturing facilities and two grinding units across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra with an aggregate capacity of 10 MMTPA as of March, 2021 and the capacity is expected to reach 16.5 MMTPA by FY24. In fiscal 2021, the company's reported a profit of Rs 152.07 crore and revenue from operations stood at Rs 2,476.39 crore. Edelweiss Financial Services

Ltd, Axis Capital Ltd, ICICI Securities Ltd, JM Financial Ltd and Yes Securities (India) Ltd are the merchant bankers that will advise the company on the IPO. This is the company's second attempt to go public. Earlier in November 2018, Penna Cement had filed draft papers with Sebi to float Rs 1,550-crore initial share-sale and had received its clearance too. However, the cement player did not launch the

Power consumption grows 19% in 1st fortnight of May

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power consumption in the country grew by around 19 per cent in the first fortnight of May to 51.67 billion units (BU) over the same period last year, showing recovery in industrial and commercial demand of electricity, according to the power ministry data.

Power consumption in the first fortnight of May 2020 was 43.55 BU. The power consumption in the entire month of May last year was 102.08 BU.

During the first fortnight of May this year (from May 1 to 14), peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of 168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded growth of over 15 per cent over 146.54 GW (peak met) recorded in the same period in 2020 (on May 13, 2020).

The power consumption in April grew nearly 40 per cent to 118.08 BU. Power consumption in April 2020 had dropped to 84.55 BU from 110.11 BU in the same month in 2019, mainly because of fewer economic activities following the imposition of lockdown by the government in the last week of March 2020 to



contain the spread of deadly COVID-19. The power consumption also fell in May 2020 to 102.08 BU from 120.02 BU in May 2019.

Similarly, peak power demand met or the highest power supply in a day also slumped to 132.73 GW in April last year from 176.81 GW in the same month in 2019, showing the impact of lockdown on economic activities.

The fewer economic activities also resulted in a fall of peak power demand in May 2020 to 166.22 GW from 182.53 GW in May 2019.

Taking to PTL, Davinder Sandhu, Advisor Primus Partners said, "Energy is

derived demand, and with onset of summer and the productive pre-monsoon cycle of the Indian economy, an uptick is always expected." Sandhu who is also a former Advisor at World Bank said, "Both energy demand and supply have risen by 25-40 per cent over March-May 2021, with thermal PLFs (plant load factor or capacity utilisation) rising to 75 per cent and more, after many quarters. This is aided by the opening of the economy in Q1 (January-March 2021), with rising economic output as well as sharp uptick in exports." The second wave of lockdowns will certainly impact economic activity, and in turn, energy demand.

Nicholas Healthcare to augment supply of medicines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nicholas Healthcare Limited, a pioneer of the global healthcare ecosystem, announces to have augmented its supply of critical care medicines, medical consumables, and lifesaving medical equipment/ devices like Medical Oxygen Concentrator amid an unprecedented surge in Covid case in the country when HCPs are continuously grappling with the shortage of these essential medical essentials to provide timely treatment to patients.

MONEY MATTERS

Amazon launches new free video streaming service miniTV on app



Amazon on Saturday said it has launched new free video streaming service 'miniTV' in India - a global first - that will allow users to watch curated content across web-series, tech news, food, beauty and fashion, among others and will be ad-supported. "miniTV has professionally created and curated content across web-series, comedy shows, tech

news, food, beauty, fashion and more... With the launch of miniTV, Amazon.in shopping app is now a single destination for customers to shop from millions of products, make payments and watch free entertainment videos," a statement said. While miniTV is available on Amazon's shopping app for Android phones, it will be extended to iOS app and mobile web over the coming months, it added. With this launch, Amazon has two video entertainment offerings in the country - miniTV and Prime Video. miniTV is free and does not require a separate app, while Prime Video requires a Prime subscription and offers content like Amazon Originals, movies and TV shows in English and 9 Indian languages. miniTV will offer content from studios like TVF, Pocket Aces; comedians such as Ashish Chanchlani, Amit Bhadana, and Shruti Arjun Anand; tech expert Trakin Tech; fashion and beauty experts such as Sejal Kumar and Malvika Sittani; and food-related content from Kabita's Kitchen and Gobble. Content consumption has grown manifold in the last few years, especially amid the pandemic.

Biocon chief compares vaccine situation to arranged marriage

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Biocon chief Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw has compared the COVID-19 vaccination situation in the country to an arranged marriage.

Mazumdar-Shaw, the executive chairperson of biotechnology major Biocon, in a lighter vein compared the two while bringing out the confusion that currently prevails regarding the entire vaccination process.

"The vaccine situation in India is like arranged marriage. First u r not ready, then u don't like any, then u don't get any! Those who got are unhappy thinking may be the other one would have been better. Those who did not get any are willing to get any one," Mazumdar-Shaw tweeted on Saturday.

Earlier this week, Mazumdar-Shaw had expressed concern over shortage of COVID-19 vaccines and sought better transparency from the government regarding their availability so



that citizens could patiently wait for their turn. "Very concerned about why vaccines are in such short supply. Can we please know where the 70 million doses are being deployed every month? @MoHFW_INDIA We need better transparency to avoid the suspense. If a timetable of supplies is made public people can patiently wait their turn," Mazumdar-Shaw had tweeted while tagging the Health Ministry. India has announced expansion of its COVID-19 vaccination drive by allowing its large population aged over 18 to get inoculated from May 1. Various states including Delhi, have complained about

lack of vaccines and questioned the Centre's policy in dealing with the situation. While the vaccine manufacturers continue to produce and dispatch lots, there remains a huge gap between demand and supply of the critical medication. As per Health Ministry data, the cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 18 crore mark. The ministry said 42,58,756 beneficiaries in the 18-45 age group have taken the first dose since the start of phase-3 of the vaccination drive against COVID-19 with 3,28,216 beneficiaries receiving their first dose in the last 24 hours. In the 45-60 age group, 5,68,05,772 people have received their first dose while 87,56,313 beneficiaries have got their second dose, and among beneficiaries above 60 years of age, 5,43,17,646 have got their first dose while 1,75,53,918 have taken their second dose.

Tech Mahindra appoints Meghna Hareendran as Wellness Officer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT services major Tech Mahindra on Saturday said it has appointed Meghna Hareendran as its 'Wellness Officer' with immediate effect. The new role has been created to institutionalise holistic wellness of all associates, and to ensure the access to medicine, hospitals and other medical supplies amidst the Covid crisis, while maintaining the mental well-being of the Tech Mahindra family. Hareendran will work as a central programme manager to take care of the healthcare needs of the associates, it added. She will also be responsible for managing relationships with Tech Mahindra partners to ensure a comprehensive suite of wellness offerings to them.

CIFCL's standalone Q4 net at Rs 31.97 cr

PNS ■ CHENNAI

Cholamandalam Financial Holdings Ltd has reported a standalone profit of Rs 31.97 crore for the quarter ending March 31, 2021. The city-based Murugappa Group company registered standalone profit of Rs 25.36 crore during the corresponding quarter last. For the year ending March 31, 2021, standalone profits stood at Rs 21.71 crore against Rs 83.33 crore a year ago. The standalone total income for the quarter under review grew to Rs 50.74 crore from Rs 28.66 crore registered in the same quarter last fiscal. For the year ending March 31, 2021, the standalone total income was Rs 58.14 crore against Rs 90.90 crore last year. The company, in a statement, said the standalone profit after tax for the year ending March 31, 2021 was lower on account of lower dividend income and interest cost recognised on borrowing made for equity investment in a subsidiary company.

Cholamandalam MS General Insurance Company Ltd, a subsidiary in general insurance, registered a gross written premium of Rs 4,705 crore in FY '21 against Rs 4,824 crore last year. Cholamandalam MS Risk Services Ltd, a joint venture company, registered a total income of Rs 43.59 crore for the year ending March 31, 2021 against Rs 48.90 crore registered in the same period last year. Cholamandalam Investment and Finance Company Ltd said it disbursed Rs 26,043 crore in FY '21 compared to Rs 29,091 crore last year. The decline was primarily due to lower disbursements in Q1 and Q2 of FY 2021 due to COVID-19 enforced lockdown, the company said. The board of directors, which met on Friday, recommended a final dividend of 55 per cent being Rs 0.55 per equity share of face value of Re 1 of the company for the year ending March 31, 2021 - subject to shareholders approval, the company said.

Zensar to acquire US-based M3bi in a \$30.6 million deal



Zensar on Saturday said it will acquire US-based M3bi in a USD 30.6 million deal, a move that will help the Indian IT firm augment its thrust in data engineering, analytics, artificial intelligence/machine learning and advanced engineering services. Zensar Technologies Ltd will acquire the entire share capital of M3bi Pvt Ltd (M3bi India), and Zensar Technologies Inc will acquire the entire share capital of M3bi LLC, a statement said. This acquisition will be completely funded by internal accruals, it added. Zensar, in a regulatory filing, said the transaction entails an "aggregate upfront payment of USD 21.60 million and performance-based deferred payments over 36 months not exceeding USD 9 million". The deal is expected to close on or before August 31, 2021 or upon fulfillment of closing conditions, whichever is earlier, it added. Post-acquisition, M3bi will continue to be managed by co-founders Anir Khandekar and Suresh Potturi. Revenue from operations of M3bi, LLC was about USD 26.75 million for the calendar year ended December 31, 2020. M3bi was founded in April 2010 and is headquartered in Scottsdale, Arizona in the US. M3bi has 445 professionals across the US and India. The addition of M3bi reinforces Zensar's new strategy which focuses on areas of market opportunities that allow Zensar to concentrate organization resources, investments and alliances to deliver maximum business impact, Zensar said in its statement. In particular, M3bi strongly augments Zensar's thrust in the data engineering, analytics and AI/ML and advanced engineering services, it added.

SKF India posts 39% rise in Mar qtr PAT at Rs 105 crore



SKF India reported a 39.1 per cent growth in profit after tax (PAT) at Rs 104.83 crore in the March quarter of FY2020-21. The Swedish auto component maker had posted a PAT of Rs 75.34 crore in Q4 of FY2019-20. Revenue from operations rose 38.9 per cent to Rs 847.53 crore during the quarter under review as compared to Rs 610.21 crore in the corresponding January-March period of FY2019-20. For FY2020-21, PAT stood at Rs 297.69 crore, a growth of 3 per cent over Rs 288.99 crore profit clocked in FY 2020, while the revenue from operations during the same period slipped 6 per cent to Rs 2,670.73 crore from Rs 2,841.58 crore in the year-ago period, SKF India said. The company expects spending and activity levels to gain momentum through the year as the macro environment improves and it remains focused on supporting environment disciplined on its strategic priorities, improving operating efficiencies and optimizing costs through digitalization efforts, faster among others, SKF India Managing Director Maneesh Bhatnagar said. "We were pleased with our performance this quarter, achieving a 38.9 per cent increase in revenue and a 51.1 per cent increase in PBT year-over-year. As we look to expand our earnings potential, we will continue to focus on the execution of our growth strategy and deep engagement with our customers and suppliers," he said.

NTPC augments Covid care facilities, adds 500 O₂ beds

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned NTPC has augmented COVID care facilities across the country and added more than 500 oxygen supported beds besides 1,100 isolation beds at its plants in different states. The company has set up Covid care centres with facilities of 200 oxygen supported beds and 140 isolation beds in Badarpur, Noida and Dadri. It has also set up a 500-bed COVID Health centre at Sundargarh in Odisha where 20 ventilators have been provided. "NTPC Ltd has added more than 500 beds with oxygen support and more than

1,100 isolation beds across plants in various states to provide support to the critical Covid care," the statement said. Besides the Covid care centres that are operational in Dadri, Korba, Kaniha, Ramagundam, Vindhyachal, Barh & Badarpur, NTPC will be setting up additional facilities at North Karanpura, Bongaigaon and Solapur as well. Other hospitals are on their way to increase the number of beds with oxygen facilities, it said. Meanwhile, NTPC has inoculated over 70,000 employees and associates across its operations. The massive vaccination drive continues across plant locations.

GST Council to meet 1st time in '21

PNS ■ MUMBAI



The 43rd GST council meeting coming in the backdrop of the fresh and more deadly Covid wave sweeping the country, is expected to announce a few Covid relief measures particularly on compliance matters. It may also announce a few measures to correct the inverted duty while discuss the compensation cess dues arising in 2021-22 due to a possible shortfall in cess collections. Two other important items including lowering of GST rates for two wheelers and bringing natural gas into the indirect tax fold may also be included in the agenda for discussion. "Smt @nsitharaman will chair the 43rd GST Council

meeting via video conferencing at 11 AM in New Delhi on 28th May 2021. The meeting will be attended by MOS Shri @ianuragthakur besides Finance Ministers of States & UTs and Senior officers from Union Government & States," the office of the finance minister said in a tweet.

The GST Council has not met since October last year when the panel of finance ministers discussed GST compensation and the borrowing formula offered by the Centre towards compensating states for GST shortfall. The 43rd meeting of the council is expected to again

discuss the compensation issue for the current year but sources said it may also take a few steps to correct inverted duty structure without pursuing any increase in GST rates or move towards converging GST to a three rate structure. Sources said that the council may at the next meeting also take up two other important items including lowering of GST rates for two wheelers and bringing natural gas into the indirect tax fold. A top source in the finance ministry said that inverted duty correction, GST cut on two wheelers and inclusion of natural gas into GST fold are on the agenda and hopefully the council will offer some solution that is in the best interest of all stakeholders.



You are only as beautiful as the many beautiful things you do for others without expectation
Janelle Monae



The impact of the pandemic on the youth is disruptive. While they are actively helping others, they are also simultaneously dealing with immense emotional turmoil of their own, writes Dr CHANDNI TUGNAIT, as she suggests ways to move beyond it to create a life outside of it

THE FIGHT FOR SANITY

The present scenario, with the rise in Covid-19 cases and deaths, is nothing short of a nightmare. Most people are experiencing mixed emotions and a lingering feeling of, "I don't feel like doing anything". This is not only because of the news and information overload on social media, but also the fact that people are losing their near and dear ones without as much of a hint.

The pain, overwhelm, fears, anger, social isolation and uncertainty are not only impacting the youth but even the kids. The years 2020 and 2021 have changed not just how we live or work but also how our children study and play. While the working youth seem to be grappling with the situation, whether it is loss of a job, business, medical facility, or life, the kids are a witness to it all. The impact is much more than what meets the eye. The confused feelings, unprocessed emotions, unclear thoughts and panicky actions are leaving a deep impact on our mental and emotional health as well.

The immediate and the long-term mental health impacts of the pandemic on the kids is difficult to estimate. However, the cases of anxiety, stress and depression amongst children between the age group of 5-16 years has seen a huge spike in the last one year. While initially they felt relieved with the online classes, the severity of the pandemic and the impact of the changes in their lives (and that of their parents) soon began to dawn upon them. The common complaints that I get from parents these days is lack of focus, lack of physical exercise, over-eating, irritability, anxiety, bouts of anger, fears and sadness in kids.

Ironically, all this is being experienced by the parents as well. No matter how we conduct ourselves in front of our children, they know exactly what is happening around us. The TV, news, social media, conversations on phone and with each other, the quarantine of a family member, life-threatening situations, the panic on our faces — they can sense it all. The schools are rushing with the syllabus online because the education of the child is important but are we considerate towards their mental health? How are the current experiences and unprocessed emotions going to impact these children as adults?

Our mental health impacts how we respond, feel, think and act. Our behaviour, decision-making and physical health is all linked to our mental health. Hence, it is essential to give love and assurance and impart coping skills to not only the adults but also to the children. The pandemic has reshaped the world beyond imagination. The suffering in India has gone to the level of basic requirements of food, shelter, medical facility and transport not being met for a large part of the population. The situation is grim with high levels of insecurity and chaos.

Of late, there is propensity for blame towards the authorities. It's never easy to lose a loved one, never. The fear, anger, blame, guilt — the whole gamut of emotions is all justified. But what is also important is to pause for a moment and accept all these emotions and begin to process them. Situation is grim for everyone (in some way or the other). What we need in today's times is prayer, compassion, love and gratitude. The impact of the pandemic on the youth is disruptive. While they are actively helping others, they are also simultaneously dealing

with immense emotional turmoil of their own.

The fact is that as a country we do not have a strong medical infrastructure *vis-à-vis* our population. We all know this (we knew it all along). But what we didn't know is the severity of the virus and how it could take away our loved ones away from us, forever, in a matter of hours. We are all guilty at some level. We all have to take the ownership for the present situation in order to change it. Despite knowing the safety protocol, a large part of the population didn't follow it. Do we always need a lockdown to exhibit appropriate behaviour? Do we know someone who doesn't wear masks, someone who went for the Diwali party at a friend's house with 20 others, someone who couldn't wait to travel to Goa, Kerala, Maldives, someone who refuted the existence of covid all together?

Now is not the time to find faults with self or others but to change the focus to what good is happening around us and how can we make it better. The brain is extremely powerful in amplifying whatever we focus upon. Till we keep complaining about our present circumstances, our mind will focus on it. The more we talk about it, write about it or feel negative about it, the more we reinforce the same neural pathways in our brain that keep adding to the misery. To change this, let's focus on the good around us.

Look around, there are many people trying to help with oxygen cylinders, connections in hospitals for beds, arranging plasma, food, support, counselling, therapies and more. Not everyone is trying to bribe, blackmail or take advantage of the situation. It is commendable how the youth is also coming forward to offer assistance, structure communities and make a difference.

Research shows that over 70% of the youth is deeply traumatised with the uncertainty the pandemic has created whether it is with respect to life, relationships, social interactions, forms of expression, health and lives of their loved ones or the disruption in future prospects for education and employment for the youth.

In addition to the grief and loss, there is an impending feeling of doom as over 43% of youth are uncertain about their future career prospects. Many even contemplate suicide. This darkness remains unnoticed as we are fighting to survive this situation.

Despite all odds, the youth is stepping up, raising their voice, offering support, structuring communities, enabling groups and volunteering in ways more than one to fight the situation.

While we should offer them social and psychological support to deal with all this, we should also come up with measures to protect this generation from being permanently scarred by this crisis — physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, financially and behaviourally. Initiatives by the government as well as private sector organisations will help in the long run though immediate support in the form of counselling, therapy, and open communication can go a long way.

The future of our nation lies with our youth and it's of grave importance that we do not take this lightly by letting their life be in a quandary. There are many people bracing and surviving the virus amidst all the deaths, there



RESEARCH SHOWS THAT OVER 70% OF THE YOUTH IS DEEPLY TRAUMATISED WITH THE UNCERTAINTY THE PANDEMIC HAS CREATED WHETHER IT IS WITH RESPECT TO LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS, SOCIAL INTERACTIONS, FORMS OF EXPRESSION, HEALTH AND LIVES OF THEIR LOVED ONES OR THE DISRUPTION IN FUTURE PROSPECTS FOR EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT FOR THE YOUTH

are many who are offering relentless care and prayers for humanity at large. There is help and compassion in many places, if not all. Hold onto that and allow yourself to be a conduit for more compassion, gratitude and assistance in any way possible instead of fear and uncertainty.

Coronavirus is probably going to be here for a long time. But we have to move beyond it to create a life outside of it, responsibly.

Some points to take into consideration are:

- **Process emotions, don't vent nor bottle them up:** Allow open communication to address the stressors. Listen and express deeply without judgments and in case of chronic stress or anxiety, seek support from an expert.
- **Respond, don't react:** There is already a lot going on in everyone's lives. Don't snap at people at home or even on other people's social media feed. We can share our views without attacking others.
- **Operate from love and compassion and not fears and anger:** Say a kind word, offer support, just hold the space for others to be themselves and accept the situation but do not cause panic with minute-by-minute update of statistics.
- **Be responsible, not reckless:** Follow the safety protocol. Even if you have recovered from Covid, do not act as if all is well. Our actions inspire many others and by being responsible we save not just ourselves but many people around us. The parties, social gatherings, important meetings, can all wait or be done online. Life is precious.
- **Help in any way possible, don't panic:** When someone you know is in a crisis, get valid connects, check the sources, be mindful, take precaution, help in every way possible and pray for the best. This is all we can do

currently. Also, limit the news and social media intake to up to 15-30 minutes a day to be well apprised of the situation and not be engulfed by it.

- **Do your bit, refrain from judging self and others:** Judgment only takes us away from action thereby delaying results. Be proactive and sensitive to the battles everyone is going through.
- **Take care of yourself:** You can't pour from an empty cup. So, take care of yourself — eating habits, sleep, exercise, breathing and mindfulness practices, get vaccinated and be in the attitude of gratitude.
- **Ask:** "What can I do today to make a difference?" instead of complaining.

It's imperative we come together from the space of love, compassion and gratitude to fight the pandemic. There's no other way.

No act is small. No prayer is negligible. No support is trivial. Looking around and complaining and blaming will only cause more pressure on our emotional, mental and physical well-being.

Operate from awareness and take care of self and others. We are undeniably in a crisis and there are faults at every level — from the root to the top. However, this is not the time to find faults and indulge in blame-game.

It's time to focus on "what can I do to make a difference today?" and then purely from a space of compassion, ACT; without worrying about the results.

Will we be able to save the world? I don't know. But what I do know is that with that one act a day, and thirty acts a month, we all can create ripples of change. It all matters. Choose change over complaints. We always have a choice.

The writer is a renowned Psychotherapist & the founder of Gateway of Healing and Life Artistry



THE PRACTICE OF
FORGIVENESS IS OUR MOST
IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO
THE HEALING OF THE WORLD
— MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

THE POTENCY OF SOUND

A *mantra* is an instrument of the mind that helps us to concentrate, intensify and spiritualise our consciousness, writes HINGORI

Mantra is a sound, a certain utterance or a syllable. Today, modern science sees the whole existence as reverberations of energy, different levels of vibrations. Where ever there is a vibration, there is bound to be a sound. That means, the whole existence is a kind of sound, or a complex amalgamation of sounds — the whole existence is an amalgamation of multiple *mantras*. The yogic scriptures often compare mantras to a boat or a bridge that an aspirant can use to cross the sea of delusion created by the external world, which we call *Maya*, and to reach the centre of consciousness within. Yogis say that a *mantra* is like an eternal friend who accompanies the meditator even after death, lighting the path in the realm where the light of the sun and the moon cannot penetrate.

In understanding what a *mantra* is and how a *Mantra* works, it is helpful to look at its translation. The word *mantra* is derived from two Sanskrit words, the first part is *man*, which means mind; and the second part is *tra*, which is the root of the Sanskrit word meaning tool or instrument. A *mantra* is therefore literally, an instrument or tool of the mind that helps us to concentrate, intensify and spiritualise our consciousness.

MANTRA VIDYA AND AURA

Chanting silently in the mind in a meditative pose helps increase the aura.

At *gurukuls*, students were taught higher-order *mantras* that were specifically created by sages of ancient India. *Mantras* generate sound vibrations that add to the aura or energy levels of those who recite them. The *mantras*

of the Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Jain and other faiths, also fall into this category. However, *mantras* can be used positively as well as negatively. Positively, they can be used to heal, defend against spiritual attacks and strengthen one's aura. They also form a telepathic connection between the seeker and the collective power of the deity or concept to which they are attributed. If the *mantra* is attributed to planets, it will connect to their rays as well. For example, the *guru mantra* will connect to the power and concept of *guru*, including the rays of Jupiter. If the *mantras* are attributed to a deceased saint, they will home in to his energy field, which exists in an ethereal dimension.

Mantras would be used in specific circumstances and were to be recited while sitting in a specific *asana* or seat. For example, the *Gayatri Mantra* was best recited while seated on a *kusha* grass mat or deer-skin. The more advanced version of the *mantra*, known as the *Mahagayatri Mantra*, was to be recited while immersed in water. Several such permutations and combinations are usable in *mantra vidya* (the science of *mantras*). The intent of such technicalities is to ensure that the energy vibrations of the *mantras* are optimally absorbed by the human body and little is dissipated into the atmosphere. A part of the dissipation adds to the aura or energy of the location. Some of it would be absorbed by the *asana* or seat. It is for this reason that *asanas* are bad conductors of electricity, that neither absorb nor discharge it quickly. As it is not possible to perform all the suggested *asanas* on animal skins, we use blankets, pure cotton sheets or cotton mattresses, instead.

THE MULTIPLICITY OF
MANTRA RECITATION
ENABLES ONE TO
CONNECT TO THE
RELEVANT POWER AT
THE MACROCOSMIC
LEVEL AND AWAKEN
THE REPRESENTATION
OF THAT POWER IN
THE MICROSCOPIC
SELF. THEREBY
CONNECTING THE
OUTER AND INNER
SOURCES OF THE
SAME POWER WITHIN
ONE'S SELF

MANTRAS AND THE DIVINITY OF SOUND

A Japanese scientist, Dr. Masaru Emoto, conducted an interesting experiment on the effect that sound vibrations had on water. Emoto observed that when water was exposed to music from Bach and Mozart, beautiful crystals formed in it. But when negative intentions were directed its way, the water formed malformed crystals. He concluded that sound is vibration; and positive sounds have healing energy. His research also showed that thoughts emit vibrations at frequencies we are yet to determine, and they too have the power to heal. The question that begs an answer is: 'How do *mantras* work?'

The knowledge of sound affecting matter is not new. Chanting *mantras* has been a part of Indian spiritual practices for thousands of years. The ancient *rishis* (sages) of India had a deep awareness of the potency of sound.

According to Quantum Physicists, whether audible or not, everything has a sound, a distinct and unique vibration. This sound is called resonance, the particular frequency at which an object naturally vibrates. In his book 'Silent Pulse', George Burr Leonard writes, "At the heart of each of us, whatever our imperfections, there exists a silent pulse of perfect rhythm, made up of wave forms and resonances, which is absolutely individual and unique, and yet which connects us to everything in the universe."

Sanskrit, the language in which many powerful *mantras* are composed, is described as a vibrational language. The ancient Indian spiritual masters devised *mantras* to vibrate

at particular frequencies. Each *mantra* is composed to have a distinct effect. When you chant a *mantra*, you send vibrations into the universe which creates a powerful ripple effect. *Mantra* recitation also helps you tune in to the universal sound that began creation and is still vibrating — the *Anahat*. Scientific research suggests, chanting *mantras* causes the left and right hemispheres of the brain to synchronise. It also helps oxygenate the brain, reduce our heart rate, blood pressure and assist in creating calm brainwave activity.

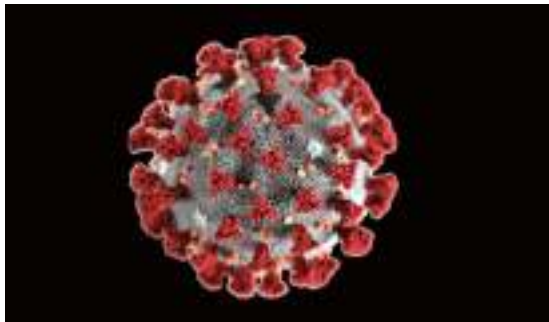
Mantras can rearrange your molecular structure and adjust your experience through the subtle vibrations the chanting causes in your being. This re-alignment allows you to experience the benefits of the vibration. The more focused you are in chanting a *mantra*, the greater will be its impact on your consciousness. When you think negatively, you create a subtle vibration with the negative thought. The longer you think negatively, the more damaging it is for your mind and body.

With every passing day, there is more scientific data to corroborate what the ancient *rishis* had a deep understanding of — sound has power. Words and thoughts, spoken and unspoken, are potent tools. Being aware of this will allow you to pay close attention to the things you say and think of yourself, and how these words and thoughts, especially the negative ones, impact you. This awareness may serve as a trigger to change the negative patterns into positive ones. It may also help you to let go of habits that impede your spiritual growth.

The writer is the author of Hingori Sutras series of spiritual books



HIDDEN SOULS
PRAMOD PATHAK



Time to be honest

Let's be honest to admit that we have not been able to handle the pandemic as effectively as we should have and perhaps could have. While citing reasons may produce long list of responses that were found missing, if we try to get to the roots, we may come to just one conclusion. More than anything else it was a failure of character. Character of those responsible for policy making that is the political class. But the bureaucratic machinery was also equally responsible for not applying their mind, the job they are supposed to do. It was also the failure of character of the common people who acted irresponsible enough to let Corona flourish the second time. What an irony. We knew what was required. Yet, we did what was not required. The point is that this is not the first time a pandemic like this has dealt a bloody blow. When are we going to learn? Maybe not as long as we are not honest to admit our mistakes, learn from them and let those who know the job do it. This is a typical Indian scenario. We always find the wrong man for the right place. You need nothing else to invite a disaster. And so, it was. Saying that the common man erred may pass on some portion of the blame to the scapegoat but that does not absolve the political class of their sin. Governance was more important than forming governments but people preferred the latter. It took a higher judiciary to point out how callous some institutions have become. If people are honest to admit mistakes and learn from them things could improve in the future. But hoping this is a tall order. The chaos that has set in reminds of an old Gandhian quote — When wealth is lost nothing is lost, when health is lost something is lost, but when character is lost everything is lost. The point he wanted to emphasise was that character is the all-important attribute. Character can help regain health and wealth even if we lose these. But the present times have no room for character, as wealth and health occupy the front seat. The results are there to see. We still can make up for the lost ground if we pick up the moral courage to own our mistakes. But for that there is need to shed the ego, the king size ego that always tells us that we are infallible. As the political class continues to pat its own back, situation is going from bad to worse. Time for some soul searching. Gandhiji had talked about seven social sins in his weekly newspaper Young India on October 22, 1925. It would be worthwhile recollecting them, which were — Wealth without work, Pleasure without conscience, Knowledge without character, Commerce without morality, Science without humanity, Worship without sacrifice and Politics without principles. While all those sins are responsible for the present-day situation, it may be prudent to identify the deadliest of the sins talked by Gandhi 95 years ago. It is politics without principles that has become the biggest curse of the present times. It is politics that is at the helm of everything. Though many definitions of politics are there power is Central to all of them. It is obsession with power that is the root cause of all evil. While thinking of principled politics may sound utopian only that can lead us out of the morass we are in.

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KRISHNA'S CONSORTS

Param Purusha Krishna's multiple wives are symbolically viewed as the different forms of *Prakriti*, writes DR. ASHA GOSWAMI

The sources of Krishna saga contain varied accounts that speak of his multiple marriages. It is said Krishna was married to 16,100 damsels. Most of these marriages were a consequence of his military expeditions in the far-east of India, the modern Assam. Krishna's eight other marriages are referred to in the *Puranas*. While most sources are silent over Krishna's other marriages, his marriage to Rukmini, his chief queen, is cited in almost all the sources of Krishna-saga — an argument cited by many scholars to bracket him with the popular monogamists of the age like Shri Rama, Nala, Satyavan and the others.

These scholars, to prove their view, quote a verse from the Mahabharata, which equates Shri Krishna with the famous monogamists of the age. It is said, Krishna carried away Rukmini moved by her deep love and desire to marry him. Later, they duly wed at Dwarka. Next, during the *syamantak-gem* episode Krishna is cited to have married Jambhavati and Satyabhama. Thereafter, it is said Krishna married Kalandi, River Yamuna-incarnate. His marriage to four maidens — Shrutakeerti, Bhadra, Madri and Hemavati is mentioned next.

The river goddess, Kalindi, had begged to marry Krishna, which reflects his influence and power during the *Dvapara*-age. Philosophically interpreting Krishna's personae, it may be stated that Lord Krishna with this bounteous grace undertook the role of a husband to all women, who looked upon him to be their guardian and saviour. At the same time, he is perceived to be the father to all the men of the world [the second role makes the first role of the Lord inevitable].

According to the Yoga system, there are sixteen thousand one hundred nerves which get united at a prime-place near the *Sushmna* nerve, and a Yogi has to hold full



control of them for exercising and carrying out some specific Yogic *sadhanas*. Shri Krishna being an excellent Yogi used to inculcate such austere *sadhanas* by exercising full control over his body with all these nerves. He was styled as the Lord or the *Swami* [husband] and master of these nerves, which probably was taken to imply his wives.

In the symbolic context, his so many wives also imply his innumerable *Vibhuti* in this world, reference to which is made in the *Vibhuti* — Yoga of Gita (when Krishna tells to Arjuna about this "na asti anto me divyam vibhutanam"). Likewise, his eight chief queens including Rukmani are symbolically treated as implying three qualities of *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas* (in human body); the river Ganges, presiding goddess of the Himalayas, *Samaveda*-mantras personified, soul and the personified [Krishna] patients virtue in itself.

Mythological, the multiple wives of

Krishna represent the *Apsaras* of Heaven in their former lives with as well as the multiple incarnation of goddess Lakshmi. The *Apsaras* assumed their next birth on earth to attain Lord Krishna as their sole husband. Besides, *Param Purusha* Krishna's multiple wives are also symbolically viewed as the different forms of *Prakriti*. In this context, the relation between *Param Purusha* and *Prakriti* corresponds to that between husband and wife. So, Krishna, the god has sixteen thousand one hundred eight forms of *Prakriti* as his wives. Likewise, his eight chief queens are symbolically represent major energies of *Prakriti* known as *Mula* (primary) *Prakriti*, namely — *Tattva*, *Mahat*, *Ahamkara*, *Akasha*, *Vayu*, *Tejas*, *Apas* and *Prithvi*.

The writer, a noted Indologist and authority on Krishnaitic Studies, was a regular contributor to Agenda, The Pioneer. He recently lost her to the pandemic. Her presence in the form of writings will be missed

Thank God, there's God!

God is there to discipline any soul, that does not toe the line. We should be grateful for his protection, writes AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Imagine a world without God. Everyone is on their own. There is no *karmaphala* principle. Everything is happening by chance, because with no God, who will enforce the cause and effect rule which is also known as the *karmaphala* principle. Some people get together like in a dictatorship and control the masses by terrorising them.

You might say that this is happening in several countries, as in the past. But you must remember that the fiercest of the dictators eventually bit the dust. So what does one make of that? Simple, there is someone far superior than any dictator howsoever powerful he/she may be. That is God. We are blessed to have God oversee everything.

Regarding their life span, no dictator could survive for long. However, there are souls who live much beyond hundred years. Some of these special souls live even beyond that. To my knowledge there is a saint who is said to be five hundred years plus old. He comes to attend the 'Kumbha Mela' every twelve years. That is how they have estimated his age. He lives in the Himalayas. He is one example, I know of. But, there must be others who have lived for longer years. How does it happen? Because God allows them this privilege. They may wish not to be liberated just yet, having qualified for such a privilege. God can allow them; and only God can, because such souls benefit the mankind by their presence.

To understand this phenomenon, we must get the hang of the cosmic design. There is God, who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. He is the basis of everything. Everything revolves around Him. He is the one who creates, sets rules ('*maryadas*'), which everyone is expect-



ed to follow. Those who do are rewarded and those who do not, get punished.

These rewards and punishments are not instantaneous. The Lord Himself sets the example of following all *maryadas*. Then, there are all of us, souls, all equal. Yes, our material or otherwise bodies differ as also where we are placed in the hierarchy which is based upon our '*karmas*', good or bad. Our smallness is intrinsic, but this does not prevent us from achieving very big tasks like some scientists do or enlightened saints do. Our smallness also does not prevent some of us from becoming despots, for which we are punished in due course. As the arrangement is eternal, there is no rush for anything. All divine actions are well thought out and absolutely fair.

Back to some souls turning rogue and causing mayhem with assistance of some other willing souls, their smallness comes in the way and they are helplessly punished. Therefore, there is no scope of any soul becoming big at any time;

God is the only big soul, and will eternally remain so. This uniform smallness of all souls also excludes giving unfair advantage to any particular soul based on different sizes of their bodies, they being temporary.

God is there to discipline any soul, that does not toe the line, and we should be grateful for the protection granted by the all-powerful God. The system is not complicated. You have done pious deeds and earned privileges. You are expected to make good use of them to make progress in the eternal journey. If these are misused, punishment is on the way once the good deeds have run out. We shouldn't get fooled by some years of someone's reign of terror; punishment is coming but in a logical way — the *karmaphala* way.

In conclusion, we can state that there is the omnipotent God to both protect us and reward us, some rogue souls notwithstanding.

Bishnoi is a spiritual writer and can be reached at spiritual@ajitbishnoi.com

YOUNG ONES ON TARGET

While the second wave of COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc, doctors and experts are predicting the onset of the third wave, a killer for children. MUSBA HASHMI reports on how, in the absence of a paediatric vaccine, children can be protected. But for that a robust paediatric healthcare system is crucial



We are stuck right in the middle of what appears to be a very lethal second wave of COVID-19. With not less than 3.5 lakh cases per day, the curve seems to not flatten any time soon. However, the horror doesn't end here. Doctors, scientists and experts have started predicting the third wave of COVID-19 which is expected to wreak further havoc. More so, because it may hit children in a hard way. While this is a major cause of worry, the question here is how prepared are we to tackle the upcoming third wave? The answer might not be what we want to hear.

"Viruses hunt for a susceptible population. With schools closed presently, children will be that group once the educational institutes reopen. This will bring on the third wave which will hit children big time," Dr Arvind Taneja, MBBS, MD (Paediatrics), Diplomat of the American Board of the Paediatrics, Fellowship — Infectious Diseases and Chief Advisor-Senior Consultant, Paediatrics, Rainbow Children's Hospital, tells you.

In the absence of an effective vaccine for children, they become the most susceptible group and masking and sanitising is the only way out.

"When 70 to 85 per cent of the population is immunised 'herd immunity' kicks in to protect people, especially children. Till then masks, social distancing continues to be the norm for children too," he advises.

The need, he says, is to speed up vaccine trials in children. "If adults vaccinated are safe so should children be. We have experienced this with polio, measles, mumps, rubella live viral vaccines for 60 years and viral influenza for 40 years in infants as young as months old," Taneja adds and tells you that pediatric trials of vaccines are expected to be completed by October-December.

"However the onset of the third is wave unpredictable," he says.

The disappointing fact is that we haven't emphasised enough on paediatric care and as a result we are lacking in it.

"India's preparation for paediatric COVID-19 is woefully inadequate. We have very few paediatric hospitals in the country, very few paediatric critical care specialists and pediatric trained nurses. In order to be prepared for the third wave, each major and medium sized city in India should have at least one dedicated children's hospital to care for this fragile population so that we are ready when and if catastrophe such as COVID-19 strikes. This is expected to happen in the third wave," he tells you.

However, the silver lining is that we may expect a decline in cases by May end, as per the doctors.

"According to a study, we may

expect a decline in cases by the end of May in most States. There could be one or two more peaks of Coronavirus cases but they may not be as huge as the current wave. Different States may see peaks at different times. The prediction is that we may see a declining trend by end of this week in India all together. But if we are to check as a nation, with all cumulative figures, we are either at our peak or are very close to it. Different states will have different trajectories," Dr Yash Javeri, Critical Care, Anesthesia and Emergency Medicine, Regency Superspecialty Hospital, Lucknow, tells you.

The third wave, he says, may hit a few States in the next two-three months.

"If we put strict measures in place, the third wave may not happen at all places or might not be as huge as the second wave. It depends on how effectively control measures are implemented at the local level in the States, districts and cities everywhere. In a few months, when the naturally developed immunity of people or the one with the help of vaccination fades, the virus can strike again. The only thing that can stop the virus from bouncing back is how people are guarding themselves," Arya opines.

He adds that if people follow COVID-appropriate behaviour in the coming months which includes double masking, using hand sanitiser, maintaining social distancing and avoiding going out unnecessarily then we can probably cut the peak.

"If we are able to vaccinate a majority of population then the magnitude of third wave will be decreased," he says.

However, Dr Animesh Arya, Senior consultant in Respiratory Medicine, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute, is of the opinion that it is hard to predict the declining trend. "There is no definite answer as to when we can expect a decline in cases, but epidemiologists feel that with all peaks there will be a fall after two to three months so decline is expected in June. But we can be way off our predictions as in the past," he says.

Many scientists, infectious diseases experts and people from economics and modelling background are trying to predict the third wave, but from a scientific point of view which is based on the previous outbreak of severe epidemics especially Spanish flu, the expectations are all in the press and it may be in September-October. "It is also being assumed children in the age group 12-15 are likely to be affected largely in the third wave as they are naive and the new mutant strain is very potent and it challenges the immunity of people not naturally protected or partially protected by immunisation," Arya explains.

He adds that as we all know building infrastructure of tertiary healthcare is essential to treat sicker patients and prevent mortality, we must not forget that pri-

mary aim to contain disease by early detection, extensive testing of all levels of contacts, isolating them and treating them well ahead of time of going into serious complications and mortality remains the key.


With that being said, there are several doctors who believe that children might not get affected as badly as it is anticipated, because all these predictions are based on statistics. Hence, parents need not angst too much. However, this doesn't mean we can put down our guards. All precautions have to be in place, both in the presence or absence of a vaccine.

"There is no evidence that the third wave will hit children. It can happen, but these are only predictions. Though, the symptoms in children are usually mild till date, but this doesn't affect the importance of vaccination for them. We can't anticipate if the symptoms will turn severe in the third wave. However, in the absence of a paediatric vaccine, the only way out is to take precautions. Immunity is another important thing. Children should be given nutritious food, including lots of green leafy vegetables and fruits in their diet. Keep them hydrated. Coconut water, twice a day, can do the job. Avoid junk at all costs. And last, but not the least, increase their Vitamin C intake," Dr Swetha Reddy P, Consultant Paediatrics, Apollo Telehealth, tells you.

Though several States Governments like Maharashtra have already started prepping up for the third wave by setting up paediatric centres, the need is to increase the number of paediatric hospitals, ICU beds and care centres to tide over the third wave with less fatalities and more recoveries.

"To curb the impact of the third wave, the need of the hour is to increase the number of ICU beds and hospitals for children, get more paediatric nurses on board and also to make sure there are ample doctors to attend to children. Our healthcare infrastructure basically needs a revamp, which is definitely not possible at this hour. Hence, now focus should be on building a robust healthcare system, well-equipped with proper staff so that doctors and nurses don't have to deal with fatigue. The strategy should be to vaccinate 100 per cent children before the third wave hits. Also according to observations the mutants have been severely affecting the children," Dr Aashish Chaudhry, Managing Director and Senior Consultant, Dept of Orthopaedics & Joint Replacement, Aakash Healthcare Super Speciality Hospital, Dwarka, says.

One of the many ways to prevent children from the risk of getting infected is to get the parents vaccinated quickly. "It is not the children that carry the virus, it is their parents or families who pass on the virus. There are no reports to back the



YOUNGVACCINE

- While many companies like Bharat Biotech and Pfizer have started the second and third phase vaccine trials on children from two to 18 years, there is still a long way to go for the vaccines to be available in the market for use.
- The Drugs Controller General of India has cleared phase II and III clinical trials of Covaxin COVID-19 vaccine for children from two to 18 years.
- US biotech firm Novavax had also started clinical trials of its proposed Covid-19 vaccine on children.
- Pfizer is running a trial for children 6 months to 11 years old.
- Moderna is also running a trial in the United States and Canada for kids between 6 months and 11 years old.

fact, but this is an observation that is made during the first and second wave. Hence, in order to prevent children from catching the infection, the elders need to get vaccinated with both doses quickly. With the shortage of vaccine, this might seem a Herculean task, however it is the only feasible option to reduce the impact of a possible third wave," Dr Gitali Bhagwati, Consultant and Head, Department of Microbiology and Infection Control, Dharamshila Narayana Superspeciality Hospital, tells you.

And apart from the rest of the measures, we need to prepare an army of young nurses and doctors on standby to move from one city to the other based on the COVID wave, to support busy hospitals. For this, we need to motivate and encourage them largely, because money alone, won't motivate young people to risk their lives in COVID ICU wards.

And lastly, mildly symptomatic patients should be isolated immediately, in order to reduce the risk of them spreading infection. "In order to flatten the curve and reduce the exposure to vulnerable population of children who are at the higher risk due to lack of herd immunity or passive immunity, mildly symptomatic patients should be provided isolation facilities till they get infection free since the infection rate this time is high," Arya tells you.

How to avoid sun damage after months in lockdown

After a winter of lockdown and with coronavirus restrictions beginning to lift across the UK, many will be hoping for good weather this summer. Restrictions on foreign travel have meant that more people plan to stay within the UK for their summer holidays than ever before. This shift, along with our social lives increasingly being based outside, makes it particularly important that people don't underestimate the risks posed by the sun in the UK. Skin damage caused by the sun is associated with both skin cancer and premature ageing of the skin. The culprit in both cases is ultraviolet radiation (UV). Invisible to human eyes, although it can be seen by many animals, including reindeer, UV sits just beyond the purple end of the visible light spectrum. One reason that it is so harmful is that its energy can be absorbed

by our cells' DNA, causing it to become damaged. If the cell isn't able to repair this DNA damage, this can lead to genetic changes, or mutations, which in turn can cause cancer. Because of their location on the surface of the body, skin cells are the main target for UV damage. The body does have some protection against these harmful effects. Molecular mechanisms within our cells are able to detect and repair the DNA damage before it can cause mutation. When skin cells detect DNA damage, they activate alarm signals that get passed on to pigment-producing cells to tell them to start producing more pigment to help protect against further damage. It's the production of this pigment, melanin, that causes a suntan.

China lands its rover on Mars

China has successfully landed a spacecraft on Mars after surviving "nine minutes of terror", the official media announced on Saturday, becoming the second country in history to have a rover on the red planet. The rover, Zhurong, named after a god of fire and war in Chinese mythology, landed at the pre-selected area in Utopia Planitia on Mars, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. The six-wheel solar-powered Zhurong rover weighs about 240 kilograms and carries six scientific instruments. It will be later deployed from the lander for a three-month mission in search of life on Mars' surface. Tianwen-1, consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a rover, was launched on July 23, 2020. It was the first step in China's planetary exploration of the solar system, with the aim of completing orbiting, landing and roving on the red planet in one mission. The China National Space



Administration (CNSA) said in a statement that its rover has successfully landed on Mars on Saturday after "nine minutes of terror". "The scientific research team confirmed via the telemetry signal sent by the "Zhu Rong" Mars rover that on May 15th, the Tianwen-1 Lander successfully landed in the pre-selected landing

Americans have really mastered landing on Mars until now. With this landing, China becomes the second country to put a rover on Mars. Significantly, it will now be a space race on Mars as the Chinese spacecraft has landed three months after the successful landing of US space agency NASA's Perseverance rover which is busy exploring the red planet's surface with a helicopter hovering around. Previously the US, Russia, the European Union and India have succeeded in sending a spacecraft to Mars, regarded as the most complex space mission.



Saudis to host meeting of Muslim nations' FMs

Saudi Arabia has called for foreign ministers of the world's largest body of Muslim nations to hold a meeting Sunday. The gathering is to discuss Israeli acts of violence against Palestinians and the Israeli police's use of force against protesters at Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. The kingdom will host the virtual summit, gathering ministers of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation "to discuss the Israeli aggression in the Palestinian territory," particularly acts of violence in the vicinity of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the body said Saturday. The Saudi-headquartered OIC includes countries Iran, Turkey, Indonesia and a range of Muslim majority nations. The sanctity of Al-Aqsa mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites, is a sensitive and emotive issue for Muslims around the world. The OIC was formed 51 years ago in response to a Jewish extremist arson attack on the Al-Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem. The hilltop on which the mosque stands is also sacred to Jews, who revere it as the Temple Mount because it was the site of the biblical temples. Some Jews and evangelical Christians support building a new Jewish temple on the site, an idea that Muslims find alarming because they fear it would lead to the mosque being partitioned or demolished.

Cairn eyes on Air India assets to recover \$1.7 bn

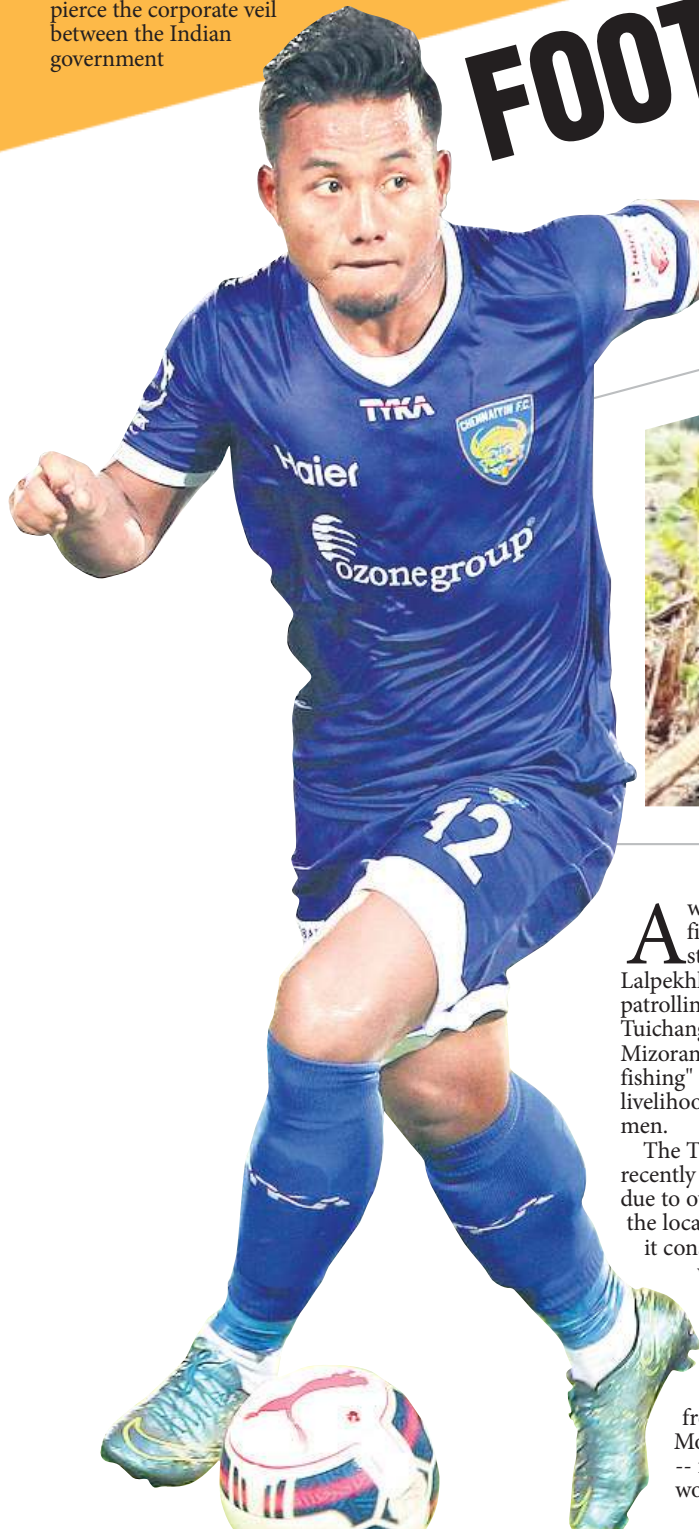
UK's Cairn Energy Plc has brought a lawsuit in the US to pierce the corporate veil between the Indian government and its owned flag carrier Air India so as to seize its overseas assets to recover USD 1.7 billion it has been awarded by an international arbitration tribunal for being taxed retroactively. The firm first moved courts in the US, UK, Canada, France, Singapore, the Netherlands and three other countries to register the December 2020 arbitration tribunal ruling that overturned the Indian government's Rs 10,247 crore demand in back taxes and ordered New Delhi to return the value of shares it had sold, dividends seized and tax refunds withheld to recover the tax demand. Now, the firm has begun bringing lawsuits in the US and other countries to pierce the corporate veil between the Indian government

and its owned companies such as in oil and gas, shipping, airline and banking sectors, to seize their overseas assets to recover the money awarded, three sources with direct knowledge of the development said. In the first instance, it filed a lawsuit on May 14 in the US District court for the Southern District of New York, seeking to make Air India liable for the judgment. The lawsuit argued that Air India as a state-owned company is "legally indistinct from the state itself". PTI had on March 28, 2021 reported that Cairn will bring lawsuits to pierce the corporate veil to establish that certain state-owned entities are India's alter ego



under Bancec for enforcing the arbitration award.

FOOTBALLER JEJE patrolling river to prevent overfishing



Away from the football field, Indian team striker Jeje Lalpekhlua has been patrolling a long stretch of Tuichang river in his native Mizoram to prevent "overfishing" and help sustain the livelihood of local fishermen. The Tuichang river recently created a lot of buzz due to overfishing, forcing the locals to keep an eye on it constantly. One of them was the Blue Tigers and SC East Bengal forward. The footballer, along with a number of youth from his village -- Model Veng Hnahthial -- formed a group that works day and night to

help preserve the ecosystem of the river that flows close to their homes. "Overfishing has greatly reduced the number of fishes in the Tuichang river over the years. It was turning out to be a big problem, even for the local fishermen, who depend on the river for their livelihoods," Jeje said to the-aiff.com. The local people of Model Veng have identified a 500m stretch along the banks of the Tuichang, where the fish are believed to have their spawning ground, where they set up a 24-hour patrol, taking different shifts, to prevent overfishing. "Over the last year, we have all taken turns to patrol this stretch to make sure that nobody catches fish in

this area. It's very important for us to leave the fish alone, at least in the spawning areas. Just with this small step we are already seeing the results," said Jeje. "There are so many fish in the river now -- local fishermen say that they haven't seen so many in the river for years. "The guys in the village have really worked hard to ensure that this happens. They have all taken rotating shifts around the clock for 24 hours to keep an eye on the river banks. I have also been helping out whenever I've been in town," he continued. "Of course, it's not always possible during the season when we have to spend five months in the bio-bubble in

the Hero ISL."

Jeje and the other men have been in constant touch with the local government authorities who have also stood by and supported their conservation activities.

"We have been in touch with the Forest Department of Mizoram. If there are any issues, we inform them. They too lend us support," said Jeje.

"There is a fishing area not very far from the parts where we set up



6-time MP from Amritsar Raghunandan Lal Bhatia passes away at 100

Senior Congress leader and six-time MP from Amritsar Raghunandan Lal Bhatia passed away after a brief illness, his family members said on Saturday. He was 100. Raghunandan Bhatia died at a private hospital here on Friday night and he is survived by his son Ramesh Bhatia, daughter Saroj Munjal and younger brother J L Bhatia, they said. He was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1972 from the Amritsar parliamentary constituency, and again re-elected from the same seat in the 1980, 1985, 1992, 1996 and 1999 elections as a member of the Indian National Congress. Raghunandan Bhatia had also served as the governor of Kerala from 2004 to 2008 and the governor of Bihar from 2008 to 2009. He had also served as the minister of state for external affairs in 1992. He, as a senior member of the Congress, held various positions in the party, including the post of Punjab unit president and general secretary. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh expressed grief over the death of Raghunandan Bhatia. "Saddened to lose former Governor & Senior Congress Leader & six-time MP, Raghunandan Lal Bhatia Ji. My thoughts and prayers are with his family members in their hour of grief. May his soul rest in peace," the chief minister tweeted. Punjab Congress leader and MLA Raj Kumar Verka condoled the demise of Raghunandan Bhatia, describing him as 'Bhishma Pitamah' of the Indian politics.



China cancels Everest climbs over fears of virus from Nepal

China has cancelled attempts to climb Mount Everest from its side of the world's highest peak because of fears of importing COVID-19 cases from neighbouring Nepal, state media reported. The closure was confirmed in a notice Friday from China's General Administration of Sport, the official Xinhua News Agency said. The move reflects the abundance of caution China has taken in dealing with the pandemic. While China has mostly curbed domestic transmission of the coronavirus, Nepal is experiencing a surge with record numbers of new infections and deaths. China had issued permits to 38 people, all Chinese citizens, to climb the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) -high mountain this spring. Nepal has given permission to 408 people. Climbing was not allowed from either side last year because of the pandemic. In Nepal, several climbers have reported testing positive for COVID-19 after they were brought down from the Everest base camp. The month of May usually has the best weather for climbing Everest. Scores have reached the summit this week and more are expected to make attempts later this month once the weather improves. Two climbers have died on the Nepalese side, one Swiss and one American. China earlier said it would set up a separation line at the peak and prohibit people on its side from coming into contact with anyone on the Nepalese side. It was unclear how that would be done.

Israeli strike on Gaza kills 7, unrest spreads to West Bank

An Israeli air raid in Gaza City killed at least seven Palestinians early Saturday in the deadliest single strike since the battle with Gaza's militant Hamas rulers erupted earlier this week. Both sides pressed for an advantage as cease-fire efforts gathered strength. The latest outburst of violence began in Jerusalem and has spread across the region, with Jewish-Arab clashes and rioting in mixed cities of Israel. There were also widespread Palestinian protests Friday in the occupied West Bank, where Israeli forces shot and killed 11 people. The spiraling violence has raised fears

of a new Palestinian "intifada," or uprising at a time when there have been no peace talks in years. Palestinians were set to mark Nakba day Saturday, when they commemorate the estimated 700,000 people who fled or were driven from their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation, raising the possibility of more unrest. US diplomat Hady Amr arrived in the region on Friday as part of Washington's efforts to de-escalate the conflict and the UN Security Council was set to meet Sunday.

