

ANALYSIS 7
NEP: A BUNDLE OF
PIOUS INTENTIONS**MONEY 8**
TOTAL VEHICLE REGISTRATIONS
SLIPS 30 PC TO 1.52 CR UNITS**SPORTS 11**
DOUBT IPL 2021 WILL
CONTINUE IN INDIA: NEESHAM

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



the pioneer

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JR NTR TESTS
POSITIVE FOR
CORONAVIRUS

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**NEPAL PM OLI LOSES CONFIDENCE
VOTE AMID SURGING PANDEMIC**

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

**WHATSAPP TO LIMIT FUNCTIONALITY
FOR USERS NOT ACCEPTING ITS TERMS**

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

**MALICIOUS COVID VACCINE SMS
SPREADING IN ANDROID PHONES**

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

**ASPIRANTS FOR POST OF CVC CHIEF
TO WRITE A 300-WORD ESSAY**

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

*Some leaders are
focused on politics,
not Covid*

2

*India fastest country
globally to administer
17cr Covid vax doses*

5

*Sensex jumps 296
points; Nifty ends
above 14,900*

8

AP may purchase vaccine from abroad to overcome shortage

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Pointing out that on average, only 19 lakh doses of vaccine per month are being supplied to AP, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy on Monday asked officials to look at the option of going for global tenders to purchase the required number of doses.

Jagan pointed out that even if the Centre supplies one crore doses per month, it would take at least six months to complete the vaccination process in the state.

The Chief Minister was addressing a review meeting on the prevailing Covid situation and vaccination during which he asked officials to strengthen the '104' helpline number. He also directed officials to make a maximum number of mock calls to monitor its services.

The Chief Minister also said the Central government will decide on the number of doses of vaccine to be sold to states and the latter will buy the sanctioned quota.

"Despite being aware that production of vaccine and their availability was not in the control of the State government, some vested politicians and a section of the media are propagating false information against the State govern-

**TS stops
ambulances from
AP on border**

PNS n Vijayawada

The Telangana state government has imposed restrictions on entry of Covid-19 patients from Andhra Pradesh.

On Monday, TS police turned away ambulances at the police check post at Ramapuram in Kodad Mandal on the Vijayawada - Hyderabad National Highway and at Pullur toll-gate in Kurnool district.

According to sources, the TS police took up thorough checks and sent back several private ambulances with patients from AP, saying Covid patients were not allowed into Telangana without prior permission.

which 9,23,296 doses were administered as the first dose and 2,90,047 doses as the second dose. A total of 12,13,343 Covaxin doses were administered. To that extent, a total of 73,49,960 doses of Covishield and Covaxin were received of which 53,23,098 doses were administered under the first dose and 19,77,362 vaccines under the second dose.

ment with regard to vaccination and creating tension and fear among the people," Jagan said.

The officials informed the Chief Minister that the state has received a total of 60,60,400 doses of Covishield, of which 43,99,802 were administered under the first dose and 16,87,315 under the second dose, totalling 60,87,117 doses.

Similarly, the state received a total 12,89,560 doses of Covaxin, of

**Though states are
procuring vaccines,
the Centre has
determined the
quantity each state
can purchase from
manufacturers.**

As per the available two crore doses of both Covishield and Covaxin for the month of May, Andhra Pradesh can only avail 13,35,630 doses. Of these 13,35,630, Covishield doses are 9,91,700 and 3,43,930 are Covaxin.

While the Centre last month opened the gates and said from May 1 onwards state governments can directly procure vaccine doses from the manufacturers -- Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech to inoculate their population, Andhra Pradesh has been facing severe shortage of supply in the vaccine

**Allocation strategy to check bargaining
power of states: Centre**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Centre also said that distribution of the vaccine amongst the states was based on equitable and rational criteria to eliminate and possibility of difference in bargaining power of one state and have a detrimental impact on the resident of the other state.

"This exercise is absolutely essential and this discipline is mandatory so as to have uniform vaccination throughout the country. This historical endeavour can be successful

only by treating India as one unit and considering the question on a pan-India basis," said the Centre.

The Union government also told Supreme Court that it was critical to note that under the new strategy, the vaccination effort of the GoI will continue to serve the priority group identified by National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 (NEGVAC), i.e. those above 45 years of age and persons with comorbidities under 45 years of age.

doses from both the manufacturing companies. Long queues and jostling are witnessed at all vaccine centres across the state and the state

government has come under fire from the general public and opposition parties alike.



11 die at RUIA hospital, oxygen shortage blamed

S BHANU PRAKASH
■ TIRUPATI

At least 11 people passed away and five were in a critical condition, allegedly due to inadequate oxygen supply at SVR RUIA Government General Hospital in Tirupati on Monday.

According to reports available, the oxygen pressure began

dipping at around 7.30 pm on Monday.

An oxygen tanker that was supposed to reach the hospital by afternoon arrived late in the evening. By the time adequate supply of oxygen was restored, about 20 minutes later, as many as 10 Covid-19 positive patients breathed their last.

**Cong puts off party
president election,
courtesy Covid**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

**Ex-DGP of
undivided
AP dead**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Director General of Police of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh B Prasad Rao died in the USA on Monday, police sources said.

"Deeply saddened over the untimely demise of Prasad Rao, IPS retd and former DGP, AP. He breathed his last in the USA early this morning. Our prayers are with his family, friends, near & dear.

May his soul rest in peace," Telangana police said in its official twitter account.

Expressing grief, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao, in a statement, conveyed his condolences to members of the bereaved family.

AP Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy also condoled the death of the former police chief.

The 1979 batch IPS officer was the last DGP of the undivided Andhra Pradesh from 2013 to 2014.



TDP's lies on vaccines creating panic: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Government Advisor (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy on Monday came down heavily on TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu and a section of media, accusing them of spreading falsehood on procurement of vaccines.

Sajjala said that the Central Government has clearly stated in its affidavit filed in the Supreme Court regarding essential supplies and services that a national task force is monitoring vaccine allocations and vaccines are being supplied to the states based on Central Government guidelines.

Speaking to the media at YSRCP central office here, Sajjala said the

false propaganda of the TDP and a section of media on vaccination has created panic among the people leading to mad rush at vaccination centres resulting in further spread of the virus.

He said though the Ministers and officials are publicising facts daily on supply of vaccination, oxygen and medicines, the TDP and the yellow media are spreading misinformation making people risk their lives out of fear.

He termed the propaganda of Naidu as treason and suggested the intellectuals and civil society to react on it and file cases against these people.



INS Airavat docks at Vizag with oxygen tanks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of the ongoing Op 'Samudra Setu' II to support the nation's fight against Covid-19, INS Airavat arrived in Visakhapatnam on Monday with eight cryogenic oxygen tanks and other critical Covid medical supplies, including 3,898 oxygen cylinders from Singapore.

The ship departed from Singapore on May 5 with oxygen tanks and cylinders sourced through various agencies in coordination with the High Commission of India.

INS Airavat is part of nine ships that have been deployed for Covid relief Operation 'Samudra Setu' II for shipment of Liquid Medical Oxygen and associated medical equipment from friendly foreign countries in the Persian Gulf and southeast Asia.

The Indian Navy has stepped up its Covid relief Operation Samudra Setu II with ships from



all three Naval Commands in Mumbai, Visakhapatnam and Kochi, deployed for shipment of Liquid Medical Oxygen and associated medical equipment from

friendly foreign countries.

On the Eastern Seaboard, Indian Naval Ship Airavat belonging to Vizag headquartered Eastern Naval Command (ENC),

departed Singapore on last Thursday while INS Jalashwa remains deployed in the region, standing by to embark medical stores at short notice.

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

Chaitra & Krishna Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Amavasya: 12:28 am (Next Day)**Nakshatram** : Bharani: 11:31 pm**Time to Avoid** : (Bad time to start any important work)**Rahukalam** : 03:24 pm - 05:00 pm**Yamagandam** : 09:00 am - 10:36 am**Variyam** : 07:15 am - 09:04 am**Gulika** : 12:12 pm - 01:48 pm**Good Time** : (to start any important work)**Amritakalam** : 06:06 pm - 07:54 pm**Abhijit Muhurtham** : 11:47 am - 12:38 pm**VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER****Forecast**: Mostly sunny**Temp**: 34**Humidity**: 58%**Sunrise**: 05:46 am**Sunset**: 06:39 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated may 10, 2021 5:00 PM

Some leaders are focused on politics, not Covid

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

This is due to politics gaining precedence over administration.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The MP Government constituted a team with four top officials.

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

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

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

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

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



Y SATYA KUMAR
BJP National Secretary

mobilising 680 MT of oxygen till May 6.

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

Though there is spurt in Covid-19 cases in MP, efficient oxygen audit helped

reduce deaths due to oxygen shortage.

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

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

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

Two days after Satish Reddy started helping the hospital with oxygen supply, AP principal health secretary AK Singhal wrote to the Centre

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

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

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

Meanwhile, the nuclear medicine research wing of the DRDO has developed 2-DG to treat Covid and started production.

The CMs of Telugu states, instead of using officials efficiently, are using them to play politics like foisting cases

against political rivals, resorting to victimisation measures and so on.

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

The way the Government of Telangana used officials to dismiss the Health Minister from the State Cabinet reflects the style of functioning of the modern day dictators in a democratic setup.

It's high time the CMs introspect and use all their resources to check Covid spread.

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

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

AP records 14,986 new cases, 84 deaths

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Coronavirus caseload crossed the 13 lakh mark in Andhra Pradesh as 14,986 fresh cases were reported from 60,124 tests in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Monday.

The last one-lakh cases came in a span of five days after the state crossed the 12-lakh mark on May 5.

The state saw 16,167

Covid-19 patients recovering from the infection while another 84 succumbed in 24 hours, according to the latest bulletin. The gross positives now mounted to 13,02,589 while the total recoveries touched 11,04,431. The overall toll increased to 8,791.

The state now has 1,89,367 active cases, according to the bulletin. East Godavari district reported 2,352 fresh cases in a day. Six districts

added between 1,200 and 1,700 new cases each while another six reported less than 1,000 each.

West Godavari and Guntur districts logged 12 fresh Covid-19 fatalities each, East Godavari 10, Visakhapatnam nine, SPS Nellore and Vizianagaram eight each, Chittoor and Kurnool six each, Krishna and Srikakulam four each, Anantapur three and Kadapa two in 24 hours.

TDP's lies on vaccines creating panic: Sajjala

Continued from Page 1

He said cases will also be filed on a section of media spreading false information with vested interests.

Sajjala slammed the Opposition parties for not being responsible during the pandemic and distorting facts for their personal interests. He said while the Chief Minister and officials are running from pillar to post to contain Covid by increasing bed availability, supply of oxygen, recruiting doctors and medical staff and writing letters to the Central government for more vaccines, TDP and a section of media are indulging in cheap politics.

Sajjala said the Chief Minister will write to the Centre requesting for delicensing of Covaxin vaccine and increase production.

He said the state government has brought Covid treatment under Arogyasri and is providing free treatment to lakhs of people. Sajjala reminded that Rs 600 crore of pending arrears of Arogyasri of the previous government was cleared by the present government.

AP to get only 13.3 L doses for May

Continued from Page 1

The TDP has been accusing the YSRCP government of failing miserably in securing sufficient doses from the companies despite the Centre allowing direct procurement. TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu has said that the state government had shown tokenism by writing letters to the manufacturing companies instead of making advance payments. Naidu pointed out that the Government has allocated a meagre Rs 45 crore for purchase of vaccines.

In response to Naidu's remarks, YSRCP general secretary and Government Advisor Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy said that the Leader of the Opposition was indulging in politics even over vaccines. He said vaccine supply was being monitored and decided by the Centre. The Centre on Monday told the Supreme Court that based on the

monthly production of vaccine manufacturers and Central Drug Laboratory (CDL) cleared doses projected to be available with them, the quantity of doses available for "other than Government of India Channel" was worked out on state wise population of 18 to 44 years "pro-rata".

"Though the states are procuring the vaccines from the manufacturers, the Central Government has, in consultation with the vaccine manufacturers, determined the pro-rata population of each state in the age group of 18-44 and each state will procure only that quantity so that there is no disparity in availability of vaccines between the states inter-se either based upon difference in their bargaining power or otherwise. Each State is informed by the Central Government in writing about the number of vaccines it would receive for the month of May 2021," said the Centre in the affidavit.

Continued from Page 1

A total of 1,33,07,889 people over the age of 45 have registered for vaccination, of whom 41,08,917 were given the first dose and 13,35,744 both doses.

They said the Central Government said it would supply 9,17,850 doses of vaccine for the first 15 days of this month, of which 7,65,360 doses are given so far, with 1,52,490 doses yet to be released.

Jagan said there should be no rush at vaccination centres and added that ANMs and Asha workers should be clearly informed on vaccination details so that lengthy queues are avoided. He said people should be informed that everyone would receive the vaccine free of cost by the government.

The Chief Minister advised officials to complete the second dose of vaccine to people who are above 45 years and take the first dose and later focus on administering the first dose of vaccine to people above 45 years as they are more vulnerable to Covid. Health professionals requested the Chief Minister to treat fever as Covid

Jagan said there should be no rush at vaccination centres and added that ANMs and Asha workers should be clearly informed on vaccination details so that lengthy queues are avoided.

symptom and provide medication immediately and the later directed the officials to take necessary action in this regard.

The Chief Minister said the vaccination programme is under the control of the Central Government and even if the state wants to buy vaccines directly from the manufacturers, the Centre is instructing them on the number of doses to be sold to the states and added that the current situation on vaccination was needed to be explained to the people.

11 die at RUIA...

Continued from Page 1

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

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

Sensing danger, duty doctors and nurses fled from the hospital.

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

Meanwhile, efforts to contact the hospital superintendent failed.

TS hospitals report more 'black fungus' cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

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

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

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

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

Till February this year, Gandhi Hospital witnessed about 10 patients with mucormycosis, and the number may go up.

Continental Hospital said that it has detected the infection in five patients. While the Telangana government is yet to officially announce the number, a doctor whose hospital reported 18 cases estimates that there are at least 300-400 cases in both the Telugu speaking states.

Several studies from around the world have indicated that secondary fungal infections among critically ill Covid positive patients are in the range of 5 percent to 23 percent while mortality rate among these fungus infected patients increases to 53 percent from 31 percent in non-infected Covid positive patients.

Dr. K Rambabu, Sr ENT Consultant, Apollo Hospitals, said, "Working at tertiary care centre in last one month we

have seen more than 50 mucormycosis cases, out of which 16 patients are making good progress, six have succumbed to the infection and the remaining are fighting in ICU s and wards. Treatment includes aggressive surgery/radical debridement exenteration of affected/blind eye, long term follow up along with antifungal medications. Patients are recovering from Covid but succumbing to such aggressive diseases that can be avoided by early recognition, the doctor said.

Watch out for facial pain, headache, nasal congestion, redness of eye, discoloration of skin color on face or in mouth and immediately rush to the hospital, he said.

"Swelling around the eyes, one-sided facial or eye pain, decreased sensation over cheeks, blood-stained nasal discharge, among others are symptoms of mucormycosis infection and such cases should be reported immediately for medical attention. Such patients will be administered with certain antifungal drugs or a surgical debridement will be performed depending on the condition to reduce the disease burden," said Dr Dushyanth Ganesuni, Consultant, ENT, Head & Neck Surgeon and Laryngologist, Continental Hospitals.

One of the major reasons for the exponential rise in cases in Covid patients is the excessive use of steroids.

"Unjustified and self-prescribed use of antibiotics and steroids to treat Covid-19 symptoms is dangerous. Such a practice will affect the



immune system and could lead to secondary to infections like mucormycosis. Hence, even for conditions like fevers, cold, cough, it is suggested one seeks medical advice before resorting to any form of self-medication," added Dr Dushyanth Ganesuni.

Apart from surgery, prolonged anti-fungal treatment plays a major role in curing the patient. Cost of such medicines runs into lakhs for prescribed quantity and duration.

A M Nagaraju said, "My 65-year-old father is suffering with rhino orbital mucormycosis which involves multiple surgeries and aggressive medication. He is admitted at Maa ENT Hospital and would need another Rs 25 lakh for treatment. We have spent Rs 5 lakh already."

Several citizens from other states are heading to Hyderabad for treatment.

Rahul S B said, "My father-in-law developed mucormycosis in Bidar and we shifted him to Hyderabad hospital for treatment."

Mucormycosis cases were treated primarily in big corporate hospitals and most of the smaller hospitals used to refer such cases to these hospitals.

Dr Madhav, ENT Surgeon Apollo Hospitals, "The problem in the supply chain is not just about a huge spike in demand for medicines and pharma companies unable to ramp up the production. It was a clear-cut system, where corporate hospitals used to request the pharma firms for medication, and they used to cater to the needs of these hospitals through their strong pharma supply chain. Now with Covid entering the battlefield: literally this whole system has been disrupted. Every corporate hospital in India is working above its full capacity. Thus, the patients being treated for Covid in smaller hospitals once infected with Mucormycosis are not able to find any hospital beds in the corporate hospitals. The toughest challenge with Mucor is the need for treatment at least within 48 hours."

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VACCINATION CENTRES BECOMING COVID HOTSPOTS



S BHANU PRAKASH
■ TIRUPATI

The Covid vaccination centres were turning out to be the Covid hotspots as people flocking in huge numbers to the Urban Public Health Centres (UPHCs) in Tirupati as the people were least bothered about the corona regulations. Though the health department has made it clear that due to the limited stock of Covid vaccine priority was being given to people who need to take the second dose, the people were thronging to the health centres even for the first dose. Heavy rush was witnessed at the vaccination centres violating the covid-19 protocols particularly failing

even in maintaining the social distance.

The people, who waited outside the urban health centres in the division, stormed into the centres at once soon after the opening of gates causing a stampede-like situation. The situation at the vaccination canters appears to be one of the hotspots for the spreading of Covid. The police and the health department staff were helpless in controlling the mob at the UPHCs. Many youngsters were also visiting these centres for vaccination without getting any time slot on the Cowin website.

"It almost took three hours for me in the queue line to reach the main entrance of the UPHC. The police stopped us

because of a heavy crowd. People are pushing each other and no one is bothered to maintain physical distance and not even wearing masks properly. There is every possibility for corona spreading here," Rajendra, a resident of Bairagipettada said.

Hari Krishna, a resident of Padmavathipuram feared that his friend, who took his second dose vaccine standing in the queue line was infected by corona. He was now in the home quarantine. The officials concerned should take measures to maintain physical distance at the UHCs, he requested.

District Collector M Harinaryana told PNS that the first dose of vaccination drive would resume from June 1. As many as 1.22 Lakh people were yet to be given the second dose in the district and at present, there was a stock of 24,000 units for the second dose.

The Collector said that the second dose of vaccination would be given priority in the whole month of May and time slots would be allotted depending upon the dates of the first dose. Slips would be sent to the houses by the ward volunteers. He appealed to the public not to become panic and strictly adhere to the Covid protocols.

GMC offers free funeral of Covid victims

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Guntur Municipal Corporation has announced to perform the funerals free of cost for the deaths due to Covid. The GMC has taken a decision to this effect for those who died while receiving treatment within the municipal limits. Mayor Shivanaga Manohar Naidu and GMC commissioner Challa Anuradha said at a press conference at the municipal office on Monday said they have inspected several crematoriums in Guntur at the field level and most of the people from all parts of the district were succumbing to the Covid

while undergoing treatment in Guntur. The Mayor further said that there was no rule that the bodies should take to their native villages for the last rites. Most of the bodies of the corona victims were being buried in the city itself. Hence, for the convenience of the relatives, the GMC has decided to conduct the funerals free of cost. He also said they had inspected the crematorium at Koritepadu and found that the Vaikunthatham was charging a huge amount for the funerals. The corporation also received several complaints about the exorbitant prices charged at the crematoriums. Show-cause notices

would be issued to the committees that were collecting the huge amount, he said. He warned that the Vaikuntadham committees would be dissolved if they did not get a proper reply to the notices. The corporation has agreed to bear the cost of the funeral in all the Hindu, Muslim and Christian cemeteries in the city. The Mayor appealed to the people to complain to the municipality if they demanded more fees at the crematoriums. The family members of the deceased or someone could contact the toll-free numbers 91770 01859, 91770 01882 for free burial, the Mayor added.



COVID EFFECT

Concern over children becoming orphans

K BALASOURY
■ ELURU

The coronavirus devastation left many families in dire straits and children were becoming orphans causing great concern for the past two months in West Godavari district.

There were many instances where children have become orphans after the parents were falling prey to the corona pandemic. The pathetic scenes in some families were heart-rending. A teacher's family in Tallakattupalli of Kukkanur mandal was an ample example of how the corona disturbed human lives. Naga Durga, a teacher who hails from Buttaigudem, was living in the village for the past two years. Her husband Ramesh was working in the village secretariat and she was working as headmistress in the high school in Kukunuru. Ramesh lost his mother during the first wave of corona last year after she tested positive for corona. Ramesh also succumbed to the corona later. Naga Durga also succumbed to the Covid while

she was undergoing treatment on Friday, leaving her twin kids as orphans. A pall of gloom descended in the area as none was left in the family to take care of little kids Nikhil and Nihar, who were studying the first standard.

Meanwhile, in another incident Suryaprakasa Rao (41), a software engineer from Jangaredygudem died on Friday night in Chennai after he was inflicted with Covid-19. Unfortunately, his two brothers Subrahmanyam (38) and Ramakrishna (41) and his mother Lakshmi (60) died of Covid in April and May respectively. The corona pandemic claimed the lives of all the four members of a family in just two months. The grief-stricken villagers have no words to express as the corona was crushing the human lives within no time. The villagers said it was the government's responsibility to identify such families and orphaned children and provide them with all assistance required to lead a better life. Otherwise, they may become anti-social elements.

Timpany school chairman Ken Gnanakan is no more

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Timpany group of schools chairman Dr Ken Gnanakan (82) passed away on Sunday after a massive heart attack. Dr Gnanakan was the founder and chancellor of ACTS Group of Institutions, a social organization with a focus on education.

He was the chairman of the 90-year-old Etasi Timpany School, as well as the Chairman of the International Council for Higher Education, Switzerland. He was also the vice-president of the Global Challenges Forum (GCF), Switzerland and served as an advisor to the United Nations Institute of Training and Research (UNITAR), Geneva. He taught in India and other parts of the world on

varied subjects such as management, environment, education, entrepreneurship, theology and philosophy. Gnanakan was married to Prema and they have two children - Santosh and Anupa.

An alumni of Timpany and student leader Samayam Hemantha Kumar, M S Naidu and students Saanvi and Dhanvi Srihari paid homage to Gnanakan.

Hemantha said Gnanakan was a great philanthropist as he gave Rs 13 crores in the form of a discount on school fee for nearly 9,000 students by helping the parents during the Covid pandemic last year. The children, parents and school staff who attended the Yavat Temple at school expressed their deep condolences.



Teachers, caretakers of home isolation Covid patients

VASIREDDY RAVICHANDRA
■ GUNTUR

In the wake of the surge in second wave Covid cases in the state, the government decided to depute teachers as caretakers for corona patients who were in home isolation. The teachers would call the corona patients over the phone and enquire about their well-being. They would submit reports from time to time to the district administration. The officials expressed hope that they would be able to take precautionary measures by knowing more accurate information on the patients' health condition.

About 80 per cent of people with corona infection were staying in the home isolation. The people with moderate symptoms were admitted to Covid Care Centers while those with severe symptoms were admitted to the Covid hospitals. In fact, the role of those who were in home isolation was crucial in preventing and controlling the spreading of the Covid virus.

Since the number of cases was increasing now, it has become difficult for the volunteers and health workers to locate them and give suggestions to the corona positive patients in the house quaran-



tine. In a bid to take control of the situation, the Guntur District Administration has taken steps to further strengthen the home isolation process by keeping abreast of the health condition of the corona posi-

tive patients.

Apart from it, the teachers were assigned responsibilities as caretakers. Each teacher would be assigned, one corona patient. Based on their phone numbers, they constantly monitor their health status for 14 days and report the situation to the district administration through a Google spreadsheet.

Teachers' MLC K S Lakshana Rao said that many teachers in the state have recovered from the coronavirus and the advice and suggestions from the teachers' experience would be very useful to the corona victims.

"We welcome these responsibilities given by the government at the time of corona catastrophe," FATTO chairman Basavalinga Rao said. At the same time, he requested the government to recognize the teachers as the frontline warriors.

State president of the Federation of Municipal Teachers Somarauthu Ramakrishna said the teachers' community would take up the task as a social responsibility. Hiring teachers as caretakers for corona-affected people of home isolation was a good outcome as the corona was rapidly spreading.



Mohan Raju takes charge as AD of I&PR

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Tanneeru Mohan Raju was appointed as the Assistant Director of Information and Public Relations (I&PR) for Prakasam District. I & PR State Commissioner Vijay Kumar Reddy issued orders to this effect on Monday.

Incumbent Additional Director K Malliswar was going on long leave, Mohan Raju was appointed in the place of Malliswar. Mohan Raju was serving as PRO in Markapuram and was appointed as additional in-charge as Additional Director of Information and Public Relations of Prakasam District to serve from Ongole.

Raju on Monday took charge from Mallishwar. The information department officers and staff congratulated on the occasion.

Two arrested in Kadapa mine explosion case

PNS ■ KADAPA

In connection with the explosion at the limestone mine on May 8 in which 10 workers were killed near Mamillapalli in Kalasapadu mandal of Kadapa district, the police arrested two persons and produced them before the court on Monday.

Kadapa district SP Anburajan informed the media here on Monday that Nageshwara Reddy, who operated the mine at Kalasapadu since 2013 through

GPA and Raghunath Reddy, who had supplied explosives from a magazine company belonging to Pulivendula were arrested and produced before the court on Monday, he said.

The SP said 10 were killed when the explosion occurred while unloading 20 boxes containing 1000 gelatin sticks at the mine in a vehicle from Pulivendula Magazine company. He said it was initially known that the mine where the incident took place had no environmental per-

mission and they have no permits to blow explosives at the mine. Notices were also issued to the owners of the mine and they would also be questioned. However, Anburajan said he had directed the authorities to cancel the license for the mine.

It was learnt that while one C Kasturibai secured the mining lease in 2001 till November 1, 2021, it was being operated by C Nageswara Reddy under a general power of attorney since December 2013.

CM Jagan trying to assassinate Babu, alleges B Tech Ravi

PNS ■ KADAPA

MLC and TDP state spokesperson B Tech Ravi has lashed out at Chief Minister Jaganmohan Reddy alleging that he was trying to 'assassinate' Opposition leader Chandrababu Naidu.

In a statement on Monday B Tech Ravi demanded that a case should be registered against Jaganmohan Reddy for attempting to murder as it was appearing that Jagan was planning to assassinate Naidu by infecting him with the coronavirus. He alleged that they planned to infect Chandrababu with the corona as in the case of

Dhulipalla Narendra, who tested positive for corona after his arrest and fighting for life. As a responsible Opposition leader, Naidu took initiative to create awareness among the people about the virus, but the Cabinet ministers had stooped to the level of local leaders and prompted common men to file cases against him. Stating that Sajjala had announced that the issue of the vaccine was the subject of the Centre and treatment was the issue of the state government, then why Jagan had failed to ask the Prime Minister during the review meeting for more vaccine stocks, he asked.

Three of a family killed in road accident

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Three members of a family were killed in a hit and run accident that took place near the Jocil company in Phirangipuram mandal of Guntur district on Monday. The victims include a couple and their son.

The accident occurred when a speeding car hit the two-wheeler.



Horticulture farmers in EG badly hit due to Covid

DHV SAMBASIVA RAO
■ KAKINADA

The second wave of the corona pandemic was leaving a trail of destruction in human lives and as well as economic growth in the rural areas. The horticulture crops, which were the major source of income after paddy cultivation in East Godavari district, were hitting the backbone of the farmers. Many farmers raised coconut, mango and banana plantations to a huge extent and they usually face threat from huge gales at the time of mango harvest especially during the summer. The farmers of coconut and banana would also face threat from monkeys as they create a great loss.

Now, the corona pandemic caused a worry for farmers as they could not move from their houses to guard their fields. In East Godavari district, mango has been cultivated in 15,363 hectares,

coconut in 54,000 hectares and banana on 13,000 hectares. The corona indirectly caused huge loss to coconut farmers as demand for coconut has declined as temples were shut down due to Covid. In a bid to reduce the losses, the horticulture authorities were advising farmers to sell the tender coconuts which have huge demand in the summer. Each coconut was currently priced at Rs 25. However, there was no market for dry coconuts. The horticulture department has already provided storage houses to 600 farmers to convert coconuts into boll kopra (Kuridi - dried coconut) to store coconut for about six months, which has a good demand. The Department of Horticulture wrote a letter to the Central Government-run NAFED seeking support for farmers.

Deputy Director of horticulture department Rammohan Rao said earlier NAFED had set up coconut



Rammohan Rao,
Deputy Director, Horticulture

purchasing counters at Ambajipeta, Mamidikuduru, Rajolu, Kothapeta and Amalapuram in Konaseema through the Oil Fed. Hence, the NAFED was requested to set up these centres again because of the Covid.

As far as bananas were concerned, it was cultivated in 13,000 hectares in the district. At present, bananas were being sold at Rs 9

to Rs 10 per kg through the support price of it was only Rs 8 per kg. It was currently exported from the district to Orissa and Bengal as well as from Visakhapatnam to Vijayawada in the state. The deputy director said that all the farmers and traders who want permits to go to outside the state could contact the Horticultural Assistant in the village secretariats.

Similarly, another major horticultural crop was mango. So far 30 per cent were sold locally after they were fully ripe. The mango was also likely to be exported to Orissa, West Bengal, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Jharkhand, he said. He, however, said that 60 per cent of the mango crop was likely to be harvested from May 15 to June 15, adding that farmers should be a little more careful. He, however, said that exports were not up to level due to the corona.



India fastest country globally to administer 17cr Covid vax doses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

INDIA CORNER

Fake call centre targeting US citizens busted; 3 held

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



Strict measures taken to curb Covid spread: West Bengal CM

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



Vistara to start Delhi-Tokyo flights from June 16

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

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



Count of active Covid cases falling in Uttar Pradesh

The number of active COVID-19 cases in Uttar Pradesh is showing a downward trend and the recovery rate in the state has improved, an official spokesperson said here on Monday. The highest single-day spike of over 38,000 infections was reported on April 24, and since then, there has been a steady decline, he added.



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

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

PNS ■ KOLKATA

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

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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Kochi were deployed to bring oxygen and other medical equipment under operation 'Samudra Setu II'.

Last year, Indian Navy had launched Operation Samudra Setu as part of the Vande Bharat evacuation mission under which it brought back to India around 4,000 stranded Indians from Maldives, Sri Lanka and Iran.

As India battles a devastating second wave of coronavirus pandemic, countries around the world have sent medical supplies including oxygen-related equipment to help it tide over the situation.

The leading countries that have supplied assistance to India included the US, Russia, France, Germany, Australia, Ireland, Belgium, Romania, Luxembourg, Singapore, Portugal, Sweden, New Zealand, Kuwait and Mauritius.

Over 1.8 cr vaccinated in Maha so far

PNS ■ MUMBAI

A total of 1,80,88,042 people have so far received COVID-19 vaccine doses in Maharashtra, the state government said on Monday.

On Sunday, 1,10,448 beneficiaries received the jabs in the state, it said. According to an official statement, 4,36,302 individuals aged between 18 and 44 years received the vaccine doses in the state till Sunday since the inoculation drive for this age group began on May 1.

So far, 11,27,341 health care workers have been administered the first dose of the vaccine, while 6,68,901 of them have got their second dose.

Aim to make Assam a top state: CM

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

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

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

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

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

Covaxin doses unavailable for second day in Mumbai

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

Local resident Rupesh



Lingayat took to Twitter to express his frustration.

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

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

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

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

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

Transplant recipients vulnerable even after vaccination: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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



prevent rejection.

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

ones produced in response to vaccines, they said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hope floats

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

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



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

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

PICTALK



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

PTI

In the slow lane

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

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

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



Apocalypse and the leadership

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



DEEPAK SINHA

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

ions to handle the problems.

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PM HAS FAILED TO HANDLE COVID CRISIS

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

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

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

GOVT MUST TAP ONLINE EDUCATION POTENTIAL

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

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

Govt must help prison inmates



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

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

C K Subramaniam | Mumbai

THE ASSAM CM MUST ACT URGENTLY

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

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

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

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

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

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

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

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUNDBITE

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



Congress leader — Rahul Gandhi

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



Russian President — Vladimir Putin

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



Actor — Angelina Jolie

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

New Zealand cricketer — James Neesham

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



Congress interim president — Sonia Gandhi

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S PATH TO CARBON NEUTRALITY

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



SANJAY GUPTA

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

There are two issues to consider. One, is it in India's medium and long-term interests to become a carbon neutral economy, gradually moving towards decarbonisation of all the sectors? As the past experience of economic history shows, countries and economies that adopted newer technologies and approaches have benefited socially, economically and in geostrategic terms. The difference between a "future" green economy and non-green economy will be the same as an industrialised and non-industrialised economy in the current



scenario. Further, the Global Commission on Adaptation avers that investments in adaptation consistently deliver higher returns and create more jobs than traditional investments. Second, should the country declare a date for achieving the net-zero carbon emissions status, what should be that date? Given the current global mood, it will be strategic for India to declare its intent on achieving carbon neutrality but only on its own terms. The path to India's green economy should not emerge out of Paris or Glasgow but rather out of every village, town and city in the country. Its net-zero emissions date should be a time band such as from 2065-2085. The later date should be offered as a more likely target. However, if there is adequate green finance made available, supported by development and availability of appropriate technologies, the earlier date of 2065 or thereabouts could be possible. What can India hope from countries that are less than supportive of a Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver on COVID-19 vaccines and medicines to avert an ongoing global tragedy? How much support will the same set of rich countries provide to India and other developing countries to address a "wicked" problem such as climate change?

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

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

NEP: A bundle of pious intentions

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



UTTAM GUPTA



AT THE ROOT OF PERSISTENT AND INCREASING LOSSES OF DISCOMS ARE THE ORDERS ISSUED BY STATE GOVERNMENTS TO SELL ELECTRICITY TO SOME PREFERRED CONSUMERS VIZ. POOR HOUSEHOLDS AND FARMERS, EITHER AT A FRACTION OF THE COST OF PURCHASE, TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION, OR EVEN FREE. ON THE UNITS SOLD TO THESE GROUPS, THESE COMPANIES INCUR COLOSSAL UNDER-RECOVERY. THIS IS AGGRAVATED BY AT&C LOSSES — MOST OF IT PLAIN THEFT

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

POINT COUNTERPOINT

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



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



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

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

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



SHIVAJI SARKAR

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

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

Populist largesse of Mamata for women, youth and *Duare sarkar* (Government at the doorstep), the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK's) welfare policies in Tamil Nadu or the Left alliance in Kerala, when studied closely, virtually refutes the "aggressive privatised development" model of the Centre. All these States have voted against farm Bills that seek to create large house monopolies, junk scrapping policy of poor man's vehicles, high fuel prices, fares, tolls, taxes and so-called user charges. The vote endorses that the country has more poverty to address than create cosmetic central vista that serves none but a few, big corporate houses. They have together rejected 'Manmohanomics' — that ended up in a political disaster for its proponent, the

Congress, and its follower, the BJP. The people are pitted against the disinvestment of prime banks, LIC, financial institutions, defence establishments and others with a target of ₹1.75 lakh crore in 2021-22. This is lower than ₹2.1 lakh crore it hoped to garner through divestment in 2020-21; an admission of failure of the Government bid. This failed economic concept is rejected now by the voters.

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

The massive vote surge in



West Bengal for the Trinamool Congress was not possible if the people did not perceive the Centre's economic policies as a grave threat. The Left-Congress, the TMC and even a section of the BJP voted for economic policy changes that, ironically, Mamata Banerjee symbolises. The 47.93 per cent votes for TMC up from 43.3 per cent in 2019 and reduced numbers of votes for BJP to 38.13 per cent from 40.2 per

cent in 2019 says a lot. The loss of all other parties was a gain for the TMC. It has also busted the myth that West Bengal votes along communal lines. The wash out of the Left and Congress for its alliance with the highly communalised ISF is enough testimony. This also proves that West Bengal votes for social and economic issues and rejects any polarisation, barring some exceptions, either for Furfura or Ram. Another noticeable aspect is the vote for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose whose anniversary the BJP celebrated as *Parakaram Diwas* and Mamata as *Deshnayak Diwas*.

Surprisingly, nobody pointed out this incongruity which Mamata aptly encashed with a heightened nationalistic presentation — a message went out strong that the Centre is not only disrespectful to Netaji, but is also blatant-

ly promoting some private houses. No wonder that some days later the Rafael bribery charge revived as an issue following a French Government exposure. India is not against private companies. Many have contributed significantly; many enjoy people's trust and have set standards. The nation, however, is against overt domineering by any group. The present elections have exposed that. The country wants privatisation neither at the cost of the public sector nor does it want to get it enslaved to any private player.

In the UP's panchayat elections, the BJP gets only 580 against Samajwadi Party (SP) 782, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) 361, Congress' 61 and 1266 others. So, will this election lead to an overt cry for economic changes? The rightist centrist party is too inclined towards the corporates and

may not bring about the changes. But the opposition though too has its corporate connections and may try to forge an alliance to clinch a political change. Its leadership is not yet obvious. Mamata may emerge as one but her all-India acceptability may not be easy.

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

Sensex jumps 296 points; Nifty ends above 14,900

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

IndusInd Bank, PowerGrid, ONGC and M&M.

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

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

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

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

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

in the country," Modi noted.

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

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

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



Gold gains Rs 179; silver up by Rs 826

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

Honda earmarks Rs 6.5 cr to support relief efforts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

Bharat Biotech begins direct supply of Covaxin to 14 states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

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

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

SSWL wins orders worth Rs 54 cr from US

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

DBS announces aid worth Rs 10 cr for relief efforts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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UltraTech shares decline over 2 pc after Q4 earnings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

Economic activity down in April, May: Fitch

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Total vehicle registrations slips 30 pc to 1.52 cr units

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

Three-wheeler registrations in FY21 were down 64.12 per



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

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

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

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

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

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

MONEY MATTERS

Vivimed Labs gets DGHS nod to manufacture, market Favipiravir



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

RASIKA DOES IT 'OUT OF LOVE'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

despondency, which I think everyone is going through."

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

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

USE YOUR sense of scent



Have you always wished you could make your own perfume? The right mix of not-too-loud fragrances and a humble amount of this one strong vanilla or rose, etc.? Well, read on to know how that's possible now! Indie perfumers like the 160-year-old Lucknow-based perfume house Isak are quin-

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

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

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

understand the world market.

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

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



ROHIT PENS EMOTIONAL NOTE ABOUT JOURNEY THUS FAR

Actor Rohit Bose Roy celebrated *Mumbai Saga's* success with an emotional post. On Monday, the actor posted a still from the film and revisited his journey in the industry. Expressing his "gratitude," Rohit said that he is thankful about the fact that he is still a part of the film business. In a post on Instagram, he revisited his "difficult childhood" but said he has no "sob stories" to tell.

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Zverev wins Madrid title

AFF ■ MADRID

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

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

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

"It is great (to win this



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

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

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

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

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



Pak seal series

AP ■ HARARE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Malinga could return to play World T20

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

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

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

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

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

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

No point in comparing yourself with anyone: Nagwaswalla

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I am excited to meet and

AC Milan push Juve out of top 4

AFF ■ TURIN

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

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

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

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

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



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

PSG HOPES DENTED

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

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

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

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

Real salvage dramatic draw

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

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

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

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

AFF

JOURNALIST AND ACTOR TNR DIES OF COVID

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

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

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

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

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



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

Calling TNR as a "soft spo-

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jr NTR tests positive for coronavirus

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

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

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

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

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

The Aravinda Sametha Veera



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

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

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

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

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

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

Chiranjeevi-Prabhas sensation on cards



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



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

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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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



Allu Arjun's *Pushpa* stroke for national fame

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

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

The upcoming enter-



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