

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 15 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 36.8°C
Min: 26.8°C
RH: 78%
Rainfall: 1.2 mm

Forecast: Rain or thunder showers likely
Max/Min temp. 37/25°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Tadiya till 7.58 am
Star: Mrigasira till 8.37 am
Varjyam: 5.55 pm to 7.41 pm
Durmuhurtam: 5.48 am to 7.31 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HIJRI CALENDAR
Shawwal 2,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.37 am
Zohar: 12.22 pm
Asar: 4.43 pm
Maghrib: 6.46 pm
Isha: 8.00 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.14 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 8.13 AM
MOONSET TODAY 9.48 PM

COUNTER POINT



Our study shows there is no oxygen in many parts of planet Earth!

SHORT TAKES

Monsoon to reach Kerala on May 31

New Delhi: The south-west monsoon is likely to arrive over Kerala on May 31, a day earlier than its normal onset date, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday. The normal onset date of the monsoon over Kerala is June 1. "This year, the onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala is likely to be on 31st May with a model error of plus/minus 4 days," the IMD said.

Cyclone Tauktae set to intensify

New Delhi: The depression in the Arabian Sea is likely to intensify into a "very severe cyclonic storm" on May 17 and cross the Gujarat coast a day later, the IMD said on Friday. It may intensify further into a severe cyclonic storm by Saturday night. From May 16-19, it may intensify into a "very severe cyclonic storm" with a wind speed of 150-160 kilometres per hour gusting up to 175 kmph.

INSIDE

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TS may have missed identifying 70 lakh cases

DEEPER REACH

Covid spreading to rural India: PM

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 14

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday warned that the Covid-19 pandemic was rapidly spreading in rural areas, as he urged all citizens to take precautions, wear masks and keep social distancing in order to check the spread of the disease that has claimed over 2.6 lakh lives.

The Centre, he said, was working on a "war footing" to check the second wave of infections and was setting up new hospitals and oxygen-generating plants while augmenting supplies of medicines and vaccines.

YSRC REBEL MP RAJU ARRESTED FOR HATE SPEECH

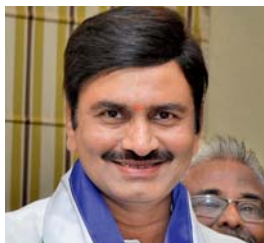
DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Narasapur MP K. Raghu Rama Krishna Raju was arrested by the AP CID sleuths at his residence in Hyderabad on Friday. The MP has been allegedly promoting hatred among certain communities with his speeches and had also been continuously targeting state government, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and other leaders.

His criticism turned even personal against the CM and he was making unsavoury remarks on every activity, be it the implementation of several welfare schemes or Covid-19 management and vaccination.

Additional DG-CID, P.V. Sunil Kumar, ordered a preliminary inquiry against the MP and found that he was making speeches on a regular basis to create tensions among various communities.

■ Page 2: Minister Balineni justifies arrest



Raghurama Krishna Raju

YOUTH CONGRESS CHIEF QUIZZED ON COVID HELP

New Delhi, May 14: Indian Youth Congress (IYC) president Srinivas BV on Friday said the Delhi Police's Crime Branch questioned him about the assistance being provided by him to people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Police called me this morning and came to my office around 11.45 am. They questioned how I was doing it," he said.

However, the Delhi Police said the questioning was done following a Delhi High Court order. The High Court has directed the city police to conduct inquiry into politicians involved in distribution of Covid-19 medicines and other items, and take steps for lodging of FIR in case of offence, a senior police officer said. In compliance with the directions of the high court, inquiry is being conducted into several people, the officer said. On May 4, the HC had asked the police to examine politicians allegedly procuring and distributing Remdesivir.

—PTI

Greeting safely



Muslims exchange Id-ul-Fitr greetings near Macca Masjid in Hyderabad on Friday. Congregational prayers were barred due to Covid-19 norms. ■ More on Page 2 — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Centre to let states import WHO approved vaccines

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

In a major relief to states facing acute shortage of vaccines, the Centre has hinted at allowing import of vaccines approved by WHO directly by the states.

In this context, Telangana would invite global tenders to procure vaccines while Andhra Pradesh has already called for quotations.

It is learnt that the states can directly release new vaccines without further trials to test efficacy in Indian environs.

Keeping in view the supply position in the next two months, Telangana State will complete the second dose vaccination to those above 45 years on a top priority basis in May and June.

An in-principle decision on this was taken by



Deepak Sapra, global head of custom pharma Services at Dr Reddy's Laboratories receives the first shot of Sputnik V vaccine against Covid-19 in Hyderabad on Friday.

the task force headed by minister K.T. Rama Rao here on Friday. Sources said TS will also focus on initiating a vaccination drive for super-spreaders like delivery personnel, banking staff and cab/auto drivers in these

FIRST DOSE OF SPUTNIK V ADMINISTERED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

The first dose of Sputnik V, Russian-made Covid-19 vaccine, was administered on Friday as part of its soft launch in Hyderabad, according to Dr Reddy's Laboratories, which is partnering with the Russian Direct Investment Fund.

■ REPORT ON PAGE 2

two months itself depending on vaccine availability.

The vaccination for the 18-45 agegroup will have to wait till July.

■ Page 2: KTR seeks long-term vax policy

5 feared killed in lightning strikes across Telangana

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

At least five people are feared killed as thunderstorms accompanied with lightning lashed the state on Friday. While one person was reported dead at Chigurumamidi mandal in Karimnagar, two others were reported dead in Huzurabad mandal, and two in Munipalli mandal in Sangareddy district. The three victims from Karimnagar were reportedly taking shelter under a tree, when the lightning struck. The other two died while they were working

in the farm. A cyclonic circulation, which originated along the western coast of India, and is now travelling in the north-east direction, caused the rains that lashed parts of Hyderabad and rest of the state on Friday.

On Friday evening, the highest rainfall in the state was recorded at Renikunta in Thimmapur mandal in Karimnagar which had received 53.3 mm of rainfall. In the city, however, it was the MMTS station at Lingampally which had received the highest rainfall, measuring 34.5 mm. This was followed by

rains in Gachibowli and Chandanagar which had received 34.5 mm and 30.3 mm of rainfall respectively. According to Dr K. Nagarathna, director, Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), Hyderabad, there would be spells of showers over parts of the state for the next 48 hours.

The IMD has also given a heavy rainfall warning for the next 48 hours in which it said, "Thunderstorm accompanied with lightning and gusty winds (30-40 kmph) are very likely to occur at isolated places in all districts of Telangana."

HC red-signals TS ambulance block

Stays circular stopping other state patients

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

The Telangana High Court on Friday stayed the implementation of a circular issued by the state government on May 11, with guidelines to streamline the influx of ambulances carrying Covid-19 patients from other states into Telangana for hospitalisation.

The court made it clear that the orders would come into effect forthwith, as against the police waiting for receipt of an order copy from the court.

The court directed the Advocate General and principal secretary, health, who was present, to immediately communicate the orders to the government and said the instructions should immediately be passed to the police authorities along the borders, as not to stop ambulances carrying Covid patients from other states.

Because of Id-ul-Fitr and other holidays the order copy could be delayed, the court directed them to pass necessary orders at the field level.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayans Reddy was dealing with an urgent case of PIL filed by Garimella Venkata Krishna Rao, who challenged the circular issued by the Telangana State government.

Justice Hima Kohli came down heavily on the government for issuing the circular, which indirectly restrained treatment to Covid patients of other states in hospitals in Hyderabad.

Chief Justice Kohli observed, "The Telangana

2 Covid patients die waiting at TS border

D.SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC
KURNOOL, MAY 14

Two Covid-19 patients died in ambulances as the Telangana state police stopped the vehicles at Pullur toll plaza on the inter-state border at Andhra Pradesh near here on Friday. A seriously ill patient has been admitted to the General Hospital here after the denial of entry into TS.

The dead were reportedly from Kadapa and Nandyal towns. At least 60 ambulances have been returned since the midnight of Thursday, a source said.

It was a day of hope against hope at Pullur toll plaza. Ambulances carrying critically ill patients were stopped from going to Hyderabad as the cops at Jogulamba-Gadwal strictly implemented the TS Chief Secretary's orders which laid down entry norms like producing an e-pass and prior hospital bed confirmation for the patients-in-transit.

● KURNOOL SP Kagineelli Fakkeerappa said no one died while waiting at the border checkpoint. He said out of 14 ambulances stuck there, 6 had patients and others were empty

However, Kurnool SP Kagineelli Fakkeerappa said no one died while waiting at the border checkpoint. "In all, 14 ambulances got stuck out here, of which six were with patients and eight empty. Four patients were shifted back to various hospitals in Kurnool and they are stable."

He said, "This information is authentic as it was verified from all sources."

After the TS High Court issuing a stay of operation of the TS Chief Secretary's orders curbing ambulances, the Jogulamba-Gadwal SP Ranjan Ratan Kumar said the status quo continues at the Pullur toll plaza.

■ Page 2: Cops yet to get orders to back off

government circular is nothing but an override of Constitutional rights by restricting citizens' entry into the state and restraining medical treatment, overreach of National Highway Authorities Act by stopping ambulances at the borders without approval of the Central government and overruling of the Supreme

Court's recent orders, which clearly stated as that no patient shall be refused admission in a hospital on the ground of his residence."

The Chief Justice further observed that the state had done indirectly what it could not do directly.

■ Page 2: HC warns TS against circumventing order

Black fungus worries Covid patients in Adilabad district

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 14

Black fungus (mucormycosis) infections have been found in some of the people recovered from Covid-19 in Adilabad district, creating fear among those cured from the pandemic in recent times.

Family members of Covid patients are now worried over the new health complication that is found in people who have recovered from Covid, and are taking extra care after knowing about the black fungus infection. It is said that the black fungus infection is affecting the lungs of Covid-recovered people and those

who are already prone to other diseases. One person who recovered from the Covid had developed black fungus in his lungs and died in Bhains while six to seven persons are undergoing treatment in private hospitals in old Adilabad district. Dr Damara Ramulu of Nirmal who is running a private hospital said early treatment was advisable for black fungus infection, otherwise it would spread to the lungs and the brain and other organs in the body. Now it is high time for the medical and health department to keep a close watch on the patients who recovered from the Covid. Even fami-

ly members should not neglect the complications developed among the Covid patients, he said.

Doctors say the black fungus infection is not a new one and found among people for a long time and need not be scared. This fungus is not only found among the elders but also in young people as well sometimes, they say. Early detection is important to start treatment and to control the infection from spreading to other organs. Doctors say that keeping the required medicines available in the government hospitals is necessary to treat patients who are suffering from black fungus.

PM salutes Dalit farmer

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MAY 14

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lauded a woman farmer practising natural farming as a role model for farmers across the country. He also noted the Dalit woman earns four times investment.

Praising her for her initiative to train 170 tribal women farmers in her village, the PM opined that major parts of country would be greener if everyone followed her example.

The Kisan (Prime Minister's Kisan Samman Fund) 2021-22 Scheme was launched by the Prime Minister on Friday through a video conference and he interacted with a few farmers from different parts of the country on the occasion.

Vannuramma, a woman



Vannuramma

farmer from Duradakunta village in Kalyanadurgam mandal, was among those who had the opportunity to interact with the Prime Minister. She had four children and lost her husband a few years ago. Though the family had four acres of dry land, she eked out a living as a farm labourer till two years ago, leaving the land for nearly 10 years as they could not bear losses.

Her life took a positive turn after she started practicing natural farming in 2 acres. She succeeded to get yields throughout the year. She also showed the PM the vegetables grown in the land.

"The government gave me four acres of assigned land. That land had been barren for ten years. I did nature farming in 2 acres. I grew three types of crops - millets, peanuts and vegetables. The total investment for the 3 crops was Rs 27,000 and I could make a profit of Rs 1.07 lakh per acre," a beaming Vannuramma briefed Modi.

Confident of sustained yields through this farming, she was training around 170 tribal women from the Tanda (tribal village) next to her village in nature farming.

IN BRIEF

RESOLVE
AMBULANCE
ISSUE: KISHANDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs G. Kishan Reddy expressed dissatisfaction over the issue of stopping ambulances on the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana State border by Telangana police.

The Minister released a video message to both state governments on Friday saying that they should amicably resolve the issue as it was affecting the lives of Covid patients. He suggested that the two Chief Ministers and their chief secretaries should talk immediately.

He urged the Telangana government to abide by the High Court orders and allow patients coming to Hyderabad for treatment. He said that the Union home secretary had already discussed with the chief secretary of Telangana about the urgent need to resolve the issue.

Kishan Reddy appealed to Chief Minister N. Chandrababhan Naraiah to withdraw the circular about not allowing ambulances into Telangana. A mutual agreement between the chief ministers can help contain the virus, he said.

UTTAM: ADD
COVID TREATMENT
TO AAROgyASRIDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday demanded the state government to add testing and treatment of Covid-19 to Aarogyasri scheme immediately.

Speaking to the media after releasing as poster of 'Rahul Gandhi Cares', along with Telangana Youth Congress president Shivasena Reddy, he said that under the programme Youth Congress would take up several relief works for Covid patients across the state.

Uttam Kumar Reddy said that neither Prime Minister Narendra Modi nor Chief Minister N. Chandrababhan Naraiah had bothered to control the second wave. He said that it was atrocious to note that testing kits were not available in the state. He said that Rapid Antigen Tests were failing to find the virus.

KTR ASKS FOR
LONG-TERM
VAX POLICY

From page 1

The import of vaccine apart from allowing more companies to manufacture Covaxin along with Bharat Biotech dominated the discussions at the task force meeting with the representatives of several vaccine manufacturers at Pragati Bhavan. Senior officials Jayesh Ranjan, Vikas Raj, Rajasekhara Reddy, Rahul Bojja were among those who took part.

Rama Rao who inquired about the progress of vaccine-making by other companies, promised full help from the government to expedite the commercialization of Covid vaccines. While exploring all possible ways to procure more stocks of C-vaccines, the minister advised the task force to draw up a long-term vaccine policy.

STATE RECORDS
4.3K COVID CASES,
GHMC AREA 607DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

There are 4,305 new cases and 29 deaths in the state on Friday, taking the total number of Covid-19 cases to 5,20,709 and the fatalities due to the disease to 2,896.

There were 57,416 tests carried out in the state, the health department stated in its daily Covid-19 bulletin. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation area recorded 607 cases, Ranga Reddy district 293, Medchal Malkajgiri 291, Nalgonda 246, Karimnagar 229, Khammam 22, Siddipet 169, Vikarabad 158, Jagtial 125, Mancherial 139 Mahabubnagar 137, Bhadrachalam Kothagudem 130 and Warangal Urban district 128 cases.

The state government states that total beds available for Covid-19 treatment in the state are 5,717. People are advised to wear masks, avoid unnecessary travel and stay at home.

TS may have missed out 70L Covid patients

Asymptomatic patients, those with mild symptoms not counted but they spread the disease

KANIA GARARI I DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

Telangana state may have missed identifying 70 lakh Covid-19 cases during the second wave of the infections. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research that did surveys for the different phases noted that for every single Covid-19 case detected in the state, as many as 33 have been either missed, not recorded, or not reported.

With 2.11 lakh cases registered in the state during the ongoing second wave, this meant Telangana missed counting as many as 6,96,300 infections that went unnoticed or not reported.

There are various reasons at the ground level for this. Those infected could

have suffered from mild symptoms and recovered soon. There were asymptomatic cases where the persons themselves did not know they were infected.

Said Dr Santosh Kraleti, senior public health specialist: "The missed cases account for those who have not got tests done but suffered from the symptoms. They have not got tested for one or other reason. This section has taken medicines and recovered."

The other section was those who had the symptoms and took medicines under the fever survey but the testing has not been done to confirm Covid-19, Dr Kraleti said.

The biggest challenge is that these positive patients are shedding viruses even as they move around. The

● **THE BIGGEST** challenge is that these positive patients are shedding viruses even as they move around. The virus could then infect others, some of whom could develop serious symptoms.

Carriers of the virus with symptoms but no quarantine shed the virus and drew others into the risk zone. It is likely the present large-scale spread is because of these missed cases.

An infectious disease specialist explained, "It is

● **EXPERTS SAY** that conservative estimates based on the models of the first wave showed a case fatality rate of 1 to 2 per cent but that is not being reflected as real-time data is not being recorded. There is distrust about the numbers being released in the daily TS bulletin.

clear that one in five persons in the state was already infected. Of these, 2.11 lakh cases were detected, 2 lakh cases are a part of the fever survey of the GHMC who have been given medical kits; and 33 of those missed for every one that was detected could have been suffering from mild or asymptomatic Covid-19."

The total number of peo-

ple infected till December last year was 24.1 per cent of the state's population, according to the sero-prevalence survey conducted by the Indian Council for Medical Research and the National Institute of Nutrition.

Public health specialists say that from December to February, sero-prevalence has increased by 5 per cent and from March to May, during the ongoing second wave of the pandemic, by 20 per cent.

The NIN, in its study published in February 2021, had warned that 75 per cent of rural Telangana is still susceptible to Covid-19 and the safety protocols of masks, social distancing and hand washing must be strictly followed.

Antibodies were found in

one among four people in Jangaon, Nalgonda and Kamareddy according to the sero prevalence study. Most of the infected were asymptomatic.

The case fatality rate is 0.55 per cent but experts doubt these numbers as there were many deaths that were "not being recorded."

Experts say even conservative estimates based on the models of the first wave showed a case fatality rate of 1 to 2 per cent but that is not being reflected, as real-time data is not being recorded. There is a lot of confusion, doubt and dis-trust about the numbers being released in the daily TS medical bulletin.

A pulmonologist at a corporate hospital says, "The numbers released in med-

ical bulletin are no longer being sent to private hospitals, though they did this in the first wave. In first and second waves, we are reporting the daily cases of admission, recovery and death. But we don't know if these numbers are being incorporated in the medical bulletin. These cases will also become a part of the missed cases of Covid-19 as the state has not recorded them."

"This is causing more strain on the healthcare services as their preparedness is based on the available data. With improper data, the prediction of active versus mild, serious and critical cases becomes difficult to assess. This is leading to confusion, chaos and inability to retrieve those from avoidable deaths," it is said.

DR REDDY'S
BEGINS SPUTNIK
V VACCINATIONDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

The first dose of Sputnik V, Russian-made Covid-19 vaccine, was administered on Friday as part of its soft launch in Hyderabad, according to Dr Reddy's Laboratories, which is partnering with the Russian Direct Investment Fund that markets the vaccine.

Reddy's Laboratories said the soft launch, as part of a limited pilot programme, followed the receipt of regulatory clearance from the Central Drugs Laboratory, Kasauli, on May 13. The first dose was administered to Deepak Sapra, the global head of Custom Pharma Services.

With the administration of the first dose of the vaccine, Sputnik V becomes the third Covid-19 vaccine in India, after Covishield from Serum Institute of India and Covaxin from Bharat Biotech, to be administered. It may be recalled that Dr Reddy's Laboratories had received 1,50,000 doses of Sputnik V on May 1.

The company said more consignment of the imported doses were expected over the next few months, following which domestically produced doses would be used.

The company said each of the imported doses was priced at ₹948 and a 5 per cent GST, with the possibility of a lower price point when local supply begins. The company was working closely with its six manufacturing partners in India to fulfil regulatory requirements to ensure smooth and timely supply, it said.

NON-COVID
HOSPITALS/ CLINICS
INCLUDED IN COVID
BED DASHBOARD

Children's hosps:	76
Neurology:	18
ENT:	22
Orthopaedic:	13
Maternity:	24
Eye:	12
Diagnostic centres:	9
Fertility:	5
Dialysis:	10
Cancer:	1
Vascular:	1
Nephrology:	1
Laparoscopy:	10
Nursing homes:	104

zero occupancy in 393 hospitals which between them have 6,023 beds. In more than 260 facilities that have one to 10 beds, the data appears to be randomly filled and these account for some 3,000 odd beds," the source explained.

"In many cases, even the phone numbers for private hospitals are wrong. The calls go to private individuals, or to other hospitals. We also found that in many instances, these private hospitals have been urging the respective district health authorities to remove their facilities from the Covid-19 bed availability list as they are receiving numerous enquiries over phone and are informing hopeful Covid-19 patients and their families that they cannot do anything to help them," the source said.

STORY OF HOPE

Free counselling
for Covid victimsSANJAY SAMUEL
PAUL I DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

Mental disturbance and distress have risen abnormally in several families because of the anguish caused by Covid-19. And the good news is that there is help round the corner, thanks to six Good Samaritans, coming in the form of qualified psychologists, who are offering free counselling to such stressed out individuals.

A good augury and an indication of their concern for the society in these testing times is that as members of Telangana Psychologists Association, they have been offered highly remunerative positions by leading players in the private health sector but they preferred to stick to free counselling. And this is not the first time they are rendering such yeoman service. They had done this last year during the first wave of coronavirus.

The league of six includes

Dr Lakshmi Nippani, Dr Mothukuri Ramchander, Hima Bindu, Krishan Sahithi, Deepdeya and Haritha. Free counselling for the second wave started early this May. Some of the callers ask if there was a need to visit hospitals and go for coronavirus test when they have cold, cough or mild fever.

The experts opined that currently most people are struggling from depression, anxiety, panic attacks and OCD. The counselors are coming in handy as people are not giving a patient hearing to those keen on narrating their mental trauma and seeking moral support.

Another major problem is lack of sleep, which is leading to various mental illnesses. It is also noted that blood pressure, diabetes and hypertension are also increasing with the surge in positive cases.

They pointed out that during the first wave many were panic-stricken and afraid of the death. They

TS POLICE YET TO
GET ORDERS TO
BACK OFF

From page 1

"We have not received any order to ease the flow of ambulances."

The SP who visited the toll plaza earlier in the day asked the police manning the border checkpoint to be fully vigilant and not allow any ambulances. When asked the SP as to why there was a strict vigil on patients visiting Hyderabad, he disconnected the call.

It was chaos at the Pullur toll plaza on Friday as TS police stopped ambulances.

The Gadwal police scrutinised ambulances for documents. At least 60 ambulances have been sent back from midnight of Thursday till Friday afternoon.

It is said two critically ill patients on oxygen support in ambulances died at the toll plaza as they were kept waiting for permission to cross the border. One more critically ill patient, denied permission, was admitted in Kurnool GGH.

Teachers' body: Support
kin of 225 Covid victimsDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

A total of 225 teachers — 166 in-service and 59 retired — have passed away in the state during the second wave of Covid19, the Telangana State United Teachers' Federation (TSUTF) has said.

On Friday, it released a list of the names of the teachers and said the highest toll was recorded in Sangareddy and Hyderabad districts, with 25 and 16 deaths.

In the Nagarjunasagar Assembly segment,

Warangal and Khammam municipal corporation limits, which saw election campaigning, 15

of the more than 500 teachers who took part in election duties died of the deadly virus, they said.

The federation has appealed to the government to help the families of the deceased teachers and take steps to prevent Covid-19 infection on teachers by giving priority to them in the vaccination process.

"Covid treatment costs 14 lakh to ₹20 lakh in private hospitals, but the state government is reimbursing no more than ₹1 lakh," the federation said.

"Even this is given only to those who have been treated in referral hospitals. Since all the hospi-

tals allowed for Covid treatment are not referral hospitals, there is no possibility of recovering from the infection even with that money," they said.

They pleaded that steps be taken to provide cashless medical care on health cards, ex gratia to the families of those who died of Covid after election duty, and financial assistance and employment opportunities to the families of the deceased contract teachers.

The federation has sent a representation on this to Chief Minister N. Chandrababhan Naraiah and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar.

COVID | TIMES

Academic session scheduled to start on June 1

Online schools till year-end

HARLEEN MINOCHA I DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 14

Online education is likely to continue for another academic year in the state, owing to the current pandemic situation, and in anticipation of a third wave of the Coronavirus in the country, government sources told this correspondent.

An official in the state education department said students and parents should be prepared to further adapt to the lack of physical, face-to-face classes at least until the

● **AN OFFICIAL** said students and parents should be prepared to further adapt to the lack of physical, face-to-face classes at least until the end of this year for the academic session of 2021-22

end of this year for the academic session of 2021-22. "Even with the first wave of the pandemic that was only half as deadly as the second wave, educational institutions were not opened in February. As we prepare for a third wave now,

online education is the only way," said the official.

The new academic year in the state is so far scheduled to begin from mid-June, once schools reopen after summer vacations on June 1.

Some private schools' bodies like the Telangana Recognised Schools' Management Association (TRMSA) are demanding that the government releases an academic calendar soon so as to prepare teachers as well as students in time.

On Monday, central and

IN BRIEF

57TH DIVISION GETS DIRTY WATER

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 14

Residents of 56th and 57th divisions were shocked after noticing the colour of the drinking water coming from their taps. It was muddy and full of dirt and not fit to even have a bath, leave alone for cooking purposes.

The state government has claimed several times that it would ensure safe water to the people of Khammam through Mission Bhagiratha. It also built four tanks and got water from Palair reservoir. The issue was taken to the notice of 57th division corporator Rafida Begum.

TD SEEKS FINANCIAL AID TO FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 14

Several leaders from Telugu Desam (TD) urged the state government to sanction Rythu Bandhu at least a month before the commencement of the season and provide financial aid immediately to farmers, who are facing hardships during the Covid-19 situation.

They stated that several families of farmers, who had contracted coronavirus, were facing problems in paying medical bills. In most places in the district, many had suffered huge losses as their crops were damaged by the recent unseasonal rains.

They said that the Prime Minister had announced release of the eighth phase of funds under the Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. They pointed out that

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Y.S Jagan Mohan Reddy had announced release of funds under Rythu Bharosa.

Given the tough times they are facing, the state government should think on humanitarian lines and help farmers, they said adding that June would be a bit late.

TD state executive secretary Damara Satyam, Karimnagar Parliament segment president Ambati Joji Reddy and secretary Vancha Srinivas Reddy released the statement.

BASAVA JAYANTI CELEBRATED WITH GAIETY

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 15

Social reformer Basaveshwara's 888 Jayanti was celebrated by the people in Adilabad district on Friday.

Members of the Lingayat community garlanded the Basaveshwara's statue in Adilabad town and paid rich tributes to the Basava.

Addressing on the occasion, Lingayat community state president Ashok and Vendi Badhreshwar said Basaveshwara preached equality among the people and promoted self-respect among the people.

Leaders of Lingayat community and political leaders of various parties were present.

SENIOR DOCTOR DATTU DIES OF ILL-HEALTH

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 15

Senior doctor Muga Dattu, 62, of Adilabad died of prolonged ill-health while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Hyderabad in the early hours of Friday.

He was popular as a public doctor among the masses of Adilabad district.

Dattu's funerals performed in his native Arli (T) village in Bheempur mandal and MLA Jogu Ramanna and others expressed deep condolences to the family members of Dattu and recollected his services as a doctor to the poor.

Congress leaders Ramchandra Reddy and Gandharh Sujatha and Sajid Khan and others expressed condolences to the family members of the deceased.

■ Dattu's funerals performed in his native Arli (T) village in Bheempur mandal and MLA Jogu Ramanna and others expressed deep condolences to the family members of Dattu and recollected his services as a doctor to the poor. Congress leaders Ramchandra Reddy and Gandharh Sujatha and Sajid Khan and others expressed condolences to the family members

Covid positivity rate stable

Collective efforts of state government and social groups yield results

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 14

Covid-19 positivity rate has been stable in Nizamabad district for the last one week. Lockdown and self-protection measures taken by people have yielded good results.

Positivity rate remained between 12 per cent and 15 per cent in the district.

The state government has reduced the Covid-19 tests as per the guidelines of World Health Organisation (WHO), which sets a benchmark of 140 tests per million population per day. Covid-19 tests were conducted in 42 centres across the district including Government General Hospital in Nizamabad and district hospital at Bodhan.

Few people approached private laboratories for Rapid Antigen Tests and RT-PCR tests in Nizamabad, Bodhan, Armoor towns. Rapid test results were declared within no time, but RT-PCR test results are waited for four to five days. For the last one week, the positivity rate is below 15 per cent.

Following the restrictions on vehicle movements from neighbouring Maharashtra state and collective efforts by government authorities and social groups, the spread of Covid-19 is controlled in rural and urban areas. People have also taken utmost precautions during their movements to work places and markets.

● Positivity rate remained between 12 per cent and 15 per cent

292 BOOKED FOR LOCKDOWN VIOLATIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 14

Sircilla police booked as many as 280 cases against individuals and 12 against shop owners on Friday for violating lockdown orders, superintendent of police Rahul Hegde said.

Cases have been booked in areas including Ambedkar chowrasta, old bus stand, Venkapet, Sundarai-ahnagar, B.Y. Nagar, Indiranagar and new bus stand in Sircilla town of Rajanna Sircilla district.

Most cases were booked in Ambedkar chowrasta region against people being outside without reason despite the lockdown. Cases were lodged against shop owners for not closing their establishments by 10 am when curfew relaxation time ends.

SP Rahul asked people to abide by lockdown timings and help state government control Coronavirus in Rajanna Sircilla district. He maintained that they will continue being strict with regard to implementation of lockdown.

Cases have been lodged against people and shopkeepers under the Disaster Management Act.

Sircilla DSP Chandrasekhar, circle inspector Anil Kumar, sub-inspector Sudhakar and trainee sub-inspector Sandhya were among those who undertook operations.

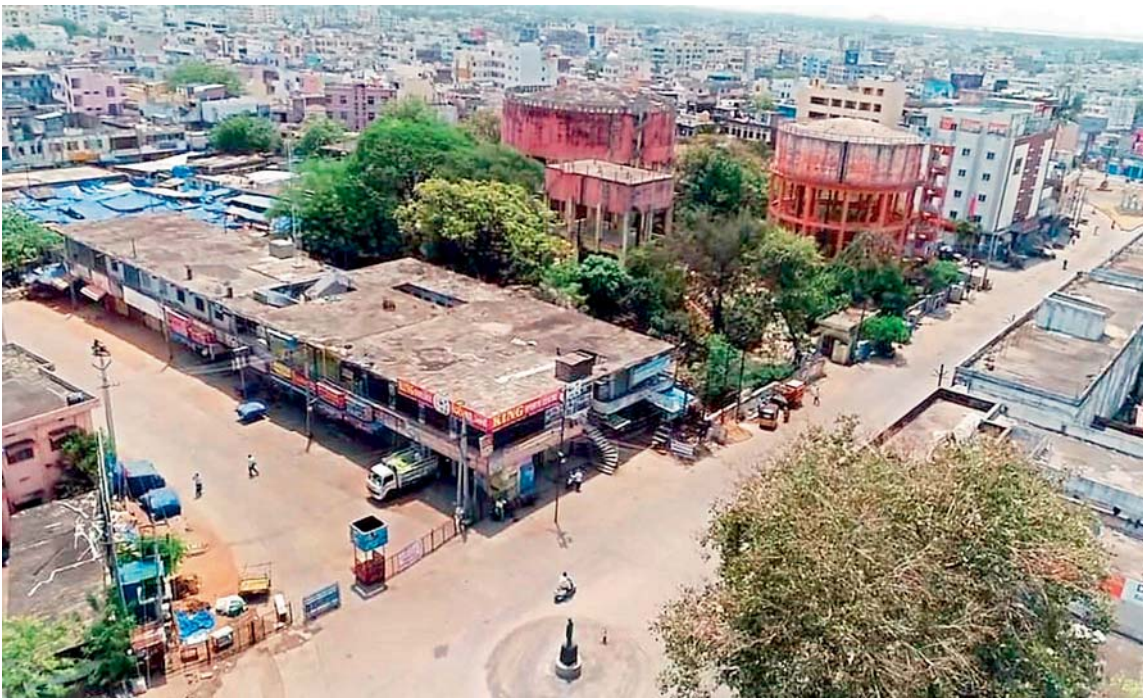
● Cases have been lodged against people and shopkeepers under the Disaster Management Act in Rajanna Sircill district.

Brahmotsavams begin sans devotees

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 14

In view of the coronavirus pandemic induced lockdown, the Bhadrakali Kalyana Brahmotsavams this year are being held without the attendance of the devotees.

The Brahmotsavams to be held from Saturday to



An aerial view of Karimnagar during lockdown on Friday.

POSITIVITY RATE IN NIZAMABAD DISTRICT			
Date	Total tests	Positive cases	Percentage
14.05.21	1339	200	14.93
13.05.21	1615	248	15.35
12.05.21	1795	255	14.20
11.05.21	1955	269	13.75
10.05.21	1906	236	12.33
09.05.21	1416	182	12.45
08.05.21	1942	254	13.07

Prayer time



Muslims pray on the occasion of Id-ul-Fitr in Karimnagar on Friday.

— DC

Gangula hits out at Etala

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 14

Former minister Etala Rajendar always imagined that he was big when the fact was that he was just a leader in the political system, said minister for BC welfare, Gangula Kamalakara.

Chairing a meeting with the people's representatives of Jammikunta municipality here on Friday, Kamalakara came down heavily against Rajendar saying that he had tried to split the TRS, which had given him recognition. Being in the party for 20 long years and after enjoying high positions, Mr Rajendar started criticizing it and tried to bring bad name for the party leadership, he alleged.

Rajendar had ridiculed schemes like Kalyana Lakshmi, Asaara pension and Rythu Bandhu schemes introduced by

● Rajendar had ridiculed schemes like Kalyana Lakshmi, Asaara pension and Rythu Bandhu schemes introduced by the state government, which was unbecoming of him, the minister observed.

the state government, which was unbecoming of him, the minister observed.

The understandings which he has maintained with Congress and BJP were exposed with his expulsion from the Cabinet, he pointed out.

The public representatives informed the minister that they would be loyal to TRS, which alone can assure development and people's welfare. They brought to his notice several issues pertaining to Jammikunta municipality.

Kamalakar to take them to the notice of the Chief Minister and said that he would be available round-the-clock to them in developmental activities.

MLC Naradasu Laxman Rao, SUDA chairman G.V. Rama Krishna, TRSV state president G. Srinivas, Jammikunta Sarpanch Forum president Venkat Mahendar, councilors M. Bikshapathi, CH. Rama Swamy, former MPP N. Rajamouli and former Karepalli sarpanch B. Sammaiah were present along with others.

Not leaving TRS: Meanwhile, some people's representatives from Huzurabad municipality lashed out at reports that they were leaving TRS.

Speaking to reporters, the vested interests were deliberately trying to damage their reputation with such baseless allegations.

SEVERAL FINED FOR FLOUTING MASK RULE

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 14

The Khammam police cracked a whip on the persons moving outside without wearing masks during morning in Khammam. Commissioner of police Vishnu Warrior visited various streets in lockdown time and stopped youth moving on the streets. They asked them for what purpose they came out.

He said that the government imposed a lockdown to check the virus and there is no sense in moving without wearing masks and not maintaining physical distance in the morning time.

Motivate frontline warriors, provide sops: Bandi to govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 14

The state government must immediately announce incentives to the frontline warriors and give assurance to them as well as their families, said BJP state president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar.

He inspected the Covid-19 ward at the MGM hospital on Friday and alleged that the state government's claims that all facilities are available for the better treatment of Covid-19 patients at the MGM hospital are false.

The Karimnagar MP said the Covid wards inside the MGM hospital and the Karimnagar civil hospital are more like general wards with negligence writ large at every corner.

The kin of the patients are forced to take care of the infected inside the ward. They do not even have gloves or PPE kits. After spending so much time inside the ward, they return home posing a risk to those around them while they travel home and also other family members.

"This situation has been created because of the shortage of staff inside the MGM hospital. Those doctors and staff already working do not have a guarantee for their lives. They are being subjected to a lot of stress due to the workload. Four lab technicians have died so far in the hospital. One doctor Shobha Rani too died while rendering her services to the Covid patients. The government does not even have the basic sense to provide good treatment to those who are serving by risking their lives," he said demanding the state government to announce incentives to the medical staff, para-medical, lab technicians, police security staff, sanitation staff and support their families.

Mr Sanjay pointed out that

SATYAVATI: TEAMS WILL CONDUCT FEVER SURVEYS

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 14

Minister for tribal affairs, women and child welfare, Satyavathi Rathod, said that the state government was working tirelessly under the leadership of CM to curb the Corona pandemic.

The minister visited the Covid-19 ward inside the Mahabubabad Area Hospital on Friday and interacted with the patients giving them mental courage.

She also asked them about the facilities provided in the hospital and the treatment provided by the doctors.

Speaking on the occasion, she said 750 task force teams have been set up at the district level to ensure proper control measures against Covid infections, to provide treatment to victims and to admit those with severity to the hospital.

The teams will go door-to-door and identify those with symptoms and provide them with the medication and mental reassurance they need. If the symptoms are high, they will suggest admission to the hospital immediately, she explained.

"We are constantly monitoring the hospital to ensure that all arrangements are made to provide proper treatment to the covid patients," the minister said.

a state minister has claimed that there is no shortage of oxygen and remdesivir injections but the medical staff do not even have PPE kits to protect themselves.

He also accused the state government of showing false figures related to Covid infections and deaths.

Lockdown makes TS booze dealers happy

A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, MAY 14

The never-before-heard odd timings of liquor and bars outlets have come as boon for those with entrepreneurial skills in Khammam and Bhadradri-Kothagudem districts.

Significantly, belt shops selling liquor without authorisation have increased in villages.

Those with cash are pur-

chasing various liquor bottles during early hours and stocking them at their homes in villages.

They are selling the same for 2-3 times the marked prices.

Some wine dealers are selling liquor after fixed timings from back doors.

There are 166 liquor shops, three clubs and 44 bar and restaurants in Khammam and Bhadradri-Kothagudem districts.

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SHORT TAKES

PARENTS GRIEVE AS COVID-19 SNATCHES KIDS

New Delhi, May 13: Nine-month-old Krishu, the only child to his blind parents, succumbed to Covid-19 at a Delhi government-run hospital on Thursday, while his father, battled the deadly virus at another hospital.

On Thursday evening, Jitender Singh ‘Shunty’, a former BJP MLA, buried Krishu in a corner of the Old Seemapuri cremation ground. This was the second time in two days that Singh was burying a child so young.

The 59-year-old humanitarian, who has given dignified cremations to over 2,000 strangers during the second wave of Covid-19, buried five-month-old Pari on Wednesday evening, near the spot where Krishu now rests.

A relative of Krishu said the boy was the only child to his parents who live in Dilshad Garden in East Delhi. “Both the parents are blind,” he said, choking on his tears.

Krishu’s mother contracted the infection around 18 days ago and since she breastfed the child, he also became ill, the relative said.

A few days ago, Krishu was admitted to the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, where he died in the early hours of Thursday.

His father, Shashank Shekar, 26, is battling for his life in the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Tahirpur.

“He doesn’t know he lost his beloved Krishu today. Now, I don’t want to lose his father too,” the mother, Jyoti, said, as she broke down over the phone.

BJP LEADER’S KIN BOOKED FOR OPENING SHOP

Budaun (UP), May 14: The brother of a BJP leader here was booked for allegedly opening his garment shop in the local market amid the Covid-19 lockdown, an official said on Friday.

The police identified the accused as Jyoti Prakash, the brother of Badaun district’s BJP president Ashok Bharti.

An FIR was lodged against Prakash under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for disobeying duly promulgated public servant’s order after he was found having opened his garment shop, City ASP Praveen Singh Chauhan said.

Prakash was found having opened his shop by city magistrate Amit Kumar and Circle officer Chandrapal as they were patrolling the city to enforce the lockdown, the ASP said.

As the two officials entered the shop, they even found customers sitting inside it purchasing different articles, Chauhan said.

As the two officials questioned the BJP leader’s brother, he entered into an argument with them with his son and employees too joining them in a bid to browbeat them, following which an FIR was lodged against all the accused.

Chauhan said a probe is on in the matter.

COVID CONTINUES TO WREAK HAVOC ON LIVES IN J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, MAY 14

Id-ul-Fitr was celebrated in a subdued manner in Jammu and Kashmir as Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc upon lives. As many as 115 more people fell prey to the deadly virus whereas about 7,500 new positive cases surfaced in the twin Union territories of J&K and Ladakh during the past two days.

The local religious groups and the mosque committees in J&K had around midnight on Wednesday endorsed Pakistan Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee’s testimony of the sighting of the Shawwal (Eid) moon. However, no big Eid congregations could be held anywhere in the UT due to the restrictions imposed to contain Covid-19 pandemic. Only small groups of Muslims offered Id prayers in locality mosques or in the lawns of residential houses with complete adherence to the Covid Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines. Eid was celebrated similar fashion in Kargil and most other parts of Ladakh with rest of the country on Friday.

The local police and Central armed police forces have continued to enforce the ‘corona curfew’ in twin capitals of Srinagar and Jammu and all other major cities and towns.

Over 2,000 bodies found in Ganga river

Health ministry is in close touch with UP, Bihar govt to ensure immediate check to stop the spread

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 14

The Union home ministry has received inputs that nearly 2,000 bodies have been retrieved from the Ganga by various district administrations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the last one week or so, according to sources.

Officials say that these bodies are most likely of Corona patients who died in remote villages along the Ganga.

Since most of the villagers are extremely poor and not able to finance the last rites of their family members, they have been dumping the bodies in the river. Both UP and Bihar share a long river bank of the Ganga of more than 1,400 km.

The Union home ministry is in close touch with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar governments to ensure that dumping of bodies in the Ganga is checked immediately as this could lead to further spread of the Corona pandemic in the two states.

Ministry sources said the trend of dumping bodies was being noticed largely in four districts of Kanpur, Ghazipur, Unnao and Ballia from where bodies were also going further downstream to Bihar. Both states have been asked to take immediate corrective steps.

After the discovery of the dead bodies floating in the Ganga, almost all bodies were disposed of with proper religious rituals. Local police have been directed to start intensified patrolling along the river and spread awareness among the villagers not to dispose of bodies in the river as this could lead to fresh health issues.

Earlier, Bihar had also raised this issue saying that most dead bodies floating in the Ganga were coming downstream from UP and were getting piled up near Ballia.

Both states have mobilised massive resources as the home ministry has cautioned them that dumping of Corona victims in the Ganga can lead to massive contamination of river water which in turn will lead to greater health issues in the coming days.

There is considerable concern among Central agencies over the spread of the Corona virus in rural areas, particularly in the populous states of UP and Bihar.



Jama Masjid wears a deserted look on the occasion of Id-ul-Fitr, marking the end of the fasting month of Ramzan, during the ongoing Covid-induced lockdown, in New Delhi, on Friday.

— PTI



96-year-old Pushpa Sharma poses for a photo with her family, after she recovered from Covid-19, at her residence in Shahdara area of New Delhi.

— PTI

48 UNDERTRIALS IN BERHAMPUR JAIL TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 14

Forty-eight under-trial prisoners (UTPs) lodged at Odisha’s Berhampur Circle Jail have tested positive for coronavirus.

The jail authorities on Friday informed that swab samples of 84 UTPs were sent for RT-PCR test two days ago and reports of 48 came out positive.

Currently, a total 927 prisoners are lodged in the jail, he added.

Earlier in the first phase of the pandemic, several inmates of the jail had contracted the virus.

A few other jails, including Jharpara Circle Jail in Bhubaneswar and Choudwar Circle Jail in Cuttack, had also reported some Covid cases.

The state government, meanwhile on Friday, issued advisory for children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women against infection. Hand washing with soap and water must be advocated for at least 40 seconds instead of 20 seconds.

All children above two years advised to wear masks as per recommendation of Indian Academy of Pediatrics mandatorily before stepping out.

New Delhi, May 14: A total of 10,796 oxygen concentrators, 12,269 oxygen cylinders, 19 oxygen generation plants and about 4.2 lakh Remdesivir vials received as global aid were delivered or dispatched through road and air to various states and union territories from April to May 13, the ministry said on Friday.

The major consignments received on May 12/13 from Indonesia, Luxembourg, Oman, South Korea, the UK, USISPF, Finland and Greece include oxygen concentrators (1,506), oxy-

gen cylinders (434) and ventilators/BiPAP/CPAP (58).

Cumulatively, 10,796 oxygen concentrators, 12,269 oxygen cylinders, 19 oxygen generation plants, 6,497 ventilators or Bi PAP, about 4.2 lakh Remdesivir vials have been delivered or dispatched through road and air from April 27 to May 13, the ministry said.

“Effective immediate allocation, and streamlined delivery to the recipient states and union territories and institutions is an ongoing exercise,” it said.

The Union health min-

istry is comprehensively monitoring this on a regular basis.

A dedicated coordination cell has been created in the ministry to coordinate the receipt and allocation of foreign Covid relief material as grants, aid and donations. This cell started functioning from April 26.

A standard operating procedure has been framed and implemented by the health ministry since May 2, 2021.

The government of India, at the forefront of the “whole of government” approach to combat the ongoing Covid-19, has

been receiving international donations and aid of COVID-19 relief medical supplies and equipment since April 27 from different countries or organisations to augment its efforts in fighting the unprecedented surge of cases.

Through a streamlined and systematic mechanism, various ministries and departments of the government of India have seamlessly collaborated for expeditiously delivering the incoming global aid to states and union territories, the ministry said.

— PTI

‘Havan’ to ward off Covid: Min

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAY 14

Unfazed by criticism from several quarters for her recent remarks that ‘havan’ can ward off Covid-19, Madhya Pradesh tourism minister Usha Thakur said one can shield oneself from the virus if one adopted the Vedic way of life.

“I can establish with evidence that one can stay healthy by following Vedic way of life. I stand by my statement that ‘yagya’ can keep the third wave of Coronavirus pandemic at bay”, she told reporters here late on Thursday.

The minister a couple of days ago created a flutter

when she exhorted people to perform yagya, describing it an ‘ancient practice, going on since ages, to purify our environment for keeping the third Covid wave away’.

“We all have the responsibility of purifying our environment. The practice of performing yagya to end a pandemic has been prevalent since time immemorial. This is yagya treatment (to ward off the virus). It is not bigotry or ritualism. If we cleanse the environment by performing yagya, then the third pandemic wave will not even touch India”, she had said while inaugurating a Covid care Centre in Indore on May 12.

Now, Delhi seeks help to store excess oxygen

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI MAY 14

After demanding adequate supply of oxygen from the Centre last week, Delhi now seeks help to store excess stock of liquid medical oxygen (LMO), from other states. Owing to the logistical hurdle which supposedly resulted into the increased turnaround time for the tankers and paucity of space to store the liquid medical oxygen, Delhi is now seeking help for storage facilities from neighbouring states.

On May 11, The Indian government’s Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) had written to the additional secretary at the depart-

ment for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) under the commerce ministry, said that excess LMO was available with Delhi, but authorities there could not ensure smooth supply from manufacturers as well as availability of tankers. As per the findings conducted by PESO, Since May 9, the Delhi government has been trying to get alternate storage space in nearby states, especially at the LMO manufacturers’ premises, to store excess LMO in their storage tanks.

It is also revealed that on May 10, the Delhi government lifted had lifted only 150 MT of LMO on from their plants at Panipat and

Roorkee against the allocated quota of 190 MT and then returned the remaining back to the plant due to non-availability of storage space or less demand in Delhi and requested not to release 42 MT of LMO from Panipat and Roorkee Plant and rather store the remaining amounts in their storage tanks.

Seeing a high-pitched battle for liquid oxygen last week, by Delhi government, Dr Sambit Patra, BJP National Spokesperson, on Friday addressing a press conference said that Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), failed to build storage facility (LMO) and now are seeking help from neighbouring states.

UP: 3 prisoners killed in clash

Chitrakoot, May 14: Three prisoners were shot dead in a clash at Ragauli district jail here on Friday, police said. One of them died in an exchange of fire with jail officials after he shot dead the other two prisoners, jailor S. P. Tripathi said.

The deceased inmates have been identified as Anshu Dixit, Merazuddin alias Meraj Ali and Mukeym Kala, officials said in Lucknow. “Dixit shot dead Ali and Kala, and held some of the other prisoners at gunpoint and threatened to kill them. He was later killed in the exchange of fire with police,” IG, Chitrakoot Range, K Satyanarain said.

Taking note of the inci-

dent, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said a joint team of Divisional Commissioner D. K. Singh and IG, Chitrakoot and DIG (prison) Sanjeev Tripathi will submit a report in this regard.

Asked how weapons reached inside the jail, the IG said, “The matter is being investigated.” He said all the three inmates were hardcore criminals and had a number of criminal cases pending against them. However, Ragauli district jailor S. P. Tripathi earlier in the day said Dixit had snatched the service revolver of a jail staff when the official intervened in the argument between the inmates.

— PTI

COVID | BLUES

Maha govt to undertake a campaign to spread awareness over fungal infection, health crisis

Mucormycosis cases increasing in Maha post Covid

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 14

Maharashtra’s healthcare infrastructure, which is already under severe pressure due to coronavirus pandemic, is facing further strain due to the rise of Mucormycosis, a dreaded fungal infection, which has taken 52 lives in the state since the outbreak of Covid last year.

Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus,

has been found in some coronavirus patients, both recovering and recovered. Its symptoms include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision.

Black fungus is mostly found among coronavirus patients who have diabetes, fluctuation in sugar level or increased iron level in the blood. However, it is not found to be infectious like the Covid.

“All the deceased have been the coronavirus patients, who had recovered from the viral infection, but later they succumbed to the black fungus infection. The immune system of such patients is weak which makes them more susceptible to this fungal infection,” said an official from the state health department.

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope had said there could be more than

2,000 cases of black fungus in the state. In Mumbai alone, 111 mucormycosis patients have been found so far. “A mucormycosis patient needs to be seen by various experts such as ENT, ophthalmologists and neurologists among others. The medicines of the disease are expensive. Hence, patients hit by the disease will be treated for free at 1,000 hospitals covered under the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya

Yojana, the state’s flagship medical insurance scheme,” Mr Tope said.

There are complaints about the injections used for treating Mucormycosis patients being sold at higher than the actual price and their rates will be capped, he added.

The Maharashtra Government will also undertake a campaign to spread awareness among people about the fungal infection, said health officials.



Beneficiaries stand in a queue to receive Covid-19 vaccine dose outside NMMC Hospital in Vashi.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

TURKISH TOURISM VIDEO TAKEN DOWN AFTER BACKLASH

Istanbul: A video promoting tourism in Turkey amid the pandemic has caused an uproar on social media for showing tourism employees wearing masks that read "Enjoy, I'm vaccinated."

The video was published on the social media accounts of official travel guide Go Turkiye on Thursday and was taken down later that day. It aimed to promote travel to Turkey as a "safe haven" for foreigners and showed unmasked tourists being served in hotels on the Turkish coast.

Opposition parties and critics on social media said the promotional video was an insult to Turks. A hashtag calling for the tourism minister to resign was trending on Twitter on Friday. Tourism workers have been prioritised to receive their vaccinations and the country's foreign minister promised "we will vaccinate all people tourists may see by the end of May."

AS A GESTURE, MYANMAR FREES JAPANESE SCRIBE

Bangkok: An arrested Japanese freelance reporter left for home on Friday after being released by Myanmar's ruling junta in what it called a gesture of friendship to Japan, Japanese officials and Myanmar state media said.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said Yuki Kigazumi was released after efforts by Japanese diplomats and others. The reporter boarded a plane at Yangon's airport and was expected to arrive in Japan on Friday night.

Myanmar's army-run *Myawaddy* TV said Kitazumi was arrested on April 18 for "inciting" anti-military civil disobedience and riots. "Although the journalist is a lawbreaker, the case will be closed and he will be released at the request of the Special Envoy of the Japanese Government for National Reconciliation in Myanmar, in view of the close ties and future relations between Myanmar and Japan," the junta said in a statement read on TV.

UN ENVOY ASKS THAI AID IN ENDING MYANMAR CRISIS

Bangkok: The United Nations' special envoy on Myanmar met with Thailand's prime minister on Friday as she continues efforts to end violence in Myanmar sparked by a military takeover in February.

The envoy, Christine Schraner Burgener, told Prayuth Chan-ocha in Bangkok that she hopes Thailand will find ways to work with Myanmar's military to ease the unrest, the prime minister's office said in a statement. The army's seizure of power has been opposed by a broad cross-section of Myanmar's population, and the junta has responded with a violent crackdown that has cost hundreds of lives. The escalation of violence and the junta's failure to restore order has led to fears the country could become a failed state, impacting neighboring Thailand and the whole region. Prayuth told Schraner Burgener his government is ready to listen and exchange information that could be beneficial, according to the statement, which said the two also discussed humanitarian assistance for affected people.

PUTIN ALLY, OPPN MIN. UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN UKRAINE

Kyiv (Ukraine): A top Ukrainian opposition politician with close links to Russian President Vladimir Putin was placed under house arrest on Thursday, days after being charged with treason.

Viktor Medvedchuk, who heads the Opposition Platform for Life party, the largest opposition force in parliament, denies the charges brought against him last week and says they're politically motivated.

Medvedchuk, who has close personal ties with Putin, the godfather of Medvedchuk's daughter, could face 15 years in prison if tried and convicted. Prosecutors had asked a court in Kyiv to put Medvedchuk in jail, but a judge ordered house arrest instead.

Medvedchuk, 66 is accused of transferring oil and gas production licenses from one of the fields in Crimea to Russian authorities. Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula in 2014, weeks after Ukraine's former Moscow-friendly president was ousted by protesters.

Medvedchuk is also charged with allegedly disclosing secret data on the deployment of Ukrainian military units last year.

U.S. VOWS TO STAND BY ALLY AUSTRALIA AGAINST CHINA

Washington, May 14: The Biden administration has vowed to stand by Australia in its worsening trade and other disputes with China.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Australian counterpart on Thursday that the US will not leave Australia alone on the field or maybe I should say alone on the pitch in the face of economic coercion by China.

"That's what allies do," he said. "We have each other's backs so we can face threats and challenges from the position of collective strength."

Like the United States and China, Australia and China are in the midst of several major disputes as Beijing seeks to apply pressure over commerce and influence. Blinken said the United States and Australia are bound together by deeply held shared values that no other nation, including China, can uproot.

Blinken and Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne both said that presenting a united front to China is key. — *AP*

HONG KONG FREEZES JIMMY LAI'S ASSETS

Hong Kong, May 14: Hong Kong authorities on Friday announced that they had frozen the assets of billionaire pro-democracy tycoon Jimmy Lai, including shares in his media publications, for breaching the city's national security law.

The security bureau said it had issued an order to freeze Lai's shares in Next Digital media group and "the property in the local bank accounts of three companies owned by him".

A rags to riches billionaire, media tycoon Lai has long been a thorn in Beijing's side thanks to his caustic tabloids and unapologetic support for democracy.

His *Apple Daily* newspaper has staunchly backed Hong Kong's pro-democracy cause, including the huge and often violent protests that swept the international financial hub in 2019. — *AFP*

No mask for fully vaccinated in US

Covid test, quarantine waived for travel; Biden says Americans can now greet with a smile

Washington, May 14: In the biggest indication that the United States is fast returning to pre-pandemic life, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said that fully vaccinated people are no longer required to wear masks. The recommendation holds true for both indoors and outdoors, the CDC said.

Following the announcement on Thursday, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris appeared before reporters at the Rose Garden of the White House without wearing masks.

"I think it's a great milestone. A great day. It's been made possible by the extraordinary success we've had in vaccinating so many Americans so quickly," Biden said.

He said 250 million vaccine shots have been given in 114 days. "We are seeing the results. Cases are down in 49 of 50 states. *New York Times* has reported that hospitalisations are the lowest they've been since April of 2020, over a year ago, right after the start of the pandemic. Deaths are down 80 per cent and also at their lowest level since April of 2020," Biden said.

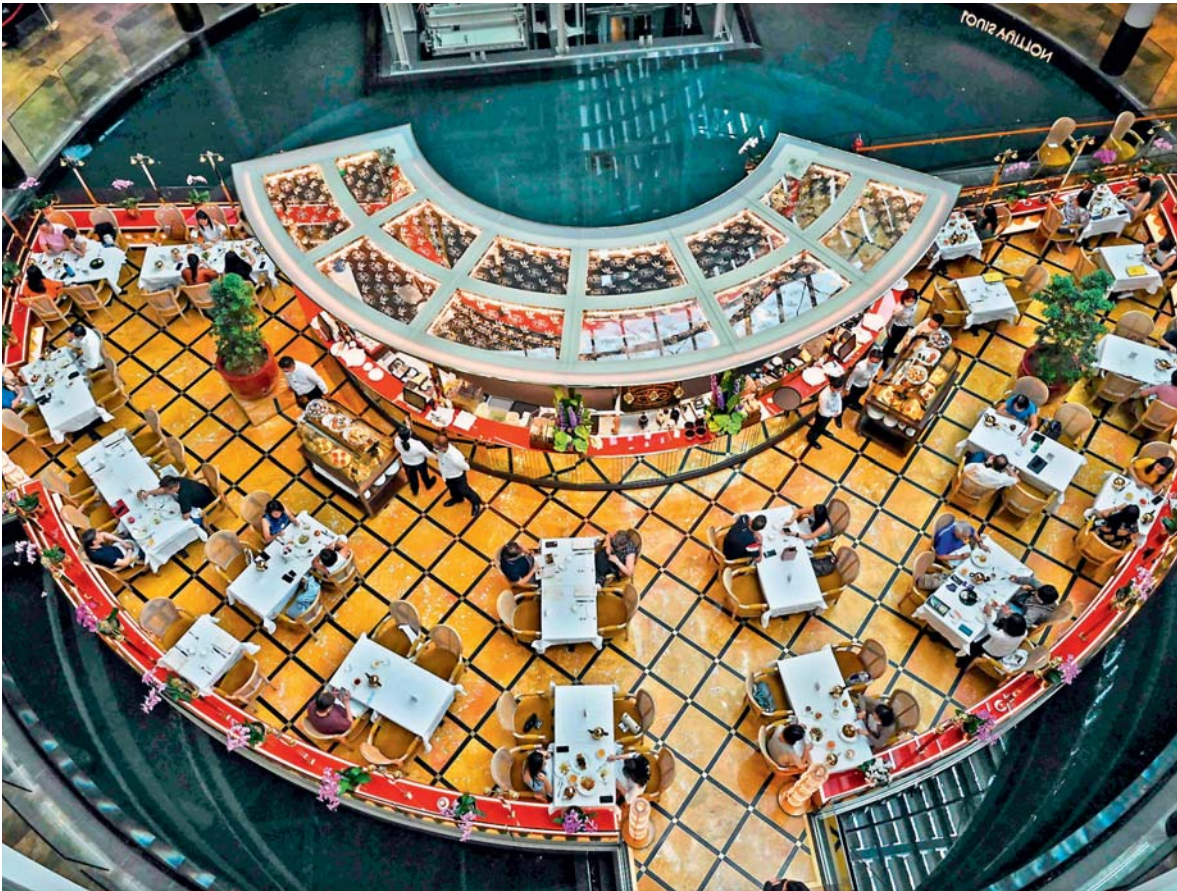
He said that the virus tragically rages in other countries. "In less than four months, we've gone from 5.5 per cent to nearly 60 per cent of the adults in America with at least one shot in their arm. We've gone from stagnation to an economy that is growing faster than it has in nearly 40 years. We've gone from an anemic job creation, to a record for job creation for a new administration," Biden added.

The CDC said fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

Those travelling within the United States need not get tested before or after travel or self-quarantine after travel. The CDC said the vaccines are effective at preventing the Covid-19 disease, especially severe illness and death.

Biden spoke about the thousands of deaths and the lives upended for millions more as they missed family gatherings and important rituals.

He heaped praise on ordinary Americans who, he said, had met the challenge head on — and better than in some other countries.



Ahead of the tightening of restrictions due to the surge in Covid-19 cases in the country, people dine at a restaurant in a shopping mall in Singapore on Friday. — *AFP*

Indian strain doubles in 1 week in UK

London, May 14: The case numbers related to the B.1.617.2 variant of Covid-19, first identified in India, have more than doubled within a week in the UK, resulting in further surge testing and enhanced vaccine measures to be deployed in parts of the country where the strain is beginning to spread "increasingly rapidly".

Public Health England (PHE) said on Thursday

● **UK HEALTH** Secretary Matt Hancock said that the health authorities are monitoring the situation "very carefully" and will not hesitate to take further action if necessary.

that its latest analysis shows the number of cases of the highly transmissible variant first

detected in Maharashtra has risen from 520 last week to 1,313 cases this week. Most cases are in the northwest of England, with some in London, and additional measures are being put in place to "rapidly break chains of transmission".

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock said that the health authorities are monitoring the situation "very carefully" and will not hesitate to take fur-

ther action if necessary, indicating that the roadmap to lifting all lockdown measures from June 21 may have to be reassessed. "This data demonstrates why our swift and decisive measures are in place. Everyone has a part to play in controlling this variant, from participating in surge testing, to following the rules, to getting the jab," said Hancock. — *PTI*

Washington state schools to resume full-time classes

Olympia (Washington), May 14: Washington authorities said on Thursday all schools in the state must provide full-time, in-person education for students for the 2021-22 school year and that students and staff will still be required to wear masks.

The Washington state Department of Health released guidelines that included mitigation efforts they said were

designed to stop the spread of the Coronavirus. The mask directive could prove controversial, as the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday moved to ease indoor mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated people.

Currently people over the age of 12 are eligible for Covid-19 vaccines in Washington state. About 1.1 million students attend

public schools in Washington state. The Washington state schools directive for fall calls for all people in K-12 schools to wear masks indoors — as well as outdoors if six feet of distancing can't be maintained.

State authorities are recommending Covid vaccinations and testing programs but are not requiring them for in-person instruction in the fall. — *AP*

12 killed in Kabul bomb blast

Kabul, May 14: A bomb ripped through a mosque in northern Kabul during Friday prayers and killed 12 worshippers, Afghan police said.

Spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said the mosque's imam, Mofei Naiman, was among the dead. Another 15 people were wounded. The bomb exploded as prayers had begun. No one claimed responsibility for the bombing, but initial police investigations suggest the Imam may have been the target, Faramarz said.

A worshipper at the mosque, Muhibullah Sahebzada, said he had just stepped into the mosque when the explosion went off. Stunned, he

● **THE EXPLOSION** comes on the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the warring Taliban and Afghan government.

heard the sound of screams, including children, as smoke filled the mosque. Sahebzada said he saw several bodies on the mosque floor and at least one child was among the wounded.

It appeared the explosive device had been hidden inside then pulpit at the front of the mosque. "I was afraid of a second explosion so I came immediately to my home" he

said. An image circulating on social media showed three bodies lying on the floor of the mosque, which showed minor damage.

The explosion comes on the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the warring Taliban and Afghan government. The pause was for the Islamic festival Id-ul-Fitr, which follows the fasting month of Ramadan. Until now many of the attacks in the capital have been claimed by the local Islamic State affiliate, but both the Taliban and government blame each other.

The most recent attack last week killed over 90 people, many of them pupils leaving a girls'

school when a powerful car bomb exploded. The Taliban denied involvement and condemned the attack.

The relentless violence comes as the US and allied NATO forces continue with their final withdrawal from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of war. Just this week the last of the US troops left southern Kandahar Air Base, while some NATO troops still remained. At the war's peak more than 30,000 US troops were stationed in Kandahar, the Taliban heartland. Kandahar was the second largest US base in Afghanistan after Bagram north of the Afghan capital. — *AP*

2 detained Indians freed after outrage in Scotland

London, May 14: Two Indians detained by British Border Force officials on suspicion of immigration offences in the Scottish city of Glasgow have been released after residents swarmed the street for eight hours to block their van from leaving, according to media reports.

The two were released on bail pending further investigation. Hundreds of residents had surrounded the Border Agency van in the Pollokshields area of Glasgow to try to prevent immigration officers from

● **HUNDREDS OF** residents had surrounded the Border Agency van in Glasgow to try to prevent immigration officers from removing the men.

removing the men. One person lay underneath the van, according to the reports.

The protesters chanted "Leave our neighbours, let them go" and "Cops go home" being heard as a ring of police stood around the van, local Scottish newspapers said. Officers said they were

freeing the men for the safety of everyone involved following a stand-off in Glasgow. The protest prompted Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon to accuse the Home Office of creating "a dangerous and unacceptable situation". "Doing this on Id, in the heart of our Muslim community, and in the midst of a serious Covid outbreak was staggeringly irresponsible — but the even deeper problem is an appalling asylum and immigration policy," she said. — *PTI*

FINANCIAL | TROUBLE With over half of Lebanese population in economic crisis, people depend on NGOs for pet food

Poverty takes toll on the lives of pets in Lebanon

Beirut, May 14: Ibrahim al-Dika had raised his Belgian shepherd Lexi since she was a tiny pup, but then Lebanon's economic crisis made him jobless and he had to sell her to repay a bank loan. "It got to the point where I was no longer able to feed her, the bank was pressuring me, and I hit a wall," said the 26-year-old, devastated beside her empty kennel outside his Beirut home.

"I didn't sell a car or a telephone. I sold a soul. I sold a part of me." Can you afford to keep your pet? Animal activists say this is a dilemma a growing num-

ber of Lebanese owners are facing as their purchasing power nosedives.

Tens of thousands of Lebanese have lost their jobs or seen their income reduced to a pittance due to Lebanon's worst economic crisis in decades.

As many families struggle to stay afloat, activists say increasingly more pet owners are asking for help to feed or re-home their animals, selling them, or in the worst cases abandoning them.

Dika, after losing his father to illness, was laid off last year when his employer, a fashion retailer, closed shop, affecting

his ability to support his mother and brother.

He had spent around a year caring for Lexi, and training her to sit, heel, give him the paw, and play dead. But when the bank started calling, he saw no option other than to sell her. He drove over a few days later to check in on her, and Lexi thought he had come to take her home. "She leapt straight into my car," he said. "She broke my heart the way she looked at me."

With more than half of Lebanon's population now living in poverty, many Lebanese have to depend on non-governmental

organisations to get by — even to feed their pets.

Amal Ramadan, 39, said she used to make donations to animal charity PAW. But these days it is her receiving free bags of food from them for her pit bull and bichon, Nelly and Fluffy. Her monthly salary working in car rental, once equivalent to \$1,000, is now worth just \$120 because of the Lebanese currency's sharp devaluation.

But as the price of imported pet food, meat and veterinary care soars, activists said some other animals have not been so lucky. — *AFP*



Founder of Woof N wags shelter Joe Okdjian plays with rescued dogs in the shelter on the outskirts of the village of Kfar Chellal in south of Beirut. As people struggle economically, activists say more pet owners are asking for help to feed or re-home their animals, selling them, or in the worst cases abandoning them. — *AFP*

DECCAN Chronicle

15 MAY 2021

Opp. letter key first step govt must take on board

Leaders of 12 Opposition parties have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that his government rework its vaccination policy and announce a universal free vaccination programme against Covid-19 and provide immediate financial relief to the people who have been hit by the second wave of the pandemic. The Union government must procure vaccines centrally from all available sources for the purpose and fully spend the budgetary allocation of ₹35,000 crores for vaccination and the money in the PM-Cares Fund in the fight against the pandemic, they said.

India is now witnessing the more fatal second wave of the pandemic and is left with no option but to declare an all-out war against the coronavirus. The steps the Opposition has listed invariably could be part of the strategy even an expert would lay out. On the other hand, the vaccine policy the government now follows is deeply flawed: It has left the job to the state governments and the private sector to source doses from Indian or foreign manufacturers to inoculate people aged between 18 and 45 years. The government has also given the vaccine manufacturers the freedom to fix the price of the life-saving vaccine. These are not steps any government would dare take in the face of a pandemic. The government has also faced uncomfortable questions from various high courts and the Supreme Court on the question of availability of vaccines, oxygen and life-saving drugs.

The government must see the Opposition leaders' letter to the Prime Minister as an invitation to open a joint front in the war against the virus. The government now says the country will get 216 crore doses by December-end. This is a welcome announcement as the quantity is enough to inoculate all the eligible persons in this country. With an assured supply of the doses, the government must now set a practical deadline for vaccinating at least 70 per cent of the population which, experts say, is a necessary condition to attain herd immunity, and roll out a programme with definite milestones. The state governments and the private sector can be drafted for the success of the mission. The programme should work in a reverse engineering mode and ensure that every bottleneck is cleared.

The Opposition has called for the postponement of the Grand Vista project as well as scrapping of the three laws that would govern the agriculture sector in this country. We find these demands are a digression. This nation has far too many issues left unaddressed for centuries, but the challenge the virus poses eclipses them all.

The nation is going through one of the most difficult phases in its history, and it's time all the people joined together and fought off the enemy, a microorganism, as one man. Shorn of the political points in it and the rhetoric, the Opposition leaders' letter can be seen as a first step. The government should drop the recalcitrant attitude it has shown towards the earlier Opposition positions and instead take this as an opportunity to work together to save the nation from further devastation.

Courting transparency

The Chief Justice's idea of live-streaming and telecasting live proceedings of the Supreme Court is to be welcomed. The CJI is seeking a consensus within the court to try and take forward a path breaking concept, which can bring transparency and openness that can reinforce the faith of the public in the judicial system. The idea was mooted in a 2018 case in the top court and experiments were conducted in the Gujarat high court, which telecast proceedings on the YouTube channel. The pandemic may have enforced virtual hearings on the judiciary but it does appear the experience can prove beneficial if it leads to telecasts and live-streaming from the Supreme Court of India.

Progress in the form of open media access was seen recently in online media portals being able to hear court proceedings. In fact, it was the reporting in online portals of the observations of Madras high court judges on the Election Commission of India that brought out the severity of issues surrounding polls in the time of the pandemic. Contentious though the comments were and also frowned upon by the top court, such access to reporting of court proceedings by the media allowed the matter to come out in the public domain.

There may be much that is opaque in the manner in which the wheels of justice move, especially in areas like the process of nomination of judges to the higher judiciary. While such matters should be confidential and handled between the collegium and the executive branch of government in power, there is no reason why the proceedings in celebrated cases cannot be telecast live so that the wider legal fraternity as well as members of the public can witness them. Of course, the matter of what is live-streamed or telecast should lie strictly in the control of the highest judiciary so that issues like those that popped up in the famous O.J. Simpson case in the US do not crop up.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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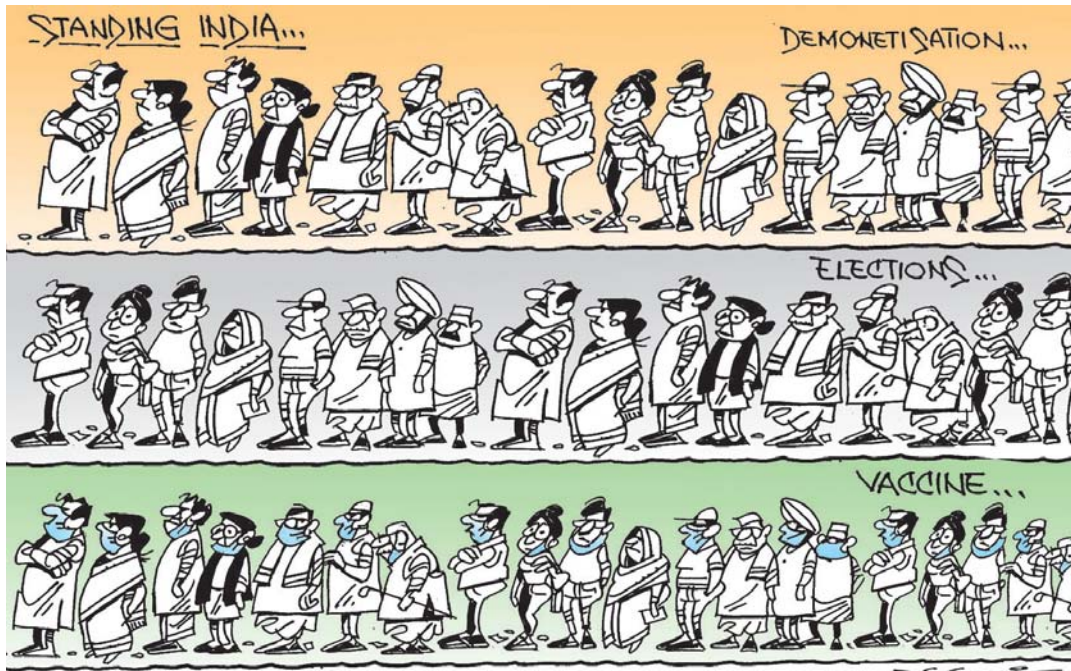
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Subhani



What'll it take for Modi to stop playing ostrich?



Shobhaa's Take

The Hindi word for the two-toed, flightless largest living bird known as the ostrich is “*shuturmurg*”. I bet you didn't know that! Well, India is full of *shuturmurgs* right now, most of them working for the government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi can't seem to make up his mind — to be a peacock or an ostrich. Which is maybe why he plays both, depending on the occasion. Of course, the ostrich in him makes sure he sees nothing and says nothing, while he watches India being turned into the world's biggest funeral pyre. Ostriches are known to run really fast when they are being chased by enemies (real or imaginary). Since our PM is staying put and not running, it's safe to assume he has zero enemies chasing him. The peacock in him makes sure his rare public appearances are perfectly colour coordinated and his flowing snowy beard well-groomed. He is now beginning to resemble the biblical Moses rather than Tagore or an Indian sage. But, unfortunately for citizens, he doesn't bear tablets in his hands nor an iPad with 10 or 20 or even 100 commandments. He says nothing at all. For a man known to like the sound of his own voice (six years of Modinama), one wonders about the stony radio silence.

Meanwhile, home minister Amit Shah stays in purdah as meme-makers go into overdrive (“Students' union files a missing person's report for Amit Bhai”). With two of the most important men in India not around during the country's biggest crisis, we are stuck with a headless chicken (the absentee government) in charge. In

charge of WHAT, you ask. Hello! In charge of us: the hapless citizens of this great nation. Guys — get this clearly — we are adrift, minus life jackets. There is no sighting of the captain who seems to have abandoned the ship. So please don't stress over minor issues and keep asking: “Where's the roadmap for the future? How do we tackle the acute vaccine shortage? What happens when the third wave hits India?” *Bhagwan ka naam lo* — and hope for the best. The roadmap doesn't exist.

A distraught friend from Jaipur was close to tears when he said: “People are dying on the streets. But the government reports only six deaths, while the funeral homes report 57 — that's how wide the gap is.” From all corners of India, citizens are sending out pathetic appeals for oxygen cylinders, beds, oximeters, vaccines — anything to save their loved ones. There is only a stone wall in front of them. Isn't it unbelievable and horrifying that our PM keeps mum through such an unprecedented tragedy? Why? It's an absolute mystery! Why has the “Great Communicator” not expressed sympathy, reassured citizens and calmed an agitated nation? Forget an apology. Forget owning up his responsibility. Forget taking charge. Such a cavalier and heartless attitude speaks of bad politics and terrible image management. Here's a man who rose to the pinnacle of power through image manipulation. He understands the impact of optics, he's the master of the social media game — and yet he refuses to pacify his countrymen and countrywomen. Unless we are overlooking the arrogance of megalomani-

acs through history — those who cruelly control their own people through fear, terror tactics, severe punishment and the threat of death.

At this point, death is at our door regardless — what's left to “fear”? Experts are warning us the times ahead will be a lot worse. In a masterly, timely and balanced essay Dr Devi Shetty gives readers a no-frills, straight-up perspective on what awaits us. The picture is far from pretty. That we are woefully short of ICUs is known. But so far, these were meant for adults. The third wave is likely to affect our infants and children — hospitals are simply not geared to meet this challenge. As always, Dr Shetty doesn't merely paint a grim picture and leave it there, he also offers strategic solutions. Why doesn't our PM induct him to lead a crack Covid team and stall the inevitable disaster?

All along, India wasted precious time and resources not enforcing Covid-19 protocols strictly. An old clip of Assam's then BJP health minister (who is now chief minister) Himanta Biswa Sarma is doing the rounds. In that he tells a persistent reporter that masks are “not necessary” as there's not even a single Covid-19 case in his state. That's the level of brazenness, plus a lack of education of our elected representatives. This week former Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Rawat said: “Corona is also a creature and has the right to live.” Insane! D.V. Sadananda Gowda, another brilliant minister

(chemicals and fertilisers) asks unnecessarily: “If vaccines are not produced yet, should we hang ourselves?” To which net-zines retorted: “What an idea, *Sirji!*” Chief ministers are callously playing with the lives of citizens, sitting back and averting their eyes from the pileup of corpses. Unless, of course, those corpses are found floating in the holy Ganga! That's when a few politicians sit up and ask for an inquiry. *Kyon?* Because the holy Ganga has been polluted — not because those who threw the half-burnt, plastic-wrapped bodies into the river may have been left with no other choice! We are running out of firewood for pyres. We will soon run out of space for graves.

These are humanitarian issues. Our leaders lack humanity. They don't have to be scientists or Covid experts. They just need to be human. And tell people that no matter what, help will reach them. Instead, all energies are focused on completing the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista construction in New Delhi: Prime Minister Modi's pet project. Imagine the irony: a man the world admired for rising to the highest position in the country after starting his life as a humble *chaiwala* and sleeping on a hard floor now wants to reside in an opulent multi-crore palace, financed by us!

Today, there are any number of Indians who are demanding the Prime Minister's resignation (as would happen in any other civilised country) and holding him directly responsible for this unspeakable tragedy. Others are seriously nominating an actor (Sonu Sood) for PM, in recognition of his sustained work during the pandemic. Rather an actor who delivers and feels the pain of his fellow citizens than a wannabe superstar who has forgotten his dialogues.

Kuch na Kaho... Kuch bhi na kaho...

Instagram handle: @ShobhaaDe; Twitter: @DeShobhaa

Our leaders lack humanity. They just need to be human. And tell people that no matter what, help will reach them. Instead, all energies are focused on completing the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista construction...

LETTERS

CARING KTR

IT minister K.T. Rama Rao has shown that he cares about his people (*Covid-19 warrior KTR says he will donate plasma, DC, May 14*). I request KTR to add Covid-19 treatment in Aarogyasri as it will be helpful for poor people.

Nareesh B. Hyderabad

CLUELESS CENTRE

The government is criminally incompetent at all levels and caused thousands of preventable deaths. Now, it is clueless and ignoring advice of experts on vaccine (*200 cr jabs by December to boost India vax drive, DC, May 14*). To claim that we will have 200 crore vaccines by December is shocking. Experts said the longer it takes to vaccinate people, the greater the risk of new variants among the unvaccinated and reinfection even in those vaccinated. We should have vaccinated the whole population in 30 to 60 days on a war footing.

Sandeep Secunderabad

The Centre is contemplating to import vaccines. The better option is to increase the availability of indigenous Covaxin by allowing Public Sector companies to start production. This will be cost effective and generate employment too.

P.R. Ravinder Hyderabad

DEATH OF INDIAN

It is laughable, if it was not so tragic, that India is worried about the death of a 30-year-old Indian woman in Israel (*India worried as citizen loses life in Israel, DC, May 13*). Here thousands are dying due to casual attitude of the Centre's mishandling of Covid-19, lack of oxygen and vaccines, pathetic hospital facilities, dead bodies floating down our holy rivers, etc.

N. Prabhakar Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Govt. takes charge of insurance

NEW DELHI, MAY 14. Officers of the Controller of Insurance in the Union Finance Ministry today formally assumed charge of the general insurance companies whose management was taken over by the Government through an Ordinance last night.

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



“It's called hiding and running Or Silence, Exile and Cunning All with Capital letters To unchain Envy's fetters

Always beat about the Bush Suspense keeps hearers Khush Language and idiom mix The ideal poetic fix.”

— From Chowpatty Repartee by Bachchoo

Why is Labour, once a force in British politics, on the rocks?

Apologies! Heres' a political quiz: Question 1: In which democracy is the party, which has very often been in power since the late 1940s, now on the brink of collapse?

Question 2: In which democratic country has the governing party come to power through an appeal to irrational or non-rational factors?

Question 3: Which government was slow to react to the Covid pandemic and caused as a consequence an avoidable number of deaths?

Congratulations, gentle reader — perhaps the questions were too easy and the answers obvious: But you got it — the answer to all three questions is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland!

The Opposition Labour Party has lost its appeal and is falling apart; the Tories appealed not to rational material advance of classes but to emotional xenophobia and BoJo's government will be castigated in the forthcoming inquiry into the handling of the Covid-19 emergency, for not implementing lockdown measures in the face of rampant public contagion.

So, why is the Labour Party, a force in British politics since its formation in 1906, on its uppers if not on the rocks? Last week, on May 6, the UK held elections for several local council seats — control of the municipalities. Labour lost 267 of them while the Tories gained 294. The biggest disaster for Labour on May 6 was the single byelection for the northeastern port of Hartlepool. For seventy years this town has voted Labour. This time it changed to Conservative. What the media in Britain characterise as another brick in the “red wall” turning blue!

In 2019, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party lost disastrously to Boris Johnson's Brexit-breuccaneering Tories. BoJo's 80-seat majority in the House of Commons was made up substantially of MPs from constituencies in this red

wall — the towns and cities of the Midlands and the North who were traditionally Labour, as they had vast populations of the working class. Did these “natural” Labour voters have a change of heart or even of DNA?

No, gentle reader, they voted with a change of allegiance towards the party that promised to “Get Brexit Done” and so ban European citizens from coming into the country, whether they came into their own red wall constituency or not.

Why? Go back a few governments and we have the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher who closed down the mines and mills, destroyed swathes of traditional manufacture and opened up Britain's markets, for example, to Polish coal and Asian textiles.

It left millions of people in the red wall territories unemployed. Subsequent Labour governments did very little to make the economic revival of these towns and cities their priority. Albeit there was a lot else to do and the 2008 world financial crisis didn't assist those Labour governments either.

Membership of the European Union gave European citizens — Poles, Hungarians, Spaniards and others

from the 27 countries — the right to come to Britain and work. These workers brought skills which had become scarce or prohibitively expensive in UK cities. For instance, in London, if you needed a plumber or a builder, the most convenient, cheapest and reliable one to do the work would be Eastern European.

Apart from an innate xenophobia, which no columnist can honestly quantify, there was the definite canard in the British working classes that these “foreign” workers were undercutting British wages. There were other more nebulous reasons — a faux-nostalgia for a supposedly vanishing British culture, eroded by the presence of other languages, religions, cuisine etc. “Keep Johnny Foreigner out” was the unspoken credo of the Brexiters.

And the Labour Party was split on the issue. Jeremy Corbyn and several leftish infiltrators and open “Trotskyists” (Yes, gentle reader, in 2019!) were wholehearted Brexiters. They made no assessments of the damage to Britain and to its working classes or to its security. They were following the hero Tony Benn who called the EU a “capitalist club”. They would leave it and join Russia, China, the United

States, India and other great “socialist” nations and with them defeat pernicious capitalist clubs. No, gentle reader, this is not an extract from Monty Python or any other satirical show. These advocates, some of them my friends, really believed and preached this.

What had started out in 1906 as a party of workers, mostly unionised, has, a hundred years on, become the political vehicle of an urban elite who would support Jeremy Corbyn's plans to nationalise the railways and take its ownership away from French and Dutch capitalist companies. They would support taxing the very rich, plugging the tax-dodge holes that the Tories and Rishi Sunak have left gaping. What they would also support is what has come to be known as the “woke” agenda. And most important, they (including yours truly) are decidedly anti-Brexit.

Labour has become two factions — the red wall xenophobes and the liberal, partially if dedicatedly, “woke” (not quite yours truly) urban membership. These are political enemies and can't present the country with a unified Opposition. Kali's heads can look both ways and manifest her powers — the Labour Party's can't.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,732.55	0.09
Nifty 50	14,677.80	-0.13
S&P 500*	4,168.54	1.36
Dollar (₹)	73.28	0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.05	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,110▲146	0.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.44	2.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.645	-0.023

* As of 8:30 PM IST

ADB sanctioned \$3.92 billion loan to India in 2020

The Asian Development Bank on Friday said it has committed a record \$3.92 billion in sovereign loans for 13 projects to India in 2020, including \$1.8 billion in Covid-19 related projects to support the government's pandemic response. The agency said it has provided emergency assistance to contain the disease and establish social protection measures for relief to the poor and other vulnerable groups.

Forex reserves swell by \$1.4b to cross \$589b



The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$1.444 billion to \$589.465 billion in the week ended May 7, 2021, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended April 30, 2021, the reserves had risen by \$3.913 billion to \$588.02 billion. The reserves had touched a lifetime high of \$590.185 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021. The increase in reserves was on account of a rise in foreign currency assets.

Vandita Kaul is appointed Bol's nominee director

State-owned Bank of India (BOI) on Friday said the government has appointed Vandita Kaul, additional secretary in the finance ministry, to its board as a nominee director. The bank said it has received the communication from the finance ministry about Kaul's nomination on May 13, 2021. Bank of India has a total of eight members on its board, including the MD and CEO Atanu Kumar Das.

Mphasis Q4 net profit declines 10.2% to ₹316 cr

Mphasis has reported a 10.2 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to ₹316.9 crore in the March 2021 quarter. Its net profit stood at ₹353.2 crore in the year-ago period, the company said. Its revenue from operations grew 7.5 per cent to ₹2,524.2 crore in the quarter from ₹2,346.1 crore in the year-ago period, it added. For the full fiscal 2019-20, Mphasis' net profit was up 2.7 per cent to ₹1,216.8 crore from ₹1,184 crore.



Akshaya Tritiya didn't end up as dud Gold sales muted but not a washout

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 14

Despite the lockdowns in key gold-buying states, Akshaya Tritiya was not a complete wash-out this year as it was the last year. The jewellery industry expects close to one-third of the usual sales to have happened this time.

Consumer sentiment remained muted and offline sales were severely affected due to lockdown in major cities and gold-consuming states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. Further, the sentiments were affected by an uneasy air of fear.

According to P.R. Somasundaram, managing director, India, World Gold Council, there were certain markets that were still open and hence it was not a complete washout as last year.

"Many organised jewellers have adopted digital and omnichannel strategies to reach out to their consumers, learning from the lockdown experience of 2020. Coupled with decent pre-bookings before lockdown, these steps could redeem the festival from being a complete washout and present a slightly improved picture than last year," he said.

He expects almost one-third of the usual Akshaya Tritiya sales to have happened this time. Usually, 20 to 30 tonnes of gold is sold during Akshaya Tritiya. Some of the organised players and

Gold bond's price fixed at ₹4,777 gm

Mumbai, May 14: The issue price for Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22, which will open for subscription for five days from May 17, has been fixed at ₹4,777 per gram, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday.

The government has decided to issue the bonds in six tranches from May 2021 to September 2021. The RBI will issue the bonds on behalf of the Government of India.

"The nominal value of the bond based on the simple average closing price for gold of 999 purity of the last three business days of the week preceding the subscription peri-

od...works out to ₹4,777 per gram of gold," it said.

The government, in consultation with the RBI, has decided to offer a discount of ₹50 per gram less than the nominal value to those investors applying online and the payment against the app-lication is made through digital mode. "For such investors, the issue price of the gold bond will be ₹4,727 per gram of gold," the RBI said.

The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22 Series-I or first tranche will be open for subscription from May 17, 2021, to May 21, 2021, and bonds will be issued on May 25. —PTI

online companies saw a good jump in digital buying. "In 2020 August sold around 15 kg of Digi Gold on Akshaya Tritiya and in 2021 it has increased by almost 100 per cent to around 30 kg of gold. Gold coins and gold bars in the range of ₹3,000-4,000 was preferred by buyers this year," said Ketan Kothari, director, Augmont.

Some of the jewellers saw good demand for gold coins that were booked on calls to be delivered post-lockdown. However, the lockdown in almost all of the south Indian states

affected the sales of some retail chains.

"Most markets in India remained closed and the overall sentiment was muted. Only 20 per cent of our showrooms were operational and they functioned under strict guidelines with reduced working hours. As expected, traction in these showrooms was minimal. It is not appropriate to compare this year's Akshaya Tritiya with any of the pre-Covid years," said Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director, Kalyan Jewellers.

CHIP SHORTAGE TO COST \$110B

As the semiconductor shortage hobbling the global automotive industry has worsened, its cost as a hit to sales has almost doubled to \$110 billion, up from an earlier estimate of \$61 billion, according to AlixPartners, a global consulting firm.

It also now says the world's carmakers will lose 3.9 million vehicles of production to the chip shortage this year, more than its prediction four months ago of 2.2 million or 4.6 per cent of the total production. —Bloomberg

SENSEX NOT PRICING IN COVID LOCKDOWN

India's Covid-19 crisis has so far failed to spark a deep stock selloff like that seen last year, and some asset managers point to less stringent curbs on the activity as one factor at least for now.

Even as the nation reports more than 300,000 confirmed infections and over 4,000 deaths a day, India's benchmark equity index has been moving in line with regional peers. The Sensex has declined 6.6 per cent from a mid-February peak, compared to a 23 per cent fall last March. —Bloomberg

UK's anti-fraud agency probes GFG Alliance

London, May 14: The United Kingdom's Serious Fraud Office (SFO) said on Friday that it is investigating suspected fraudulent trading and money laundering related to companies within the Gupta Family Group Alliance (GFG), led by British-Indian businessman Sanjeev Gupta.

GFG Alliance includes the embattled Liberty Steel business that continues to find alternative financing after its main backer, Greensill Capital, collapsed in March. The SFO said its investigation covers the company's financial arrangements with Greensill Capital UK Ltd.

The SFO is investigating suspected fraud, fraudulent trading and money laundering in relation to the financing and conduct of the business of companies within the Gupta Family Group Alliance (GFG), including its financing arrangements with Greensill Capital UK Ltd, an SFO statement said.

As this is a live investigation, the SFO can provide no further comment, it said. The Gupta-led business has been the subject of much speculation over the past few weeks as it was feared thousands of jobs in Britain's steel industry were under threat as a result of

Greensill's collapse.

The finance company itself faces separate inquiries, including by the Parliament's Treasury Select Committee which called in former British prime minister David Cameron on Thursday to give evidence related to his role as part-time adviser to the collapsed bank.

The panel of cross-party MPs is among three parliamentary committees that have launched inquiries into Greensill Capital following its collapse in March, including to probe the extent of Cameron's lobbying of ministers in the lead up to its bankruptcy. —PTI

BIG TECH FIRMS ENTER FRAY TO SAVE JOBS OF STAFF'S SPOUSES

New York, May 14: Big Tech is wading into a legal fight over visas in an attempt to preserve the jobs of spouses of its foreign employees who are working in the US.

Amazon.com Inc., Apple Inc., Google, Microsoft Corp. and more than 20 other companies and organisations, including the US Chamber of Commerce, on Friday, urged a federal court in Washington to reject a lawsuit seeking to eliminate work authorisation for more than 90,000 H-4 visa holders.

Eliminating H-4 visas "would not only siphon off US gross domestic product but gift that productivity — and the innovation that comes with it — to other nations, harming America's global economic competitiveness into the future," the companies and organisations said in a so-called friend-of-court brief.

Under the Obama-era "H-4 Rule," the US department of homeland security in 2015 issued visas to spouses, more than 90 per cent of whom are women, of more than 580,000 highly skilled workers who live in the US on H-1B visas, according to the companies' filing. H-4 visas are critical to couples' decisions to come to the US, buy homes and raise children, they argue. The Trump administration attempted to dismantle the rule, but never executed its decision. —Bloomberg

Dr Reddy's set to focus on Sputnik shots, Covid drugs

New Delhi, May 14: Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Friday reported a 29 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹557 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2021.

The Hyderabad-based drug major had posted a net profit of ₹781 crore in the January-March period of 2019-20.

Net sales, however, rose to ₹4,608 crore in the quarter under review as compared with ₹4,336.1 crore in the fourth quarter of 2019-20, Dr Reddy's Laboratories said in a regulatory filing.

For 2020-21 fiscal year, the company posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,952 crore as against ₹2,026 crore in 2019-20.

Net sales increased to ₹18,420 crore during the last fiscal year as compared with ₹16,357 crore in 2019-20.

"In FY 21, we continued to grow across all our businesses, enhance productivity and strengthen our development pipeline," Dr Reddy's Laboratories co-chairman and MD G.V. Prasad said.

The company is prioritising its efforts to launch Sputnik V vaccine across India while working on the development and com-

Farmers got ₹1.35L cr under PM-Kisan: Modi

New Delhi, May 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the Centre has transferred around ₹1.35,000 crore so far under the PM-KISAN scheme with the payment of the eighth instalment on Friday and is also procuring a higher quantity of paddy and wheat at MSP to boost farmers' income.

Out of the total amount disbursed since the launch of the scheme in February 2019, Modi said around ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is helping farmers in these difficult times.

The Prime Minister on Friday released the eighth instalment of ₹20,667 crore to more than 9.5 crore farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme via video conference.

Under the scheme, which became effective from December 2018, the Centre provides ₹6,000

per year to eligible farmers in three equal instalments of ₹2,000. Addressing the event, Modi said farmers have performed their duties even during this Covid-19 pandemic and helped the country achieve record production of foodgrains and horticulture crops.

He said the PM-KISAN scheme was launched to help farmers, especially small and marginal ones, in meeting their input costs.

He said around 10 crore farmers have received the 8th instalment. "To West Bengal farm-

ers, the benefit has begun to reach for the first time. Today, lakhs of farmers in West Bengal have got their first instalment. Gradually when the names of farmers are sent to the Centre, the number of beneficiaries will increase," he added.

Overall, around 11 crore farmers have received around Rs 1.35,000 crore under the PM-KISAN scheme so far. Modi said, adding that about ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"PM-KISAN is benefiting small and marginal farmers. In these difficult times, this money is helping these farmers a lot. So far under the scheme, about 11 crore farmers have got ₹1.35 lakh crore in their bank accounts. There are no middlemen," Modi said.

The government is continuously making efforts to ensure benefits to farmers reach directly at a faster pace, the Prime Minister added. —PTI

India's exports up 3-fold in April

New Delhi, May 14: India's exports in April jumped nearly three-fold to \$30.63 billion from \$10.36 billion in the same month last year, according to government data released on Friday.

Imports too rose to \$45.72 billion last month as against \$17.12 billion in April 2020, the data showed. The trade deficit widened to \$15.10 billion

as against \$6.76 billion in April 2020.

Exports in April last year had plunged by a record 60.28 per cent due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown.

In March this year, exports grew by 60.29 per cent to \$34.45 billion.

Due to the low base effect, exports in April 2021 recorded a growth rate of 195.72 per cent.

Oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.66 billion in the corresponding month last year.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive growth in April include gems and jewellery, jute, carpet, handicrafts, leather, electronic goods, oil meals, cashew, engineering, petroleum products, marine products and chemicals. —PTI

GO AIRLINES FILES DRHP FOR ₹3,600-CR IPO

New Delhi, May 14: Go Airlines, which has rebranded itself as 'Go First', has filed preliminary papers for an initial share sale worth ₹3,600 crore and the proceeds will be mainly used to repay dues amid the aviation industry facing strong headwinds due to the coronavirus pandemic.

After taking to the skies 15 years ago, the Wadia group-promoted budget carrier — which has ambitious expansion plans — is looking to mop up the amount through the issuance of fresh equity shares. It also has plans to raise up to ₹1,500 crore by way of a pre-IPO placement.

Once the shares get listed, Go Airlines (India) Ltd will be the third operational scheduled carrier after SpiceJet and IndiGo to trade on Indian bourses. "We expect competitive conditions in our industry to intensify further as new entrants emerge and as existing competitors seek to extend their operations and flight frequencies over routes that we operate," as per the DRHP. It also noted that the aviation industry faces significant business challenges due to Covid. —PTI

COVID | WARRIORS

Centre for special drive for fin services staff

Vaccinate bank staff, says finmin

New Delhi, May 14: The finance ministry on Friday asked state governments to accord priority to employees of banks and insurance companies for Covid-19 vaccination, saying they are exposed to high risks during these difficult times.

Department of financial services secretary Debashish Panda, in a letter, addressed to chief secretaries of states and union territories, said states should consider a special dispensation for vaccination of staff of banks, insurance companies, business correspondents, payment systems



and other financial services providers on priority.

Tagging the letter, he said in a tweet, "Kudos to our Bankers, Insurers, Payment Service Providers, Bank Mitras for

ensuring uninterrupted delivery of banking and financial services to people in need during these challenging times."

He also mentioned that many of these employees have succumbed to

Covid-19. "All state/UT governments are requested to instruct local authorities to provide them necessary help and support in ensuring delivery of banking and financial services. Vaccinating them on priority will mitigate their high exposure to risk in the delivery of public service," he said.

Raising the issues of some instances of man-handling by state law enforcement authorities during local lockdowns, the letter also asked state administration to ensure easy movement of officials for discharge of duty. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

Shaw stopped for pass, gets it soon

Mumbai: India batsman Prithvi Shaw was stopped while on his way to Goa in the Sindhadurg district of Maharashtra for travelling without an E-Pass, a police official said on Friday. The incident took place at Amboli on Wednesday when the cricketer was heading for Goa in his car, said the official. He was allowed to leave after obtaining a pass. Shaw was going to Goa for vacation, he said. The Maharashtra government has made it mandatory to obtain a pass for travelling in its efforts to contain the second wave of the pandemic. After the police stopped him in Amboli, he applied for the pass online afresh and got it in an hour. — PTI

Hussey Covid free, Saha still positive

New Delhi: Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey has recovered from Covid-19, paving the way for his return to Australia on Sunday but Sunrisers Hyderabad's Wriddhiman Saha has received conflicting results in two coronavirus tests, prolonging his isolation. Saha, who has been named in India's squad for the World Test Championship final and the subsequent Test series against England, is hoping to join the squad's bio-bubble in Mumbai on May 25. His inclusion is subject to fitness. Both Hussey and Saha had first tested positive during the now suspended IPL. "Hussey has returned with negative RT-PCR results and has recovered well," CSK CEO Kashi Viswanathan said on Friday. — PTI

Nadal rallies past Shapovalov in QF

Rome: When it comes to long, grueling clay-court battles, nobody is better than Rafael Nadal. Nearing his 35th birthday, the Spanish great showed he's still got the stamina to withstand much younger challengers in a 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (3) comeback win over 22-year-old Denis Shapovalov on Thursday that secured him a spot in the Italian Open quarterfinals. Nadal, a nine-time champion in Rome, will next face Alexander Zverev, the 2017 Rome champion. He also won in a comeback, beating Kei Nishikori 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. Earlier, top-ranked Novak Djokovic cruised past Spanish qualifier Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-2 6-1. — AP

Tvesa off to good start in Capetown

Capetown: India's Tvesa Malik made a good start before dropping two bogeys to finish at even-par 72 and lie tied fifth after the first round of the Investec South African Women's Open golf tournament here. Tvesa had a share of the lead for some part of the day before faltering. Lee-Anne Pace and Welsh Lydia Hall, who carded two-under 70 each on the opening day, shared the lead.

SHARMA MAKES CUT AT BRITISH MASTERS

Shubhankar Sharma helped avert an Indian wipeout as he made up for a disappointing first round with 1-under 71 in the second round to make the cut at the Betfred British Masters in Wishaw, UK. — PTI

Indian shooters hit range next week

New Delhi: In quarantine till May 19, India's Olympic-bound shooters are keeping themselves busy with dry firing in their respective hotel rooms at Zagreb before they hit the range next week. Accorded a warm welcome by the Croatian shooting fraternity, including world number three rifle shooter Peter Gorsa, the Indian team will take part as a guest invitee in the European Championship from May 20 to June 6 at Osijek. After the continental event, the Indian shooters will compete in the ISSF World Cup, slated to be held in same city from June 22 to July 3. — PTI

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

FA Cup Final: Chelsea vs Leicester from 9.45 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

UFC

Fight Night: Charles Oliveira vs Michael Chandler and other bouts from 7.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2

COACH POTATO

Raman writes to Ganguly, Dravid on 'Prima Donna Culture' in women team

New Delhi, May 14: Ousted Indian women's cricket team coach W. V. Raman has written to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, alleging that there is a "prima donna culture" in the national team and it needs to change.

In the mail that has also been marked to National Cricket Academy head Rahul Dravid, Raman has also offered to present a roadmap for women's cricket in the country, if asked.

In a surprising move, the former India Test player was not retained as the head coach of the senior women's team by the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) which picked Ramesh Powar for the top job. Raman's major achievements included a runners-up finish for the side at the women's T20 World Cup last year.

"As far as I know, Raman has said that he has always believed in team being placed above everybody else, and insisted that no individual can really be a prima donna," a source privy to Raman's mail said.

The stylish former left-hander's crisp letter to the two former captains is sure to ruffle a few feathers given that it has always been the coaches who have either stepped aside or sacked following fallout with players, most notably ODI captain Mithali Raj.

While Raman's letter didn't name anyone, it is understood that he has spoken extensively about the star culture that prevails in the team, which he said is probably doing more harm than good.

While repeated calls to Raman went unanswered, a source in the know of things did admit that a mail to both Ganguly and Dravid has gone out.

"Raman has asked Dada



(Ganguly) that if a past accomplished performer feels constrained by this culture, then he (Ganguly) as a former India captain, should take a call on this matter, whether the coach is asking for too much," the source added.

Raman, it is learnt, is dismayed by allegations that he is not proactive as a coach. He has recalled how he oversaw three training sessions (for Trailblazers, Velocity and Supernovas) between 1 pm to 9 pm in humid UAE conditions during the last T20 challenge.

"In case the president and secretary want to hear his opinion on allegations about his work ethic, he can explain."

The letter has been copied to Dravid because Raman sincerely believes that he can contribute towards building a roadmap for Indian women's cricket. — PTI

Raman, David were not on same page for SA selection

New Delhi, May 14: Former opener W. V. Raman's unceremonious ouster from the Indian women's team head coach's position has opened a can of worms with both the Madan Lal-headed Cricket Advisory Committee and Neetu David-led selection panel coming under the scanner of BCCI bigwigs.

It has been confirmed from multiple sources that Raman had red-flagged the kind of squad that David, Arati Vaidya, Renu Margate, Mithu Mukherjee and V. Kalpana picked for the South Africa series, for which teen batting sensa-

tion Shafali Verma was not picked for the ODIs and senior pacer Shikha Pandey was inexplicably dropped.

While both David and Raman couldn't be contacted for corroboration, it is understood that the BCCI nowadays records all selection meetings. The just-removed coach didn't approve the changes.

"Do you know what kind of logic was given for dropping Shikha and Shafali? It is beyond comprehension," a peeved senior official said.

The selectors said that Pandey was unfit because she hasn't worked hard

on training during lockdown and was "overweight".

"But when they were asked to prove their point, they couldn't simply do it," the official alleged.

In the case of Shafali, her fielding was questioned and put forth as the reason for her non-selection in the ODI team.

"If Raman had a counter-question that if Shafali's fielding is a problem for 50-over cricket, then it is bigger problem in T20 format where it is more important. Then how is she being selected in T20 format," the official asked. — PTI

Rookie Roy gets maiden call-up for England tour

New Delhi, May 14: Rookie wicketkeeper-batter Indrani Roy from Jharkhand was rewarded with maiden Test and ODI call-up for India's tour of England next month but senior left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad missed out due to an injury.

The Neetu David-led selection panel made a course correction with teen batting sensation Shafali Verma and seasoned pacer Shikha Pandey making it to all three squads after their South Africa home series snubs.

Sneh Rana and Indrani were two stellar performers in the National One-Day competition and thus got their call-ups.

The likes of Monica

THE FIXTURES

■ **Test:** June 16-19 (Bristol)
■ **1st ODI:** June 27 (Bristol)
■ **2nd ODI (D/N):** June 30 (Taunton)
■ **3rd ODI:** July 3 (Worcester)
■ **1st T20 (D/N):** July 9 (Northants)
■ **2nd T20:** July 11 (Hove)
■ **3rd T20 (D/N):** July 15 (Chelmsford)

SQUADS

Test & ODI: Mithali Raj (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur (vice-captain), Punam Raut, Priya Punia, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Indrani Roy (wicket-keeper), Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav.

T20: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana (vice-captain), Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh, Harleen Deol, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Indrani Roy (wicket-keeper), Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav, Simaran Dil Bahadur.

Patel, C. Prathyusha have been dropped from the squad altogether.

As expected Mithali Raj will lead the team for the one-off Test, to be played at Bristol from June 16 to 19 and the three One-Day Internationals while Harmanpreet Kaur will take over the reins during the three T20 Internationals. — PTI

TUCHEL TARGETS FA CUP AS FOXES CHASE HISTORY

London, May 14: Thomas Tuchel plans to ruin Leicester's bid to make history, as the Chelsea manager eyes the first trophy of his reign in Saturday's FA Cup final at Wembley.

Tuchel has enjoyed a superb run since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard in January. The German has led Chelsea to the FA Cup and Champions League finals, while taking them back into the Premier League's top four.

Winning his maiden silverware in English football would be further evidence of Tuchel's impact.

But Leicester will pose a significant threat to Tuchel's ambitions under the astute guidance of boss Brendan Rodgers.

The Foxes are aiming to win the FA Cup for the first time in their first final appearance since 1969.

No club have appeared in more FA Cup finals without lifting the trophy than Leicester, who have lost four times in the showpiece match.

— AFP

Reds boost chances of CL return

Manchester, May 14: Liverpool kept their chances of a place in next season's Champions League in their own hands with a thrilling 4-2 victory over Manchester United at Old Trafford on Thursday.

Jürgen Klopp's men still need to win their remaining three games to guarantee a place in the Premier League's top four, but cleared the biggest hurdle in their path with a first victory away to United since 2014.

Roberto Firmino scored twice either side of half-time after Diogo Jota cancelled out Bruno Fernandes' early opener for the home side.

Marcus Rashford's strike set up a grandstand finish, but Mohamed Salah secured a vital win in the final minute as Liverpool moved up to fifth in the table.

"We are still in the game, still in the race. That is all we could do tonight," said Klopp.

"It was necessary. Without this result we don't have to talk about it."

The clash between



Liverpool's Roberto Firmino (left) scores against Manchester United in an EPL match at Old Trafford in Manchester on Thursday. — AP

English football's two most successful clubs had been postponed 11 days ago as United fans stormed the pitch and clashed with police amid protests against the club's owners.

A peaceful protest took place before kick-off as supporters again voiced their anger at the Glazer family. Distrust of the Americans has been reignited by United's part in a failed European

Super League (ESL) project, that collapsed within 48 hours last month due to a backlash from fans, players, governments and governing bodies.

United and Liverpool were reportedly two of the leading drivers behind the project that sought to guarantee top level European football for 15 founder members every season without the need to qualify on the pitch. — AFP

MADRID VICTORY PUTS PRESSURE ON ATLETICO

Madrid, May 14: Real Madrid kept the pressure on Atletico Madrid by thrashing Granada 4-1 on Thursday to reduce the gap to two points at the top of La Liga, with two games left to play.

A draw or defeat for Real would have given Atletico the chance to win the title on Sunday by beating Osasuna but goals from Luka Modric, Rodrygo, Alvaro Odriozola and Karim Benzema secured a comfortable victory.

Atletico could still be crowned champions this weekend if they overcome Osasuna and Real fail to win away at Bilbao but the Spanish title race has been full of surprises and still nothing is guaranteed.

"We can only keep putting pressure on Atletico and hope they don't win both of their games," said goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. — AFP

Japan to expand virus emergency

Tokyo, May 14: Japan on Friday further expanded a Coronavirus state of emergency from six areas, including Tokyo, to nine, as Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga repeated his determination to hold the Olympics in just over two months.

Japan has been struggling to slow infections ahead of the Games. The three additions are Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, where the Olympic marathon will be held, and Hiroshima and Okayama in western Japan.

Despite the worsening infections, Suga stressed his commitment to holding the games safely and securely while protecting Japanese by strictly controlling the movements of foreign participants, including possibly expelling journalists covering the event if they defy regulations.

"I understand there are various difficulties, but the priority is to stop the further spread of infections and protect the people's lives and health," Suga said.

The three additional areas will join Tokyo, Osaka and four other prefectures already under the

● **The three additional areas will join Tokyo, Osaka and four other prefectures already under the emergency Coronavirus restrictions through May 31, Japan PM Suga announced at a government taskforce meeting on Friday.**

emergency coronavirus restrictions through May 31, Suga announced at a government taskforce meeting Friday. Bars, karaoke parlors and most entertainment facilities are required to close. Business owners who comply will be compensated; those who don't could face fines.

"Infections are escalating extremely rapidly in populated areas," Suga said. "As new variants continue to spread, we judged that now is a very important time to stop the further spread of infections."

It was the second expansion of the emergency in just one week.

Suga said he will decide on a possible further extension by evaluating the virus situation at the end of May. — AP



Lawyer Kenji Utsunomiya, a representative of an anti-Olympics group, shows an anti-Olympic banner after submitting a petition to the Tokyo government calling for the cancellation of the Tokyo Olympics on Friday. — AP

PETITION SUBMITTED TO CANCEL TOKYO GAMES

Tokyo, May 14: An online petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled has been submitted to the Tokyo government with over 350,000 signatures on Friday morning.

The rollout of the petition comes with Tokyo, Osaka and several other areas under a state of emergency with coronavirus infections rising particularly new variants.

The postponed Olympics are to open in just under three months on July 23rd.

The petition will also be sent to International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, who cancelled a planned trip to Japan this month due to surging cases of Covid-19 in the country, and to International Paralympics Committee President Andrew Parsons.

Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics cancelled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen. The petition was organised by Kenji Utsunomiya, a lawyer who has run several times for Tokyo governor. — AP

Irfan negative in second Covid test

New Delhi, May 14: Olympic-bound race walker K.T. Irfan and four other elite track-and-field athletes have returned negative for Covid-19 in a confirmatory second test conducted at Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, the nodal body said on Friday.

Irfan was among five athletes who tested positive for Covid-19 at the centre in a weekly test conducted on May 7.

But the SAI on Friday confirmed that all these athletes, who got their first jab of Covid-19 vaccine on April 29, have returned negative in the second test conducted on Thursday.

However, the SAI said out of 22 athletes, who underwent the tests, one is still positive but it didn't disclose any further details.

"All have tested negative in the second test conducted yesterday, the results of which came on Friday morning. All athletes at the SAI campus across the country are being tested on a weekly basis," a SAI source said.

A total of 16 tests were conducted on Friday,

which included two steeplechase athletes, two male race walkers, a male middle and long distance runner, two female middle and long distance athletes, four para athletes, besides a para coach and an NCOE athlete.

During the weekly test conducted May 6 and 7, 22 athletes tested positive for coronavirus.

"They were asymptomatic and isolated and kept under medical observation. 21 of the 22 athletes have since tested negative after a repeat RT PCR test was done," the SAI stated in a release.

"Among those who have tested negative are, race walker K.T. Irfan, middle and long distance athletes P.U. Chitra and Sandeep Kumar and para athlete Mariyappan Thangavelu. Hockey players Chinglensena Singh and Vivek Sagar Prasad are also among those who have tested negative," the SAI said in a statement.

At SAI Bengaluru, where athletes in hockey, track and field and para-athletics are based, all have been vaccinated on April 29. — PTI