

Womenia

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Dia Mirza advises to go green

The Champion of Nature says even though climate issues seem overwhelming, everyone can start somewhere to make a difference.

As World Environment Day is observed globally on June 5, actor, producer, environment ambassador and UN Secretary General's SDG advocate Dia Mirza says, it is time to be cognisant of the link between unsustainable development and the pandemic. And to do all we can to protect and restore the environment.

She says, "Unless we adhere to sustainable development and stop environmental degradation at every level, climate change will impact each one of us. It already is. Somehow, environmental activism is not taken seriously enough even though we are living through a pandemic caused by the inability of humans to respect nature's laws. Climate issues also seem overwhelming to many even though everyone can start somewhere. Just do something for the earth today. Plant a sapling, start segregating your waste, cut out single use plastic from your life, use natural cleaning products and biodegradable hygiene products. Do what you can, because it is better than looking away from the problem."

She feels relieved that a new research by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) commissioned by the World Wildlife Fund, shows a dramatic increase in the number of people concerned about the environment in the past five years especially after the pandemic. "The fact that people are beginning to talk about biodiversity loss, are engaging in digital activism and increasingly engaging in offline environmental campaigns gives me hope."

Young people who are going to inherit the planet are asking more questions, taking part in demonstrations, choosing plant based diets and this shows that awareness levels



are increasing. I hope this will give climate activism the momentum it needs to make a global impact on industries and governments," says Dia.

During the pandemic too, while spending a large amount of time at home, Dia continued to engage with online communities to share her concerns about the environment. She says, "I know I may sound repetitive at times but certain messages need to be mainstreamed and reinforced repeatedly. For instance, it is important to dispose of your masks and medical waste responsibly and think about the challenges faced by sanitation workers while clearing our garbage. Let us just be a little more mindful and sensitive towards each other and the planet. We really have no other choice if we want to survive and thrive as a race."

My presence in realty show made me realise my fan club- Neelam Kothari



After returning to the showbiz radar and drawing a stupendous response with Netflix's "Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives", Neelam Kothari Soni recently got a first-hand taste of the love of her fans when she graced the set of a reality show "Super Dancer - Chapter 4". Neelam, who was accompanied by Govinda, her co-star of over a dozen films including "Love 86", "Sindoor" and "Khudgarz" and many hit iconic dance numbers, was pleasantly surprised by the magnitude of how her body of work continues to be celebrated even today.

Bollywood's favourite girl-next-door of late 80s and early 90s, Neelam felt especially overwhelmed as she has been away from an active career in films and the entertainment world for a long time.

Neelam says, "At the time when I was at the peak of my career in films, we never had social media to give us a direct

sense of our popularity, the excitement among fans and their appreciation. But being on a Netflix show first and then this appearance on a reality show have collectively made me realize how many fans I still have. People remember my work so fondly. I have been inundated with the most encouraging response through comments and direct messages on social media, and it almost feels like I've made a comeback! I have to say that this adulation and warmth really tempts and motivates me to be more active in the industry going forward."

The multi-faceted actor left films to immerse herself in balancing her personal and a different professional life. So, while she devotes most of her time to taking care of her parents, her husband - actor Sameer Soni, and their 8-year-old daughter Ahana, Neelam also continues to nurture her talent as a jewellery designer, carrying forward a legacy of three generations of her family business.

As she gears up for Season 2 of Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives, Neelam is also seriously considering a full-fledged acting comeback. While she has kept her lips sealed on any details, it is sufficient to say that she already has some projects in the pipeline and she will soon zero in on something interesting.

TWEET PATROL

KAJAL AGGARWAL
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Looking forward to commencing Uma's journey

FASHIONISTA



FDCI opens next tranche of Covid Support Fund

PUJA GUPTA

The Fashion Design Council of India has opened the next tranche of its Covid-19 Support Fund (CSF) which provides financial aid to weavers and craftsmen who are in crisis due to the pandemic.

FDCI Chairman Suni Sethi says, "In the first tranche we helped out fashion designers for their staff and junior staff which included their tailors, masters, peons and others. But the second tranche is open for non-FDCI designers who were not our members and yet we

want to see how we could help them and also other people who are related to it. We did not go to the public for funding. Instead of identifying individual weavers, this time we are going with societies and co-operative societies, unions etc through references, so that the fund is distributed among many."

FDCI has identified two groups Sidhika Self Help Group and MG Gramodyog and already started distributed substantial amount to them. "It is upto them to utilise the amount," Sethi says.

Sidhika Self Help Group in Kaithun town of Rajasthan which 108 women weavers working on Kota Doriya. They are a certified member of All India Artisans and Craftworkers Welfare Association (AIACA) Craftmark.

While MG GramodyogSewaSansthan has 32 weavers and 24 spinners in Bengal - working on revival of Bengal muslin and promote indigenous cotton fabric.

FDCI is open to offer support to any individual or groups related to the fashion fraternity, subjected to its merit, he says.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Ananya Pandey: Never a bad idea to be kind to yourself

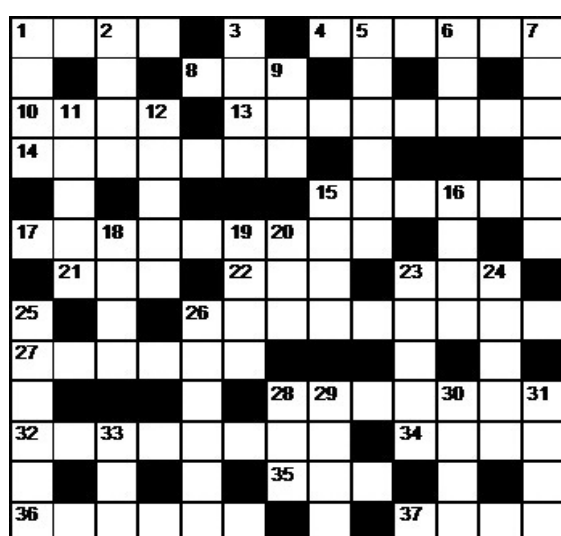
Ananya Pandey sure loves wearing her motto on her phone. A set of pictures she posted on Friday has the actress checking out her phone that has a back cover with the pop philosophy, "It's never a bad idea to be kind".

In Instagram images, Ananya wears a face pack and clicks a selfie. She repeated the mantra on the back of her phone in her caption with some modification.

"It's never a bad idea to be kind (especially to yourself)," she wrote, underlining the self-beauty care and flashing a slight pout in one of the frames. Her caption was accompanied by a spook and heart emojis.

Ananya will next be seen in the film "Liger" opposite Telugu star Vijay Deverakonda. The film has been directed by Puri Jagannadh. Produced by Karan Johar, the film is scheduled to release on September 9.

She also stars in Shakun Batra's untitled next with Deepika Padukone and Siddhant Chaturvedi.



SOLUTION TO JUNE 4

CROSSWORD

Across

- 1 Two of a kind (4)
- 4 Slow movement (6)
- 8 The British ____ : British colonial rule in India ? (3)
- 10 Lengths of past lives or existences, in a way ? (4)
- 13 First-rate (3-5)
- 14 Move by degrees (7)
- 15 Harass (6)
- 17 Engagement (9)
- 21 Brief swim (3)
- 22 Ten decibels ? (3)
- 23 High mountain (3)
- 26 Suffering or being punished ? (6,3)
- 27 Under cover (6)
- 28 Prickly shrub (7)
- 32 Very young children's game (8)
- 34 Jack-in-the-pulpit (4)
- 35 Forbid (3)
- 36 Mythological semi-divine maidens of sea, woods, etc. (6)
- 37 Entrance (4)

Down

- 1 Beloved (4)
- 2 Aid in crime (4)
- 3 Tardy, not in time (4)
- 5 Contradiction (6)
- 6 Acquire (3)
- 7 Not these (6)
- 9 Make a brief note (3)
- 11 Stood in awe (5)
- 12 Steep slope (5)
- 15 Indonesian island (4)
- 16 Deep hollow (4)
- 18 Bound (4)
- 19 Ski lift (1-3)
- 20 Pink Floyd's ____ you (3)
- 23 Brightly coloured lizard (5)
- 24 French soldier (5)
- 25 Japan (6)
- 26 A strong alkali (6)
- 28 Cropped hairstyle (3)
- 29 A highway; route (4)
- 30 A small nail (4)
- 31 Give off (4)
- 33 Shade tree (3)

SUDOKU

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

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

SOLUTION TO JUNE 4

HIV Long Term Survivors Day

When HIV first became apparent as an epidemic 30 years ago, the life expectancy for those who became infected was not good, often coming in under 19 years. In recent

years that rate has improved to 53 years (for those infected at age 20), meaning that HIV sufferers have a lifespan nearly as long as that of an uninfected person. HIV Long-Term Survivors Day celebrates those

who have been living with HIV for decades, and are still surviving today.

HIV Long-Term Survivors Day was established as part of aids.gov to help raise awareness of the aging face of HIV. Today over 59% of people who are infected with HIV and living with it are over 50 years of age. Needless to say, that is both a beacon of hope as well as a note for concern, and we'll soon be living in a world where 70% of people with HIV are over age 50. Living to a ripe old age was a dream that was stolen from those who had become infected with HIV in years past, and this increasing number speaks of a greater hope as well. That before long there will be no one living with HIV, the epidemic is almost over.

But for those still living with it, special concerns exist. Those who have lived with HIV the longest have typically developed resistances to multiple drugs used for treating their symptoms, and the ongoing battle with HIV may have left them with physical damage. In part due to having taken medications that were less effective, and caused both cardiovascular and neuropathy. Long-term survivors require a higher level of specialized care, and HIV Long-Term Survivors Day is focused on raising awareness of these needs. Celebrating HIV Long-Term Survivors Day can happen in multiple ways, but the best way to do it is to learn all you can about those around you who are living with HIV and what you can do to help them. Further, help to reduce stigma against those with HIV by exploring the facts behind the causes, and how it's transmitted. Even this late in the game there's a lot of stigma against HIV sufferers, and HIV Long-Term Survivors Day is a great opportunity to help reduce it a little more.



BJP to bank on Hindutva, natl pride for 2022 UP polls

Lucknow

AS the countdown for the 2022 Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh begins, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) already has its roadmap laid out.

With the elections still more than six months away, the party will wait for the second Covid wave to subside and then gradually, but firmly, shift the focus back to the emotive issues such as the Ram Temple.

The Ram Temple in Ayodhya will be projected as one of the biggest achievements of the BJP

and Yogi Adityanath's 'massive' development plan for the holy city, serving as the proverbial icing on the cake.

According to party sources, BJP workers will continue to harp on the slogan "Ayodhya toh sirf jhanki hai, Kashi, Mathura baaki hai" (Ayodhya is a mere teaser, Kashi and Mathura are still left).

"In Kashi, the local court has already granted permission for excavation. Even if that is tied up in legal maze, the ambitious Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project will be ready by Novem-

ber 2021, and this will be a major attraction for Hindus across the globe. The magnificence of the temple complex will wipe away all the unhappy memories of the pandemic," said a senior BJP functionary.

At present, the BJP workers have been asked to focus on the 'Sewa Hi Sangathan' campaign of the party that has been designed to serve the victims of the pandemic and blunt the opposition attack on the Yogi government.

BJP national General Secretary (organisation) B.L. Santosh and party Vice President Radha



Mohan Singh, who were in Lucknow earlier this week, have stressed on cadre mobilisation and redressal of their complaints during meetings.

The party also plans a major programme to assuage the feelings of the cadre level workers who have been feeling alienated of late.

The BJP, according to sources, has no plans to give up the Hindutva card.

The party functionary said, "Yogi Adityanath has vibrantly put up the Hindutva factor during his regime. He has promoted

development keeping in mind the religious factors, and has undoubtedly emerged as the torch-bearer of Hindutva. The party will capitalise on it."

The BJP in Uttar Pradesh will further look to blunt the opposition by evoking 'national pride', which has been the hallmark of the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre.

"There is development, Hindutva and national pride -- a perfect mixture for resounding success in the next Assembly elections," the BJP functionary said.

Bogus call centre busted in Gurugram, three arrested

Gurugram

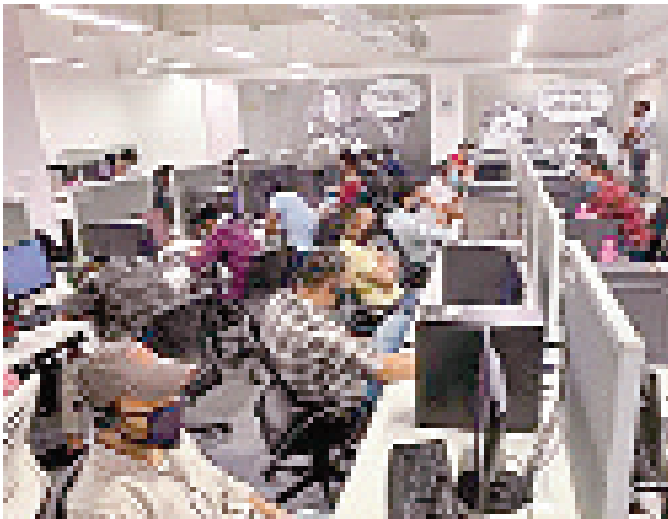
A fake call centre was busted here and three people arrested for allegedly duping foreign nationals by creating false legal pressure in the name of the US central banking system, the Federal Reserve System (FRS), Gurugram police said on Friday.

Police said that the fraudsters used to cheat US nationals for resolving Social Security Number (SSN) verification issues and used to ask for \$200 to \$500 as service charge per client.

According to the police, SSN is a nine-digit number that the US government issues to all its citizens. The government uses this number to keep track of the residents' lifetime earnings and the number of years worked.

The bogus call centre was running for the last two months. The fraudsters posed as legal department employees to dupe their clients.

According to the police, a team



from the Cyber Crime police station led by ACP Karan Goyal raided the call centre which was located in Suncity Success Tower, Sector 65, Golf Course Road, following a tip-off.

During the raid, the police arrested three persons and seized

three laptops and mobile phones, along with other electronic gadgets and a five page script the accused used to communicate with their clients.

The arrested were identified as Devang Awasthi, the owner of the call centre, and his two partners

identified as Harsh Bhavsar and Abhishek, all residents of Ahmedabad.

"A complaint was received that this fake call centre in Suncity Area had cheated several US nationals by creating a false legal pressure on the name of the FDR and on pretext of to resolve SSN related problems. The youths were employed at the call centre, which was being operated without a license issued by the Department of Telecommunications," said the ACP.

"During the questioning, the employees revealed that the data of US citizens was provided by their owner, who had purchased the data through an online websites and used to upload on his server VICI dialer and used to sent bulk messages to around 3 to 4 thousands US citizens on daily basis," the ACP said.

"The matter is under investigation and involvement of other people cannot be ruled out," the officer added.

Amarinder meets Cong panel, says discussed poll preparations

New Delhi

PUNJAB Chief Minister Amarinder Singh appeared before a three-member Congress panel here on Friday, reportedly formed by the party high command to sort out the problems in its state unit. The meeting lasted for more than three hours.

The panel is headed by the leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Mallikarjun Kharge, and also comprises Congress' Punjab in-charge Harish Rawat and former MP J.P. Aggarwal.

Speaking to the reporters, Amarinder Singh said, "The meeting was to discuss the preparations for the Assembly elections scheduled early next year. These are our inner party discussions and I don't propose to share them with you."

The rift in Punjab Congress surfaced after former state Cabinet minister Navjot Singh Sidhu along with Pargat Singh opened a front against the Chief



Minister. The All India Congress Committee (AICC) was forced to constitute a committee to listen to the grievances of its Punjab leaders, after a group led by Sidhu suggested change in the state leadership. However, sources said that there has been no discussion on replacing Amarinder Singh.

The Congress wants to pacify Sidhu and retain him in the party by making some minor adjustments, without going for a

major shake-up, sources said.

The panel has already discussed the issue with former Congress President Rahul Gandhi, besides meeting the party MPs from Punjab and the ex-state unit chiefs.

Disgruntled Congress leader Sidhu, who has targeted Amarinder Singh on various issues, including the 2015 sacrilege case, had met the Congress panel on Tuesday and presented his views.

SP leader booked under Pandemic Act

Gorakhpur

AN FIR has been lodged under the Pandemic Act by the Gorakhpur police against Samajwadi Party leader Shailendra Yadav, after a video in which he can be seen dancing at the wedding, went viral on the social media.

The wedding, sources said, was of his brother-in-law's. Shailendra Yadav is husband of district panchayat member Renu Yadav in Gorakhpur.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Dinesh P. said that a case has been registered in connection with violation of the Pandemic Act and action will be initiated against those present at the event.

He said that safety protocols were not followed at the wedding.

Suicide-pact couple of UP, out of danger

Jhansi

A 20-year-old youth and 15-year-old girl, who had consumed poison in an apparent suicide pact, are now out of danger.

The couple, both from Mahoba, had consumed poison in Lalitpur district, late on Wednesday night when they were being taken back to their families by the police.

The two had been staying in Lalitpur with an acquaintance after running away from their homes. The couple was rushed to the community health centre (CHC) Talbeth, from where they were referred to Jhansi Medical College where their condition is said to be stable.

The youth, identified as Sanatosh, had eloped with a minor girl from Charkhari area of Mahoba district a few days ago. They were planning to marry each other. The parents of the girl had lodged a report of abduction, after which the Mahoba police started a hunt for the girl. They put the mobile of the girl on surveillance and found its location in Lalitpur district.



trict. A team of Mahoba police went to the village on Wednesday and apprehended both of them. While returning, as the police vehicle carrying them reached Talbeth, the couple somehow managed to consume the poison they were carrying with them. As they started losing consciousness, police got alerted and took them to the nearby CHC, from where they were referred to Jhansi Medical College.

SP Lalitpur Pramod Kumar said they did not know about the presence of Mahoba police that took the couple without informing their counterparts in Lalitpur. Chief medical superintendent (CMS) of Jhansi Medical College, Dr Harish Chandra Arya said that the boy and the girl had consumed rat poison. "They are out of danger and will be discharged in a day or two," he added.

NHRC asks govt to prioritise vaccine for lactating mothers

Jaipur

THE National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked the secretary, ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW), to take appropriate action and submit an Action Taken Report (ATR) for prioritising vaccination of lactating mothers in India.

Seeking the urgent intervention of the NHRC, Tapish Saraswat, a student of Law College, Rajasthan University, filed a complaint regarding the violation of the human rights of lactating mothers in India.

In his complaint, he prayed for the vaccination of lactating mothers on a priority basis and to include them in the guidelines which were issued on May 27, 2021 by the Ministry of Health and to make it available near to home COVID Vaccination Centres.

"Now, the government has recommended that all lactating mothers can get vaccinated. About 67,000 babies are born every day in India, approximately 2.7 crore pregnancies in a year are recorded in our coun-



try, putting them directly at risk of getting infected. So there is an urgent need for vaccination of lactating mothers on a priority basis and to include them in the guidelines which were issued on May 27, 2021 by the Ministry of Health regarding Near to Home COVID Vaccination Centres. Slow vaccination of lactating mothers not only endangers their lives but could also lead to their babies having to suffer the consequences," he said in his complaint.

The NHRC in its order stated "This complaint be transmitted to the concerned authority for such action as deemed appropriate. The authority concerned is directed to take appropriate action within eight weeks associating the complainant/victim and to inform him/her of the action taken in the matter."

SC junks pre-arrest bail challenge against journalist in rape case

New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday refused to cancel anticipatory bail granted to a Mumbai-based TV anchor, accused in a rape case registered in the national capital in February this year. A bench comprising Justices Navin Sinha and Ajay Rastogi said there is no ground made out to interfere with the Delhi High Court order.

Counsel appearing for the victim argued that the High Court granted bail disregarding statutory changes in the rape law, and it also virtually granted benefit of doubt on selective reading of Section 164 statement too. The counsel added that for 50 days the accused evaded arrest. The bench queried the victim's counsel, our question is, purely for purpose of bail only, question of normal human conduct and understanding. The bench added, if a man and woman are in a room, and man makes a request and woman complies with it, do we need to say anything more at this stage? The victim's counsel contended the IPC



states that to each act there has to be unequivocal consent. The counsel added, if there is a particular act man wants to indulge in, and there is no consent, then it's an offence, and insisted that there was no continued consent. The bench replied that it is not impressed with the argument.

The top court was hearing a plea by the rape victim challenging the Delhi High Court's order granting pre-arrest bail to Mumbai TV journalist Varun Hiremath, the High Court passed on May 13. The petitioner argued the High Court erroneously granted anticipatory bail in such heinous offences as rape and assault. The High Court had granted interim protection to Hiremath on the condition that he shall join the investigation whenever required.

UP police invokes NSA against black marketeer of Remdesivir

Noida

THE Noida Police have taken action under the National Security Act (NSA) against those involved in the black marketing of fake Remdesivir injections during the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, this is the first such case in Uttar Pradesh when the NSA has been invoked against an accused for black marketing of Remdesivir, a drug used in the treatment of Covid-19.

According to information shared by the Uttar Pradesh police, "The police of Noida Sector-20 police station have arrested an accused on April 21 with 105 Remdesivir injections selling them at exorbitant prices higher than the prescribed rates during the current wave of Covid-19 pandemic and sent him to jail. A case was also registered against the accused under several sec-



tions."

After the injections seized from the accused were examined by a medical expert, they were found to be fake.

According to Noida police, the accused Rachit Ghai is a notorious criminal who put people's lives at risk selling fake Remdesivir injections.

The accused was making efforts to get bail from the court following which the NSA was invoked against him after approval by the District Magistrate, Suhas L.Y., on Thursday.

Doorstep diesel delivery picks up pace in Rajasthan

Archana Sharma

Jaipur

DOORSTEP diesel delivery is a new revolution in the field of energy distribution in Rajasthan which is easing the lives of the end-consumers without the hassles of diesel procurement.

Four fuel entrepreneurs are bringing change in the fuel industry in Rajasthan with this door-to-door delivery model which includes Bikaner-based Hiralal Bhattar Petroleum. It has started the facility of doorstep diesel delivery through their mobile petrol pumps. This new fuel startup is run by Suresh Bhattar, who owns a Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) retail outlet. "While having discussion with BPCL officials, they gave me the information so I thought this should be done for the welfare of the society," Suresh said.

Barmer-based Shree Mahadev Petroleum has also started the facility of doorstep diesel delivery.



The startup is run by Mahendra Kumar, who is in the fuel business since 2011 and is also a dentist by profession. His father is a cooperative bank manager. They have recently acquired a mobile fuel pump and will deliver within a 40 km radius. "There is a gas terminal near my petrol pump and

so I saw a constant demand for diesel and thought of delivering it at people's doorstep and to other bulk consumers, too," said Mahendra Kumar.

Pali-based Manish Kishan Filling Station has also started the facility of doorstep diesel delivery. Manish Kishan Filling Sta-

tion is run by Manish Choudhary who owns a Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) outlet. He has recently acquired a Mobile Fuel Pump -- which will go around Pali to meet the demand for diesel by various end-users at their doorstep. They have successfully met the diesel

demands of the many textile and mining industries situated near his delivery area.

"I was searching for a solution regarding this issue when I came in contact with Tata-Repos Energy. They had developed a new fuel delivery system and I was impressed with the technology they were using. I did my research and bought Repose Energy's Bowser (Doorstep Diesel Delivery System) in 2019. This type of system is very innovative and helps to resolve a genuine problem faced by industries," said Manish Choudhary.

M/s Sirohi Petroleum has started the facility of doorstep diesel delivery through their mobile petrol pumps in Nagaur. This fuel startup is run by Akhil Sirohi, who is into this business since 2010 and started doorstep diesel delivery from April 17, 2021 by partnering with his cousin brother Ashok Sirohi. He belongs from a family of Nagaur who have been in mining and quick lime industry for the last 40 years.

Incentivising vaccination, US style

DON'T want to be vaccinated? Afraid? Don't care? Well, reconsider it. If you are a US citizen and seek a free beer. Perhaps, this is what is called fighting the battle 'every witch way'. The White House's new partnership with Anheuser-Busch offering free beers if the country reaches its goal of getting 70 per cent of adults at least one Covid-19 vaccine shot by July 4 - almost prohibition in reverse - is more than a gimmick.

It's a headline that heralds a widening, more micro-targeted approach to getting skeptical Americans vaccinated against Covid-19 and a shift from an approach that saw mass vaccination sites in stadiums earlier this year. Interesting? Yeah? (Who says many Indians are illiterate and hence don't come forward for vaccinations)? It's also a sign of growing con-

cern about slowing inoculation rates, fears that millions of unprotected Americans could be vulnerable to new viral spikes in the fall and a desire to preserve the miracle wrought by vaccines.

After several days in which Dr. Anthony Fauci's just-released emails painted a picture of foreboding at the beginning of the crisis last year, President Joe Biden conjured up the prospect of a Covid-free future at the White House. "Get a shot and have a beer. Free beer for everyone 21 years or over to celebrate the independence from the virus," he said on June 2.

There's more than free booze on offer from the teetotaler Biden and his web of private sector partnerships announced on June 2 to convince skeptics to get vaccinated. Go for a trim in a Black-owned

barbershop - traditional community hubs - and a Covid-19 vaccine comes at no extra cost. Parents who get the shots can get free child care while they're inoculated. Cities will compete to grow vaccination rates. Employers can cash in tax credits if they let workers feeling side effects from the vaccine take time off. Out of the box? Isn't it so?

States like Ohio have gone ahead with tagging million dollar lotteries for the vaccinated too. Incentives are flooding the markets of the US. Free tickets for sports enthusiasts and so on and so forth. The US needs to do all this now because people are not any more afraid of the virus. They know that a single shot of vaccine is protecting them and as many of the people have already inoculated, the fear of contracting the virus is diminish-

ing. This precisely is the reason why the US is stepping up with incentives.

"Because we have had so much success early on, we are now getting to the part of the campaign which is tougher," Surgeon General Vivek Murthy told the media. The new White House vaccine push reflects important public health, economic and political considerations. All said and done, the fear of new human misery, after nearly 600,000 US deaths from Covid-19, is a powerful motivating factor.

The return of the virus with a vengeance in some regions could also hamper the economic rebound, which has been halting in places amid complications in getting millions of Americans back to work. Does India learn a lesson with this? We are also seeing our pyres burning. Could we emulate the good instead of adopting only the bad from the world?



India's deep economic paralysis just set in

RICHARD MAHAPATRA

THE National Statistical Office's latest GDP data for 2020-21 fiscal reiterates what was expected. But, for the current financial year, it indicates the country's economy already slipping into a deep paralytic state. Lack of demand and consumption in rural areas that sustains two-thirds of the country's population is the reason behind this. This is also despite the agriculture being the only sector that registered a positive growth with a gross value added of Rs. 20,40 lakh crore in 2020-21. This year the monsoon is going to be above normal as well.

Between 2019-20 and 2020-21, India's GDP has reported a loss of Rs. 10.56 lakh crore, or a -7.3 growth. But the data on consumption reiterates what was mostly expected: the economic slowdown led to en mass reduction in private consumption. Without this, no economy would even sprout. Private consumption expenditure that accounts for 56 per cent of the country's GDP in 2020-21 has reduced to Rs 75,60,985 crore (56 per cent of GDP) in 2020-21 from Rs 83,21,701 crore (57.1 per cent of GDP) in 2019-20. That is 70 per cent of the total GDP loss. This also demonstrates the criticality of private consumption to economic growth. Before this, the country was already into fourth year of consecutive economic decline. Private consumption, both in rural and urban areas, was not registering enough growth to fuel economic growth beyond the 5 per cent mark. Per capita private consumption expenditure fell to Rs 55,783 per year in 2020-21 from Rs 62,056 in 2019-20. Consumption expenditure is a proxy for income and in India it is used to measure poverty level. Tentatively, using the above consumption expenditure, one can argue that the monthly per capita income in the country was Rs 4,649 per month in the first year of the pandemic. This was around 10 per cent less than the previous year's level of expenditure.

What does this number indicate?

It indicates a decline in overall economic activities expected in the first year of the pandemic. But, the caveat: Even this expenditure was incurred when significant number of people reported loss in income or is in irregular jobs. It means most of them must have used up their savings. To sum up the accounting: People have either been left with no money currently or they are simply getting back to jobs, as the GDP data for the last quarter of last fiscal showed a positive growth, even though minimal. This decline has impacted India in disproportionate ways. Pew Research Center, using World Bank data, has estimated that the number of poor in India (who earn \$2 per day or less at purchasing-power parity) has more than doubled to 134 million from 60 million in just a year due to the pandemic-induced recession.

From here, India enters into a situation that currently looks unimaginably distressed. The data came at a time when we assumed that the pandemic was almost over. The devastating second wave struck India in April, the beginning of the new fiscal. The second wave is also breaching into rural areas, the resultant restrictions and lockdowns being widespread and longer. Given that half-a-billion people reside in India's rural areas, it could well be the world's first rural pandemic.

India recorded almost 7.8 million new cases between May 1 and 24, the highest ever in a month. In this period, every second new case of COVID-19 in the world was from India. And every third death due to this disease was from India. Within India, every second new case was reported from the rural districts while every second death was also from rural areas for this time period. It means every third case in the world was a resident of rural India. In the first wave, the rural areas were not that much impacted; rather it was a popular perception that COVID-19 was a disease of the urban areas. While we witnessed the overwhelmed health infrastructure crumbling in urban and megacities, how it would unfold in rural areas is a scary thought.

Will India repeat / worsen the economic situation over last year?

The impression is that it would be much worse than last year. The rural incursion of the infection makes the India's recovery from the pandemic difficult and unpredictable. The second wave, being rural by spread, turns out to be more devastating for the country's already poor. Experts foresee a vicious cycle for the country's over half-a-billion rural residents. Rural Indians - mostly an informal workforce and poor by any accepted definition - have lived with irregular jobs for over a year as the pandemic has been ravaging. The second wave with more rural cases will further aggravate this economic crisis. The expenditure on health may also go up as cases rise, draining people's income or savings. Currently, all states in the country have imposed restrictions

on movements and activities. The stringency of lockdown, unlike last year, varies from state to state and within a state, from district to district. Similarly, lowering down restrictions will also depend on individual states. So, people without regular income for over a year are in a situation of extreme economic uncertainty. This perpetuate the cycle of poverty. All signs point towards this.

According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), job losses and unemployment are being reported from rural areas unlike last year. CMIE's recent data indicate that national unemployment rate is nearing to the level of June 2020, the highest due to the national lockdowns and restrictions caused by COVID-19. For the week of May 16 unemployment for urban areas was 14.71 per cent, while for rural areas it was 14.34 per cent. "The pandemic has slowed down the labour participation rate to 39.9 per cent from an average of 42.7 per cent in 2019-20," said the Reserve Bank of India in its monthly bulletin for May. This level of unemployment, particularly in rural areas, is what is referred to as the tipping point. "By 2017-18, the unemployment rate was at a 45-year high. The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified this problem," says economist Santosh Mehrotra. The second wave, as various estimates show, has hit the unorganised sector the most. "Unlike the first wave, rural supply chains will be impacted because farmers and cultivators are also infected," Mehrotra adds.

Economic impacts of the lingering pandemic in rural areas would be devastating for the fact that mostly it is an informal and low-earning workforce. On the other hand, India's rural income, comprise close to 46 per cent of the total income of the country.

Last year, rural economy backed by a robust agricultural growth and government spending on rural schemes somehow stayed put, though with cuts. But this year, it has also stagnated. Agriculture sector reported 3 per cent increase in employment as millions returned back to villages. This year it doesn't have the capacity to absorb any more people. Also, the unfavorable term of trade results in less and less income despite bumper harvests. This will nullify the much inflated benefit of a third consecutive normal monsoon. Less income means, less consumption expenditure. Similarly, 50 per cent of manufacturing and construction in India happen in rural areas which are a significant employer as well. These as well suffer from lockdowns and also due to overall lack of demands activities have not picked up. Here as well, the rural areas will report dip in income.

(Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Modi, Didi should rise above petty politicking



SABKA Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas' is the "basic mantra" of the BJP and its mission is to work for the country and its development. This certainly is a very good mantra. When the BJP came to power with absolute majority at Centre in 2014, this mantra gave a new direction and kind of new enthusiasm. It was felt that after 67 years of Independence, the country has got a positive direction and hence forth the dimension of politics will undergo a definite change.

The results of 2014 general elections made people feel that this mantra indicates that the country will now do away with political vendetta and politicking will end once elections would be over and from then onwards, both Centre and State would focus attention on governance and India will shift from the concept of Swarajya (self-rule to Surajya good governance). The Indian voters, it was felt had taken a wise decision in giving absolute majority of the BJP.

It was also felt that since the Centre would turn to Surajya, the states too will follow. But then our experience in last six years has left us wondering if all these nice and ear pleasing utterances were also part of politicking? When the attack on Congress party began by BJP, it was felt that the Congress party was committing mistake after mistake and was reeling under darkness without an effective leader to guide the rank and file.

But it now appears that all ruling parties from Lutyens Delhi to down South have adopted the same policy, decimate the opposition and muzzle the voice of media and anyone who questions the ruling party. A situation has come where even media had fallen silent as it has seen how some of them were arrested under sedition cases.

The way the Centre and West Bengal government are on warpath leaves one aghast. While TMC has won thumping majority, the BJP too had not only

given a tough fight but also improved its tally to 74 and emerged as the major opposition. Soon after the results, one expected that the war was over. The BJP had also said that the Centre would extend full cooperation to the state. This statement was welcomed by all because there was lot of heat generated between the TMC and the BJP and the war of words had reached a peak.

But the developments that we are witnessing now indicates that the war between TMC and BJP is not over. Didi wants that she should now be allowed to govern the State. The Centre says, she was violating all norms of protocols and not just that she was even roping in bureaucrats into politics.

Mamata Didi continues to roar like an injured tigress. But the frustration is clearly visible. She even went to the extent of saying, "If the Prime Minister tells me, 'you touch my feet, I will help Bengal', that also I am ready to do. But please don't humiliate me like this. Don't insult me like this. Don't defame Bengal. You are not only disturbing me, but you are also disturbing my secretariat. Why are you behaving like this? We won by a landslide. Is that your worry?" She asked

Why did Centre get angry? It was because Didi kept the PM waiting when he went to West Bengal to assess the damage caused by cyclone. She also left the place to visit cyclone affected areas along with her chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay. Though Mamata has been claiming that they failed to arrive at Kalaikunda in advance due to security restrictions imposed by ATC (air traffic control) in view of the PM's arrival and that after reaching Kaklaikunda, she was not allowed to meet the PM immediately by the SPG, Didi seems to be on weak wicket. As per protocol, she should have reached Kalaikunda well in advance of the arrival of the Prime Minister. Apart from reaching late, she handed over a memorandum to the Prime Minister and left the place along with her CS. This act would certainly make anyone angry.

The result was the Ministry of Home Affairs served a notice to the Chief Secretary under Disaster Management Act saying that PM Narendra Modi and others accompanying him were kept waiting for over 15 minutes. The MHA said, "In view of the ab-



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sence (at PM meeting), the Chief Secretary was called by an official as to whether they wanted to participate in the meeting or not. Thereafter, the Chief Secretary arrived along with the CM and left immediately." The notice asked Bandyopadhyay, a 1987-batch IAS officer, to explain within three days why action should not be taken against him. This has sparked off a major war of words. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that this was not the time to fight with state governments, but to confront the coronavirus pandemic together. Mamata reacted saying, "Within minutes of my taking oath, the Governor issued a statement of some incidents that took place when the state was under the Election Commission. You cannot digest defeat that is why from day one you started all these actions."

Some TMC MPs felt that Disaster Management Act should be applied against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Election Commission for "endangering human lives" by holding polls and poll rallies during Covid spike in West Bengal.

Not willing to give up, the West Bengal Chief Minister refused to relieve CS and made him resign and appointed him as advisor to the Chief Minister. She also remarked, "We respect his guts; he chose to retire rather than bowing down. We need his service in the interests of Bengal." Now the

big question is why did Mamata go to such extra lengths to protect the officer who earned the ire of Modi government? Was it her concern for the bureaucracy or did she drag her CS also into politicking?

There is no doubt that she trusts her former CS to a great extent and credits him with the concept of governance at the doorstep of the common man. He also heads almost all committees meant for relief and rehabilitation work and reposed confidence in him from managing Covid-19 situation to Yaas cyclone. Bandyopadhyay is also known for his flexibility in shifting into any system and had worked with many Chief Ministers from Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee of Left Front to Mamata and had held important positions.

Alapan is Ramakrishna Mission-educated and a Presidency college graduate who started his career as a journalist at Anandabazar Patrika. According to reports the Chief Minister trusts Bandyopadhyay to such an extent that he heads almost all committees formed for relief and rehabilitation work in the past two years, from Covid-19 pandemic to cyclones Amphan and Yaas.

According to experts, the legal position says that the IAS cadre officer may, with the concurrence of the state governments concerned and the central government, be deputed for service un-

Time to 'Reimagine, Recreate and Restore'

V SHANTHI



TODAY'S pandemic is not the impact of neglecting and destroying our planet's ecosystems. Every three seconds, the world loses enough forest to cover a football pitch and to our dismay we have already lost and destroyed half of our wetlands. As much as 50 per cent of our coral reefs have already been lost and up to 90 per cent of coral reefs could be lost by 2050, even if global warming is limited to an increase of 1.5°C.

From the above disastrous imparity of ecosystem and the nature is the evidence of this emergence of Covid-19 which also shown just how the loss can be to human beings. By lessening the area of natural habitat for animals, we have created ideal conditions for pathogens - including coronaviruses - to spread.

Telangana State has recorded improvement in forest cover in all four categories - very dense forest, moderately dense forest, open forest and scrub. This is possible from the afforestation programmes envisaged to plant and protect 230 seedlings over a period of four years.

Reacting to the report, Rakesh Mohan Dobriyal, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Haritha Haram and Social Forestry) said: "Efforts of several rounds of Haritha Haram and

also the massive afforestation of forests undertaken by the government have started yielding good results. Actually, the forest land which is being taken for construction of irrigation projects has been compensated elsewhere on waste lands that otherwise would have remained barren.

Telangana had reported an extent of Recorded Forest Area (RFA) as 26,904 sq km which is 24 per cent of its geographical area. The reserved, protected and unclassified forests are 75.65 per cent, 22.07 per cent and 2.28 per cent of the recorded forest area in the State respectively. Main reasons for the increase in forest cover in the State are plantation and conservation activities as well as improvement in interpretation, the report said.

Telangana is the only State that has taken up a massive greening and save the nature programme, 'Telangana Ku Haritha Haram' in the State to aim at achieving the twin objectives of increasing the forest cover and reduce pressure on the existing forest resources, through massive community participation by Vana Samrakshana Samithis (VSS) and Eco-Development Committees (EDCs) in protected areas and Watershed Development Committees in the watershed areas," the ISFR 2019 said.

The climate change plays a vital role in driving the degradation of forests and disturbances to forest dependent communities, environmentalists and foresters are now supporting the strategy of assisted natural regeneration also

as an alternative to tree planting, which is low-cost, easy to adopt and a high-impact intervention to restore and rejuvenate degraded forests and biodiversity, and sequester carbon as well.

Dassarla Satyanarayana from Mothe is successful in creating the artificial forest in his 70 acres of land that is giving relief to more varieties and species of birds, insects and other reptiles. If we all convert our concrete lives to that system that is helpful in balancing the parity between the Nature and our ecosystem, then our lives will be ever green.

Linking tree planting programmes with wages and livelihood under various government schemes and incentives have resulted in wide acceptance and popularity of Haritha Haram.

This has helped not only to make all governmental organisations and other stakeholders responsible and empowered, but also provided them a good platform to address the challenges of climate change.

With the inclusive concept of Jungle Bachao, Jungle Badhao (Protect Forest, Expand Forest), the activities outside forest areas are centred on increasing greenery by way of planting in rural areas. Considering the vital role of green cover in both cities and villages, the recent focus of government has been to develop and create urban green spaces.

A great news from The Economic Intelligence Unit a survey conducted by the "Worldwide Funding for Nature" (WWF), is that, a huge response from the mankind for the consequences

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY



of imparity between the nature and the ecosystem in the recent past. There is 190 per cent of article searched in the topics like Diversity in the living world and the nature. People started thinking and the protection of our ecosystem and the nature thanks to the corona tsunami. This survey was conducted between 2016 and 2020.

This pandemic at least made us, "Awake Arise and Achieve" quotation to remember always in accepting the challenges thrown by the Nature and many more in future for nipping them in the budding stage and not allowing the tiny virus to threat our lives more. Even more interesting news is, that there are 550 tweets in the social media about the loss of ignoring the nature and diversification of our lives in the living with the nature. There is a great saying in English, that "Better Safe than Sorry". This enlightens us to protect our environment and the nature everyday by which, we can simply avoid these perils at large and our mother earth gives us a chance to celebrate everyday as Environment day.

(The author is Assistant Professor, AMS Arts & Science College for Women, Hyderabad)

‘Universal free vaccination can only save people from Covid’

Congress leaders to hold Satyagraha Deeksha on June 7

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday demanded that universal free vaccination should be taken up to save people from Covid-19. Along with leader of Congress Party in Assembly Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, MPs A Revanth Reddy and K Venkat Reddy, and former MP Ponnampallabharathi, he submitted a memorandum in this regard to the Governor.

Addressing the media, Uttam Kumar Reddy severely criticised that both the Central and State governments have miserably failed to control Covid. He noted that the economy was devastated due to the uncontrolled spread of Covid in the country. He said that they have conveyed their anguish to the President of India through memorandum submitted to the Governor.

Stating the importance of vaccination, Uttam demanded that vaccine should be given at free of cost to all adult population. The



TPCC president and Nalgonda MP N Uttam Kumar Reddy along with Congress MPs Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, A Revanth Reddy and others submitting a memorandum to TS Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan at Raj Bhavan on Friday

target of vaccinating all the adults by December 31 would not be achievable unless one crore persons are vaccinated every day. At the present pace of vaccination, it takes three years to achieve this target, he added. He criticised that the TRS government has failed to arrange medical facilities and medicines in the State. Even though they have

made a complaint to the Governor on the same issue 15 months ago, the Chief Minister has taken it lightly, he pointed out.

Demanding that Covid should be included in Arogyasri scheme immediately, Uttam said that Satyagraha Deeksha would be held on June 7 at State and district headquarters demanding free treatment to Covid and

Black Fungus patients.

The Congress leader alleged that the Modi government's vaccination strategy has been a dangerous cocktail of blunders and bloopers. The Centre has deliberately created a 'digital divide' thereby slowing down vaccination and willfully complicit in creating differential pricing for the same vaccine.

Four held for selling fake Ramraj masks

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Kavali police on Friday arrested four persons for allegedly manufacturing and selling fake cotton face masks of Ramraj brand. The accused were identified as, Shaik Ghouseuddin, Gopalakrishnan, Vasudevan and D Raja.

According to police, they received a complaint from the management of Ramraj cotton stating that they have observed a lot of fake cotton face masks being sold in the market by using their brand name and logo. Upon receiving the complaint, special teams were formed and raids were held at various shops in Kavali.

During the investigation it was revealed that, one Shaik Ghouseuddin, an accountant at a popular readymade garment shop started his own company named, RTGS Agencies in association with Gopalakrishnan and Vasudevan. All three accused worked in the same garment shop. After collecting evidences against their involvement in selling fake cotton Ramraj face masks, they were detained, said the police.

Further investigations re-



vealed that, they were just selling the masks, whereas the manufacturer was one D Raja, the owner of Sri Vasavi Textiles in Ongole. The special teams then travelled to Ongole to nab the culprit. He was then detained and the fake masks were seized from his possession. All the four accused have been booked under relevant sections of IPC and the case is further being investigated to look out for other such culprits, said the police.

Meanwhile, the founder of Ramraj cotton, KR Nagarajan, said, "The public should be very careful to buy at authorised dealers and Ramraj Cotton showrooms and use the original Ramraj Cotton face masks only. Also citizens should not be fooled by counterfeits."

He added, "Those involved in such misconduct would be constantly monitored and action would be taken by the police."



YSR party provides financial assistance to kin of Covid victims

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RANGA REDDY

ON the call of YSR Telangana party chief YS Sharmila, Shadnagar YSR Telangana party leader MD Ibrahim on Friday provided financial assistance to the families of the victims, who died to corona in Shadnagar constituency.

Speaking on the occasion, YSR Telangana party leader MD Ibrahim said that financial assistance of Rs 25,000 and RS 20,000 was provided to the families of victims who died to co-

rona. He said the programme was carried out under the direction of YSR Telangana party chief Sharmila. No one can compensate enough to the families for the damage done by corona but we tried to provide financial assistance to share their grief, he said.

Mohammad Jahangir, Mohammad Ilyas, Mohammad Hafeez, Mamidipalli Asad Khan, Mohammad Irfan Abdul Aziz, Chopari Ramesh, Abdul Jalil, Mohammad Haimad, Satish, and YSR Telangana activists were present.

IDP, ISDJ launch “Better Reporting on Food and Agriculture” course

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

INDIA Data Portal (IDP), developed under the aegis of the Bharti Institute of Public Policy (BIPP), at the Indian School of Business (ISB) on Friday launched the online “Better Reporting on Food and Agriculture” course in collaboration with India Spend School of Data Journalism (ISDJ).

In a statement the ISB said that participants can log in to study offline and upon completion, secure an online certification. The food and agriculture course are free for the applicants.

With agriculture being one of the strongest pillars of the Indian economy, the sector contributes to 17% of the total GDP and pro-

vides employment to over 60% of the country's population. However, for journalists, researchers, and public policy experts, finding updated data, facts, and figures on food, agriculture and financial inclusion can be an uphill task.

The course aims to provide an understanding of the broad aspects around the state of agriculture in India, an overview of relevant food and agriculture policies in India, insight on the various initiatives introduced by the government around and supporting the agriculture activities.

Further, the course will also provide an in-depth understanding of the India Data Portal, which is a one-stop destination for open-access data on agriculture, rural development, and fi-

nancial inclusion in India. Participants will be able to navigate through the portal to orient themselves to be able to read and develop unique data sets, independently. Lastly, the course will provide imperative insights on visualisations and interpreting data.

Dr Aarushi Jain, Associate Director, Bharti Institute of Public Policy, said,

“We are very excited to offer the online certificate course on food and agriculture, using data and visualisation. Understanding India's food and agriculture landscape can be daunting as there is a plethora of information available in a raw and unfiltered manner. The Better Reporting on Food and Agriculture course will help journalists, researchers, stu-

dents, policymakers, administrators, NGOs, and entrepreneurs get an in-depth understanding of the subject area, understand India's regulatory landscape related to agriculture and orient participants to file better visually aided stories using the India Data Portal.”

This course is relevant to newsrooms, journalism, and public policy students, development sector professionals, members of the food and agriculture associations, data enthusiasts, policymakers, academia, and civil society organisations.

Interested persons can obtain further details and register themselves by visiting, <https://isdj.in/course/better-reporting-on-food-and-agriculture/>, it added.

TRS State secretary resigns

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SHADNAGAR

TELANGANA Rashtra Samithi (TRS) State secretary Ande Babaiah on Friday resigned from the party. He has been with the TRS for the last seven years. He also worked with Telugu Desam Party in the constituency for about 35 years. Ande Babaiah resigned from the party in support of the resignation of former Minister Eatala Rajender.

Speaking with the media, TRS former State secretary A Babaiah announced his resignation in support of former Minister Eatala Rajender. A media conference would be held on Saturday to announce his future political plans, he added.

AP CM LAUNCHES AP-AMUL PROJECT IN WG DISTRICT

- Says the project is intended to empower women self-help groups by encouraging milk cooperatives in govt sector
- The government has kept its promise given to dairy farmers, by strengthening the milk cooperatives and offering remunerative price by signing up with Amul, he says

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched Jagananna Palavelluva- AP Amul Project in West Godavari district virtually from his camp office on Friday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said the project was intended to give a fillip to the empowerment of women self-help groups by encouraging milk cooperatives in the government sector.

The project was first started on December 2, and milk was being collected from 722 villages in Guntur, Chittoor, Kadapa and Prakasam districts and now milk would be collected from 153 villages in West Godavari district.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said that the government had kept its promise given to dairy farmers, by strengthening the milk cooperatives and offering remunerative price by signing up with Amul, which is the largest dairy cooperative in the country, where all the shareholders are dairy farmers. He said that Amul was paying



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy after formally launching the milk procurement under AP-Amul Project in West Godavari district on Friday

MOU WITH AMUL DAIRY

HC directs AP govt not to release funds

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE AP High Court on Friday directed the State government not to release funds as part of MoU entered with Amul Dairy.

It may be noted that MP Raghuramakrishna Raju filed a petition in High Court challenging the State government entering into an MoU with Amul Dairy. He filed petition against the State Cabinet's decision transferring AP Dairy Development Federation properties to Amul Dairy on

remunerative prices in the market where women in Guntur, Chittoor, Kadapa and Prakasam districts were able to earn Rs 5

Next hearing slated for June 14

lease basis. The High Court directed to issue notices to Amul Dairy and posted next hearing to June 14.

As part of the MoU entered with AP government, the Amul Dairy started milk collection in Chittoor, Guntur, Kadapa and Prakasam districts. Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy launched Amul Dairy services in West Godavari district on Friday.

to Rs 15 more per litre than the existing price.

Further, the Chief Minister said 52.93 lakh litres of milk

was so far collected from 13,739 women dairy farmers in 722 villages of Guntur, Chittoor, Kadapa and Prakasam districts, where a sum of Rs 24.54 crore was paid to them. Amul had paid Rs 4.06 crore more than the existing price by providing an additional income, he said. In order to ensure all the women are being paid in a transparent manner on the basis of quality check, bulk milk cooling units and automatic milk collection units would be set up in 9,899 villages at a cost of Rs 4,000 crore as part of the Amul project in the next two years.

Amul MD Sodhi said that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy had brought revolutionary changes for the development of villages, especially in the dairy sector by encouraging women on a large-scale. He said that the Amul company is being operated by the farmers and the profits of the company are being passed on to the farmers.

93 ZP High Schools to be upgraded as junior colleges

This exercise will be undertaken in mandals where there are no junior colleges

HANS NEWS SERVICE
GUNTUR

THE State government is making efforts to upgrade 93 Zilla Parishad High Schools as junior colleges from the academic year 2021-22. The government has decided to upgrade ZPHSSs as junior colleges in the mandals in which there are no junior colleges. The Board of Intermediate Education secretary V Rama Krishna directed the District Vocational Educational Officers (DVEOs) to conduct feasibility study and inform infrastructure available in Zilla Parishad High

Schools and submit a detailed report at the earliest. He issued orders to this effect on Friday.

According to the official sources, the DVEOs will ask the DEOs to select one ZPHS and submit the feasibility report at the earliest and inform facilities available in the school for taking further action. If everything goes well, 93 Zilla Parishad High Schools would be upgraded into junior colleges beginning from the academic year 2021-22.

The girl students of SC, ST, BC, minorities and poor families are not going to distant

places to join in the junior colleges. As a result, they are not studying Intermediate. To increase admissions in the government junior colleges, the government extended the mid-day meal scheme to Intermediate students and introduced Amma Vodi scheme.

If this proposal translates into action, eligible school teachers working in the ZPHSSs are likely to be promoted as junior lecturers. The government is likely to appoint junior lecturers on contract basis in the Zilla Parishad High Schools to be upgraded as junior colleges.

Megha striving to mitigate oxygen shortage

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIJAYAWADA

THE engineering giant MEIL has provided oxygen pipelines, manifolds and flow meters to the Covid care facility in Tadipatri. The company provided similar facilities at Anantapur and Punganur also.

At the Tadipatri Covid-19 temporary hospital near Arjas Steel Factory, the MEIL has completed work for 500-bed oxygen pipe with required valves and pressure gauges including outlets and flow meters with L-Gauge and humidifier (0-15 bar) for each bed.

The company also provided a standby manifold with a control panel. Similarly at Anantapur Covid-19 temporary hospital near the Government Hospital the work is under progress for a 300-bed oxygen pipeline.

At the Covid-19 Primary Health Centre at Punganur, the MEIL has completed 80-bed oxygen pipeline along with control panel. To mitigate oxygen shortage, Megha has imported cryogenic tanks.

The MEIL has imported three cryogenic tanks for Andhra Pradesh from Singapore. Each cryogenic tank can distribute 1.40 crore litres of medical oxygen.

Minister orders probe into Nellore GGH incident

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

MINISTER for Health Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas ordered an inquiry by a three-member committee on the alleged incident of indecent behavior towards a medical student by Superintendent at Nellore Government General Hospital. The Minister ordered formed a committee including Nellore ACSR medical college principal Dr Sambasiva Rao and two other professors.

The Minister directed the Director of Medical Education Dr M Raghavendra Rao to submit a report on this issue. The Health Minister warned of serious action on the erring official and added that steps will be taken to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

Like HIV, hepatitis, Covid cannot infect new born from mother : Experts

SUJIT CHAKRABORTY
AGARTALA/GUWAHATI

LIKE HIV and hepatitis, Covid-19 cannot transmit to the new born babies even if the mother had tested positive for the deadly virus, as around 250 nCoV positive women were found to have delivered healthy babies in Tripura, doctors and experts said.

Agartala Government Medical College's (AGMC) Microbiology department head Tapan Majumder said that it is a very positive development that in India there has been no such instance found where the Covid-19 is be-

ing transmitted to the new born baby from the mother even though the coronavirus disease is a communicable disease.

"Congenital and vertical transmission of coronavirus is not possible as there is no receptor at the placenta to receive or entertain the virus. But HIV positive and hepatitis virus can be transmitted to the new born baby from the mother," Majumder, also a Professor of the AGMC, told IANS.

During the two pandemic waves, since last year around 250 Covid-19 positive pregnant women have delivered healthy



babies at the AGMC, Tripura's main Covid medical college and hospital. "During the first wave,

as many as 214 Covid-19 positive women had delivered healthy babies while in the second wave 35

such mothers gave birth to fit and normal babies. There were also many other cases of caesarean delivery," said Jayanta Ray, Head of the Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology of AGMC.

He told IANS that before admission, all pregnant women are mandatorily undergoing Covid testing and if anyone is found with a positive case, due health protocols are being maintained. "However, family members and relatives of the new born babies and the concerned women have to be more careful. They should not indiscriminately come closer to both the kid and the

mother," said Ray, a renowned Gynaecologist.

Health officials in different northeastern states said that unlike in the first wave children below 15 years are also being tested for Covid-19 in reasonable numbers during the second wave in Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam, forcing the governments of these states to constitute panels of paediatric doctors. A total of 31 minor girls and eight caretakers at two orphanage homes in Tripura have recently tested positive for Covid-19 and most of them have already recovered from the infec-

tious disease. As the nature and intensity of the second wave of Covid-19 are diverse, physician Pradip Bhowmik has suggested forming study groups for an in-depth study of the disease.

"It is witnessed in the second wave that during the post-Covid period many patients are being affected by pneumonia and some by mucormycosis (black fungus)." Unlike in the first wave, a large number of young people and children are being infected by the coronavirus. In the second wave the recovery rate is very slow and the death rate is higher," Bhowmik told IANS.

SUPPLY OF VACCINES TO PRIVATE HOSPITALS

After Centre's rap, Punjab cancels order

AMRITSAR

SOON after the Centre pulled up the Capt Amarinder Singh-led Punjab government of selling Covaxin doses at over and above the prices they were procured from the Centre triggering allegations of 'vaccine profiteering', the order was withdrawn by the state government. The Punjab government has now withdrawn the stock of controversial vaccines supplied to private hospitals. Principal Secretary Hussan Lal said that the government had supplied 40,000 doses and only less than 1,000 were administered by the private hospitals. "We have taken back the remaining stock," he said.

Leading the charge for the Centre earlier was Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar who alleged that the state profiteered on Covaxin shots by getting them for Rs 400 a dose from the Centre and selling it to 20 private hospitals at Rs 1,060 a dose. The state government has also taken back the order of providing one-time limited vaccine doses to the 18-44 years age group population through private hospitals. It has directed all private hospitals to return all vaccine doses available with them.

"A strange kind of politics is



Rag-pickers collect re-usable waste from a waste-dumping site, on the eve of World Environment Day, on the outskirts of Jammu on Friday

Post vans converted to ambulances for staff

MUMBAI: In a unique initiative, the Maharashtra Postal Circle has converted its mail motor Vehicles into fully-equipped ambulances for post department staff and their families hit by Covid-19 pandemic, an official said here on Friday. Four such post vans, refitted as ambulances, flagged off on June 1 by Chief Post Master General H.C. Agrawal in Mumbai, have reached their stations in Pune, Nagpur, Aurangabad and Kolhapur where they shall be based, the official said. Each of the converted postal van has been equipped with the necessary medical aids, including oxygen cylinders and the department has also obtained temporary licences to operate them as Covid ambulances. An official said that during the pandemic times, there have been complaints of lack of availability of ambulances to shift Covid-19 affected people to the hospitals.

playing out in Punjab. The state continues to be affected by Covid. Covid management leaves much to be desired. The required level of government involvement

needed for Covid testing is also not there in Punjab," Javadekar said. He added that internal factionalism has been bogging down the Congress government in Punjab

India records 1.32L cases, 2,713 deaths

NEW DELHI: India on Friday logged 1,32,364 new infections in 24 hours as 2,713 more succumbed to the pandemic, the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry said. On June 1, India reported 1,27,510 cases lowest since April 8. On April 8, India had recorded 1,31,968 cases while on April 7, the country witnessed 1,26,789 fresh cases. Tamil Nadu was the largest contributor with almost 25,000 cases while in the metros the count in the last 24 hours was 487 in Delhi, 961 Mumbai, 3,533 in Bengaluru, 976 in Kolkata and 2,062 in Chennai. India's overall tally of Covid-19 cases now stands at 2,85,74,350 with 16,35,993 active cases and 3,40,702 deaths so far.

100% attendance in Guj offices allowed

SURAT: In the wake of a significant decline in COVID-19 cases, the Gujarat government on Friday announced that private as well as government offices in the state can now function with 100 per cent staff from June 7. The decision was taken by Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, an official release issued on Friday said. All government offices will remain open on Saturday (June 5), it added. Private as well as government offices in Gujarat have been functioning with 50 per cent staff since the beginning of May, when the state witnessed a substantial rise in infection cases.

The state government had allowed only half the work force in offices in a bid to curb the spread of the virus. However, the number of daily infections has come down drastically in the last couple of weeks. On Thursday, Gujarat recorded 1,207 new cases and 17 deaths.

for about six months. "The entire party and the government have been camping in Delhi for the past four days. So who will care about the people? Disregard of the people at the altar of internal party politics is a big sin of the Congress," Javadekar said.

"What kind of people's governance is this where the state government wants to make profits on a vaccination drive for Covid? And Punjab is charging people Rs 1,500. Government of India has given free 22 crore doses to states till now," he said.

No jeans, T-shirts or sports shoes, CBI asks staff to wear only formals

NEW DELHI

CENTRAL Bureau of Investigation (CBI) director Subodh Kumar Jaiswal has made it mandatory for all officers and staffers of the agency to be formally dressed in the office and said casual wear like jeans and sports shoes will not be tolerated.

According to an order, the dress code for men will be shirts, formal trousers, and formal shoes. They are also required to come to the office properly shaved. The women employees of the CBI have been asked to wear only sarees, suits, formal shirts, and trousers. "No jeans, T-shirts, sports shoes, chapals, ad casual attire is allowed in office," said the order, a copy of which HT has seen. It directed

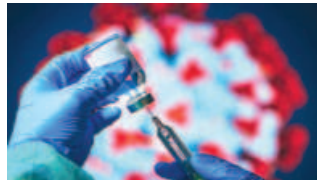


heads of branches of the CBI across the country to ensure these guidelines are strictly followed. CBI officers, who spoke on condition of anonymity, called it a balanced order and said every officer, staffer always needed to wear formals. "However, over the years, people started wearing casuals... like jeans and T-shirts and nobody stopped it. CBI officers need to at least wear a formal collared shirt, trousers, and shoes," said an officer, requesting anonymity.

Delhi HC anguished over shortage of vaccines in India

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court Friday expressed anguish over the way things have transpired in the second wave of COVID-19 where vaccine shortage is hitting everyone even when the Central government says the best way to fight the pandemic is to vaccinate the entire population. The high court was deliberating with the issue related to manufacturing of COVID vaccine Sputnik V by India's Panacea Biotech in collaboration with Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF). The high court directed the Centre to release arbitral award of over Rs 14 crore along with interest from 2012 to Panacea Biotech for manufacturing Sputnik V vaccine in India subject



to the condition that the company obtains permission from the government to manufacture the vaccine. A bench of Justices Manmohan and Najmi Waziri said the release of the amount, awarded to the company by the arbitral tribunal, will also be subject to the undertaking of the firm that 20 per cent of its sale proceeds of Sputnik V will be deposited with the court's registry till the awarded amount is secured. "Today, we are a bit anguished with the way

things have transpired during the second wave. As a responsible citizen you also would be anguished.

Vaccine shortage is hitting each and everyone. Even today vaccine is not available in Delhi... You have good products in India, a little handholding will work," the bench said. It added that someone from Russia has been able to locate infrastructure in Himachal Pradesh but the Centre has failed to do so. The high court's order came on a plea of Delhi-based Panacea Biotech seeking to modify a July 2020 order, by which the firm had undertaken not to prosecute further the execution proceedings instituted by them in relation to an arbitral award, running into crores of rupees, passed in its favour and against the Centre.

UK: Delta variant causes more hospitalisation

LONDON

THE Delta variant of COVID-19, first found in India, has now emerged as the dominant strain in the UK and may send more to the hospital than before, the country's scientists have said.

The UK's Public Health England (PHE) said experts believe that Delta has now overtaken Alpha, the name given to the variant first detected in Kent, England. It also said variant cases are on the rise in several parts of the country. The UK health body, which tracks variants, says early evidence sug-

gests there may be an "increased risk of hospitalisation" with the Delta strain compared to the Alpha, although more data is needed to reinforce this view.

Official data says 278 people with the Delta variant went to hospital in an emergency this week. Last week, that number was 201. Most of these patients have not been vaccinated, according to PHE.

Experts have urged people to "remain cautious" as the country approaches the next stage of the roadmap — June 21 - when all lockdown restrictions are to end.

Trump says he was right 'Virus came from Wuhan'

WASHINGTON

FORMER US President Trump said that he was right about 'China Virus coming from Wuhan Lab'.

"Now everyone, even the so-called 'enemy', are beginning to say that President Trump was right about the China Virus coming from Wuhan Lab," said former US President Donald Trump.

He also called for imposing a fine on China for the death and destruction they have caused due to this 'lab leak'.

"The correspondence between Dr Fauci and China speaks too loudly for anyone to ignore. China should pay USD 10 trillion to America, and the world, for the death and destruction they have caused!" added Trump.

After US top coronavirus ad-



visor, Dr Anthony Fauci private emails were revealed to the press the debate over coronavirus coming from Wuhan Lab has sparked once again.

Over 3,000 pages of emails were obtained by the Washington Post, Buzzfeed News and CNN through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, date from January to June 2020. The emails revealed about early days of the US Covid outbreak. Dr Fauci and his colleagues took notice, in the early days, of the theory that COVID-19 may have leaked from a laboratory in Wuhan, China.

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మీ కలలకు సాకారం

సరైన సమయంలో చక్కని నిర్ణయం మంచి ఫలితాలను అందించింది

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TODAY'S QUOTE

Centre will make more capital expenditure

“The enhanced capital expenditure by Ministries will play a critical role in revitalising the economy post-pandemic and encouraged to front-load their capital expenditure. A request was made to Ministries to exceed their capex targets and to regularly review sector-specific projects with the respective State governments


– **Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Minister**



STOCKS

Mkts retreat from record highs

Equity indices treaded lower on Friday, weighed by banking, energy and FMCG stocks, after the RBI left interest rates unchanged but slashed the GDP growth estimate. The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 132.38 points or 0.25% lower at 52,100.05, the NSE slipped 20.10 points or 0.13% to finish at 15,670.25.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	73.74	South	
Euro	89.33	African Rand	6.15
UAE Dirham	20.47	Hong Kong Dollar	10.732
Thai Baht	2.57	Japanese Yen	0.76
British Pound	104.17	New Zealand Dollar	52.76
Australian Dollar	56.53	Saudi Riyal	21.4
Canadian Dollar	60.79	Swedish Krona	10.06
Swiss Franc	81.51	Singapore Dollar	56.07

DELHI SATURDAY 5 JUNE 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Hyundai's CSR activity

Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF) has handed over 100 oxygen concentrators and 50 BiPaP machines to Somesh Kumar, Chief Secretary, Govt of Telangana, for further distribution to hospitals in the State on Friday. Additionally, to support the society at large, a lifesaving oxygen plant will be installed by Hyundai Motor India Foundation in Utnoor, Adilabad. Under the Hyundai Cares 3.0 initiative, Project: 'Back to Life' ensures the expedited procurement and delivery of highly critical oxygen products to help provide immediate relief across most affected States and cities in India. Under the Hyundai Cares 3.0 Covid-19 relief initiative, Hyundai Motor India Foundation has expedited purchase and supply of critical medical equipment, thereby ensuring a quick dispatch of relief materials to hospitals across most affected states of Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Haryana and New Delhi.

Apollo gets recognition

Apollo Hospitals, Hyderabad, has received the coveted Joint Commission International (JCI) Accreditation, for a record sixth time. JCI is internationally acknowledged gold standard for best clinical practices in quality and patient safety, which is renewed triennially. JCI Accreditation is the privilege of select few reputed healthcare institutions, globally. The distinctive accreditation reiterates Apollo Hospitals commitment and constant endeavor to offer highest quality care and ensuring utmost safety for patients. "JCI accreditation is a testimony to Apollo's dedication and commitment to deliver the best possible care to patients. Apollo's patient centric approach and care on par with the best globally, enabled to conform with JCI's strenuous parameters. Kudos to the team and the expert clinicians for their tireless initiative and commitment to highest quality standards spanning over the last 18 years, says Dr Sangita Reddy, Joint MD, Apollo Hospitals Group.

RBI sticks to status quo as Covid bites

Keeps key repo rate unchanged at a record low of 4%; Retains accommodative stance to support growth

MUMBAI

THE Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday left key interest rates unchanged at record lows and announced new measures to support the economy after the nascent recovery was pummelled by the devastating second wave of Covid-19 infections. The six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) headed by Governor Shaktikanta Das voted unanimously for keeping repo rate - RBI's key lending rate - unchanged at 4 per cent, and the reverse repo rate - the borrowing rate - at 3.35 per cent. "The MPC was of the view that at this juncture policy support from all sides is required to gain the momentum of growth that was evident in the second half of 2021, and to nurture the recovery after it has taken root," Das said.

It decided to retain an accommodative policy stance "as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy," signalling there is still room to cut rates further. RBI expanded its version of quantitative easing to keep borrowing costs anchored. It will buy an

RBI BALM FOR COVID PAIN

- Banks get ₹15,000 cr liquidity window
- Boost to MSMEs as SIDBI gets ₹16k cr
- restructuring window has been extended



“The MPC was of the view that at this juncture policy support from all sides is required to gain the momentum of growth that was evident in the second half of 2021, and to nurture the recovery after it has taken root

– **RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das**

additional Rs 1.2 lakh crore of bonds under the Government Securities Acquisition Programme (G-SAP) 2.0 in the second quarter.

In April, RBI committed to buying Rs 1 lakh crore worth of government bonds from the market between April and May under G-SAP 1.0. Under G-SAP 1.0, RBI will purchase government securities worth Rs 40,000 crore on June 17. The move is aimed at supporting the government's borrowing plan at comfortable interest rates. The speed, scale and severity of the second wave of Covid-19 has impacted the economic recovery.

But Das said unlike the first wave of Covid-19 infections which brought the economy to an abrupt standstill under a na-

tionwide lockdown, the impact of the second wave on economic activity is expected to be relatively contained with restrictions on mobility being regionalised and nuanced. He said retail inflation is seen at 5.1 per cent in 2021-22, with upside risks from higher commodity prices and re-emergence of higher supply constraints amidst the current phase of lockdowns.

Other announcements include a separate liquidity window of Rs 15,000 crore being opened till March 31, 2022, with tenors of up to 3 years at the repo rate, under which banks can provide fresh lending support to Covid-hit sectors such as hotels, restaurants and tourism. Further, an additional Rs 16,000

crore funding has been earmarked for Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) for lending to Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), directly or indirectly over and above the quantum of Rs 50,000 crore that was set aside for government financial institutions in the April policy.

In order to provide further relief to the businesses hit by Covid 2.0, the newly announced restructuring window has been extended for all entities with outstanding credit of Rs 50 crore, up from Rs 25 crore. Das said India's foreign exchange reserves have by all indications crossed \$600 billion, a huge buffer that will help the economy from global spillovers and volatile external flows.

Cuts FY22 growth forecast to 9.5%

KUMUD DAS MUMBAI

THE Reserve Bank on Friday lowered the country's GDP growth forecast for the current financial year by a percentage point to 9.5 per cent in view of the uncertainties created by the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Observing that unlike the first wave, the impact of the second wave of Covid-19 is likely to be relatively contained, RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said that taking several factors into consideration, "real GDP growth

is now projected at 9.5 per cent in 2021-22 consisting of 18.5 per cent in Q1; 7.9 per cent in Q2; 7.2 per cent in Q3; and 6.6 per cent in Q4 of 2021-22."



He was addressing the media after the meeting of the rate-setting panel - Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). The Reserve Bank had earlier projected a growth rate of

10.5 per cent for 2021-22. Das noted that since the MPC's April meeting, the second wave of Covid-19 has surged across several States and has spread into smaller towns and villages, leaving a trail of human misery and tragedy.

As per the provisional estimates of national income released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on May 31, 2021, India's real gross domestic product (GDP) contracted at 7.3 per cent for 2020-21, with GDP growth in the January-March quarter at 1.6 per cent (year-on-year).

HANS BUSINESS/MUMBAI

Industry hails RBI's moves

Bankers, industry and experts have welcomed RBI's decision to maintain status quo on key policy rates. They termed policy to be a fine balancing act between growth and inflationary expectations. Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, said "While keeping the policy rates unchanged, RBI's move to continue to use its unconventional tools to keep yields stable amid a large government borrowing program provides succour to keep the borrowing costs contained for the private sector."

BoI posts net profit of ₹250 cr in Q4

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

STATE-owned Bank of India (BoI) on Friday reported a standalone net profit of Rs 250.19 crore for the quarter ended March 31, 2021.

It posted a net loss of Rs 3,571.41 crore in the year-ago period. However, the net profit in the period under review was lower than Rs 540.72 crore in December quarter 2020-21,

Bank of India said in a regulatory filing. Total income during March quarter 2020-21 was down at Rs 11,379.84 crore as against Rs 12,215.78 crore in the year-ago period. For full year 2020-21, the standalone net profit was registered at Rs 2,160.30 crore against a net loss of Rs 2,956.89 crore in the previous year. Income came down marginally to Rs 48,040.93 crore in 2020-21 from Rs 49,066.33 crore a year ago.

Aurobindo sets up O₂ plant

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

AUROBINDO Pharma Foundation, the CSR arm of Aurobindo Pharma, established an oxygen generation plant with 0.5 tonnes per day capacity at Gandhi General Hospital here.

Set up with an outlay of Rs one crore, the plant will augment the supply of oxygen to meet the growing requirements to treat critically ill

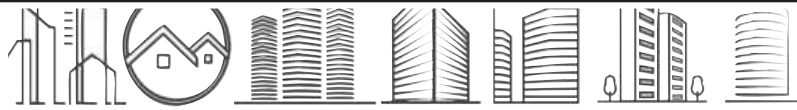


Suresh Raman, VP, Aurobindo Pharma, handing over papers of oxygen plant to Dr M Raja Rao, Superintendent, Gandhi General Hospital, in Hyderabad on Friday

Covid patients at the hospital. The plant has formally been handed over to the hospital authorities by an Aurobindo team led by Suresh Raman on Friday.

"Aurobindo has spent around Rs 1 crore on procurement of machinery, equipment and converting the nitrogen plant into an oxygen generating plant. Amidst the severity of the second wave of Covid-19, the demand for medical oxygen is growing phenome-

nally," said Suresh. "The organization has taken initiatives to support govt hospitals to meet the demand of medical oxygen through various measures. The foundation has supplied 50,000 cubic meters of medical oxygen to Gandhi, TIMS and MGM hospital Warangal in the last month. We also distributed oxygen cylinders to needy patients in rural areas," said S Sadananda Reddy, Head, Aurobindo pharma foundation.



REAL CORNER



REALTORS ON RBI POLICY

LOW HOME LOAN RATES BOON FOR HOME BUYERS

Realty bodies demand more steps to boost liquidity

NEW DELHI

HAILING the RBI's decision to keep policy rates unchanged, the real estate industry on Friday said the low-interest regime on home loans will continue, aiding revival in housing demand that has been hit badly during the last two months due to a second wave of the Covid pandemic.

The industry demanded more steps to boost liquidity. "RBI continues to maintain an accommodative stance as it is crucial to mitigate the impact of Covid pandemic," Credai president Harsh Vardhan Patodia said. "Modifying the ECLGS scheme and clear instructions to banks and other financial institutions on sanctioning funds to labour intensive sectors like Real Estate is the need of the hour," he added. Naredco president Niranjan Hiranandani said the RBI has kept the benchmark rates unchanged, which will benefit home loan borrowers. "While it reflects a response to the Covid-19 pandemic challenges, it is an advantage for home loan borrowers, with the floating retail loan rates continuing to be at the lowest level over the past two decades," he said. Sanjay Dutt,



Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Tata Realty and Infrastructure termed the policy as good news. To revive the property market, he demanded industry status for real estate, input credit, allowing FDI in RTMI (ready to move in), a single-window clearance mechanism at the State level and lower GST on raw materials for the sustainable long-term growth of the sector.

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, India, South-East Asia, Middle East and Africa, CBRE, said the RBI's accommodative stance will help sustain

homebuyer sentiments which were strengthening pre-second wave.

"With the repo rate and reverse repo rate being maintained at status quo, banks and NBFCs will continue to render loans at reduced rates to homebuyers, thus supporting demand in the realty sector," he added.

Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri described the policy to be positive for homebuyers. "The continuation of this low-interest rate regime works very well for all borrowers as the environment of high affordability is likely to continue for some more time," Puri said. Amit Goyal, CEO,

India Sotheby's International Realty, said the policy effectively means that the interest rates on home loans would continue to remain at a historic low. "We believe RBI's goal to maintain the liquidity and support economic growth in the country through lower interest rates will be crucial for recovery from the second wave of the pandemic," Goyal added. Dhruv Agarwala, Group CEO, Housing.com, Makaan.com & Proptiger, said the RBI move to hold the repo rate is along expected lines.

He said the banking regulator should announce monetary support to the NHB to revive growth in the real estate sector. Knight Frank India MD Shishir Bajjal felt there was a dire need to provide monetary policy support - on account of both easy availability and lower cost of funds - to households and businesses alike. Samantak Das, Chief Economist, and Head Research & REIS, JLL, said:

"Though the competitive mortgage rates are expected to provide long-term support for sustained growth of real estate, overall economic recovery leading to job, and income growth will be contributing factors for housing demand."

India's realty sector to cross \$1trn by 2030

NEW DELHI: The size of real estate sector is projected to cross \$1 trillion by 2030, Housing and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said. "In 2019-20, real estate sector contributed nearly 7 per cent to our GDP. Its total contribution was to the tune of \$200 billion to our GDP. And projections are that by 2030 this number is going to cross \$1 trillion," Mishra said.

He also noted that real estate is an important sector for the economy with around 11 per share in the total employment numbers.

The secretary was speaking at a virtual event to launch Housing Price Index, created by realty portal Housing.com and Indian School of Business (ISB) in association with industry body Naredco. "By 2030, when we are projecting our economy to go up to \$10 trillion, nearly 10 per cent of that will come from the real estate sector itself," he added. Mishra said the sector is also very important from the point of view of employment and highlighted that out of 50 crore jobs, real estate provides 5.5 crore employment opportunities.

The secretary said the real estate sector has transformed in the last seven years and implementation of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, popularly known as RERA, has played an important part in making a paradigm change.

MMR registers 50% dip in property sales

ARCHANA RAO NEW DELHI

PROPERTY sales took a sharp slump in Maharashtra as the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) recorded sale transactions worth Rs. 10,979 crores in May 2021 as compared to Rs. 22,507 crores in April 2021. As per the CRE Matrix property tracker and data available from Inspector General of Registration and Controller of Stamps (IGR) Maharashtra as on 30th May 2021, MMR region and Mumbai registered low sales record and stamp duty collection largely due to ongoing second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

The MMR regions were witnessing steady growth in the last quarter of Financial Year 2020-21, with sales recorded at Rs. 44,167 crores as of March 31st. The sales numbers, however, took a steep dive with property sale transactions reaching Rs. 22,507 crores in April and Rs. 10,979 crores in May. Similarly, Mumbai too suffered a setback with sales transactions standing at Rs. 7,246 crores in May 2021 as compared to Rs. 16,250 crores in April 2021. The property sale transactions registered in Mumbai in March 2021 was Rs. 28,961 crores. Pritam Chivukula, Secretary, Maharashtra Chamber of Housing Industry CREDAI

(MCHI) said, "Amid the sudden surge in Covid cases and the various curbs due to the lockdown in the State, the sector faced a gradual slowdown which made it extremely difficult to sustain the momentum."

Chivukula has urged the Maharashtra State government to reconsider its decision on the stamp duty waiver to attract homebuyers. The State government in April decided not to continue with the two percent stamp duty waiver on property and reinstate its earlier system of five percent stamp duty on property registrations.

As per the data from IGR Maharashtra, the stamp duty collection in MMR for the month of May was Rs 417 crores as compared to Rs. 725 crores in April 2021. Whereas the stamp duty collection in MMR for the month of March was Rs. 1365 crores. For stamp duty collection in Mumbai, Rs 250 crores were collected in May as against to Rs. 492 crores in April this year. Whereas the stamp duty collection in MMR for the month of March was Rs. 830 crores.

Ashok Mohanani, president, Naredco Maharashtra, said, "We have started witnessing a 50 per cent dip in property sales after the Maharashtra government restored stamp duty back to five per cent in Mumbai and six per cent in the rest of Maharashtra, from April 2021."



