

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

VIJAYAWADA | WEDNESDAY | 28 APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 35.0°C
Min: 25.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Clear.
Max/Min temp.
35/25 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Pournami
till 9 am; Chaitra Bahula Dwitiya
till 1.35 am (Thursday)
Star: Visakha till 5.14 pm
Variyam: 8.47 pm to 10.12 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.48 am to
12.38 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Ramzan 15, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.35 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.15 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.44 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.25 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 7.53 AM
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.30 AM

RAMZAN TIMINGS
IFTAR: 6.31 PM (TODAY)
SEHRI: 4.23 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT



Don't worry! They are busy with account holders of Twitter, Facebook...

SHORT TAKES

Australia ends fights to India

Melbourne: Australia on Tuesday suspended all direct passenger flights from India with immediate effect until May 15 due to the "very significant" spike in Covid-19 cases, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced. Morrison also launched an immediate support package for the country in its fight against the coronavirus crisis.

Kumbh Mela finally ends

Dehradun/Rishikesh: The last 'shahi snan' at the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar on Tuesday was a subdued affair with seers keeping the ritual symbolic in view of a surge in Covid-19 cases. Till 10.45 am, 670 seers took the royal bath and some more are expected to take it in the day at Har ki Pauri on the banks of the Ganga, officials said.

Justice Bindal is Calcutta CJ

New Delhi: Justice Rajesh Bindal was on Tuesday appointed as the acting chief justice of the Calcutta High Court, a law ministry notification said. Justice Bindal is the senior-most judge of the Calcutta HC. He has been appointed as acting chief justice with effect from April 29.

DOUBLE CHECK

HC quizzes AP over Covid plan

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA APRIL 27

The Andhra Pradesh High Court asked the state government to submit details on the measures it is taking to handle the spread of Coronavirus pandemic. A division bench of Chief Justice A.K. Goswami and Justice C. Praveen Kumar heard a petition filed by APLA joint secretary Mohan Rao seeking details

● The court sought details as to whether the state government is following Covid control guidelines

as to whether the state government is following Covid control guidelines and the number of tests being done, among other aspects. The court sought details on the availability of beds in hospitals for the infected,

the number of Covid tests every day and the timing of release of the test reports, the status of medical oxygen availability and whether oxygen manufacturing plants were set up as per directions issued earlier by the Centre.

Government pleader C. Sumon submitted the details to the court. Later, the court directed the state to submit details to petitioner's counsel and to the court

and posted the case for next hearing to Wednesday.

In a separate development, the court heard a 'quash petition' filed by ex-MLA Dhulipalla Narendra on the ACB filing a case against him in relation to alleged irregularities in the Sangam Dairy. A single judge bench headed by R. Raghunandan Rao heard counsels from the petitioner and the state government and reserved the verdict.

WORLD | 4

China holds South Asian FMs meet



deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle



SPORTS | 6

Brett Lee donates bitcoin for Covid relief

FOREIGN NATIONS COME FORWARD TO BAIL OUT INDIA

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

The United States is expected to soon approve the supply of filters as part of the vaccine raw materials required for the manufacture of Covishield vaccines in India and may also release 10 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine to foreign nations, including India, as soon as the Food and Drug Administration gives its approval in the coming weeks, government sources said Tuesday.

Media reports from Washington quoted a US official as saying the United States would despatch a "Strike Team" comprising of public health experts to India.

As India faces a ferocious second Covid storm, several nations, including the US, Britain, France, Germany, Gulf nations, South-east Asian nations and Australia are sending crucial medical supplies and equipment to help India fight Covid-19. Russia is expected to send help soon.

A high-level inter-ministerial group under the Centre has "established a procedure" for the immediate clearance of materials being received from foreign nations, which will ensure the "material would be dispatched promptly to hospitals.

Public transport, however, is permitted with 50 per cent occupancy leaving alternate seats vacant and no standing of passengers to be allowed.

Both the staff and passengers are supposed to wear masks and have to sanitise hands frequently. Boarding and disembarking should be done with proper physical distance.

All movie theatres should leave alternate seats vacant to maintain social distance and a distance of five-feet must be maintained amongst the staff in all government and private offices.

ENROLL FOR COVID JAB



Registration for Covid vaccine for those aged 18 and above opens today at [cowin.gov.in](https://www.cowin.gov.in)

and maintaining social distance.

The government in its order said that only up to 20 participants are permitted to attend funerals and related activities.

AP slaps more curbs on gyms, social events

50% capacity in buses and movie theatres

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Tightening restrictions on congregation of people to slow down the spread of Coronavirus, the Andhra Pradesh government on Tuesday ordered the closure of all gyms, spas and sport complexes with immediate effect.

It has also imposed curbs on all gatherings and congregations, including marriages by allowing only up to 50 participants and all participants should comply with Covid-appropriate behaviour by wearing masks, sanitising hands

STATE RECORDS 64 DEATHS IN JUST ONE DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Andhra Pradesh registered 11,434 fresh Coronavirus infections and 64 deaths in the last 24 hours.

State health authorities reported here on Tuesday that 11,434 out of 74,435 samples tested were found infected with Coronavirus.

■ Full report on Page 3

WAITING FOR BED, BABY DIES IN AMBULANCE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 27

Waiting for a bed, a one-and-half-a-year old child died of Covid-19 in an ambulance near CSR Block of King George Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

■ Full report on Page 3

Jagan asks officials to fill vacant medical positions

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday ordered immediate filling up of all vacancies in the health department so as to cope with the Corona spread. He has also advised officials to provide beds to Covid-19 patients within three hours.

He asked officials to hold walk-in interviews to fill the vacancies in health department and complete the recruitment in 48 hours.

Jagan held a Spandana

review meeting with district collectors and SPs on the Covid-19 situation on Tuesday. He said there must be effective working of 104 call centers to offer medical services to Corona patients and that the district joint collectors should personally monitor all Covid hospitals in their spheres.

"Set up adequate Covid care centres," the CM told officials, adding the collectors should ensure all the facilities in these centers and there should be no scarcity of beds.

The officials informed him that 59 such centers

are functional in the state with a total bed strength of 33,327.

The CM asked officials to take strict action against anyone spreading rumours. An official bulletin will be released every day and everyone should depend on the same data vis-à-vis Covid situation in the state.

Jagan asked district collectors and SPs to be on high alert in coming months in view of the rapid spread of the second wave.

■ Page 2: Lockdown wiped out ₹1 lakh cr, says CM

TABLOID

IPL - To play on, or draw stumps?



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EC bans victory rallies on May 2

Says only 2 persons must accompany winner

SANJAY BASAK | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 27

It is perhaps too little, too late. After being severely castigated by the Madras and Calcutta High Courts over the second wave of Covid-19, the Election Commission on Tuesday banned all victory rallies by political parties and candidates after the Assembly election results are declared on or after May 2.

After being reprimanded by the courts, the EC, which had ordered an unprecedented eight-phase election in West Bengal, said: "No victory procession after the counting on 2.5.2021 shall be permissible. Not more than two persons shall be allowed to accompany the winning candidate or his/her authorised representative receive the certificate of election from the returning officer concerned."

The eighth and last phase of the West Bengal election will be held on Thursday, April 29. Voting is already over in Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and the Union territory of Puducherry.

On Monday, the Madras High Court in a stinging

● A survey conducted by an English-language television news channel on Tuesday showed the steep spike in Covid-19 cases in the poll-bound states.

● In Kerala, the Covid cases had gone up by 130 per cent, while in Tamil Nadu it was by 56 per cent. The channel claimed the cases had shot up by 215 per cent in Assam, while it was 86 per cent in West Bengal.

remark had said the EC "should be put up on murder charges... for being the most irresponsible institution".

The Madras High Court also said that it would "stop the counting if we do not find before May 2 a blueprint on how proper maintenance of Covid protocols will be maintained so that this state does not succumb to your idiosyncrasies any further..."

The EC has been directed to submit a detailed report to the high court on April 30.

A survey conducted by

an English-language television news channel on Tuesday showed the steep spike in Covid-19 cases in the poll-bound states.

In Kerala, the Covid cases had gone up by 130 per cent, while in Tamil Nadu it was by 56 per cent. The channel claimed the cases had shot up by 215 per cent in Assam, while it was 86 per cent in West Bengal. In Uttar Pradesh, following the recent Kumbh Mela, the Covid-19 cases had seen a staggering rise of 47 per cent.

At this point, India is reporting well over three lakh Covid cases and over 2,000 deaths a day.

While Covid-19 cases were on the rise, politicians continued to address mammoth rallies in the poll-going states. Top leaders ranging from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, home minister Amit Shah, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee and the Left leaders addressed several rallies in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Despite repeated appeals, the EC refused to club the election dates in West Bengal.

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IN BRIEF

JAGAN EXPRESSES GRIEF OVER DEATH OF SATYANARAYANA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has expressed grief over the death of senior Congress leader and former Andhra Pradesh minister M. Satyanarayana Rao. He expressed profound sympathy to the family.

Satyanarayana Rao was recently admitted to the Nims for treatment of Coronavirus infection. He died on Tuesday morning while receiving treatment.

His hometown is Vedira in Ramadugu mandal of Karimnagar district in Telangana.

He was the general-secretary of the AICC, a three-time MP and a minister in the YSR Cabinet in 2004. He also served as the Joint Andhra Pradesh RTC chairman and PCC president. He was very close to former CM late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

YSR MLA Malladi Vishnu expressed shock over the death of Satyanarayana. He said that the late leader has stood by Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy during his Padayatra.

Telangana State Chief minister KCR expressed his condolence.

"MSR had a unique style of politics as a staunch Telangana supporter, as an MP and as a state minister. He was known for his straightforward nature," read the tweet from the CM's office.

The Telangana CM has advised TS chief secretary Somesh Kumar to ensure the final rites of MSR are held with state honours.

LOCKDOWN WIPED OUT ₹1 LAKH CR, SAYS CM JAGAN

From Page 1

"If the government loses one rupee due to the lockdown, the common man will lose ₹4. The lockdown had cost the government 20,000 crore in 2020, which means a loss of about ₹80,000 crore to the people."

On oxygen supply, the chief minister said 320 to 340 metric tonnes of oxygen is being supplied every day to state hospitals, and this is adequate at present.

"Those with SPO2 level less than 94 should be provided with oxygen," the CM noted.

Jagan said permission will be granted to only 50 people for marriages and officials must ensure people do not gather at gyms, parks and swimming pools. All the financial and commercial activities should continue but by adhering to Covid protocols, he said.

The chief minister said seven crore vaccine doses are being manufactured in the country per month, of which one crore was of Covaxin and the remaining the Covishield. Vaccination of two doses is completed for 11.30 lakh people and single dose for 45.48 lakh people in the state, all of age above 45. Vaccination will also be given to people above 18-45 years.

Jagan said district collectors should oversee the functioning of the 104 call center and ensure effective functioning. The 104 number should be registered in the minds of the people as a one-stop solution for all issues related to Covid.

He said beds should be arranged to Covid patients within three hours of calling the 104 center and an adequate number of doctors should be available for each of these call centers.

On beds in hospitals, the Chief Minister said collectors have identified a total of 355 hospitals across districts for treatment of Covid with a bed capacity of 28,377 in which 17,901 beds are occupied.

Treatment in these hospitals is completely free and medicines and health care will be extended to patients free of cost.

The Chief Minister said Joint Collector (Village/Ward Secretariat development) should completely focus on tackling the Covid situation in the districts. "The joint collector should ensure good sanitation facilities, quality food supply, availability of doctors and paramedical staff, setting up of help desks etc. They should monitor the performance of Aarogya Mitras through CCTV cameras. They should also coordinate with call centres and ensure all works are done on time."

The chief minister said Covid hospitals at district level should be divided into clusters and in-charges should be appointed for them. District-level Flying Squads should be set up by also including the medicine regulatory department officials in it.

For Covid treatment



A critically ill Covid-19 patient is shifted to VIMS Hospital in an ambulance for better treatment in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. — P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

Coronavirus spreads to agency area in EG

Movement of people to other places should be restricted: Experts

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 27

Covid-19 has spread to the agency area of Rampachodavaram and Chinturu mandals vigorously in East Godavari district, with more than 225 active cases and the infected patients being treated.

Three villages - Mothugudem, Kalleru and Kammuru - in Chinturu mandal were declared as containment zones due to severity of the Covid-19 pandemic. 21 children, studying at Kalleru Ashram School, are infected with Covid-19 while 15 villagers are also suffering from the virus. Two or three employees of the area, working in other places like Bhadrachalam, Jagdalpur and Visakhapatnam have visited the village during weekend holidays and got the virus to the area.

The officials opine that the virus spread into the area because of those employees.

Noticing the situation, Rampachodavaram ITDA project director Venkata Ramana has imposed sev-



A health worker gives vaccination to a woman outside the Giripuram health centre in Vijayawada on Tuesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

eral restrictions like reducing the business hours to 7 pm and closing shandy markets and preventing crowds in public places and others.

Venkata Ramana said that all necessary steps are being taken to render good medical treatment to the patients and at the same time organising awareness programmes to curb the virus. He said the

RT-PCR tests are being conducted at Primary Health Centres and the medical and health department personnel are giving medicines to home quarantine patients from time to time. However, he said that more than 110 cases reported and unfortunately two patients died in the division.

It is said that there is no Covid-19 testing centre in

the Chinturu Division. There was a proposal of setting up a covid-19 centre in the area, but it has not been materialised yet.

In the Rampachodavaram agency area division, nearly 105 active cases prevail. Many people in Rampachodavaram agency division are moving to other places like Rajamahendravaram and nearby places of Rampachodavaram and Visakhapatnam border areas, villages on way to Bhadrachalam and other places, which may increase the chances of spreading the virus.

The experts say that the movement of people to other places should be restricted for some time to curb the virus.

Assistant Project Officer of ITDA of Rampachodavaram Naidu said that a health care centre has been set up at Rampachodavaram, linking all PHCs. He said that the centre is coordinating 18 PHCs and action is being taken from time to time. He said that already vaccination is being done in the area.

ENTIRE SRIKAKULAM TOWN DECLARED CONTAINMENT ZONE

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRIKAKULAM, APRIL 27

The Srikakulam town has been declared as the Covid-19 containment zone from Tuesday. The town has been reporting the highest number of Covid-19 infections in the state during the second wave for the past one week. The district administration on Monday night decided to impose half-day lockdown to contain the spread of the virus. Srikakulam district has been witnessing a steep rise in Covid-19 infections with positive cases registering between 900 and 1,200 for the past few days.

Srikakulam district collector J. Nivas said that over 30 per cent of the Covid-19 positive cases have been reported from Srikakulam town only. Srikakulam district has reported 63,701 cases so far and majority of the cases were reported from Srikakulam Town.

At present, 1,381 Covid-19 patients were availing treatment at hospitals while 1,001 patients were availing treatment in Covid-19 care centres and as many as 10,499 people were under home isolations, he added.

"Considering the increasing Covid-19 cases in Srikakulam district, we have asked traders and businessmen to operate the commercial establishments till 2 pm for two weeks from Tuesday to contain the spread of the virus," Nivas told the mediapersons.

MLA announces lockdown in Chandragiri constituency

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 27

Government whip and Chandragiri MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy on Tuesday sprang a surprise by announcing lockdown in his constituency.

At a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy were considering lockdown as a last resort, the ruling YSR Congress MLA took the initiative and announced that the shops would be allowed to open between 6 am and 10 am. "We will not allow any public movement after 10 am," he announced at a media conference in Tirupati. The lockdown will come into force in next three days, he added.

Bhaskar Reddy's unilateral decision on lockdown earned him a pat from the Opposition parties who

BJP DEMANDS HEALTH EMERGENCY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 27

The vice-president of state BJP unit and former MLA P. Vishnu Kumar Raju demanded that the government impose a health emergency in the state due to the Covid-19 spreading like wildfire all over.

He said the patients were in panic for not finding beds in the hospitals, Covid-19 related medi-

wanted the Chief Minister to learn a lesson on or two from his whip. The Chief Minister was targeted by the Opposition for going ahead with conducting SSC and other public examinations. The MLA also announced that he would donate Rs 25 lakh to set up 100 oxygen beds in Chandragiri gov-

ernment hospital and 50 beds in Naravaripalli Primary Health Centre. Incidentally, former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu hails from Naravaripalli. "Measures are being taken to set up bulk cylinders at these hospitals for an uninterrupted supply of oxygen," said the MLA.

He strongly condemned the government for deploying employees for demolition of alleged illegal buildings and shops when their services were required for Covid-19 management.

Jagananna Vasati Devena set for launch today

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted reviews of various welfare schemes and government departments during a meeting with district collectors on Tuesday. He said the Jagananna Vasati Devena would be launched on April 28, followed by Rythu Bharosa and Matsyakara Bharosa on May 13 and May 18 respectively. Payment of insurance premium for kharif 2020 will start on May 25.

While explaining the progress of house site patas, the officials said that a total of 30,28,346 are to be distributed, of which 94 per cent or 28,54,983 have been distributed so far. Of 17,053 Jagananna colonies, patas have been distributed to 16,450. Distribution of patas is pending in Nellore, Guntur, Vizianagaram, Kadapa, East Godavari, and West Godavari districts.

The CM directed officials to complete the distribution within the next 15 days. He also held discussions regarding the status of fresh applica-

● **TENDER PROCESS** had been completed for 311 of the required 353 buildings. Further, the officials also stated that of the 55,607 anganwadi centres in the state, 27,438 were functioning in rented spaces.

tions for house sites and construction of new houses.

While the target for April is 2.50 crore work days, only 1.89 work days had been completed as of April 26, the CM said and directed the officials to ensure one crore work days are completed in every district in the next two months. Wage component needs to be improved in Nellore, Guntur, Krishna, West Godavari and Kurnool districts, he added.

He said that while 10,929 village secretariat buildings had been approved and construction had started, only 6,057 buildings were near completion. Stating that construction had been delayed in Kadapa, Chittoor, Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Krishna, and Anantapur districts, he directed authorities to

ensure the construction of all buildings by the end of June.

Under Rythu Bharosa Kendras, 10,408 buildings had been approved, of which 2,649 were near completion, the officials said. Construction of all buildings is expected to be completed by July.

While 8,585 buildings were approved for Dr Y.S.R. Health Clinics (rural), only 1,755 have been constructed. Officials stated that work was delayed in Anantapur, Visakhapatnam, Kurnool, Kadapa, East Godavari, and Guntur districts, adding that construction was expected to be completed by the end of August. There was also a need for 560 urban health centres in the state. Tender process had been completed for 311 of the required 353 buildings.

Further, the officials also stated that of the 55,607 anganwadi centres in the state, 27,438 were functioning in rented spaces. Under the Nadu Nedu scheme, work on construction of 4,706 new Anganwadi centres and renovation of 3,928 was underway.

CM EXPRESSES CONDOLENCES ON KANAKA'S DEMISE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed condolences over the demise of Vemuri Kanaka Durga, wife of *ABN Andhra Jyothi* MD Vemuri Radhakrishna, who passed away on Tuesday morning.

In a statement, the Chief Minister prayed that God should give courage to V. Radhakrishna and his family members during these difficult times.

V. Kanaka Durga, 63, who was director of Andhra Jyothi passed away on Tuesday morning due to illness. As per the reports, she was unwell and was being treated at a hospital for the past few days.

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock over the death of Vemuri Kanaka Durga. He conveyed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members and recalled how Kanaka Durga used to look after the welfare of the employees of their organisation.

TD state president K. Atchannaidu also expressed his grief over the passing away of Kanaka Durga.

Govt hands over Sangam dairy to APDDCL

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

After former Telugu Desam MLA Dhulipalla Narendra was arrested by the Anti-Corruption Bureau, and a preliminary report was submitted, the Andhra Pradesh government handed over Sangam dairy to the government-run AP Dairy Development Corporation Limited, and issued orders on Tuesday.

Narendra, who was the former chairman of Sangam dairy, was arrested on charges of illegalities. Meanwhile, the sub-collector of Tenali has been appointed to look after the dairy's operations with immediate effect.

Animal husbandry department special chief secretary Dr. Poonam Malakondaiah issued the order, which stated that the milk commissioners and registrar of milk cooperatives had submitted that certain irregularities, including misuse of government assets, had been committed by then chairman Narendra and Sangam dairy. Accordingly, the govern-

ment had requested the ACB to inquire into the allegations.

ACB's inquiry report declared that there was prima facie evidence concerning the involvement of the then chairman, then managing director, and other officials of Sangam dairy, along with then district cooperative office, Guntur, in transferring 10 acres of government land to a trust, which was set up in memory of Narendra's late father. Narendra allegedly used title deeds of properties belonging to the government and raised huge sums of money through loans.

In order to protect the interests of milk producers, employees and consumers, the unit's day-to-day activities shall continue unobstructed. Additionally, Tenali's sub-collector shall be present in the unit's premises to ensure that all operations continue smoothly.

Narendra had earlier filed a quash petition in the AP High Court, challenging the cases filed by the ACB. The HC had reserved its verdict.

TD alleges YSRC conspired to hand over AP dairies to Gujarat

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

TD leaders objected to the transfer of the dairy when the matter was still pending. Former minister and TD politburo member Nakka Anand Babu criticised the Jagan Mohan Reddy government of 'hatching a conspiracy' to destroy the dairy and hand it over to Gujarat-based Amul industries out of political vendetta.

Anand Babu said that lakhs of farmers, who depended on the Sangam dairy, would now be shattered because of the government's thoughtless activities.

He further alleged that the current regime was adopting backdoor meth-

● **ANAND BABU** FURTHER alleged that the current regime was adopting backdoor methods, in order to crush the dairy, even as the case was still pending.

ods, in order to crush the dairy, even as the case was still pending. Babu also deplored that while the Chief Minister and his ministers do not care about farmers whatsoever, they were also destroying other organisations that were helping the dairy farmers.

"For decades, the Sangam dairy has been taking up many novel activities to give better deals to the farmers.

It is a well-reputed dairy in the entire state but the current government just wants to crush all good organisations," he alleged, adding that local dairies in the state were being encroached, only to transfer their business to Amul illegally.

Anand Babu also claimed that there was a conspiracy to transfer AP companies and their properties to Gujarat-based companies. He said the Chief Minister was doing this solely to secure the blessings of the Prime Minister so as to escape from his CBI and ED cases, under which the management of several ports in the state have been handed over to a Gujarat-based company.

ANIMAL CARE

Joint action plan soon to handle stray elephant menace, submit it to Centre for its nod

Plan to set up elephant corridor in Koundinya

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Forest officials in an interstate virtual meet have proposed to set up an elephant corridor in Koundinya forest to prevent elephants entering the human habitations and also to protect them. Forest officials from Tamil Nadu and

Karnataka attended a virtual meet held under the aegis of AP forest department on Tuesday. AP principal chief conservator of forests N. Prateep Kumar said that though the AP government had taken steps to prevent elephants to stray into human habitations from the forests, some of them from the

neighbouring states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were entering the AP forest and added that due to lack of food and water, elephants from Koundinya elephant sanctuary were straying into villages while some of them were getting electrocuted as some farmers set up electric fencing to protect their crops.

The officials said that the elephants from Tamil Nadu were reaching Koundinary forests in AP as the TN forest teams were opening fire on herds of elephants to disperse them while elephants from Karnataka too reaching the AP forests via Kupam.

The senior officials from the three states in the meet-

ing have come up with a series of suggestions and have resolved to meet at regular intervals and to solve the issue with coordination. They have opted to set up an elephant corridor as Koundinary forest is located in parts of three states and to appoint a nodal officer from each state. They have also planned to come up

with a joint action plan benefiting all the three states to handle the stray elephant menace and submit it to the Centre for its consent.

Karnataka chief conservator of forests (wildlife) Vijay Kumar Gopi, Tamil Nadu chief conservator of forests (wildlife) Munjamil Abbas and other senior officials were present.

IN BRIEF

WOMAN'S BODY SHIFTED ON BIKE IN PALASA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 27

After futile attempts to get an ambulance or a vehicle, a man and his brother-in-law were forced to carry their mother's body on a motorcycle for a distance of 18 km. The incident took place in Palasa mandal of Srikakulam on Tuesday.

Reports said 50-year-old woman G. Chenchu of Killoyi tribal hamlet under Mandasa mandal in Srikakulam district fell ill. Her son Narendra and son-in-law Ramesh took her to Neelamani Durga Hospital in Palasa Town of the district for treatment, where she was referred to a diagnostic centre for a CT scan.

The woman underwent the CT scan but died before the report arrived. Later, the doctor going by the scan report said that the woman had Covid-19 symptoms. Hoping to arrange an ambulance or any other vehicle, the family kept waiting with the body before ferrying it to the cremation ground on a bike.

The revenue officials said that the last rites of the woman were performed as per the Covid-19 protocol.

AKKA MAHADEVI JAYANTI AT SRISAILAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL APRIL 27

Akka Mahadevi Jayanti, the 12th century Sivasarani, who devoted her life to Srisailla Mallikarjuna, was performed in Srisaillam on Tuesday.

A proficient scholar in Kannada and Sanskrit, she was credited with composing several hymns on the Lord Shiva.

She had spent 12 years in penance and was in meditation at caves now known as Akka Mahadevi caves, known for Siddha powers. It is believed whoever sits in meditation in the Akka Mahadevi caves would see a total transformation.

A true ascetic, Mahadevi is said to have refused to wear any clothing—a common practice among male ascetics, but shocking for a woman. Legend has it that due to her true love and devotion with God her whole body was protected by hair.



Elderly people wait for their turn to get administered with the second dose of Covid vaccine at Urban Primary Health Centre at Chinnawaltair in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

State faces uphill task to transport liquid oxygen

Shortage of tankers to bring oxygen from other states

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA APRIL 27

Andhra Pradesh faces an uphill task to transport liquid medical oxygen to filling stations and hospitals here from other states due to shortage of cryogenic oxygen tankers.

Daily demand for medical oxygen to treat the Coronavirus patients in the state ranges from 340 tonnes to 360 tonnes. At times, this goes up to 390 tonnes. AP is maintaining the stocks of nearly 480 tonnes of medical oxygen a day. This means the quantum that is available is sufficient for the time being.

However, as the number of Coronavirus patients is rising rapidly, with many of them requiring medical oxygen, the available stocks may get exhausted.

● Daily demand for medical oxygen to treat the Coronavirus patients in the state ranges from 340 tonnes to 360 tonnes. At times, this goes up to 390 tonnes.

● AP is maintaining the stocks of nearly 480 tonnes of medical oxygen a day.

● Only about 60 oxygen tankers are available for transport of medical oxygen, be it from other states to here or for internal distribution to hospitals

● Transportation of LMO from states like Odisha to AP has become a major problem

The Centre has allotted liquid medical oxygen to AP, some 150 tonnes, from Angul in Odisha, 68 tonnes from Bellary in Karnataka, 10 tonnes from Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu, 100 tonnes from RINL, Visakhapatnam, 60 tonnes from Liquinox in Srikakulam and 40 tonnes from Ellen Berries in Visakhapatnam.

Though the total daily quantum of medical oxy-

gen thus allotted comes to 428 tonnes, the state is facing a tough task to transport this from Odisha, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, for want of oxygen tankers.

AP health authorities say it takes three to four days for the tankers to reach the supply from Odisha to this state for its local supply. Only about 60 oxygen tankers are available for transport of medical oxygen,

be it from other states to here or for internal distribution to hospitals within AP. Unless AP manages to get more cryogenic oxygen tankers and receive additional quantum of medical oxygen, the state may not be able to meet the increasing demand for the oxygen in hospitals treating Coronavirus patients.

AP state nodal officer for medical oxygen S Shan Mohan said, "Transportation of LMO from states like Odisha to AP has become a major problem for us due to want of adequate number of cryogenic oxygen tankers. If the number of patients rises, we cannot ensure supply of adequate quantum. "The state government has requested the Centre for allocation of additional quantum of medical oxygen."

WAITING FOR BED, BABY DIES IN AMBULANCE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM,
APRIL 27

Waiting for a bed, a one-and-half-year old child died of Covid-19 in an ambulance near CSR Block of King George Hospital in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

The child, suffering from congenital heart disease, was shifted to King George Hospital from a private hospital in Gajuwaka. The baby also contacted Covid-19. As her condition worsened, she was rushed to KGH in an ambulance and her parents made frantic efforts to get her admitted in the CSR block. As the waiting was too long, the baby succumbed to the virus in the ambulance by afternoon. All along the baby was on oxygen support in the ambulance.

The parents were seen squatted on the ground near the hospital waiting for their dead child in their arms. Passersby tried to console them but in vain. The young couple wailing with the baby in arms.

KGGH is fast filling up with Covid-19 patients

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL APRIL 27

With rising Covid cases, the Kurnool General Hospital would be converted into Covid Hospital, said hospital superintendent Dr G. Narendranath Reddy. Out of 1,200 beds, 750 are occupied by Covid patients.

A cause of concern is patients are suddenly turning critical as their lungs are turning bad, he said.

Dr Narendranath Reddy said that the hospital has total bed strength of 1,050 but 1,200 beds can be adjusted. Already 609 people were undergoing medical treatment for Covid-19 as in-house patients against the total 688 beds availability as per Monday records of the hospital.

If the hospital has to make 1,000 beds for Covid patients alone then it has to shift patients from various wards even Gynic, Paediatric and Neurosurgery. Already,

● The hospital has total bed strength of 1,050 but 1,200 beds can be adjusted. Already 609 people were undergoing medical treatment for Covid as in-house patients against the total 688 beds

the hospital authorities were using several wards to provide medical treatment to the Covid-19 patients, particularly at general medical wards, plastic surgery, ENT and others. However in view of strengthening services to the patients, the hospital is now running only emergency services and no admissions were taken for general medicine, plastic surgeries, ENT, chest diseases and surgical services. But they were still continuing Paediatric, Gynic, Cardiology, Urology and Nephrology in the hospital based on emergencies, the hospital superintendent said.

The hospital doesn't have any oxygen supply issues since it has 750

beds with oxygen supply directly from oxygen units in the hospital and the transporter filling it regularly. There are two tankers with a total capacity of 21.5 kilo litres (one unit has 10,000 litres capacity and second unit has 11,500 litres) on the hospital premises.

In addition, a new oxygen generating unit is ready to function with capacity of 3,000 litres per minute.

District collector G. Veera Pandian on Tuesday evening visited the Kurnool GGH and interacted with doctors and told them to provide all facilities for Covid-19 patients without returning them. Make a special focus on quality of medications and food provisions. He then observed functioning of Oxygen plants and supply to the patients in the hospital. He also directed the hospital officials to recruit needed staff and doctors based on increasing admissions. He visited few private hospitals in the city.

SAVING | LIVES

Each unit will cost ₹40,000 to ₹60,000 depending on brand

Call for buying oxygen concentrators

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR |
DC
NELLORE APRIL 27

A medical professional has advises the state government to buy portable oxygen concentrators on a war footing to save the lives of the people. The oxygen concentrators are designed to convert air into oxygen and they can be fixed to the hospital beds.

Senior physician at People's Poly Clinic popularly known as Ramachandra Reddy hospital, Dr M.V.

Ramanaiah, suggested that the government buy 100 oxygen concentrators for oxygen beds at the GGH, which is full to its brim with patients in Nellore.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, he said each unit will cost ₹40,000 to ₹60,000 depending on the brand. This is small pie for the government.

Dr Ramanaiah said medical experts in the government were well aware of the second wave of Coronavirus looming large over the country. The present crisis could

● The ₹50 lakh insurance package announced by the Centre last year is not adequate considering the high risk being taken by the medical and paramedical personnel, Dr Ramanaiah felt.

have been effectively handled if the lull between the first and second waves was utilised for developing the infrastructure and recruiting more of medical and paramedical staff.

An important functionary of Jana Vignan Vedika, Dr Ramanaiah lamented the sacking of the medical personnel hired last year for hospital duty and the delay in recruiting such staff again as the virus is playing havoc with lives.

"Lockdown can only slow down the pandemic. This is not a solution to contain the virus," the physician asserted while advising the government to declare a health emergency and make better use of the services of doctors in the private sector.

Demand to start Corona Care Centres in every municipality

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Andhra Pradesh Urban Citizens Forum demanded starting of Covid-19 care centres in every municipality to offer treatment to Covid-19 infected people free of cost.

The APUCF leaders lamented that Coronavirus patients were facing severe difficulties due to the shortage of oxygen, medicines and beds but the government failing to improve the needed facilities in the government hospitals.

APUCF convener Ch. Babu Rao alleged that Covid-19 cases in the state are 10 times higher than the data shown by the officials. He said they have discussed various issues pertaining to the present Covid-19 situation during a meeting here on Tuesday. He alleged that the required number of Covid tests is not being carried by the government and the delay in giving the test report was paving way for further spread of the Coronavirus. He said that there is no truth in the state government's claim that there is no shortage in oxygen supply, beds, medicines and injections.

Babu Rao said the Prime Minister has totally failed to support the state and left everything to the state's fate. He alleged that the BJP and the PM are interested in conducting elections and to be in power but not showing interest to save the lives of the people during the pandemic.

He demanded to conduct

Experts: Patients should opt for Covid Care centres

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 27

Health experts are suggesting people to opt for Covid Care Centres rather than rushing to the hospitals out of panic. After reports of people waiting in the queue at Covid-19 notified hospitals, health officials in Visakhapatnam said the patients having mild symptoms seem to be rushing to the hospitals due to panic.

"They can as well get admitted to the two Covid Centres which were opened in Visakhapatnam last year. The patients will get medical supervision, medicines and food. In case of emergency, an ambulance will shift them to hospital," said medical officer in-charge for Covid Care Centres Dr Malladi S. Sharma.

Visakhapatnam has two centres - one at Mudasarlova and another at Bakkannapalem - which can accommodate over 1,600 patients. Mudasarlova

● At present, there are two Covid Care centres in Vizag

opened on Sunday with all the facilities and as on date 35 patients are being treated for mild symptoms.

He said the Centres would give them confidence that they are under medical supervision and will be shifted to a hospital in case of emergency.

"Under the present conditions, Covid Care Centre can find a bed for the patient which he cannot get on his own," said another medical official.

Citing an instance, the official said a 33-year-old patient from neighbouring state and living all alone in Vizag got admitted to a Covid Care Centre with mild symptoms. Hours later, his oxygen levels started falling. He was immediately shifted to VIMS in an ambulance and got admitted without much hassle.

council meetings in all Municipalities and Corporations to draw and implement Covid-19 prevention measures.

Babu Rao stated that the APUCF meeting passed a resolution demanding the government to set up at least one Covid-19 care centre in each municipality, to initiate special sanitation measures, spraying of sodi-

um hypochlorite, setting up of containment zones, deploy additional staff and the officials in municipalities.

The state government should allocate additional funds to all municipalities and additional staff. Special measures must be taken to complete the electrical cemetery works on a war footing.

11,434 new Covid cases, 64 deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Andhra Pradesh registered 11,434 fresh Coronavirus infections and 64 deaths in the last 24 hours.

State health authorities reported here on Tuesday that 11,434 out of 74,435 samples tested were found infected with Coronavirus.

Out of a total number of 1,61,43,083 samples tested in the state so far, 10,54,875 persons were found infected; of them, 9,47,629 have recovered while 99,446 are still

under treatment.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, all 13 districts registered more than 250 infections each, with Guntur recording the highest at 2,028.

This was followed by 1,982 infections in Chittoor, 1,322 in Srikakulam, 1,237 in Nellore, 1,067 in Visakhapatnam, 702 in Anantapur, 633 in Vizianagaram, 544 in Krishna, 497 in Prakasam, 474 in Kurnool, 424 in West Godavari, 271 in Kadapa and 253 in East Godavari.

Tomato prices crash this season

AVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM DC
TIRUPATI, APRIL 27

Owing to higher production, compression of demand and market disruption amid Covid-19 second wave crisis, the prices of tomato have plummeted to their lowest in the current season.

Earlier this week, the price of tomato was ₹2-₹3 per kg in the wholesale markets of Palamaner and Madanapalle in Chittoor district, which is the largest supplier of this perishable additive to markets in the neighbouring states and few other north Indian states.

Due to high moisture-led short shelf life, coupled with high arrivals and impact of lack of demand from bulk users, the farmers and traders at the "wholesale mandis" were selling their tomato crop in a hurry to avoid its spoilage. The deteriorating quality of

the stored tomato also led to a dramatic price fall.

Consequently, local variety of tomato prices in the wholesale mandis have declined by nearly 40-50 per cent so far this week and trading currently at ₹30-₹40 a box (15 kg) from ₹60-80 a box earlier this month. The price of tomato in the retail market, however, remains firm and quoted at ₹8-12 a kg. Such a low price of tomatoes is hitting farmers, who borrowed funds from local money-lenders at a higher rate of interest, hard.

Usually, the total arrivals of tomato at the Palamaner wholesale market by this time would be 2.20 lakh tonnes (last season) and the commanding price for the local variety comes at a minimum price of Rs 10 to Rs 15 a kg. However, this time the production was higher than usual and the market till date saw the arrival of nearly 2.58 lakh tonnes of tomatoes.

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SHORT TAKES

VAJAPYEE'S NIECE KARUNA DIES OF COVID-19

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC RAIPUR, APRIL 27

Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's niece Karuna Shukla who played a key role in dethroning Raman Singh government in the 2018 Assembly elections, died of Covid-19 in a private hospital here early on Tuesday morning. She was 70 and is survived by her husband, daughter and son. The senior Congress leader was admitted to the Ramakrishna Hospital in Raipur last week when she tested positive and succumbed to the virus early on Tuesday morning, her family members said. Her last rites were performed in Baloda Bazar in Chhattisgarh.

Late Shukla had begun her political career in BJP and was elected to the Madhya Pradesh Assembly 1993 and to the Lok Sabha from Janjgir in Chhattisgarh in 2004 as BJP candidate.

GUJARAT: NIGHT CURFEW IN NINE MORE CITIES

Ahmedabad, April 27: The Gujarat government on Tuesday decided to impose night curfew in nine more cities of the state in a bid to stem the spread of Covid. With this, the night curfew is now being enforced in 29 cities of Gujarat.

The state government also announced new restrictions in these 29 cities, including closure of restaurants, swimming pools, cinema halls, shopping complexes and water parks, till May 5. It also announced curbs on APMCs, public transport, religious gatherings, funerals and marriage functions across the state. The night curfew from 8 pm to 6 am was already in place since April 7 in 20 cities, including Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Vadodara.

Bodies of 22 victims stuffed in one ambulance

Medical college’s Dean cites lack of ambulances, managing transportation of patients as reason

Aurangabad, April 27: The bodies of 22 Covid-19 victims were stuffed in one ambulance while being taken to a crematorium at Beed in Maharashtra, with the district administration citing lack of medical transport vehicles as the reason for it. The incident took place on Sunday when the bodies, kept in the mortuary of the Swami Ramanand Teerth Rural Government Medical College at Ambajogai in Beed, were being transported for the last rites.

“This happened because the hospital administration does not have enough ambulances,” said the medical college’s Dean, Dr Shivaji Sukre.

He said they had five ambulances during the first wave of Covid-19 last year. Out of them, three

were later withdrawn and the hospital was now managing the transportation of Covid-19 patients in two ambulances.

“Sometimes, it takes time to trace the relatives of a dead patient. The bodies from the Covid-19 centre at Lokhandi Sawargaon village are also sent to our facility as they don’t have a cold storage,” the official said. He said they wrote to the district administration on March 17 to provide them three more ambulances.

“To avoid the chaos, we have also written to the Ambajogai Municipal Council to conduct the last rites of the victims between 8 am and 10 pm and the bodies will be sent to the crematoriums from the hospital ward itself,” he said.

Meanwhile, BJP MLC

Suresh Dhas alleged that the hospital and the local civic body were passing the blame on each other.

Talking to a TV channel, the legislator from Ashti in Beed said, “There is no control left and the government is not acting swiftly. The state administration has permitted ambulances to be provided from the MLA fund, but the technical sanction for it is given from Mumbai.”

Ambajogai Municipal Council’s chief officer Ashok Sabale said it was the responsibility of the medical college to transport the bodies to the crematorium on Mandwa road (designated for the last rites of Covid-19 victims).

“Our teams are there at the crematorium for conducting the last rites. A meeting was held on Mo-

nday over the issue during which the medical college dean said they do not have enough ambulances. If it is the case, didn’t they have any review mechanism? Why didn’t they act on it?” Sabale asked.

Municipal council president Rajkishor alias Papa Modi also expressed concern over the incident and said the same day, eight more bodies were transported in another ambulance for cremation.

“We are going to provide one ambulance to the medical college and another two will be made available from the district administration,” he said.

The official said the local medical infrastructure is “stressed” as critical patients from nearby districts are also brought to Ambajogai.

—PTI

Pune: Social group ensures dignified farewell to victims

Pune, April 27: A social welfare group is working round-the-clock with the Pune civic body to give a dignified farewell to Covid-19 victims, irrespective of their religion, and claimed to have performed the last rites of over 1,200 victims since the pandemic began last year.

The organisation comprises about 40 members, including some auto-rickshaw drivers and mobile technicians, in the age group of 22 to 64 years.

A senior group member said their workload has

increased during the current second wave of Covid-19. “We have been helping conduct the last rites of victims, irrespective of their religion, for the last 14 to 15 months. So far, we have buried or cremated over 1,200 victims in Pune city and adjoining villages in Maharashtra district,” said Ummat Foundation member Javed Khan.

“Many a times, family members or relatives are unable to come, but we ensure that the last rites are conducted with all respect and as per their

tradition,” Khan said.

He said the number of deaths has increased in the second wave, and their group members are now working 24x7.

Two days ago, they got a call about the death of an elderly member of a Brahmin family, which was in isolation after contracting the viral infection, he said. “Our volunteers in PPE kits reached there with a body bag, brought the mortal remains to a crematorium and conducted the last rites as per their rituals,” he said.

—PTI

Assam imposes night curfew

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 27

In view of the gradual growth in Covid positive cases, Assam government on Tuesday decided to impose night curfew — from 8 pm to 5 am — across the state with immediate effect, till May 1.

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also announced that the state has received four lakh doses of Covishield and one lakh Covaxin. Informing that now the state has the total stock of 6,57,180 vaccines, the minister in his social media post said that they are going to step up vaccination drive further.

The state disaster man-

agement authority which also reviewed the Covid scenario in its order said, “It has been observed that there has been a rapid increase in the number of active cases of Covid-19 across the state and therefore, it is felt that night curfew needs to be imposed in all districts of the state, except for essential or emergency services as an emergency measure for well-being and safety of the people.”

This has come close on the heels of the state government’s earlier order closing down all shops and business establishments to contain the spread of the disease. Assam on Monday recorded 3,137 new cases and 15 deaths.

WORLD

SHORT TAKES

TANKER SPILLS OIL OFF CHINESE PORT AFTER COLLISION

Beijing, April 27: A tanker spilled oil into the sea off one of China’s busiest ports Tuesday after a collision with another vessel, the government and a ship tracking company reported.

The A Symphony collided early Tuesday with a cargo vessel, the Sea Justice, while approaching Qingdao, according to MarineTraffic.com. It was anchored outside Qingdao, southeast of Beijing, the Maritime Safety Administration said. Other ships were told to stay at least 10 nautical miles (18.5 kilometers) away, but the agency gave no details of damage or how much oil leaked.

PAK LAWMAKER ARRESTED IN TREASON CASE

Lahore, April 27: A Pakistani lawmaker was arrested here on Tuesday on charges of treason.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif’s close aide Javed Latif was arrested by the Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) of Lahore Police after a sessions court rejected his pre-bail petition in the treason case.

According to the FIR, Latif defamed state institutions and passed hateful remarks against them. He is also accused of talking about dismemberment of Pakistan in case anything happens to Sharif’s daughter Maryam Nawaz.

“If anything happens to PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz, the PML-N will not say Pakistan Khappay (stay united). PPP had made this slogan of Pakistan Khappay after assassination of Benazir Bhutto but the PMLN will not say this if anything happens to Maryam Nawaz,” Latif had said in a TV talk show. He was talking in the backdrop of alleged “life threats” being given to Maryam for taking on the military establishment.

On March 20, Latif was booked on charges of treason and a case was registered against the Member of National Assembly (MNA) on the complaint of a private citizen, Jameel Saleem.

Biden hails stunning progress in virus battle

A lot of work needs to do in May and June to get us to July 4 celebrations, says US President

Washington, April 27: President Joe Biden hailed the “stunning” progress that the United States has made in the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic, as he addressed the nation from the White House on Tuesday.

“While we still have a long way to go in this fight, a lot of work to do in May and June to get us to July 4, we’ve made stunning progress because of all of you, the American people,” Biden said, referencing Independence Day as a milestone goal in the fight against the virus.

“Cases and deaths are down — down dramatically from where they were when I took office,” Biden spoke out as the country’s premier health agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, issued new guidance notifying Americans vaccinated against the coronavirus that they no longer need to wear masks outdoors.

Fully vaccinated people can eat, walk or attend small gatherings outside without a mask — as long as they are not at crowded events.

“If you are fully vaccinated, you can start doing many things that you had stopped doing because of the pandemic,” the government body said in a statement.

Masks are still considered necessary for vaccinated people if they are at concerts, parades or large

China: South Asian FMs meet on Covid-19 ‘open’ for India

Beijing, April 27: China, which is hosting a meeting of Foreign Ministers of some South Asian countries to deal with the Covid-19 situation, said on Tuesday that the virtual conference is open to all countries in the region, including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are invited to the virtual Foreign Ministerial level meeting being hosted on Tuesday by Chinese

sporting events, even when outdoors, the CDC said. More than half of all US adults have now received at least one of two vaccine doses. The surging rate of people seeking out vaccines has begun to taper, but new Covid-19 cases are also falling.

The government announced on Monday it would be sending up to 60 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine abroad, after critics had accused Washington of “hoarding” the British-developed vaccine, which is not authorized in the country and will likely not be required to vaccinate Americans.

—AFP

● THE MEETING is part of China’s cooperation with South Asian countries to fight the Covid pandemic.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi. India, Maldives and Bhutan are conspicuously absent from the meeting. Asked why India has not been invited to the meeting, Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a media briefing that “China follows the spirit of openness and inclusive-

RUSSIA CLAIMS BRAZIL REFUSAL TO IMPORT SPUTNIK V JAB ‘POLITICAL’

Moscow, April 27: The developers of Russia’s Sputnik V Coronavirus vaccine on Tuesday criticised Brazil’s refusal to import the jab as politically motivated.

Brazilian health regulator Anvisa on Monday denied requests from several states to receive batches of Sputnik V, saying it did not have the data needed to verify the jab’s safety and efficacy.

“Anvisa’s delays in approving Sputnik V are unfortunately of a political

ness”. “This meeting is open to South Asian countries, including India. We welcome the participation of all countries,” he said.

This meeting is part of China’s cooperation with South Asian countries and regional and international cooperation to fight the Coronavirus pandemic, he said. “We follow an open attitude and we are open for the participation of other South Asian countries,” Wang said.

—PTI

AUSTRALIA

Oz suspends direct flights from India

Melbourne, April 27: Australia on Tuesday suspended all direct passenger flights from India with immediate effect until May 15 due to the “very significant” spike in Covid-19 cases, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced.

Morrison, announcing the temporary border closure with India, also launched an immediate support package for the country in its fight against the ongoing Coronavirus crisis. Addressing a press briefing after convening a Cabinet’s national security committee meeting, he said that the ban on arrivals from India would be reviewed before May 15.

“Today we agreed, in addition to the measures that I announced after the last National Cabinet meeting, to pause direct passenger flights between India and Australia until the 15th of May,” he said. “We recognise that this has been a very significant outbreak in India,” Morrison said.

The latest move would affect direct flights into

Sydney and two repatriation flights scheduled to arrive in Darwin. The move could also affect thousands of people, including Australian cricketers currently playing in the Indian Premier League in India.

All indirect flights coming from India via Singapore, Doha, Dubai and Kuala Lumpur have also been paused by their respective governments. Giving details of the relief package, Prime Minister Morrison said that Australia will send a range of goods to India to help as it struggles with a critical shortage of medical supplies.

Australia will send 500 ventilators, as well as 1 million surgical masks, 500,000 protective and surgical masks, goggles and face shields. “We’re standing with those Australians in India and recognising those serious difficulties they face. I stress this is an initial package, there’ll be more to follow,” Morrison said.

—PTI

BELGIUM

BELGIUM BANS ARRIVALS FROM INDIA, BRAZIL, SOUTH AFRICA

Brussels, April 27 : Belgium on Tuesday became the latest territory to ban travel from India, Brazil and South Africa, major countries hit by fast-spreading Coronavirus variants.

“Passenger travel by air, train, boat, and bus, including transit traffic, from India, Brazil and South Africa to Belgium will be banned,” Prime Minister Alexander de Croo announced in a statement.

“People with Belgian nationality and people who have their main residence in Belgium can return from India, Brazil, and South Africa to Belgium. They are strongly advised not to travel to these countries.”

There will be some exceptions to the ban for essential travel by some transport workers and diplomats, but otherwise the ban will be strictly enforced.

—AFP

N-deal talks resume in Vienna

Berlin, April 27: World powers were set to resume high level talks in Vienna on Tuesday focused on bringing the United States back into the nuclear deal with Iran, in their first session since comments surfaced from the Iranian foreign minister alleging that Russia once tried to scupper the pact.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has thus far refused to comment on the remarks from Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, made in a seven-hour interview with a think tank associated with the Iranian

presidency that leaked over the weekend.

Russia’s top representative at the Vienna talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, who has outwardly been one of the most optimistic about the possibility of getting Tehran and Washington to agree to terms for the US to rejoin the 2015 deal, also made no mention of the allegations before the meetings, saying in a tweet only that “the participants will continue negotiations on restoration of the nuclear deal.”

Ulyanov is joining representatives from China, Germany, France, and

Britain — the other parties to the deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA — for the talks chaired by the European Union. “Participants will continue their discussions in view of a possible return of the United States to the JCPOA and on how to ensure the full and effective implementation of the JCPOA,” the EU delegation said before the talks.

The US is not at the table because it unilaterally pulled out of the deal in 2018 under then President Donald Trump.

EU to approve to post-Brexit trade deal

Brussels, April 27: European Union lawmakers are set to formally ratify the post-Brexit deal between the EU and the United Kingdom amid ongoing tensions between London and Brussels over Northern Ireland trade rules.

The deal, which was finalised on Christmas Eve, already has been ratified by the UK Parliament and conditionally came into force pending the European Parliament’s approval. Because of disagreement on how to apply trade rules in Northern

Ireland, some EU legislators previously threatened to hold back the ratification vote, but a large majority of lawmakers are in favor of the deal. Results of the vote are set to be announced on Wednesday, almost five years after UK voters decided to withdraw from the bloc.

“This deal is not good because Brexit is not good. The situation is also complicated because we cannot be sure how trustworthy the UK government really is,” said Terry Reintke, the vice-president of the Greens/EFA group in the

European Parliament. “Still, this agreement can be a starting point reconstructing what we lost due to Brexit.”

Top European Union officials and their British counterparts have so far failed to find common ground on implementing the so-called Northern Ireland protocol, which were designed to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland, and to guarantee the integrity of the bloc’s single market. In March, the UK government unilaterally extended

ed until October a grace period for not conducting checks on goods moving between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, a decision that led the EU to start legal action against its former member nation.

In an address to EU lawmakers ahead of Tuesday’s ratification vote, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said she shared their concerns on “unilateral actions taken by (the) United Kingdom” but noted some progress in the talks with British officials.

—AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,944.14	1.15
Nifty 50	14,653.00	1.16
S&P 500*	4,188.44	0.02
Dollar (₹)	74.65	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.67	0.30
Euro (₹)	90.07	0.37
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,906.69	0.14
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.90	0.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.055	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.584	0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

TVS Motor profit rises four-fold to ₹319 cr in Q4

TVS Motor Company posted nearly four-fold increase in its consolidated net profit to Rs 319.19 crore for the March quarter, on the back of robust sales in the domestic and international markets. The company had reported a net profit of Rs 81.84 crore a year ago. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 6,131.90 crore from Rs 4,104.71 crore. Total two- and three-wheeler sales stood at 9.28 lakh units in Q4, up 47 per cent.



■ Bid to avert IL&FS, PNB-like scams
Lenders require RBI nod to hire auditor

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

In a bid to improve the quality of financial reporting of lenders and to prevent IL&FS and Punjab National Bank-like scams, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday made it mandatory for lenders to take its prior approval for the appointment and re-appointment of statutory central auditors (SCAs) and statutory auditors.

The apex bank also mandated that the statutory audit for entities with an asset size of at least Rs 15,000 crore at the end of the previous year should be conducted by a minimum of two audit firms.

All other lenders of lesser size should appoint at least one audit firm to conduct the statutory audit, the apex bank said in its guidelines on appointment of statutory auditors of commercial banks (excluding regional rural banks), primary (urban) co-operative banks (UCBs) and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs). The guidelines will be applicable to commercial banks from financial year 2021-22.

However, UCBs and NBFCs shall have the flexibility to adopt these guidelines from H2 of FY22 so that there is no disruption.

The guidelines provide instructions for appointment of SCAs/ SAs, the number of auditors, their eligibility criteria, tenure and rotation, etc. while ensuring the independence of auditors. "The



revised Guidelines being issued will ensure that Statutory Auditors are appointed in a timely, transparent and effective manner," the RBI said.

Makarand Joshi, founding partner, MMJC and Associates—a corporate compliance firm—said, "Rotation of auditors is heavily relied upon by regulators to ensure that any element of true and fair view cannot be kept under wraps for a fairly long period. The issues in large NBFCs like IL&FS and DHFL witnessed over the past few years have been a wake-up call for the regulator. This is an attempt to improve transparency and reliability. The new norm would mean that management will have to invest time to make a new auditor familiar with working of NBFC or financial institution more frequently."

Public sector banks have to allot the top 20 branches (to be selected in order of the level of outstanding advances) to SCAs to cover a minimum of 15 per cent of the total gross advances

of the bank by SCAs. For other entities—excluding payment banks and core investment companies—SCAs/SAs shall visit and audit at least the top 20 branches/top 20 per cent of the branches of the entities (in case of entities having less than 100 branches), to be selected in order of the level of outstanding advances, to cover a minimum 15 per cent of their total gross advances.

Commercial banks (excluding RRBs) and UCBs will be required to take prior approval of RBI (Department of Supervision) for appointment/reappointment of statutory central auditors and statutory auditors, on an annual basis, the banking regulator said.

In order to protect the independence of the auditors, lenders will have to appoint the SCAs/SAs for a continuous period of three years. Commercial banks and UCBs can remove the audit firms during this period only with the prior approval of the department.

Lenskart to hire 100+ for tech centre

FC BUREAU
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Lenskart, India's omnichannel eyewear brand, on Tuesday said that it will hire 100 engineers and designers for its newly opened technology centre in Hyderabad. This would be the latest addition to technology and research centres that several companies have set up in Hyderabad.

"To accelerate the on-goings, Lenskart is looking to hire 100+ people, across engineering, product & design in the coming six months," said Ramneek Khurana, co-founder, Lenskart.

He also revealed that the company has acquired Hyderabad-based e-commerce start-up DailyJoy and would utilise the services of the target company's technicians to manage its Hyderabad technology centre. The cost of the acquisition, however, was not made public.

Currently, Lenskart has a team of 150 staff. In the next six months, it would reach 250, with a majority of them working from Hyderabad.

The new recruitment, he said, would be in engineering, product and data science functions.

Lenskart has posted a modest rise in sales during the last fiscal because of the Covid-induced restrictions and change of customer behavioural pattern. However, it has witnessed a 50 per cent increase in its online sales.

Maruti expects second wave to boost car sales

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, APRIL 27



R.C. Bhargava

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, on Tuesday said a fresh surge in coronavirus cases in the country would strengthen demand for personal mobility, and that lockdowns in some cities had not yet hurt the carmaker's sales or production.

Following a steep fall in car sales last year when the pandemic first hit, Maruti's sales picked up in India over the past two quarters as people opted out of public transport and poured their lockdown-led savings into big-ticket items such as cars.

Still, Maruti's fourth-quarter results took a hit due to rising commodity prices and supply chain disruptions. Maruti has passed on some of the

costs to customers and already bumped up car prices twice this year.

"With this second pandemic wave the demand for personal transport will, if anything, strengthen, not weaken. Because more and more people will want to have their personal transport," R.C. Bhargava, chairman at Maruti Suzuki told reporters after Maruti posted a near 10 per cent drop in quarterly profit.

"If the current demand situation continues, April-June should be 'decent,' he said.

The carmaker, which sells one out of two bought in the country, reported a 9.7 per cent year-on-year (YoY) decline in profit at Rs 1,166 crore for the March 2021 quarter, on the back of weak demand and higher commodity costs but revenue was strong.

The New Delhi-based company reported a profit of Rs 1,291.7 crore in the year-ago period.

Revenue from operations in Q4 FY21 stood at Rs 24,023.7 crore, up 32 per cent from Rs 18,198.7 crore in the year-ago period backed by strong double-digit growth in sales.

Maruti Suzuki sold 4,92,235 vehicles in the March quarter, up 28 per cent YoY.

MARKET SENTIMENTS LOOK UP

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

The Sensex gained over 500 points for the second day in a row, after the Covid scare seemed to come down due to a drop in fresh daily cases. The Sensex closed 558 points, or 1.15 per cent, up at 48,944 while Nifty 50 rose to 14,653, up 168 points.

The BSE Mid-cap and Small-cap indices up 1.04 per cent and 1.49 per cent.

The daily Covid cases on Monday was lower at 3.23 lakh compared to around 3.5 lakh on Sunday and Maharashtra also reported lower daily infections at 48,700. The market sentiment also got a boost as help started pouring in from many countries. "Investors' expectations from earnings outcome by heavyweights, the progress of the vaccination drive and a dip in the Covid cases further boosted sentiments," said Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking.

On Tuesday, FPIs were net sellers by Rs 1,454.75 crore.

RETAIL TRADE COUNTS LOSSES

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 27

Lock-down and restrictions in a few states has caused a business loss of Rs 5 lakh crore to unorganised traders, while the organised retail too estimates around 40 per cent loss in states affected by the second wave.

The Confederation of Indian Traders says curfew and other restrictions has caused a business loss of about Rs 5 lakh crore in the past 25 days nationally. Out of Rs 5 lakh crore, the loss of retail traders is estimated to be about Rs 3.5 lakh crore and wholesale business of Rs 1.5 lakh crore.

Delhi alone recorded a business loss of more than Rs 25,000 crore. The calculations are based on the trader feedback from 14 states, excluding West Bengal, NE, Punjab, Haryana, J&K and Goa.

Interstate trade and loading and unloading activities also are getting affected due to night curfews.

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Boxer injured in Worlds bout dies

Lausanne, Switzerland: An 18-year-old boxer from Jordan has died after being seriously injured in a bout at the World Youth Championships, the International Boxing Association said on Tuesday. Rashed Al-Swaissat was treated in the ring and then hospitalised after being knocked out in his preliminary-round light-heavyweight fight against Estonian boxer Anton Vinogradov on April 16 in Kielce, Poland. "It is with deep sadness that we learned of the passing of Rashed Al-Swaissat of Jordan, who had been admitted to hospital on April 16 further to his fight during the AIBA Youth World Championships," AIBA said. — AP

FC Goa play out yet another draw

Margao: FC Goa conceded an 89th minute goal to squander the chance to become the first Indian club to win a match in the prestigious AFC Champions League as they played out a 1-1 draw with Al Rayyan of Qatar here Monday. Jorge Ortiz gave FC Goa the lead in the third minute of the Group 'E' match but Ali Ferydoon equalised with just a minute left in regulation time. The Indian Super League side went out of reckoning for a knockout berth after Al Wahda of UAE beat Persepolis FC 1-0 in another Group 'E' match. — PTI

Repsol Honda gear up for Spanish GP

Spain: After an emotional return to MotoGP in Portimao, Marc Marquez's rehabilitation continues in Jerez as Pol Espargaro aims to make amends for the previous round. Heading to the iconic Jerez de la Frontera for the Gran Premio Red Bull de España, the MotoGP World Championship is primed for another exciting weekend. The Repsol Honda Team will again be operating at full capacity as Marquez and Espargaro line up together aboard the RC213V. This weekend there will be a fifth Honda on the grid as Stefan Bradl returns to the World Championship as a wildcard. Marc put in a hero's effort to race to seventh in Portugal.

Correa keeps Lazio in CL hunt
Joaquin scores brace to beat AC Milan, Napoli blank Torino to go third

Rome, April 27: Joaquin Correa ensured Lazio kept their hopes of Champions League qualification alive on Monday with a double in a 3-0 win over AC Milan while Napoli jumped up to third thanks to a 2-0 triumph at Torino.

Correa opened the scoring for Lazio with only a minute on the clock at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome and added the second five minutes after the break.

Ciro Immobile struck the third with three minutes left as Lazio moved five points off the Champions League spots with a game in hand on their rivals.

"This was like a final for us, the last chance to stay in with a shout for the top four... It was a clear and dominant victory," Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi told Sky Sport Italia.

Inzaghi's side sit sixth, behind AC Milan who are level on 66 points with Napoli and Juventus — third and fourth respectively — but have dropped down to fifth after their second straight league defeat.

They are 13 points behind leaders Inter Milan, who can win their first league title since 2010



Lazio's Joaquin Correa (left) vies for the ball with Ante Rebic of AC Milan in their Italian league match at Rome's Olympic Stadium on Monday.

— AP

on Saturday if they beat Crotone and second-placed Atalanta fail to win at Sassuolo on Sunday. Stefano Pioli's Milan, who started the weekend in second place, could have been beaten by a larger margin as Manuel Lazzari

frustrated by Correa's second, which was given after a lengthy VAR check following what he felt was a foul from Lucas Leiva on Hakan Calhanoglu. "I don't understand how it wasn't given as a foul on Calhanoglu, said Pioli.

THE RESULTS

Torino	0
Napoli (Bakayoko 11, Osimhen 13)	2
Lazio (Correa 2, 51, Immobile 87)	3
AC Milan	0

"He looked at it again and from the replay you cannot say Leiva doesn't catch Calhanoglu and completely miss the ball."

Napoli moved into third thanks to first-half goals from Tiemoune Bakayoko and Victor Osimhen earlier on Monday.

They could have been further ahead at the break following a dominant opening period in which Piotr Zielinski hit the post and Matteo Politano was unlucky to see his deflected shot slide wide.

Lorenzo Insigne, playing his 300th Serie A match for Napoli, also hit the upright with a curling shot just before the hour mark.

They failed to add to their tally but ran out winners to put pressure on their rivals. — AFP

SOCIEDAD EDGE PAST EIBAR TO KEEP HOLD ON EUROPA SPOT

Madrid, April 27: Alexander Isak scored a first-half winner as Real Sociedad defeated Basque Country rivals Eibar 1-0 to strengthen their hold on fifth place in the Spanish league.

The win left Sociedad three points ahead of sixth-placed Real Betis and four points in front of seventh-placed Villarreal with five rounds remaining. The teams finishing in fifth and sixth places secure a Europa League berth next season.

It was only the second win for Sociedad in their last seven league matches.

It was the fifth consecutive loss for last-placed Eibar, which is winless in 16 straight league games.

● The win left Sociedad three points ahead of sixth-placed Real Betis and four points in front of seventh-placed Villarreal with five rounds remaining.

It stayed seven points from escaping the relegation zone.

Isak scored at Eibar's Ipurua Stadium with a shot from close range in the 26th minute.

Sociedad next visit Huesca, while Eibar host Alavés, another relegation-threatened team.

— AP

Iheanacho leads Foxes fightback to sink Palace

Leicester (United Kingdom), April 27: Leicester strengthened their grip on third place in the Premier League as Kelechi Iheanacho's superb strike capped a spirited fightback in Monday's 2-1 win against Crystal Palace.

Brendan Rodgers' side trailed to Wilfried Zaha's first half goal. But Timothy Castagne equalised soon after the interval with his first goal since September. And Nigeria striker Iheanacho sealed Leicester's second successive victory when he scored with a thunder-

ous finish 10 minutes from full-time.

Leicester are four points clear of fourth placed Chelsea and seven ahead of fifth placed West Ham as they bid to qualify for next season's Champions League.

"It was a very important win for us. It was the third game in nine days so a tough schedule," Rodgers said.

"Going one behind against Palace, they're super organised and tough to break down. I thought the players were outstanding. They kept the calmness and control

and scored two very good goals."

With five games left, the FA Cup finalists have already matched their total of 62 points from last season.

A late collapse cost the Foxes a place in the Champions League in 2020, but Rodgers' men are firmly on course to make amends thanks to the sparkling form of Iheanacho. "We spoke about it at the start of the season and put it to bed them. Our performance levels this season have shown that is in the past," Rodgers said. — AFP

TOKYO | OLYMPICS

Host towns pull out over corona

Tokyo, April 27: Hundreds of Japanese towns and cities have been forced to rethink plans to host Olympic teams because the coronavirus will prevent public appearances and require costly safety measures.

The western town of Okuizumo spent more than \$5 million preparing to welcome India's hockey team for a pre-Games training camp, only to scrap the visit because of Covid-19.

After sinking money into upgrading sports facilities, Okuizumo balked when it became clear it would have to provide bubble-like biosecurity measures with regular virus tests and medical care.

"We wanted to have one of the world's top tier teams visit our town and show their skills to local children," town official Katsumi Nagase said.

"But that seems impossible now."

More than 500 municipalities signed up to host athletes and officials in a scheme aimed at broadening the Olympics' benefits beyond Tokyo.

Some, like Okuizumo, have already scrapped plans to host overseas athletes, while others are devising careful programmes they hope will

● The western town of Okuizumo spent more than \$5 million preparing to welcome India's hockey team for a pre-Games training camp, only to scrap the visit because of Covid-19.

keep everyone safe.

Instead of giving residents the chance to meet elite athletes and try out new sports, towns will have to ditch any physical contact, school visits and public training sessions.

Kurihara city in northern Miyagi prefecture was planning to host South Africa's hockey team, but decided the expense was no longer worth it given the limitations imposed by virus measures.

"It's a project that will use our tax resources," Hidenori Sasaki, an official with the local board of education, said.

"If it becomes just athletes holding a training camp without any exchanges with local residents, local citizens won't enjoy the benefits."

In some cases, Olympic teams have cancelled, worried about the risk of infection before the Games. — AFP

HOCKEY UMPIRE'S MANAGER VIRENDRA DIES OF COVID-19

New Delhi, April 27: Indian hockey umpire's manager Virendra Singh has died of Covid-19 related complications and his demise was mourned by the game's governing body. Singh was 47. He died in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, on Monday.

Virendra had officiated in a number of All India tournaments and National Championships.

Mourning his demise, Hockey India president Gyanendra Ningombam said, "We at Hockey India are deeply saddened to learn about the untimely demise of Virendra Singh."

'SHOOTER DADI' CORONA POSTIVE, IN HOSPITAL

Octogenarian shooter Chandro Tomar, nicknamed 'Shooter Dadi', has tested positive for Covid-19 and admitted to a hospital due to difficulty in breathing.

The Twitter page of the 89-year-old legendary shooter, hailing from the Baghpatt village in Uttar Pradesh, posted the development. — PTI

