

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | SUNDAY | 25 APRIL 2021

WEATHER

Max: 37.4°C
Min: 23.9°C
RH: 29%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Rain likely. Max/Min
temp. 38/24 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Trayodasi
till 4.08 pm
Star: Hasta till 1.52 am (Monday)
Varjyam: 11.53 am to 1.19 pm
Durmuhurtam: 4.50 pm to
5.41 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Ramzan 12,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.51 am
Zohar: 12.24 pm
Asar: 4.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.40 pm
Isha: 7.50 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.53 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.34 PM
MOONSET 4.29 AM
MOONRISE 4.55 PM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.40 PM (TODAY)
SEHRI: 4.28 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT



Now, every day
is my day!

SHORT TAKE

CM for check on safety of hospitals

Hyderabad: Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao has directed the medical and health department to review the fire safety measures in all government and private hospitals in view of the recurring mishaps in healthcare facilities elsewhere in recent days. The CM reviewed the matter with health minister Etela Rajender and senior health officials over phone on Saturday. He advised all hospitals to remain on high alert and take preventive steps at the earliest. ■ Report on Page 2



WORLD | 5

Merkel defends tough Covid curbs

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



SPORTS | 7

Sachin turns 48, says will donate plasma

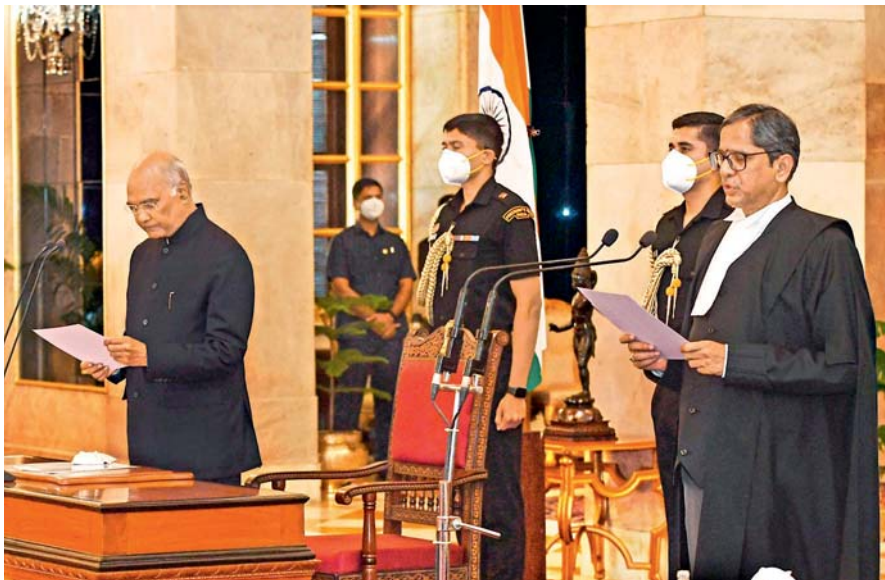
TABLOID

Lost year: Up to adults to mentor their kids



Vol. 20 No. 329 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Justice Ramana sworn in as India's 48th CJI



President Ram Nath Kovind administers the oath of office to Justice Nuthalapati Venkata Ramana (right), after he was appointed as the 48th Chief Justice of India at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ Report on Page 4 — PTI

20 critical patients die in Delhi as oxygen runs out

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24**

Twenty people died at Delhi's Jaipur Golden Hospital as medical oxygen supply was not replenished on Saturday, exposing the danger to critically ill Covid patients admitted in the national capital.

The hospital in southwest Delhi's Rohini locality had feared the worst and predicted a disaster could repeat itself a day after 25 patients died at the Ganga Ram Hospital.

"Next impending oxygen crisis in Jaipur Golden Hospital. Over 200 lives at stake if liquid medical oxygen is not supplied by 9 pm tonight," the hospital had tweeted at 7.15 pm.

Medical Director D.K. Baluja said, "Oxygen pressure has dipped as we are running out of stock."

The hospital officials added that over 80 per cent of the 200 patients in the hospital were on oxygen support and 35 were in the ICU.

At the Ganga Ram Hospital, authorities struggled to avoid a repeat of the earlier day's tragedy. The hospital

shortage of oxygen and the explosion in the number of cases in Delhi together stretched healthcare infrastructure to its limits, leaving hospitals big and small struggling and coming up with band aid solutions — limited supplies to see them through for the next few hours before placing another SOS call.

Outside the hospitals, scenes of despair played out with queues of ambulances, frantic relatives and patients gasping for breath as they waited for help and hospitals, overwhelmed and helpless, tried to deal with the multiple emergencies at their doorstep.

The story found echo in hospital after hospital. "We are running low on oxygen and using our back-up now. We have alerted our patients about the situation, and are advising them to shift to another hospital. Things are really uncertain," P.K. Bhardwaj, medical director, Saroj Super Speciality Hospital, a mid-sized hospital in Rohini, said in the morning.

"Now it is at 0.7 tonnes, which will last for one hour only," hospital chairperson D.S. Rana said in a statement released around 2 pm. "We are getting supplies of 500 to 1500 cubic metres only. We have 516 Covid patients, of which 129 are in ICU and 29 on invasive ventilation. These 29 patients are on manual ventilation since midnight due to scarcity of supplies. This can't go on for long, the staff is getting exhausted," he said.

"Hospital has and is approaching all authorities and nodal officers but no help is coming. Hundreds of calls made, nobody picking the calls," he added.

In a pincer effect, the

requires a minimum of 11,000 cubic metres of oxygen daily but was left with just 200 cubic metres when a tanker with 1.5 tonnes of oxygen arrived at 11.35 am, officials said.

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Free vaccine for all in Telangana, says KCR

State to foot ₹2,500 crore bill for vaccination programme

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD APRIL 24**

33 more die, 7,432 new cases in state

Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao on Saturday announced that Coronavirus vaccine will be administered to everyone in the state free of cost and irrespective of the age-limit.

He noted that the state has a four-crore population including those who came from different states and are working in different sectors. Of these, 35 lakh have been vaccinated. The rest would be vaccinated at the earliest and free of cost. "This would cost the state more than ₹2,500 crore in expenses, but saving the lives is a matter of first priority," he stressed.

Rao also issued instructions to this effect to chief secretary Somesh Kumar and heads of the medical and health department. He noted that Bharath Biotech is producing vaccine and several firms including Reddy Labs are coming forward to do the same. Hence, there will be no dearth of vaccine.

The CM said he would hold a meeting soon, a couple of days after undergoing necessary medical tests and completely recovering from Covid infection, and personally monitor the vaccination programme.

Necessary steps would be taken to see that there is no shortage of Remdesivir as also other life-support medicines required for Covid treatment. Oxygen supply would also be ensured in hospitals.

Rao said there was no need to panic. A large-scale sanitation programme will be taken up as part of the efforts to check the Covid spread. Whether it be for hospital care, beds or medicines, the government will take maximum care, he promised, and advised the people to cooperate with the authorities in the attempts to check the pandemic's spread. "Observe self-discipline and avoid coming out of homes as far as possible," he said.

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486 new cases in Nizamabad district.

The Warangal Urban district, going to polls to elect the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation Council, saw 323 new cases on Friday, a whopping rise from 94 on Thursday.

Khammam district, in which the Khammam Municipal Corporation is also slated to go to polls soon, also reported more than double the cases overnight reporting 325 cases on Friday, up from 152 on Thursday.

In addition to these districts, Bhadrachalam, Kothagudem, Kamareddy, Karimnagar, Mahbubnagar, Mancherial, and Sangareddy saw over 200 each.

■ Page 2: 58,148 active cases in Telangana

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COVAXIN TO COST ₹600 FOR STATES, ₹1,200 FOR REST

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 24**

Bharat Biotech on Saturday announced the price of Covaxin, its Covid-19 vaccine for state governments and private hospitals. The company said it will sell each dose at ₹600 for state governments, and at ₹1,200 for private hospitals. For exports, it said the doses will be between \$15 and \$20.

Company chairman and managing director Krishna M. Ella in a statement said the company is supplying the vaccine to the Central government at ₹150 per dosage. Earlier this week, Serum Institute of India had announced a price of ₹400 per dose for Covishield for state governments and ₹600 per dose for private hospitals.

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STERN | WARNING Centre quizzed

Will 'hang' oxygen blockers: Delhi HC

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24**

The Delhi High Court said on Saturday that if any official at the Central, state or local administration was obstructing in the picking up or supply of oxygen, then it would "hang" that person. The observation by a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli came during the hearing of a plea by Maharaja Agrasen Hospital over shortage of oxygen for seriously ill Covid patients.

The court told the Delhi government to give it one instance of who was obstructing the oxygen supply and said "we will hang that man". "We will not spare anyone," the bench added. It told the Delhi government to inform the Centre also about such officials of the local administration so that it could take action against them. The HC also asked the Centre when the 480 metric tonne (MT) of oxygen per day allocated for Delhi would see the light of the day.

"You (Centre) had assured us (on April 21) that 480 MT per day will reach Delhi. Tell us when

will it come? The 480 MT per day is still to see the light of the day," the court said.

The Court directed the Centre and Delhi to coordinate between themselves for arranging the cryogenic tankers to ensure

SHORT TAKES

58,148 ACTIVE CASES IN TELANGANA

From Page 1

Yadadri-Bhongir Warangal Rural, Wanaparthy, Vikarabad, Siddipet, Rajanna Siricilla, Peddapalli, Nirmal, Nalgonda, Nagarkurnool, Medak, Mahbubabad, Jagtial, and Adilabad districts reported more than 100 cases each on Friday.

Meanwhile, the 'active cases' in the state on Friday stood at 58,148, while one out of every 13 from among the 98,634 tests for which results were available, according to the Covid-19 bulletin, tested positive for the disease. Results for 5,136 tests were awaited, the bulletin said.

GHMC FAILED TO CONDUCT FEVER SURVEYS

From Page 1

Under LB Nagar zone, Kapra-1, Uppal-2, Hayathnagar-3, Sarooranagar-4 and LB Nagar areas have two containment areas each while Malakpet-6, Santoshnagar-7, Chandrayangutta-8, Charminar-9, Falaknuma-10 and Rajendranagar-11 also have two containment zones each under the Charminar zone.

Five areas in Khairatabad zone — Mehdiapatnam-12, Karwan-13, Goshamahall-14, Khairatabad-17 and Jubilee Hills-18 — have two zones each while Yousufguda-19 and Chandanagar-21 under Serilingampally zone have three each. Apart from these, two other areas — Patancheru-22 and Serilingampally-20 under Serilingampally zone — have two containment zones each.

The corporation, in coordination with the health department, was to have conducted the fever surveys but it did not. It has also not deployed its staff to take up the sanitation and spraying (sodium hypochlorite) activities. "It has not been keeping track of residential addresses of Covid-19 patients to curb their movement," a complainant said.

A senior official who kept track of the containment activities during last year said, "We were not asked to do it this time. The labeling of micro containment zones would simply remain on paper just to report this to the court. Residents and Covid19 patients take the risk of stepping out."

There is some action too, though. For instance, the EVDM wing has been spraying sodium hypochlorite over all public spaces, especially on the main roads and at commercial places.

BIOLOGICAL E GETS NOD FOR PHASE III TRIAL OF VAX

Hyderabad, April 24: Biological E. Limited (BE) on Saturday announced that it has successfully completed Phase I/II clinical trials of its Covid-19 subunit vaccine candidate in India and received the approval to start the Phase III clinical trial from the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) — Subject Expert Committee (SEC).

BE started the Phase I/II clinical trials of its Covid-19 Vaccine candidate in the second week of November 2020, the vaccine maker said in a press release.

Its candidate includes an antigen developed by the Texas Childrens Hospital Centre for Vaccine Development and in-licensed from BCM Ventures, Baylor College of Medicines integrated commercialization team, along with Dynavax Technologies Corporations advanced adjuvant CpG 1018TM.

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) have provided support for the Phase I/II clinical trials and also for the upcoming Phase III trial of this vaccine candidate, it said.

BE's Phase I/II clinical trial evaluated the safety and immunogenicity of the vaccine candidate, consisting of the Receptor Binding Domain of the Spike Protein of SARS-CoV-2 at three-dose level adjuvanted with CpG 1018 plus alum, in about 360 healthy subjects in the age range of 18 to 65 years.

The vaccination schedule consisted of two doses for each study participant, administered via intramuscular injection 28 days apart.

BEs novel Covid-19 vaccine was found to be safe and well tolerated and immunogenic, the release said. — PTI

Covid's dance of death persists in TS

Doctors not in a position to reveal actual numbers; HC expresses concern over case data

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 24

Telangana State on Friday reported 33 deaths due to the Covid-19 pandemic in the state. But this official number appears to hide the actual extent of the devastation the pandemic is causing here.

Frontline warriors on the Covid-19 front say there is more to it than meets the eye. The state health department, from day one, has been calibrated in reporting the extent of the Covid-impact. Doctors from different private and government hospitals do not believe in the figures the government is reeling out.

"Many more are dying due to Covid19," they told *Deccan Chronicle* on Saturday.

The Telangana high court has repeatedly expressed its concern over the way Covid-19 case details are being reported by governmental agencies and it felt the state was not presenting the true picture of the extent of the disease spread and its impact on the people.

"The problem is, deaths are no longer being reported by private hospitals. District-level death-tracking panels are not insisting that they do so," a government doctor said.

"The actual number of daily deaths could be three to four times higher," doctors said. The head of a government hospital, when asked if the actual number of daily deaths could be revealed, said the hospital has not been allowed to do so.

In Nizamabad alone, on Saturday, at least 14 persons died of Covid-19 in one government hospital as per information gathered by DC from unofficial sources.

It is learnt that around 30 people died of the pandemic over the past few days in a few private hospitals in the state. All of them died due to the inability of those hospitals to maintain oxygen pressure at adequate level, sources said.

The state government's showpiece hospital at Gachibowli — the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences — is bearing with the sight of a lot of deaths. TIMS is now an exclusive Covid-19 facility but patients are "dying in the wards" even



Due to heavy rush for Covid-19 tests, a woman waits for her turn to get tested and admitted at the King Koti Hospital, in Hyderabad on Saturday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

GRIM SCENE IN TELANGANA

DEATHS IN 2020

1,544

● Death toll in 2021 in TS has been 417 so far. The breakup is as follows:

January	57
February	33
March	67
April up to 23*	260

before they are shifted to an ICU.

"Normally, deaths occur in ICUs where patients are rushed to when their health condition turns critical. A problem with TIMS, as is the case with Gandhi Hospital or other government and private hospitals in the city, is that ICU beds are often not available for emergency care. They all are occupied," a doctor explained.

KCR ORDERS FIRE SAFETY REVIEW IN TS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 24

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has directed the medical and health department to review the fire safety measures in all government and private hospitals in view of the recurring mishaps in health care facilities elsewhere in recent days. The CM reviewed the matter with health minister Etala Rajender and senior health officials over phone on Saturday. He advised all hospitals to remain on high alert and take preventive steps at the earliest.

K. Chandrashekar Rao said the chances of fire mishaps would be more during summer as the system carried heavier loads; and officials should be more alert in May when the season will be at its peak. He advised health

● CM SAID the chances of fire mishaps would be more during summer as the system carried heavier loads; and officials should be more alert in May when the season will be at its peak.

officials to coordinate with the fire service department and ensure safety of the systems. Officials must, in special, do stock-taking in dedicated Covid hospitals like Gandhi and TIMS where substantial numbers of Corona patients are under treatment. "Keep the fire engines ready at these hospitals round-the-clock," the CM asked fire officials. He also wanted officials to form joint teams of health and fire departments to inspect hospitals on their existing fire safety statuses and take immediate steps to meet the requirements.

FIGHT AGAINST VIRUS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 24

A slew of senior doctors, many of them with distinguished service and recognition for their work, have written a letter to Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao outlining a 20-point action plan to improve Telangana's Covid-19 management policy making and implementation.

The letter said that a group of 39 medical professionals, and one lawyer,

23 pvt hosps flout fire safety norms

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 24

As many as 23 private hospitals throughout the state were found to violate fire safety norms, according to the Telangana State Disaster Response and Fire Services.

Of these, four hospitals were penalised penalties by courts, while 19 other cases were pending adjudication. In all, the department said it has issued no objection certificates (NOCs) to 112 hospitals in the state. The 23 hospitals

found violating the norms were all issued notices in the past one year.

Regional Fire Officer V. Papaiah, said, "We found the violations during our inspections following which we issued prosecution orders for violation of fire safety measures."

"Out of 23 hospital buildings 18 prosecution proceedings have been issued against violation of fire safety measures noticed during surprise inspection and five prosecution proceedings issued on regular basis for violation of fire safety

measures."

As per the Telangana Fire Service Act, 1999, any hospital building, standing more than 15 meters in height, has to obtain a NOC, by following heights and setbacks as per local building bylaws and provide fire prevention and suppression measures as per the National Building Code, 2016.

Explaining about the measures taken at the hospitals where Covid-19 patients were being treated, Papaiah said, "We are closely monitoring the fire safety measures of

each and every Covid-19 hospital and quarantine centre. The department has deployed fire vehicles at Gandhi Hospital and TIMS (Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences, Gachibowli) to attend any fire/emergency call."

The department urged all hospital managements to ensure electrical safety and fire safety. Every hospital must keep its fire-fighting equipment in working condition, and must train staff on emergency evacuation procedures and first aid fire fighting, it said.

Delhi hospitals still send out requests for oxygen

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

P.K. Bhardwaj, medical director, Saroj Super Speciality Hospital, said the hospital hadn't received an oxygen refill in 44 hours and that it has been getting just one metric tonne of oxygen instead of the three it needs.

Batra Hospital in Tughlakabad Institutional Area received emergency oxygen supply from the Delhi government moments after it exhausted its stock, officials said.

Executive director Sudhanshu Bankata said the facility exhausted its oxygen stock around 9 am. "We received an emergency supply from the Delhi government. It will last another one-and-a-half hours. Our supplier has not been responding to calls," he said.

There are around 350 patients admitted in the hospital, of which 265 are



A woman breaks down after her husband died due to Covid-19 at Jaipur Golden hospital, Rohini, in New Delhi, on Saturday. — PTI

Covid positive and 30 are in the ICU.

The Fortis Hospital in Shalimar Bagh also sent out a desperate appeal.

"#SOS Fortis Shalimar Bagh is running out of oxygen. Patients' lives are at risk. We are running on backup, waiting for supplies since morning. We are currently suspending admissions. Request immediate assistance," the hospital tweeted at 12.28 pm, tagging the Prime Minister's Office and Delhi Chief Minister

Arvind Kejriwal among others.

"We are keeping patients and attendants informed of the critical situation and trying to manage admitted patients to the best of our abilities," it added.

Moolchand Hospital, a big hospital in south Delhi, said at 7.05 am that it has less than two hours of oxygen supply left. "We are desperate and have tried all the nodal officer numbers but unable to connect. Have over 135 Covid patients

with many on life support," it tweeted.

In a ripple effect, Max Hospital in Gurgaon said it too was running out of oxygen.

"SOS — Less than 2 hour's Oxygen supplies at Max Hospital Gurugram and attached Dedicated Covid Centre. Over 70 covid pts admitted across. Supplies expected at 10am diverted," Max Healthcare said on Twitter at 11.20 am.

The medical director of Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital, Suresh Kumar said the facility's oxygen stock can last up to eight hours. It is likely to be a few days before the crisis is resolved, he said.

Some hospitals reduced their hospital beds. The GTB Hospital cut the number of beds from 986 to 700 but did not give any reason. On Friday, the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital had reduced beds from 600 to 350 citing oxygen shortage.

In the discussion were Dr Lakshmi Lavanya Alapati, a consultant endocrinologist, and a diabetologist, and Dr Sanjeev Singh Yadav, vice president of Indian Medical Association, Telangana.

The letter also suggested many other measures including checking exploitation of patients by private hospitals, increasing genetic sequencing of virus samples, and various administrative measures that the government can enforce.

Uttam Kumar, driver, gunman test positive

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 24

State Congress president N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Saturday tested positive for Covid19. Citing a mild lung infection, he was admitted to a private hospital in Gachibowli.

Prior to Reddy, his gunman, driver and personal

assistant tested positive after they accompanied him during the Nagarjunasagar bypolls. Though the TPCC chief tested negative during RT PCR test, he showed symptoms after the bypoll campaign. He underwent a lung scan on Friday and doctors found a mild infection.

Med shops run out of masks, sanitisers

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 24

Medical shops and pharmacies in the city are facing a shortage of surgical face masks. Chemists say the demand for masks went up in the past few days and the suppliers are unable to match the supply with demand owing to the sharp rise in Covid19 cases.

"In the past two to three days, people have flocked shop asking for bundles of masks and sanitisers. We are running out of stocks," said a shop owner at PG Road here.

Another pharmacist said masks and sanitisers are

● "THE DEMAND is too high to match the supply from distributors," said a pharmacist.

flying off the shelf. "The demand has increased all of a sudden over the past one week. The demand is too high to match the supply from distributors," said Paramathma Chilukuri, Nalagonda district general secretary of the pharmacists' association.

There is a slight increase in the prices of the three-ply surgical masks. The masks that were being sold at ₹2 are now being charged ₹3 or 4 at several shops.

HIGH COURT FINES COLLEGES FOR DEFYING FIRE RULES

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 24

The Telangana High Court on Saturday imposed a fine of ₹25,000 each on colleges belonging to nine trusts and groups of institutions running around 40 Intermediate colleges without obtaining NOC from the state disaster response and fire services department for their buildings. The amount should be paid by managements to the state legal services authority within two weeks.

Group educational institutes like Narayana, Sri Chaitanya, Gayatri, the Gouthami College for Girls at Nalgonda, the Sri Vyshnavi and others had approached the court challenging the closure notices issued by the fire safety department and non-grant of affiliation by the board of intermediate studies to the colleges which did not submit the NOC.

The colleges claimed that they were running classes in these buildings for years and got affiliations from the intermediate board without them being asked to produce any NOC from fire department. These buildings were constructed before fire safety norms were made mandatory for commercial buildings, they said.

In the light of these, they pleaded with the court to allow them run these complexes.

The court rejected the plea and made it clear the safety of students is important.

Hence, it imposed costs on each of the nine petitions.

TEACHERS SEEK EARLY SUMMER VACATIONS

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 24

State government is yet to decide on government teachers' plea to advance summer vacations in view of the rapidly rising Coronavirus cases in the state. Telangana State United Teachers' Federation (TSUTF) had submitted a representation in this regard to the Education Department on April 19, which is still pending with the office of chief secretary Somesh Kumar.

OTHER STORIES

POLICE ARREST
BURGLAR GANG,
SEIZE 7.5 TOLA GOLDDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, APRIL 24

The Godavarikhani Two Town police officials nabbed the gang of five burglars who were indulged in various theft cases, 8 incline colony of Godavarikhani in Peddapalli district on Saturday.

According to the police, the accused five were identified as Bachhala Praveen Kumar (19), Insula Kiran (18), Namtabad Raviteja (19) and Chittari Vasanth Kumar (21) residents of 8 incline and Potla Preetham (25) resident of Pothana colony of Godavarikhani town.

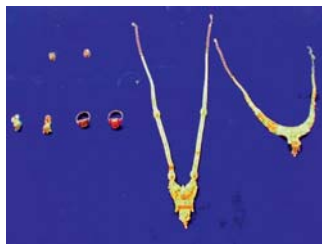
Habituated to luxurious life, the gang five indulged in various theft cases in the Godavarikhani town. On 24 March, they broke out into Ajmeera Venkateshwarlu's house who resides at quarter number T1-14 and stole 7.5 tola of gold by cutting the door lock of the house.

With the complaint lodged by Venkateshwarlu, the Sub Inspector Santosh Kumar along with his team started investigation and by observing the footage from the CCTV cameras installed at various locations in the colony where Venkateshwarlu resides, they nabbed the three members of the gang first during the vehicle check at the shopping complex at 8 incline colony and with the information extracted from them the police also nabbed the other two of the gang.

The police seized 7.5 tolas of gold from their possession worth ₹2.25 lakh and by registering the case sent them for remand.

The DCP Ravinder, ACP Umendar and CI Srinivas Rao appreciated the SI Santosh Kumar and his team head constable P. Rajendra Prasad, constables Dhanujay, Malliah and Sridhar for cracking the theft cases and for nabbing the gang of five burglars.

● **HABITUATED TO** luxurious life, the gang five indulged in various theft cases in the Godavarikhani town. On 24 March, they broke out into Ajmeera Venkateshwarlu's house who resides at quarter number T1-14 and stole 7.5 tola of gold.



Gold ornaments which were recovered from the burglars.



BJP state president, Karimnagar MP, Bandi Sanjay Kumar takes part in a road show in Warangal on Saturday. —BY ARRANGEMENT

TRS fielded rowdy sheeters
in GWMC polls, says SanjayDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, APRIL 24

The TRS party realised that the BJP is going to win the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) elections. TRS is afraid that BJP would put a check on the land-grabbing business of the its leaders. If good people are made corporators, they will not do anything. Hence, rowdy sheeters and gundas who hack heads, hands and legs were being fielded, said BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar.

Taking part in a roadshow in Warangal on Saturday as part of the GWMC election campaign, he said Chief Minister K. Chandrababhai Rao gave coaching classes to all MLAs on land grabbing. In practicality, the MLAs from Warangal came out as toppers with the highest marks in the coaching, Sanjay said.

Addressing the Rampur dumping yard issue, which is troubling the surrounding villages, he said the garbage is reaching Waddepalli lake which is one of the drinking water sources of the city. He said the BJP will see to it that the lake is not polluted if voted to power.

Sanjay said the BJP lead Central government has allocated crores of rupees for oxygen plants in hospitals across the country. Oxygen plants have been sanctioned in 5 hospitals in Telangana but the state government

ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO CONDUCT
POLLS TO WARANGAL CIVIC BODYDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, APRIL 24

Warangal Urban district collector and electoral officer, Rajiv Gandhi Hanumanthu stated that all arrangements have been made for the peaceful conduct of the GWMC elections.

Election materials distribution centres are being set up at NIT, Arts and Science college and counting centres at Delhi Public School in compliance with the Covid-19 protocol. "We are providing masks, hand gloves and sanitisers to all the staff. We are keeping a medical officer at each polling station and also making masks and sanitisers available at the

polling stations," he said.

The collector said that they have taken steps to provide the postal ballot facility to the Covid-19 patients, and voters who are above 80 years old.

The distribution of photo voter slips is underway and will be finished by the 27th of this month, the collector said.

Hanumanthu said they have identified 167 problematic, 203 sensitive and 159 hypercritical polling stations and said that they are recording the entire polling process in these areas.

He said 1221 ballot boxes are ready for polling at 898 polling stations.

● **ADDRESSING THE** Rampur dumping yard issue, which is troubling the surrounding villages, sanjay said the garbage is reaching Waddepalli lake which is one of the drinking water sources of the city. BJP will see to it that the lake is not polluted if voted to power.

has not set them up.

"While Prime Minister, Narendra Modi has reviewed the second wave of the pandemic situation twice, KCR has not done it even once," he pointed.

Sanjay alleged that KCR's family trading their illegally amassed money in businesses in America, London and Dubai. Stating that the Central government is giving crores of rupees as funds for the development of Warangal, he alleged that the TRS is diverting them. He also warned that when BJP comes to power, KCR will be sent to jail.

"The BJP works for the welfare of the society. Give us one chance by voting us to power. We will develop and prove ourselves," he assured.

Covid patients forced
to wait for treatment

Few pvt. hospitals are maintaining a waiting list to admit patients

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, APRIL 24

Moderate to critical Covid-19 patients have been forced to wait for treatment in private hospitals as most of the beds were filled up. A few private hospitals have been maintaining a waiting list to admit the Covid-19 patients in Nizamabad. Patients from Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Jagtial, Nirmal and neighbouring Nanded district in Maharashtra thronged Nizamabad for Covid-19 treatment.

A few patients preferred to join in Government hospitals for Covid-19 treatment, but others approached private hospitals. The district administration has accorded permission for 70 private hospitals in Nizamabad, Bodhan, Armoor towns to treat Covid-19 patients. Based on beds capacity and infrastructure, the private hospitals are charging ₹18,000 to ₹30,000 per day for Covid-19 treatment.

Medicines and laboratory tests expenditures are collected extra from the patients. Based on their health conditions, the Covid-19 patients discharged from 5-14 days, the sources said. However, few critical patients succumbed while undergoing

DOCTORS TREATING EVERY PATIENT AS
COVID VICITM, ALLEGES PATIENT'S KINDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, APRIL 24

Relatives of some patients allege that doctors are looking at all the cases as related to Covid and not in other angles when a patient admitted to the hospital.

Doctors are under tremendous pressure with more number of people admitting to the hospitals with covid symptoms.

Recently, a patient of Boath mandal who was

suffering from Typhoid died since doctors treated him for covid despite he was tested negative for covid at RIMS, Adilabad.

It seems that the doctors might have thought that the patient was affected with covid and the patient died as he was not treated for typhoid which was his real health problem.

All the health-related issues are being attributed to the covid when people complained of health issues.

treatment. The families of Covid-19 patients mobilising funds for treatment from their available sources.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, a corporate hospital representative said that they are monitoring the beds capacity to accommodate critical patients. Remdesivir injections and other medicines are available in hospitals, but beds capacity is not sufficient for requirement, he said. "We are maintaining a waiting list of patients to admit them, whenever the bed is available," he explained.

The hospital authorities inquired about oxygen lev-

els and severity of Covid-19 patients to admit in their hospitals. Emergency wings in private hospitals round the clock are working to serve the people. Ambulances are available in hospital premises to carry the critical patients.

Meanwhile, people thronged government testing centres and private labs for rapid and RTPCR tests for the Covid-19 confirmation.

Most of the people have been staying in home isolation and getting treatment. The patients with comorbidities and severe symptoms approaching hospitals.

VILLAGE UNDER
LOCKDOWN
WARNS ₹2K FINE
ON VIOLATORSDC CORRESPONDENT
KAMAREDDY, APRIL 24.

A tribal village (thanda) in Kamareddy district announced voluntary lockdown on Saturday to prevent the spread of Covid-19. The gram panchayat of Gajyanaik thana in Machareddy mandal also decided to impose ₹2,000 penalty of lockdown violators and ₹100 fine for not wearing a face mask.

The gram panchayat members conducted an emergency meeting chaired by sarpanch Hanji Naik on Saturday and took decisions. They also invited presidents of various shops associations and suggested they shut their shops by 1 pm during lockdown from April 25 to May 10. They also advised villagers not to come out from homes other than emergency works. Gajya Naik thana turned role model for other gram panchayats in Kamareddy district for strictly implementing self-lockdown norms.

OFFICIALS SET UP TOLL FREE NUMBER
FOR FARMERS TO LODGE COMPLAINTSDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, APRIL 24

Since farmers are about to get their yield from the crops produced during 2020-21 Rabi season, a call center was established to help them, informed the district collector G. Ravi inaugurating the call center at the Collectorate complex building here in Jagtial district on Saturday.

The farmers can dial the toll-free number 18004258187 to clear the doubts if they have any regarding the selling of food grains and also for resolving the problems they face at the procurement centres, he added.

Ravi ordered the officials concerned to respond to the calls at appropriate time and

extend their full support to the farmers by giving them complete information about what farmers seek along with entering the details of the complaints into the register.

The officials estimated that around 6,99,096 metric tonnes of paddy was produced by the farmers by cultivating them in about 2,91,290 acres of land. The civil supply department estimated that they can procure around 6,50,045 metric tonnes of food grains during this Rabi season. Out of an estimated 400 centres across the district, 259 procurement centres were established, which procured 582 metric tonnes of food grains along with transporting 222 metric tonnes to the mills, he informed.

POLLING STAFF APPOINTED FOR GP POLLS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, APRIL 24

Randomisation of polling staff for gram panchayat elections began on Saturday. Elections will be conducted for 4 sarpanch

and 77 ward member posts in 56 gram panchayats in the district. Additional collector B.S. Latha conducted randomisation of polling personnel including 106 presiding officers and 119 additional staff.



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TRS, BJP luring
leaders of each other
to build up baseDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, APRIL 24

The TRS and BJP parties are poaching each other's leaders and joining the activists and leaders of opponent party into their parties to strengthen their base before the elections to be held for the Adilabad rural ZPTC seat.

Every day, party joining programs are being held in several places in the Adilabad rural mandal.

Leaders of both the TRS and BJP are focusing on luring the leaders of the opponent party into their party to give an impression that people and leaders are with their party. The leaders of these parties are on this mode to lure the Adivasis vote bank.

The leader of both the parties took the winning Adilabad rural ZPTC election as a prestige issue and spending huge money on the campaigning.

It is surprising to note that these two parties have started arranging feasts to the voters to influence them. People are saying in the villages that, party supporters and leaders and activists were seen in election campaigning in the villages in the day time and the same were seen in the camps, where feasts with liquor and meat arranged in the Adilabad town in

● **THE LEADER** of both the parties took the winning of Adilabad rural ZPTC election as a prestige issue and spending huge money on the campaigning.

the nighttime.

It is said that even political leaders are bearing auto charges for their transportation to come to the camps from their villages and dropping them home after the celebration.

TRS MLA Jogu Ramanna is campaigning in the villages by highlighting the welfare and development schemes being implemented in the villages by the state government.

While BJP leaders including Adilabad MP Soyam Bapurao, party district president Paval Shankar are campaigning highlighting the failure of the state government in the implementation of various schemes and problems faced by the farmers.

Meanwhile, Congress leaders led by the TPCC state general secretary, Gandrath Sujatha are campaigning rigorously in the villages and trying their best to expose the failures of both the state and central governments as far as development and welfare are concerned.

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Justice Ramana had ensured end of internet ban in Kashmir

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Justice Nuthalapati Venkata Ramana on Saturday was sworn as Chief Justice of India. He was administered the oath of office by President Ram Nath Kovind. He is the 48th Chief Justice of India with a term of a little over one year and four months until August 26, 2022.

The swearing in ceremony of Justice Ramana, amongst others dignitaries, was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and his predecessor Sharad A. Bobde.

Justice Bobde had his last working day in the top court on April 23. Justice Ramana was elevated as a judge of the top court on February 17, 2014.

Born in an agricultural family on August 27, 1957, in Ponnavaram village, Krishna District, Justice Ramana did his B.Sc., B.L. and was enrolled as an advocate on February 10, 1983.

Justice Ramana began his career as a journalist of a leading Telugu newspaper for a short while before turning to legal practice in 1983.

During his student days, he was known as an activist, involved in the issues concerning farmers and industrial workers.

Justice Ramana was appointed

● He was also a part of a five-judge constitution bench of the top court that had in a landmark verdict in 2016 ordered restoration of the Congress government in Arunachal Pradesh. The bench had said the “clock should be turned back” as it quashed all decisions of the governor that precipitated its fall in January, holding them “violative” of the Constitution.

as a permanent Judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court on June 27, 2000. He functioned as Acting Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court from March 10, 2013 to May 20, 2013.

He was appointed as the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court on September 2, 2013.

The new chief justice of India, has authored path-breaking verdicts as a Supreme Court judge and one of them led to the end of internet ban in Jammu and Kashmir, and another brought the apex court under the ambit of transparency law.

He will demit office on August 26 next year and have to deal with key task of ensuring smooth functioning of apex court amid resurgence of the coronavirus pandemic. The judgement penned by Justice Ramana in the Anuradha Bhasin case related to internet ban in Jammu and Kashmir following the abroga-

tion of Article 370 provisions has been hailed by many as one of the progressive verdicts.

It held that freedom of speech and conducting business on the internet are protected under the Constitution and had directed the Jammu and Kashmir administration to immediately review curb orders.

The bench had directed the authorities in the Union territory to immediately review all orders suspending internet services and said orders not in accordance with the law must be revoked.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice Ramana had in March last year declined to refer to a larger seven-judge bench a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Centre's decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370.

He was part of a five-judge constitution bench that had held in November 2019 that the office of the CJI was a public authority under the Right to Information Act.

In the November 2019 verdict, the top court had also said “judicial independence has to be kept in mind” while disclosing information in “public interest”.

He was also a part of a five-judge constitution bench of the top court that had in a landmark verdict in 2016 ordered restoration of the Congress government in Arunachal Pradesh.



Covid patients getting free oxygen, by a Sikh organisation at Indirapuram Gurdwara in Ghaziabad on Saturday.

- PTI

Centre says Delhi got more oxygen than they asked for

On ground, people continue to beg for oxygen beds in hospitals

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

The harrowing times for Covid-19 patients and their families continues despite several high level meetings by the Centre for the last couple days as hospitals in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat continued sending SOS messages for Oxygen to the Centre and state governments and patients died due to lack of O2.

While Delhi Chief Minister Mr Arvind Kejriwal wrote to all States requesting them to divert their spare Oxygen reserves to Delhi, Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh ordered shutdown of operations of some of the state's industries to divert Oxygen for medical use as five patients died at a hospital in Amritsar due its shortage. On his part Union

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said Delhi has been allotted more than the Oxygen quota they had asked for and UT government has to now rationalise the quota in a timely manner but on ground people continue to beg for Oxygen beds as Delhi hospitals kept pleading for Oxygen.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi held another round of meeting on measures to increase supply of Oxygen and related equipment. The government has announced to waive off basic customs duty and health cess on Oxygen and equipment related such as Oxygen concentrator and cylinders, ventilators and ventilator masks and all other devices that can be used for Oxygen generation.

Besides, Covid-19 related vaccines will also be exempted from

● IAF planes are bringing in cryogenic oxygen tanks from Singapore and transporting oxygen tanks in the country to reduce travel times. Railways Oxygen Express has delivered nearly 150 tonnes of Oxygen in the last 24 hours in Maharashtra and UP.

basic customs duty. Centre feels these measures will boost availability of these crucial items and make them cheaper. The exemption is for three months.

India on Saturday recorded 3,46,787 new cases and 2,624 deaths. At the same time, over 2.19 lakh recoveries have been registered in the last 24 hours and Case Fatality Rate has come down to 1.14%.

Eleven States/UTs have not reported any Covid deaths in the last

24 hours. Ten states - Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan - reported 74.15% of the new cases in the country. While Maharashtra reported the highest daily new cases at 63,818 and 676 deaths, there was some respite in Mumbai where major decline in fresh cases were noticed.

Mumbai reported 5,888 new cases and 71 deaths while 8549 people got cured.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation released the third Sero survey data, in which 36.30% of residents of Mumbai were found to be positive. The survey was carried out on blood samples of 10,197 people.

During the meeting, Prime Minister emphasised the immediate

need to augment the supply of medical grade oxygen as well as equipment required for patient care both at home and in hospitals. It was suggested that import of equipment related to providing Oxygen to patients needs to be expedited.

This will boost availability of these items and make them cheaper.

Senior officials in the Centre said the Government is taking a lot of measures to improve supply of Oxygen and medical supplies.

IAF planes are bringing in cryogenic oxygen tanks from Singapore and transporting oxygen tanks in the country to reduce travel times. Railways Oxygen Express has delivered nearly 150 tonnes of Oxygen in the last 24 hours in Maharashtra and UP and more trains are on way.

ARMY RESCUES 2 KIDNAPPED ONGC STAFFERS

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APR. 24

The Indian Army and Nagaland police with the support of some local villagers on Friday night rescued two employees of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), who were kidnapped earlier this week from Sivasagar, in Mon district of Nagaland. The operations are still on to trace the third abductee, Retul Saikia.

The rescued employees were identified as Alakesh Saikia and Mohini Mohan Gogoi. The police also recovered one AK 47 from the location, the ONGC employees were rescued.

Informing that security forces had launched joint coordinated operations since April 21, the day suspected Ulfa-I rebels had kidnapped three employees of ONGC from a rig site at Lakwa oil field in Assam's Sivasagar district, security sources said that security forces have also sealed the international border with Myanmar.

Meanwhile, a total of 14 linkmen, who aided the United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent (Ulfa-I) in kidnapping the three ONGC employees, were apprehended by Assam police. The Assam police also said that it has received specific information that the banned Ulfa (Independent) was involved in the kidnapping of three ONGC employees from

MAOISTS KILL ABDUCTED JAWAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, APR 24

A jawan who was abducted by Maoists three days ago in Chhattisgarh's south Bastar district of Bijapur was brutally killed by the ultras, police said on Saturday.

Body of Murali Tati, who was a sub-inspector in district reserve group (DRG), an exclusive tribal counterinsurgency wing of Chhattisgarh police, was found on the outskirts of the village of Peddepara in Bijpur district early on Saturday morning, Bastar police said.

The slain jawan was abducted by Maoists near Palsumpara under Gangalur police station on April 21. Maoists' west Bastar division owned responsibility for his killing. The jawan's widow had earlier appealed to the Maoists to release.

Covid-19: New rules for pvt hosps in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY I DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 24

With many states witnessing a surge in deaths of Covid-19 patients due to shortage of oxygen, ventilators and critical care facilities, the Kerala government has initiated measures to prevent such a horrific situation in the state.

The state reported 26,685 new cases on Saturday taking the total number of active cases to 1,98,576. Besides, 25 deaths were also reported in Saturday taking the death toll to 5,080.

During the last 24 hours 1,31,155 samples were tested and the test positivity rate was 20.35.

In the wake of the huge spike in cases reported in the state over the past one week, the government apart from utilising the public health care infrastructure to the fullest, has decided to involve

the private hospitals in an organised manner for providing critical care to the Covid-19 patients.

Chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday convened a meeting of representatives of the private hospitals. The meeting decided to mandatorily set aside 25 per cent of beds mandatorily for Covid-19 patients.

The chief minister also directed the private hospitals to not to levy high charges for Covid-19 treatment. He assured the private hospitals that the pending dues connected with Covid care under Karunya scheme would be cleared in two weeks.

The private hospital managements have urged the chief minister not to impose uniform treatment rates for Covid related complications. They pointed out that the rates are based on the facilities provided in each hospital including speciality care.

MADHYA PRADESH CONG MLA DIES OF COVID-19

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APR 24

Tribal Congress MLA from Alirajpur district in Madhya Pradesh Kalawati Bhuria died of Covid-19 in a private hospital in Indore early on Saturday morning, family sources said on Saturday.

She is the first sitting MLA in MP who succumbed to the virus. She was admitted to the Shalby Hospital in Indore 14 days ago after she tested positive.

Her condition deteriorated fast two days ago and the end came early on Saturday morning, her family sources said.

“Her lungs were 70 per cent infected. She was on ventilator”, hospital's medical superintendent Vivek Joshi said.

The 47-year-old leader who had shunned marriage to devote her time for social service was emerging as a key tribal leader of Congress in Madhya Pradesh, particularly among her tribe of Bhil in western belt of the state.

The niece of former Union minister and Congress MLA Kantilal Bhuria, Kalawati was elected as Jhabua district zilla panchayat president four times before being elected as MLA from Jobat constituency in Alirajpur district in 2018 polls.

“She was a very popular leader in the tribal region in the state. Her death is an irreparable loss to Congress”, former minister and MP PCC vice-president Raja Pateria said.

Former chief minister and veteran Congress leader Kamal Nath expressed shock and grief over the untimely death of the party legislator.

“The news of the sad demise of Jobat MLA Kalawati Bhuria is very disturbing and shocking. She was an active, gutsy, strong-willed and friendly legislator”, Mr Nath tweeted.

Meanwhile, two Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers of MP cadre died of Covid-19 on Friday.

The two deceased forest officers are

Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Force Ashish Verma and Sendhwa divisional forest officer S S Meheta.

● The niece of former Union minister and Congress MLA Kantilal Bhuria, Kalawati was elected as Jhabua district zilla panchayat president four times before being elected as MLA from Jobat constituency in Alirajpur district in 2018 polls.

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday wrote to all Chief Ministers of all states requesting them for oxygen if they have any to spare.

Kejriwal said that he would be grateful if the chief ministers could provide Delhi with any oxygen, along with tankers, from their state or any organization in their state. He asked for this request to be treated as an SOS.

He also wrote that due to the severe rise in Covid cases in the last

few days, many Delhi hospitals had run out of oxygen.

Kejriwal wrote that while the Central Government is helping Delhi in this regard, the intensity of the spread is so severe that the quantity is proving inadequate.

Kejriwal tweeted, “I am writing to all CMs requesting them to provide oxygen to Delhi if they have spare. Though Central govt. is also helping us, the severity of corona is such that all available resources are proving inadequate.”

In the letter, he wrote,

“Delhi does not produce any oxygen. Due to the severe rise in corona cases in the last few days, many Delhi hospitals have run out of oxygen. Daily supplies of oxygen to Delhi are woefully short of our requirements.”

The CM added, “Central Government is also helping us a lot in this regard. However, the intensity of the spread is so severe that it is proving inadequate. Therefore, I would be grateful if you could provide us with any oxygen, along with tankers, from your state or any

organization in your state. Kindly treat this as an SOS. I would be personally grateful for your support.”

Two days ago, Kejriwal had said how in this time of crisis, all states should come together to help each other out. Calling the current wave a collective crisis, the Delhi Chief Minister had said, “If we decide to split ourselves into Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, India will not survive. We need to come together and unite as Indians and as human beings.”

34-hour curfew begins in J&K as situation continues to be grim

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, APRIL 24

Entire Jammu and Kashmir was placed under a complete curfew for 34 hours from Saturday night in view of worsening Covid-19 situation.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, while taking to micro-blogging site Twitter announced, “Complete Corona curfew to be observed in the Union Territory from 8PM, 24th April (Saturday) till 6AM, April 26 (Monday). Essential and emergency services to be allowed. All

● J&K has witnessed an upward trajectory in Covid-19 cases over the past couple of weeks. The officials said that the UT on Saturday reported 2,030 fresh cases, taking the tally to 1,58,374.

market, commercial institutions will remain closed”. (sic)

J&K has witnessed an upward trajectory in Covid-19 cases over the past couple of weeks. The officials said that the UT on Saturday reported 2,030 fresh

cases, taking the tally to 1,58,374. Also, 15 more people died of the virus in the last 24 hours, they said. With these, the total fatality count has went up to 2,126.

The government had earlier this week extended night curfew in all twenty districts of the Union Territory besides announcing a slew of other tough measures including allowing only fifty per cent shops and other business establishments on alternate days to curb the spread of the virus.

However, Kashmir's

senior most official Divisional Commissioner P.K.Pole had said that the government has no plan to impose fresh lockdown in the Valley as the administration is following the mantra of *Jaan bhi, Jahaan bhi*.

Around the same time, the authorities in J&K and Ladakh had informed the Union government that the surge in the positive cases in the twin UTs is a result of inbound travellers as many of them have turned out to be the carriers of the asymptomatic transmission of virus.

CBI BOOKS FORMER MAHA HOME MINISTER

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 24

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday conducted searches at former Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh's premises in Mumbai and his hometown Nagpur after registering a case against him in connection with allegations of corruption levelled against him by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

However, the NCP has termed the agency's action as a ‘political witch-hunt.’

“The preliminary enquiry (PE) prima facie revealed that a cognisable case is made out in the matter wherein former Maharashtra Home Minister, Anil Deshmukh and unknown others attempted to obtain undue advantage for improper and dishonest performance of his public duty,” said the CBI FIR.

The CBI has charged Mr Deshmukh under Section 7 of the amended Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), 2018, along with Section 120 B of the IPC. After registering the case, the CBI conducted a search operation at a number of locations including the premises of Mr Deshmukh in Mumbai, Nagpur and other places. A CBI team had arrived in Nagpur from Delhi on Friday night and carried out searches at Mr Deshmukh's house.

IN BRIEF

Stop killings, Myanmar told

Jakarta, April 24: Indonesian President Joko Widodo has said that Southeast Asian leaders have demanded an immediate end to killings and the release of political detainees in Myanmar, in an emergency summit with its top general and coup leader in the Indonesian capital.

The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations also told Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing in the talks Saturday in Jakarta that a dialogue between contending parties in Myanmar should immediately start, Widodo said, adding that the situation in the troubled Southeast Asian nation is unacceptable.

Zarif to visit Iraq, Qatar today

Tehran, April 24: Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is to visit Iraq and Qatar on Sunday, his ministry announced, following reported talks brokered by Baghdad between Tehran and regional rival Riyadh.

The talks in the Iraqi capital earlier this month, which have not been confirmed by either capital, were held at the level of officials not ministers and aimed at restoring relations severed five years ago, an Iraqi official and a Western diplomat said in Baghdad. Tehran has neither confirmed nor denied the reports saying only that it has “always welcomed” dialogue with Saudi Arabia. Riyadh has flatly denied them.

PoC shot: 7 deputies on leave

Elizabeth City (US), April 24: Seven North Carolina deputies have been placed on leave in the aftermath of a PoC man being shot and killed by members of their department serving drug-related search and arrest warrants, authorities said Friday.

The disclosure comes as calls increase for the release of deputy body camera footage amid signs, including emergency scanner traffic, that Andrew Brown Jr. was shot in the back and killed as he was trying to drive away.

Pasquotank County Sheriff's Office Maj. Aaron Wallio confirmed the number of deputies on leave due to the shooting in an email Friday.

New crew reaches ISS

Washington, April 24: A recycled SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying four astronauts docked with the International Space Station early Saturday, the third time Elon Musk's company has safely delivered humans to the orbital outpost. The spacecraft named Endeavour, piloting herself autonomously, locked on to a docking port at 5:08 am Eastern time (0908 GMT), some 260 miles (420 kilometers) above the south Indian Ocean.

Two hours after the process was completed, Endeavour's quartet posed for photos with the last crew of four sent by SpaceX, and three Russian cosmonauts — making the ISS unusually crowded with 11 people in total.

CHAUVIN TO BE SENTENCED ON JUNE 16

Minneapolis, April 24: Sacked US police officer Derek Chauvin will be sentenced on June 16 for the murder of African American George Floyd in a case that sparked nationwide anti-racism protests. The Hennepin County District Court in the Midwestern city of Minneapolis, where handcuffed Floyd died last May, said in its online schedule that the white ex-cop will be sentenced at 1:30 pm (1830 GMT).

The ex-officer — who knelt on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes — faces up to 40 years in prison after being found guilty of all charges Tuesday over the death of the unarmed man.

The crime was recorded by a bystander whose video shocked the world, triggering mass protests across the United States and beyond, while also prompting a national reckoning on racial injustice and police brutality.

Last year's killing of Floyd as he lay face down and handcuffed saying repeatedly “I can't breathe” has prompted some police reforms, but advocates, including President Joe Biden, say more is needed.

While the Chauvin trial progressed, Minneapolis was rocked by the police shooting of yet another African American.



New Zealand band Six60 perform at Eden Park in Auckland, on Saturday. Six60 is being billed as the biggest live act in the world since the Coronavirus pandemic struck after New Zealand stamped out the spread of the virus. — AP

Clot: US lifts J&J vax pause

Washington, April 24: US health officials lifted an 11-day pause on Covid-19 vaccinations using Johnson & Johnson's single-dose shot, after scientific advisers decided its benefits outweigh a rare risk of blood clot.

The government uncovered 15 vaccine recipients who developed a highly unusual kind of blood clot, out of nearly 8 million people given the J&J shot. All were women, most under age 50. Three died, and seven remain hospitalised.

But ultimately Friday, the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention decided that J&J's one-and-done vaccine is critical to fight the pandemic and that the small clot risk could be handled with warnings to help younger women decide if they should use that shot or an alternative.

Above all else, health and safety are at the forefront of our decisions, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said. Our vaccine safety systems are working. We identified exceptionally rare events out of millions of doses” of the J&J shot and will continue to monitor them.

The US decision similar to how European regulators are rolling out J&J's shot comes after CDC advisers earlier Friday voted 10-4 to resume vaccinations but panelists made clear that they must come with warnings about the risk. The group debated but ultimately steered clear of outright age restrictions. This is an age group that is most at risk (of the clotting) that is getting vaccine predominantly to save other peoples' lives and morbidity, not their own. And I think we have a responsibility to be certain that they know this,” said Dr. Sarah Long of Drexel University College of Medicine, who voted against the proposal because she felt it did not go far enough in warning women. The panel members all agreed the J&J vaccine “should be put back into circulation, chairman Dr. Jose Romero, Arkansas' health secretary, said. — AP

New, more potent virus strain in Lanka

Colombo, April 24: A new Coronavirus strain that is airborne and more potent than all those found previously in Sri Lanka has been discovered in the island nation.

The variant, which is highly transmissible, can remain airborne for nearly an hour and is spreading fast, Neelika Malavige, the head of the Department of Immunology and Molecular Sciences of the Sri Jayawardenapura University said.

This variant of Coronav-

irus is more highly transmissible than all found so far in the island. The droplets can remain airborne for nearly an hour, Malavige said. Health authorities feared that the new variant is spreading rapidly after last week's New Year celebrations with more younger people getting infected.

In the next two incubation periods, the disease can progress to a third wave, Upul Rohana, of the Public Health Inspectors said. — PTI

NZ PAUSES TRAVEL BUBBLE WITH W. AUSTRALIA AFTER VIRUS CASE

Wellington, April 24: New Zealand on Friday paused arrivals from Western Australia, temporarily excluding the state's travellers from a quarantine-free bubble between the countries due to a Covid-19 outbreak.

“As set out in our Trans-Tasman bubble protocols, travel between New Zealand and Western Australia has been paused, pending further advice from the state government,” a state-

ment on the New Zealand government website said.

Earlier on Friday the Perth and Peel regions were sent into a three-day lockdown after Western Australia recorded its first community transmission of the virus in 12 months. A man in his 50s, who recently left hotel quarantine, flew into Melbourne from Perth on Wednesday and tested positive for the Coronavirus earlier Friday. — AFP

GERMANY BERLIN RESTRICTS TRAVEL FROM 'HIGH-RISK' INDIA

Berlin, April 24: Germany will shut out all travellers arriving from India apart from its own citizens, Health Minister Jens Spahn said Saturday as a new variant has made the South Asian country the latest Coronavirus hotspot. “We're very worried about the new mutation of the virus discovered in India. So as not to endanger our vaccination programme, India travel has to be significantly limited,” Spahn told the Funke newspaper group. — AP

KUWAIT ALL COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS FROM INDIA SUSPENDED

Dubai, April 24: Kuwait on Saturday suspended all direct commercial flights from India due to the worsening Covid-19 situation in the country.

The move came after instructions from health authorities. Kuwait's directorate general of civil aviation said that it had suspended all direct commercial flights from India, effective April 24. Passengers arriving from India or via another country will be banned from entering unless they have spent 14 days out of India. — PTI

Merkel defends new law

Bwelin, April 24: Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday defended a fiercely opposed new law imposing tough Coronavirus restrictions across Germany, including night curfews and school closures.

With many of its neighbours lifting restrictions despite higher virus rates, Europe's biggest economy is bucking the trend with the new national law dubbed the “emergency bra-

ke”. Passed amid huge protests in Berlin this week, the law prescribes uniform national restrictions

GERMANY

and is designed to end a tug of war between the federal government and Germany's 16 states.

The law “is something new in our fight against the pandemic. And I'm convinced that we need it urgently,” Merkel said in her weekly video podcast.

“If we manage to significantly and quickly reduce infections, gradual opening up will be possible in the near future,” she added. Tough measures will apply from Saturday in all regions with incidence rates of more than 100 new infections per 100,000 people over the last seven days. — AFP

OUT OF THE CAVE

Lombrives Cave, April 24: Ever wonder what it would feel like to unplug from a hyperconnected world and hide away in a cave for a few weeks? Fifteen people in France found out.

After 40 days in voluntary isolation in a dark, damp and vast cave, eight men and seven women who took part in a scientific experiment emerged Saturday from their self-seg-

regation in the Pyrenees. With big smiles, the 15 participants exited the Lombrives cave to a round of applause and basked in the light of day while wearing special glasses to protect their eyes after so long in the dark. “It's really warm!” said one.

For 40 days and 40 nights, the group lived in and explored the cave without a sense of time. There were

no clocks and no sunlight inside, where the temperature was 10 degrees Celsius (50 F) and the relative humidity stood at 100 percent. The cave dwellers had no contact with the outside world, no updates on the pandemic or any communication with friends and family above ground.

Scientists at the Human Adaption Institute leading the 1.2 million-euro \$1.5 million) “Deep Time” project

say the experiment will help them better understand how people adapt to drastic changes in living conditions and environments, something much of the world can relate to because of Coronavirus pandemic. In partnership with labs in France and Switzerland, scientists monitored the 15-member group's sleep patterns, social interactions and behavioural reactions via

Lost submarine sank: Indonesia

Says vessel went down, cracked open April 21

Banyuwangi (Indonesia), April 24: Indonesia's navy on Saturday said it found a missing submarine, indicating the vessel with 53 crew members had sunk and cracked open, and that there was no hope of finding survivors.

Military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said the presence of an oil slick as well as the discovery of debris near the location of KRI Nanggala 402's last dive on Wednesday off the island of Bali were clear proof of the vessel had sunk.

Indonesia earlier considered the vessel to be only missing. Navy Chief Yudo Margono told a press conference in Bali, “If it's an explosion, it will be in pieces. The cracks happened gradually in some parts when it went down from 300 metres to 400 metres to 500 metres...If there was an explosion, it would be heard by the sonar.” The navy previously said it believes the submarine

● **THE NAVY** previously said it believes the submarine sank to a depth of 600-700 metres (2,000-2,300 feet), much deeper than its collapse depth of 200 metres (655 feet), at which point water pressure would be greater than the hull could withstand.

sank to a depth of 600-700 metres (2,000-2,300 feet), much deeper than its collapse depth of 200 metres (655 feet), at which point water pressure would be greater than the hull could withstand. The cause of the disappearance was still uncertain.

The navy had previously said an electrical failure could have left the submarine unable to execute emergency procedures to resurface. Margono said in the past two days, searchers found parts of a torpedo straightener, a grease bottle believed to be used to oil the periscope, debris

from prayer rugs and a broken piece from a coolant pipe that was refitted on the submarine in South Korea in 2012. “With the authentic evidence we found believed to be from the submarine, we have now moved from the sub miss' phase to sub sunk,” Margono said at the press conference, in which the items were displayed.

Margono said rescue teams from Indonesia and other countries will evaluate the findings. He said no bodies have been found so far. Officials previously said the submarine's oxygen supply would have run out early Saturday. An American reconnaissance plane, a P-8 Poseidon, landed Saturday and was set to join the search, along with 20 Indonesian ships, a sonar-equipped Australian warship and four Indonesian aircraft. Singaporean rescue ships were expected Saturday, while Malaysian rescue vessels were due Sunday. — AP

Israel, Gaza engage in exchange of fire

Jerusalem, April 24: Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired some three dozen rockets into Israel overnight Saturday, while the Israeli military struck back at targets operated by the ruling Hamas group. The exchange came as tensions in Jerusalem spilled over into the worst round of cross-border violence in months. The barrage of rocket fire came as hundreds of Palestinians clashed with Israeli police in east Jerusalem.

The clashes, in which at least four police and six protesters were injured, have become a nightly occurrence throughout the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and show no signs of stopping. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he held talks with top security officials about Gaza and Jerusalem. He said he instructed officials to be ready “for every scenario” in Gaza. In Jerusalem, he said Israel would guarantee “freedom of worship” for everyone, and he appealed for calm.

“We ask now for people to obey the law and I call for a calming of tempers on all sides.” The UN envoy to the region, Tor Wennesland, condemned the violence and said the United Nations was working with all sides to restore calm. “The provocative acts across Jerusalem must cease. The indiscri-

minate launching of rockets towards Israeli population centres violates international law and must stop immediately,” he said. “I reiterate my call upon all sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid further escalation, particularly during the Holy month of Ramadan and this politically charged time for all.”

Meanwhile, Israeli chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, is weighing “a series of steps for possible responses,” and preparations if the situation continued to escalate, the military said in a statement. He also postponed a trip to the United States that was scheduled for Sunday. The US also appealed for calm, while neighbouring Jordan, which serves as the custodian for Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites, condemned Israel's actions.

Jerusalem, home to holy sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2014, similar tensions erupted into a 50-day war between Israel and Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group.

The Israeli military said a total of 36 rockets were fired into Israel throughout the night. It said six rockets were intercepted, while most of the others landed in open areas. There were no reports of injuries. — AP

Biden: Atrocities against Armenians were genocide

Washington, April 24 : President Joe Biden has formally recognised that the systematic killings and deportations of hundreds of thousands of Armenians by Ottoman Empire forces in the early 20th century were “genocide” — using a term for the atrocities that his White House predecessors have avoided for decades over concerns of alienating Turkey.

With the acknowledgement, Biden followed through on a campaign promise he made a year ago Saturday — to recognise that the events of 1915 to 1923 were a deliberate effort to wipe out Armenians.

● **WITH THE** acknowledgement, Biden followed through on a campaign promise he made a year ago Saturday — the annual commemoration of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day — to recognise that the events of 1915 to 1923 were a deliberate effort to wipe out Armenians.

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the events of 1915 to 1923 were a deliberate effort to wipe out Armenians.

Biden used a presidential proclamation to make the pronouncement. While previous presidents have offered somber reflections of the dark moment in history via remembrance day proclamations, they have studiously avoided using the term genocide out of concern that it would complicate relations with Turkey — a NATO ally and important power in the Middle East. — AP

LANKAN EX-MINISTER, BROTHER ARRESTED OVER EASTER ATTACKS

Colombo, April 24: Sri Lankan Police on Saturday arrested a former minister and his brother for allegedly aiding and abetting the suicide bombers responsible for the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks in which 258 people, including 11 Indians, were killed. Rishad Bathiudeen, the leader of a minority Muslim party that is part of the main Opposition party, the SJB, and his brother Riyaj Bathiudeen were arrested from their respective residences.

“They have been arrested under the provisions of the prevention of terrorism Act based on direct, circumstantial and scientific evidence,” Ajith Rohana, the senior deputy inspector general, said.

In May last year, Riyaj was nabbed for making contacts with suicide bombers and given bail in Oct. Rishad, a former Minister of Industry and Commerce, was nabbed in Oct and given bail in Nov. over misappropriation of state resources. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

25 APRIL 2021



Sucheta Dasgupta
Off the beaten track

Hope and sorrow in the time of C-virus

A ghost lives in my body and watches over the state of my heart. It does not take up space. It refuses food and drink, and speaks only when spoken to. I consult it when I need to identify my feelings. For my benefit, it keeps a record of them. For some reason, strange or otherwise, I alone was never an adept at that.

The only time the ghost speaks to me of its own accord is when I am tired. Whenever I expend myself beyond my lung capacity, it tells me: This is how it felt for him, too, when, for instance, he resumed breathing for your sake, twice coming out from under ventilation. And the cold finger of guilt grips my heart.

The first time I heard the ghost speak was when I was perspiring over the griddle a full year after Baba died.

Baba went under ventilation three Marches ago, in the late spring of 2018. The lone tree tucked away at the back of the interstate bus terminus was full of stars.

Baba did not die of the coronavirus. Following cardiac and kidney failure, he died of septic shock. Between the two illnesses, the pneumonia was the common factor.

Baba, a doctor, has missed out on the whole pandemic plus the vaccine conversations.

I have given up exercising for fitness. There is no one to perform for, vie against, show off. It puts me on a better footing than the children in my neighbourhood, fretting because they want to but cannot play. Less than a month ago, I saw a desi mother supervising their games in the park as I silently applauded her. To me, she was the pith of society, salt of the earth. That was then, though. This is now. In-between, the coronavirus has exploded and is now spreading furious and fast.

Despite its no-pussyfooting bravado and stupendous majority, the government did not declare a lockdown on Holi. The Kumbh continued uninterrupted. The virus, meanwhile, reached the interiors and the second wave has since surpassed the first one. The daily case count is over three lakhs. Experts say the peak is many weeks away. India is notorious for its non-existent chains of primary and secondary medical infrastructure. My husband held that these omissions on the part of the government — failing to declare a curfew, call off the Kumbh and so on — fell on its policy blindspot.

Well, one didn't. The decision to hold an eight-phase legislative assembly election, ongoing in the present, was deliberate. My home state, West Bengal, was chosen for this singular punishment.

Our leaders thus dropped the ball when our severely constrained health workers had almost won the match. The latter slogged away alone. Many did not return home in days. The hospitals were full of despair.

A young man asked a photographer to click the smoke coming out of his mother's pyre. She was there.

The high courts stepped in. They bore upon the Centre to direct uninterrupted transport of oxygen across state borders. India is the world's largest producer of industrial grade oxygen. But earlier, state governments had refused to come on the same page on this simplest of measures.

Eventhough I am his eldest, I am not going to my hometown to perform Baba's annual rite. My younger sister will fill in for me. The coronavirus is a factor. But what made the decision for me is my awareness from the start that I have not been a good child. While he never needed me to, I did not help Baba take care of the family. No one took care of him, on the other hand. I spurned his wish for me to become a doctor. For the sake of my journalistic quest, I abandoned him.

My rishirin to Baba will be paid when I complete my memoir of our differences. Baba was a flawed man. But no one, including a never-genuinely exceptional me, had a mind like Baba's.

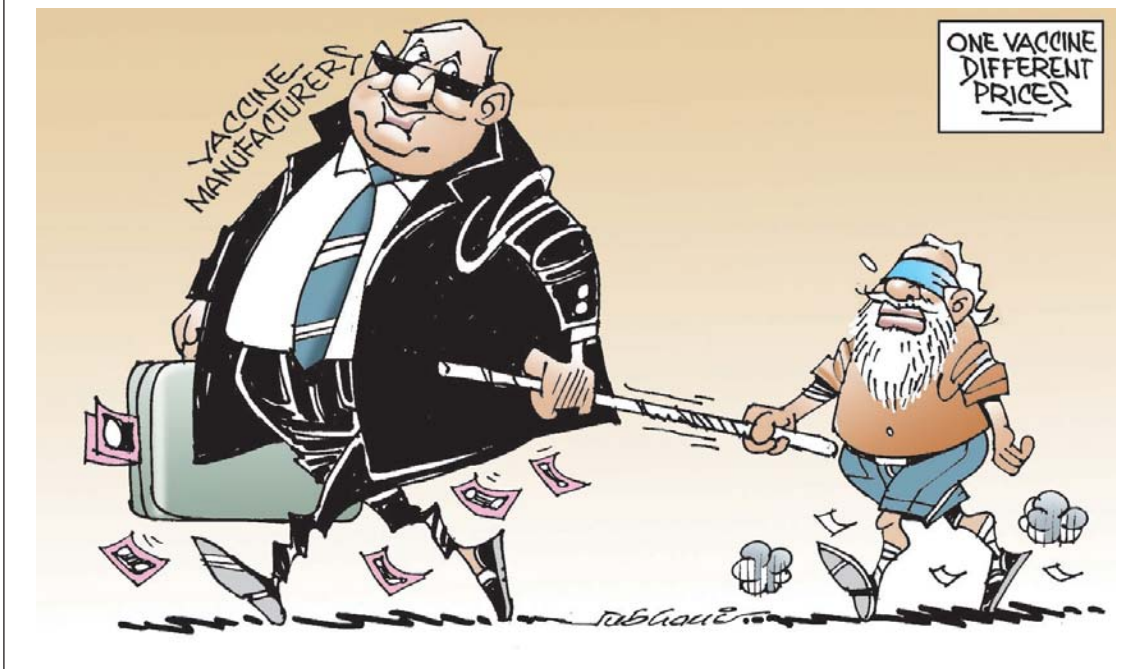
Periodically, the seed of my guilt bursts on my skin in angry hives. When I work very hard and accomplish a minuscule amount of good it goes away. I risk losing a bit of my memory of Baba whenever that occurs.

The young child I know in our condominium has started school. But school is online and she does not speak a word, and I worry that the lack of physical contact with classmates and peers will further rob her of that incentive. Whenever we meet, I am infected by her boundless energy. But she is more poised than I ever will be and never exposes her weak spots. Like her inability to articulate. Her absence of vocabulary.

I, too, had once chosen certainty over sharing, but I had been pushed to do that.

I dream of her growing up. To being from nothingness, darkness to light. Like Vak, daughter of Ambhrin, she will give a name to all existence, one by one, that will, in turn, give rise to noun, thought, knowledge and identity. That day, should I be around, she will probably look into my eyes with those great big ones of hers and there will be a reckoning. Or there will be not.

Subhani



An AWOL government



Manish Tewari
State of the Union

It is like a nightmarish deja-vu moment for me. Opening the debate on the demands for grants for the ministry of health and family welfare in the Lok Sabha on March 17, 2021, I, at the outset, stated: "Mr Speaker Sir, this discussion is taking place at a point in time when the world is being engulfed, if not overwhelmed, by the second wave of coronavirus infections." These words have unfortunately proven to be prophetic in the case of our nation.

The last two weeks have been a nightmare for India as the second wave of Covid-19 hit the nation in all its fury. Overflowing hospitals, oxygen scarcity, hoarded life-saving drugs being sold on the black market, diagnostic centres stretched to a breaking point and hospitals approaching the courts to maintain oxygen supplies. The worst is even cremation and burial grounds not being able to cope with inflow of dead bodies and death numbers literally being fudged. People are being cremated on makeshift platforms set up on public pavements — denied dignity even in death.

The imagery of the past fortnight could not have been more bizarre. On one hand, the Prime Minister and home minister were addressing frenzied supporters in West Bengal and, on the other hand, sick and even dying people were being turned back from hospitals for lack of space.

The government is AWOL — absent without leave.

What is, however, even far more felonious if it turns out to be true is that the Indian-origin double mutant strain, B.1.167, that is responsible for the current

rampage, was first detected as way back on the 5th of October 2020. Since both earlier mutations, E84Q and L425R, were discovered in the virus' crucial spike protein, its devastation potential should have been sequenced on a war footing. Instead, it was consigned to the back burner and never taken seriously because Covid infection numbers had started declining.

How could we have missed the second wave of Covid-19 with all the empirical evidence of hundred years of history staring us straight in the face? Downright negligence, coupled with hubris, made the governments, both at the Centre and some in the states, let their guard down.

Surprisingly, when the Prime Minister addressed the nation on Tuesday night, he said lockdown should be used as a measure of the last resort. On March 23, 2020, when India was at 341 cases and only seven dead, he was the most enthusiastic champion of a national lockdown.

All through the whole of last year, ministers and spokespersons of the NDA/BJP alliance kept touting it as the magic bullet that had saved millions of lives. *Jan Hai To Jahan Hai* (If there is life there would be paradise) — they sang in chorus. One year later, the Prime Minister and his band of not-so-merry men are singing an entirely different tune.

With a 32 lakh crore hole in the Union budget spread over two fiscals, 2020-21 and 2021-22, and no cushion to fall back upon, for the economy has been grossly mismanaged going back to the illogical demonetisation in November 2016, livelihoods are

With a 32 lakh crore hole in the Union budget spread over two fiscals, 2020-21 and 2021-22, and no cushion to fall back upon, for the economy has been grossly mismanaged, livelihoods are now being prioritised over lives

now being prioritised over lives. If the wheels of the economy do not keep ticking, the Union government stares at the spectre of bankruptcy.

It is, therefore, not trite that even in times of a raging pandemic, the allocations in the Union budget for health in the current fiscal are at best tardy. I had pointed this out during the Parliament debate.

In 2020-21, the ministry received an allocation of ₹67,112 crores. This is an increase of a measly 3.9 per cent over the revised estimates of 2019-20 — ₹64,609 crores. In 2019-20, the cumulative public health expenditure of all the states put together was a meagre ₹1,96,659 crores. The Union government's performance was even worse at ₹36,339 crores.

We all know India's health system is in shambles. Last year in these columns, I had argued that what we need is a new health deal for India. I had calculated that India requires an infrastructure investment of ₹6 lakh crores to rebuild its public health system bottom upwards. The human resource cost to staff it is separate.

Given this state of play, a second wave meant that it would be each to their own. One would be primarily responsible for saving one's own life and those of one's loved ones.

Had we not experienced the same a year back? The disadvantaged sections of our society — the millions of internal migrants who keep the wheels of our economy turning — were compelled to walk home as they were doused with

with chlorine water, cane-charged and made to suffer a million other ignominies by a callous state to prevent them from reaching their home and hearth. Once again as states announce lockdowns and curfews, you see the same stampede at bus stands and railway stations as people make a beeline back to their villages. The clock has turned a full cycle.

It, therefore, begs a question: Should people themselves not have come together to enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour during the lull when cases had come down? But given our intrinsic sense of fatalism — it is all in God's hands — we threw all caution to the winds. This, even when it is known that there is never a government when it is required the most.

Maybe, given the hand-to-mouth existence of the bulk of our people who need to migrate to urban agglomerations to keep their body and soul together, it is not even humanly possible to think beyond the next meal. They are thus destined to play the Russian roulette, for the choice is a really a binary between death by hunger or death by virus.

Will this situation ever change? Can we build a state-of-the-art education and healthcare system for our people? The answer is yes. However, it would first and foremost require population control. With 135 crore people and growing by the minute, it is just not possible for any system to provide even the basic level of amenities required for a decent living. A broad national consensus regarding the need to contain population needs to be created at the earliest. How many more tragedies would it take to understand this?

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

VACCINATION

My father is 45 years old and he should be vaccinated, but the CoWin app is not working for vaccination. We saw that many hospitals are not providing dates for vaccination and now it is being open for all above 18 years from May 1. This is unfortunate.

Pooja Harshitha Innani
Hyderabad

There is absolutely no communication from the state government about availability of vaccine. Many senior citizens who booked slots for second dose were informed that their slots were cancelled due to non availability of vaccines. Telephone queries to hospitals get the standard reply "We have no information when the stocks will come". The CoWin portal shows only a handful of UPHCs, most of which again show limited availability. The public needs to know if the government is trying to get vaccine stocks and by when they expect to get.

L. Prabhakar
Secunderabad

SECOND WAVE

The Centre and state governments have failed citizens of the country by throwing all caution to the winds. They did not prepare for the second wave, or stock up on essentials like drugs, oxygen, etc. What was the need to allow the Kumbh mela when the Markaz in Delhi, which was a much smaller gathering, was criticised so vehemently, even attributing a conspiracy theory. This is an emergency, and it would it not have been imprudent to postpone the elections in multiple states and opt for governors rule for six months where elections were due. The common people are just pawns to satiate the thirst for power hungry politicians.

M. Rajendar Reddy
Nizamabad

It is very disappointing to see the CM of Delhi pleading with the PM for Oxygen. Though there were warnings of a second Covid wave, we could not prevent it. Governments failed to reach out to people or guide them on how to go about this.

S. Venkateswara Rao
Hyderabad

HIDING DATA

Hiding data with regard to a pandemic leads to wrong planning, wrong results and costs human lives (*HC raps state for fudging Covid data, DC, April 24*). How can patients get cured if they hide their health issues from the doctor?

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Russia's 2-year lead over U.S.

HOUSTON, April. 24 American space officials today conceded that Russia would have atleast a two-year lead over the United States if its Soyuz-10 cosmonauts were preparing to man an orbiting space station. America's first prototype space station, basically a converted Apollo rocket called Skylab, is not due to be launched until 1973. It will house teams of three astronauts for an initial period of 28 days followed by two 560day missions.

Pradeep S. Mehta
and Prashant Tak

Haryana law a bad example: Populism won't create new jobs

Haryana is the latest addition to the growing phenomenon where Indian states are formulating laws and policies to reserve jobs for locals in the private sector. Other states that have undertaken such measures, though with negligible implementation, include Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Is it a race to the top or the bottom? It is certainly petty, immoral and may not achieve its objectives.

The Haryana government recently enacted the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act 2020, which requires private establishments that employ 10 or more workers to reserve 75 per cent of new jobs with a monthly salary of less than ₹50,000 for domiciles of Haryana.

It has resulted in a rift between the state government and the private sector, as evident from the backlash it has received from private entrepreneurs and industry bodies. Many private sector firms have threatened to move out.

This practice of regional protectionism has a ripple effect, that is likely to push other states to follow suit due to populist considerations, or a race to the bottom. It will end up restricting the freedom of workers to migrate and access better employment opportunities.

It may also push employers to leave places where such laws are applicable. Most critically, it will lead to the erosion of national unity.

The perceived economic rationale of such laws — to generate jobs for locals and boost local industrial ecosystems — seems to get defeated.

To govern a commercial ecosystem, the state government is entitled and mandated to enact laws concerning land, labour, capital and energy.

These laws are meant to ensure smooth commercial activity. Each or both of the objectives forms the economic rationale towards formulation of a law. Additionally, under the new paradigm of stakeholder capitalism, the government, private sector, labour and civil society need to work in a compact over each other's actions for inclusive and mutually beneficial governance.

While enacting this law, the Haryana government failed to do adequate pre-legislative exercises to test its economic rationale. It also undermined its compact of cooperation with the private sector. The law restricts the opportunities of migrant workers and disrupts the industrial ecosystem of Haryana. It seems like an expression of the state government's insecurity towards unemployment and a classic example of ad hocism in law-making, driven by populism.

There already exists a trust deficit between the government and private sector, as each has avoided accountability towards the other on various occasions. The private sector knowingly failed to adequately distribute its acquired wealth and institutionalise precarious jobs. The government has overregulated the private sector, leading to a high compliance burden. The world is debating stakeholder capitalism vs shareholder capitalism: to ensure that every enterprise works for society, not just its owners.

In both instances of state supervision of business, however, labour has borne the brunt of the adverse consequences. What is unfortunate is that self-interest, rather than mutual interest, drives the solution of modern economic problems. There is nonalignment between the problem statement specified in the statement of objects and reasons of the Haryana law and its objectives. The statement specifies the influx of migrants competing for low-paid jobs as the prime reason for the adverse impact on local infrastructure and housing, and proliferation of slums. It further attributes these factors to the rise of environmental and health issues, thus affecting the quality of life and livelihood.

It's true there is migrant influx for low-paid jobs in Haryana or the entire National Capital Region as it is in Mumbai or Kolkata. There can be two possible reasons. First, availability of abundant work opportunities under different industry segments; and second, lack of work in the states where the workers migrate from.

However, the primary reason for the burden on local infrastructure, housing and proliferation of slums is not the presence of migrants. It can be attributed to factors like lack of state capacity in undertaking welfare measures, non-availability of decent jobs in the private sector. Further, the quality of life and livelihood is affected for the same reasons.

Therefore, the solution to address this doesn't lie in reserving jobs for locals but in enhancing the investment on local infrastructure, welfare measures and strengthening skill development initiatives. The solution also demands ensuring decent work for low-paid workers in particular. Decent work implies that the primary needs of workers, including health, food, shelter and clothing, are fulfilled. It also places a worker in a position where monetary savings are ensured and there is an opportunity for skill enhancement.

Ensuring decent work is a goal in

itself and has an economic rationale of increased productivity and development of human beings. Working towards it requires the efficient performance of the compact between the government, labour and the private sector.

The state governments also need to realise such quota enabling measures are accompanied by newer compliances for enterprises. The proliferation of compliance responsibilities dilute the state's agenda of facilitating the "ease of doing business" and also reduces the governance deficit.

The policies enabling employment quotas for locals is driven by populism. It has far-reaching consequences which goes beyond the direct impact on labour, the government and the private sector. It adversely affects the investment prospects for a commercial ecosystem, urban mobility of workers and has an immense opportunity cost. Therefore, any state action towards enhancing employment must be anchored through an economic rationale. This will be clear when the compact between the government, labour and the private sector is evidently functional.

The writers work for CUTS International, a global public policy research and advocacy group

SHORT TAKES

HRW WELCOMES
RELEASE OF THAI
ACTIVISTS

Bangkok, April 24: A leading human rights group on Saturday welcomed the release on bail of two Thai activists charged with insulting the country's monarchy, but repeated its contention that the apparent use of pretrial detention to punish anyone who criticizes the royal institution is unjust.

Jatupat Pai Dao Din Boonpattarakasa and Somyot Prukkasemsuk were released Friday evening from Bangkok Remand Center. They had been held on lese majeste charges of defaming the monarchy in connection with their involvement in a political rally last September. They have also been charged with sedition and several minor offenses.

Lese majeste carries a penalty of three to 15 years' imprisonment. The legal assistance group Thai Lawyers for Human Rights said the two men each posted 200,000 baht (\$6,400) bail and were released on the condition that they must not leave the country or be involved in any activities that could damage the monarchy's reputation.

Holding pro-democracy activists in detention prior to trial and conviction on charges of insulting the monarchy seems aimed to punish them, in total disregard of fair trial procedures and the right to the presumption of innocence, said Sunai Phasuk, a senior researcher for Human Rights Watch.

It sends a clear message that not only are demands by pro-democracy groups for monarchy reforms not tolerated, but they would result in harsh punishment.

Jatupat and Somyot are prominent figures in a pro-democracy movement that started last year and held street demonstrations with three core demands: The resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and his government, amending the constitution to make it more democratic and reforming the monarchy to make it more accountable.

Dispute over Russian pipeline tests Biden's Europe outreach

Pressure on Prez to act, stop Moscow getting leverage over US allies

Biden's Georgia rally next week to promote jobs

Washington, April 24: President Joe Biden is heading to Georgia next week to mark his first 100 days in office and promote his infrastructure and jobs plan with a drive-in rally in Atlanta.

The White House said the president and his wife, Jill Biden, will travel to the state on April 29, a day after he delivers his first address to a joint session of Congress. In his address, he's expected to tout the accomplishments of his first 100 days in office and lay out his agenda for

the rest of his term.

One of his next top priorities is a massive \$ 2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, which provides funds to update the nation's infrastructure, shift to green energy and expand caregiving options for older and disabled Americans.

It will mark Biden's second visit to the state since becoming president. His first visit was to promote his Covid-19 relief package, but those plans were derailed by a series of shootings at Atlanta-area spas that killed eight people,

including six Asian women. Biden instead spent his visit meeting with community leaders and state lawmakers from the Asian American and Pacific Islander community to discuss the events, which came amid an outbreak of anti-Asian violence nationwide during the Coronavirus pandemic.

His second visit comes as Georgia's controversial new voting law has put the state's election system in the spotlight. Biden has called the law Jim Crow in the 21st century.

dependence on Russian energy while US-Russian tensions are soaring over a number of issues, including Ukraine, election interference, cyber intrusions and the crackdown on opposition figure Alexei

Officer shoots man who had charged at him with knives

Nashville (US), April 24: A Tennessee police officer fatally shot a man who charged at the officer with knives during a traffic stop early Saturday, authorities said.

Metropolitan Nashville Police Department Officer Christopher Royer has been placed on administrative assignment after he shot the man on a Nashville road, department spokesman Don Aaron said at a news conference.

The man died at a hospital, Aaron said. He was not immediately identified.

Royer was on patrol in his police car when he ran a license plate for a white Mercedes sedan, but the plate was actually registered to a green 1998 Chevrolet, Aaron said.

After the officer stopped the Mercedes, the passenger ran out of the car holding a knife in each hand, Aaron said.

The passenger began running around and briefly entered the driver's side door of Royer's police car, police body camera footage released at the news conference showed.

The man then ran toward Royer, who retreated

about 25 yards from his police car, Aaron said. Royer could be heard on the video requesting backup, telling the passenger to drop the knives and saying, "I don't want to shoot you."

The man continued running at Royer, who fired three times, the video showed. The man fell onto the street.

Dude, what are you doing, man, come on, Royer said. I did not want to have to do that. Police Chief John Drake said five officers rendered aid to the man. Drake said Royer retreated and he asked the man to drop the knife several times in an attempt to de-escalate the situation. He continued charging at him, and he was left with no choice, Drake said. Drake said officers regularly run licence tags to determine if vehicles are stolen. Nashville police are issued stun guns, Drake said, but Royer did not appear to attempt to use it, according to the video.

That's a lethal situation, Drake said, calling the passenger's behaviour bizarre.

Officials say carrier to help protect Afghan pullout

Washington, April 24: The Pentagon has decided to keep an aircraft carrier in the Middle East to help provide protection for American and coalition troops during their planned withdrawal from Afghanistan in coming weeks, United States defence officials said on Friday.

Also, two United States Air Force bombers will be

deployed to Afghanistan as part of the pre-pullout bolstering of security.

The moves back up Pentagon officials' public assurances that United States forces will be prepared to meet whatever resistance the Taliban might present during the withdrawal of more than 10,000 United States and coalition troops starting after May 1.

About 2,500 to 3,500 of those troops are American.

I would advise the Taliban that we will be well-prepared to defend ourselves throughout the withdrawal process, Gen. Frank McKenzie, the head of United States Central Command, said Thursday at the Pentagon.

Prior to President Joe Biden's announcement last week that he would com-

● **THE TALIBAN** had insisted that Washington stick to a February 2020 agreement the militants had reached with the Trump administration to complete the United States withdrawal by May 1.

plete the United States withdrawal by September 11, the Taliban had insist-

ed that Washington stick to a February 2020 agreement the militants had reached with the Trump administration to complete the United States withdrawal by May 1.

United States officials said after Biden's announcement that extra military personnel would likely be positioned in Afghanistan to facilitate the pullout of troops and

equipment, and the Pentagon typically beefs up its military presence as a precaution when executing a sizeable withdrawal.

When the United States pulled troops out of Somalia in January it kept an aircraft carrier in the region as a precaution.

Officials on Friday said the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, an aircraft carrier that is operating in

the Arabian Sea, will remain in the region.

Also, two United States bomber aircraft will be deployed to Afghanistan, along with hundreds of Army Rangers to provide security during the pullout, the officials said.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss moves that had not yet been announced.

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Nadal surges into
Barcelona semis

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal stepped up his bid for a 12th Barcelona Open title with a 6-1, 6-4 victory over Cameron Norrie in the quarter-finals on Friday, while Stefanos Tsitsipas will play Janik Sinner in the last four. Nadal, who captured his first Barcelona title as an 18-year-old at the 2005 tournament, will face Diego Schwartzman or Pablo Carreno Busta in Saturday's semifinals.

Tsitsipas swept aside Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3, 6-3, the Canadian who recently teamed up with Toni Nadal, the uncle and former coach of the 20-time Grand Slam winner. Tsitsipas extended his winning run to eight matches. — *AFP*

Barty battles past
Pliskova in QFs

Stuttgart, Germany: World number one Ashleigh Barty fought back to reach the semifinals of the WTA Stuttgart clay-court tournament with a 2-6, 6-1, 7-5 win over Karolina Pliskova on Friday. Barty faces fourth seed Elina Svitolina in Saturday's semifinal after the Ukrainian staged a remarkable comeback in her 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-2 win over Petra Kvitova. Second seed Simona Halep is yet to drop a set in Stuttgart as she reached the semifinals with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Ekaterina Alexandrova. In her semifinal, Halep will face either fifth seed Aryna Sabalenka or Anett Kontaveit. — *AFP*

Persepolis hammer
FC Goa in return leg

Margao: Starting with as many as eight fresh faces, FC Goa were thrashed 4-0 by Iranian champions Persepolis FC in their return-leg AFC Champions League Group E match here on Friday. Shahriar Moghanlou (24th minute), Mehadi Torabi (43rd), Issa Alkassir (47th) and Kamal Kamyabinia (58th) scored for the winners in a completely one-sided match. The result saw Persepolis, with 12 points from four games, extending their 100 per cent win record while FC Goa suffered their second consecutive defeat after the 1-2 loss to Yahya Golmohammadi's side on Tuesday. — *PTI*

Toffees add to Gunners misery

Own goal from Arsenal goalkeeper gifts Everton first win in seven games

London, April 24: An own-goal from Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno handed Everton a 1-0 Premier League win on Friday as around 2,000 fans protested against Gunners owner Stan Kroenke outside the Emirates Stadium.

With both sides chasing places in Europe next season, it was Carlo Ancelotti's side who came out on top with a first win in seven games.

German keeper Leno turned a Richarlison cross into his own goal in the 76th minute to give the Toffees victory.

Arsenal supporters had gathered outside the ground demanding Kroenke stand down after the club's attempt to join the doomed Super League project.

The result left Everton in eighth place, three points off the Champions League places after their first league win at Arsenal since 1996.

Arsenal are ninth, nine points off the top four.

"It was really important to stay attached to the top of the table," Ancelotti told the BBC.

"The performance was



Everton's Richarlison (left) vies for the ball with Granit Xhaka of Arsenal in an EPL match in London on Friday. — *AFP*

good. It's all good news tonight and this gives us confidence for the next games. Finally I can say we are back."

The game produced few

chances.

Everton's Gylfi Sigurdsson saw a 30-yard free-kick come back off the crossbar.

Arsenal were furious

when a second-half penalty, awarded for a foul by Richarlison on Dani Ceballos, was overturned by VAR for an offside in the build-up. — *AFP*

Super League fiasco gives clubs open goal to reset with UEFA

Geneva, April 24: Purged of most of its leaders in the Super League fiasco this week, the group representing European soccer clubs was given a chance to reinvent itself.

Now the European Club Association is free to push for reversing Champions League changes that favour the wealthiest and more powerful who threatened to tear apart soccer's traditional fabric.

The decisions UEFA made on Monday for a Champions League revamp in 2024 — of 36 teams each playing 10 games in a single standings — clearly favour the rebels.

Two wild cards for storied clubs is one gift that

● **The decisions UEFA made on Monday for a Champions League revamp in 2024 — of 36 teams each playing 10 games in a single standings — clearly favour the rebels.**

can be taken back now they no longer dominate a key UEFA committee.

Hours earlier around midnight on Sunday, the 246-member ECA lost 12 of the most influential — and most demanding — when they left to announce their own Super League.

The project quickly col-

lapsed amid a ferocious backlash from fans and domestic leagues, governments and Champions League organizer UEFA, handing the ECA a chance to restore trust.

"Over the past week, we have seen the worst but also the best of football," ECA chief executive Charlie Marshall said in a statement Friday.

"Ultimately, the best has triumphed."

The "worst" was done by clubs and people that were Marshall's bosses until the early hours of Monday. They led ECA through talks with UEFA to shape the Champions League's future while plotting a rival to usurp it. — *AP*

SNAP SHOTS

Hyderabad cricketer Ashwin no more

Former Hyderabad fast bowler Ashwin Yadav died after suffering a cardiac arrest in Hyderabad on Saturday. He was 33 and is survived by his wife and three sons.

Ashwin played 14 first class matches and took 34 wickets after making his Ranji Trophy debut in 2007 against Punjab in Mohali. His best figures were 6 for 52 against Delhi at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad in the 2008-09 season. Ashwin's last Ranji Trophy match was against Mumbai in 2009.

He, however, continued to play for State Bank of Hyderabad and then SBI in the local league. Ashwin played for the Evergreen cricket club for many years before he joined SBH.

Indian team's fielding coach R. Sridhar condoled Ashwin's demise. "Devastated to hear the news of #Ashwinyadav passing away. A Very jovial and fun loving guy, team man to the core, punched way above his skills as a fast bowler. I pray to God for strength to his family. #gonetooearly #OmShanti You will be missed," Sridhar said in a tweet.

Women archers storm into WC final

Recurve women's team of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari assured India of its first medal in the Archery World Cup Stage 1 after cruising into the final with a straight-set win over Spain in Guatemala City.

However, the men's team, which qualified as third seed, lost in the quarterfinals to their Spanish rivals 26-27 in a shoot-off after both teams were tied 4-4.

India are also in the medal hunt in three more events with newlywed Atanu Das and Deepika advancing into the mixed pair bronze playoff. The duo will also vie for individual medals, having made the last-four in their respective sections.

In the women's semifinal, Spanish trio of Elia Canales, Ines De Velasco and Leyre Fernandez Infante were no match to the top seeded Indians, who drilled in consistent scores of 55, 56 and 55 to seal a 6-0 win and make their first World Cup final since Shanghai, 2016. — *PTI*

Zimbabwe beat Pakistan in T20

Harare, April 24: Zimbabwe beat Pakistan for the first time in a Twenty20 international Friday, with four-wicket Luke Jongwe the star of a shock 19-run triumph at Harare Sports Club.

A maiden victory in 16 attempts seemed unlikely when the tourists restricted the hosts to a meagre 118-9 with Tinashe Kamunhukamwe (34) the only batsman to impress.

But right-arm medium pacer Jongwe (4-18) wreaked havoc and Zimbabwe bowled out Pakistan for 99 in 19.5 overs.

It was the lowest total defended in a T20 international in Harare and victory for Zimbabwe levelled the three-match series at 1-1 ahead of the decider at the same venue on Sunday.

Pakistan arrived in Zimbabwe brimming with confidence after completing a double in South Africa, winning a one-day international series 2-1 and a T20 series 3-1. — *AFP*

Brief scores: Zimbabwe 118/9 in 20 overs (Tinashe Kamunhukamwe 34, Mohammad Hasnain 2/19) **beat Pakistan 99 in 19.5 overs** (Babar Azam 41, Luke Jongwe 4/18, Ryan Burl 2/21).

