

## WINDOWS

### China successfully lands its rover on Mars

BEIJING: China on Saturday successfully landed a spacecraft on Mars after surviving "nine minutes of terror", becoming the second country in history to have a rover on the red planet. The rover, Zhurong, named after a god of fire in Chinese mythology, successfully landed at the pre-selected area in Utopia Planitia on Mars, the official Xinhua news agency reported on the Communist giant's latest achievement in its ambitious goals in space. The six-wheel solar-powered Zhurong rover weighs about 240 kilogrammes and carries six scientific instruments. It will be later deployed from the lander for a three-month mission in search of life on Mars' surface. Tianwen-1, consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a rover, was launched on July 23, 2020.

### Robot dexterity will be a game changer for the world

"Hasta La Vista baby." Nobody can say this dialogue better than Arnold Schwarzenegger in the movie 'Terminator 2'. This AI-based robot, played by Arnold, continuously observes the young and cool John, the human he is supposed to protect. The Terminator picks up this line from the boy's lingo. That was true 'machine learning' displayed in real-time. The Robots we see in movies can walk, talk and move almost like humans. However, the ground reality is far from it. They can perform most tasks under pre-set environments but falter under uncontrolled and real-time conditions. In the same way, they are fantastic at doing impossible and complex things while they falter at regular everyday human tasks. ►P7

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# Localised containment must: PM

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for augmenting healthcare resources in rural areas to focus on door-to-door testing and surveillance, and asserted that localised containment strategies are the need of the hour, especially in States with high positivity rate in districts.

Chairing a high-level meeting, Modi said States should be encouraged to report their Covid-19 numbers transparently "without any pressure of high numbers showing adversely on their efforts", remarks that come amid reports that many states have

**PM Narendra Modi directs that a distribution plan for ensuring oxygen supply in rural areas should be worked out, including through provision of oxygen concentrators**



been under-reporting their case and fatality tallies.

Modi also directed that a distribution plan for ensuring oxygen supply in rural areas should be worked out, including through provision of oxygen concentrators, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office

(PMO) said. He said necessary training should be provided to health workers in the operation of such equipment, and power supply should be ensured for smooth operation of such medical devices, it said. Unlike the first wave of Covid-19 cases last year

when rural India was not badly hit, the region has been seriously affected by the second wave in several states. Prime Minister Modi sought empowering ASHA and anganwadi workers with all necessary tools. Testing needs to be scaled up further, with use

of both RT-PCR and rapid tests, especially in areas with high test positivity rates, he added.

The PMO noted that testing has gone up rapidly in the country, from around 50 lakh tests per week in early March to around 1.3 crore tests per week now. Modi was briefed about the gradually decreasing test positivity rate and increasing recovery rate, it said, adding that cases had gone over four lakh per day and are now coming down as a result of the efforts of healthcare workers, state governments and the central government.

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## Google takes initiative to support jobs for H-1B holders' spouses

WASHINGTON

GOOGLE is leading a determined effort by US tech giants to support a programme that gives work authorisation for spouses of those possessing H-1B foreign work visas, the most sought after among Indian IT professionals.

Goggle is joined by 30 other companies to support the H-4 EAD (Employment Authorisation Document) programme. An H-4 visa is issued by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to immediate family members (spouse and children under 21 years of age) of the H-1B visa holders.

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. Technology companies depend on it to hire

tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. "Google is proud to support our nation's immigrants. We joined 30 other companies to protect the H-4 EAD programme which spurs innovation, creates jobs and opportunities, and helps families," Google CEO Sundar Pichai tweeted.

Google on Friday filed a legal brief in a lawsuit called Save Jobs USA vs US Department of Homeland Security. Tech companies that signed onto the amicus brief include Adobe, Amazon, Apple, eBay, IBM, Intel, Microsoft, PayPal and Twitter. "To support this important programme, we are leading an amicus brief with over 40 companies and organisations to preserve and protect the H-4 EAD programme," Catherine Lacavera, Vice President, Legal, Google, said in a blog post. Continued on Page 4



People throng flower market during relaxation of curfew in Tirupati on Saturday

## Alarming surge in Covid cases despite partial lockdown

### Chittoor reports more cases than during pre-lockdown period

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
TIRUPATI

EVEN after 10 days of imposing partial lockdown, the Covid positive cases have not witnessed any downward trend in Chittoor district. There was no respite from increasing number of cases as a total of 23,163 infections were reported during the last 10 days as against 20,913 during the previous 10-day period prior to the imposition of partial lockdown.

The cases continue to surge in spite of lockdown restrictions as the district has reported a low of 1,543 cases on May 9 and a high of 2,886 on Saturday during this 10-day period. The cases fell below the 2,000 mark only on two days during the same period.

With the second wave tightening its grip, the partial lockdown curbs have proved to be inadequate. There was a hectic movement of people and vehicles during 6 am to 12 noon and both people and shopkeepers were ignoring minimum Covid safety norms. Everyone looks in a hurry to complete their tasks before 12 noon and this six-hour period was enough to spread the virus rampantly across various sections, said a doctor. No physical distancing could be seen at any commer-



**DM&HO Dr M Panchalaiah** cial places leaving aside the hand sanitisation. Police have been controlling the people's movement and commercial activities after 12 noon leaving everything to the fate of the people before that. Still, police have booked 9,118 cases so far and collected Rs 36.36 lakh as fines for violating the safety norms. The ever-increasing Covid cases have been making a huge adverse impact on the healthcare system with all Covid hospitals and care centres running with full capacity. According to DM&HO Dr M Panchalaiah, the district is having more than 20,000 active cases now while around 2,000 oxygen beds are there.

He told The Hans India that the district has been getting more migrants from the neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as those states have imposed total lockdown.

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## Defunct oxygen plant at Gudur revived

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
NELLORE

A four-tonne-capacity defunct oxygen plant at Gudur is now ready to produce around 440 cylinders of oxygen per day giving a big respite to the district administration which has been under tremendous pressure for the supply of oxygen.

A team of technicians from Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam, and local revenue officials headed by Sub Collector R Gopala Krishna worked for more than five days to restore the defunct oxygen plant at Chillakur in Gudur by Friday night. Lekharaju Balasubrahmanyam started an Air Separation Unit, M/s Krishna Teja Air Products, at Boodanam in

Chillakur Mandal in 2011 with a capacity of 4 tonnes of oxygen. It can be filled into 440 cylinders of 10-litre capacity. The



quantity of oxygen can address the needs of private hospitals involved in Covid treatment in the district. The unit was closed subsequently due to financial issues and lack of round-the-clock power facility. Continued on Page 4

# Cyclone Tauktae moving fast towards Gujarat

MUMBAI/  
AHMEDABAD

CYCLONIC storm Tauktae had intensified and was heading towards the coast of Gujarat and the Union Territory of Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Saturday evening.

The storm is very likely to intensify further into a "very severe cyclonic storm" by late Saturday night, the IMD said, adding it was very likely to move north-northwestwards and cross Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Naliya around May 18 afternoon. As it would bring very heavy rainfall in that region, cities like Mumbai would not be affected much, the IMD added.

There will be strong winds and heavy rainfall at isolated places on May 17 over north



Rough sea weather conditions due to formation of Cyclone Tauktae in the Arabian Sea, in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday

### NDRF teams ready

Teams of the National Disaster Response Force are being stationed at Gir Somnath, Amreli, Porbandar, Dwarka, Jamnagar, Rajkot, Kutch, Morbi, Surat, Gandhinagar, Valsad, Bhavnagar, Navsari, Bharuch and Junagarh districts of Gujarat, an NDRF spokesperson said.

### PM reviews readiness

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday reviewed the preparedness of states, central ministries and agencies concerned to deal with the situation arising out of cyclone Tauktae and asked them to take every possible measure to ensure that people are safely evacuated.

Konkan, including Mumbai, the IMD said. The Maharashtra capital

can expect showers from Sunday afternoon, said Shubhani Bhute, senior

director (weather) IMD, Mumbai. The storm is currently 250 km southwest of Goa, she added.

"Goa alongwith Sindhudurg and Ratnagiri districts of Maharashtra would be mostly affected in terms of showers and gusty winds," Bhute said, adding the wind speeds would be around 60 to 70 kmph.

The IMD has issued an 'orange alert' which means heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely over entire Konkan and hilly areas of western Maharashtra, mainly Kolhapur and Satara on Sunday and Monday, she said.

In Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the preparedness of states, central ministries and agencies concerned to deal with the situation arising out of cyclone Tauktae and asked them to take every possible measure to ensure that people are safely evacuated.



## Tenth class exams from June 7

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

THE Government of Andhra Pradesh has decided to hold the tenth class exams from June 7. This was revealed by Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh.

Speaking to the media persons, Suresh said that the steps initiated by Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy for the prevention of the Covid-19 virus were yielding desired results. He made it clear that their objective behind holding the exams was to ensure a bright future to the students. He asked all the tenth class students to prepare for the exams as per the schedule released by them.

# 'Ambulance couple' goes where relatives sometimes fear to tread

In this combo photo, Himanshu and Twinkle Kalia, who spend their days ferrying the ill to hospital, fetching medicines, arranging funerals and sometimes stepping in to perform last rites too, in New Delhi



D P MISHRA  
& MANVENDER VASHIST  
NEW DELHI

PROFILES of humaneness in the time of Covid, Himanshu and Twinkle Kalia spend their days between helping the ill get a fighting chance at life and ensuring dignity at death for those who don't make it. As the second Covid-19 wave ravages large parts of India -- including the national capital that has seen thousands scramble for oxygen, hospital beds and crematorium spots -- the Kalias, Delhi's 'ambulance couple', ferry the ill to hospital, fetch

medicines, arrange funerals and sometimes step in to perform last rites too.

Cloaked in PPE suits, face shields and masks, the Kalias go where even close relatives fear to tread, spending their days tending to people suffering from Covid or those who have died of it and making sure their fleet of 12 ambulances are road ready to tackle any emergency. "We don't put it in records but in the second wave of coronavirus we have been helping almost 20-25 patients daily reach hospitals. We have performed cremations of 80 people who have died of

Covid-19 and helped over 1,000 people in arranging for cremations," Himanshu told PTI. It's all free of course, the 42-year-old hastened to add. A few days ago, they got a call from Mayur Vihar in east Delhi about a patient who had died in an autorickshaw on the way to hospital, said Twinkle. The Kalias, who live in Pratap Nagar in north Delhi, reached there quickly, got the body verified by a doctor and helped in the last rites. "We got a call from Sandeep Mitra whose wife Madhura had collapsed in an autorickshaw while he was taking her to a hospital. He

was not getting any help from his society or elsewhere. We reached there, got a doctor to the spot and performed her cremation at the Sarai Kale Khan crematorium," Twinkle said. The 39-year-old is a cancer survivor and the couple has two daughters, Japji (13) and Ridhi (7). But personal commitments don't come in the way of their zeal to help others in these days of India's most serious health crisis. At a time ambulances are in short supply and stories of ambulance drivers and owners fleeing those in need make the rounds, the Kalias

have publicised the free services of their fleet.

Himanshu's mobile number has been pasted at various places across the city. As a result, he said, distress calls come in from all over Delhi and also from Ghaziabad and Noida. The word has spread and some hospitals have also started reaching out. Some know him for not just services but also his skills behind the wheel, he said proudly. "Due to my fast driving, even through traffic, many hospitals call me in emergency situations to save the lives of patients," he said.

Continued on Page 4



# Strictly observe Covid norms, Kishan Reddy appeals to people

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

UNION Minister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy appealed to people, and in particular people aged below 40 years to strictly observe Covid guidelines to flatten the coronavirus curve.

Addressing the media here on Saturday, he said 70 per cent of the people taking admissions in hospitals for Covid treatment during the second wave are below the age groups of 40 years.

He said that the Centre is doing everything possible to augment oxygen, medicines, ventilators to provide the much-needed relief to assist the State governments. However, he said that it is the State governments, which should ensure proper utilisation of the resources to avoid unfortunate incidents that took place in Sri Venkateswara Ramnarain Ruia Government

- Companies gearing up to produce 300 crore doses of multiple Covid vaccines from May
- State governments should ensure judicious and optimum use of resources like oxygen, medicines, ventilators



General Hospital, Tirupati, in which, 11 patients were died due to oxygen shortage.

Kishan Reddy said that the Centre is overseeing the planned production of Covid vaccines in the country. "About 16 companies have been gearing up to produce multiple vaccines of 300 crore doses starting from May to December this year, for the vaccination of the entire population in the country." For this, the companies have informed the Centre about the scheduled stepping up the production of vaccines on

monthly basis. Besides, the Centre is also preparing to clear proposals within 24 hours to the foreign entities coming to produce their vaccines within the country. Also, trying to import, in addition to the domestic production.

However, people should co-operate with the Centre and the State governments and strictly follow Covid norms in the fight against the virus, he said.

Responding to a question, the Minister said that the Centre has to receive any oxygen demand forecast reports

seeking its help after the first wave of the Covid.

Because "no one could foresee the intensity of the second wave resulting in the oxygen requirement shot up three times," he said. But the Centre has taken immediate steps to increase oxygen production and speedy transportation by oxygen trains, airlifting using military aircraft, and by road.

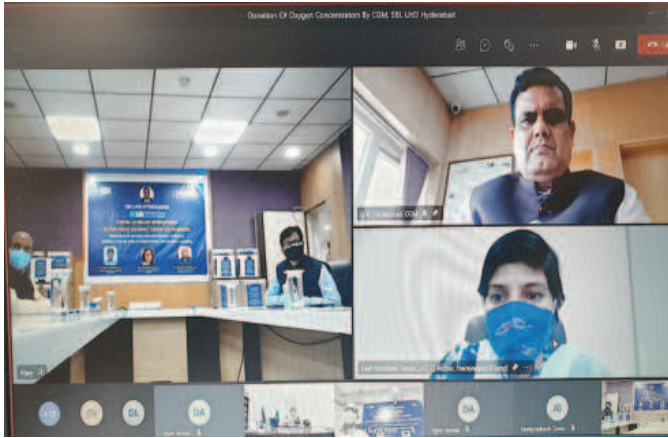
Kishan Reddy said that the Union Home Secretary had called the Telangana Chief Secretary and conveyed that stopping the ambulances coming with patients on the State borders was against the law. Expressing concern over the reported interference of the Andhra Pradesh government on the freedom of the press, he said, "It should be avoided, and assured that he would take up the issue with the Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar."

# SBI donates 15 oxygen concentrators to three districts

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

STATE Bank of India, Hyderabad circle, has donated 15 oxygen concentrators, (five each to three districts) at a cost of Rs 12.25 lakh as part of Covid relief operations undertaken by the Bank. The Bank donated them through District Collectors of Narayanpet, Vikarabad and Gadwal. The activity was organised through video conferencing from SBI local head office, Hyderabad and attended by Narayanpet district Collector and District Magistrate Hari Chandana; Vikarabad District Collector and District Magistrate Pausumi Basu; and Jogulamba Gadwal district DMHO Chandu Naik (attended on behalf of District Collector and District Magistrate Shruti Ojha).

Addressing the district authorities, Chief General Manager Om Prakash Mishra told that strengthening the public health response to coronavirus is the first step towards



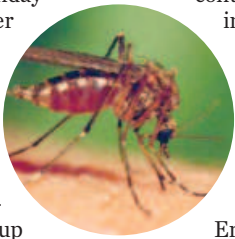
delivering relief to affected families and supporting our communities that are struggling to survive. The bank has been extending support in the fight against Covid-19. Last year also the Bank arranged supply of medical equipments like ventilators, Multi patient monitors, ECG machines, 2D Echo, Radio Meter, Digital pulse oxy Meters in addition to supply of 8000 PPE kits, food relief, dry ration kits etc., by spending more than Rs two crore.

This year also, Bank has identified initiatives targeting specific local populations with a view to address the urgent needs and for distributing life-saving healthcare equipment, enhancing oxygen support, PPE kits, masks, dry rations, food packets/meals. Bank has also identified NGOs in these emergent situations, to support them in setting up of makeshift hospitals/ Covid-19 care centres by seeking additional funds/budgetary support, he stated.

# ‘Take up awareness campaigns on National Dengue Day’

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

AHEAD of the National Dengue Day observed on Sunday (May 16), the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Zonal Commissioners, Deputy Commissioners and Entomology staff were instructed to take up awareness campaigns in their respective wards by following Covid-19 guidelines without conducting rallies and meetings. Since January this year, only 39 dengue cases were reported in the city as GHMC conducted regular anti-larval operations, fogging and awareness programs in these



months which gradually decreased the cases in the city.

GHMC is taking up all precautions for effective surveillance and control of mosquito breeding and spread of vector borne diseases, even the officials were addressing the public grievances on mosquito menace, states a press release.

On National Dengue Eradication Day, GHMC appealed to the people to continue the 'Every Sunday 10 Minutes at 10 am' programme which is aimed at encouraging community participation in containing the vector borne diseases. As a part of the programme citizens are involved in clearing water stagnation points in homes.

# SRMIST donates ₹1.10 crore to TN CMPRS Fund

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE SRM Institute of Science and Technology (SRMIST), Deemed to be University, has donated Rs 1.10 crore to Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund (TNCMPRF) in an effort to effectively support efforts of the TN government to contain the spread of second wave of Covid pandemic.

SRMIST Pro-Chancellor (Academics) Dr P Sathyanarayanan, Chairman of Ramapuram campus Dr R Shivakumar and co-Chairman S Niranjan handed over the contribution of Rs 1.10 crores to TN Chief Minister MK Stalin. SRM Group of Institutions Founder-Chancellor MP (Perambalur Constituency) Dr TR Paarivendhar mentioned that the amount



SRMIST Pro-Chancellor (Academics) Dr P Sathyanarayanan, Chairman of Ramapuram campus Dr R Shivakumar and co-Chairman S Niranjan handing over the contribution of Rs 1.10 crores to TN Chief Minister MK Stalin

donated to TNCMPRF was the generous contribution of all the employees working in Kattankulathur, Vadapalani, Ramapuram and Trichy campuses and all other institutions under Valliammai Society. In support of the steps taken by the TN gov-

ernment, SRMIST has also playing a key role in treating of Covid patients at its hospitals in Kattankulathur, Vadapalani (SIMS Hospital) and Trichy including providing quarantine facilities with 1300 beds at above hospitals.

# LOCKDOWN 2.0 Migrant workers worst hit again in TS

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

WORKERS engaged in the construction and hospitality industry are jobless in Telangana. Nearly 40 per cent of the migrant workers from Northern States already left to their native places from Hyderabad. As a result, construction activity came a halt again.

Nearly one lakh workers already left the city. The State government has provided relief for migrant workers by extending rice and financial benefit during lockdown-1 last year. About 40,000 workers in the hospital industry were already in dire straits. The Real Estate Association members said that the skilled workers engaged in construction, flooring, plumbing and electrical works stopped at-

tending duties soon after the government imposed the lockdown. Many workers left to their places and those, who were in the city, have been provided basic facilities. The unskilled workers were left in the lurch. They were expecting some relief from the government.

Cooks, bartenders and suppliers in restaurants, bars and hotels lost their jobs in Hyderabad. Most of them hailed from Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh and leaving the city since all the establishments closed down during lockdown period. The Bar managements said the government should come to the rescue of the migrant workers at least for a week. The bar managements already bore the brunt of lockdown-one imposed for three months last year.

# 6-member thieves' gang from Swiggy, Zomato held

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
RANGA REDDY

LEADING food delivery companies Swiggy and Zomato are reportedly shutting down after 8 pm in the wake of the corona cases surge in the country. However, it was highlighted that some of the young men, who were working as daytime Swiggy, Zomato food delivery boys, are committing night robberies. Bachupally police have arrested a six-member gang on Saturday who were involved in looting in and around Hyderabad. According to the police, the gang was found to be targeting people who appeared alone at night. Police said that the gang would sell robbed goods on OLX. A case has been registered and investigation is under process, police added.

# Centre appreciates online audit of TS PR

PR Joint Secretary asks TS Audit Director to give power point presentation

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

APPRECIATING the Telangana Panchayat Raj for giving their best in the online audit in the country, Union Panchayat Raj Joint Secretary KS Sethi has requested the Director of Telangana Audit wing Martineni Venkateshwar Rao to give a power point presentation in front of the Union Panchayat Raj Minister. The Union Joint Secretary said that during 2019-20 audit year, Telangana Audit department has sent an online audit of 5,174 Gram Panchayats out of the total 12,769 Gram Panchayats and also asked the officials to give explanations on 56,505 objections. He recalled

that Rs 8,923.80 crore were released to the Panchayat Raj local bodies in 25 States during corona pandemic. He asked the officials to take up online audit of this grant for the year 2020-21 as based on this audit the Centre would release funds.

Central PR Joint Secretary Sethi has mandated the officials of all the States to take online audits only. He said that steps were being taken up to ensure all states follow 100 per cent online audits taken up by the Telangana government. This would ensure the Centre to know how the Central funds were being utilised. The officials had taken steps to have an online audit in 12,769 GPs this year.

# 5% early bird scheme in property tax fetches ₹101 cr for government

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

THE five per cent rebate provided through the early bird scheme by the government has fetched a revenue of Rs 101 crore as about 2.29 lakh owners in 129 municipalities and 12 Corporations have paid property tax and got a benefit of Rs 5 crore.

The Telangana government had brought the 5% rebate scheme for the property owners in the State in April and now it has also been extended to May in the wake of corona pandemic. There are 129 municipalities and 12 corporations under the Commissioner and Directorate of Municipal Administration (CDMA) and 14.05 lakh properties are eligible under the early bird scheme and so far 2.29 lakh property owners had paid Rs 101.98 crore. The property owners collectively saved Rs 5.1

crore from the early bird scheme.

The citizens in Warangal utilised the early bird scheme to its maximum as it has stood number one in the payment of property tax. As many as 28,767 people have paid Rs 12.16 crore and Nizampet Municipal Corporation followed with Rs 6.84 crore.

In Nizamabad, Rs 4.44 crore was collected, in Dundigal Municipality Rs 3.60 crore was collected. In other municipalities the collected figure was Narsingi (Rs 2.63 crore), Manikonda (Rs 2.17 crore), Badangpet (Rs 1.19 crore), Sangareddy (Rs 2.89 Crore) etc.

The officials had brought a QR code facility to pay the property tax for the property owners. The authorities are printing QR code on demand notice of the property tax from this year in all the municipalities except for

GHMC. A senior official said that the citizens need not go to the offices to pay the tax and can pay with their mobile phone. The details pertaining to the property owners would come if the QR code is scanned and after this, citizens can pay through the credit card, debit card or mobile applications and can also get online receipt. Apart from this, the authorities provided payment through WhatsApp with a special number 9000253342 and the officials said that the collections would be more in the coming days.

The Director of Municipal Administration N Satyanarayana has asked the municipal commissioner to encourage the property owners in the state to utilise the services during the next 14 days. The officials are taking up campaigns to make the citizens aware of the discount.

# KCR condoles death of well-known Linguist

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD

CHIEF Minister K Chandrashekar Rao condoled the death of well-known Linguist and Professor KK Ranganadhacharyulu, who made rich contributions to the development of Telugu language and literature. The CM recalled the services rendered by Ranganadhacharyulu, who worked in several capacities and also as critic, teacher and research guide. KCR conveyed his condolences to members of the bereaved family.

# Medchal DEO appointed as Nodal Officer

HYDERABAD

MEDCHAL Malkajigiri district Education Officer I Vijaya Kumari has been appointed as a nodal officer to monitor coordination mechanisms with the NGOs involved in the relief work during Covid pandemic.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Joint Advisor has written a letter to the State authorities stating that the increase in the number of Covid cases has precipitated an unprecedented crisis. To handle this crisis, it is necessary to involve all the stakeholders at State, district and local levels. They have suggested that the structures and functions of the coordination mechanism and the need to set up a coordination center will help not only in efficiently overcoming Covid crisis, but it will also help in event of any future disaster. The DEO has been asked to take over the charge with immediate effect without any slackness and report compliance to the undersigned.

# Set up CT scanning centres: MLA

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
SHADNAGAR

LOCAL Legislator Anjaiah Yadav on Saturday urged the government to set up CT scanning centres to reduce the prices of scanning during the ongoing corona pandemic.

In this view, on the request of MLA the local CT scanning centres agreed to charge lower prices for scanning. Mahabodhi scanning centre has agreed to charge Rs 3,500 instead of the current CT scanning (HRCT) rate of Rs 5,000 while Shadnagar scanning centre has agreed to charge only Rs 3,000. Speaking on the occasion, the MLA thanked CT Scanning Centres for reducing the charges during the Covid-19 crisis. He said that private hospi-



tals should provide treatment to the poor and middle class Covid victims at the rates prescribed by the government only. We are working hard to stock up oxygen and Remdesivir injections for Shadnagar people, he added. The MLA instructed the officials to

ensure better medical care for Covid-19 victims in all public and private hospitals. Hospitals and Covid-19 wards should be kept clean and disinfected, Covid-19 victims should be provided with nutritious food on time, MLA said. Shadnagar Deputy DMHO and private hospital owners were present.

# EDU MINISTER CONDUCTS REVIEW MEET ON COVID

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
MAHESHWARAM

EDUCATION Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy conducted a review meeting in Maheshwaram on Saturday. Later, the Minister visited ward at local hospital and interacted with patients, the patients were enquired about the facilities provided to them in the hospital.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that the government is reviewing and taking steps to prevent corona and to provide treatment to those who affected by Covid-19. She said that as part of the fever survey, medical teams inspected the houses and after identifying the symptoms, they were given the needed medicines. All arrangements are being made to



provide proper treatment at the right time to the corona patients who come to the hospitals, the Minister added. She later said that Emergency Remdesivir injections, oxygen cylinders, emergency medications are being monitored to en-

sure that there is a buffer stock and we are also monitoring and reporting every day on how to vaccinate as per the regulations. The Minister appealed to the people to cooperate in the lockdown which was imposed only for the protection of

their lives. The Minister instructed the officials to conducted Covid-19 test at government school from tomorrow. She also instructed the officials to complete hospital building construction works. Over the past one and half month, 3,478 people have been tested in the zone and 493 have been infected with corona. So, far 8,749 doses of the vaccine have been given. Maheshwaram Zone MPP Raghuma Reddy, Vice MPP Sunita Andya Nayak, Tahasilidhar Jyothi, Inspector Madhusudhan, Maheshwaram government hospital in-charge Indrasena Reddy, Sarpanch's of various villages, MPTCs, Asha Workers, Society Directors, Co-option members and others were present.



INSTIGATING MAYHEM DURING MODI'S VISIT

# Top Jamaat leader held in B'desh

DHAKA

TOP Jamaat-e-Islami leader and listed 1971 war criminal Shahjahan Chowdhury has been arrested by the police for allegedly instigating the violence unleashed by radical outfit Hefazat-e-Islam on March 26 during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh, said Abdullah Al Masum, Superintendent of Police (Special Branch), Chittagong. The arrest was made on Friday night.

According to the police, Chowdhury is accused in over 20 criminal cases, including fanning communal tension and for his role in the genocide of 1971.

Chittagong SP Masum confirmed with IANS on Saturday, "We have found evidence of Chowdhury's involvement in the violence that Hefazat-e-Islam unleashed on March 26-28 in Chittagong's Hathazari."

The police said the 1971 war criminal will be shown arrested as a provocateur in the case.

Chowdhury is accused in a case filed in connection with the massacre and atrocity unleashed by Hefazat-Jamat-BNP militants at Hathazari in Chattogram. He was arrested following a police raid at his home in the Chhamdar area in Satkania municipality in Chattogram.

Hefazat-BNP and Jamaat militants were involved in extensive violence and vandalism in Hathazari during Narendra Modi's visit in March, including an attack on the local police station. Around 2,500 unidentified persons have been accused in 10 cases in connection with the mayhem.

After the assassination of the father of the nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1975, Chowdhury reportedly led the mass killings of local freedom fighters by the students of 'Shibir', the student



wing of Jamaat-e-Islami. During the Jamaat-BNP regime (2001-2005), under-world don in Chittagong, Ahmadul Huq Chowdhury (locally known as 'Ahmodu' or 'Ahmoudya') left the Jamaat to work for the then ruling party BNP in 2004, after the son of Tareq Zia Khaleda offered him nomination to be a lawmaker, countering Chowdhury.

Ahmodu exposed Chowdhury's mission to kill freedom fighters, pro-liberation forces and open thinkers in Chittagong. Ahmodu said he was forced to kill freedom fighters, as he was blackmailed by Jamaat leader and then Chittagong lawmaker Chowdhury in the name of religion.

Ahmodu had also announced a 90-day ultimatum for Chowdhury, saying "either you or me will be alive after 90 days".

Within a couple of days after making the bold announcement in an exclusive interview with 'Shaptahik 200', Ahmodu was killed along with two of his associates in a cross-fire by the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), the elite force of the police, on September 10, 2004. (IANS)

# PM holds high-level meeting to review preparedness on Cyclone 'Tauktae'

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday took a high-level meeting to review the preparedness to deal with the situation arising out of cyclone 'Tauktae'.

The Prime Minister directed senior officers to take every possible measure to ensure that people are safely evacuated by the state governments and to ensure maintenance of all essential services such as power, telecommunications, health, drinking water and are restored immediately in the event of damages caused to them. The Prime Minister further directed officials to ensure special preparedness on Covid management in hospitals, vaccine cold chain and other medical facilities on power back up and storage of essential medicines and to plan for unhindered movement of oxygen tankers.

He also directed for 24X7 functioning of control rooms. "Special care needs to be taken to ensure that there is least possible disruption in oxygen supply from Jamnagar," the Prime Minister said.

He also spoke about the need to involve the local community for timely sensitisation and relief measures.

In the meeting, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) informed that Cyclone 'Tauktae' is expected to touch the Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Naliya on May 18 afternoon or evening with the wind speed ranging upto 175 kmph.

"It is likely to cause heavy rainfall in the coastal districts of Gujarat, including extremely heavy falls in Junagadh and Gir Somnath and heavy



to very heavy rainfall at a few places in the districts of Saurashtra Kutch and Diu namely Gir Somnath, Diu, Junagadh, Porbandar, Devbhoomi Dwarka, Amreli, Rajkot, Jamnagar," the IMD informed.

The IMD also warned of storm surge of about two-three metres above astronomical tide to inundate coastal areas of Morbi, Kutch, Devbhoomi Dwarka and Jamnagar districts and one-two metres along Porbandar, Junagarh, Diu, Gir Somnath, Amreli, Bhavnagar and 0.5 to one metre over the remaining coastal districts of Gujarat during May 18 afternoon/evening around the time of landfall. The IMD has been issuing three hourly bulletins since May 13 with the latest forecast to all the concerned States.

In a statement the PMO said, it was discussed that Cabinet Secretary is in continuous touch with Chief Secretaries of all the Coastal States

and Central Ministries and Agencies concerned.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is reviewing the situation 24X7 and is in touch with the State Governments/UTs and the Central Agencies concerned. The MHA has already released the first instalment of SDRF in advance to all States. NDRF has pre-positioned 42 teams which are equipped with boats, tree-cutters, telecom equipment in six States and has kept 26 teams on standby. The Indian Coast Guard and the Navy have deployed ships and helicopters for relief, search and rescue operations. Air Force and Engineer task force units of the Army, with boats and rescue equipment, are on standby for deployment.

Seven ships with Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Units are on standby along western coast. Surveillance aircraft and helicopters are carrying out serial surveillance

restoration of electricity. The Ministry of Telecom is keeping all the telecom towers and exchanges under constant watch and is fully geared to restore telecom networks.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued an advisory to the States/UTs, likely to be affected, for health sector preparedness and response on Covid in affected areas. The Health Ministry has also kept 10 Quick response medical teams and 5 Public health response teams ready, with emergency medicines.

The Ministry of Port, Shipping and Waterways has taken measures to secure all shipping vessels and has deployed emergency vessels (Tugs).

The NDRF is assisting the state agencies in their preparedness for evacuating people from the vulnerable locations and is also continuously holding community awareness campaigns on how to deal with the cyclonic situation. (IANS)

# Don't be like ostrich with head in sand: Delhi Cong to Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi Congress on Saturday slammed Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying that he is behaving like an "ostrich", as when people are battling with the uncontrolled spread of the mutated variants of Covid-19, the AAP chief has buried his head in the sand to escape from the harsh ground realities.

Addressing a press conference here, Delhi Congress chief Anil Kumar Chaudhary said, "Kejriwal is behaving like an ostrich, as when people are battling with the uncontrolled spread of the mutated variants of coronavirus, and are dying due to the shortage of oxygen, medicines and hospital beds, he has buried his head in sand to escape the harsh ground realities."

Chaudhary also said that the Chief Minister had vanished when Covid played havoc with the lives of the people across Delhi, but now that the cases are ebbing, he is back with his unconvincing and hollow promises.

Chaudhary said that it was insensitive on the part of Kejriwal to say that the Delhi government will "bear the cost and responsibility of raising and educating the children who have lost their parents



Anil Kumar Chaudhary

due to Covid", as many families had lost their bread winners during the deadly surge in fatalities between April 20 and May 12, a time when the Chief Minister had resorted to his 'vanishing trick', leaving the embattled people to fend for themselves, at the mercy of god.

The Congress leader said that Kejriwal blamed others for vaccine and oxygen shortage, lack of hospital beds and every other problem plaguing Delhi, though his primary duty should have been to address the problems with a hands-on approach, and to save lives, but he let the people

down when they needed his help the most. Chaudhary also said that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader is now making big promises for the future, which he will never fulfil, without addressing the problems being faced by the people.

He said the Chief Minister now boasts of adding more Covid beds after thousands of poor people died for failing to get hospital beds.

The Congress leader said that Delhi Congress had been demanding that the city government should create an "oxygen bank" to serve the needy, which was not heeded to, but now that many people have lost their lives gasping for breath, the Chief Minister is mulling over an oxygen bank.

He said that Delhi Congress had also demanded that the AAP government should float a global tender to ensure a continuous supply of Covid vaccines to complete the vaccination drive in Delhi as fast as possible.

"But the Chief Minister kept his faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and now that the Centre has betrayed Delhi, the government had to shut down over 150 vaccination centres, which is a pity, as it is uncertain when Delhi will get its quota of vaccines," he said. (IANS)

## Recovered Covid patient spends ₹3.6K for 4-km ride

CHENNAI

DUE to the lockdown, recovered Covid patients are finding it tough to reach their homes, as the call taxis and auto rickshaws are not plying on the streets citing police threat, said the son of a recovered patient.

"My mother, who had tested positive for Covid-19, was discharged today (Saturday). But call taxis and auto rickshaws were not accepting rides citing police harassment. They said police were levying heavy fines," Narayanan Anand, a private sector employee, told IANS.

According to him, his booking with an Ola cab got cancelled four times, while the same happened with Uber twice. Finally he managed to get hold of an ambulance service provider who charged about Rs 1,000 per km which came to Rs 3,600 in his case.

The government as part of its lockdown restrictions had clearly said that call taxis and auto rickshaws are permitted if the passengers had to go to hospitals. "The police should penalise the passengers who travel without any emergency and not the drivers so that the genuine travellers are not affected," Anand added. (IANS)

# No denial of vaccine or essential services for want of Aadhaar: UIDAI

NEW DELHI

THE Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on Saturday said in a statement that no one will be denied vaccine, medicine, hospitalisation or treatment for want of Aadhaar.

The statement has come in the present Covid-19 pandemic situations against certain reports suggesting that vaccination and a few other essential services like hospitalisation were being denied to the residents for want of Aadhaar.

UIDAI said that in the Covid pandemic circumstances, no one shall be denied a service/benefit just because he/she doesn't have an Aadhaar.

If one does not have Aadhaar or if Aadhaar online verification is not successful due to some reason, the concerned agency or department has to provide the service as per Section 7 of Aadhaar Act, 2016 and the Cabinet Secretariat OM dated 19th Dec 2017, UIDAI said in a statement.

UIDAI said that Aadhaar should not be misused as an excuse for denial of any essential service. There is a well-established exception handling mechanism (EHM) for Aadhaar and it should be followed to ensure delivery of benefits and services in the absence of



Aadhaar. If a resident does not possess Aadhaar for some or the other reason, she/he must not be denied essential services as per Aadhaar Act.

UIDAI said that Aadhaar is meant to bring transparency and accountability in public service deliveries through effective use of technology and there are exception handling regulations issued by UIDAI vide its circular dated October 24, 2017 to ensure that no beneficiary is denied of benefits/services for the want of Aadhaar.

Also, relevant provisions are there in the Aadhaar Act under

Section 7 to ensure that there is no exclusion and no denials.

Further, the Cabinet Secretariat OM dated December 19, 2017 has clearly explained the exception handling mechanism by using alternate means of identification for extending benefits and services to the residents who do not possess Aadhaar or in cases where Aadhaar authentication is not successful due to any reason.

UIDAI advised that in case of any such denial of service/benefit, matter should be brought to the knowledge of the higher authorities of concerned departments (IANS)

DHEERAJ SHARMA

IF CONFRONTED WITH INDIA'S COVID-19 CASE LOAD

# Would UK and US have fared better?

SINCE the outbreak of the second wave of Covid-19, the media has been highlighting the struggle of ailing people in finding a hospital bed. Several celebrities have also conveyed that they had to wait for hours to get a bed during this Covid crisis. Immediate parallels are drawn with the UK and USA. In other words, conclusions are summarily drawn that our systems in India are obtuse and uncaring.

To get to the bottom of the performance of India's healthcare system during the pandemic, a study was conducted in the National Capital Region (NCR). It focused on the time taken by a typical patient to get a bed when he/she reached the hospital. A sample of 284 attendants of Covid patients hospitalized reported that it took nearly 2 hours for them to get the person admitted in the hospital. Some did start attending the patient in about 45 minutes but the total time for admission and start of some form of treatment was 2 hours. This data pertains to non-trauma hospital admissions only.

Now, is the average time of 2 hours less or more is something that needs to be examined. Furthermore, can anyone get admitted to super-specialty hospitals such as AIIMS, PGI, etc. and can anyone get admitted to a hospital in the USA and UK directly. 100 per cent of the respondents had come to the hospital without having visited any medical doctors prior to com-

ing to the hospital. 64 per cent had sought telephonic advice and remaining were advised by their attendants, family members, or/and self to go to hospital as they experienced worsening symptoms. Therefore, it would be interesting to see if this is possible in the USA or UK context.

The average wait-time in the A&E (accidents and emergency) area in the UK was well above six hours prior to 1997. It was under Prime Minister Tony Blair, that the National Health Service (NHS) was given a key target to reduce the maximum waiting time at the A&E department to four hours. While this appeared to be an uphill task at that time, it was found that even if this was achieved in majority of the times, it would be an extraordinary success for the National Health Service in the UK. The results were less than encouraging.

In an article written by John Carvel (2003) in The Guardian and later cited in the paper by Kelman and Friedman in 2009, it was reported that two-thirds of NHS A&E departments in England faked the data on improvements in waiting time. In other words, waiting-time re-



mained abysmal.

According to an article in Harvard Business Review written by Nicos Savva and Tolga Tezcan in 2019, the average waiting-time for patients entering emergency in the United States is one and a half hours. It was reported in the same article that patients who arrived in the

emergency with broken bones had to wait on an average of 54 minutes. Consequently, I am not sure if the wait of two hours for the patients to be admitted is high or low. Every single minute can be excruciatingly painful for a person before receiving care and getting admitted. However, I am not sure if it fares poorly

with systems in major countries of the developed world.

Second, can a patient directly walk into a hospital in the UK and USA? The UK and USA both have a referral system. In other words, all those who are eligible will have a primary care physician (general physician). This primary care physician refers the patient for diagnostics and further treatment.

In other words, the patients must be referred by their primary care physicians to hospitals. It is only during emergency situations that the patient can come to hospital directly. However, in the Indian context, most of the patients who come in the OPD do not go to primary health care centres, general physicians, Mohalla clinics, etc. before coming to hospitals. The doctors in India continue to provide care to hundreds of OPD patients in government and non-government hospitals every day without turning anyone away. It must be recognized that the Indian healthcare system therefore is least discriminating globally.

While patients in Indian OPDs come and wait for hours, they are given care nevertheless by our Indian doctor in the

most effective manner under the given circumstances. 100 per cent of the respondents of our study stated that they were able to get medical advice on phone or in person within hours. When asked to estimate the time, 94 per cent of the respondents stated that they could manage to get a doctor on the phone in less than an hour and 88 per cent were able to schedule an appointment with a doctor on the same day. However, it is not easy for patients in some advanced countries to get a doctor's appointment on the same day or even the next day. Commonwealth Fund International Health Policy Survey of Eleven Countries shows the percentage of adults who were able to get a same-day or next day appointment when they needed care (www.commonwealthfund.org).

It is interesting that most of these countries have a population (other than US and UK) nearly that of Delhi State or even lesser. The UK's population is nearly the same that of Rajasthan state only. The delivery of healthcare remains and will continue to be challenging due to the size of our population and resources available but not because of the people who are delivering services. Consequently, while we must continue to strive to find ways to improve, augment, and innovate, at the same time it may be a bit more useful to be appreciative of the healthcare providers and healthcare system in our country.



# AP receives 1<sup>st</sup> Oxygen Express

- The express with two containers of 40 liquid medical oxygen arrive at Krishnapatnam port
- Another Express with 76.39 tonnes is on its way to Guntur
- SCR says the train for Andhra was operated from Durgapur in West Bengal and covered a distance of nearly 1,650 km in 27 hrs

NELLORE

THE first Oxygen Express for Andhra Pradesh reached the Krishnapatnam Port in the district on Saturday.

The express with two containers of 40 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen reached the port while another is on its way, a press release from South Central Railway (SCR) said. The SCR said two additional trains with a combined capacity of 140 tonnes are on their way to Telangana.

The train for Andhra was operated from Durgapur in West Bengal and covered a distance of nearly 1,650 km in around 27 hours, the release said.

The train came through the green corridor at an average speed of 65 kmph, it said.

The Oxygen Expresses are being operated by the Railways across the length and breadth of the country as per the request of the state governments.



Oxygen Express that arrived at Krishnapatnam port in Nellore district on Saturday

## State sees 22,517 new cases, 98 deaths

AMARAVATI

THE cumulative coronavirus positive cases touched 14,11,320 in the state as 22,517 infections were added afresh in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Saturday. The state also reported 98 Covid-19 fatalities while 18,739 patients had recovered in a day, the latest bulletin said. The last one lakh cases also came in five days as

Accordingly, Oxygen Expresses have been received in Telangana and Andhra, the release said.

Additionally, one more express with 76.39 tonnes is on its way to Guntur.

Meanwhile, principal secre-

the state logged over 20,000 cases per day since May 11.

The total recoveries increased to 11,94,582 and toll to 9,271, the bulletin said. The active caseload in the state was now 2,07,467.

East Godavari district reported 3,383 fresh cases, Anantapur 2,975 and Chittoor 2,884 in 24 hours. Nellore and Vizianagaram added close to 1,000 new cases each while

East Godavari tops in new infections with 3,383 fresh cases followed by Anantapur 2,975 and Chittoor 2,884

eight other districts registered between 1,000 and 2,000 each.

Anantapur reported 12 fresh Covid-19 fatalities, Nellore 11, East Godavari ten, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram nine each, Chittoor and Srikakulam eight each, Guntur and West Godavari seven each, Krishna, Kurnool and Prakasam five each in a day. Kadapa reported two more deaths.

tary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal said six tankers carrying 110 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen from the Reliance plant in Jamnagar would arrive in Guntur on Sunday.

“In all, we will be getting 230 tonnes of LMO over and above

the 590 tonnes allotted to the state. We will store the additional oxygen in different districts to meet the emergency needs,” Anil said. Another two tankers would also come from Durgapur in the next two days, he added.

# Yanamala warns of negative economic growth

AMARAVATI

TDP senior leader and former minister Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Saturday expressed concern that the retrogressive decisions of the YSRCP government were pushing Andhra Pradesh into a deep economic crisis never seen before in the history of the state.

Ramakrishnudu said that the state's growth rate has come down to an alarming 0.3 per cent during 2021-'22 because of the adamant policies being implemented for the past two years.

In a statement here, the TDP leader said that the AP growth rate came down to 4.3 per cent in the Covid first wave itself. It was largely because of the multiplying impact of the lockdowns on a state which was already reeling under the anti-industry and anti-people decisions being pursued by the YSRCP regime. The present situation was even more precarious. The economy might even get stuck in negative growth rate in the rampaging second wave of coronavirus.

Ramakrishnudu slammed the government for totally ignoring

- Says regressive decisions of the YSRCP govt are driving the State economy into a deep economic crisis
- Points out that growth rate which fell to 4.3% during Covid first wave will further come down owing to severity of second wave and the 'anti-industry' 'anti-people' policies being pursued by the Jagan govt
- Growth rate down to 4.3% in Covid first wave

the manufacturing sector and the industry. “An anti-industrial climate was created in the state with the ruling party MPs and leaders issuing threats to the managements of companies. Investments are neither attracted nor allowed to continue. Already, the unemployment rate reached 10 per cent which might even climb to 20 per cent in the near future,” he said.

The former finance minister said all development came to a standstill while lots of jobs were

gone. The migrant workers had to go without work and they were on the verge of starvation. Productivity came down steeply. No doubt, the State would slip into negative growth rate in the second wave. If the YSRCP regime followed its arrogant policies for the next three years, AP would be in a complete mess and a total disarray.

The TDP leader said that in the 2021-'22 proposed budget, the government was showing all false figures that would not help to set right the state economy in any manner. Excessive loans, revenue deficit and financial mismanagement were the only dubious achievements that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy had got in the last two years. With his inexperience and illogic, the Chief Minister has been throwing the state economy into an irretrievable and irreparable crisis, he said.

The TDP leader asserted that Jagan Reddy would go down in history as a ‘reverse ruler’ who had destroyed all development opportunities and ran a rule of vengeance and political victimisation.

A DAY AFTER ARREST

# Raghurama alleges torture in remand, HC seeks report

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
AMARAVATI

NARASAPURAM MP K Raghurama Krishna Raju has been sent to remand till May 28 by the magistrate court.

The entire process of remand took place amidst dramatic developments. First, the magistrate returned the remand report presented by the CID saying that it was not in order. Later, when the magistrate asked Raju if he was troubled by CID, he showed his injuries on the legs and alleged that he was beaten by the CID police since Friday night.

He also gave a four-page complaint to the magistrate, in which he said some persons came at night with mask and tied his feet with rope and beat him up with rubber belts and made him to walk with hurt feet. When he could not walk any further they left him.

Late in the evening, the CID again came with revised remand report. Based on it, the magistrate passed orders sending for remand till May 28 but said that he will not be sent to jail till his health condition improves.

Raju urged the magistrate to send him to a private hospital and not to Guntur General Hospital since GGH was a Covid designated hospital.

The magistrate ordered that if need be he may be sent to Ramesh Hospital. The CID court also said that Raju would be un-

- Magistrate court sends the Narsapuram MP to remand till May 28
- After the MP alleges torture, court orders he be sent to Ramesh Hospital till his health condition improves
- AP HC questions the CID on the injuries on the legs of Raju and directs medical board to test the injuries and submit a report by today afternoon



K Raghurama Krishna Raju

der the CRPF security till he was in hospital.

Meanwhile, additional advocate general (AAG) Ponnawolu Sudhakar Reddy alleged that the MP Raghurama Krishna Raju was misleading the court. He said that the MP was seen healthy till this evening when his family members brought him lunch.

“When the bail petition was rejected, the MP started high drama alleging that the CID police had beaten him up,” he said.

In the meantime, the MP's advocate and Supreme Court lawyer Adinarayana Rao moved habeas corpus petition in High Court seeking special division bench to hear the case.

The AP High Court special division bench led by Justice Praveen Kumar questioned the

CID police on the injuries on the legs of Raju. It directed medical board to test the injuries of the MP and submit a report by Sunday afternoon. It also directed the CID to admit the MP in a private hospital for treatment.

It may be noted that the CID charged him under Sections 124A (sedition), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), 505 (statements conducing public mischief) read with 120B (conspiracy) of Indian Penal Code. It also mentioned two media houses and ‘ohters’ as accused.

The FIR stated that Raju did not restrict himself to fair criticism of the government, and had made every attempt to create hatred, contempt disaffection towards the government.

## TDP chief demands probe into torture of on Narsapur MP

AMARAVATI

TDP chief and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday demanded a full-fledged inquiry into the alleged third degree methods used by the CID police against Narsapuram MP K Raghurama Krishna Raju.

Naidu asked whether the senior officials were violating the laws of the land and resorting to third degree methods against a MP only to see happiness in the eyes of the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. If anything would happen to the life of Raghurama Raju, then the AP government should be held responsible. In a statement here, the TDP chief said that a high level probe should be ordered into the third degree methods and the required action should be taken against the CID top officer concerned.

# Two held for selling Remediesivir in black

The accused were demanding Rs 2.1 lakh for six vials of the injection

HANS NEWS SERVICE  
VISAKHAPATNAM

TWO persons involved in black marketing of Remediesivir injections were caught red-handed as drug control officials conducted a decoy operation.

Drugs inspector (Vigilance), Suneeta posing as a patient's relative in need of Remediesivir injections made a decoy call to a contact number which was obtained from a patient's relative.

A person Suresh responded to the call and he gave Rakesh's number to contact for the injection.

When the Drugs Inspector contacted Rakesh, he said that he has six Remediesivir injections and the price of each was Rs 35,000 and that it would cost Rs 2.10 lakh for six vials.

Drugs Inspectors Suneeta and PNVVS Kalyani (Visakha-

patnam Sales) waited near the hospital in MVP colony and said their relative was admitted in the hospital.

Meanwhile, Rakesh along with another person G Brahmani came to meet the drugs inspectors at the hospital.

Three Covifor (Hetero) and three Redyx injections along with Rs 44,000 cash were taken from their possession.

Drugs inspectors Suneeta and Kalyani along with S Laxmoji, CI filed a complaint at MVP Police station against the accused.

During investigation, Rakesh and Brahmani disclosed that they got the injections from a doctor. The accused were taken into custody on Friday evening.

Assistant Director of Drugs control Administration K Rajita mentioned that the MVP police are investigating further.

# ‘Ambulance couple’ goes where relatives sometimes fear to tread

Continued from P1

And sometimes the ambulance has to do the job of a hearse. It's not an easy existence. There is a fleet of vehicles to maintain, a team of 18 people to support and a home to run. Both Himanshu and Twinkle work as insurance agents and said they spend their earnings in serving humanity.

The ambulance service started in 2002 when his parents-in-law gifted him an ambulance, said Himanshu. It has built up steadily since with the Kalias adding vehicles over the years. Six of the ambulances are parked at their residence and six elsewhere. The couple was doing charitable work even

before the pandemic struck and has received several awards. In 2019, Twinkle was awarded the Nari Shakti Puraskar by President Ram Nath Kovind. Four years before that, in 2015, an organisation in Dubai honoured her as the ‘First Woman Ambulance Driver’. In 2016, Himanshu got the ‘Ambulance Man’ award in Malaysia. Hoping to ramp up their work of facilitating hospital admissions, blood donations and arranging funerals, Himanshu and Twinkle said they have expanded their team. As millions of Indians battle infection and death, there are many more miles to go and hurdles to cross for this intrepid couple.

## Three red sanders smugglers held

TIRUPATI

TASK Force personnel on Saturday arrested three smugglers and seized three vehicles including two cars and a two-wheeler. The Task Force personnel who were inspecting vehicles at the Anjaneayapuram check post on Kodur road, 15 km from here grew suspicious when two cars did not stop and fled away.

After a hot chase, the Task Force personnel were able to intercept the two vehicles and took the drivers into custody.

They were identified as Karthik, 30, belonging to Kurakalva in Renigunta mandal and M Sasikumar, 28 of Papanaidupeta in the same mandal. The inspection of the vehicles led to recovery of the red sanders logs.

Task Force officials said one more person Challa Balaji, 22, a native of Gudimalam, who was on a motorcycle piloting the two cars, was also arrested along with the vehicle. A case has been registered in Tirupati Task Force police station.

# Google takes initiative to support jobs for H-1B holders’ spouses

Continued from P1

“This builds on an amicus brief we recently joined in support of a lawsuit filed by the American Immigration Lawyers Association to expedite the delayed processing time of H-4 work authorisations,” she said.

Kent Walker, Senior Vice President, Global Affairs, Google, said H-4 EAD authorisations for the

spouses of high-skilled workers help American companies recruit and retain the world's best talent. “Today we led a business coalition filing on behalf of 30 companies to preserve and protect the programme,” Walker said.

“H-4 EADs provide work authorisation to more than 90,000 H-4 visa-holders--more than 90 per cent women. COVID has dis-

proportionately affected women. Ending this programme would make things worse, disrupting careers and reducing wages,” he said. “It doesn't make sense to welcome a person to the US to work but to make it harder for their spouse to work. That hurts their family and hurts our economy now and in the future,” he added.

## Alarming surge in Covid cases despite partial lockdown

Continued from P1

Boozers are even coming to Tamil Nadu border areas as the liquor shops are closed in that state. This has been resulting in more infections along the border areas. It could not be said when the cases will see a downward trend.

As the second wave has been making more people suffer from breathlessness, the demand for oxygen beds is increasing and it has become an uphill task for officials to fill the gap. The death toll has also been rising in the district with around 10 deaths are officially being reported though there are many more than this number.

## Defunct oxygen plant at Gudur revived

Continued from P1

Now it has been revived with the active involvement of the district administration. A local donor and aqua farmer donated Rs 6 lakh for reopening the unit. Officials sought the help of Navy and a team led by Commandant Dipayan Kumar and others reached Chillakur and rectified the technical problems for the generation of oxygen. Many sub-teams divided work and completed the repairs by Friday midnight. The Control Checking Team has been invited to verify the works taken up by the teams from the Navy and give final nod for production. Officials say the revival of the defunct unit is a big relief to the district who are facing a difficult situation for oxygen after a reduction in daily quota from Chennai since May 2.

The Gudur Sub Collector said this unit will bridge the gap of oxygen in the district. He also said the APSDCL has waived outstanding power dues to the extent of nearly Rs 3 crore paving way for the restoration



# Not pandemic, it's the infodemic that is hurting

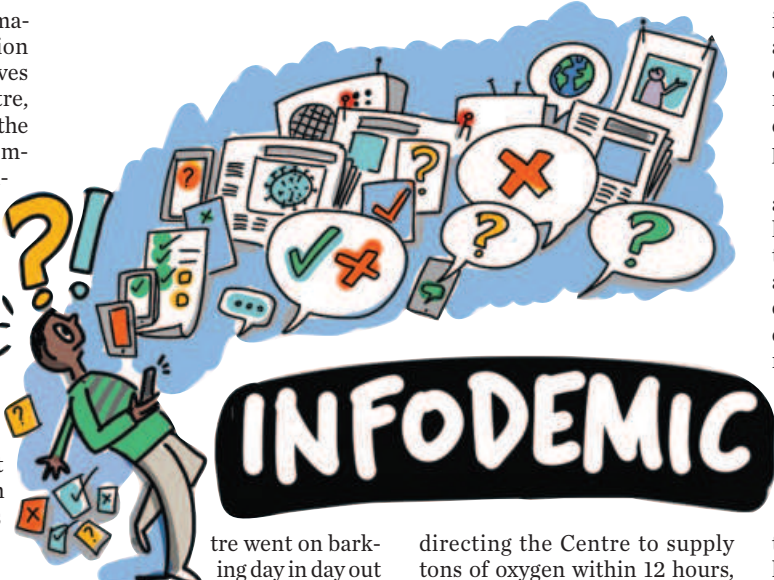
There is so much information and misinformation and abuses and invectives mostly directed towards Centre, especially on Modi right from the so-called elite personalities comprising ex-bureaucrats, scientists, economists, jurists, secularists, politicians of all hues.

Rahul Gandhi the so-called great torch bearer of Nehru clan delivers messages every day denouncing Modi and the union govt. Now the great medical journal Lancet has added it's ten pence. It commands a respect in international community in spite of its bogus credibilities after having ascended a self-proclaimed pedestal

One finds everyday some high court or the apex court overhauling the Centre for its numerable failures and breathing down its neck with the threat of contempt. The courts seem to have put on the shoes of these executive without having any expertise on the matters concerned, simply based on the endless PIL's filed by anyone and the submissions from various state governments.

Mamata didi never fails to add spice to the whole issue. Be it shortage of vaccine or oxygen, hospital beds, shortage of ambulance, inadequate crematoria, fires in hospitals, shortage and consequent black marketing of medicines the entire blame has to be borne by Modi and his govt. There is a blurring of image in that Modi has to bear the entire blame. Elections and Kumbh Mela are reported to have been instrumental in the explosion of Covid -19, Chapter 2. Statistics and theories abound in its support and against. None of the leaders suggested to the EC for postponing elections till the time the infections and fatalities hit them on their faces towards the fag end of the exercise.

The public are also having a major share in the episode in that they renounced masks and social distancing in spite of the governments both in the states and Cen-



tre went on barking day in day out through all sorts of media, post the first wave.

When the vaccine was progressing, the Centre has been asking the citizens go for vaccination. At that time we had netas like Rahul and many others denouncing the vaccine as "BJP vaccine" "Modi vaccine" exhorting people to shun them. Now they all clamour and want everyone to go for it. What sort of patriotism and integrity is this? India did have a breakthrough very early and wanted to help the poorer nations of the world and exported vaccines to these countries as we were not forthcoming to get vaccinated. At the height of Covid crisis we shipped HCQ to US and the west to give them some succour to their citizens who were dying in hordes. The goodwill earned is being reciprocated now when we are under enormous pressure during the second wave. We should stop for a moment and think how these loose mouths would have handled such a situation had they been in power. I shudder to imagine that situation.

The state governments go to their high court's with a rant against the Centre in order to cover up their failures at the ground level. The courts also, without having any expertise in these matters simply pass orders

directing the Centre to supply tons of oxygen within 12 hours, supply lacs of vials of Covaxin/Covishield by the morning.

Manufacture of oxygen is in the hands of private sector and it is not a regulated commodity. Thanks to these private sector, in spite of being derided by great Netas of left and secularists, these companies have risen to the occasion and are showing their patriotism and integrity by converting and diverting their entire production of medical oxygen to the state governments for use in the hospitals. Here also states have failed in not organising to transport and distribute oxygen. There is an acute shortage of oxygen tankers.

Most of the corporate hospitals have failed in having their own O2 plants and abject neglect in maintenance. We can see a number of fire accidents and internal supply failures. The net result is extensive damage to Centre and especially Modi. These netas, bogus secularists and the unethical media have succeeded and are basking in the glory in spite doing something to mitigate the sufferings of the people or to improve the morale and positivity of the public.

The main issue for all these exalted personalities is that Modi is not getting baited by their invectives and does not respond to any of their accusations. All he

is doing is focussed on mitigation and taking the citizens of this country to safer shores. He may respond once our country conquers and comes out of the raging pandemic.

None of the loud mouths look at States, esp Orissa, with capable leaders, for being focussed on the task in hand and not spew venom at anyone else. Modi and his government have committed grave errors and earnestly engrossed in remedying the situation. Let us wait and pass judgement at a later date.

These personalities have not made even one effective alternatives in the present crisis except finding fault with anything the government does. When lockdown was initially announced there was loud objections for scuttling the livelihood. In the present scenario, there is reluctance on the part of the central government with concern for livelihood, the coterie shouts for lockdown. In Kerala, the government is so focussed on taking care of the people of the state, it does not have the time to indulge in petty politics.

The most questionable part of the whole episode is the utter lack of integrity on the part of individuals indulging in hoarding and black marketing essential and life-saving materials. The citizens have also failed by not adhering to basics like use of mask and social distancing. No court in the country has reprimanded them for their share in spreading the second wave. It's time media, all sorts, resorted to some honest reporting and refrained from scaring the public by spewing negativity in tons.

By constituting various task forces, the apex court is creating more paper without knowing/analysing the situation. Centre has established its rightful thought by objecting to the courts taking over administration. The courts, it appears are in a hurry to pass orders and play to the gallery. It's time they stopped for a minute and introspect.

— J Kannan, Hyderabad

## PAST AND PRESENT

# SIMPLE PLEASURES, LAID-BACK LIVES

K R SRINIVASAN

OFTEN I sit and reminisce of my school days and the summer holidays of the late sixties, not only a smile glows on my face but feel relaxed recollecting the joyous past. In particular, when I recollect the ice-cream seller, whom we friends fondly refer as Kulfi wala. Practically, his visit to our street more or less every day in the late summer afternoons and announcing variety of ice-creams quoting cost of each one made him familiar with young and old. However, as his face and voice engaged the immediate attention of all whenever he entered our street is unforgettable. Further, pedaling his cycle slowly with the container fitted to the cycle stocked with ice-creams not only distracted our attention for a moment while playing cricket on the street with tennis ball but were also tempted to buy ice-cream of our choice from him. Though it was priced at twenty paise, yet we did not have the luxury to buy quite often.

However, he was very generous and offered ice-cream even if we ran short of money at times. Similarly, I miss the days when my entire cousin gang visiting our house during summer vacations. We used to sit on the terrace of my house



almost every night after dinner and chit-chat for a long time on various topics ranging from films, sports and current affairs etc besides exchanging anecdotes before going to sleep. At times, munching snacks after dinner, recollect every moment of the day spent and laugh heartily.

On few nights, dividing ourselves into two groups and playing "Antakshari" with my siblings also participating always remains memorable and pleasant. In a way, whatever little we had at our disposal, we feel contented and moved on without regret or disdain giving our hundred percent presence to the task that inevitably enhanced our well-being. Thus when thinking of the unforgettable bygone days clearly

etched in my mind sitting lonely, it beckons always that things were simpler then and joyous despite the present times provide speedier contact modes and customised options.

On the contrary, the youth of today surrounded by gadgets, facilities, comforts and with so many stimuli around is restless forgetting its own power to do a simple task. Further as youngsters are always tempted and addictive to modern gadgets besides thinking always to earn more money than anything else, it is advisable that they also devote time in spiritual and familial pursuits like us in order to savour the present instead of been selfish and thinking only about themselves which will only take them to nowhere.

## Releasing prisoners, not without risks

It was interesting to read the letter by a reader who advocated release of prisoners booked for petty crimes, and others who were critical of the government. It is true that prisons in the country are bursting at the seams due to accommodating inmates more inmates than the intended capacity for which the jails are build, and prevailing Covid situation in the country, is making matters worse by posing challenge to the government and jail authorities as more and more inmates are being found Covid+ve, owing to congested and unhealthy environment prevailing in prisons.

The apparent solution to this problem is expanding jails in order to accommodate more prisoners, and to release them on parole, considering the insignificant and petty crimes they have committed to be in tune with the humanitarian approach will prove disastrous. It must be remembered last year, when the Covid situation in the country was at its peak, such an experiment of releasing jail inmates on parole had been tried.

Though, at first this seemed logical and prudent proposition, the crime rate began to mount in society as the released ones were back in business, on the trade they knew so well, posed problems to law-abiding society, and the folly was soon realised by the authorities to round them up, and put them again in jail.

Such shortcut methods in the name of human rights is a perverse notion that the jailed individuals who are serving their term can be released for the reasons of the pandemic, and jails unable to accommodate them meaningfully.

— S Lakshmi, Hyderabad

## We need to be more proactive

The column of Ramu Sarma "Adopt multipronged approach to tackle Covid 2.0" (May 15) detailing with clarity all the relevant happenings and how we are reeling under severe heat of dreadful corona virus has to be adopted in toto with still advanced methods invented and observed by other nations in eliminating China Organised Virus International Disease (COVID). It is surely an undeniable fact that both state/central governments and people are squarely responsible with their indolent and care free attitude for indiscriminately spreading of virus beyond the reach of its incarceration and it is now high time to impose drastic decisions leaving no chance to courts to order on governance. Andhra Pradesh government could have retained Hyderabad as its capital until 2024 to gain advantage on certain valid and vital matters.

It is not perfectly and scientifically intelligible as to how this infection is inflicted to those strictly restricted in the closed circuit of four walls and those who were administered two doses of vaccine. Covid patients especially people with diabetes and immuno-suppressed are being infected with a new harmful virus known as Black Fungus (Mucormycosis) and its symptoms are also many according to scientists and doctors. It appears we are entering from lion's cage to tiger's cage. Already we are not able to get rid of from the

clutches of covid pandemic despite all possible efforts.

US government is not forcing its people who have taken two doses of vaccine while others are advised to adopt precautionary protocols. But in our country, it is not at all possible as one more threat is ahead that states Covaxin and Covishield are less effective against B.1.617 or the Indian strain according to ICMR's authorised report. Inoculation of vaccines is implemented at snails pace due to acute shortage and it may take a few more years to vaccinate all eligible people.

When governments are initiating new ways and means to control the surge, anti-social elements are encashment every opportunity from the patients. Ambulances, corporate hospitals, selling spurious drugs, oxygen cylinders, hoarding medicines, pall bearers, etc., are causing pall of gloom in the lives of needy. Lockdown is relegated to back seat. Lakhs of precious lives were succumbed to vicious virus. Third wave with mettlesome force is ready to attack us and hence everyone in all fields must be alert round the clock to drive back this tsunami. Don't throw blame on governments for each and every unfortunate event. The 'opinion' author felt shy or inconvenience to mention on statistics. They must be on three false subjects - lies, damned lies and statistics.

— Dr N S R Murthy, Secunderabad

## Deficit of humanitarian attitude and scientific criteria

THE second wave of coronavirus reached its peak and sooner hopefully as per the expert opinion, will flatten and reduce. The situation at the field turned catastrophic in different parts of the country with massive deaths of patients due to leakage and lack of oxygen like Nashik and Vijayawada. News like floating of dead bodies in River Ganges at Buxar, suspected to be of Covid affected people creating scare in the hearts of people. The satellite photos released by NASA where thousands of lighting pyres left a scar in the minds of citizens of this country. Though not talking overtly everybody is gripped with fear psychosis and are feeling death is not far away. The real reasons for these fearful situations can be attributed to lack of scientific approach by each individual and as the country as a whole. Since the beginning our country has prioritized emotional feelings than scientific approach. When the government says not to flock during the festive seasons and on

solemn occasions, the citizens violated the 'appropriate covid behaviour' at large. Now reaping the ill results of what they have sowed without heeding to the requests of the Prime Minister repeatedly.

The authorities also missed the scientific approach while estimating the different waves of this pandemic. Accordingly they failed to properly advise the government and once again proved they are not suitable to encounter unprecedented catastrophes (only best to maintain status-quo). About the massive requirement of Medical Oxygen also the top health officials and top Administrators of this Country miserably failed to guide the Political Executive and thereby belied the people during the historic pandemic. It is really heart burning to see the medical doctors themselves denied to take jabs of vaccines in the pretext of many unscientific reasons when the vaccination started. I saw such people in my own family. The instances reminded me the days when my

grandfather used to narrate the stories how people used to run away and hid themselves in the granaries when the medical staff approached to vaccinate them in the early days after Independence. Means even though the people are studying/studied MBBS but scientific approach has not butressed into their mindsets. When the doctors are like that one can visualise how a common man thinks about the vaccination.

During my discussions with the Commissioner of Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) it was learnt that, they had to take lot of pains initially to entrench the importance of vaccines to the police forces. Only mild threats like government will withdraw certain benefits from those who were not vaccinated, yielded some results. Perhaps the initial lukewarm response (from the frontline covid warriors and common public) could have been the main reason for the government not emphasized on universal vaccination and went for less massive production.

The civil servants are once again showing their back to the people. Like a layman they are just cautioning each other 'stay safe', 'stay healthy' by not venturing out when it is most necessary in the last one century. By their inhuman attitude of timidity and self-centered approach, they left everything to the hands of officials like Municipal Commissioners (MCs) and District Collectors & Magistrates (DMs).

Due to this overburden the system of Commissioners and Collectors may crumble at any time. Instead of being mute spectators to the crisis, the top class civil servants should come forward and share the burden. Else people will remember them as treacherous people who enjoyed life of pomp and splendour, plum postings during normal time and hiding like rats when the crisis surfaced in the country.

— Nelapatla Ashok Babu (The author is Additional Commissioner of Income Tax, Pune)

# COMBATING COVID-19 DEVASTATION IN INDIA

PROF NAIDU ASHOK

IN this context the Government of India Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released revised guidelines for home isolation / asymptomatic covid-19 cases; it is high time to review these guidelines document. The document contains nine sections. The essence of the guidelines broadly can be categorised into two parts, one is instructions for the home isolation of mild and asymptomatic Covid-19 cases, secondly, role of the state and district authorities. Most of the instructions are suggestive in nature ignored the actual implementation. The roles of the state and district authorities are described but completely ignored the role of the central government, moreover it just considering that the centre has advisory role. In other cases it donating the centre state

relations where as in this crisis situation limiting its role by releasing guidelines. Further the detailed analysis on this home isolation and the role of the district or local authorities given below.

In my research, one of the main reason for spread of covid-19, which I observed is housing pattern - in one room more than four and five sometimes even six persons are living and using the same toilet-. Therefore, if a candidate is affected in a home remaining persons are aromatically getting infected. So the efforts of the government to stop the spread of the virus are hampered.

1. Identifying the local school and college hostel buildings to convert them into Corona Care Centres (unlike isolation and quarantine centres). In every district we have a university, so the university hostel buildings may



also be utilized for this Corona Care Centres. Every village must be ensured to have this CCC in order to reach the expected goal

to stop the virus spread. 2. In this CCC only preliminary health facilities will be given such as separate bed, food and basic medical

facilities for those who infected by the corona virus. Only initial and less severe patients will be accommodated if the severity in-

creased the patients need to be shifted to the better hospitals.

3. In this CCC centres Local Doctors, Nurses, ANMs, Medical staff, Asha Volunteers, Anganwadi teachers and other local government health and sanitation departments' men power will be utilized as of requirement.

4. This CCC centres will be run under the supervision of local MRO and under control of district Collectors and with the help of health and sanitation departments. Further police department may also extend their role in security, law and order issues.

Finally, the expected outcome of this CCC centres are to stop the spread of deadly virus in the state and also to utilize infrastructure and human resources in the best possible manner. If this CC C centres implemented properly, the model will be example for the other states in the

country. In due course of time, this tentative proposal of converting all Government School, College, and university hostel buildings into a temporary arrangement of Corona Care Centres (CCCs) is also submitted to the higher authorities of the state government. In the end it is worthwhile to mention the world famous medical journal in its recent volume analysed the situation in India and highlighted the causes and consequences. After observing the all these international journals and public opinion the major causes for the present health crisis is the leadership of the country lacking proper vision and direction and institutional failure are the foremost important reasons for the covid-19 devastation in the country.

(The author is Former Dean Social Science, OU, and Director, Academic Audit Cell, OU)



# Will we combat the apathetic reality of our terrible health care?

REETI MATHUR

IT was somewhere in 2006-7 when I received a call at the palliative care home I worked at that was then situated in Darya Ganj, Old Delhi. Our colleague in the remote town of Churachandpur, Manipur had been diagnosed with liver cirrhosis and needed to be brought to Delhi since they could not treat him in Churachandpur. Logistics were quickly organized and before we knew it, a team of us were waiting to pick him up at the Delhi airport.

After spending a few days at the care home, his condition began deteriorating and he had to be rushed to Lok Nayak Hospital. It must have been less than a week at the hospital when his condition worsened further. The doctor checked and informed us that he was in need of a ventilator, failing which he may not survive. From around 11 pm to about 3 am, a care worker from the care home and I ran from one department to another, from the ICU to the HOD's office to the Medical Superintendent's office. We even made calls to other government hospitals requesting a ventilator. In the end, the doctor on duty told us there was no time and if a ventilator was not available, the next best option was to use a manual resuscitator. Taking turns, the care worker and I pumped the hand-held device hoping to stabilise our friend's, our colleague's breath. Until that moment came when he didn't breathe anymore.

I was in my twenties and as I say there on the dingy dirty spit-covered staircase of the government hospital I questioned everything. Why this struggle? Why this death? Why this dearth? Why? This wasn't the first incident and surely wouldn't be the last.

Almost fifteen year later, I sit scrolling through social media and quietly listen to people over phone calls. There is anger, a desperation, fear and an intense surge among my peers. Covid-19 ripped through the lives of people in a manner never before ex-



perienced by my generation of people, or majority of us who belong to the blurry-lined Indian middle class. How many of us experienced first-hand the devastating impacts of malaria or tuberculosis or even diarrhoea? Weren't such illnesses—that take lives, that damage the fabric of families—gareeb logon ki bimari (poor man's illness)? Didn't these illnesses come from poor living conditions, bad quality of water and from not having enough money to seek treatment? Isn't that the reason gareeb log (poor people) contracted and died of these illnesses?

Up until my late thirties, when Covid-19 shattered the facades we live behind, not very many people in India spoke so fervently about the rotten conditions of our healthcare system. Nor did most people hurriedly gather resources, create hashtags or made urgent phone calls to get help for those gasping for their last breaths. Those who did, were considered social workers and activists, which was not always a compliment at social or family gatherings and was often received with hints of condescension.

The general unspoken comfort in knowing that we either had access to resources that

saved us from life-threatening illnesses or enough money to seek treatment at a private hospital was enough. We were safe. The fact that 60 per cent of our population who lives in rural regions had only 24,855 public health centres across the country in 2019 didn't really affect our drive to the local pub or club.

Neither did the fact that in 2019, out of the daily footfall of approximately 15,000 people at AIIMS seeking treatment, only around 2000 were admitted on a daily basis. If only one day, instead of driving down to Adchini or Hauz Khas village, someone had walked into the compounds of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Safdarjang hospital in the heart of Delhi. The reality of thousands of people lying around under the scorching sun or the chill of December, waiting for their chance to be seen by a doctor, would have perhaps built a movement much sooner.

Did we ever bother to question the system before it became personal, before gareeb logon ki bimari became our own reality with Covid-19? Suddenly, we are surprised that India doesn't have enough hospital beds or even supplies. Whereas, according to the 2019 National

Health Profile, there were only 0.55 government hospital beds per 1000 population and only around 915 government allopathic doctors per 10,00,000 population. This was a whole year before COVID-19 snatched away our freedoms and securities, before it brought us down to the masses...for whom inaccessibility to healthcare has been and continues to be a generational reality.

Yes, our governments haven't made the least of efforts to ease the pain, the suffering, the angst. Yes, every thinkable system in our country is corrupt. And yes, instead of thinking of saving human lives, everything is politicised with an agenda to win the next election. But what about our own apathy towards our failing systems before it became personal? Where was the outcry and where was our anger towards the broken healthcare system before it personally affected us? How are we, who spew pseudo-intellectual jargon 20 times a day on social media, so different from the governments we accuse? Aren't we also only piggy backing on the poor to take a stand for ourselves? Trampling once again the spirit of the poor, just to make a point about some global inequality that we perpetuate with every single thing we consume.

It is time we really take a stand and stop exploiting the plight, misery and anguish of the poor to inflate our already self-indulgent egos. Will we continue to fight the good fight once this horrific pandemic subsides and is concentrated only in the overcrowded slums or the most rural regions of India? Will we continue questioning the global inequality once this illness is minimised or eradicated from developed nations? Will we continue to philosophise once our precious private hospitals have all the resources to take care of us, resources that are inaccessible by the poor? Will we?

*(The author is an editorial and development consultant)*

# HOW TO MAKE BETTER JUDGEMENTS

JYOTHI GOSALA

THERE'S a vast difference between being judgmental and exercising good judgment. Here are a few takeaways for a more improved decision-making ability by identifying your original judging style, and how to expand that style and make better decisions. Some key skilling initiatives for practicing good judgment in challenging situations, when making decisions about the future, and when interacting with others at work.

**Skills**  
Decision making, Problem solving: Both decision making and problem solving have to be weighed carefully. For a sound judgement, one has to be well informed by looking at the pros and cons. Problem solving needs a few mechanisms like reasoning, balanced approach, finer perspective to have a good outcome. Paving the way to better decisions; judging wisely when in tough situations; and seeing things more clearly will help in focusing your judgement ability in a better light.

Judgment is an innate ability focusing on the personal traits are formed with enhanced knowledge and experience in forming opinions and making decisions is a characterised leadership tool. When decisions are meant to be made, scrutinising the facts becomes all the more essential. Better insight, good intuitive abilities, weighing right and wrong with that gut spirit is important. Some amazing leaders with good judgement are good listeners, are able to perceive things from others viewpoint, understand the depth of emotions, are firm and grounded. Practices adopted, enhanced skills, sound associations reflect the judgements one makes. Some elements like learning, trust factor, experience, better choices are to be practiced consistently.

Leaders need many a qualities but without having a good judgement, they will not go far. A variant of mixed factors sighing the pros and cons have to be considered before taking a deci-



sion, embarking on a chosen mission or dealing with people.

**Future Skills**  
Thanks to technology, the rise of soft skills is at an all-time high. The workplace structure is undergoing a sea change. With change in place, the demand for skillsets is at an all-time high. Judgment is an ability to make balanced effective decisions with a sense of objectivity.

## Understanding Decisions

- Is the decision important?
  - What's the outcome?
  - What are the eventualities?
- Building on resilience, self-control, sound judgement and fairness are key traits essential to build one's own personal identity. Good judgement takes into account all our acts we are responsible for both internally and externally. Good judgements help us to take better informed decisions. While good judgment doesn't guarantee a good outcome it will enhance the chances on a positive note. Good judgment combines what you're born with and what you learn, but it can be honed and improved.
- Key elements of judgement  
Good judgement involves

measuring the various facets of enhanced understanding. Learning Inputs are key assets in a learning process, listening ability, and the assimilation of the tools which have a heightened awareness on us. Information obtained has to be weighed carefully, by seeking good opinions, judgement should be a well-established quality based on reliable information sources.

What we know has to be built up based on our insight and experiences. A critical factor in judgement and decision making, helps shape decisions. Values are key driving force in decision making. Being aware is essential to avoid biased opinions. We need to seek inputs from trusted sources. Choices have to be evaluated to have better outcomes. One has to act to generate the results and be quick to action.

With good judgement comes better decision making. This paves way for better relationships in and out of an organization, promoting growth and productivity and being a morale booster in crisis. Getting it right in the most pressing situations, identifying strengths and weaknesses and building them way up.

# Why diets don't work in the long term, lifestyle changes do

DHRUV BHUSHAN

FOR decades, diet conversations globally have ranged from the simple and straightforward to elaborate and convoluted, the latter sometimes even bordering on crazy. In today's digital age, before you can say cheese, a new diet would have garnered a global following, with everyone from a lay person to experts swearing by its efficacy.

However, just a few weeks or months later, the same experts have moved on to another 'miraculous' weight-loss or diet program. That is what you get when you don't follow science, just fads. Health though, is not a fad. It is a lifestyle habit.

Amid all these fads, one cannot help but wonder if each of these programs are a sure-shot way to maintain a healthy weight and lifestyle, why don't they survive the test of time?

According to a study published in the BMJ, most diets help with weight loss and lower blood pressure in the first few months, but the desired effects don't last. So, people keep returning to new fads. But fad diets can be damaging. They often lack essential nutrients and teach you nothing about healthy eating. Excessively restrictive diets also take pleasure out of eating and may lead to eating disorders, slow down your metabolism, causing more harm than good in the long run.

One of the reasons for crash diets to fail is because the body views dieting as a form of starvation. When you eat much below your desired energy intake for a long time, your metabolism slows down and tries to fight back. The hormones that regulate our hunger and satisfaction waver making it harder to sustain the diet and hence weight loss. Further, the idea of taking extreme steps such as quitting certain foods can often lead to one feeling low and disappointed. Sooner or later you bounce back to prior 'unhealthy' eating habits. And a few months later, you are trying another new weight loss diet.

No wonder that the diet and weight loss industry around the world is growing leaps and bounds from \$192.2 billion in 2019, expected to be over \$295 billion by 2027. However, more and more studies show that if you are truly interested in losing weight and maintaining a healthy lifestyle you need a more sustainable plan than a fad diet. We must also understand the



difference between weight loss and fat loss. Not all weight loss might be healthy, you might just be losing muscle or water weight due to crash dieting and doing copious amounts of cardio. To lose fat, a few components are proven to work: these are eating slightly less than your energy requirements, having adequate protein intake to preserve muscle mass, and strength or resistance training. Doing this regularly, will slowly help manage your weight in a healthy manner, and also boost your metabolism and tone your body.

Consider making these small, incremental changes to your lifestyle to embrace a healthy relationship with food and, indeed, life. Suggested by Habbitt CEO and Co-founder Dhruv Bhushan.

Stress might feel like a default response to the challenges of a modern lifestyle, but constant stress can pose serious health problems.

Stress causes an increase in cortisol and adrenaline levels which influences blood pressure, heart rate, eating habits, sleep patterns, blood sugar, fat metabolism, and immunity. Long-term stress can also increase your risk of heart attack or stroke and contribute to depression. You can manage stress by adopting some of the above healthy habits, and by making conscious efforts to relax. Breathe deeply, enjoy your favorite activities, spend time with your loved ones. And

## Manage your stress levels

ask for help, by speaking to those who care for you, or a trained professional.

Eating and living healthy, or trying to manage weight should not be a punishment or a sacrifice. There is no one size fits all definition or path to good health. It is a combination of different small steps that add up to big results over time. Health is a lifestyle. Trusting your instincts with food and actions that feel good, go a long way towards overall well-being. Eat food you enjoy without the guilt, just maintain a balance. With the right mix of natural organic ingredients, an indulgent low calorie Blue-

berry Crumble wise cream will be better and more delightful than so-called magic fat burner pills.

The next time, someone tempts you with the next-best diet fad, show them your intuitive eating and healthy lifestyle plan. You will develop a better relationship with food when you tune in to your body's needs and cues, and incorporate this into your everyday life.

Remember not to think of lifestyle changes as daunting behavioural changes. They are small steps on a journey towards good health -- ones that combine science, taste, and sustainability.

## Add physical activity into your regular routine

Make exercise, activity and movement a part of your daily routine, like brushing your teeth. In case you have very busy schedules, try and exercise first thing in the morning before the day consumes you.

Just like your food, pick activities that you can stick to, and not things that will peter out after a few weeks of initial enthusiasm. You don't need to be spending hours in the gym or hiring a personal trainer. Even a relaxing walk or jog while listening to your favourite music, a dance class or a yoga session can be a good starting point. Also, stay active throughout the day. Take stairs instead of the lift, walk around while on the phone, contribute to household chores, play with your kids or pets, enjoy a sport, have sex, walk or cycle to neighbourhood areas instead of driving there, just simple choices without the need to take out extra time also go a long way. And for more dedicated individuals looking to burn fat, lose kilos and tone up, research shows that strength or resistance training, and high intensity workouts offer more sustainable outcomes. More than how much or what you do every day, what matters is that you do exercise every day. Start small and stay consistent.

## Make sleep a priority

This is one of the most overlooked aspects of our well-being today. We should aim to get adequate restful sleep every night, which may range from 6 to 9 hours for different individuals. It is during this time that the body repairs and recovers. Essential hormones that also aid weight loss are at play only during sleep. Not getting enough sleep can have a detrimental impact on your physical, mental and emotional health. If for some reason, you have trouble falling asleep, address it as a priority. Make time to sleep. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine. Unplug your digital devices before bedtime. Instead, unwind with a bath or some light reading. Create an environment that is conducive and free from distractions, with a bed and bedding that is comfortable.

## Make healthy eating a daily habit

It is important to be in tune with your specific needs, and not feel deprived. The same plan might now work for everyone. Nutrition need not be complicated, and crash diets are not sustainable. Don't think about giving up the "bad" foods, instead focus on choosing foods that are holistic, nourishing, and pleasing for the palate. Don't be taken in by jargon-filled technicalities on nutrients. Opt for easy to use, nutritious products. Play with your food choices, mix and match ingredients. Health and taste can go hand in hand. Even foods that you crave or are 'addicted to', have a healthier alternative out there. Ensure a balanced diet of fresh, seasonal fruits and vegetables for vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants. Balance these with whole grains and healthy fats. Meet your daily protein intake, whether from foods, or supplements using natural proteins. This can't be stressed enough since protein deficiency is one of the leading causes of lifestyle diseases, including obesity. Drink plenty of water.



## How Covid taking huge financial toll on Indians

Many households in rural areas resorting to borrowing to meet increased healthcare expenses: Survey

HANS BUSINESS  
HYDERABAD

THE deadly Covid-19 pandemic triggered by the novel coronavirus has taken a big financial toll on Indians, with many people resorting to borrowing to meet the health-related and other expenses, a survey has revealed.

Hyderabad-based short news portal, Way2News, carried a survey among three lakh households about the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic whose second wave is ravaging the country now.

According to the survey, the pandemic is leaving a devastating impact on millions of families as hospital and other expenses have gone up multi-fold. Job losses are compounding the problem. The survey revealed that many families are borrowing at high interest rates from different sources including private lenders and loan sharks as their savings already exhausted.

As many as 28 per cent of the households said their hospital expenses surged while 24 per cent cited that job loss worsened their financial situation.

About 49 per cent admitted that they spent more money on hospital bills and also on efforts to stay healthy, while 31.6 per cent said they already utilised their savings.

On the brighter side, 21 per cent of the consumers spent money on nutrition and hygiene. But,

spending more on nutrition and hygiene is a burden on the poor. Nearly 32 per cent of households are spending judiciously during these trying times. They cut down on non-

**Hyderabad-based Way2News carried a survey among three lakh households on the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic whose second wave is ravaging the country now**

essentials and discretionary spending. "With household financial savings contracted, financial distress is rising in every region. Bold measures and stronger crisis management from the governments is need of hour. Further, India has to work out a way to vaccinate



its population at the earliest possible," Raju Vanapala, CEO, Way2News.

Interestingly, a meagre 4.9 per cent of the respondents said they resorted to credit card spending. That means majority of people are borrowing from other sources including private lenders and loan sharks to meet the expenses. There is a spurt in gold loans as middle-class households have not many options to pay their hospital bills.

"Indians are using instant loan/lending money services, where they get higher limits to borrow, at higher interest. Meaning, they are ending up in a debt trap as they are taking loans from unauthorised lenders at exorbitant interest rates. As many as 23 per cent have said they have taken loan this way, already," Raju Vanapala explained.

# Robot dexterity will be a game changer for the world

It will make robots work like human beings; AI, big data and computer vision tech hold the key



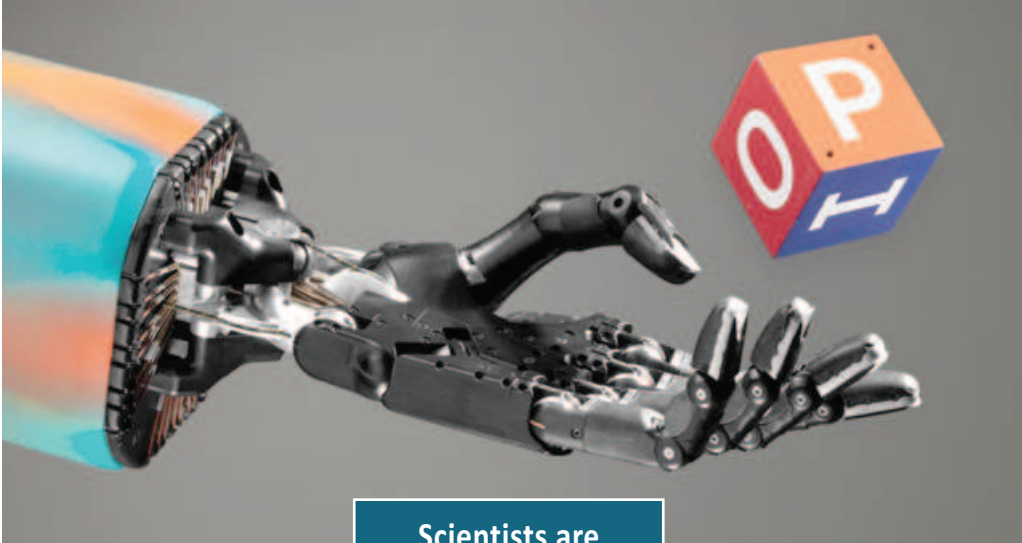
Suresh Reddy

"Hasta La Vista baby." Nobody can say this dialogue better than Arnold Schwarzenegger in the movie 'Terminator 2'. This AI-based robot, played by Arnold, continuously observes the young and cool John, the human he is supposed to protect. The Terminator picks up this line from the boy's lingo. That was true 'machine learning' displayed in real-time.

The Robots we see in movies can walk, talk and move almost like humans. However, the ground reality is far from it. They can perform most tasks under pre-set environments but falter under uncontrolled and real-time conditions. In the same way, they are fantastic at doing impossible and complex things while they falter at regular everyday human tasks.

For instance, robots can precisely cut a bone for knee joint replacement surgery but fail at opening a door lock. In the same way, they can beat a Grandmaster at chess but struggle to achieve the agility of a two-year-old such as grabbing a pencil from a random pile of office supplies.

The key reason is "dexterity in robots", as technology has not arrived yet. Not to lose heart on that, giant strides are happening in this domain as we speak. Artificial Intelligence, big data and computer vision technologies have started to contribute to the advancement of robot dexterity.



Extensive research is going on to improve this area.

Scientists are leveraging a technique called reinforcement learning. Reinforcement learning is a type of machine learning method which improves the algorithm using the hits and misses in simulation. This will enhance the motor skills of the robot as the algorithm learns the best technique to handle objects. In essence, they teach themselves to manage the physical world.

One such project is Dactyl, a robot that taught itself to flip a small toy block in its palm with its fingers. The project was run by OpenAI, a non-profit founded by the tech billionaire Elon Musk. Dactyl uses an off-the-shelf robot hand with lights and cameras around it. The AI software controlling this robot first learns how to grasp and turn the block around in a virtual environment by trying various permutations and combinations. Later, it tries it out in the real world. Usually, it is difficult to transfer such virtual learning into the real world because of unpredictable properties like friction. The OpenAI team got around this by adding ran-

Scientists are leveraging a technique called reinforcement learning. Reinforcement learning is a type of machine learning method which improves the algorithm using the hits and misses in simulation. This will enhance the motor skills of the robot as the algorithm learns the best technique to handle objects. In essence, they teach themselves to manage the physical world

domness to the virtual training, giving the robot a proxy for the complexity of reality.

The goalpost for robotic dexterity changes based on who you

talk to and its related application. However, one can ponder the following broad factor variations based on what the robot can handle.

Object size  
Object shape  
Gripping strategy  
Reachability  
Speed

All these factors are interrelated. One factor in isolation does not necessarily define the robot as "dexterous," but together, they give a broad picture.

While AI and autonomous cars dominate the headlines, another breakthrough technology - robot dexterity - is likely to have an even more significant impact in both business and everyday life.

"Robot manipulation is the next shoe to drop," says Dr Robert Platt, a computer science professor at Northeastern University. "Imagine a robot that can do things with its hands in the real world- anything from defusing a bomb to doing your laundry".

*(The author is Chairman and CEO of Hyderabad-based Brightcom Group)*



## Gland Pharma donates ventilators

HANS BUSINESS

HYDERABAD: Gland Fosun foundation, the corporate social responsibility arm of city-based Gland Pharma company, is donating over 120 ventilators and bipaps to government hospitals in Telangana, said Raghuraman, Managing Trustee of Gland Fosun Foundation.

As part of this initiative, Raghuram personally handed over 10 ventilators to the collector of Jangoan District in the presence of Baa Vikasa Executive Director Shoury Reddy who collaborated with the pharma major in coordinating with the district authorities.

Raghuraman said the Gland Fosun Foundation is responding to the current crisis and trying its best to support the government in saving the lives of thousands of people. Gland Pharma management is happy to collaborate with government hospitals who are doing great service during the pandemic situation, he added.

District Collector Nikila said the support of gland pharma is very relevant to the current needs in the hospitals. The ventilators will help the doctors to provide effective services to critical Covid cases and save hundreds of lives. The Collector appreciated the initiative of Gland Pharma in providing life saving equipment.

Shoury Reddy said that the Gland Pharma company had spent over Rs 4 crore on purchase of these ventilators. "The company is doing great service through this initiative," he added.

# CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY KEY IN CO-COVID WORLD

Sustainability becomes increasingly relevant against the backdrop of the global conundrum of Covid-19



Viiveck Verma

THE Covid-19 crisis directly affected the ways in which businesses and organisations functioned and as the ravages of the pandemic continue, corporate sustainability becomes an idea of paramount significance for both a co-Covid and a post-Covid world. Corporate sustainability aims to create long-term stakeholder value through the deployment of a holistic and ethical approach. It takes care of all aspects of doing business, manages risks and ensures employee development. As remote working becomes the new normal and the world remains unlikely to go back to pre-Covid realities, it is a good idea to revisit and reassess how businesses can stimulate longevity while giving more to the world and their employees.

Sustainability becomes increasingly relevant against the backdrop of the global conundrum of Covid-19. From health and safety activities to business advisory to philanthropy to climate action, it is the moment for companies to test their resilience in the face of unexpected upheavals and challenges, while bolstering their commitments to the world. Globescan in a 2020 survey found out that 47 per cent of the respondents anticipated budget cuts for measures to ensure sustainability. This could be dangerous as the prevailing adversity requires us to step



While CSR is about self-regulation to achieve philanthropic aims, corporate sustainability is geared towards holistic development and sustenance to think ahead. Ideas tied to sustainability are aimed to achieve plausible results such as cost-effectiveness, image building and better work experiences

up the game on sustainability, instead of withdrawing from it. The need of the hour is to secure the present as well as the future, as an ideal post-Covid scenario is dependent on the decisions of today.

In times where environmental resources such as oxygen become scarce in relation to a burgeoning demand, the environmental impact of doing business cannot be disregarded. This finds exemplification in a rise in decarbonisation startups. Innovation towards sustainability has been achieved by startups such as Carfbix, which figured out ways to permanently dissolve carbon dioxide in water and congeal it into rocks, ensuring storage of tons of carbon dioxide. Outside these companies devoted to environmental innovation, all organisations must endeavour to reduce their carbon footprint and e-waste generation, and figure out climate-friendly reliance on technology.

Human rights and social justice have also acquired new pertinence in the same vein. This requires companies to recognise the material and social conditions workers hail from, and commit to a regime of fair and timely wages, greater protections and safety at work. In times of disease and death, these measures can prove undeniably, instrumental. For instance, several organisations transformed the physical workplace to assure Covid safety for employees. Working on-site, when needed, consequently became a relatively applicable idea despite the dangers posed by viral spread.

To think of the human aspect of this approach a little further, employees have been integrated into a 'work from home' regime, with minimal dependence on the usual workspace. This has important repercussions as the work and life domains of employees became conflated and concerns such as attend-

ing to one's parents and developing content for work became part of one lifestyle. Accordingly, a flexible work environment becomes crucial for sustaining a motivated pool of workers. Businesses must keep workforce development in mind and need to provide new incentives to the people they employ— flexible deadlines, mandated leave days and increased communication between the management and the workers can all prove beneficial in this regard.

Forbes notes how a study conducted by Ohio State University observed how as the thoughts of employees turned increasingly to the pandemic, their anxiety levels rose leading to them becoming less engaged in their work. The best coping occurred when managers took care of the priorities and needs of employees, which at this time included their emotional suffering, helping to empower employees and boost engagement. Such en-

deavours are indispensable in times of dire predicament, but also provide a worthy model to be carried into the foreseeable future.

Corporate sustainability, differing from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has an immediate futuristic imperative. While CSR is about self-regulation to achieve philanthropic aims, corporate sustainability is geared towards holistic development and sustenance to think ahead. Ideas tied to sustainability are aimed to achieve plausible results such as cost-effectiveness, image building and better work experiences. Therefore, as we deal with the co-Covid world, we need to be far-sighted to make the post-Covid world inherit favourable situations. Measures towards greater employee development and security, socio economic justice, resource utilization and environmental protection will go a long way in creating resilient systems which can withstand the shocks of human existence and offer exceedingly better opportunities and spaces for value creation.

To quote Abraham Lincoln, "The best way to predict your future is to create it." As businesses go ahead to energise our existences and provide to the world, the future they craft will be glorious with an embracing of sustainability. A holistic engagement and a commitment to create exemplary work conditions, employ ethical business practices and deliver value to people will only bolster the durability of a glorious future to envision.

*(The author is Founder, Upsurge Global, and Senior Advisor, Telangana State Innovation Council)*

QUIZ NO.  
173

## HANS BIZ QUIZ

### 'National Armed Forces Day - USA'

1. The United States of America celebrates 'Armed Forces Day' in May every year to honour the US military forces. Which day in May is celebrated as Armed Forces Day?

- a) On the third Sunday
- b) On the third Saturday
- c) 16th May
- d) 17th May

2. More than 1.4 million active-duty service members are stationed in the United States and worldwide. Which of the below branches constitutes partially under the US military?

- a) Air Force, Army
- b) Navy, Coast Guard
- c) Space Force, Marine Corps
- d) Army National Guard and Air National Guard

3. Which Defense Secretary of the USA created the Armed Forces Day on August 31, 1949?

- a) William Perry
- b) Louis Johnson
- c) Charles Erwin Wilson
- d) George Marshall

4. There were separate days for some branches of the US' forces. 'Armed Forces Day' was created by the US' Defence Secretary to unify which events?

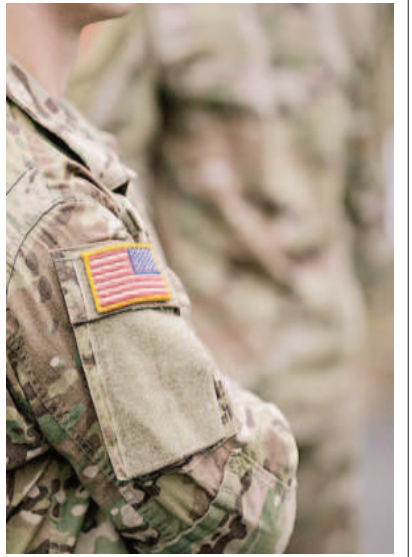
- a) Army Day and Navy Day
- b) Navy Day and Air Force Day
- c) Army Day, Navy Day, and Air Force Day
- d) Army Day, Navy Day, Air Force Day, Coast Guard Day, Marine Corps Day

5. When did the first observance of Armed Forces Day take place?

- a) 20 May 1950
- b) 17 May 1950
- c) 16 May 1953
- d) 15 May 1951

6. Armed Forces Day was first celebrated in the month of May. The event marks the first combined demonstration by America's troops of all branches of the military. During whose Presidency did the Armed Forces Day come to existence?

- a) Harry S Truman
- b) Dwight D Eisenhower
- c) Franklin D Roosevelt
- d) John F Kennedy



7. Which President of America established Armed Forces Day as an official holiday?

- a) Ronald Reagan in 1985
- b) Lyndon B Johnson in 1966
- c) John F Kennedy in 1962
- d) Harry S Truman in 1950

8. Identify the year in which Armed Forces Day celebrated with the theme "Teamed for Defense"?

- a) 2020
- b) 2000
- c) 1970
- d) 1950

9. The President of the USA is the Commander-in-Chief of overall the US armed forces. Secretary of the Department of Defense, a cabinet member, is the in-charge of all the military branches except?

- a) Air Force
- b) Army
- c) Navy
- d) Coast Guard

10. Which branch is part of the Homeland Security Department within the US government?

- a) Air National Guard
- b) Army
- c) Coast Guard
- d) Army National Guard

The Hans Biz Quiz has been compiled by **Sunil Dhavala**, CEO, The Third Umpire Media. He had held senior management roles at Bertelsmann, NGC, Fox Broadcasting, Star TV and others. He is an alumnus of Indian Institute of Foreign Trade

KEY

1B 2B 3B 4B 5B 6B 7C 8B 9D 10C





India tour to England

# Sthalekar slams BCCI for ignoring bereaved Veda

NEW DELHI

FORMER Australian women's team captain Lisa Sthalekar feels the BCCI neither checked on Veda Krishnamurthy after the twin tragedies in her family nor communicated to the bereaved India cricketer its decision to not consider her for the upcoming tour of England. Earlier this month, the flamboyant middle-order India batter lost her elder sister Vatsala Shivakumar to COVID-19, two weeks after her mother succumbed to the dreaded virus. On expected lines, she was not included in the Indian Test and ODI team for next month's tour of the United Kingdom, but ICC Hall of Famer Sthalekar was not convinced with the BCCI's handling of the whole episode. "Whilst not selecting Veda for the upcoming series may be justified from their point of view, what angers me the most is that as a contracted player she has not received any communication from BCCI, just to even check how she

is coping," Sthalekar said in a note on her Twitter handle. She added, "A true association should deeply care about the players that play the game... not focus solely on just the game at any cost. So disappointed." The 28-year-old Bengaluru-based Veda recently paid an emotional tribute to her sister and mother, who succumbed to the virus in a span of two weeks. The all-rounder, who has been helping others through her social media by amplifying their requests for aid, has represented India in 48 ODIs and 76 T20s. Sthalekar, the first player to achieve the double of 1000 runs and 100 wickets in women's One-Day Internationals, felt the time has come for a player's association for the Indian women's team. "As a past player the ACA (Australian Cricketers' Association) have reached out daily to see how we are and provided all kinds of services. If there was a need for a player association in (India) surely it is now." The 41-year-old Sthalekar, now a commentator, said being looked after has become more important at the moment, with the pandemic wreaking havoc across the world. "The stress, anxiety, fear and grief that many players have experienced through this pandemic will take its toll on them as individuals and inadvertently affect the game," Sthalekar signed off. India is reeling under a devastating second wave of the pandemic with cases rising by over three lakh everyday and the crisis has been compounded by a shortage of some crucial medicines and oxygen supplies. (PTI)

# Djokovic scripts comeback win over Tsitsipas, enters semis



Italy's Lorenzo Sonego reacts after beating 3-6, 6-4, 6-3, Russia's Andrey Rublev during their quarter-final match at the Italian Open tennis tournament in Rome on Saturday

ROME

SERBIAN world No. 1 Novak Djokovic raised his game after trailing 4-6, 1-2 on Friday to earn a 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 comeback victory against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas in a rain-hit quarter-final match of the Italian Open on Saturday. Djokovic will take on Italian Lorenzo Sonego -- who upset seventh seed Russian Andrey Rublev -- for a place in the final. Sonego recovered from a set down to defeat the Monte-Carlo runner-up 3-6, 6-4, 6-3. The top seed Serbian returned to court on Saturday morning with Tsitsipas serving at 6-4, 2-1, and he broke serve in two of his opening five return games to force a decider. Djokovic then twice recovered from a break down in the decider to reach the

final-four in Rome for the eighth straight year. "There are many things to say about today or yesterday's match. It kind of felt like we played two matches... The one yesterday, where he was the better player. He started better today also. I managed to somehow to hold my nerves [and] break his serve in the important moments in the second and third sets," Djokovic said after the match. "The support of the crowd was amazing. It was great to play in front of a crowd. [It was a] fantastic atmosphere. It was a bit of luck, a bit of mental strength and the right tactics at the right time. One shot, not even a point, one shot really decided the winner today. I am just glad to be on the better side." This is Djokovic's fourth straight ATP head-to-head tri-

umph against Tsitsipas. The world No. 1 owns a 5-2 advantage against the 22-year-old, which includes an unbeaten 3-0 record on clay. Tsitsipas made a strong start after the resumption of play to move into a 4-2 lead in the second set. But Djokovic soon raised his level in return games. The defending champion won two marathon games on Tsitsipas' serve to push the match to a deciding set. Across return games at 4-3 and 6-5, Djokovic earned a combined nine break points. The 18-time Grand Slam champion used his forehand to break through on both occasions, ripping winners up the line to level the match. "[I had to dig] very deep. Without a doubt, until the last shot I didn't know whether I was going to win but I believed that I could," Djokovic said. (IANS)

## Key to domestic cricketers' Covid compensation rests with states

NEW DELHI

THE Indian cricket board has still not committed to compensate first-class players for loss in income due to the curtailed 2020-21 season amid Covid-19 pandemic that had no longer format tournament, including the premier Ranji Trophy and Duleep Trophy competitions. "We may think on those lines. But it also depends on what the state cricket associations think. We need to talk to the state bodies for it," an official of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) told IANS. A state cricket body official said that if the BCCI decides to compensate, the biggest challenge for an association would be to find out the players who would have played. "The state associations will have to provide the list of players who played last year and who might have played this year. Deciding on who all would have played this year may be a tough thing to do," a state body official told IANS. While the BCCI had kept the option of compensation open, though had not committed to it, there was a talk that it may eventually not compensate and follow the norms of the other industries where employees hired on work-and-pay basis don't get paid without work. The BCCI Apex Council last month decided to keep September as the tentative month to start the 2021-22 domestic season.

# ISL has given structure to Indian football: Hyderabad FC's Poojary



HYDERABAD

THE Indian Super League (ISL) has had a 'tremendous' impact on Indian football as it has given the country 'grounds, facilities and great coaches', said Hyderabad FC midfielder Nikhil Poojary. Poojary, who has played 28 games for Hyderabad FC in the last two ISL seasons, said on Saturday that the tournament had also brought 'structure' to In-

dian football. "The ISL has had a tremendous impact on Indian football. The reason I say that is now we have top grounds, facilities and great coaches. It has brought with it a structure to Indian football that is sustainable and will have a positive impact on the long-term future of the sport in the country," Poojary said in an interview on the ISL website. During the 2020-21 ISL edition, the Mangalore-born 25-year-old featured

in 10 games and played 604 minutes in all for Manuel Marquez's team as it narrowly missed out on a semi-final berth in what was their second season in the league. The pandemic, says Poojary, has brought fresh challenges for footballers, both on a "personal as well as professional level". "We are trying hard to find ways to cope with the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, both on per-

sonal as well as professional level. It's been difficult for everyone. It's been a year to forget but as an athlete, you try to do as much as you can to help your family and friends in these times. "And other times you try to follow a routine so that you can keep yourself in excellent condition," said the midfielder who made his ISL debut for FC Pune City in 2018-19 and has also represented Mumbai FC and East Bengal (now SC East Bengal) as well. (IANS)

## Indian football team to leave for Qatar on May 19 for WC Qualifiers

NEW DELHI: The Indian football team will leave for Qatar on May 19 after the gulf country, in a big relief, accepted All India Football Federation's (AIFF) request to allow its players to train there ahead of the 2022 World Cup Qualifiers next month. Not only that, Qatar has even agreed to the AIFF's request to waive the mandatory 10-day hard quarantine after reaching there. The players will have a preparatory camp of nearly two weeks in a bio-bubble in Qatar before the first match on June 3. "We are planning to fly the team on May 19 evening. There will be no quarantine (of the players) and they will be in a bio-bubble," AIFF general secretary Kushal Das told PTI on Saturday. He said the players will assemble in New Delhi and they will be tested for COVID-19 before their departure to Qatar. India is already out of reckoning for a 2022 FIFA World Cup berth but is still in contention for a 2023 Asian Cup spot in the joint qualifiers. The remaining three matches -- against Qatar (June 3), Bangladesh (June 7) and Afghanistan (June 15) -- are crucial for Asian Cup qualification. Qatar was picked by the AFC in March as the centralised venue to host the remaining Group E matches owing to the coronavirus-related travel and quarantine restrictions. (PTI)

# India footballer Jeje patrolling river in native state to prevent overfishing

NEW DELHI

AWAY from the football field, Indian team striker Jeje Lalpekhlua has been patrolling a long stretch of Tuichang river in his native Mizoram to prevent "overfishing" and help sustain the livelihood of local fishermen. The Tuichang river recently created a lot of buzz due to overfishing, forcing the locals to keep an eye on it constantly. One of them was the Blue Tigers and SC East Bengal forward. The footballer, along with a number of youth from his village -- Model Veng Hnahtial -- formed a group that works day and night to help preserve the ecosystem of the river that flows close to their homes. "Overfishing has greatly reduced the number of fishes in the Tuichang river over the years. It was turning out to be a big problem, even for the local fishermen, who depend on the river for their livelihoods," Jeje said to the-aiff.com. The local people of Model Veng have identified a 500m stretch along the banks of the Tuichang, where the fish are believed to have their spawning ground, where they set up a 24-hour patrol, taking different shifts, to prevent overfishing. "Over the last year, we have all taken turns to patrol this stretch to make sure that nobody catches fish in this area. It's very important for us to leave the fish alone, at least in the spawning areas. Just with this small step we are already seeing the results," said Jeje. "There are so many fish in the



river now -- local fishermen say that they haven't seen so many in the river for years. "The guys in the village have really worked hard to ensure that this happens. They have all taken rotating shifts around the clock for 24 hours to keep an eye on the river banks. I have also been helping out whenever I've been in town," he continued. "Of course, it's not always possible during the season when we have to spend five months in the bio-bubble in the Hero ISL." Jeje and the other men have been in constant touch with the local government authorities who have also stood by and supported their conservation activities. "We have been in touch with the Forest Department of Mizoram. If there are any issues, we inform them. They too lend us support," said Jeje. "There is a fishing area not very far from the parts where we set up our patrol. But since that is not exactly a spawning area, it has not had as much effect." Jeje feels that it is important to keep everyone's interest in mind when it comes to protecting the environment. "This is not just an issue for Mizoram. Depletion of resources is an issue that the whole world is facing right now. The world is getting warmer, and other creatures are being affected. "We humans have created this problem, and we are the ones who need to set it right. The fish are valuable food resources for many. So we need to be selective with our fishing. These are very small steps, but they're not very difficult. If we can continue, some world will be a much better place to live in after 7-8 years." (PTI)





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