

Womenia

TWEET PATROL



**MALLIKA SHERAWAT
@MALLIKASHERAWAT**

I'm excited! My new film RK/RKAY will open in US & Canada May 14 read this new, wonderful interview with the film's writer-director & my co-star, Rajat Kapoor: [@outsiderpics](http://moretimetotravel.com/rk-rkay-new-film-within-a-film-by-rajat-kapoor...@outsiderpics) @RanvirShorey @KubbraSait @moretime2travel



World wish day

When did you last make a wish? Was it on your previous birthday? Did you wish for health for a loved one who has a difficult battle ahead of them? Wishes come in many different shapes and forms. They are all important. After all, if you don't have wishes and dreams, you don't have hope!

Dare to dream! If you did not have the capability to make your wildest wishes come true, your mind would not have the capacity to conjure such ideas in the first place.

World Wish Day is a day that celebrates wishes in all forms! This includes wishes that have not been granted yet, as well as those that have been.

The day was established by the Make-A-Wish Foundation. This is a non-profit organisation that was founded in Phoenix, United States. The purpose of the organisation is to help terminally ill children achieve their wishes. They grant wishes for children between the age of two-and-a-half-years-old and 17-years-old.

There are many different ways that you can celebrate World Wish Day. One way to do this is by filling in the inquiry format Make-A-Wish Foundation if you know someone who fulfils the criteria that are in place. If you know someone who deserves their dreams to be made, yet they do not fulfil the Make-A-Wish Foundation, you could try to find another way for their wishes to come true. This could include fundraising and getting a group of people together who can help to make the person's wish a reality.



Improve your respiratory health



Naini Setalvad

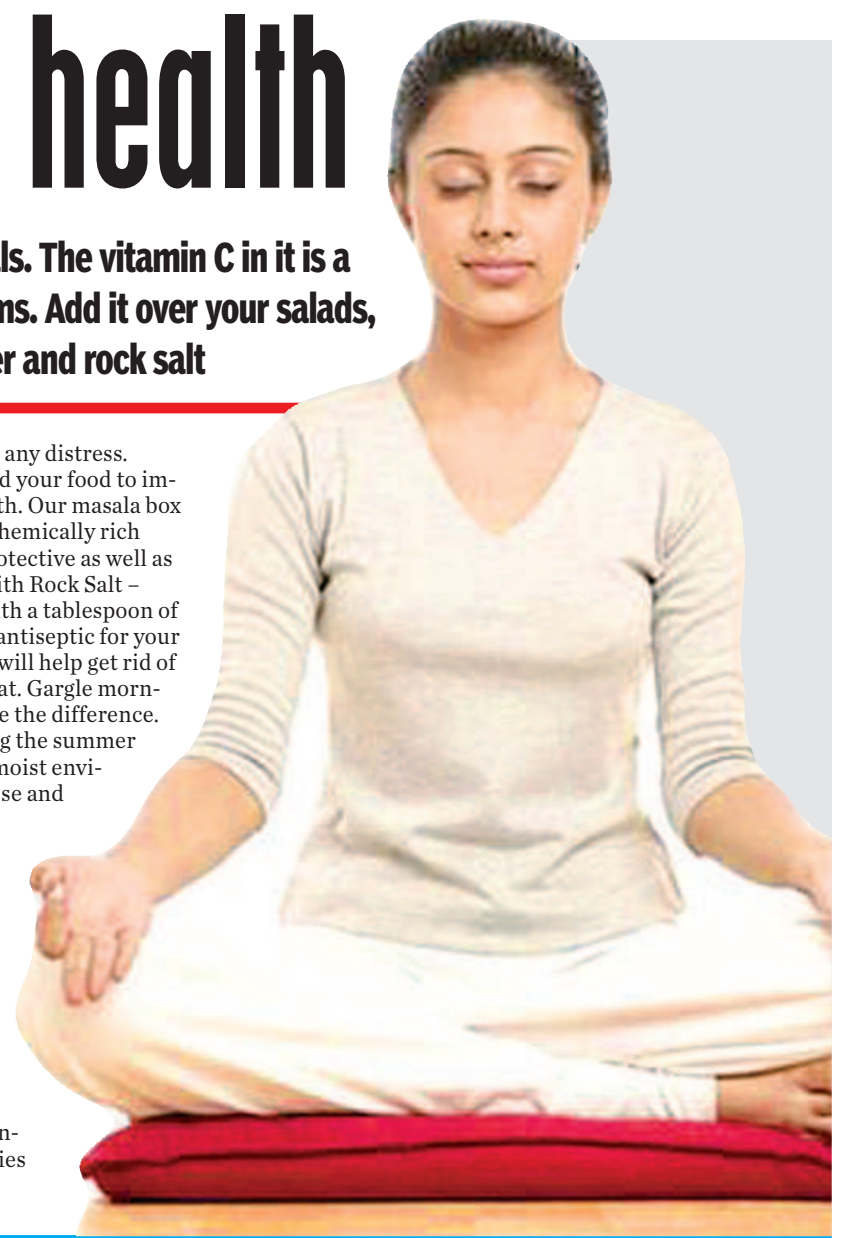


Suck on my favourite fruit Lemon, or squeeze the juice on your meals. The vitamin C in it is a potent antioxidant which helps in combating the respiratory germs. Add it over your salads, daals or simply make a lemonade with roasted cumin powder and rock salt

"Just Breathe", that's my answer to my clients when they ask me how to manage this constant juggling act we women are performing. How-ever busy my day, I still find some quite time to do a little meditation that both calms me and refreshes me. With swirling pandemic anxiety doing the rounds, this is an effective fix. I've seen that even the slightest cough or tiniest sniffle scares most people. Instead of being a worrywart, it is best to take fool-proof steps to protect your respiratory health. Try out my suggested remedies and strengthen your lungs. Suck on my favourite fruit Lemon, or squeeze the juice on your meals. The vitamin C in it is a potent antioxidant which helps in combating the respiratory germs. Add it over your salads, daals or simply make a lemonade with roasted cumin powder and rock salt. Incorporate Ginger into your daily diet to make sure you are eliminating the chances of inflammation and infections in your body. Grate ginger in all your foods and beverages and reap its benefits. Black Pepper contains piperine, which instantly clears your sinus and congestion. Sprinkle this spice in your daily salads and soups and watch it alleviate even the most persistent coughs. Turmeric works in tandem with pepper to curb inflammation. This golden star of spices is effecting in -itself as an antidote to coughs and cold. Make a paste of it with cow's ghee and consume to soothe an irritable throat. Chew on a few leaves of the holy Tulsi plant and immediately see changes in your breathing. This little leaf relieves your airways from any blockages. Its natural de-stressing property is a bonus. Another go to cure for a pestering respiratory infection is plain old onion and garlic. These bulbs contain anti-inflammatory compound allium and organic Sulphur which helps kill infectious germs. Add to your meals or make a spice concoction (

Kadha), to bid adieu to any distress.

Spice up your life and your food to improve respiratory health. Our masala box has numerous phyto-chemically rich spices that are both protective as well as flavourful. Gargling with Rock Salt - Warm water gargles with a tablespoon of rock salt will act as an antiseptic for your persistent coughs and will help get rid of the phlegm in the throat. Gargle morning and evening and see the difference. Hydration is key during the summer months. It provides a moist environment for the ear nose and throat helping you to breathe freely. Keep sipping on my favourite drink- water, throughout the day. Deep breathing is another great way of increasing lung capacity and clearing out blockages. I truly believe that prevention is better than cure. So make sure to include the above remedies in your daily life and breathe freely!



Sonnalli Seygall to spend birthday at Kalimpong bootcamp

Actress Sonnalli Seygall will spend her birthday on May 1 at a bootcamp in Kalimpong, a scenic small town in her home state of West Bengal.

Since all shooting has stopped owing to Covid lockdown, the actress had time to leave the city and has already reached her hometown.

"Given the current situation, my shoots got stalled and that left me with a lot of free time. So, I came to my home state West Bengal. There's a small town here called Kalimpong. It's very secluded and it has a beautiful weather," said the actress, known for her role in "Pyaar Ka Punchnama".

She feels that staying away from work for a while and close to the nature will help her rejuvenate.

"I'm working on my body and mind and trying to use this time constructively. So, this bootcamp seemed like a great activity," says the actress.

Due to the pandemic, the actress has had a lot of time for herself and learning new things.

"I've been doing kickboxing, yoga and meditation. I've been going for some short but hectic treks. So, it's helping me keep my mind and body healthy. I also plan to visit a couple of monasteries and chant with the monks. I plan to dedicate one chanting session for the world to get rid of the pandemic," she says.

Sonnalli recently revealed that she would be travelling to Haridwar soon, where she will shoot for the upcoming film, "Boondi Raita".



NEWS ROUNDUP

QUICK TIP

Apply dry shampoo before bed

Dry shampoo is a last-minute lifesaver when you have to be somewhere, but you don't have time to wash your hair. But you may actually get more out of your bottle of dry shampoo if you apply it before going to bed. Hair will absorb it as you sleep and you'll look refreshed in the morning.



Quick makeup tips for working women

How much time do you need every day to do your makeup? 30, 40, 50 minutes or more? Today's modern women are perfectionists. They want to look their best 24/7 and not have to fix mistakes every couple of minutes. Sadly, very few women have time to spare in the morning. The good news is that you can do a complete face of makeup in as little as 5 minutes.

Cleanse & moisturise in the evening

A lot of women don't remove their makeup when they get home. Some even sleep with their make-up on. This mistake will cost you a lot the next day when your skin is filled with zits, cracks, and imperfections. You'll end up spending a lot of time on applying foundation, and you certainly won't have any time left for your hair. But if you clean your face thoroughly at night and you moisturise, your face will look incredible the next day. Just apply a BB cream, blush and mascara, and you're good to go.

Care for your eyebrows

You might think that just because you have well-defined lips and big eyes nobody will notice skinny eyebrows. Wrong! The whole dynamics of your face depends on your eyebrows. And if you're used to plucking them all the time, you'll never have properly balanced facial features. Some women look gorgeous without any make-up. Often, they have beautiful, natural eyebrows to compensate for the lack of definition.

Cheekbone contouring

If you want your face to look amazing in as little as 5 minutes, all you need to do is contour your cheeks. Use a darker brown on the upper cheeks, right on the bone line, and then a lighter shade above the



BEAUTY FUNDA

bone line. For more impact, use a shimmery illuminator. That's all you need for beautiful cheeks, and it takes less than 5 minutes to do.

Matte lipstick

If you don't have time for elaborate makeup, you can just use mascara for your eyes and lipstick in striking deep nuances. Dark red and burgundy in a matte color are the best. You'll have full, luscious lips that everyone will envy. The main idea behind this simple makeup is to add a touch of glam to your face without exaggerating. Keep your eyes all natural and focus on your

lips for striking makeup that can be completed in less than 5 minutes.

Use the right brushes

Some women use a single makeup brush for everything when doing their makeup. This takes up a lot of unnecessary time if you're cleaning the same brush you used for your foundation in order to use blush. The same thing goes for eye shadow. If you want to be able to do your makeup fast and efficiently, you should invest in a set of beauty brushes. You need at least 5. Make sure they're qualitative so that blending can be done smoothly.

FASHIONISTA

Trends you can follow for that perfect picture

With the ongoing pandemic everything around us is just not so good. We need to great some positive vibe around us while staying home. These 4 things can help you boost yourself.

Light colours are better than dark

Not only will lighter colors keep you cooler (black absorbs more heat), but they also have a better summer vibe. I mean you could wear dark colours such as black, charcoal, violet, or dark blue, but it doesn't have that light airy feel that is synonymous with summer.

Natural makeup is best

If you ask me, nothing is worse than wearing a ton of makeup on a hot summer day. Light and natural makeup is the way to go during the summer season. Put away the heavy black eyeliner, dark shadows, heavy foundation, and dark lipstick. Instead wear pretty neutral eye shadows, tinted moisturisers and nude, pink, or rose stains and tinted balms.

As for foundation, unless you're going to a summer event, wear a tinted moisturiser. To add that gorgeous summer glow adds a touch of liquid highlighter to your summer makeup routine. Just dab a bit of highlighter to the tops of your cheekbones, brow bones, and the bridge of your nose.

If you only have one handbag, go with a neutral brown

If you're only going to invest in one handbag for summer go with a neutral earth-tone brown. Look for a summer handbag that is not that structured and that you'll want to wear over many summers.

Braid your hair or wear it in a bun

Beach waves are sexy and stylish but if you don't have the time or can't get your hair to have that perfect beach curl, then braid it or wear it in a bun. For some reason the idea of styling my hair during the summer is unappealing. A braid will always be stylish in summer, whether the trends call for it or not.



Shift arrested scribe Kappan to Delhi hospital: SC tells UP govt

NEW DELHI

THE Supreme Court Wednesday directed the Uttar Pradesh government to shift journalist Siddique Kappan, suffering from various ailments and arrested last year on way to Hathras where a young Dalit woman had died after being gang raped, to a hospital in Delhi for better medical treatment. Keeping in mind the basic human rights of an accused, Chief Justice of India N V Ramana headed bench granted the relief and directed the state to provide medical treatment to the Kerala-based scribe.

The bench also comprising Justices Surya Kant and A S Bopanna said that Kappan will be transferred back to Mathura jail after his recovery. The top court, however, granted him lib-

erty to approach an appropriate forum challenging his arrest or for any other relief and disposed of the plea filed by Kerala Union of Working Journalists (KUWJ) and his wife, seeking his release from alleged illegal detention. "Taking into consideration facts of the case, we dispose of the writ petition.

Even though Solicitor General Tushar Mehta very seriously opposed the contention, we are directing the state to shift the accused to RML or AIIMS hospital here or wherever treatment can be done," said the bench. Mehta, who strongly opposed the top court's suggestions, said that the bench may also pass direction to the hospital concerned to vacate one of the beds for 42-years-old Kappan, which are now fully occupied by COVID patients.

The bench, however, refused to pass any such directions and told Mehta that the state government can arrange a bed for him and "we leave it at that". Earlier in the day the bench asked Mehta to seek instructions from the UP government on whether Kappan can be shifted to a hospital outside the state for better treatment. Mehta, after taking instruction told the bench that it is dealing with a non-COVID patient, whose medical report is before the top court and there are 40-50 coronavirus patients with some or no co-morbidities in Mathura jail but they are not getting beds in hospitals.

"Since last year, I have been asking this man to approach a competent court for bail but he is adamant and not approaching it. In this petition before the



court, there is not even prayer for bail or shifting for better treatment," Mehta said. Advocate Wills Mathews, appearing for KUWJ and Kappan's wife, said that he be granted interim bail in the case besides being provided with proper medicines and treat-

ment. At the outset, the bench said it was confined to the limited issue of granting better health facilities to Kappan and asked whether he could be allowed medical treatment in Delhi.

"We are confined to health issues. He has health problems like BP, Diabetes and other ailments. He has precarious health conditions. You have to consider this. He is in custody of the state. You have to protect him. It is in the interest of the state also that the accused gets better treatment," the bench observed. Justice Bopanna said that notwithstanding the petition filed by the KUWJ, there is also a petition filed by Kappan's wife, which seeks his release.

"Can't this court direct for better treatment. You forget about the petitions. Life of a citizen is important. Tomorrow, no one should be able to blame us, that he was not given better treatment," the CJ said. Mehta said he had objections to the suggestion and was ready to constitute a medical board to ascertain his ailments and ad-

vice and only then the court should take a call on his shifting to the hospital in Delhi. The bench then told Mehta that whether there was any embargo on the court that while entertaining a habeas corpus petition, it cannot go for a lesser relief of bail. Mehta said that from Kappan's possession, police had recovered an Identity card of a newspaper, which was shut in 2018 and he has association with Popular Front of India (PFI), which in turn is associated with banned organization Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI). The bench asked Mehta whether PFI is a banned organization to which he replied that many states have done so and as per his information "Centre is also in process to ban PFI".

HC asks jail officials to monitor treatment of ex-MP Shahabuddin

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court Wednesday directed the AAP government and the prison authority to ensure proper medical supervision and care of former RJD MP Mohd Shahabuddin who is suffering from COVID-19 and admitted in DDU Hospital. Justice Prathibha M Singh said the doctor on duty for looking after COVID-19 patients shall monitor Shahabuddin's health condition and treatment and if required, also consult with senior doctors of the Deen Dayal Upadhyay Hospital.

The court also directed that the former RJD MP, serving life sentence for murder, be permitted to speak to a family member twice a day and disposed of his plea for protection of his life and monitoring of the treatment being provided to him at DDU Hospital.

Delhi government additional standing counsel Santosh K Tripathi said as per the prison rules, calls to family members are not permitted when a prisoner is outside the jail. "But he is unwell, no," the court said. Subsequently, Tripathi said that the convict can be allowed to speak over the phone with one relative under supervision of the prison official(s). He also told the court that proper



medical care was being provided to Shahabuddin and the same shall continue.

The former RJD MP, in his plea, had said that he apprehended that he would not get the proper treatment as there was a scarcity of oxygen and other medicines in Delhi. He had also alleged that he was "apprehending the mismanagement of his health situation at the hands of the doctors at the behest of the opposite political leaders" in Delhi. According to the petition, he was lodged in a cell, in the high risk ward of Tihar Jail, which he was sharing with another inmate. Despite the other inmate testing COVID-19 positive in early April, Shahabuddin was kept in the same cell with the infected inmate and "no separate arrangement was made by the jail authorities", the petition had said.

UP 1st State to conduct four crore Covid tests

LUCKNOW

THE Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has now become the first state in the country to conduct more than 4 crore Covid tests.

In the past 24 hours, around 1,84,000 tests have been done in the state, out of which more than 94,000 were through the RT-PCR mode, a government spokesperson said.

The state government has placed an order for 40 new RT-PCR machines to intensify testing.

Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath intends that maximum testing should be done through RT-PCR in the state.

According to the spokesman, "The Chief Minister has always emphasised on the mantra of 'Test, Trace and Treat'. The strategy of conducting door-to-door survey by surveillance teams, intensifying vaccination and doubling the testing capacity in the state, is yielding good results. The government has reached out to around 21 crore people out of the total population of 24 crore in the state."

To reduce the effects of Covid virus, the UP government has

also intensified the vaccination drive in the state. So far, a total of 1,19,47,728 vaccine doses have been administered in the state. This includes the first dose of 98,83,945 vaccines and 20,63,783 second doses.

The vaccine will be now administered to those above 18 years of age in the state from May 1.

To ensure availability of adequate doses in the state, the state government has ordered to procure one crore doses of Covishield and Covaxine from the manufacturing companies.



Ensure smooth supply of firewood to crematoriums

NEW DELHI

WITH municipal-run crematoriums facing a shortage of wood for funeral pyres in the face of surging Covid-19 fatalities, North Delhi Mayor Jai Prakash Wednesday urged Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to direct the forest department ensure smooth supply of firewood to these facilities.

The national capital has reported 4,063 Covid-19 deaths in April so far, over 2,500 of them in the past seven days alone in the terrorising second wave of the pandemic. In all of February, the death toll was 57, and in March 117. "As you are aware that the number of deaths due to COVID-19 is on the rise and to cremate the bodies in the traditional manner a large amount of wood is required.

"This is to request you to direct the forest department to ensure steady supply of firewood to these crematoriums without fail," Prakash said in his letter to Kejriwal. As Covid-19 wreaks havoc, there is a queue not just at the hospitals, but also at crematoriums. Such is the flow of the bodies that crematoriums have started building additional platforms to

accommodate them. Prakash added in his letter, "Kindly give appropriate directions to the forest department so that the crematoriums can continue doing



their work uninterrupted and the bereaved families are not put into any kind of trouble."

Shaking Delhi's spirit and soul, an unimaginable tragedy is unfolding at Delhi's crematoriums struggling to cope with the deluge of the dead arriving at frightening pace, prompting the staff at crematoriums to start building additional platforms to accommodate them. Delhi recorded a record 381 COVID-19 deaths on Tuesday, while the positivity rate stood at 32.72 per cent, according to the latest bulletin issued by the city health department. This was the sixth day on the trot that Delhi has recorded over 300 deaths due to coronavirus.



Haryana to get its first Oxygen Express soon

NEW DELHI

HARYANA will get its first Oxygen Express train over the next few days with five tankers leaving Faridabad on Wednesday to load the life-saving gas from Rourkela in Odisha, the railways said.

Since April 19, the railways' Oxygen Express trains have delivered a cumulative 510 tonnes of oxygen to Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, it said. "The Haryana government has also requested railways for Oxygen Express. Currently, tankers are being loaded in Faridabad, which will be sent for filling to Rourkela.

As of now, it is planned that two Oxygen Express trains with a capacity of five tankers each will be run specifically for Haryana," the railways said. The first Oxygen Express train was pushed into service on April 19 when seven trucks left Mumbai for Vizag to load oxygen. These trucks were loaded on flat wagons and carried to the loading location. Each tanker of the Oxygen Express trains can carry around 16 tonnes of medical oxygen and these trains travel at a speed of around 65 kmph.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh received its first Oxygen Express train carrying more than 64 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen early Wednesday morning. These tankers were unloaded at various locations across the state like Jabalpur (one), Bhopal (two) and Sagar (three), it said. The fourth Oxygen Express destined for Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh will reach the city on Wednesday carrying three tankers of liquid medical oxygen, the railways said.

DRDO to set up 500 medical O2 plants within 3 months: Rajnath

NEW DELHI

THE Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) will set up 500 medical oxygen plants within the next three months from the allocation made by the PM Cares Fund, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Wednesday.

"The medical oxygen plant (MOP) technology developed by DRDO for on-board oxygen generation for light combat aircraft (LCA) Tejas will now help in fighting the current crisis of oxygen for COVID-19 patients," the minister said on Twitter. India is grappling with the rising number of coronavirus cases and hospitals in several states are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

The DRDO, in a statement, explained that transfer of MOP technology has been done to Bengaluru-based Tata Advanced Systems Limited and Coimbatore-based Trident Pneumatics and these two companies will set up 380 plants. Moreover, 120



plants of 500 litres per minute capacity will be set up by industries working with the Indian Institute of Petroleum, Dehradun, it mentioned. The MOP of the DRDO is designed to generate 1,000 litres oxygen per minute, it noted.

"The system caters for 190 patients at a flow rate of 5 litres per minute and can charge 195 cylinders per day," it added. India saw a record single-day rise of 3,60,960 coronavirus cases, which pushed the total tally to

1,79,97,267, while the death toll crossed two lakh following 3,293 fresh fatalities, according to Union health ministry data updated on Wednesday. Singh said on Twitter on Wednesday: "The DRDO is going to set up 500 Medical Oxygen Plants within 3 months under PM CARES Fund." He appreciated the DRDO for using the MOP technology to generate "much needed oxygen for COVID-19 patients which will help in overcoming the present crisis".

Doc in HC seeks to use closed hospital for Covid patients

NEW DELHI

A doctor who set up a 150-bed multi-speciality hospital which was closed down due to insolvency resolution process against its parent company requested the Delhi High Court on Wednesday to allow it to operate for COVID-19 patients in the national capital.

The doctor told the high court that he and his team of doctors and paramedical staff are ready to support operation of the hospital. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh issued notice to the Health Ministry, Delhi government and the resolution professional seeking their stand by May 7 on the public interest litigation (PIL) filed by the doctor.

Delhi government additional standing counsel Santosh K Tripathi opposed the PIL saying it was an attempt by the petitioner to interfere with the ongoing resolution process. Rakesh Saxena, who set up Febris Multispeciality Hospital under the parent company Durha Vitrak Pvt Ltd, said that considering the serious situation in the national capital -- grappling with a huge surge in COVID-19 infections and shortage of beds, oxygen and medicines -- his hospital be used to help people.

He has said the Centre or Delhi government can take over the hospital closed since 2019 and use the facilities there for COVID-19 patients. He told the court that the license of the hospital can be renewed in view of the prevailing emergent situation on the ground. The corporate insolvency resolution process was initiated against the company on an application filed before the National Company Law Tribunal by the LIC Housing Finance Ltd, a creditor of Durha Vitrak Pvt Ltd.

Woman kills boyfriend for talking to another woman on phone

SITAPUR

A woman slit her boyfriend's throat after she found him talking to another woman. The woman was booked for murder and arrested by Sitapur police. She has confessed to her crime. The incident reportedly took place in Laharpur police circle on Monday evening when the accused Rajni, 35, caught her boyfriend Rajesh, 28, talking to some other woman on phone. Station house officer (SHO), Laharpur, R.S. Dwiwedi, said, "Rajni got agitated and asked Rajesh who was the woman over the phone twice, but he refused to divulge the details and failed to convince her. In a fit of rage, Rajni picked up a knife and slashed his throat." "Rajesh slumped to the ground and started bleeding profusely. Villagers rushed to the spot and took him to the local community health centre where doctors declared him dead on arrival," said the SHO. The police official said that Rajni and Rajesh were in a relationship for the last three years.

Rajesh worked at a shop and also brought expensive gifts for Rajni. "A case was registered on the complaint of the family members of the deceased against Rajni on charges of murder. The bloodstained knife that was used in the crime has also been recovered and the fingerprints on it have been collected by the forensic team," added Dwiwedi

WANTED CRIMINAL KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

LUCKNOW

IN an encounter, a man facing charges of murder and dacoity was killed by police in Uttar Pradesh's Mau district in the early hours of Wednesday, officials said.

Lalu Yadav alias Vinod Yadav, who carried a reward of Rs 1 lakh, was injured in the exchange of fire between him and police personnel. He was taken to a hospital where he was declared brought dead, Additional Director General of Police, Law and Order, Prashant Kumar said.

The encounter took place near Bhanvarepur in the district's Sarai Lakhansi area around 3.30 am, he said.

Yadav opened fire when he found himself surrounded by police personnel who had reached after a tip-off, Kumar said.

Inspector Chiraiyakot Avinash Kumar Singh, Inspector Rajesh Prasad Yadav, Sub-Inspector Amit Mishra and Constable Vivek Singh were hit by bullets but saved as they were wearing bulletproof jackets, he said.

Police have recovered a pistol, bullet cartridges and a motorcycle from the spot.

ARCHANA SHARMA
JAIPUR

IT has been over seven decades since India attained Independence, but the caste system still holds sway in many parts of rural India. On Tuesday a small village in Rajasthan -- Surajpur in Viratnagar town of Jaipur district -- turned into a virtual fortress during a Dalit wedding, it being the first ever marriage here where the groom rode a horse as per Hindu tradition which the high caste people had never allowed to happen earlier.

A large number of policemen walked along with the



baraat (marriage procession) to stop interference from the

high caste people -- a common occurrence in this village. As per the villagers, this village has never seen any Dalit groom riding on a horse even after 73 years of Independence.

This time, groom Kailash Chand, son of Premchand Balai, sent a letter to MLA Indraj Gujjar and Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot urging them to provide strict security to the marriage party -- it being the first time after Independence that a Dalit groom will ride a horse in this village.

Additional Superintendent of Police, Kotputli, Ramkumar Kaswa said that

the groom had given in writing that he wanted police protection as he wanted to ride on a horse at his wedding. Hence, a huge police force was deployed to make history in this village.

The administration officials spoke to the villagers and convinced them to maintain peace during the wedding ceremony.

On Tuesday, the marriage was solemnised peacefully. However, what made it the talk of the town was that while relatives and guests were seen dancing in the 'baraat' a police team followed them everywhere to ensure their safety.

Govt, Oppn parties should alter their approaches

THE Indian political system needs to change a lot. From indulging in criticising each other it needs to mature into finding solutions to the problems and work out a long term plan to see that the country is well geared up to meet any medical emergency.

We are witnessing a Covid second wave and the situation can be termed as dangerous. It is the result of sheer negligence of the part of the political executive, both central and states. Every leader and even the media is going overboard in highlighting the failure of the government in providing adequate beds, oxygen and injections like Remdesivir thereby creating a visual pandemic rather than coming up with workable solutions.

The most immediate task which the Centre and State governments should embark on is to ramp up the vaccination programme. Instead of spending money in publicising the vote bank-based welfare schemes, they should go in for vigorous campaign. Just as they ensure that their voters go to the polling booth, they should make people go to vaccination centres. Lack of proper and authentic information about the vaccine has resulted in many senior citizens too postponing their decision to get the jab.

All governments need to be proactive and follow the advice of experts and take up massive vaccination programme in a mission mode. If this can be achieved, by July the country can

be out of pandemic situation and the graph would once again fall drastically. This would help in breaking the process of new mutations and we would be out of danger both in terms of health and economy.

Lockdown certainly is not the solution. People on their part should decide whether they would prefer complete lockdown or using of masks and physical distancing so that the wheels of economy would continue to move.

There is also difference of opinion on night curfew. Except closure of pubs and preventing youngsters from partying, night curfew may not help much. Some medical experts suggest that the central Government should also focus attention on spending

more of GDP for medical infrastructure and make changes in medical education.

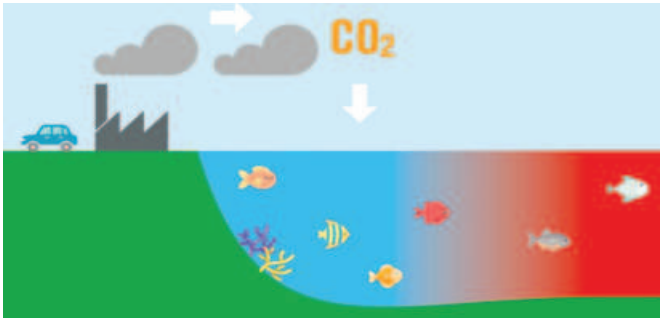
It should send medical students who are in second year of MBBS for clinical training and promote final year students and house surgeons as doctors and send them for taking up case studies of the patients. The government should utilise the pandemic to train the present genre of doctors to handle emergencies. In 1918 when the world faced the pandemic which is known as Spanish Influenza, there was no facility to provide practical training to the doctors. But now the situation is different.

As far as people are concerned, they should also realise their responsibility. They should follow

the protocols by wearing proper masks covering the face from nose to chin, sanitise or wash hand frequently and maintain physical distancing. The government too should be ruthless in implementing these protocols.

The second stage is racing towards peak but what we need to realise is that we should now prepare ourselves for the third wave which is likely towards the end of the year and go in for concerted efforts so that we can defeat the Pandemic.

The only Ram Baan according to medical experts is to boost your immunity in a scientific manner and not based on the stuff one finds on social media. The simple preventive way to stay safe is to take healthy food, indulge in limited regular exercises and following health protocols. Stay Home, Stay Safe. Wear mask.



Commonwealth nations to tackle ocean acidification

A new policy handbook, launched on Tuesday, will help Commonwealth governments put in place strategies to tackle ocean acidification -- a key aspect of climate change.

Ocean acidification happens when the sea absorbs excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, primarily caused by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation.

This leads to an increase in the acidity of the ocean, affecting the lifecycles and biology of certain marine species, and in turn, threatening the entire food web as well as the lives and livelihoods of communities that depend on these ocean resources. Tackling this challenge requires technical expertise and capacity that are often not available in Commonwealth countries. The new handbook addresses this gap by identifying existing resources, streamlining technical concepts, outlining pragmatic solutions and providing useful templates for policy makers. The handbook was commissioned by the New Zealand government, which champions the Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group on Ocean Acidification

A particular focus in the handbook is on collaboration, which is a distinctive feature of the Commonwealth Blue Charter, an agreement adopted in 2018 by the 54 Commonwealth member countries to work together to solve ocean challenges. The Commonwealth Blue Charter is implemented through 10 action groups led by 15 'champion countries', which focus on guiding the development of knowledge, tools and training on ocean priorities such as marine plastic pollution, ocean climate change, and the sustainable blue economy.

Head of Oceans and Natural Resources at the Commonwealth Secretariat, Nicholas Hardman-Mountford, said: "This new handbook is an example of the concrete and practical outcomes that are generated by the Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Groups and their discussions.

"While we all understand the grave threats that confront the ocean -- and consequently, the entire planet -- we must also realise that we, as the global community, can do something about it, by working together to share expertise, pool resources and align national and regional strategies to existing global commitments."

The launch of this publication follows on the first-ever workshop by the Commonwealth Ocean Acidification Action Group, hosted in 2019 by New Zealand in its role as Champion Country for the group.

PART-I

Indians and the Armed Forces



THEY are everywhere, advertisements exhorting people to join the Armed Forces. They extol the advantages of service in the military, and call upon the youth to join the heady quest for excitement, adventure and honour. They tell you that, apart from the patriotic spirit being satisfied, one will be looked up to in society, and enjoy a quality of life that goes with the best of the careers on offer.

Response to these calls, however, varies sharply as one travels away from the northern parts of the country. Every other family, in states such as Rajasthan or Punjab, will usually have sent a daughter or a son to one of the forces. Not so, however, in States such as, say, Gujarat or Andhra Pradesh.

Historically, peninsular India has been relatively immune to external aggression. Even the long coastline has rarely, if ever, been exposed to hostile attacks. Also, India has neither been an imperialistic country seeking to expand its influence to lands across the seas, nor a seafaring nation, in trade and commerce. On the other hand, invasions from the northwest have been frequent in the history of India. Over time, those areas produced tough, hardy, courageous and fearless people, not unfamiliar with the travails that come with living in close proximity to enemies across the border.

Thus, over the centuries, peninsular India lived in relative security and prosperity, literally with its hair let down and feet

put up. People indulged in peacetime luxuries such as the fine arts, including literature, music, dance etc. with the rulers of different kingdoms extending enthusiastic patronage and support. Save the occasional skirmish, triggered by envy or greed, between and amongst themselves, the rulers had little to do with defending the borders of the country against external attacks.

All this is neither to take away from the great and significant achievements the northern States have to their credit in the fields of higher education, culture and the arts, nor to detract from the valour and courage that people from the south have shown on various occasions, when internal as well as external challenges tested the country's peoples. The mention of a few names such as Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Ravi Shankar, Alluri Sitharama Raju, Veerapandiya Kattabomman and Subramanya Bharati should suffice to illustrate the point. Similarly, in the military sphere, significant contributions have come from the South and the East from stalwarts including Shivaji, Subhas Chandra Bose, General Cariappa, General Timmimayya and General Sam Manekshaw.

A quick look at the numbers shows that the state of Punjab, for instance, contributes 2.4 per cent to the population of the country while accounting for 16.6 per cent of the Armed Forces. Somewhat similarly, the numbers for Haryana, are 2.2 and 7.82. On the other hand the state of Gujarat has sent a mere 3199 people to the Forces between 2015 and 2018. While Andhra Pradesh contributes less than a fourth of what Punjab does, Telangana contributes only about 10 per cent of the same.

Those numbers were merely by way of illustrating the point that the attraction the Armed Forces offer to the youth of the country is certainly a function of geography and, in turn, a host of other factors including exposure to external threats, inher-



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ited qualities relating to patriotism and honour etc.

I was brought up just as any other middle-class south Indian boy and therefore, had little exposure to the military way of life, almost until I completed my training in the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy for Administration (LBSNAA), at Mussoorie and reported in the district. Even the little exposure one would have normally had to the 'military' way of life (through what was known as the 'army attachment', an integral part of the training at the LBSNAA) was denied to the group of three to which I belonged, ostensibly on account of the preparations on for the immi-

nent engagement with Pakistan on account of the (then) East Bengal uprising, we were sent to cool our heels with a battalion of the Grenadiers Regiment at Jabalpur.

That was a rather dull and uneventful experience, brightened for a brief while when yours faithfully was asked to guide a marching unit at night, compass in hand. The neighbouring state was only a few kilometres away when the Commander of the unit gently retrieved the instrument from my hands, and suggested that, perhaps, finding my bearings at night was not my best suit, after all!

My next contact with the Army happened only when I was

Sub-Collector at Ongole during the Andhra agitation. The Army was brought in as the entire administration had come to a standstill on account of the agitating masses, with only the highest echelons of the police and civil services available. They did the usual 'route march' and restored calm and quiet. I developed a close contact with the Army contingent which came there and learnt quite a few things about how army does things.

Apart from a few arms' length relationships with the Armed Forces in the wake of the occurrence of natural disasters, I had, thereafter, little to do with the Armed Forces, until I became the Chief Secretary of (the then) Andhra Pradesh State in which capacity one dealt with the units of the Air Force and the Army at Hyderabad, and the Eastern Naval Command situated at Visakhapatnam.

Much later as a Member of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), I dealt with them again, albeit in a limited manner, in seeking, and obtaining, their assistance in the raising, equipping and training the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

(The writer is former Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh)

LETTERS

Invest in R&D before it's too late

IN India we have 425 State Universities, 125 Deemed to be Universities, 54 Central Universities and 375 Private Universities. In Spite of 979 universities India is in the bottom of the list in filing Patents. One could easily identify the proximity between patents and economic development. Today America became the richest nation because of scientific research and development. Patents Will create wealth. The same is the story of developed nations in Europe and Japan. Japan was destroyed in the Second World War. But it raised like phoenix and became the Second Largest Economy and in the 1960's it's economy was called 'Miracle Economy'.

When independent India started its journey, China was worse than India. Today China has filed more number of patents than the United States. All this is happening because of govt. investment in R&D. In US corporate giants also investing billions every year for inventions and discoveries, thereby earning Patents and contributing for the GDP of their nation. India could not file Patents even 10 per cent of China. The only reason is Higher Education is highly neglected in India. For the last 20-25 years the govt. universities all over India are in shambles.

Shortage of faculty, lack of proper facilities for research, our equipment in most

of the labs are of 1970s and 80s. Even faculty is engaged on a contract basis for 10 months a year, hardly any environment for world class research and filing of patents by universities is almost negligible. This year UGC has recognised 15 State universities as Universities of Eminence. What about the rest? Needs no explanation.

There are many young Indians who are doing research on EU Scholarships and filing and acquiring patents. Today there is murmur about vaccine and patents. The GOI should take up this challenge and concentrate more on higher education and research. This is high time that India should invest more and more in Research and Development, so India will become a truly a wealthy developed nation. Of course, 'Vishwa Guru' also.

Dr S.Surya Prakash, Visakhapatnam

Costly mistake

WE, who boasted to the world that we conquered corona virus are at the mercy of the countries whom we helped in the past for costly surgeries. What can be the reason? We took things for granted and went into hibernation. When we woke up from the slumber the assault is complete and our bite is gone, leaving us to meekly surrender just like a big snake does before a mongoose. Let us stop the blame game and wake up to the reality.

D S P Rao, Kakinada

thehansreader@gmail.com

Inhuman existence

THE daily reports in all newspapers on Covid-19 is frightening us. Probably the human species has lost its humanity. The relatives of Covid-19 death, faces a herculean task to dispose the corpse. They feel sorry for not giving a normal send-off. The hurdle starts from getting the corpse from mortuary after bribing, transportation cost at sky touching charges, going around the crematorium to book slots, getting firewood at prohibitive cost and performing last rites as per charges demanded by the priest. Everybody wants to make quick bucks. Are we not human beings? Shouldn't we show our sympathy to the neighbours at the time of crisis?

P R Vittal Rao, Hyderabad

Control panic, be aware

IN the times of rising Covid cases, the most important aspect that needs to be addressed is Covid stigma. Issues regarding mental health are rising every day. Ambiguity and uncertainty about coronavirus and isolation are creating extremely stressful situations. While preventive and medical action is the most important aspect of fighting the pandemic, emergency psychological crisis interventions for people affected by Covid-19 are also very significant which cannot be ignored.

Hearing about Covid situation for entire day from all corners is creating unwanted scare. Many incidents are being reported across the nation about people dying with

fear of Covid. A positive campaign in this chaotic situation is need of the hour. People who have recovered from Coronavirus should come front and spread the positivity. No doubt second wave is severe in India, but fatality rate is 1.2%. Not every person who tests positive requires a bed in hospital and needs oxygen. It's mostly for patients who are already suffering with comorbidities and in some cases for people who start Covid treatment very late. Be Aware, but don't panic.

Ravi Teja Kathuripalli, Hyderabad

Stop IPL tournament

THE IPL tournament is going on in India without the involvement of live spectators. The much-debated issue to cancel the tournament amidst the second wave of pandemic needs an urgent overview. While it is appreciable to play with the sportsmanship and spirit of the game despite the odds, the organisers otherwise should take a call to cancel the tournament now without much delay.

IPL tournament may be cancelled for the remaining matches while considering the health and safety of the players and the match officials involved in the game. The organisers should instead come forward to donate the funds to much-needed medical relief and oxygen requirements in India. The gesture will be welcomed by one and all as such there is no need for a cricket tournament to be held in this hour of a health crisis.

Varun Dambal, Bengaluru



It was a most heart-wrenching scene when Bejugam Janaki boarded the flight for India from Saudi Arabia where she had spent most of her life with her husband. Unlike earlier occasions when visiting India was exciting and full of anticipation - gifts for loved ones back home would never be in short supply - and pre-boarding phone calls with relative would not stop flowing from Janaki's eyes.

Instead of meeting family and friends, Janaki had only one thought on her mind - how to carry ashes for immersion of her late husband, who had died of Covid-19 in the port city of Jeddah?

Janaki, 58, hailing from Hyderabad, had lost her husband, Dashaarat, last month due to Covid-19. Her situation showcased the agony of bereavement faced by non-Muslim families of NRIs in Saudi Arabia.

Undoubtedly, these are traumatic times, which have caught most governments on the wrong foot. In Janaki's case, she had herself battled with the virus and defeated it. But her husband did not make it. There was no one to look after her outside the hospital premises, leaving her with no option but to remain there for weeks. From the hospital, she unsuccessfully tried to arrange the cremation of her deceased husband.

Typical of many NRI families, Janaki and Dashaarat's children had settled in the USA, from where

they failed to get a Saudi visa to catch the final glimpse of their late father.

It is hard to console a grieving wife who lost her husband in alien land, especially when transporting his mortal remains is an issue.

According to official policy, mortal remains can be repatriated by adhering to health ministry guidelines, which exist on paper. But on the ground repatriation of dead bodies on cargo flights is a grim and contentious issue. Problems such as disinfection of aircraft, health monitoring of the personnel who handled the dead body cargo, among others routinely come into play.

Then there are some roadblocks typical to puritan Saudi Arabia, where cremation of bodies is not allowed. Instead, non-Muslims can be buried in designated places in select cities.

Caught in the cross-hairs of religion, bureaucracy and red tape, grief-stricken families such as that of late Dashaarat are unable to carry mortal remains of their loved ones. Neither can their ashes be brought back home for river immersion so that there is a closure to the tragedy, which has unfolded in a foreign land.

Man arrested for instant loan app fraud

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Cyber Crime wing of Hyderabad City Police on Wednesday apprehended a person from Bangalore to Hyderabad on prisoner transit warrant for his involvement in instant loan app frauds. The accused has been identified as K Kalappa (24), director of Finexpress Financial Services Private Limited.

According to police, the accused was involved in committing the fraud of providing instant loan through an app named; Hi Cash and the details of the accused were revealed by the ones who were arrested earlier.

Till now, the police have arrested 24 persons in this connection and an amount

The police have arrested 24 persons in this connection and an amount of Rs 400 crores pertaining to the bank accounts of all these companies were freed

of Rs 400 crores pertaining to the bank accounts of all these companies were freed, said Avinash Mohanty, Joint Commissioner of Police, Cyber Crime Station. Police officials further told that their teams are regularly working on the instant loan app fraud cases.

“We have made a decent progress in these cases as we were able to curtail their movements by cracking their modus operandi,” Avinash Mohanty, added.

ESA BIN ABDUL REHMAN
HYDERABAD

WHILE borders of several States have been closed due to an exponential increase in Covid-19 cases, the worries of labourers grow further as a myriad number of unnerved workers continue to flock towards native places.

Everyday hundreds of labourers are leaving the city for their native places. Only the Katedhan area, considered one of the transit points on the city outskirts from where the labourers board buses are witnessing migration consistently with at least 100 labourers along with their families leaving the city everyday.

These journeys of a thousand miles have begun even before the imposition of night curfew in the State on April 20. On April 21, nearly 100 labourers boarded two busses for Odisha and Bihar from Amma Garden Mailardevpally. Similarly, three more tourist buses carrying labourers of different industries began the journey to Itanagar, Odisha two days ago and the migration is going on every day.

“There were around 100 labourers, individually or along with the families, boarding the buses heading to Odisha or Bihar every day from Amma Garden Mailardevpally under Rajendranagar. These labourers are mainly from Katedhan, Kothur and Shamsabad areas who are either working in industries, hotels and restaurants or complexes on the city outskirts,” informed Jahangir, a driver of a tourist bus heading to Odisha frequently.



However, the worries of labourers grow further when several States bring curbs on their borders owing to a grave situation created out of the second wave of the pandemic. “Earlier, we were able to mark the journey to the endpoint. Since the last one week the local authorities are not allowing us to move inside their territories prompting us to drop the passengers on the borders on the tender mercies of the transport services of their own States,” added Jahangir.

“Most of the labourers are from Odisha and West Bengal who are working in several industries from Katedhan, Shadnagar, Kothur, Gagan Pahad, Jeedimetla and Balnagar areas. As per a conservative estimation, around 500 labourers along with their families have boarded

to their native’s places in a week,” informed Hari, one of the contractors arranging transportation for the labourers at Mailardevpally.

“Present situation seems to be very alarming and we can’t afford another exodus barefoot just like last year. Already rail services have closed and only buses are shuttling between the destinations. If the situation turns volatile again and lockdown is imposed, then who will provide us with the transportation to drive back home,” felt Jay Kumar, a labourer working in a city-based factory.

“We have booked the tickets online and secured our seats by paying Rs 2,000 each for the journey. As there was a huge demand, the tourist operators demanded more taking advantage of the situation. We are afraid of

the situation and hence decided to get back to our native places anyhow before the situation takes an ugly turn,” said Pavan, another labourer.

“These workers are worried over the present situation and are expressing concern over their survival in the days to come due to change of events created out of the second wave of Covid-19. This has made them completely unnerved and returning back to their native places,” said G Kurmaiah, secretary CITU, Rajendranagar.

Unfortunately, unlike last year the labourers are seen travelling to their hometown on their own expenses and no one from any law enforcing agencies like police and GHMC was seen guiding or arranging the much-needed support to take up the journey.

TS Government college lecturers ask govt to declare summer holidays

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Telangana State Government Colleges and Contract Lecturers Association (TSGCCLA) on Tuesday urged the State government to declare summer holidays for the government degree and polytechnic colleges in the State.

The TSGCCLA State president and general secretary G Ramana Reddy and Dr Koppiseti Suresh urging the State Education Minister Sabita Indra Reddy to announce summer holidays said, “The State government has declared holidays for the schools and junior colleges in the wake of Covid-19 but no decision have been taken in the case of the government degree and polytechnic colleges. Staff and teachers attending these institutions are scared for their lives in the wake of the corona virus spreading fast.”

Degree college staff in Khammam, Siddipet, Gajwel and Hyderabad contacted the virus due to the bio-metric attendance system at the colleges, despite addressing the issue to the higher authorities nothing have been done, they added. They urged the State Higher Education Department (SHED) not to play with the lives of the teachers and staff and asked to declare summer holidays. If needed, they should be allowed to continue their academic activities from home, they added.

The TSGCCLA leaders said that they have submitted a representation to the Education Minister, higher education officials, Commissioner of Collegiate and Technical Education to declare summer holidays.

3 held for illegal sale of Remdesivir shots

HYDERABAD

THE Saroor Nagar police on Tuesday arrested three persons for illegally selling Remdesivir injections. The accused were identified as, C. Parushuramulu, a nurse at Sunrise hospital in Hayathnagar, Ramavath Janu, a tele caller and S. Upended, an OT technician. As many as eight Remdesivir injections and a cash amount of Rs. 31000 were seized from their possession. According to police, they received a tip off that the said persons were involved in illegally selling the Remdesivir injections. Upon receiving the information, the cops rushed to the spot

near Dilsukhnagar metro station and nabbed the three persons. The police further informed that the accused C. Parushuramulu was collecting the injections from a known source from past 10 days and was selling it to his needy persons in order to earn money illegally. Though the prescribed amount for the injection was Rs. 3490, the accused was selling it to Rs. 15000. The other two accused came to the spot to purchase it for Rs. 15000 and intended to sell it on much higher rates, said the police. All three persons were arrested under relevant sections of IPC and Disaster Management act and remanded to judicial custody.

JAGANANNA VASATHI DEEVENA

₹1,048.94 CR DEPOSITED INTO ACCOUNTS OF MOTHERS

- Over 10.89 lakh students covered under the scheme in the State
- CM Jagan points out that the YSRCP govt has spent a whopping Rs 25,714 crore in just 22 months under various welfare schemes introduced in the education sector during the last 22 months

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

ASSERTING that poverty should not deprive a child from pursuing higher education, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Wednesday credited Rs 1048.94 crore into the accounts of mothers of 10,89,302 students under Jagananna Vasathi Deevena scheme for the academic year 2020-21.

Speaking on this occasion, the Chief Minister said that only education has the power to change the world, eradicate poverty and backwardness of the society, which is why no child has to be deprived from getting educated. In order to provide quality education for the students and to ease the financial burden on parents, the government has come up with Vidya Deevena reimbursing the college fees and



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy formally releasing money into bank accounts of mothers under Jagananna Vasathi Deevena scheme at this camp office in Tadepalli on Wednesday. Education Minister A Suresh is also seen.

Vasathi Deevena for boarding and hostel fees to the students.

Stating that Vasathi Deevena would benefit nearly 10.89 lakh students in the State, the Chief Minister said that Rs 2,270 crore was spent alone on the scheme since the formation of YSRCP government. In the education sector, for schemes like Amma Vodi, Vidya Deevena, Vasathi Deevena, Goru Muddha, Vidya Kanuka and Naadu-Nedu, the State govern-

ment had spent a whopping Rs 25,714 crore in just 22 months of forming the government.

In spite of going through severe financial crisis due to the pandemic, the State government didn’t back out from implementing any welfare scheme, said the Chief Minister. Speaking on the reforms in the education sector, he said that the government will be implementing CBSE board from the coming

academic year and also transform Anganwadis as YSR Pre-primary schools offering PP1, PP2 and Pre first class.

Further, speaking on the issue of conducting examinations to class X and Intermediate students, he said the Centre had left it to the State governments to decide whether or not to conduct exams in the current scenario. He explained that examinations are underway in some States following strict measures and said that SSC and Inter examinations are very important to the students as their future depends on those certificates. He clarified that their government will ensure safety of every student in the State.

The Chief Minister said that the criticism of opposition on conducting 10th and Inter examinations is not good and flayed them for trying to degrade the government even in the times of disaster. He questioned, will there be any admissions in good institutions for students with pass certificates, as only pass certificates would be issued by the States which have not conducted the exams. He stated that the government is conducting exams to ensure that students have a better future and assured them that he thinks for the future of every student.

AP records 14,669 new cases, 71 deaths in 24 hrs

Active cases rise to over 1.07 lakh

AMARAVATI

ANDHRA Pradesh’s active Covid-19 cases crossed the one lakh mark with 14,669 new coronavirus cases during the last 24 hours ending 9 am Wednesday, the State government said. The infection count has gone up to 1,06,954 with the addition of the fresh cases while 71 fatalities pushed the toll to 7,871, an official bulletin said. The State has 1,07,611 active cases and over 74,000 samples were tested in the last 24 hours. As many as 6,433 people recovered from the disease, taking the tally to 9,54,062. Nellore topped the toll chart with nine casualties followed by Krishna eight, seven each in Anantapur, East Godavari and Vizianagaram, six each in Chittoor and West Godavari, five in Visakhapatnam, four each in Guntur and Kurnool, three each in Prakasam and Srikakulam and two persons died of Covid in Kadapa district.

Highest number of 2,072 corona positive cases were reported in Guntur district, followed by 1,975 in Chittoor, 1,926 in Nellore, 1,415 in East Godavari, 1,255 in Srikakulam, 1,083 in Visakhapatnam, 795 in Kurnool, 679 in Prakasam, 604 in Kadapa, 582 in Vizianagaram, 506 in East Godavari and 486 in Krishna district. Meanwhile, 6,433 people recovered from Covid in the past 24 hours.

AP Inter exams as per schedule from May 5: Minister

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

MINISTER for Education Audimulapu Suresh said Intermediate examinations will be held as per schedule from May 5.

At a review meeting conducted with officials through video-conference, the Minister asked the officials to get prepared to conduct the examinations taking Covid precautions. He said some States postponed the examinations and no State cancelled the In-

- Covid guidelines to be strictly followed
- Audimulapu Suresh pats officials for successfully completing practical exams

termediate examinations. Stating that some political parties are trying to create panic among parents and students on the examinations, the Minister asked the officials to conduct the examinations

from May 5 to 23.

He congratulated the officials for successfully completing practical examinations.

The Minister said as per the direction of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy priority should be given for safety of students and at the same time conducting the examinations following Covid guidelines.

Principal Secretary of School Education B Rajasekhara and others were present.

Four of a family commit suicide

M Chandrasekhar (35), his wife and 2 daughters take the extreme step due to debt burden

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

FOUR members of a family had committed suicide after consuming a sedative-laced drink here on Wednesday. The incident took place at Maldar Peta in Nandyal and the deceased were identified as Maccha Chandrasekhar (35), his wife Kalavathi (30), daughters Anjani (16) and Anjali (14).

According to Obulesu, Circle Inspector of Nandyal One Town Police Station, Chandrasekhar was a goldsmith. Some time ago, he abandoned the profession after incurring huge losses. He later entered into the construction sector. He had constructed a house and sold it.

With the money he had obtained out of selling the house, he again purchased a 3 cents plot and started construction of a three-storey building.

For construction of the building, he had borrowed a huge amount, nearly Rs 70 lakh to Rs 80 lakh from moneylenders. Still, he could not complete the en-

tire construction works. For finishing them, he was in need of more money. In the meantime, the moneylenders began exerting pressure on him to repay the money.

Unable to find a way to clear the debt, he along with his wife and daughters had taken the extreme step, the Circle Inspector said.

On noticing all the family members in an unconscious state, their relatives who reside in the neighbourhood shifted them to Nandyal government general hospital. But the doctors at the hospital declared that that all were brought dead. Later, the police were informed about the incident.

Based on the information the police rushed to the hospital and recorded the statement of the relatives. The bodies have been handed over to them after the completion of autopsy.

A case under section 174 IPC was filed. The Circle Inspector has said that Anjani (16) was a second year Inter student and Anjali (14) was studying 8th class.

Naidu blames State govt for deadly spread of Covid 2nd wave

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday accused the Jagan Mohan Reddy government of pushing Andhra Pradesh into an unenviable position of being the worst-hit State in the entire country in the deadly second wave of coronavirus. Naidu questioned the wisdom of the Jagan Reddy regime to go for the 10th class and Intermediate examinations at a time when their government was not in a position to provide hospital beds, medical oxygen, ventilators and even medicines to the infected patients. It was the adamant and arrogant attitude of the Chief Minister and his Ministers that the lives of AP people were greatly jeopardised with the systems even failing to provide space in the cremation grounds to perform last rites for the deceased victims.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP

chief deplored that while the whole world was talking about the peak level rise in Covid cases in India, it was about the extreme dangerous infections prevailing in AP that the other States in the country were talking about. The inefficient YSRCP government has failed to take responsibility for the lives and health of the people. This was why Tamil Nadu was demanding e-passes for entry into their State from AP. Whereas, Odisha was closing down borders afraid of the deteriorating situation here. It was alarming that AP’s positivity rate has touched 25.8 per cent.

Naidu said that the Jagan Reddy government gave many GOs in a hurry in the days prior to the hearing of the virus related case in the High Court on April 27. However, the rulers had not shown any sincerity to ensure the strict implementation of those GOs which remained in paper only. The Chief Minister promised to provide a hospital bed within three hours of request but that had not been fulfilled anywhere in the

State. A 24-hour timeframe was given for giving Covid test results while they were taking five to six days. Quick reports were being given only on payment of bribes. GOs were given prescribing Rs 230 for rapid antigen test and Rs 490 for RT-PCR test but this was not implemented anywhere.

Stating that the government was giving false details, Naidu said Aarogyasri coverage was not being given at any network hospital contrary to the claims made by the rulers. The government was in such a helpless condition that a family carried the body of their loved one on a scooter for lack of a proper vehicle at Palasa. A 15-month-old baby suffered and succumbed for lack of bed and oxygen in Visakhapatnam. The YCP rulers have destroyed systems like the RTGS which has now proved to be a big disadvantage. The Mahaprasthanam vehicles were cancelled which was why ambulances were now being used to carry dead bodies to the burial grounds.

India declines help from UN; Canada to donate \$10mn to Red Cross Centre to procure 1 lakh portable oxygen concentrators, 500 more PSA oxygen plants

NEW DELHI

India has declined assistance offered by the United Nations of its integrated supply chain for Covid-19-related material, saying the country has a "robust system" to deal with the required logistics, a spokesperson for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said.

"One of the things we did is we offered the assistance of our integrated supply chain if it was required. We've been told at this point that it's not needed because India has a reasonably robust system to deal with this. But our offer stands, and we're willing to help in whatever way we can," Farhan Haq, Deputy

Spokesman for the UN Chief, said in response to a question by PTI.

On whether any shipments of essential materials from UN agencies are expected to reach India amid the crisis, Haq said, "none have been sought so far, but like I said, we do have people, including our people who deal with operational and logistical issues who are willing to help, if we're needed, and we're in touch with our counterparts in India to see whether that will be useful."

Haq added that the UN is also making sure that its own staff, whether international or national, in India are taken care of so that they don't place a burden on the healthcare system of India. "And luckily, we've main-

tained a very low level of cases. So, we've, I think, been succeeding at trying to do that and making sure that we're not pressuring a healthcare system that already is facing extreme challenges.

Canada will provide 10 million dollars to India to support the country in its fight against the unprecedented second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. "We are also ready to provide 10 million dollars through the Canadian Red Cross to the Indian Red Cross," the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said.

The Singapore government has sent a consignment of oxygen cylinders to support India's pandemic response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Wednesday. Russia

announced that it will be sending a large consignment of aid to India by an urgent flight of the Russian Emergencies Ministry.

The government will procure one lakh portable oxygen concentrators and install 500 more pressure swing adsorption oxygen plants from the PM Cares Fund, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday, asserting this will help improve access to oxygen, especially in district headquarters and tier-2 cities.

The PMO said in a statement that the oxygen concentrators and the new Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) plants will greatly augment the supply of oxygen near the demand clusters.



Cremation ground under construction at a park near Sarai Kale Khan, in New Delhi on Wednesday

WINDOWS

Two Naxals killed in Maha

NAGPUR: At least two Naxals were killed on Wednesday in an encounter with the police in a forest in the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, a senior official said.

The exchange of fire took place when C-60 commandos of the Gadchiroli Police were conducting an anti-Naxal operation in the Jambia Gatta forest around 6.30 am, he said.

"Two ultras have been killed and a search operation is underway in the forest area," the official added.



A health worker takes a nasal swab sample to test for the Covid-19 in wake of a spike in second wave of coronavirus cases, at a Government Hospital in Srinagar on Wednesday

Mane's custody extended

MUMBAI: A special court extended till May 1 suspended Mumbai police officer Sunil Mane's National Investigation Agency (NIA) custody. Mane is in the custody in connection with the Antilia bomb scare case and the probe into the death of Thane-based businessman Mansukh Hiran. Appearing for the NIA, special public prosecutor Prakash Shetty told special NIA court judge Rahul Bhosle that the central agency's probe so far had revealed that Mane was involved in Hiran's killing. Shetty said that the NIA had recorded the statements of accused persons as well as witnesses confirming that at the time of Hiran's killing, Mane had taken the businessman's phone, switched it off, and kept it in a bag.

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA/LUCKNOW

THE Delhi High Court Wednesday said it appeared that the Centre wanted people to die as according to the new protocol on use of Remdesivir for Covid-19 treatment, the drug was to be given only to those on oxygen support.

"This is wrong. This is a complete non-application of mind. Now people who do not have oxygen will not get Remdesivir either. It appears you want people to die," Justice Prathiba M Singh said to the Central government. It appears the Centre was changing the protocol to reduce the shortage of the drug, the high court said.

Justice Virendra Kumar Srivastava, a sitting judge of the Allahabad High Court, passed away on Wednesday after being afflicted by Covid. Justice Srivastava was at the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court. A Covid-19 infected Delhi judicial officer is unable to get the ventilator support in the hospital, court sources said on Wednesday.

Nupur Gupta, a Metropolitan Magistrate in the Tis Hazari Court complex, is currently admitted to a hospital here. The 32-year-old judge is in dire need of the ventilator as her health has deteriorated, sources told PTI. She had tested positive on April 22, pursuant to which she was rushed to the private hospital. The national capital was left with only five intensive care units (ICU) beds with ventilators, out of the capacity of 1,657.

With four states and one Union Territory gearing up to count votes cast during the recently concluded Assembly elections, the Election Commission on Wednesday said that no candidate or agent will be allowed to enter counting centres without a negative RT-PCR test report or a vaccination certificate.

The wife of a Trinamool Congress candidate who died of Covid, has filed a murder case against the Election Commission. Kajal Sinha, the party candidate from Khardah, died on April 25. His wife Nandita Sinha has now accused Deputy Election Commissioner Sudeep Jain and other officials of "careless and negligent" behaviour that led to the death of husband and several other candidates.

Accusing the Commission of "self-serving blind motives", Nandita Sinha, in her complain to the police, wrote while the entire nation was "struggling to cope with the coronavirus crisis" the EC decided on a staggering eight-phase polls in Bengal that stretched from March 27 to April 29.



Madhya Pradesh cops wearing PPE kits pay tribute during the funeral of Sub-Inspector Mohan Singh Patel, who died due to Covid, in Bhopal on Wednesday

Allahabad HC judge succumbs to coronavirus Widow of TMC candidate files case against EC

Four patients die in hospital fire

THANE: Four patients died after a fire broke out at a private hospital near Thane in Maharashtra in the wee hours of Wednesday, a civic official said. The patients died while being shifted to other hospitals after the blaze and not due to burns, the official said. They may have inhaled smoke after the fire, he added. The incident comes five days after 15 coronavirus patients died in a blaze in the intensive care unit of a private hospital at Virar in the adjoining Palghar district. Wednesday's fire broke out at the Prime Criticare Hospital at Kausa-Mumbra locality at 3.40 am, the official said. There were no coronavirus patients in the hospital, he added. Three fire engines and five ambulances were rushed to the spot.

Now, an oxygen langar in Kanpur

KANPUR: Just when you are losing hope in this horrendous mess we find ourselves in, the Sikh community steps in and saves the day. In Kanpur, the Guru Singh Sabha is providing "oxygen langar" to COVID-19 patients. "Yesterday we have provided medical oxygen to 56 people. 10 beds are available here and we will increase it tomorrow," says Kulwant Singh Gill, senior vice president, Guru Singh Sabha. The Sikh community has also provided free meals to Covid patients quarantined at home in Delhi.

The UP government, meanwhile, wants NSA invoked against 'those who spread rumours', in other words, Covid patients' relatives, hospitals who have been begging for oxygen.

DU prof dies days after daughter death

NEW DELHI: Former Delhi University professor and human rights activist N K Bhattacharya has passed away, according to a statement. He was the convener of Jan Hastakshep, a citizen's forum, based here, the organisation said.

"We lost a great human rights activists and a good human being," the statement issued by Jan Hastakshep said.

The Indian Federation of Trade Unions paid tributes to Bhattacharya and remembered him as a fighter for human rights.

Bhattacharya died in New Delhi on Monday and it is learnt that his daughter died of COVID-19 three days ago, it said in a statement.

Govt with vision essential, not Central Vista project: Rahul

NEW DELHI

THE Central Vista project is not essential now, but a central government with a vision is, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Wednesday as the country saw a record single-day rise of over 3.60 lakh coronavirus cases.

India's death toll also crossed two lakh following 3,293 fresh fatalities, according to Union health ministry data updated on Wednesday. "Central Vista- not essential. Central Government with a vision- essential," he said in a tweet. The Central Vista revamp project, which was announced in September last year, envisages a new triangular Parliament building, with seating capacity for 900 to 1,200 MPs, and it is targeted to be constructed by August, 2022 when the country will be celebrating its 75th Independence Day.

The common Central Secretariat, a part of the project, is likely to be built by 2024. In another tweet, Gandhi lauded the common people for helping each other. "By helping each other, the common people show that to touch someone's heart one need not touch one's hands. Keep helping," he said in a tweet in Hindi, using the hashtag "#Together-Stronger". Gandhi asked people to continue helping each other and expose the reality of the "blind system".

Rahul hit out at the government over the "high" COVID vaccine prices, saying the system has once again failed Indian citizens.

"People's money was given to vaccine companies to develop COVID vaccines. Now, GOI will make the same people pay the highest price in the world for these vaccines," he alleged on Twitter.

"Once again, the failed 'system' fails our citizens for Modi-mitrs' profit," he said. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh also lamented that only 2.36 crore people have been fully vaccinated in the country.

6.4 magnitude quake strikes Assam

GUWAHATI/NEW DELHI

A series of earthquakes jolted Assam and most of the Northeast on Wednesday, causing extensive damage to buildings and forcing people to scamper out of their homes. There were no immediate reports of deaths, but three people were injured as the first quake of 6.4 magnitude struck Tezpur, the headquarters of Sonitpur district in Assam, at 7.51 am, officials said. The impact was felt in almost the entire Northeastern region, parts of West Bengal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The first quake was followed in quick succession by lesser

intensity tremors of 4.7, 4, and two 3.6 magnitudes at 8.03 am, 8.13 am, 8.25 am and 8.44 am, Regional Meteorological Centre (RMC) Deputy Director Sanjay O'neil Shaw said. Another earthquake of 3.2 magnitude hit Assam's Nagaon district at 10.05 am. A while later, another jolt of 3.4 magnitude hit Tezpur at 10.39 am. At 12.32 pm, the eighth quake of 2.9 magnitude hit Marigaon. There were reports of extensive damage to buildings and other structures from across Assam, mostly in the central and western towns of Tezpur, Nagaon, Guwahati, Mangaldoi, Dhekiajuli and Morigaon.



A man stands near a severely damaged wall due to a high-intensity earthquake, in Guwahati on Wednesday

Pregnant tigress killed in Maharashtra jungles

YAVATMAL

ACTIVISTS and conservationists are agitated at the shocking news of a pregnant tigress with four foetuses in the womb being found brutally killed in the forests near Pandharkawada in Maharashtra's Yavatmal. The incident, which happened last Sunday, came to light a day later when the mutilated carcass was found in a pool of blood with the poachers having chopped off its front paws to extract the claws.

The wildlife community and officials have reacted strongly to the incident which occurred within the Mukutban ranges of the thick forests, known to

be frequented by tigers in the Vidarbha region.

Member of State Board for Wildlife and Satpuda Foundation founder Kishore Rithe exposed the matter in public and demanded stringent action against the culprit-poachers responsible for the "murder". He termed it as one of the most horrible instances of a tigress' death which has never been heard or witnessed in recent years.

A team of veterinarians comprising Dr. Chetan Patnod from Pench Tiger Project, Dr Arun Jadhav from Wani, Dr S.S. Chavan of Zari, Dr D.G. Jadhav of Mukutban and Dr V.C. Jagde performed the autopsy on the tigress and the report is awaited.

As India gasps, Kerala has 510 tons of oxygen reserve

KOCHI

As many states in the country continue to grapple with oxygen shortage, the Kerala government has said it has a reserve of 510 metric ton of the life-saving gas at production centres post-delivery.

The government is now mulling the possibilities of increasing the reserve stock upto 1000 MT to meet any adverse situations, authorities said.

In the wake of the number of COVID-19 cases crossing the 30,000 mark in the southern state, Health Minister K K Shailaja convened a special high-level meeting on Tuesday to review the availability of oxygen. In view of the grim situation, it has been decided to set up audit committees in the state, district and hospital levels for the effective

utilisation of the available oxygen in the state, she said. "At present, 220 metric tonnes (MT) of medical oxygen is available in government hospitals. Around 100 MT of oxygen is required for COVID and non-Covid treatments. After distribution, we have around 510 MT oxygen as reserve at production centred now," Shailaja said.

The meeting also discussed the possibilities of increasing the reserve capacity to 1000 MT to fight any sorts of emergencies. District collectors were apprised of the requirements of oxygen based on the treatment facilities being set up in their concerned districts.

"The meeting also decided to take steps to avoid oxygen leakage at the treatment centres and give training to those officials handling oxygen cylinders," the minister said in a release.



Meanwhile, developed economies have hoarded Covid-19 vaccines and the raw materials needed to make them. Now, they're being forced to act as an explosive outbreak in India raises the risk of new virus mutations that could threaten the wider world.

Under mounting criticism for dominating vaccine resources, the U.S. said this week that it will help India by sending items needed to manufacture vaccines as part of an aid package. European countries are also pledging help as new cases in the South Asian country smash world records. President Joe Biden's administration is separately vowing to share its stockpile of AstraZeneca Plc vaccines -- which the U.S. hasn't even approved for use -- and meeting with drug companies about boosting supply and waiving

intellectual property protections on Covid-19 shots, a shift India and South Africa have been pushing for.

The moves show a growing realization that the vaccine nationalism many wealthy nations have embraced has the potential to backfire, prolonging the global pandemic. While those countries have been cornering supplies of the first vaccines for their world-leading rollouts, places like India have run short, allowing the virus to run wild.

Some scientists have linked the nation of 1.3 billion people's second wave to a more virulent strain, with the out-of-control outbreak providing a petri dish for further mutations to evolve that could challenge the vaccines now being distributed from the U.K. to Israel.

TODAY'S QUOTE

KPIT targeting double-digit growth

“The KPIT Tech has 23 per cent jump in its March quarter net profit to Rs 47.04 crore. The company is targeting a double-digit rise in revenue in the new fiscal and is very confident about the new deal pipeline. Its operating profit margin improved to 17.2 % a year ago

– **Kishor Patil, Managing Director, KPIT**



PROPERTY

Covid impacts housing sales

Housing sales will be impacted across major cities during the April-June quarter because of the rapid spread of the coronavirus disease, according to property consultant Anarock. Latest government data already indicate a drop in property registrations in April over March.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)

US Dollar	75.9	South	
Euro	90.63	African Rand	5.95
UAE Dirham	20.84	Hong Kong Dollar	11.01
Thai Baht	2.61	Japanese Yen	0.78
British Pound	104.23	New Zealand Dollar	54.14
Australian Dollar	58.13	Saudi Riyal	21.8
Canadian Dollar	60.5	Swedish Krona	10.2
Swiss Franc	82.01	Singapore Dollar	57.17

DELHI THURSDAY 29 APRIL 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Hyundai's Covidrelief

Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF), the philanthropic arm of Hyundai Motor India, has announced Covid-19 relief programmes such as infrastructural assistance to most affected States of Maharashtra, Delhi, Haryana, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. HMIF will roll-out a multi-faceted relief package of Rs 20 crore and deployed its resources by: setting up oxygen generating plants in hospitals, to aid critical patients. Install medicare facilities and provide support staff to various hospitals and cater to their operational cost for the next three months. S S Kim, MD, CEO, Hyundai Motor India Ltd., said: “To offer meaningful assistance to the most affected cities and States, Hyundai has redeployed its resources and channeled efforts that will provide relief during these difficult circumstances.”

KSB develops new range

KSB Ltd has developed main boiler feed water pump-BFP and booster pump-BP for Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL). It marked a milestone for KSB Ltd. in developing the pump for 700 MW Indian Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs). On March 2021, these pumps moved out from KSB, Shirwal, a state of art new facility for pump assembly and testing. Rajeev Jain, Regional Executive Officer, KSB West Asia and Managing Director KSB Limited, India said: “KSB's core strength in design, supported with modern manufacturing capability has made it possible to develop a key product for India's premier power generation organisation NPCIL. KSB's strong leadership qualities, decision-making, technical expertise and great teamwork were witnessed during the various phases of the development”.

sRide unveils new feature

sRide has launched sNeighbour to enable neighbours to seek help and provide support to those who are in need by supplying them with cooked food, groceries, medicines, to share information about medicines, oxygen tanks, hospital beds, vaccination centres with vaccines, offering rides to vaccination centres etc. Those in need can get in touch with individuals on sRide app. Global software firms EPAM and Thought Works joined the cause and encouraged their employees to use the platform to provide and seek help. Lakshna Jha, co-founder, sRide who said: “In the wake of the Covid-19 situations, it is heartening to see the coming together of people and communities to help each other out. With sNeighbour, we have augmented our existing technology infrastructure and network of over 2 million users in a way that can make a positive grassroots-level impact.”

Clensta's new products

Clensta International has launched new lotion and hand sanitizer. The sanitizer offers 99.9 per cent germ protection with antimicrobial and antiseptic properties for up to 12 hours and reduces the extended use of alcohol-based sanitizers, available at Rs 50 for 100 ml and Rs 250 for 500 ml. The lotion can be used over any exposed part of the body including face and hands, available at Rs 299 for 100 ml. The FDA approved product ensures the safety and efficacy of the product by ensuring all the regulatory compliance.

COVID 2ND WAVE

S&P SEES DOWNWARD RISKS TO THE ECONOMY

Says a drawn-out Covid outbreak will impede India's recovery

NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Wednesday said the second wave of Covid infections poses downside risks to India's GDP and heightens the possibility of business disruptions.

The second wave brings in uncertainty and a drawn-out Covid outbreak will impede India's recovery, it said. “This may prompt us to revise our base-case assumption of 11 per cent growth over fiscal 2021-2022, particularly if the government is forced to reimpose broad containment measures,” S&P said in a statement.

Last week another global rating agency Fitch had projected India's economic growth in current fiscal at 12.8 per cent, while Moody's Investors Service had earlier this month said that the second wave of Covid infections presents a risk to India's growth forecast, but a double digit GDP growth is likely in 2021 given the low level of activity last year.

As per official estimates, Indian economy contracted 8 per cent in the 2020-21 fiscal, which ended March 31, 2021. S&P said the country already faces a permanent loss of output versus its pre-pandemic path, suggesting a long-term production deficit equivalent to about



10 per cent of GDP, it added. “India's escalating second wave of Covid-19 infections is serious. In addition to the substantial loss of life and significant humanitarian concerns, S&P Global Ratings believes the outbreak poses downside risks to GDP and heightens the possibility of business disruptions,” it said.

India reported a record 3,60,960 new infections on Wednesday, bringing its total to over 1.79 crore. Deaths also rose by a record 3,293 to 2,01,187. S&P said, the high absolute number of infections in India also presents a significant contagion risk to other geographies and the outbreak is putting severe pressure on the country's health infrastructure.

“Strong economic growth will be critical to sustain the government's aggressive fiscal stance put forth

within India's latest national budget, and to stabilise its high debt stock relative to GDP. The pace and scale of the post-crisis recovery will have important implications for the sovereign credit rating,” S&P said. S&P, which currently has a ‘BBB-’ rating on India with a stable outlook, earlier this month had a forecast of 11 per cent for India's GDP this fiscal on account of fast economic reopening and fiscal stimulus.

It said the localised lockdowns currently in force disrupt daily work and related economic behaviour, which could drag out the recovery of revenue and earnings of some corporate sectors. Banks continue to face a high level of systemic risk. Lenders' asset quality remains strained and credit losses will continue to hold back profitability during fiscal 2021-22.

India's GDP likely to grow at 11% in FY22: ADB

ADB on Wednesday said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 11 per cent in the current financial year on the back of the strong vaccination programme, but cautioned that second wave of Covid is worrying. “India's economy is expected to grow 11 per cent in fiscal year (FY) 2021, which ends on March 31, 2022, amid a strong vaccine drive.

However, the recent surge in Covid-19 cases may put this recovery at risk,” said the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2021. Continued economic recovery boosted by increased public investment, vaccine rollout and a surge in domestic demand will trigger this strong rebound, ADB said. The predictions are based on assumption that there is extensive vaccine deployment across the country and the second wave of coronavirus is contained. According to ADB's flagship publication Asian Development Outlook, “the second wave of Covid-19 cases is worrying, especially if vaccine rollout falters or fails to contain it.”

Bajaj Finserv Q4 net jumps 4-fold

NEW DELHI

BAJAJ Finserv Ltd (BFL) on Wednesday reported over four-fold jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 979 crore for the fourth quarter ended in March 2021, driven by its insurance business. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 194 crore during the corresponding January-March period of 2019-20. The total consolidated income during the March 2021 quarter increased to Rs 15,387 crore as against Rs 13,294 crore in the corresponding period of the previous financial year, BFL said in a regulatory filing. The board has recommended a dividend of 3 per share or 60 per cent on the face value of Rs 5 per unit.

The profit after tax in 2020-21 rose to Rs 4,470 crore from Rs 3,369 crore in the year-ago period,

it said. The company's consolidated total income was at a record of Rs 60,591 crore in 2020-21 compared to Rs 54,351 crore in 2019-20. The company's subsidiary Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company recorded an all-time high annual profit and continued to deliver robust improvement in

its underwriting result, it said. During the year, the general insurance arm posted a profit of Rs 1,330 crore as against Rs 999

crore in the previous fiscal. Similarly, life insurance arm registered an all-time high annual gross written premium in FY21 at Rs 12,025 crore. Its Assets Under Management reached an all-time high level of Rs 73,773 crore at year end, it said. “As a result, Bajaj Finserv had satisfactory profit growth on a consolidated basis, in an extremely demanding year,” it said.



Mkts rally for 3rd day in a row

Sensex soars 790 pts, Nifty up 211 pts; Bajaj Finance jumps 8%

MUMBAI

THE Sensex soared 790 points while the Nifty vaulted above the 14,850-mark on Wednesday as markets maintained their winning streak for the third session on the trot amid robust corporate results.

A strengthening rupee and short covering ahead of F&O expiry also fuelled the rally, traders said, even as the Covid-19 situation remained an overhang.

The 30-share BSE Sensex surged 789.70 points or 1.61 per cent to finish at 49,733.84. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty surged 211.50 points or 1.44 per cent to 14,864.55.

Bajaj Finance was the star performer in the Sensex pack, surging 8.32 per cent, a day after it posted a 42 per cent increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 1,347 crore for the March quarter. Bajaj Finserv gained 4.06 per cent after reporting an over four-fold jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 979 crore for the fourth quarter. In-

duSnd Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Bank, SBI, Bajaj Auto, HDFC Bank and HDFC were among the other prominent winners, climbing as much as 5.08 per cent.

However, Nestle India, HCL Tech, L&T, TCS, Dr Reddy's and ITC closed with losses of up to 0.96 per cent. “Continued rebound in financials aided benchmark indices to defy concerns of rising Covid-19 cases. A visible contraction in daily caseload in Maharashtra and Mumbai offered comfort to market. Further, short covering ahead of F&O expiry also contributed to the rally.

“Notably, strong 4Q FY21 numbers delivered by ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and Bajaj Finance along with

strong commentaries from managements despite ongoing challenges supported rally in financials. Notably, rebound in equities this week added over Rs 6 lakh crore to investors' wealth in last three days,” said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities. Sectorally, BSE bankex, finance, auto, telecom and consumer durables indices rallied as much as 3 per cent, while realty, metal, healthcare and capital goods ended in the red.

In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap indices spurred up to 0.99 per cent. India saw a record single-day rise of 3,60,960 coronavirus cases, which pushed the total tally to 1,79,97,267, while the death toll crossed two lakh following 3,293 fresh fatalities, according to Union health ministry data updated on Wednesday.

World equities remained firm ahead of the US Federal Reserve's interest rate decision, while strong earnings from tech majors propped up Wall Street.

Two Indian firms, Reliance Industries' technology arm Jio Platforms and e-learning startup Byju's have figured in the Time Magazine's first-ever list of 100 most influential companies. On its website, Time said companies shaping the future are at the heart of the first ever Time100 Most Influential Companies. To assemble it, Time solicited nominations across sectors including healthcare, entertainment, transportation, technology and evaluated each one on key factors, including relevance, impact, innovation, leadership, ambition and success. “The result is a diverse array of 100 institutions, from the tech startup engineering a smarter way to recycle to the cryptocurrency firm reimagining the future of money to the pharma titans creating the vaccines of tomorrow (and today),” it said.

Jio, Byju's in Time's top cos list

NEW DELHI

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MassMutual to hire 1,000 more in Hyd

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD-based Global Capability Centre (GCC) of leading US life insurer Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual), has planned to hire further 1,000 employees by the end of this year despite the pandemic challenges.

The company has chalked out plans to increase its hiring targets in Hyderabad based on its continued digital focus and the availability of qualified talent in India.

“We are currently a workforce of approximately 450 associates and leadership areas across a number of organisational functions,” said Ravi Tangirala, Head of the GCC in India. “With an aim to further expand hiring for multiple roles across the technology landscape, we are targeting to reach more than 1,000 employees by the end of this year. We are seeking roles in Full Stack Development and Support, DevOps, Quality Assurance, Security and Cloud Engineering, Data Science and several other areas.”

MassMutual's GCC team in India has been conducting interviews and hiring virtually since the onset of the pandemic. The company's hiring process reflects a 360-degree inclusive approach, underpinning the



Ravi Tangirala, Head of GCC, (MassMutual)



growing diversity in the regional workforce. MassMutual's growing GCC team in India is committed to the local ecosystem. Tangirala serves as a member of the advisory council to the State Government of Telangana, representing the banking, financial services and insurance sector and providing guidance and expertise for IT policy as well as encouraging innovation.

MassMutual currently employs more than 6,000 people in the US and has been consistently ranked as one of the World's Most Ethical Companies by the Ethisphere Institute, World's Most Admired Companies by FORTUNE®2, and America's Best Employers for Diversity by Forbes.

Morepen Labs to raise over ₹433 cr

NEW DELHI

DRUG firm Morepen Laboratories on Wednesday said its board has approved raising over Rs 433 crore through issue of shares to Switzerland's private venture capital firm Corinth Investment Holdings and Liquid Holdings, a promoter group of the company, on preferential basis. “The board of directors of the company considered and approved issue and allotment of up to 10.85 crore equity shares on a preferential basis,” Morepen Laboratories said in a regulatory filing.

Morepen Laboratories' board has approved issue of up to 5 crore equity shares to Liquid Holdings, an entity belonging to the promoter group of the company, at a price of Rs 38 per equity shares, for an aggregate amount of up to Rs 190 crore. Morepen Laboratories' board also approved issue of up to 5.85 crore equity shares to Corinth Investment Holdings AG, a Switzerland based entity, belongs to the public category, at Rs 41.60 per equity shares, at a premium of 10 per cent for an aggregate amount up to Rs 243.36 crore.

Extend ECLGS benefits to retailers: RAI urges govt

NEW DELHI

RETAILERS Association of India (RAI) on Wednesday asked Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to extend benefits of emergency credit line guarantee scheme to retailers while seeking a moratorium on principal and interest of all loans for up to 6 months stating that curbs due to the second wave of Covid-19 have crippled the sector.

Putting forward a series of demands, RAI said around 80 per cent of the retail stores are closed due to various restrictions across states and almost Rs 75,000 crore could turn NPA if urgent measures to ease the working capital challenges are not taken by the Reserve Bank and the Centre. “Retail businesses across the country are among the worst hit as several states have mandated lockdown of malls and shopping complexes where most modern re-



Availability of additional funding facility to eligible retail business will go a long way

tailers operate. The industry is finding it hard to survive through the immense financial stress that is threatening to derail businesses,” RAI said in a statement.

In a submission to the Ministry of Finance, RAI said it has recom-

mended that the ministry and the Reserve Bank of India step in to bring some relief to the mounting stress on the retail businesses in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic.

It asked the ministry to extend benefits of emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS) 3.0 to retail companies as well, saying the availability of additional funding facility to the eligible retail business will go a long way in contributing to their revival, protecting jobs, and creating a conducive environment for employment generation.

Seeking a moratorium on principal and interest on loans for 6 months, RAI said the retail sector “represents an investment of Rs 2,50,000 crore and almost Rs 75,000 crore could turn NPA if urgent measures to ease the working capital challenges are not taken by the Reserve Bank of India and the Government of India.”

Zomato to raise ₹8.2k cr thro' IPO

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA
BENGALURU

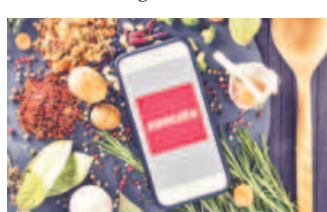
FOOD delivery aggregator Zomato on Wednesday filed a Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to raise Rs 8,250 crore (around \$1.1 billion) through its Initial Public Offering (IPO).

While the IPO offer includes a fresh issue worth Rs 7,500 crore, it also has an offer for sale by its shareholder Info Edge. Info Edge is the parent company of recruitment platform Naukri.com and is the largest investor of Zomato.

The company also mentioned that it will consider a private placement of up to Rs 1,500 crore,

prior to filing of the red herring prospectus. In the run up to its IPO, Zomato has already converted itself to a public limited company a couple of weeks ago from a private company. It has so far raised funding of around \$900 million from clutch of private equity investors. Sources in the know said the company is likely to be valued at around \$7-8 billion in the pre-IPO round.

Zomato is one of the first internet companies which will go public by listing in Indian exchanges. According to market research firm RedSeer, the total food services market opportunity stands at \$65 billion growing at 9 per cent annum and is likely to reach \$110 billion in 2025.





MI look to get back to winning ways

NEW DELHI

AFTER two successive losses, Mumbai Indians (MI) would like to turn it around when they face Rajasthan Royals (RR) in an afternoon encounter of the Indian Premier League (IPL) at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Thursday.

MI were thrashed by Punjab Kings by nine wickets. Prior to that, they lost to Delhi Capitals by six wickets.

RR, on the other hand, have also been inconsistent this season. Like MI, they have won just two out of their five games. But they are coming off a six-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders.

RR have very limited overseas options to fall back on. A couple of their overseas players, Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes, left the shores due to injury. Liam Livingstone left due to bio-bubble fatigue while Andrew Tye departed

due to fear of getting locked out of Australia.

The Rajasthan franchise is now left with only four foreign players -- David Miller, Chris Morris, Mustafizur Rahman and Jos Buttler.

Unlike RR, MI have a lot of overseas players to pick from. However, their problem has been their middle-order which struggled to get going on a spin-friendly pitch at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai.

A change in venue may bring in a change in fortunes although going by past experiences, the pitch at the Ferroz Shah Kotla grounds is also slow and spin-friendly. It may be a challenge but MI hard-hitters will hope it plays better than the one in Chennai.

Both teams are on four points, but MI have a better net run rate than RR. Despite two losses, they begin favourites. (IANS)

Squads

Mumbai Indians: Rohit Sharma (captain), Adam Milne, Aditya Tare, Anmolpreet Singh, Anukul Roy, Arjun Tendulkar, Chris Lynn, Dhawal Kulkarni, Hardik Pandya, Ishan Kishan (wicketkeeper), James Neesham, Jasprit Bumrah, Jayant Yadav, Kieron Pollard, Krunal Pandya, Marco Jansen, Mohsin Khan, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Piyush Chawla, Quinton De Kock (wicketkeeper), Rahul Chahar, Saurabh Tiwary, Suryakumar Yadav, Trent Boult, Yudhvir Singh.
Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (captain), Jos Buttler (wicketkeeper), Riyan Parag, Shreyas Gopal, Rahul Tewatia, Mahipal Lomror, Kartik Tyagi, Andrew Tye, Jaydev Unadkat, Mayank Markande, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Anuj Rawat, David Miller, Manan Vohra, Robin Uthappa, Shivam Dube, Chris Morris, Mustafizur Rahman, Chetan Sakariya, KC Cariappa, Kuldeep Yadav, Akash Singh.

DC take on buoyant Knight Riders

AHMEDABAD

DELHI Capitals (DC), whose form has tapered off a bit in recent times, will take on Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in an Indian Premier League (IPL) match here at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Thursday.

DC lost their previous match to Royal Challengers Bangalore by just one run on Tuesday night and they barely managed to beat Sun-Risers Hyderabad in the Super Over on Sunday night.

The Kolkata franchise, which has been inconsistent throughout the tournament, managed to return to winning ways beating Punjab Kings by five wickets. Prior to that, KKR had lost four matches in a row.

So far, KKR has won just two out of six matches. Unlike them, DC have won four out of six matches in the IPL so far.

DC's strength is batting and not just bowling. Even as Prithvi Shaw, Shikhar Dhawan and Steve



Squads

Kolkata Knight Riders: Shubman Gill, Nitish Rana, Tim Seifert (wicketkeeper), Rahul Tripathi, Rinku Singh, Dinesh Karthik (wicketkeeper), Eoin Morgan (captain), Andre Russell, Sunil Narine, Varun CV, Kuldeep Yadav, Pat Cummins, Lockie Ferguson, Kamlesh Nagarkoti, Shivam Mavi, Sandeep War-

rier, Prasidh Krishna, Shakib Al Hasan, Sheldon Jackson, Vaibhav Arora, Karun Nair, Harbhajan Singh, Ben Cutting, Venkatesh Iyer, Pawan Negi.
Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (captain/wicketkeeper), Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Ajinkya Rahane, Steve Smith, Sam Billings,

Smith failed to get going in the last match against RCB, middle-order batsman Shimron Hetmyer showed that one can never write off DC.

Skipper Rishabh Pant too appears to be in form as he scored an unbeaten fifty in the last match. For KKR, the good news is that their skipper Eoin Morgan is back in form. He scored an unbeaten 47 to see the team through to victory in the last match.

Their bowling too looks well-rounded. Young Shivam Mavi was brilliant and miserly in his bowling while Prasidh Krishna too delivered. (IANS)

Shimron Hetmyer, Ishant Sharma, Kagiso Rabada, Anrich Nortje, Umesh Yadav, Tom Curran, Avesh Khan, Lalit Yadav, Pravin Dubey, Rupal Patel, Lukman Meriwala, M Siddharth, Marcus Stoinis, Axar Patel, Ravichandran Ashwin, Chris Woakes, Vishnu Vinod (wicketkeeper), Aditya Tare (wicketkeeper).

Kuggeleijn replaces Richardson at RCB

AHMEDABAD

ROYAL Challengers Bangalore (RCB) on Wednesday announced that New Zealand fast bowling all-rounder Scott Kuggeleijn will replace Kane Richardson in the Indian Premier League (IPL) after the Aussie pacer left the tournament. Kuggeleijn was part of the Mumbai Indians set-up as a net bowler and was in Delhi when the call came for him to join RCB in Ahmedabad.

Richardson and leg-spinner Adam Zampa left India after midnight on Wednesday as they wanted to reach Australia amid rising cases of Covid-19.

"We are happy to announce the arrival of Scott Kuggeleijn, New Zealand fast bowling all-rounder, as a replacement for Kane Richardson," said a statement from RCB

DC skipper Pant urges Covid survivors to donate plasma

NEW DELHI

INDIAN Premier League (IPL) team Delhi Capitals (DC) skipper Rishabh Pant on Wednesday appealed to Covid-19 survivors to come forward and donate their blood plasma so that the lives of the critically ill patients could be saved.

In a video message posted on the franchise's website, the wicketkeeper-batsman said, "In the last few months, the number of Covid-19 cases in India has gone up. If you have recovered from Covid, please go and donate your plasma."

Pant also requested people not to spread misinformation about the disease.

"I request everyone to not take this lightly and strictly follow the guidelines issued by the government and experts. It is important that you verify any information related to Covid relief and only then share it further," the DC skip-

per added.

Plasma therapy is one of several treatments given to critically ill patients where the plasma from a fully recovered Covid



survivor is extracted and injected into the bloodstream of an infected patient.

Research has shown that the antibodies in the plasma of recovered patients when injected into the bloodstream of critically ill patients, helps them re-

cover from the diseases faster.

DC opener Shikhar Dhawan had, in a video posted on his Instagram on Tuesday, said, "So many people are running around in blood banks and hospitals to save their loved ones. If you are a Covid survivor, you have a superpower to save a life. Do not let it go waste. Connect with Fever FM and join the Project Plasma if you wish to donate and earn blessings."

"In these tough times, we all need them the most. With your help, we can defeat the virus and save lives. Donate plasma," Dhawan added.

DC, in a joint initiative with Fever FM, are connecting survivors who reach out to them with patients in need of plasma at various hospitals in Delhi.

"The most valuable thing right now is your plasma. If you have defeated the virus, you have the superpower to save lives. Please contact FeverFM team and donate your plasma," urged DC pace bowler Ishant Sharma. (IANS)

Sharath Kamal feeling in top shape ahead of Tokyo Olympics

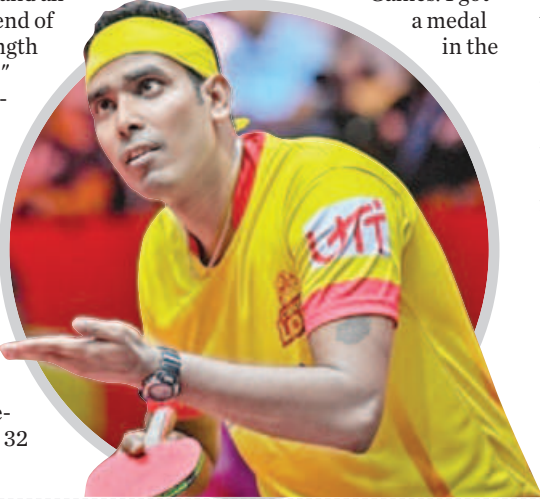
NEW DELHI

Achanta Sharath Kamal, India's ace table tennis player, believes Tokyo Olympics will be his best ever major competition.

"My body is responding to high intensity training. I have got vast experience in handling pressure and all sorts of distractions. The blend of experience and mental strength has added to my confidence," said the 38-year-old international from Chennai during an online media interaction on Wednesday.

The Tokyo Games will be Kamal's fourth successive Olympics. He first participated in an Olympic Games in 2004 in Athens.

According to the seasoned table tennis player, the confidence has grown because he is ranked world No 32 in the men's singles event.



"Six months before the Rio Olympics, I was supposed to be enjoying good fitness. But injury spoiled my preparation. This time I've been very consistent over the last 2-3 years, which has built inner strength. I got a medal in the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games. I got a medal in the

Jakarta Asian Games. The next target is the Olympics," he added.

After the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted training in the first half of 2020, Kamal said he resumed training in September.

"There was uncertainty around us. But we tried to control things that were within our reach. We started with small goals. Achieved them. It made us strong and we moved on gradually," he added.

Kamal says things aren't just going on expected lines but are slightly better than last year.

"We have started our preparation for the Olympics in Chennai. It might not be the best way but whatever we can do, we are trying. The focus again is on small goals. I wanted to go to Pune to train with Manika Batra for a mixed team event for 5-6 sessions a month but couldn't go due to lockdown. Then she had to come to Chennai for training. There are restrictions but we are working to achieve the best result," he added. (IANS)

Indian fencers fail to qualify for Olympics

NEW DELHI

NATIONAL fencing squad's hopes of earning an Olympic Games quota place ended at the quarterfinal stage of the Asian Olympic qualifier tournament held in Tashkent.

"Since it was one last chance to make the cut for the Olympics, the players wilted under pressure. Instead of staying calm and playing their natural game the fencers became a bit error prone that spoiled their chances," a national level coach told IANS.

The two-day tournament, held last weekend, offered six quota places, including three in the women's category for the Tokyo Olympics.

According to the coach, two fencers -- Sunil Kumar and Radhia Avati -- entered the quarterfinals of their respective events while other three bowed out in the first round.



"Sunil gave a good account of himself in the epee event. He was leading in his quarterfinal match, but lost three vital points in the closing stages of the tournament to bow out," he said.

Radhia too reached the quarterfinal stage in the


women's foil event. "We were expecting Karan Singh to reach the semis of men's sabre event. But he too went out early in the Asian tournament," said the national team coach.

The Asian Olympic qualifiers was the last chance for Indians to

make the cut for the Olympics scheduled to start on July 23.

Last month, India's Bhavani Devi had won the Olympics quota place in the sabre event in Italy. She is the only Indian fencer to have won a ticket for the Olympics. (IANS)





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