

IN BRIEF

HEALTH MIN
BROKE COVID-19
RULES: DOCS

From Page 1

This move by Rajendar, who has been repeating ad nauseum Covid-19 warnings and asking people to behave, stay at home, and not gather into crowds, has not been taken to kindly by many government doctors who expressed severe displeasure at Rajendar breaking the Covid-19 safety protocols by campaigning for the TRS candidates.

Meanwhile, the BJP and Congress leaders too have been criss-crossing Warangal city campaigning for their respective candidates.

STATE SOUGHT
MORE COVID TEST
KITS FROM CENTRE

FROM PAGE 1

But this has not been the case as Telangana state is facing acute shortage of testing kits — particularly the Rapid Antigen Test kits — in which the government appears to have placed it faith in for their fast turnaround of results in around 15 minutes.

The gold standard RT-PCR tests are now taking 72 hours or more before the results can be communicated to those who undergo these tests in the state as more and more people are lining up to get these tests done. It may be recalled that health minister Etala Rajendar has already written a letter to the Centre urging it to ensure Telangana state receives additional supplies of testing kits. Meanwhile, on Tuesday, reports from many districts in the state said that hundreds of people were turned away from testing centres as they did not have enough kits.

Incidentally, while the health department says that RAT tests are efficient and provide up to 80 per cent correct results, the best of them in the world are about 50 per cent reliable, and even among these, there is the real danger of 'false positive' results. "Even the gold standard RT-PCR test is only about 80 per cent efficient. For the state to claim that it trusts RATs, is laughable," a senior doctor told this newspaper.

AFTER DC EXPOSÉ, TIMS REFUSES TO
GIVE HOME-MADE FOOD TO PATIENTS

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD APR 27

The management of Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (Tims) on Tuesday began cracking down on patient attendants placing restrictions on their access to the hospital premises, and making it clear that hence forth, no home-made food will be allowed to be brought by families for their members being treated at the hospital for Covid-19.

The hospital witnessed a flurry of activity following a report published by *Deccan Chronicle* 'Covid patients exploited at TIMS' on Tuesday, over the state of affairs at TIMS, and how patients and their families were being fleeced by hospital staff, even for something as simple as giving a patient some drinking water.

Families of some patients told *Deccan Chronicle* the hospital administrators went around all the floors and inquired about the details in the report published by *Deccan Chronicle* and attempted to find out who gave the information about the goings on in the hospital.

An attendant of a patient, who was among around 20 or so made to wait outside for hours in the morning with food they brought for their loved ones, said the hospital officials were upset at the news report in *Deccan Chronicle*.

"We have cross-checked with the staff and it was all made up by the patients here, I refuse to comment further on this," said Dr Ehsan Ahmed Khan, the superintendent of TIMS. Incidentally, the "transactions" patients attendants had to make with hospital staffers for providing basic services for their loved ones in the hospitals, have left electronic trails of payments made through online payment apps. Interestingly, the attendants were told by the hospital administration that while they will no longer be allowed to bring food from Wednesday, they could bring any medicines that are prescribed for the patients. This "permission" to bring medicines for patients from outside, flies in the face of the health minister Etala Rajendar's repeated claims that every government hospital is well stocked with every and any medicine required to treat Covid-19 victims.

Corrupt people vultures, says HC

FROM PAGE 1

A division bench of Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy also observed that those who are taking advantage of the present critical situation are nothing but "vultures preying on the people's flesh." The court advised the government to arrange hearse vehicles to shift the bodies and make available body bags for this purpose at the hospitals.

Stressing that the "dignity in death" should also be maintained, the court said it was seeing reports bodies of the dead at hospitals and crematoria were left around or handled without proper care. It also went into reports of vested interests or rackets charging higher prices for oxygen supply, the seeking of bribe by government ambulance drivers and swindling of money by private ambulances to shift the patients or bodies of the dead from one place to another.

There were also reports about the charges being levied at cremation grounds.

To all these, the bench observed that this was "nauseating" and directed the government to take adequate steps to rectify the situation.

Advocate Jeevan Kumar apprised his own experience before the court, saying how a demand was made at Gandhi Hospital for ₹20,000 to hand over the body of his deceased friend.

He also explained how there was swindling of money by the ambulance driver to shift the body to the cremation ground and the higher amounts that had to be paid for the cremation.

RUSH AT CREMATO-
RIA

The bench expressed concern over the rush at crematorium grounds and sought a report on the need for expanding the space of these grounds, the details of burial grounds in the state and how many electrical

burning grounds are present in the state.

The court put on record that the state government is still trying to fudge the numbers of Covid deaths. Observed the CJ: "As long as the state furnished such (unrealistically low) figures, the general public will not be bothered about deaths due to Covid19. This will be more damaging and will harm the general public. Correct information will prompt the general public to get vaccination done on them fast so as to be safe."

The CJ advised advocate general BS Prasad to ensure that a proper record is maintained of the numbers of the dead brought in at various crematoria and burial grounds across the state, so that the figure furnished by the state can be matched with these numbers.

WHAT NEXT?

"What is the next step," the court asked the state government in light of the letter addressed by the Union home ministry, which asked states to impose area-specific restrictions and implement strict containment measures to flatten the sharp Covid-19 curve.

CJ Kohli asked the advocate general, "In these circumstances, in which way is the Telangana State going? There is rampant rise in cases. But still you are sticking to your guns (figures). Even after the Centre advised states to allow only 50 members for marriage events and 20 for funerals, you have not issued a notification. After April 30, what restrictions are you planning? The night curfew is only until that day."

AG replied that he will get instructions from the government.

RT-PCR TEST REPORT

The court also expressed its dissatisfaction over the government not issuing a circular to hospitals, asking them not to insist on RT-PCR test report to admit patients.

"We have been asking

the state to take necessary steps, but the state is not listening. This is the last time the court is asking you to issue the circular. Next time, if this does not happen, the court will react."

The court criticised the affidavit and reports filed by the Director of Health and DGP, which did not answer most of the questions raised by it and to the 20 details sought by the court in its 17-page order issued on April 23.

POLICE PULLED UP

Justice Hima Kohli wondered how, even after this, the police had registered only four across the state against those who did not maintain the Covid protocol of Social Distance at public places; and only two cases were booked for unlawful holding of public meetings.

The CJ said this was a joke. "These figures are laughable and reflect how the police is not interested in enforcing law. You could register four cases in one area, as can still see more violations. But, the police are not able to see such violations," the bench said.

The court advised the police to impose fine on violators who not properly wear masks. "Wearing of masks at head or chin is not what is advised in the Covid protocol. The mask should cover the mouth and nose. Else, impose the fine," the court asked the police.

NOTICE TO SEC

The Telangana high court issued notices to the State Election Commission, asking it to furnish the action plan as also the arrangements for managing crowds during the upcoming municipal elections scheduled for April 30. The report must be furnished by the SEC on April 28.

The following directions were issued by the court to the state government:

● Reactivate the HITAM app, introduced in August 2020, to give medical guid-

ance to Covid patients via phone.

Needful shall be done within one week from today.

Each district is directed to issue a Daily Bulletin relating to the number of tests, positivity rate, the number of deaths as was done earlier and upload them on its web portal.

● Appoint a nodal officer who will be taking stock of the Oxygen Supply to private and government hospitals in the state as regards the requirement of the state, the requisition sent to the central government, the allocation by the central government etc.

● Designate more numbers of private and government hospitals as Covid19 centres, as there is a huge spike in the pandemic cases across the state.

● Create another toll free number for "Hearse vehicles" so that Covid 19 patients can be transported from home to hospital and hospital to home as there is a huge spike in Covid 19 cases.

● Make available sufficient number of body bags at various government and private hospitals so that the body of a Covid19 patient is wrapped in the body bag and is given the dignity it deserved — "dignity in death". This direction is issued after the print and visual media reported about the huge number of bodies being piled up at various crematoria and burial grounds and kept in the open.

OXYGEN SUPPLY

As per the directions of the court, officials from the central health and other departments appeared before it via virtual mode and stated that 430 metric tonnes of oxygen supply has been cleared for Telangana State since April 24.

Apart from this, the central government has supplied 91,135 vials of Ramedisivir life-saving drug to the state government — which is 10.75 per cent of the total allocation

across the country. Advocate general informed the court that the state has requested for a supply of 600 MT of oxygen by the end of this month in the light of a sharp increase in infections.

The court adjourned the PILs related to Covid to May 5.

BHARAT BIOTECH
TO GIVE PRIORITY
TO TS FOR VAX

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

The state government has requested Bharat Biotech to give priority to Telangana and ensure supply of maximum doses of Covid-19 vaccine to facilitate free vaccination drive in state announced by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao recently.

Chief secretary Somesh Kumar on Tuesday held a meeting with Bharat Biotech MD Dr. Krishna Ella at BRKR Bhavan. The CS brought to the notice of Bharat Biotech that there will be a huge requirement of vaccines in Telangana as CM had announced to vaccinate entire population for free.

Dr. Krishna Ella has responded positively to the request made by CS and assured that the company will ensure adequate vaccine supplies to Telangana.

NO SHORTAGE
OF OXYGEN:
ETALA

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Telangana government is taking every possible step to control Covid-19, including ensuring adequate supplies of medical oxygen to hospitals. Steps have been also been initiated to add more beds, equipped with oxygen, at various hospitals, health minister Etala Rajendar said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, the minister maintained that there is no oxygen shortage in Hyderabad city. Supplies are also being made to hospitals in the districts. "We need around 270 tonnes of oxygen a day. Arrangements have been made to ensure arrival of around 400 tonnes of oxygen," he said, referring to Odisha returning to the state by road with their oxygen loads.

Rajendar said Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's advice well in advance in terms of augmenting oxygen supplies, ensuring additional beds and other facilities have helped the state in dealing with Covid-19. He disclosed that the state will get five oxygen concentrators from PM CARES funds, even as Covid-19 services will begin at the ESI Hospital in Nacharam from Wednesday.

The minister said in all, TS has 10,000 oxygen beds currently. The state is all set to add 400 more such beds at Gandhi Hospital, the only hospital in the country with 600 ICU beds. He took serious objections to private hospitals not handing over bodies of dead till families pay bills. Calling them inhuman, he asked the hospitals to show humanity.

HC PULLS UP
STATE ON PUBLIC
HEARING DURING
PANDEMIC

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Telangana High Court on Tuesday faulted state government for allowing public hearings and gatherings despite a super-spreading Coronavirus.

The court instructed the government to stop all such hearings. It further advised the government to follow standard operating procedures and advisories issued by union home ministry with regard to such gatherings. The High Court was hearing two petitions complaining that Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) and Telangana Pollution Control Board are conducting a public hearing to get opinion from public on mining in their villages despite Covid-19 infections being very high in Jagityal, Mancherial and other districts.

VIRUS | VICTIM 89-year-old politician, 3-time Karimnagar MP was active in TS movement

Veteran Cong. leader MSR dies due to Covid

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD APRIL 27

Veteran Congress leader and former state minister M. Satyanarayana Rao (MSR) succumbed to Covid-19 here on Tuesday.

The 89-year-old politician was under treatment at the Nizam Institute of Medical Sciences after testing positive for Coronavirus. Family members said the death occurred around 3.45 am.

A three-time MP from Karimnagar, MSR started his political career as a student leader and was closely associated with Indira Gandhi. He was among those who brought in Rajiv Gandhi as PM after Indira's death.

MSR was known for his frank comments which often led to controversies. He was elected to the Assembly from Karimnagar in 2004 and became a minister in the Cabinet of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

In 2006, MSR had thrown an open challenge to K. Chandrashekar Rao, daring him to resign and re-contest the by-election for Karimnagar LS seat to prove popular support. KCR accepted the challenge and won by a margin of over two lakh votes. MSR subsequently quit as minister.

MSR hailed from Vedira village in Karimnagar district. He is survived by wife Chennamaneni Suguna, two daughters, and two sons.

AICC Telangana in-charge B Manickam Tagore, TPCC chief Uttam Kumar Reddy, state party working president Revanth Reddy and other Congress leaders condoned the death and said this was a great loss to the Congress party.

"Saddened by the passing away of M Satyanarayana



M. Satyanarayana Rao

and Vemulawada constituency in-charge Adi Srinivas, Choppadandi assembly segment Congress in-charge Medipally Satyam as also health minister Etala Rajendar, BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakar, BJP state chief and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar expressed their condolences to the family-members of MSR.

Menneni Satyanarayana Rao represented Karimnagar in parliament thrice from 1971 to 1984. While he won the polls for the first time as a nominee of the Telangana Praja Samithi and he got elected twice as a Congressman. He was active in the separate Telangana movement during 1969 and faced lathi-charge from police.

As general secretary of the All India Congress Committee, MSR acted as party in-charge in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu Kashmir, Kerala and Karnataka states during various periods.

He served as chairman of Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation for two terms — from 1990 to 1994 and from 2007 to 2004. In 2004, MSR was elected as MLA from Karimnagar and served as minister for Endowment in the YSR cabinet. When the TRS chief K Chandrasekhara Rao was leading the Separate Telangana movement, MSR provoked him by challenging KCR to resign as Karimnagar MP to prove the popularity of Telangana sentiment. Accepting the challenge, KCR resigned and won in the next bypoll with a record margin. This proved to be a historic step in the Separate Telangana movement and it rejuvenated the TRS party cadre.

MSR's taunt that finally
brought Telangana state

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Historians cannot ignore mention of Meneni Satyanarayana Rao, popular as MSR, when they chronicle the decades-old agitation for separate Telangana. His tremendous victory as Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao in 2006 led to the latter's resignation and re-election from Karimnagar. MSR had dared KCR to resign and prove his credibility among people of Telangana by winning on his own. KCR did just that and it became an igniting moment for revival of the separate statehood struggle. What otherwise would have been criticised as foot-in-mouth disease, statements of MSR were straightforward and with clean intent. This earned him the nickname "Bhola Sankarudu". Meneni Satyanarayana Rao left his mark in the erstwhile AP politics during his stint as Pradesh Congress Committee president after Congress' debacle in 1999 assembly polls. Though his claims of advising late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on crucial issues and convincing both Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi to take the plunge into politics are to be verified,

people of the combined state are witness to his daring act of endorsing Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy as Congress chief ministerial candidate during the latter's historical padayatra before 2004 assembly polls.

"People will chase and beat us if YSR is denied what he deserves," MSR announced in the run up for polls, a deviation from Congress culture of high-command deciding on CM after the polls. His wholehearted support to YSR, another deviation in group-ridden Congress politics, cost him the PCC job, as YSR's detractors had their way in convincing the high command of restoring balance of power by replacing him with D. Srinivas.

Hailing from politically dominating Velama community, MSR took active part in politics from his days in Osmania University, where he did his law. He participated in the 1969 Telangana agitation and later got elected from Karimnagar LS seat on TPS ticket. MSR, along with his close friend Palvai Goverdhan Reddy had been detained under Preventive Detention Act once. Later he became a staunch Congressman once TPS founder Marri Channa Reddy merged his outfit with Congress.

MSR joined YSR cabinet in 2004 and offered to step down as Endowments Minister following an Anti-Corruption Bureau report mentioning his involvement in a temple land scam.

COVID HELPLINES

Several helplines are being set up by individuals, political parties, and NGOs to help Covid-19 patients and their families connect with various services. Following are some of them:

Telangana Congress Covid Control Room
For plasma, hospital bed, oxygen, ventilator, medicines 040-24601254 Tweet at #SOSTCongress

Bharatiya Janata Party Covid Helplines
8886509991 9985000320

AIMIM-Asaduddin Owaisi Helpline
Oxygen bank, doctors' consultation 7306600600

For hospital bed position in RR, Sangareddy, Medchal-Malkajgiri dts
<https://covid-hosp-hyd.glideapp.io/>

For 24x7 free consultancy, telemedicine in English, Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati
<https://mild-covid.glideapp.io/>

Office of MLC Kavitha – Covid-19 Helpline
91 89856 99999 08462-250666 040-2359999

Gudur Narayana Reddy
www.telanganaplasmadonors.com

10,122 COVID CASES REPORTED IN 24 HRS

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Covid-19 is ripping through Telangana and its people. Despite the 'do not worry', and 'do not panic' homilies from the state health department and various ministers, speaking in their respective districts, and sporadically attempting to allay fears among the people over the disease and play down its impact, the only thing that appears to be flying high in Telangana is the Coronavirus.

Proof of just how the virus has now gained

VACCINE DRIVE
FACES MASSIVE
STUMBLING
BLOCKS IN STATE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Health authorities administered vaccines to as many as 2,15,294 individuals under its daily Covid-19 vaccination programme in Telangana on Monday. Of these, 1,87,769 received their first doses while 27,525 got their second shot.

The vaccination programme, however, is not going on smoothly, with several government and private-run vaccination centres in the state running out of supplies. At several places throughout Telangana, people, who had already reached the centres for vaccination, were advised to return a day later when additional supplies could arrive.

According to the health department, as on Monday evening, the state had 67,769 doses in hand. Telangana is administering both Covishield and Covaxin to people. But Covaxin is practically out of stock.

Any available doses of Covaxin are being administered to those who have already received their first shot of this vaccine and have lined up for their second dose.

Health officials said currently, Covishield is being administered widely in the state.

tions across the country.

Advocate general informed the court that the state has requested for a supply of 600 MT of oxygen by the end of this month in the light of a sharp increase in infections.

The court adjourned the PILs related to Covid to May 5.

SHORT TAKES

THUNDERSTORM
WARNING ISSUED
FOR TELANGANADC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has extended the thunderstorm warning for the state till May 1 saying thunderstorm accompanied by lightning and gusty winds of 30-40 kmph are likely to occur at isolated places in TS.

As of 8.20 pm on Tuesday, the highest rainfall of 18.5 mm was recorded in the city at Madhapur. Similarly, in the state, the highest rainfall was at Sathupalle in Khammam district, which received 44 mm of rainfall.

IMD attributed the weather to an upper air cyclonic circulation, which is currently over Andhra Pradesh.

According to IMD and Ministry of Earth Sciences, thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds are very likely at isolated places over Assam and Meghalaya, Madhya Maharashtra, Marathwada, Telangana, Kerala and Mahe; and with lightning at isolated places over Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, Odisha and Arunachal Pradesh.

CHILDREN'S
PARK FOR
POLICE KIDSDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, APRIL 27

Adilabad incharge SP M. Rajesh Chandra inaugurated the children park for the police families in Boath on Tuesday.

Rajesh Chandra first inspected the Boath police station and interacted with the police and inquired about the Covid situation in the Boath. He appreciated the Boath circle police for setting up a children's park for the police families.

Later, he interacted with the police families and expressed happiness over setting up a children's park for police families in the mandal headquarters. Rajesh Chandra insisted on the police officers maintaining good health and said the health of the police personnel will have an impact on the services.

DSP N.S.V. Venkateshwarao, Boath CI M. Nailu, SI Raju and Bhjarhathnoor SI P. Udaykumar and training SI Rahul were present.

LOW-KEY FETE
ON TRS' 20TH
FOUNDATION DAYDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Low-key celebrations marked the 20th Foundation Day of ruling Telangana Rastra Samithi (TRS) across the state on Tuesday due to surge in Coronavirus cases. Moreover, it was double whammy as TRS supreme Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and party workers president K. T. Rama Rao are in home isolation after both tested positive for Covid-19 last week.

This is the second consecutive year that Covid-19 has made TRS Foundation Day a low-key affair. The party had earlier planned to hold a plenary in a grand manner with over one lakh people to mark the completion of two decades of TRS formation. But the same had to be put off due to restrictions imposed after the state got hit by the second wave of Coronavirus.

TRS secretary general K. Keshava Rao led the celebrations by hoisting the party flag at Telangana Bhavan, the party headquarters in Banjara Hills. Keshava Rao said people of Telangana will always remember April 27. This was the day in 2001 that KCR revived the movement for statehood to Telangana. He then went on to achieve the long-cherished dream of Telangana people with formation of the new state in 2014. TRS secretary general maintained that the party's task has not completed with formation of Telangana state, as TRS is working towards achieve the goal of "Bangaru Telangana".

Keshava Rao paid tributes to those who laid down their lives for Telangana state. On the day, party working president Rama Rao appealed to party leaders and cadre to hoist the pink flag on every house in Telangana as a mark of self-respect. He said after achieving Telangana under KCR's leadership, the party is now leading the state on the path of development.

MLC K. Kavitha recalled that KCR almost went to the extent of sacrificing his own life.

SRLIP not completed even
after seven years: Kishan

There is a scam in every project in TS and no accountability: Minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, APRIL 27

Minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy said that TRS government failed to complete the Sitarasma Lift Irrigation Project (SRLIP) and Bhakta Ramadasu Lift Irrigation though it commenced seven years back.

Kishan Reddy, who visited Khammam as part of election campaign in the Corporation elections, said that the TRS government is showing a step-mother attitude towards the people of Khammam district.

He said that the government is allocating crores of rupees in the budget to the irrigation projects in Khammam and not spending it.

"There is only one Chief Minister in India who has not visited the



Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy participates in campaign for KMC elections in Khammam on Tuesday.

Secretariat once for six years. The farmhouse of K. Chandrasekhar Rao was shaped as a secretariat. There is a scam in every project in

Telangana and there is no accountability of the government," he said. Bharatiya Janata Party will expose the corruption practices of Chief

Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and minister for transport Puvvada Ajay after it came to power. He said that BJP is con-

testing in all five municipalities and two municipal corporations including Khammam. He said that the people want BJP to come to power in these urban bodies. The roads from Khammam to Warangal and Khammam to Vijayawada were developed with the funds allocated by the Central government.

The people of Telangana tested all parties and they are waiting to give a chance to BJP, Kishan Reddy said. The Khammam town will be developed in all fronts if BJP is given majority divisions in Khammam. TRS assured to build two lakh houses in Khammam district and it did not fulfil its promise. A roadshow, led by Kishan Reddy, was organised in various divisions in Khammam on the occasion.

TRS @ 20



TRS MLC Naradasu Laxman Rao and other party leaders celebrate TRS party foundation day in Karimnagar on Tuesday.

Good Samaritan helps in
last rites of Covid victimsDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, APRIL 27

Manchala Gnanender, 49, a good Samaritan of Nizamabad is extending his services to Covid-19 victims. He has been providing Swarga yatra ratham (specially designed) vehicle for last rites of Covid-19 victims for the last few days. Observing the Covid-19 protocol, he is helping for dignity in the last rites of the deceased.

Gnanender is known for his social service for the last 8 years. He is native of Kanagarthi village in Konaropet mandal of Rajanna-Sircilla district, but settled in Nizamabad for his business. Devotee of Lord Ayyappa, Gnanender noticed an unknown

● Gnanender never received any donations from people or organisations

dead body near Bengaluru, during his visit to Sabarimala eight years ago and helped for the last rites of the body. Getting inspiration from this incident, Gnanender started Manchala Shankaraiah Gupta charitable trust in memory of his late father and started Swarga yatra ratham in Nizamabad to conduct last rites of deceased. Gradually, he extended his services to Vemulawada, Sircilla, Bodhan, Banswada, Medchal and other towns in Telangana. To conduct the last rites with dignity,

he provides free of cost ratham to carry the body from the home of the deceased to the graveyard.

Mr Gnanender has also distributed numerous Bhagavad Gita books to eminent personalities including Vice President of India Venkaiah Naidu, Infosys' Sudha Murthy and others. Community lunch, plantation of saplings, distribution of free textbooks, water tankers for slum areas and other social services regularly conducted in various towns in the state.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Gnanender said that they conducted more than 50 last rites to the Covid-19 deceased in Nizamabad. Taking precautions, we are conduct-

ing last rites of the deceased and the vehicle cleaned with hypochlorite, he said. "With the help of my family members, I extended my social services to more places," he added.

Meanwhile, state and Central governments and social organisations presented him various awards for his tireless social services. He received more than 200 awards, including honorary doctorate from Berkley University in the US. Surprisingly, Gnanender never received any donations from people or organisations. In his profits from the petrol bunk and veterinary medical shop business, he spends money for social services.

Homage to MSR



Congress activists pay homage to former minister M. Satyanarayana Rao in Karimnagar on Tuesday.

— DC

Take steps to prevent
Covid spread in villagesDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, APRIL 27

District collector K. Shashanka on Tuesday ordered the officials of the concerned departments to take immediate steps to prevent the gathering of people in groups, especially in villages in view of the increase in the number of positive cases in the Karimnagar district.

Mr Shashanka held a teleconference with the tahsildars, mandal parishad development officers and officials of panchayat raj department.

He ordered the officials to direct the members of the mandal task force teams to visit the villages and prevent gathering of people and to create awareness among the villagers about maintenance of physical distance and personal hygiene, wearing of face masks, sanitizing hands and about maintenance of sanitation in the villages.

Mr Shashanka ordered the tahsildars not to give permission for more number of people to participate in functions, marriages, festi-

vals and fairs and if needed take the help of police personnel. Give wide publicity about the precautionary steps to be taken for preventing the spread of the second wave of Covid-19, he added.

Identify the persons who are showing the symptoms of Covid-19 and send them to testing centres immediately. If they test positive and do not have a facility at their house to stay in isolation, then shift them to either Covid-19 care centres or to the government hospitals for further treatment, he suggested.

Restrict RMPs and PMPs in conducting corona tests and also giving treatment to the corona patients. Take stringent actions against such doctors who violate orders and conduct Covid-19 tests.

Take steps for administering of Covid-19 vaccination to all those who are 45 years and above in the villages by establishing the vaccination centres near to the villages in the government schools and complete the process by April 30, he ordered.

Employees fear to
attend poll dutiesDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, APRIL 27

As Covid-19 cases increase in Khammam district, employees fear to attend poll duties on April 30.

Nearly 100 to 120 cases have been reported everyday in Khammam town and 300 to 400 cases in the district for the last 10 days. The State Election Commission required 2,000 polling staff to conduct elections at nearly 340 polling stations. Many of the employees submitted applications to relieve them from poll duties for various reasons. These employees showed the reasons for relieving including as their family members and they were undergoing Covid-19 treatment, suffering with chronic diseases and age factor.

There are 60 divisions in Khammam Municipal

Corporation (KMC) and the Commission is setting up five to nine polling booths in each division as per the voters. At least four staff are needed in each polling booth to conduct elections. K. Srinivasa Rao, a government employee said, "My wife is suffering with Covid-19 and I applied for relieving my poll duties." Nearly 230 employees asked the government to relieve them from poll duties for various reasons. There are Covid-19 cases in every division in KMC limits.

Following the Covid-19 guidelines in the polling stations is a herculean task to the staff.

As per the reports, the second wave is so serious in the country due to elections in various states.

Covid-19 spreads like wildfire after Nagarjunasagar byelection.

CLASSIFIEDS

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HUGE LOSS

Millers are not paying the money within time to the farmers

Paddy farmers stage dharna over pricing

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, APRIL 27

Farmers staged a dharna in front of the revenue division office in Kallur demanding the government to lift the paddy from them and check the rice millers cutting the prices by claiming various reasons.

Appi Reddy, a farmer said that millers are cutting the price of the paddy by showing various reasons including the empty ears of corn. The loss is ₹35 per 75 kg bag and it is a massive loss to the farmers.

Appi Reddy said, "The millers completed the weighing and not sending the lorries to shift it to



Farmers stage a dharna in front of the revenue division office in Kallur on Tuesday.

— DC

the mills. We fear rain may destroy the paddy." He said that the millers are not paying the money within time to the farmers.

Rama Rao, another farmer said that there is scarcity of the jute bags in the mandal and they are suffering a lot to bring the grain to the lifting centres. He demanded the government to make available sufficient bags to the farmers.

● A farmer said that there is scarcity of the jute bags in the mandal and they are suffering a lot to bring the grain to the lifting centres.

SHORT TAKES

VAJAPYEE'S NIECE KARUNA DIES OF COVID-19

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC RAIPUR, APRIL 27

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

Late Shukla had begun her political career in BJP and was elected to the Madhya Pradesh Assembly 1993 and to the Lok Sabha from Janjgir in Chhattisgarh in 2004 as BJP candidate. She, however, had fallen out with former chief minister and BJP national vice-president Raman Singh and snapped her 32-year-long ties with BJP in 2014. She later joined Congress.

She was fielded against Singh in Rajnandgaon Assembly seat in Chhattisgarh by Congress in 2018 polls. She, however, had lost the polls.

Late Shukla, a firebrand leader, had played a key role in the return of Congress to power in Chhattisgarh in 2018 Assembly polls after a gap of 15 years.

She had vowed to defeat BJP in Chhattisgarh in the 2018 Assembly poll in Chhattisgarh and campaigned against BJP extensively in Chhattisgarh in the 2018 Assembly elections. She was appointed president of Chhattisgarh state social welfare board when Bhupesh Baghel government came to power in the state.

MAHA MIN: NOT ENOUGH SUPPLY TO GIVE SHOT TO ALL

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 27

Citing shortage of Covid vaccines, Maharashtra has raised a question mark over the implementation of vaccination drive for people above 18 years of age. Maharashtra home minister Rajesh Tope has expressed inability to start the vaccination from May 1 if sufficient doses are not provided.

Amid a massive Covid surge in the country, the Centre has allowed vaccination for all 18-plus citizens from May 1. Earlier the inoculation was restricted only for people above 45 years and frontline workers.

According to Tope, Maharashtra has 5.71 crore people in the age group of 18-44 years and, for their two-dose vaccine and taking wastage into account, 12 crore doses will be needed.

"But if we don't get vaccines, how will we start vaccination from May 1? This is not just our situation, this is a situation every state in India is facing," he said on Tuesday.

The Serum Institute of India (SII) has informed the State government that it can supply the 'Covishield' vaccine only after May 20. They have told us that till May 20 their stock is blocked by the central government. Maharashtra needs a week's quota delivered at one time in order to vaccinate a maximum number of people, the health minister said.

The state government has sent letters to the SII and Bharat Biotech two days ago, asking about the schedule of vaccine supplies in such large quantities, and is awaiting their reply, Tope added.

RELIGIOUS AFFAIR

Nearly 2,000 seers of 13 'akhadas' had taken a dip in the Ganga at Har Ki Pairi ghat

Kumbh: Seers keep last Shahi Snan symbolic

Dehradun/Rishikesh, April 27: The last 'shahi snan' at the Kumbh Mela in Haridwar on Tuesday was a subdued affair with seers keeping the ritual symbolic in view of a nationwide surge in Covid-19 cases.

Till the conclusion of the royal bath, nearly 2,000 seers of 13 'akhadas' (sects) had taken a dip in the Ganga at Har Ki Pairi ghat which was reserved exclusively for them, officials said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on April 17 had appealed to sadhus to observe the remaining duration of the Kumbh only in a "symbolic" manner.

Following this different 'akhadas' had agreed to keep their participation symbolic.

Crowds at the ghats of the Ganga started thinning down drastically since last week after the key 'akhadas' of seers began pulling out of the Maha Kumbh, one of the largest religious gatherings in the world, citing the spike in the number of Coronavirus cases.

Many spots were a deserted look on Tuesday at the Kumbh which will formally close only on April 30.

With 3,23,144 people testing positive for Coronavirus infection in a day, India's

Bodies of 22 victims stuffed in one ambulance

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

Aurangabad, April 27: The bodies of 22 Covid-19 victims were stuffed in one ambulance while being taken to a crematorium at Beed in Maharashtra, with the district administration citing lack of medical transport vehicles as the reason for it.

The incident took place on Sunday when the bodies, kept in the mortuary of the Swami Ramanand Teerth Rural Government Medical College at Ambajogai in Beed, were being transported for the last rites.

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

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, BJP MLC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

Pune: Social group ensures dignified farewell to victims

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

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

A senior group member said their workload has

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

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

tradition," Khan said.

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

Two days ago, they got a call about the death of an elderly member of a Brahmin family, which was in isolation after contracting the viral infection, he said.

"Our volunteers in PPE kits reached there with a body bag, brought the mortal remains to a crematorium and conducted the last rites as per their rituals," he said. — PTI

Fighting spirit on



Family members of Covid-19 patients wait outside an oxygen-filling centre to refill their empty cylinders, as demand for the gas rises due to spike in Coronavirus cases, at Naraina in New Delhi on Tuesday.

— PTI



(Top) Health worker move Covid-19 positive patient inside a Coronavirus OPD at a Covid-19 hospital, amid the ongoing surge in Coronavirus cases, in Ahmedabad on Tuesday.

— PTI

(Left) Senior citizens wait on wheelchairs to receive a dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at a Vaccination Centre in Mumbai on Tuesday.

— PTI

Assam imposes night curfew from 8pm-5am

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, APRIL 27

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

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

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

This has come close on the heels of the state government's earlier order closing down all shops and business establishments to contain the spread of the disease.

Assam on Monday recorded 3,137 new cases and 15 deaths — both figures

the state's highest for this year. The state has 17,764 active cases at present.

Officers of Central and state government departments and those involved in emergency services, public transport, disaster management etc. have been exempted from the curfew, provided they are able to show their valid identity documents on request.

Judicial officials, medical personnel, journalists, pregnant women and patients, diplomats of foreign countries, and persons holding constitutional posts will also be exempted from the curfew.

"There shall be no restriction on inter-state and intra-state movement/transportation of essential/non-essential goods. No separate permission shall be required for such movement," the order said.

Personnel related to food products, animal fodder, medicines, medical equipment, banks, insurance offices, telecommunications, internet, IT services, petrol pumps, LPG units, electricity generation and supply, cold storage and warehousing, private security agencies, manufacturing units of essential commodities and units that require continuous production are also exempted. The curfew will not be applicable on those going for Covid-19 vaccination.

Guj: Night curfew in 9 more cities

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

The state government also announced new restrictions in these 29 cities, including closure of restaurants, swimming pools, cinema halls, shopping complexes and water parks in these 29 cities till May 5.

Other establishments like beauty parlours, gardens, salons, gyms, auditoriums and malls would also remain shut in these cities, it said. Besides all the APMCs (agriculture produce market committees) across the state will also remain closed, and only market yards trading in vegetables and fruits will be allowed to function.

All religious places in the state will also remain shut for the public, and only 20 people will be allowed at a funeral, the release said, adding that the upper limit for marriage gatherings is 50.

Public transport buses across the state would function with 50 per cent capacity, it added.

Gujarat's Covid-19 tally crossed the 5 lakh-mark on Monday to reach 5,10,373 with the addition of 14,340 new cases, the highest rise in a single day so far. With a record 158 fatalities in a day, the Covid-19 toll rose to 6,486, as per the state health department.

Chief Minister Vijay Rupani took the decision during a high-level meeting on Tuesday after taking into consideration Union home ministry's latest guidelines to control the spread of the Coronavirus, it said.

Niranjani akhadas and three Bairagi akhadas kept the 'snan' symbolic on Chaitra Purnima, Zonal Officer of LIU, Haridwar, Sunita Verma said.

Kumbh Mela officer Deepak Rawat, Inspector General (Kumbh Mela) Sanjay Gunjyal and Senior Superintendent of Police, Kumbh Mela, Janmejay Khanduri reviewed the arrangements at Har ki Pairi before commencement of the bath on Tuesday.

Talking to reporters, Rawat thanked the seers for scaling down the shahi snan in response to the Prime minister's appeal. — PTI

● **CROWDS AT** the ghats of the Ganga started thinning down drastically since last week after the key 'akhadas' of seers began pulling out of the Maha Kumbh.

82.54 per cent, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Tuesday.

Uttarakhand reported 5,058 Covid-19 cases on Monday with Dehradun registering 2,034 cases and Haridwar 1,002 cases.

Around 2,000 seers of the Joona, Agni, Avahan, Kinnar, Udasin, Bada and Naya Udasin, Nirmal and



Devotees gather for last Shahi Snan of Kumbh 2021 on the day of Purnima, or full moon, in Haridwar on Tuesday. — PTI

total tally of Covid-19 cases has climbed to 1,76,36,307, while the national recovery rate has further dropped to

SHORT TAKES

TANKER SPILLS OIL
OFF CHINESE PORT
AFTER COLLISION

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

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

KABUL BUS CRASH
KILLS 7, INJURES
70: OFFICIAL

Kabul, April 27: Two buses crashed head-on near Kabul, killing at least seven people and injuring more than 70, an Afghan official said Tuesday.

The traffic accident took place on Monday night, on a highway linking the Afghan capital and southern Kandahar province, according to Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian. The buses were going in opposite directions but the cause of the accident was not immediately known, Arian added. He said the injured were transferred to nearest hospitals for treatment. In a similar accident last week on the same highway, 14 people were killed and 12 were injured. Traffic accidents are common in Afghanistan, mainly due to poor road conditions and carelessness of drivers on highways.

17 MIGRANTS
FOUND DEAD OFF
SPANISH ISLANDS

Madrid, April 26: Seventeen people were found dead Monday on a boat drifting off El Hierro in Spain's Canary Islands, the country's maritime service said, as migrant arrivals to the archipelago surge despite the deadly dangers of the crossing.

A Spanish military helicopter airlifted three survivors to a hospital on El Hierro, one of the smallest of the Canary Islands, a spokeswoman for the service said.

"The three had hypothermia but were otherwise in good shape," she said.

A Spanish air force plane first spotted the boat some 265 nautical miles southeast of the island of El Hierro on Monday morning and a search and rescue vessel was deployed to the area.

The migrants on the boat were all sub-Saharan Africans, the spokeswoman said. It was not immediately clear where the boat had embarked from.

Earlier this month four people were found dead in a makeshift boat that was found south of El Hierro, with 23 migrants on board.

PAK LAWMAKER
ARRESTED IN
TREASON CASE

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

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

According to the FIR, Latif defamed state institutions and passed hateful remarks against them.

He is also accused of talking about dismemberment of Pakistan in case anything happens to Sharif's daughter Maryam Nawaz.

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

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

Biden hails stunning progress in virus battle

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

sporting events, even when outdoors, the CDC said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

RUSSIA CLAIMS BRAZIL REFUSAL TO
IMPORT SPUTNIK V JAB 'POLITICAL'

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

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

"Anvisa's delays in approving Sputnik V are unfortunately of a political

nature and have nothing to do with access to information or science," the official Sputnik V Twitter account said.

It pointed to a recent US government report that said Washington had tried to persuade Brazil not to use Sputnik. "The US Department of Health, in its 2020 annual report several months ago, publicly stated that the US health attaché 'persuaded Brazil to reject the Russian vaccine against Covid-19,'" the account added. — *AFP*

EU set to give approval to
post-Brexit trade deal

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

The deal, which was finalised on Christmas Eve, already has been ratified by the UK Parliament and conditionally came into force pending the European Parliament's approval. Because of disagreement on how to apply trade rules in Northern Ireland, some EU legislators previously threatened to hold back the ratification vote, but a large majority of lawmakers are in favor of the deal. Results of the vote are set to be announced on Wednesday, almost five years after UK voters decided to withdraw from the bloc.

"This deal is not good because Brexit is not good. The situation is also complicated because we cannot be sure how trustworthy the UK government really is," said Terry Reintke, the vice-president of the Greens/EFA group in the European Parliament. "Still, this agreement can be a starting point reconstructing what we lost due to Brexit."

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

France warns over
Brexit fishing deal

Paris, April 27: France on Tuesday threatened "reprisals" against Britain unless a post-Brexit deal on fishing rights is implemented, the latest sign of cross-Channel tensions over the highly sensitive sector.

French fishermen say they are being prevented from operating in British waters because of difficulties in obtaining licenses.

They began a protest movement last week by blockading trucks bringing fish from Britain to France, saying that only 22 boats out of 120 from the Boulogne-sur-Mer port had obtained a licence for British waters.

"We are asking for the whole deal, nothing but the deal, and for as long as it has not been implemented... we will carry out reprisals in other sectors if it is necessary," French Europe Minister Clement Beaune told the BFM Business channel on Tuesday. British authorities have contested the French industry's claims, saying last Friday that 87 French boats had received licences for fishing within six to 12 nautical miles from the UK coast.

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

In an address to EU law-

Fishing rights were one of the most complicated questions to negotiate in the Brexit deal agreed between Britain and the European Union for the UK's full departure from the bloc on January 1.

Britain made fishing rights a key issue in the negotiations, with control over access to its waters seen as a sign of British sovereignty.

Beaune said that French reprisals could be in the form of holding up approvals for British financial service operators to work in the EU.

"The United Kingdom is expecting quite a few authorisations from us for financial services. We won't give any for as long as we don't have guarantees on fishing and other issues," he added.

"It's give-give. Everyone needs to respect their commitments, if not we will be as brutal and difficult as is necessary as a partner," he said.

The British fishing sector has also complained about red tape preventing the export of catches to the European continent.

— *AFP*

EU lifts immunity
of Greek lawmaker

Brussels, April 27: European Union lawmakers voted on Tuesday to lift the immunity of a Greek far-right member of the EU parliament who has been sentenced to 13 years in prison in Greece for being a leading member of a criminal organisation.

The European Parliament voted 658-24, with 10 abstentions, to remove Ioannis Lagos's parliamentary protection, paving the way for Belgian authorities to extradite him to Greece. Lagos has been living in the Belgian capital, Brussels, since a

Greek court in October convicted him and 17 other former Greek parliament members from the extreme-right Golden Dawn party of leading a criminal organisation, or being members in it.

The other convicted Golden Dawn members are already in jail, except for one who escaped. Golden Dawn was founded as a Neo-Nazi group in the 1980s. It saw a surge in popularity during the 2010-2018 financial crisis, gaining parliamentary representation between 2012 and 2019. — *AP*

AUSTRALIA

Oz suspends direct
flights from India

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

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

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

The latest move would affect direct flights into

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

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

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

— *PTI*

BELGIUM

BELGIUM BANS
ARRIVALS FROM
INDIA, BRAZIL,
SOUTH AFRICA

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

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

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

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

— *AFP*

Covid recovery discussion



Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi addresses the Italian Senate to present the governments EU-funded pandemic recovery plan, just days before the deadline to submit it to Brussels, in Rome on Tuesday. — *AFP*

N-deal talks resume in Vienna

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

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

weekend.

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

Ulyanov is joining representatives from China, Germany, France, and Britain — the other parties to the deal, known as

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

The US is not at the table because it unilaterally pulled out of the deal in 2018 under then President Donald Trump, who restored and augmented American sanctions in a campaign of "maximum

pressure" to try and force Iran into renegotiating the pact with more concessions. President Joe Biden wants to rejoin the deal, however, and there is a US delegation in Vienna talking part in indirect talks with Iran, with diplomats from the other world powers acting as go-betweens.

The deal promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. The reimposition of American sanctions has left the country's economy reeling, and Tehran has reacted by steadily increasing its violations of the restrictions of the deal. — *AP*

LUNAR ODYSSEY

Decision eliminates opportunities for competition, says Bezos' firm

Blue Origin slams Nasa's SpaceX pick

Washington, April 27: Blue Origin, the US space company founded by billionaire Jeff Bezos, on Monday filed a protest against Nasa's choice of rival SpaceX to build the module that will land the next US astronauts on the Moon.

"NASA has executed a flawed acquisition for the Human Landing System programme and moved the goalposts at the last minute," Blue Origin said in a statement. The decision "eliminates opportunities for competition, significantly narrows the

supply base, and not only delays, but also endangers America's return to the Moon" by 2024 as the US space agency plans, the private space company said.

"Because of that, we've filed a protest with the GAO," or Government Accountability Office, which audits services for Congress.

NASA announced just over a week ago that it had chosen Tesla founder Elon Musk's company to take its astronauts back to the Moon, awarding SpaceX a \$2.9 billion contract to

● **Blue Origin** argued that Nasa had misjudged the risks involved in choosing SpaceX.

develop the Starship rocket.

But Blue Origin argued that Nasa had misjudged the risks involved in choosing SpaceX's "entirely new launch vehicle." "Starship has no flight heritage or validation of performance, and launch vehicle development is notoriously difficult and takes much longer than anticipated," the com-

plaint said.

Prototypes of the rocket are currently being tested in Texas, but recent tests have ended in spectacular explosions. In addition, Blue Origin said, the space agency's decision to award only one winner rather than two, as had been originally set out in the submissions process, would leave the project at "high risk" because it lacks a back-up plan.

The decision also "creates a potential monopoly for all future NASA exploration missions because there would not be contin-

uing programs for lunar access other than the SpaceX solution," the protest said.

Blue Origin, which had partnered with three big names in the aerospace industry — Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and Draper — to respond to NASA's call for tenders, asked the GAO to press NASA to rescind its decision and "resolicit offers against a revised statement of available funds, and conduct discussions with all eligible offerors under the revised requirements." — *AFP*

DECCAN Chronicle

28 APRIL 2021

EC failed in duty, sharp rebuke by HC welcome

The decision of the Election Commission of India to ban victory processions once the results in the elections to the legislative assemblies of four states and a Union territory are announced justifies the sharp criticism of the Madras high court on the role of the constitutional body in triggering a second wave of pandemic Covid-19 in India. The commission's decision to allow only two persons to accompany the winning candidate to receive the certificate of election from the returning officer also goes with the spirit of the observations and the order of the court which had asked the commission to draw up a programme without which it would be inclined to stop the counting scheduled for May 2.

A bench of the court, comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy, while hearing a petition seeking a direction for adherence to a strict protocol on the day of counting, singularly held the commission responsible for the second wave and went to the extent of suggesting that its officials be booked for murder. The court's rebuke of the panel, which stood as a mute spectator of the mammoth rallies which lakhs of people attended in utter disregard of Covid-appropriate protocols, will be welcomed by the people who in their lakhs fall sick every day. The court did not mince its words when it asked the commission whether its members were on a different planet when these rallies were taking place. It also reminded the poll panel of the fact that the fruits of democracy could be enjoyed by citizens only if they are alive. Or, in other words, elections are not for elections' sake, but for the people's sake. The Calcutta high court had also made similar remarks last week, after observing that the commission had failed to implement its own guidelines while conducting elections during the pandemic.

A bench of the court, comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy singularly held the Commission responsible for the second wave and went to the extent of suggesting that its officials be booked for murder

The judges were reflecting the minds of all right-thinking people in this country, or even in the world, who have been petrified by the dance of death the pandemic has let loose in India. It did not demand superior wisdom to understand that the convergence of lakhs of people at a place to listen to leaders would eventually end up as a superspreader event. The commission had the power to stop them but it looked the other way when leaders, including the country's Prime Minister, took pride in and announced that they have addressed the largest rallies of their lives during these elections. The explanation that it followed up on the procedure it had deployed in Bihar elections hardly wash. That a mishap did not happen is no reason why one should go easy on the rules especially while negotiating the fatal curves an extremely dangerous pandemic leaves behind.

The election process is not over yet but the commission has already entered the dock for failing the people on many occasions in recent times; the vaccinations on pandemic rules are just one instance. Its overenthusiasm while taking on the Opposition while going easy on the ruling party is another. It will do well not to invite non-complimentary comments from other constitutional bodies such as courts in future.

Opinions still matter

Newspapers are in the news these days, including a couple who have forsworn reporting of IPL cricket in the time of the pandemic. *New York Times*, a newspaper of record from the Big Apple, is in focus at the moment for deciding to do away with the term "Op-Ed", or "Opposite Editorial" page, because there seem to be more viewers of newspapers online in America than are consuming the old-fashioned printed version, which still come crackling paper form in the morning with a smell of fresh ink. But the definition of the spatial has changed in the digital age, the old geography skewed by there being no flipping of pages, only scrolling from one page to another.

The "Op-Ed" was much more than a defining physical term at the top of the page. It symbolises a space for the expression of opinions that were often at odds with those of the newspaper editors, who however are free to express themselves, even if anonymously, in editorials on the "Edit" page. A diversity of thought was always considered good for society, however opinionated the reader or viewer himself may be regarding the great societal issues of the day. The more blunt 'Opinion' will probably mark the section that carries a variety and range of opinion that newspapers still invite from thinkers, activists, intellectuals and politicians too, for who can have stronger opinions one way or the other than politicians.

It might appear that the day and age is somewhat perilous for those stating opinions in public space, be it in the Edit and Op-Ed sections of newspapers or in online news and opinion websites or in the more equitable space of social media. As the free and the fair cringe in the face of official India and trolls for opinions expressed without fear or favour, the stating of opinion is far too important to be sacrificed, however tilted the world may seem against honest opinions. The term "Op-Ed" may seem outdated but opinion still matters. But, as the Bard said, what is in a name?

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



Caring governance vital to save lives & India's future



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

When the newspapers recorded that over 20 Covid-19 patients had died in a leading New Delhi hospital for lack of oxygen, they also reported that India's richest man, Mukesh Ambani, had paid \$57 million (£592 crores) for the Stoke Park estate in England. Another tycoon, Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute of India, had rented a mansion in London's Mayfair for £50,000 a week.

India has always been a land of cruel contrasts. But seldom has the self-seeking cynicism of its ruling class been so grotesquely flaunted. Humanity cannot avert what lawyers call "acts of God", but the devastating second wave might not have struck so ferociously had it not been for the government's triumphalism.

"With made-in-India solutions, we controlled the spread of the virus and improved our health infrastructure", Prime Minister Narendra Modi had boasted. "Our vaccine research and production capacity have given a shield not just to India but to many other countries in the world." The complacency and vanity ignored India's decrepit medical infrastructure.

Monday's official figures of 16,960,172 infections and 192,311 deaths may be a gross understatement. Even without deliberate fudging, there are few means of accurate assessment in India's remote villages, for whose innocent inhabitants all illnesses are just "bemaari", or fever.

Reflecting official Indian priorities, the system virtually ignores both the countryside, where 70 per cent of 1.3 billion Indians live, and the poor who numbered 364 million (28 per cent of the population) in 2019, according to the

United Nations. As studies elsewhere have shown, hypertension, diabetes, respiratory disorders and nutritional deficiency are the highest in lower income groups.

Wallowing in India's cricket victory over England may have been counter-productive. Cricket crowds, religious jamborees like the Kumbh Mela, packed cinema halls and the BJP's resolve to extend its control through elections in five states/UTs contributed to today's crisis. The Covid-19 protocols were completely abandoned and the virus was able to mutate into new vaccine-resistant forms. West Bengal's tenfold rise in infections is being squarely blamed on political rallies.

The BJP's smug pundits should rue the February day when, swept away on the tide of servile sycophancy that is the hallmark of our political culture, they hailed Prime Minister Modi as a visionary who had "defeated" Covid-19. This has become routine adulation. Even in 2018 the party's national executive had passed a resolution applauding his his "visionary and disruptive leadership" (echoing Joseph Schumpeter's theory of "creative destruction") and claiming that his "new confident India" would reach "new heights in each and every field" by 2022. Another eight months to go before that Elysium dawns!

Meanwhile, pictures of the dead and dying, of coronavirus patients gasping for breath on pavements outside hospitals and of cremation fires smouldering night and day have gone viral on the world's television screens.

"I weep for your nation" — messaged Doug Jackson, a journalist from the North of England with whom I had worked 63 years ago and who is now

Their private jets may fly the Ambanis and the Poonawallas to Geneva or New York for a toothache, but the system by and large gives reasonably good service to the next rank of the wealthy and the politically influential. It neglects all the others.

an authority on Tiffany glass, the author of *Mosaic: The Story of Joseph Briggs, the English 'Tiffany'*.

"It sounds ghastly", commented Colin Smith, the author of *England's Last War Against France and Singapore Burning*, and once star writer for London's *Observer* newspaper. In that capacity he had trekked to Dhaka from what was then Calcutta during the 1971 Bangladesh war, encountering hordes of fleeing East Bengal refugees who thought him mad for walking in the opposite direction. "Wish London would at least make a gesture and send a squadron of RAF transports heavy with oxygen" Colin Smith added.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has responded since.

But tiny Singapore made the unpublishised first gesture with four cryogenic oxygen containers. "We stand with India in its fight against Covid-19", said Singapore's high commission in New Delhi. But whatever Britain — or for that matter any other country — does, the answer lies in Indian hands. Neither another Marshall Plan or PL-480 wheat (or its equivalent) can resolve India's trauma now.

India alone can save its own future through more responsible and caring governance.

As the virus shifts to smaller towns and villages or moves down the age scale in a land where 65 per cent of the population is under 35, as vast swathes of people are

felled because only 1.3 per cent of the population has been fully vaccinated, the BJP's religion-obsessed caste-ridden bigots must face up to the stark facts. Death and disease do not spare the rich because they are Hindu. Nor is there a quick fix to compensate for the neglect of decades. The situation might well deteriorate before it improves.

Everything in India now is geared for the rich. Their private jets may fly the Ambanis and the Poonawallas to Geneva or New York for a toothache, but the system by and large gives reasonably good service to the next rank of the wealthy and the politically influential. It neglects all the others.

Mandatory online registration for vaccinations is the latest instance of discrimination since it at once creates difficulties for large numbers of the underprivileged. The differential pricing for vaccines, with no cap, to which West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee rightly objects, is equally objectionable for potentially facilitating profiteering.

In fact, in reviewing the system, the government cannot overlook the choice between hospitals that exist only to make a profit for the owner and institutions whose main purpose is to serve the public.

Private hospitals, including many old established nursing homes, have the resources and quality. But being now in the hands of businessmen with no vision, many have deteriorated into money-making operations.

Government hospitals, on the other hand, are often ill-equipped with poorly trained staff, no public accountability and subject to bureaucratic and political controls.

Choosing between the devil and the deep blue sea cannot be easy. But the vast majority of Indians will remain bereft of adequate medical care without a caring version of John Kenneth Galbraith's "post office socialism".

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

VACCINE SUPPLY

Supply of Covaxin has been stopped. Those who took the first dose are running from pillar to post for the second dose. When will the supply going to resume?

K. Gopal
Hyderabad

VACCINE DIVERSION

Hospitals are misusing vaccine quotas of registered users for their own contacts. In Princess Ezra Hospital listed on CoWIN site for paid vaccine, my father, an 85-year-old retired government doctor, was due for his second dose. I was given a slot between 9 am and 11 am. The hospital staff gave excuses to deny my father the vaccine. When I showed the CoWIN confirmation, they asked us to wait. However, a resident doctor walked in and was able to register her friends on the spot for vaccine. After waiting for three hours, they asked us to leave without giving the vaccine.

Krishna Prema
Hyderabad

DON'T LOCK DOWN

The government should compulsorily vaccinate everyone on a war-footing. Vaccination booths must be modelled after voting booths. Each district or four sectors in a city can be administered vaccine on a particular day. All businesses must be closed on vaccination day. Vaccinate all and ink mark them like polls so that they can be allowed to road free. Do not go in for lock down.

Dr Md. Iqbal Jaweed
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

33 held in City for defying ban order

HYDERABAD, April. 27 Thirty-three persons were taken into custody by the police for defying, prohibitory order in force in City on the 16th day of the indefinite strike by the State Government employees today.

The strikers were arrested, when they picketed before the Secretariat. Later, they were produced in the court and the case was posted for hearing on May 7. All of them released on personal bonds. Mr. I.B. Ramakrishna Rao, Convenor, Joint Council of Employees' Unions and Associations in a statement claimed the strike was total in all departments throughout the State.

Freddy Gray



Joe's rodeo: US President's first 100 days have been a wild ride

Joe Biden, 46th President of the United States, has never been able to keep his mouth shut. Throughout his absurdly long career in politics, he has always said too much, made stuff up, gone too far. His friends and fans just shrug it off: "That's our Joe".

The trouble is: Mr Biden is now America's commander-in-chief, leader of the not-so-free-anymore world, and his loquaciousness is a problem.

Take, for instance, his decision this week to intervene before the jury reached its verdict on the trial of Derek Chauvin, the white police officer found guilty of the murder last year of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. "I'm praying the verdict is the right verdict. I think it's overwhelming in my view," Mr Biden said. "I wouldn't say that unless the jury was sequestered," he quickly added — as if there were nothing untoward in a President weighing in pre-emptively on the most racially charged legal trial in America since the O.J. Simpson case in 1995.

As things turned out, the jury agreed with Mr Biden and found Chauvin guilty on all three counts. Yet what ought to have been a calm vindication

of American justice was treated as a grubby political show trial. Angry right-wingers will regard the verdict as a sop to left-wing mobs who would have set fire to cities across America had Chauvin not gone down.

So far, the new President's aides have done an impressive job of keeping his promiscuous verbosity under wraps. His public appearances are carefully managed, his speeches tightly scripted. In the coming week, he will mark his first 100 days in the White House, and yet has only given one real press conference.

After the political earthquake of Donald Trump's presidency, everybody in Washington is eager to make out that sanity is back in charge. Under Mr Biden, the headlines have certainly been a lot less sensational. Pay attention to what he's been saying, though — and you realise America's executive branch is as mad as ever.

Mr Biden has brought back civility to politics and international affairs, we are told. Yet he's already called Xi Jinping a "thug" and Vladimir Putin a "killer". His presidency would restore America's clout in the world, we were told. From Bush to Obama to Trump

and now to Biden, America's great power continues to wane.

But who cares when the money keeps flowing? Mr Biden is carrying out the biggest government spending splurge of all time. His Covid relief package alone came to \$1.9 trillion: to be poured on top of what looks set to be the world's strongest economic recovery. For now, polls suggest people like the free cash. Those who worry about the deficit or inflation are told they don't understand modern economics.

Next comes the \$2.5 trillion infrastructure bill, to which Democrats are tacking all sorts of spending commitments for pet causes.

Mr Biden is canny enough to have realised at some level that he won the Democratic nomination and the presidency precisely because the public didn't think he was rabidly left-wing. He's also sufficiently sharp to recognise that he must keep appeasing the radicals who increasingly dominate the airwaves and his party.

At some stage, probably next year as the mid-term elections approach, Mr Biden will try to drag the Democratic donkey back towards the middle ground. For now, he seems happy to let the woke warriors take him for a

wild progressive ride. On Tuesday, after the Chauvin verdict, Mr Biden did do the presidential thing of calling on the nation to come together.

"Not enough" might be the leitmotif of Mr Biden's presidency so far. It sometimes feels as if the President is in an abusive relationship with the radical Democratic fringe. He promises ever more urgent and expensive solutions to global climate change, and his party just demands more. He talks about the nobility of the American ideal, yet his UN ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, claims: "White supremacy is weaved into our founding documents and principles."

"Words have consequences", Mr Biden used to say over and over when campaigning against the loudmouth Donald Trump. But that does not appear to be a lesson he has learned. As a candidate, for instance, Mr Biden was desperate to emphasise his enthusiasm for all immigration. In a televised debate, he said: "I would in fact make sure that we immediately surge to the border all those people seeking asylum."

Inevitably, as soon as he became President, migrants did as he asked. The result has been a catastrophe. In

March, US Customs and Border Protection stopped nearly 200,000 people who were trying to enter the country, including tens of thousands of unaccompanied children. Mr Biden's White House recently admitted that the situation has reached "crisis" levels.

To his admirers, Mr Biden is finding a third way between the old centre and the new left. Because he campaigned as a moderate, they say, he can govern as a radical. His impressive vaccine rollout is drawing worldwide praise. Add to that his gargantuan spending packages, and patter about new deals and transforming the soul of America: he can still be hailed as a 21st-century answer to Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

But many of the problems blamed on Mr Trump are only getting worse under Biden. His administration so far has been defined by a kind of geriatric wokeness. "I want to change the paradigm," he said in that only presidential press conference. He has been using stock phrases for more than 50 years and so have most American politicians. The language of progress never changes.

By arrangement with the Spectator

quick
BITES

INDICATORS

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

* As of 8:30 PM IST

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

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



GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Boxer injured in Worlds bout dies

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

FC Goa play out yet another draw

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

Repsol Honda gear up for Spanish GP

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

■ Bid to avert IL&FS, PNB-like scams
Lenders require RBI nod to hire auditorFALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Lenskart to hire 100+ for tech centre

FC BUREAU
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

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

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

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

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

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

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

Maruti expects second wave to boost car sales

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, APRIL 27

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

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

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



R.C. Bhargava

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MARKET SENTIMENTS LOOK UP

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

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

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

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

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

RETAIL TRADE COUNTS LOSSES

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, APRIL 27

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

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

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

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

TOKYO | OLYMPICS

Host towns pull out over corona

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

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

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

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

"But that seems impossible now."

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

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

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

keep everyone safe.

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

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

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

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

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

Joaquin scores brace to beat AC Milan, Napoli blank Torino to go third

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

— AP

on Saturday if they beat Crotone and second-placed Atalanta fail to win at Sassuolo on Sunday.

Stefano Pioli's Milan, who started the weekend in second place, could have been beaten by a larger margin as Manuel Lazzari

was denied a goal just before the break by the tightest of VAR offside calls and Italy forward Immobile struck the post seven minutes before he scored his 18th league goal of the campaign.

Pioli was however left

frustrated by Correa's second, which was given after a lengthy VAR check following what he felt was a foul from Lucas Leiva on Hakan Calhanoglu.

"I don't understand how it wasn't given as a foul on Calhanoglu, said Pioli.

THE RESULTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIEDAD EDGE PAST EIBAR TO KEEP HOLD ON EUROPA SPOT

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

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

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

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

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

It stayed seven points from escaping the relegation zone.

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

Sociedad next visit Huesca, while Eibar host Alav es, another relegation-threatened team. — AP

Iheanacho leads Foxes fightback to sink Palace

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

Brendan Rodgers' side trailed to Wilfried Zaha's first half goal. But Timothy Castagne equalised soon after the interval with his first goal since September.

And Nigeria striker Iheanacho sealed Leicester's second successive victory when he scored with a thunder-

ous finish 10 minutes from full-time.

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

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

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

and scored two very good goals."

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

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

HOCKEY UMPIRE'S MANAGER
VIRENDRA DIES OF COVID-19

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

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

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

● **'SHOOTER DADI' CORONA POSITIVE, IN HOSPITAL**

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

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



● CHENNAI SUPER KINGS ● DELHI CAPITALS ● KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS ● MUMBAI INDIANS ● PUNJAB KINGS ● RAJASTHAN ROYALS ● ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE ● SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

DECCAN CHRONICLE, KARIMNAGAR, WEDNESDAY, 28 APRIL 2021

pg 8

| ORANGE | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Shikhar Dhawan, DC | 265 |
| KL Rahul, PBKS | 240 |
| Glenn Maxwell, RCB | 223 |
| PURPLE | |
| Harshal Patel, RCB | 17 |
| Avesh Khan, DC | 12 |
| Rahul Chahar, MI | 9 |

Off the field



Sunrisers fast bowler T. Natarajan underwent a knee surgery on Tuesday.

— Twitter

Franchises focus on mental health now

Despite the withdrawal of four players from the ongoing IPL, the franchises say that there are no major problems concerning mental health of the players.

“Covid is being discussed every single day in meetings and we are aware of the threat. We are trying to bring distraction from it through activities, celebrations of birthdays etc,” a team official said.

Most franchises are quite open with their players, a couple of officials claimed. “This is exactly why these four managed to leave the tournament quickly and without delay. The management is very open. If there is any problem with anyone, we have told them to reach out to us,” said an official of a franchise affected by the departure.

Lee donates bitcoin worth ₹40 lakh

Inspired by his countryman Pat Cummins’ gesture, former Australian pacer Brett Lee on Tuesday decided to donate one bitcoin (approximately ₹40 lakh) to help India in its fight against the raging COVID-19 pandemic. “It saddens me deeply to see people suffering due to the ongoing pandemic. I feel privileged to be in a position of making a difference and with that in mind, I’d like to donate 1 BTC (Bitcoin) to Crypto Relief to help with the purchase of oxygen supplies for the hospitals across India,” Lee said.

“India has always been like a second home for me. The love and affection that I have got from the people of this country both during my professional career and even after my retirement, holds a special place in my heart.”

Kuggeleijn signed up as replacement

New Zealand pacer Scott Kuggeleijn was on Tuesday announced as a replacement for Kane Richardson in the Royal Challengers Bangalore squad for the remainder of IPL-14. Along with compatriot Adam Zampa, Australian Richardson quit the tournament midway citing personal reasons. No replacement has been named yet for leg-spinner Zampa.

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RETURN ASSURANCE

BCCI guarantees safe return to foreign players

New Delhi/Melbourne, April 27: The BCCI stepped in to assuage apprehensions of foreign cricketers, especially Australians, at the IPL as a second wave of COVID-19 infections battered India, prompting the government Down Under to suspend air travel with the country besides asking players to make their “own arrangements” for return.

The fear of being locked out of their own nation drove the likes of Andrew Tye to take an early flight back to Australia while Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa also exited their franchise Royal Challengers Bangalore’s bio-bubble on Monday.

A day later, Australia announced that it was suspending air travel to and from India till May 15 amid the swirling COVID-19 cases. The BCCI wrote to the foreign players telling them that their safe return home will be its responsibility once the tournament ends on May 30.

“We understand that many of you are apprehensive about how you will get back home once the tournament concludes... We want to apprise you that you have nothing to worry about,” BCCI COO Hemang Amin said in a letter addressed to the players.

“The BCCI will do everything to ensure that you reach your respective destinations seamlessly. The BCCI is monitoring the situation very closely and is working with the gov-



RCB's Glenn Maxwell boards a flight to Ahmedabad.

ernment authorities to make arrangements to get you home once the tournament concludes.

“Be rest assured that the tournament is not over for BCCI till each one of you has reached your home, safe and sound,” he added.

AUSSIE PM RULES OUT GOVERNMENT HELP

Prime Minister Scott Morrison ruled out any government assistance and said that those in the IPL will have to make their own arrangements for return.

“They have travelled there privately. This wasn’t part of an Australian tour. They’re under their

own resources and they’ll be using those resources too, I’m sure, to see them return to Australia in accordance with their own arrangements,” Morrison was quoted as saying by *The Guardian*.

The crisis outside the IPL’s bio-bubble has led to some talk about whether it is appropriate for the league to go on and whether its organisers and participating players should be doing more to express empathy.

Amin lauded the players for carrying on and giving some joy amid the gloom.

“When you all walk out onto the field, you are bringing hope to millions

of people who have tuned in,” he said.

“While you are professionals and will play to win, this time you are also playing for something much more important,” he added.

As of now, the IPL still has 14 Australian players, including big names like Steve Smith (Delhi), David Warner (Sunrisers) and Cummins.

Ricky Ponting (DC) and Simon Katich (RCB) are among the high-profile Australian coaches, while iconic former players such as Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee and Lisa Sthalekar are part of the commentary team. — PTI

LYNN ASKS CA TO ARRANGE A CHARTER FLIGHT

New Delhi, April 27: Mumbai Indians batsman Chris Lynn has requested Cricket Australia to arrange a chartered flight to take its players home after the IPL is over and revealed that his franchise will get all members of the team vaccinated next week. “I texted back that as Cricket Australia make 10 per cent of every IPL contract was there a chance we could spend that money this year on a charter flight once the tournament is over?” Lynn told *News Corp media*.

“I know there are people worse off than us. But we are going from a really tight bubble and are getting vaccinated next week so hopefully the government will let us get home on a private charter.

“We are not asking for shortcuts and we signed up knowing the risks. But it would be great to get home as soon as the event is over.”

“Obviously India is in chaos at the moment. But we are at least giving people something to smile about by playing the tournament,” Lynn said.

While some Australian players have returned home, their New Zealand counterparts have no such plans.

— PTI

Felt vulnerable in bubble: Zampa

New Delhi, April 27: Australian leg-spinner Adam Zampa on Tuesday said he decided to quit the IPL midway as it was the “most vulnerable” bio-bubble he has been a part of and the tournament should have been held in UAE, like last year. Zampa and Kane Richardson, who were part of the Royal Challengers Bangalore squad, are set to fly back home later on Tuesday, having pulled out citing personal reasons.

Speaking to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Zampa said he felt a lot safer in the UAE where the IPL was held last year.

“We’ve been in a few (bubbles) now, and I feel like this is probably the most vulnerable. I just feel like because it’s India, we’re always being told about the hygiene over here and being extra careful... I just felt like it was the most vulnerable.

“The IPL that was held in Dubai six months ago didn’t feel that way at all. I felt like that was extremely safe. Personally, I feel like that would have been a better option originally for this IPL, but obviously, there’s a lot of political stuff that goes into it.

“Obviously there’s the T20 World Cup that’s meant to be happening here later this year. That’s probably going to be the next discussion in the cricket world. Six months is a long time,” said the leg-spinner.

Zampa said a lot of factors contributed to his decision to leave the IPL.

“Obviously the COVID situation over here is pretty dire. I just felt, rocking up to training and stuff, obviously, I wasn’t playing in the team as well, I was going to training and I wasn’t finding the motivation.” — PTI

| POINTS TABLE | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|-----|--------|--------|
| Teams | P | W | L | N/R | Points | Net RR |
| RCB | 6 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 10 | +0.089 |
| CSK | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 8 | +1.612 |
| DC | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 8 | +0.269 |
| MI | 5 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 4 | -0.032 |
| KKR | 6 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 4 | -0.305 |
| PBKS | 6 | 2 | 4 | 0 | 4 | -0.608 |
| RR | 5 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 4 | -0.681 |
| SRH | 5 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 2 | -0.180 |

Sunrisers face an uphill challenge

New Delhi, April 27: Operating like a well-oiled unit, Chennai Super Kings will start as overwhelming favourites when they clash with struggling Sunrisers Hyderabad in an Indian Premier League (IPL) match, here on Wednesday.

The MS Dhoni-led CSK have bounced back in style after losing the opening match. They are on a roll with four straight wins and will hope that the new venue — Feroze Shah Kotla ground — also favours them.

The three-time champions had an underwhelming 2020 season but the team, packed with seasoned players, is now displaying the efficiency it is known for.

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja has been the driving force behind CSK’s impressive run so far.

His blistering assault on Harshal Patel in the final over shut out RCB on Sunday. He has been among the wickets with his accurate left-arm spin apart from effecting stunning run-outs.

Openers — Faf du Plessis and Rituraj Gaikwad — have found form while Suresh Raina and Ambati Rayudu are due for big knocks.

The CSK batters are aware of the Rashid Khan threat but the rest of the SRH attack doesn’t inspire much confidence.

Hyderabad rely heavily on their foreign recruits, led by skipper David Warner, opener Jonny Bairstow, Kiwi great Kane Williamson and Rashid, which is a cause for concern. Their biggest weakness is a fragile batting

Live on TV

Chennai Super Kings vs Sunrisers Hyderabad from 7:30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

HEAD to HEAD

Matches 14

CSK 10 SRH 4

FOR THE RECORD

● David Warner with 199 sixes in 147 innings needs just one more to become the eighth batsman to complete a double century of sixes in IPL.

● Suresh Raina with 4,99 fours in 193 innings needs just one more to become the fourth batsman to complete 500 fours in IPL.

LAST YEAR’S MATCHES

● Sunrisers beat CSK by 7 runs at Dubai.

● CSK beat Sunrisers by 20 runs at Dubai.

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

order and over-reliance on the top order.

The inability of the team’s Indian middle-order to step up has cost SRH more often than not and the think-tank needs to get the combination right if they have to move out of the last spot on the points table which they currently occupy.

Warner needs to shrug off his poor run and for that he needs to negotiate CSK pacer Deepak Chahar, who has impressive ability to strike upfront, well.

Apart from Chahar, spin all-rounder Jadeja and veteran Imran Tahir form a strong bowling unit. — PTI

RCB edge Capitals in thriller

Ahmedabad, April 27: Royal Challengers Bangalore edged Delhi Capitals in a last-ball thriller on Tuesday.

In pursuit of RCB’s 171, contrasting half-centuries from Shimron Hetmyer (53 off 25) and Rishabh Pant (58 off 48) took Delhi closer to the finish line. Capitals needed a six off the last ball, but Pant could only manage a four.

Earlier, the ever-reliable AB de Villiers hit an unbeaten 42-ball 75 to power Royal Challengers Bangalore to 171 for five.

It was a collective effort from the Delhi bowlers — Ishant Sharma (1/26), Axar Patel (1/33), Kagiso Rabada (1/38), Amit Mishra (1/27), Avesh Khan (1/24) — who all picked one wicket apiece.

De Villiers, who hit three fours and five sixes, was the top scorer for RCB.

The veteran South African hit 22 runs off the last over bowled by Marcus Stoinis (0/23) that included three sixes.

Rajat Patidar (31) and Glenn Maxwell (25 off 20 balls) also provided valuable contributions.

Put in to bat, Devdutt Padikkal (17) and skipper Virat Kohli (12) were off to a flying start, amassing 30 runs in 3.5 overs. The youngster opened his account with a boundary



RCB's AB de Villiers en route to his half-century against Delhi.

— IPL

off Ishant in the first over. The duo hit five fours. However, that changed as DC bowlers effected back-to-back blows.

Pacer Avesh provided the Capitals with the first breakthrough, dismissing the RCB captain for 12 in the fourth over. In the very next ball, Ishant, playing his first match of the season, got rid of the dangerous Padikkal.

With two new batsmen in the middle, the seasoned speedster went on to bowl a wicket maiden to slow down the proceedings as RCB collected 36 runs for the loss of two wickets in the Powerplay.

Maxwell played a short cameo, smashing two maximums and a boundary but was caught at long on by compatriot Steve Smith of leggie Mishra as RCB reached 68

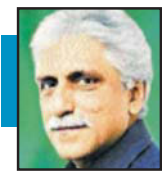
for three at the halfway mark.

Patidar, who hit 31 off 22 deliveries, and de Villiers steadied the ship by stitching a 54-run stand but all-rounder Axar Patel, who accounted for the Indian in the 15th over.

Barring de Villiers all RCB batsmen were guilty of not capitalising on good starts.

— PTI

Cancelling IPL will not mitigate the colossal tragedy



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

Should the current IPL season be completed with the second wave of the pandemic hitting India with a sledgehammer blow, or suspended to a later month when the situation is under control?

R. Ashwin, Kane Richardson, Adam Zampa, Andrew Tye, Liam Livingston pulling out of the tournament in the past week has exposed the trou-

mas and concerns being experienced in the seemingly hassle-free bio-secure bubbles. It is reasonable to believe that the number of such players is not restricted to six.

Human sensibilities and responses in such extraordinary circumstances can't be simplistically codified. Different players will react differently. For some, ambition, thrill and pride

of playing sport, rewards of fame and money etc may not matter after a point.

Others, however, who may see the same situation differently. Shortly after news filtered through of the players pulling out, Pat Cummins, Australia’s vice-captain, reiterated his commitment to play, and in fact donated \$50,000 to the Prime Minister Cares Fund.

Cummins believed that the tournament provided some relief to the Indian public otherwise besieged by the pandemic. Fellow Aussie, former captain Ricky Ponting holds a similar view. There will be

many in agreement with this point of view too.

This polarisation spills over outside the bio-secure bubbles, in everyday life.

One section of people believes that the IPL’s celebratory and brazenly commercial ethos is out of sync with the havoc being caused by the virus and mocks the tragedy that the country is currently experiencing.

The opposite point of view is that the IPL should not be seen only for its gloss, glamour and clamour, but for the thousands of jobs it provides, apart from the modicum of relief for people from the anguish they are undergo-

ing. The BCCI, meanwhile, has said that it will not call off the tournament. One assumes that this will depend on how the country copes with the pandemic on a daily basis.

Cancelling the IPL will not mitigate the colossal tragedy inflicted by the current Covid tsunami. The tournament is not a super spreader, like multi-phased elections and religious events to which those in authority turned a blind eye despite all warning signals. The IPL is being played without fans, with all precautions taken on health safety procedures.

However, the BCCI can be

faulted for being insensitive to the extenuating circumstances. With a little imagination, the phenomenal reach of the league could have been exploited for more meaningful messages (with connivance of franchises, players, broadcasters) rather than just regular PR stuff.

A major accusation is that players — especially Indians — have not coughed up money for relief. As high-income earners, they should. Some may have, without making it public who knows. But personal money contribution is not the only thing needed in this dire situation.

In the long build up to matches, 10 minutes dedicated to promoting (through players) how to fight the disease would have gone longer than full page ads in newspapers and mucky, ill-informed stuff on news TV. The Strategic Time Out for instance, would have been ideal for appeals for assistance to the most adversely hit cities, towns. And so on.

The surround sound this season needed sobriety and strong show of altruistic purpose, not the regular brouhaha, which in the prevailing circumstances, has seemed crass, unempathetic, uncaring.