

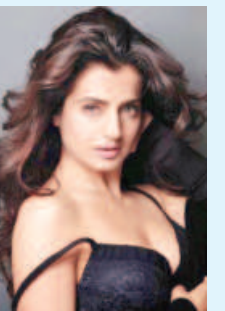
Womenia

TWEET PATROL



AMEESHA PATEL
@AMEESHA_PATEL

Finally happy
that the
sun is out ...



NEWS ROUNDUP

Rubina Dilaik talks of things to do while recovering from Covid

Actress Rubina Dilaik took to Instagram on Wednesday, to speak about things she did to ensure proper recovery from Covid. The actress posted a video in which she talks about the five things to do while battling Covid. She says she ate healthy, stayed hydrated, practised yoga, took medications on time and listened to music.

She captioned the post as, "I quarantined for more than 19 days. But these are 5 things I did to help me speed up my recovery. Most important is to listen to your favourite music and be happy."

Rubina had tested positive for Covid a few weeks back. She was in Shimla and had quarantined herself there. The actress has been keeping her fans updated about her health.



Get rid of pandemic blues

Focus on deep breathing, gratitude, faith and good quality sleep

Cheer up, the easiest way to shake off these pandemic mood blues is by adding what my favourite doctor, Dr. Food says. The food doctor is packed with nutritious facts and ideas to help your body from the inside out. As a consulting nutritionist I ask all you women to also focus on deep breathing, gratitude, faith and good quality sleep. I contracted Covid19 in April 2021 and I used food to keep my mood up. I regularly include these in my normal life and ask my clients to include them too. Start your day with water. Your body is 80 per cent water. En-

sures optimum functioning as water is the main mode of transport for nutrients.

One of the main causes of depression, irritability and mood swings are because of cutting out your carbohydrates especially fruits, vegetables and whole grains. They contain B vitamins, vitamin C and serotonin, your mood improving chemical.

You will be shocked to hear me say sugar in the morning and in the evening to pep you up. I mean natural fruit sugars.

Break your fast or make an evening snack with a seasonal fruit. Ba-

nanas are rich in serotonin and magnesium both minerals that instantly make you feel good.

Add on the seasonal mango as it has Vitamin C, Vitamin A, Folate and Iron making it beneficial for brain health.

Load up on seasonal vegetables for a correct balance of nutrients and minerals which balance your moods. Starchy vegetable potato is rich in Vitamin C that prevents depression like symptoms. Fear not your whole grains like rotis, rice, millets in your food. They provide vital B complex vitamins which are required for neurotransmitter production like sero-

tonin and dopamine which help regulate your mood and brain function.

Good quality fats from nuts and seeds are required to stay at the prime of your mood. They are also rich in zinc which supports anti-depression effects.

Spice up your life by adding on calming spices like ginger, turmeric, tulsi, peppermint, ashwagandha, nutmeg to your foods. Add them to kadhas or cook them in good quality fat to make them most bio available to the body. It is true, your gut health is what gives you great health and mood. Fermented foods like pickles and curd fuel good gut bacteria, instantly giving you a feel-good mood. Cocoa in its raw unprocessed form is rich in tryptophan which gets converted to serotonin in the body increasing your overall feeling of happiness.

Keep a check on blood Vitamin D3 and Vitamin B12 levels as they play an important role in various metabolic functions in the body. Stress stimulant foods like white sugar, alcohol, chocolate, fried foods should be avoided to ensure no gloomy feeling sets in. You may always be in a mood for food, but choose the right food to improve your mood!



Naini Setalvad



Use gram flour for skin and hair problems

PUJA GUPTA

Besan or gram flour has long been used in India for its many benefits for skin and hair care. In fact, it is a traditional home remedy used right from the time when one is a baby. Besan in the form of uptans or epilation formula for baby hair, during adulthood in a myriad number of packs and scrubs to take care of beauty issues right from acne to tanning, cleansing



and exfoliating. Not surprisingly, the world is now waking up to this must-have beauty essential that is gram flour.

Dr. Geeta Grewal, Cosmetic Surgeon and Wellness Expert, 9Muses Wellness Clinic, Gurugram takes you through the various ways to use gram flour and also gives you recipes for packs and treatments you can make and apply at home.

Natural Hair Remover

In India, gram flour has been used to remove fine facial hair. In fact, a gram flour scrub is used to remove hair from all over the body for babies. If you are tired of threading and waxing your face, you could try gram flour hair removal as well. Just keep a few things in mind before you start.

For starters, steam your face so that the pores open and the hair is easier to remove from the roots; Don't rub too harshly as that might cause your skin to become inflamed and irritated. Don't forget to do a patch test first to check if you are allergic to any of the ingredients in the home

remedy and don't be impatient because you will have to repeat the treatment a number of times before you get the results you want.

Remedy

Step 1: Make a paste with gram flour and fenugreek powder and yoghurt.
Step 2: Apply this over the areas where you want to remove hair.
Step 3: Allow it to dry. Wet your face with a little water and scrub away the paste.

Brings glow to the skin

Gram flour packs work wonders in absorbing the excess oil and cleansing your skin as well. Gram flour has alkalizing properties that keeps the pH levels of your skin balanced. It is also very absorbent and soaks up all the extra oil. Gram flour has been used for brightening one's skin tone for centuries and its super cleansing properties leave your face looking its best.

Remedy

Add half a cup besan, a pinch of turmeric powder and quarter cup fresh milk to create a smooth paste. Apply evenly on your face and neck area and leave it on for 20-25 minutes. Rinse with lukewarm water to notice the glow.

Removes dark patch from the elbow

Tanning and darkening of el-



BEAUTY FUNDA

bows is one of the most difficult and stubborn areas to remove black spots. But there are certain home remedies to help you to get rid of dark and black elbows. Gram flour cleanses the area and also provides mild exfoliation. Lemon juice acts as a natural bleach that will help to reduce the darkness from your elbows.

Remedy

Add a teaspoonful of lime juice to a teaspoon full of gram flour to make it a paste. You have to balance out the consistency of the paste by carefully adding or

as a wonderful moisturiser. You could also add some olive oil or almond oil and get the same results.

Remedy

Step 1: Mix gram flour and milk cream to make a paste
Step 2: Apply this to your face and neck
Step 3: Wash it off before it dries completely

Best for exfoliation

Exfoliating should be an essential part of your beauty routine because if you do not scrub away all the dead skin cells, the debris starts to pile up leaving your skin looking dull and lifeless. While there are hundreds of scrubs available in the market, there's nothing like a good, home-made gram flour scrub to get the glow back on your face. And its environment-friendly as well.

Remedy

Step 1: Combine 3 teaspoons gram flour with 1 teaspoon ground oats, 2 teaspoons cornflour and milk.
Step 2: Gently rub this on your damp face and leave on for about 10 minutes.
Step 3: Wash off

Hair cleanser

Has your hair turned dull and lifeless because of all the commercially available shampoos and cleansers? Well, maybe its time to try a homemade hair

cleanser.

Remedy

Step 1: Make a simple thin paste of besan and water. Take as much gram flour and water as you think is necessary to cover your scalp.
Step 2: Apply the paste evenly all over your scalp.
Step 3: Leave on for 10 minutes and wash off.

Tan lightener

If you want to go back to your natural colouring, ditch the harsh chemical tan lighteners and try gram flour instead for tan removal. With its multi-purpose benefits, there is nothing quite like gram flour and the best part is that it is almost always available in your kitchen. Gram flour has been used for de-tanning and brightening one skin tone for centuries and its super cleansing properties leave your face looking its best ever. Try this kitchen remedy today.

Remedy

Step 1: Mix 4 teaspoons gram flour with a pinch of turmeric, 1 teaspoon of curd and the juice of a lemon. The vitamin C in lemon will reduce pigmentation, while dahi will moisturise your skin.
Step 2: Add a pinch of salt for exfoliating benefits
Step 3: Apply to your skin and face daily and you will see results after prolonged use.

Be confident in what you wear

Women have a natural sensitivity to what they wear. It matters about every cloth you put on as that defines who you are and how other people perceive you. Some women are okay with t-shirt and jeans, and that makes them complete. It is advisable that you understand your body shape, have consciousness of what you wear, and how it makes you feel. Clothes should not make you feel self-conscious or insecure. There are no rules to what you should wear, but remember, clothes have a way to affect the way you talk, walk, interact, and even smile. Let's check out about why the dress you wear matters.

Understand your dressing

Before you leave your house, whether wearing casual or for an official look, ensure your skin feels confident. Let what you wear brings you a smile, and those around you feel respected because you were careful enough to dress nicely. Let what you wear makes you happy and above all shine. Many women forget the importance of wearing themselves and instead focus on pleasing others. Let whatever you choose to dress be about how comfortable and confident you feel, as that generally makes you happy. Choosing what to wear may intimidate sometimes and make you feel uncomfortable. Of course, it feels awkward if you don't know what to wear. That alone makes you stay in worry as to whether your choice appears wrong.

Find what works and stick to it

Know the right color that complements you. If you love wearing white clothes, camel, navy, cream, or beige, know how to balance them, and you will never struggle shopping for your right type. If you love wearing heel shoes, you will not go for the uncomfortable type regardless of how great it might look. At first, you may find it hard to adjust, but when you realize you are dressing to make yourself happy and feel comfortable, anything else is out of the question.

BE A MILLIONAIRE DAY

Everyone wants to have the freedom and ease of mind that comes from having a million dollars in the bank, but very few people achieve it. So if those fantasies don't materialise, then you can always celebrate National Be a Millionaire Day on May 20th by taking the opportunity to have a good look at your own financial situation and seeing what you can do to improve your outlook. Having the belief that you can make changes and achieve the things you want, with a little time and effort on your part, can help spur you on to your eventual goal of becoming rich. The truth is, anyone can become a millionaire with financial discipline, investment and perhaps a ton of luck too. Be a Millionaire Day isn't about just suddenly being rich, it's about acting and thinking in the way those who are millionaires did to become that way. It's also about taking care of yourself like you're worth a million bucks because self-care is an important part of living a good life. While the incredibly rich have existed for as long as there was money to count, the first millionaire didn't exist until sometime in the 17th century. John Law had founded the Mississippi Company and due to its success became the first person to be described as a millionaire. He was worth well over one million French Francs and was the first person known to do so. A new world would have to be invented in 1916 to describe John Rockefeller when his personal wealth grew to over one billion dollars. One of the things that have come out of the growth of the very rich is a study of what it takes to become rich. The most important part of being a millionaire is learning how to manage your money, though a fortunate birth doesn't help.



THIS DAY IN HISTORY
with
HANS INDIA

VIRTUAL IMPOSTERS BEWARE OF 'FAKEBUSTER' DETECTION TOOL

NEW DELHI

A UNIQUE detector named 'FakeBuster' will now identify imposters attending a virtual conference without anybody's knowledge.

It can also find out faces manipulated on social media to defame or make a joke of someone.

In the present pandemic scenario when most of the official meetings and work are being done online, this standalone solution enables a user (organiser) to detect if another person's video is manipulated or spoofed during a video conferencing.

That means the technique will find out if some imposter is attending a Webinar or virtual meetings on behalf of one of your colleagues by morphing his im-

age with his own.

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Ropar in Punjab and Monash University, Australia have developed the unique detector.

"Sophisticated artificial intelligence techniques have spurred a dramatic increase in manipulation of media contents. Such techniques keep evolving and become more realistic. That makes detection difficult which could have far reaching security implications", said Dr Abhinav Dhall, one of the key members of a four-man team that developed the 'FakeBuster'.

"The tool has achieved over 90 per cent accuracy", assures Dr Dhall.

The other three members include Associate Prof Ra-



manathan Subramanian and two students Vineet Mehta and Parul Gupta. A paper on this technique

-- FakeBuster: A DeepFakes Detection Tool for Video Conferencing Scenarios -- has been pre-

sented in the 26th International Conference on Intelligent User Interfaces, in the SA, last month.

Dr Dhall said that the usage of manipulated media content in spreading fake news, pornography and other such online content has been widely observed with major repercussions.

He said such manipulations have recently found their way into video-calling platforms through spoofing tools based on transfer of facial expressions.

"These fake facial expressions are often convincing to human eye and can have serious implications. These real time mimicked visuals (videos) known as 'Deepfakes' can even be used during online examinations and job interviews."

This software platform is independent of video conferencing solutions and has been tested with Zoom and Skype applica-

tions. The Deepfake detection tool - 'FakeBuster' works in both online and offline modes.

Since the device can presently be attached with laptops and desktops only "we are aiming to make the network smaller and lighter to enable it to run on mobile phones/devices as well", informed Associate Prof Subramanian.

He said the team is working on using the device to detect fake audios also.

The team claims that this software platform 'FakeBuster' is one of the first tools to detect imposters during live video conferencing using DeepFake detection technology.

"The device has already been tested and would hit the market soon."

Elderline becomes operational in Uttar Pradesh



LUCKNOW

THE Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has become one of the first states in the country to successfully operationalise 'Elderline', a helpline to assist and comfort the senior citizens amid the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic across the state.

The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India had come up with an initiative to reach out to the senior citizens in times of crisis to help them in terms of health con-

cerns, emotional support and legal aid. The toll-free helpline facility had been made operational in Uttar Pradesh to extend complete support to the elderly citizens across all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh.

The helpline -- 14567, is being cited as a critical step to reach the elderly in need during the prevailing pandemic in the state, as it receives as many as 80 to 90 calls on a daily basis from various districts of Uttar Pradesh ranging from Noida to Ballia.

Chief minister Yogi

Adityanath has been particularly concerned about the safety, security, and all-round welfare of the needy, vulnerable and deprived sections of society. In its efforts to realize the above objective even during such challenging times, the 'Elderline' project is providing complete support to senior citizens through the call centres which remain functional from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

All queries pertaining to information on old age homes, physiotherapy units, health related, mental health related and legal issues are being addressed promptly, thereby ensuring quick redressal of grievances as directed by the state government.

The facility has already been made operational in five major states of Uttar Pradesh (UP), Madhya Pradesh (MP), Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu (TN) and Karnataka and efforts are being made to make them functional in all states by the end of May 2021.

The 'Elderline' is a facility operationalized with the assistance of Tata Trusts and NSE foundation.

Sunni board to move court against razing of mosque

LUCKNOW

THE UP Sunni Central Waqf Board has said that it will soon approach the Allahabad High Court demanding restoration of a mosque that was razed earlier this week and a high-level judicial inquiry and action against the officers concerned.

Controversy broke out after the demolition of a decades-old mosque in Ram Sanahi Ghat tehsil area of Barabanki on Monday amid police deployment.

The tehsil is located on a highway on the Barabanki-Ayodhya border.

Barabanki district magistrate Adarsh Singh said the structure was constructed illegally on government land by unidentified people who escaped when a notice was sent on March 15.

The administration took possession of the structure on March 18 and it was demolished that day itself after due orders from the sub-divisional magistrate's court, he added.

Muslim groups are saying it was the illegal razing of a mosque. "It is high-handedness of the local administration," said Sunni board chairman Zufar Ahmad Faruqi. A Barabanki resident and



lawyer, Iqbal Naseem Noman Dariyabadi, said he was offering namaz at the mosque for the past three decades. Dariyabadi said he was unable to understand the motive behind the hurried action during the pandemic.

A district official said the 'illegal structure' was first flagged during a verification drive in

March. "Three people living there escaped when asked to show their identity proof," he added.

In a video, Barabanki District Magistrate Adarsh Singh called the demolished structure as a "residential place that was constructed illegally" on the tehsil premises in front of the house of

SDM (Ram Sanahi Ghat). "The occupants escaped from there when a notice was sent to them to prove their ownership on March 15, 2021. The administration took possession of the structure on March 18, 2021," he added.

The Sunni Board claimed in a statement that it was a '100-year-old mosque'.

HP university to provide Covid relief of ₹1 crore



SHIMLA

SHOOLINI University in Himachal Pradesh on Wednesday announced an initiative with a target of funding relief of Rs 1 crore for Covid patients in coordination with the state Health Department.

The relief includes provisions for about 100 beds, along with necessary medical equipment like oxygen cylinders and concentrators, ventilators and other ICU facilities. The university has

set a target of funding relief of about Rs 1 crore and has already generated about Rs 75 lakh for the purpose. Part of a consignment of medicines and oxygen concentrators has already been received.

The first of the Yogananda Covid Care Centres is in the process of being established at Sultanpur village in Solan district with provision of 18 beds and steps are being taken to set up another centre in Kandaghat tehsil shortly, the university said

in a statement. Meanwhile, Greenko Group, one of the largest clean energy companies, provided the first consignment of 30 large medical oxygen concentrators with 10 litres per minute capacity to Chief Secretary Anil Khachi to fight the pandemic. The second consignment of 20 oxygen concentrators is in transit and would be delivered in a week's time, said the government. New Delhi-based Six Sigma Healthcare has opened a field hospital for mild corona care in Nahan town in Solan district.

CBI arrests 3 customs officials for demanding bribe

NEW DELHI

THE Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday arrested three officials of the Customs department in connection with a graft case and recovered Rs 20 lakh cash during the searches.

CBI spokesperson R.C. Joshi said that the arrested accused have been identified as Surendra Singh, Ajeet Kumar, both posted as Superintendent or Senior Intelligence Officer, Customs (SIIB), ICD (Import), Tughlakabad in New Delhi and Sandeep Rath, an Inspector of the Customs department in a bribery case of Rs four lakh. Joshi said that the agency has registered a case on the basis of a complaint against the three officers. He said that the complainant, an authorised signatory of a private company had alleged that the accused demanded bribe of Rs 15

lakh for clearing the consignment of open cells (TV Screens) imported by his company and additional bribe of Rs 50,000 per container cleared in last four months. The official said that later, the accused allegedly agreed to accept Rs 10 lakh in instalments and the first instalment of Rs four lakh was to be paid. "CBI laid a trap and caught Singh while demanding and accepting the bribe of Rs four lakh as first instalment from the complainant. During investigation, other two -- Kumar and Rath were also arrested," he said.

He said that searches were conducted at the premises of accused in Delhi/NCR which led to the recovery of cash and incriminating documents.

"Cash of Rs 11 lakh was recovered from the residence of Singh and Rs nine lakh from the premises of Kumar during the searches," he said.

Expelled yoga guru Giri seeks probe into Akhara secy's death

PRAYAGRAJ

THE recently expelled Yoga guru, Anand Giri, has demanded an inquiry into the death of former Niranjani Akhara secretary Ashish Giri whose bloodstained body with a gunshot was found in Daraganj ashram in November 2019.

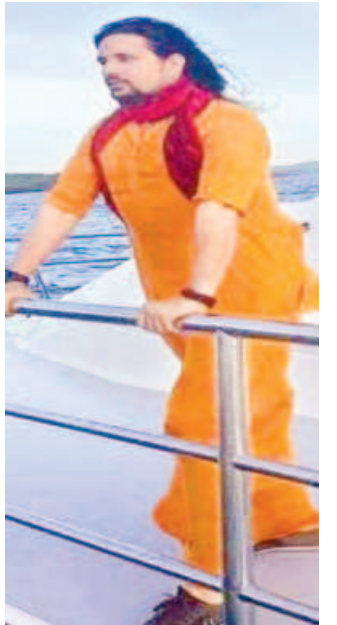
In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and chief ministers of UP and Uttarakhand, Anand Giri has claimed that Ashish Giri was murdered under a conspiracy, but the file was closed terming the case as a suicide.

He also alleged financial irregularities in the ashram and demanded a probe.

In his letter, Giri has sought security saying he is getting threatening calls and feels threat to his life from his Guru Mahant Narendra Giri and his aides.

He has apprehended that he could also be murdered like Ashish Giri.

He further wrote that he has been with Baghambari Gaddi Math since 2005 when there were voices of dissent within the akhara against Mahant Narendra Giri on the issue of sale of



land of Niranjani Akhara school in 2004.

"I was given land for opening a Gausala, but my Guru started putting pressure to cancel the lease and sell it," he alleged.

He further said that Mahant Narendra Giri has purchased several properties which are registered in the name of his drivers, students and a person close to him.

Only 25 people allowed at weddings, events in UP

LUCKNOW

THE Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has now issued fresh directives, allowing a maximum of 25 people to take part in weddings and other functions in view of the Covid pandemic. In a letter to district officials, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Avanish Awasthi said permission will be given for participation of maximum 25 invitees at a time for wedding and other functions, both in open and enclosed places.

Earlier, a maximum of 50 people or 50 per cent of the capacity

of the marriage hall, were permitted. A maximum of 100 persons were allowed in open spaces. Awasthi said that invitees will have to comply with Covid-appropriate protocols, with the use of masks and sanitizers. Social distancing will have to be strictly followed while making seating arrangements, besides making proper arrangements for sanitation and cleanliness of toilets at the venue where the function is being organised, the order stated. The responsibility of complying with these conditions will be that of organisers, the order said. Meanwhile,



more than 2,700 weddings have been postponed or cancelled in the state capital alone during the ongoing Corona curfew. According to a wedding hall owner, bookings have been cancelled in huge num-

bers, giving a major setback to those in the business. "People are cancelling marriage events because compliance of Covid protocols is not possible in such functions. If the number of guests

exceed 50, how can anyone tell the additional guests to leave the venue? The local police tend to misbehave if there is any violation. Moreover, the curfew makes it tough for guests to commute," said a well-known businessman who has 'indefinitely postponed' his son's wedding, scheduled for May 29. The businessman said that he has not fixed a fresh date for the wedding yet. "There is talk of the third wave in September which would again make things difficult. We may opt for a destination wedding outside the country if that happens," he said.

CENTRAL ORGANISATION FOR RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION
1, NAWAB YUSUF ROAD, CIVIL LINES, PRAYAGRAJ-211001
FAX No. 0532-2407892, www.core.indianrailways.gov.in

No. RE/Tender/Civil/512 Dated: 17.05.2021

E-TENDER NOTICE

Name of Work: Zonal repair and maintenance, white washing, distemping etc. and execution of miscellaneous and Horticulture works in GMS new Camp Office at ITO and Officers Rest House at Tilak bridge, New Delhi.

1. Completion Period : 12 Months

2. Approximate Cost of the work : Rs. 2408794.07

3. Tender Cost : Rs. 0.00

4. Earnest money to be deposited : Rs. 0.00

5. Submission/Opening of tender : 15.06.2021 upto 15.00 Hours for submission of tender through www.ireps.gov.in and the Tender shall be opened online using IREPS portal any time after closing of tender.

6. Website particulars: www.ireps.gov.in (Where details have been uploaded).

7. Office address: Office of PCE/CORE, 1 Nawab Yusuf Road, Civil Lines, Prayagraj

NOTE: Only e-Bid shall be accepted against above tender.

No.: PR/24/2021 (Kaka)

DY. CHIEF ENGINEER/CORE/PRAYAGRAJ
FOR & ON BEHALF OF PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Serving Customers with a Smile

Indifferent administration hurting people

WHEN will the administration wake up, stop making claims of how “effectively” they are handling the pandemic and instead see the ground reality and take measures to put an end to black marketing of drugs and injections required to treat Covid-19 and the other three epidemics black fungus, Singapore strain and Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in children that are threatening to add to the problem?

It is just enough if Chief Ministers or public representatives make rounds of hospitals? What will they see or learn? It would be a pre-arranged tour and more useful for the purpose of publicity.

In no way would it help in knowing the ground realities. They will go round the wards, meet the Superintendents of hospital talk to them, come out and claim all is well. They do

not realise that all is in “WELL.” The Delhi High Court on Wednesday made an interesting observation, “Politicians, bureaucrats find difficult to accept failure; not in veins.”

In this age of technology, for the administration it still seems difficult to put an end to the menace called black marketing. Just as a Covid-19 patient requires strong will power to fight the virus, the administration too needs strong will power laced with humanity. But as the High Court said it is not in their veins.

What is required is a serious study of why lifesaving injections and drugs are being black marketed, what are the loop holes in supply chain from lab to medical shops and strengthening of vigilance wings which can prevent hoarding and black marketing.

In this era of technology, it is not difficult to monitor the sup-

ply chain. But the problem in India is the authorities which are supposed to check such illegal activities are not as effective as they should be and the political executive blinks over this issue.

The Centre had told the Supreme Court that all States must ensure special teams at different levels to “mercilessly clamp down” on hoarding and black marketing of drugs during the Covid-19 pandemic and send a clear message that “trading in human miseries” shall not be tolerated. Will the State governments prove they have the spine?

“The question of black-marketing is essentially dealt with sternly by use of police administration and local State administration. Law and order being a state subject all State governments must ensure special teams at State, district and taluka levels to mercilessly

clamp down on any illegal hoarding or black marketing” the Centre has said in its affidavit.

The industry says that the pharmaceutical supply chain involves many stakeholders and the process is a complex one. It involves manufacturers, wholesale distributors, retailers etc. It would require several steps to be taken to ensure medications are available and accessible to patients.

The pharma companies say that if the drugs are not distributed properly it affects both the needs of the customer and the image of the company that manufactures the drugs. It also disrupts the healing processes of patients and produces negative efforts on public health a Kaiser Family Foundation report said.

We are seeing how black marketing of Remdesivir, Inflimab and many other such important

drugs have gone off the shelves and landed in the hands of black marketeers. The injection that should cost Rs 20000- Rs 28000 is being sold for anything above Rs 40,000 per dose. How outsiders, non-licensed persons could access these drugs, no one bothers to find and curb such practices.

They are available for a premium even at around 1 am and they drain the financial resources of the patients attendants. On one hand the high hospital fees and on the other hand, the black marketing of drugs and injections make people feel dejected. Unfortunately, the governments don't focus attention on this problem and are more busy in politicking. Some ministers tweet contact us for any problem. But how and how fast can they respond? For example a patient needs injection to reduce lung infection, is there a mechanism to help them in place? Certainly not. When will ‘Aache Din’ come?

Lancet editorial on India's fight against Covid biased and misguided

PANKAJ CHATURVEDI

I read the editorial in The Lancet titled ‘Indias Covid-19 emergency published on May 8, 2021. Let me quote from the article, “India will see a staggering 1 million deaths from COVID-19 by Aug 1. If that outcome were to happen, Modi's Government would be responsible for presiding over a self-inflicted national catastrophe.”

It is reminiscent of news reports in the British colonial era in India. To justify their forceful occupation of India, there was an orchestrated attempt of the western media and their political leadership to portray India as the country of fakirs and snake charmers that didn't deserve independence.

When India's Independence Bill was being debated in the British Parliament in 1947, Winston Churchill had angrily remarked, “Power will go into the hands of rascals, rogues, and freebooters.”

While the Covid crisis is indeed alarming in India, the article is suitable for a politically motivated tabloid rather than a reputed academic journal. As an Indian, I felt indignant with the vitriolic rant leading to poor portrayal of my country.

a false belief that the pandemic was getting over.

I also agree that many states were not prepared for the second wave that turned out to be a Tsunami. Even if they had planned, it would be impossible to create an efficient system in less than six months.

Now let's discuss about the large political rallies and failure of the Election Commission of India in deferring the polls. The editor blamed the Indian government for failing to heed the warning of the second wave of the pandemic. If that is the case, predictions are being made of a much larger third wave in India. Will the editor please let us know when India could have conducted the elections safely? Is the author aware of the consequences of indefinite postponement of elections in the politically sensitive states of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala?

I agree that the Kumbh Mela shouldn't have been held this year and it could have been the super spreader event. Kumbh Mela is one of the largest voluntary religious congregations of human beings on earth that happens every 12 years in the months of January to April. Let me share some more information to put things in perspective.

The entire Kumbh area was spread over 150 sq km and over 9 million people voluntarily visited it between January and April 2021. The maximum number of people visiting the Kumbh area on a single day was 3.5 million. On that day of peak foot fall, the population density in the Kumbh area was estimated as nearly 23,000 people per sq km.

With nearly 17 and 13 million population, respectively, Delhi and Mumbai are India's two largest cities. The population density of Mumbai is approximately 30,000 per sq km, of which nearly 40 per cent live in the slums. That means Mumbai and many metropolitan cities lives with Kumbh like situation every day. Dharavi, a locality in Mumbai, is Asia's largest slum that has a population density of nearly 277136 per sq km. Compare it to London that has a population density of 6000 people per sq km.

Mumbai's local trains, the life line of the city, carry 7.5 million people (population of Hong Kong) every day with nearly 6,000 passengers packed into a 12-car rake during the peak hour. When the lockdowns were lifted during the pandemic (February and March, 2021), nearly 4 million passengers travelled every day in the Mumbai local trains.

While the developed world may look down upon these as uncivilised conditions, it probably gave this population a distinct advantage. In August 2020, a seroprevalence study reported presence of antibody among 54 percent of the slum population and 16 percent of the non-slum population.

In contrast, the highest level of antibody achieved in New York, London and Paris was 20 per cent, 13 per cent and 12 per cent, respectively. Is Indian's high level of herd immunity responsible for the low case fatality rate?

We still remember the allegations of pharma industry – journal nexus in publishing pharma funded studies of questionable benefits. What about the pharma companies who failed to communicate about lack of efficacy or appropriate usage while selling lopinavir, ritonavir, oseltamivir, remdesivir, interferons, tocilizumab, hydroxychloroquine, azithromycin etc? Will the scientists, institutions and the rich nations apologize to the world for holding on to the patents/copyrights of the lifesaving drugs and equipment while thousands die every day?

The Lancet editorial made a ludicrous statement that the “government has seemed more intent on removing criticism on Twitter than trying to control the pandemic”. It is obvious from my narration above that India has done the best it could do.

The Lancet editorial seemed to be solely for the media attention and trending on twitter while maligning India globally. In the word of German Scholar, Max Mueller, “If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions, I should point to India.” Wait till India recovers, it will lead the world soon.

(Dr Pankaj Chaturvedi is a professor at the Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai. The views expressed are personal)

PART-II

Changing role of Civil Services



TALKING OF MANY THINGS

INDIA with its three distinct personalities, the rural, the urban and the metropolitan has just entered a decade of challenges and opportunities in a globalised world. The civil servant of the future needs to understand the different facets of the country's personality. So do training institutions and their curricula.

The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), has, one must concede, been doing excellent job, if staying au fait with the imperatives of rapidly changing external imperatives, and proved capable of managing change. It has, realised that education, is a 'drawing out' and not 'a putting' in. And, though postings in areas dealing with social welfare, planning and training are usually, regarded as dumping grounds for unwanted officials, the Academy has invariably been fortunate to be headed by exceptionally gifted IAS officers and Directors of the Academy have remained in sync with transformations in the policy environment. The Academy also has collaborations with institutions of renown both in India and abroad.

After my recent visit to Mussoorie for the Golden Jubilee Reunion of the 1968 batch, I felt that the Academy is now a robust institution, capable of handling competently, its onerous responsibilities in the changing times.

Our generation was lucky to move from the 'law and order' mode to the processes of equitable and efficient, delivery of goods, and services, in all spheres of governance. Some components of the training, horse riding, for instance, might no longer have had any practical relevance, but surely, contributed to personality

building by helping overcome the fear of the unknown.

Sound training needs to understand what an Officer Trainee (OT) requires, which depends on the functions to be performed.

Needless to say the OTs will need to be fluent in the local language. (In my case, Telugu was the mother tongue, and I learnt Urdu, the second official language of the state). They will also need to comprehend the country's diversity, issues and conflicts arising out of caste and community, and prevalent exploitative practices, especially against women and children, and appreciate the role they need to play in empowering the exploited sections to assert their rights and entitlements as enshrined in the Constitution of India. The Constitution of India makes a specific mention of the All India Services and the need for protecting them in order to ensure that they remain impartial, fair, and above fear and temptation. This should be brought home to the OTs.

Training at the Academy also emphasises that service is a community endeavour and includes interaction, entertainment reflective of different regions, celebration of festivals with OTs encouraged to don regional apparel and serving regional cuisines.

OTs are also exposed to international issues, national challenges and initiatives of regional cooperation and conflict, and issues related to national security. They are prepared for administrative responsibilities, duly recognising the importance of public participation in governance and application of modern techniques like Total Quality Management. Emphasis is also laid on e-governance, computerised records and IT, and the boarding facilities are computerised.

Emphasis on health and fitness is very high with physical training and horse riding being regular components of the schedule. Facilities also exist for several games, and a world class gym is available. Adventure and exploration are also encouraged and environmental consciousness is built into the ambience of the Academy with tree plantation being a regular exercise. One shortcoming is the absence of constant revision of the curriculum. An-



Civil service reform is being looked at seriously in other democratic countries such as France and Sri Lanka. Training of prefects in France, for instance, is addressing the puzzling issue of the survival of a pre - democratic institution in a democratic, decentralising and Europeanised republic. In Sri Lanka the British system of the permanent bureaucracy assisting elected officials in day to day functions of government is being emulated. For quite some time now arrangements have been in place for IAS officers to undergo training, while in service, in successive phases, five, to be precise

other is the absence of training in town planning.

Mission Karma Yogi, was recently launched by the Government of India, for improving the capacity building of civil servants. It heralds the ushering in of a new national architecture and comprehensive reform of the training apparatus. It focuses on functional and behavioural competence and is working at establishing a digital platform for on-the-job training. A proposed university for training and the setting up a separate central ministry for Training are on the anvil.

Many innovative changes have come into being of late, with OTs being made to work as Assistant Secretaries in the departments of the government of India for a period of three months before being sent to their district carders state cadres.

In short, the government no longer wants civil servants merely to consume theoretical knowledge, but be also exposed to techniques of practical implementation thereof.

Training at the Academy recognises the need to handhold the OTs as they transit from being raw university graduates/post graduates to a regime that will de-

mand wisdom and experience.

Civil Service reform is being looked at seriously in other democratic countries such as France and Sri Lanka. Training of prefects in France, for instance, is addressing the puzzling issue of the survival of a pre - democratic institution in a democratic, decentralising and Europeanised republic.

In Sri Lanka the British system of the permanent bureaucracy assisting elected officials in day to day functions of government is being emulated. For quite some time now arrangements have been in place for IAS officers to undergo training, while in service, in successive phases, five, to be precise.

The first one, a rigorous spell, enables OTs to handle assignments they are expected to hold in the first decade of their service. The second phase provides a platform for sharing experiences, and appreciating the strengths and weaknesses of the extant system of administration and governance. It encourages the interactive learning method and is supplemented with sessions addressed by distinguished experts from within and outside government. On the whole, it

constitutes a vibrant learning ground for launching a career in public service.

While the third phase, the most crucial, marks the transition from field administration to higher responsibilities, (Head of the Department at the state level or Deputy Secretary/Director in the government of India), and prepares the officers for upcoming challenges, the fourth phase comprises a transition, from implementation to policy formulation, and aims to improve the leadership and negotiation skills.

Finally, the fifth phase focuses on strategic management on the lines of public policy and governance, and is a spring board for occupying the highest positions in the service.

A notable feature of these phases is that, during the course of some of them, the officials are taken on a tour to other countries to broaden their vision and exposure. The training during our times was only of the one week and one month durations, and was mostly organised in various institutions spread over the country. I myself found the one week and the one month in training in-service training courses refreshing and rewarding experiences.

Quality is a journey not a destination with pit stops. Continuous capacity building and even reskilling are essential. There should be no room for complacency. The fact that exceeding the expectations of the governments and the public is very much the hallmark of excellence.

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

LETTERS

We should safeguard ourselves

PROPOS the article “RSS vs BJP” (THI 19 May). RSS will never jettison PM Modi until it trains someone similar in RSS. One should understand that their social work always is in public glare and functioning is never made public except public events foundation day and other important religious functions. Realising the public mood RSS leaders like Mohan Bhagwat, Ram Madhav are only involved in shadow boxing to raise a debate like “whether Modi would be jettisoned” etc.

What is more shocking that RSS chief went on to claim “after the first wave, we all became inattentive, whether the public, the government or administration. We knew doctors were giving signals. But we all became inattentive”. How can RSS chief bring in public when the rulers became so obsessed with winning a partic-

ular state that they went into the campaign and invited people to attend their meetings, rallies, and roadshows in large numbers. RSS itself was working from behind to help its political wing to make inroads in West Bengal and other states which went for polls.

I know the general public would not have taken the RSS chief seriously if he had advised them not to let the guard down, but why he did not advise the ruling party before the outbreak of the second wave. In fact, there was a second wave when the government made a claim that India has won the war against Corona and what we are witnessing now is indeed the third wave. RSS Chief seems to have forgotten Ram Rajya where the Raja, Ram was leading from the front and practiced what he was preaching to his subjects. However, we need to be positive in facing the pandemic on our own as we can no longer depend on the rulers involved more in politics.

N Nagarajan, Hyderabad

Tough battle ahead

IN view of ongoing corona onslaught, the central government issued guide-

lines for containing pandemic in peri urban, rural and tribal areas recently. Apart from guidance, the state governments and local bodies are in dire need of more funds and logistics support from the centre. The health services and infrastructure in rural India are far from adequate. They cannot be made battle ready with the existing way of support. To fight corona in rural areas is more difficult task when compared to the urban area. It needs a recruitment of lot of health personnel, construction of makeshift care centres and providing of oxygen, drugs and food in every village. There should be proper planning for testing and a strategy to vaccinate them. A tough battle is ahead of India in its war against pandemic.

Dr D V G Sankararao, Nellimarla,

Well done, DRDO!

IT is good news that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh along with Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on Monday released the first batch of the anti-Covid 2-DG drug. The new anti-Covid oral drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) has been successfully developed by Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied

Sciences, a lab of Defence Research and Development Organisation in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Hyderabad.

The new 2-DG molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised Covid patients by reducing oxygen dependency. This drug will provide immense benefits to the people suffering from Covid-19. “The 2-DG drug is a new ray of hope in these challenging times,” the Defence Minister said while launching the new drug 2-DG.

The new 2-DG drug is a landmark in India's fight against Covid-19 pandemic. The drug will save precious lives of the Covid patients. This new drug developed by DRDO at a time India is grappling with a record breaking second wave of Corona pandemic has stretched the country's healthcare infrastructure to its limit. The 2-DG drug has brought a new ray of hope for the treatment of Covid patients in reducing oxygen dependency and spend less time in hospital. Our scientists really deserves accolades and applause for their efforts in indigenously developing this new 2-DG drug. Kudos to DRDO.

K S Rao, Thane

KCR visits Gandhi Hospital

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IN an effort to counter the criticism of opposition parties and to generate confidence among people, Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao on Wednesday afternoon visited Gandhi Hospital. He interacted with patients, enquired about the treatment and quality of food being provided to them. Rao spent about an hour going round various wards, giving the inmates confidence that he is there for them.

This is for the first time, after becoming the Chief Minister KCR paid a visit to the premier government-run hospital. Finance Minister T Harish Rao, who has been entrusted with the Medical and Health portfolio, and Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar accompanied him.

The CM visited ICU, emergency, outpatient and general wards, where the Covid patients are being treated. He went to beds and spoke with patients, seeking their personal details as well as wellbeing. KCR offered them words of solace and courage.

The CM quickly responded to some problems raised by patients and gave instructions to medical officers. He had faced Opposition criticism for not creating confidence among people on the health system.

In the backdrop of the State government's decision to set up oxygen plants in all government



- Talks to patients, enquires about treatment & quality of food
- Spends about an hour going round various wards, giving inmates confidence that he is there for them
- Directs dept officials to send proposals to solve problems of junior doctors and nurses with the aim of immediate redressal
- "You are doing a great job, standing by people", CM tells staff

hospitals, KCR inspected the oxygen plant set up recently in the hospital. It is to supply 2,000 litres a minute. He enquired from Superintendent Raja Rao about its working and the purity of gas generated.

The CM interacted with senior doctors, contract nurses and junior doctors. He complimented them for offering serv-

ices to Corona patients, putting their own lives at risk. KCR assured them that the government would solve any problem they faced. "As young doctors you need to stand by people in these troubled and turbulent times", he sought to impress upon them.

The CM directed the Medical and Health officials to send pro-

posals to solve the problems of junior doctors and nurses with the aim of immediate redressal. "In these difficult times you are doing a great job by standing by people. Continue such services. In case you have any problem or difficulty, please contact me directly. I will extend all cooperation to you," KCR informed the doctors and nurses.

Consider railway staff frontline warriors: Kishan to CM

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD



UNION Minister for State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy on Wednesday demanded Chief Minister

K Chandrasekhar Rao to consider railway employees as frontline warriors.

Reddy wrote a letter to KCR stating that the railway employees were rendering many services to people by working 24 hours a day. "They are not only helping in movement of people to their desired destination, but also transporting essentials, like food, grains, milk, agriculture products, fertiliser, coal, cement and other products needed for industries".

The letter stated that be it transportation of oxygen tankers or people stranded at different places, the railway employees were keeping their lives at stake in these difficult times. In these special circumstances, they are also getting infected with virus. Keeping this in mind, the governments in Odisha, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and other States have declared the railway staff as frontline warriors and giving priority in vaccination. The minister demanded the government to provide vaccination and other benefits to these employees.



Edu Minister inspects beautification works

HANS NEWS SERVICE
BADANGPET

EDUCATION Minister Sabitha Indra Reddy inspected the beautification works being carried out at the Badangpet Tower in Badangpet Municipal Corporation on Wednesday. She inspected the lawn around the tower, and later inspected the park and nursery at Dawood Khan Guda. While many Telangana schemes are already being implemented by several States along with the Center, the Minister said that the fever survey launched by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao during Covid-19 in Telangana is being carried out across the country today. She instructed the authorities to distribute free medicines and kits on behalf of the government if they had symptoms or problems like fever, sore throat and cold. She said that the first installment of fever survey has already been completed in Telangana and the results came out really well. The number of cases in the State has declined in the past and the percentage of

The Minister urges people to cooperate in lockdown and exercise self-control and also congratulated the medical personnel serving as 'Front Line Warriors'

those recovering has also increased, the Minister added.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that it is everyone's responsibility to pass on the ancient heritage to future generations. She said that under the leadership of KCR, efforts are being made to bring the former glory to places of special importance all over Telangana. Parks are said to contribute to the mental well-being of the people from mechanical life, she added. The Minister urged the people to cooperate in lockdown and exercise self-control and congratulated the medical personnel serving as 'Front Line Warriors'.

Mayor Parijata Narasimha Reddy, Deputy Mayor Ibrahim Shekhar, Corporation Party President Ram Reddy, corporators and officials were present.



Saroornagar SHO rescues destitutes

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SAROORNAGAR

AS per the instructions from Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Mahesh Bhagwat and with the support of District Welfare officer, the District Legal Service Authority conducted rescue drive of homeless people in Saroornagar limits on Wednesday.

SHO Saroornagar and team identified 12 homeless elderly and mentally ill patients and found out that all these people don't have family and social support who have been

starving for many days due to lack of basic needs.

Destitute were accommodated in home for aged and disable at Bansilalpet with the help of District Welfare Officer N Mothi and District Legal Service Authority G Udaykumar.

Later, Rachakonda CP Mahesh Bhagwat appreciated the initiative of SHO Saroornagar Sitaram with District Welfare officer N Mothi, District Legal Services Authority and Ranga Reddy district court Uday Kumar.

Doctor, four others nabbed for selling Amphotericin B injections

HANS NEWS SERVICE
LANGER HOUSE

THE North Zone Task Force, along with the Langer House police, on Wednesday laid a trap and nabbed five persons who were allegedly blackmarketing Amphotericin injections. They seized five injections.

The accused were identified as Ramcharan (doctor of Yashoda Hospital, Malakpet), Sainath (doctor at Reddy Labs), Suresh (X-Ray machine operator at Malla Reddy Hospital) Saivardhan (interior marketing) and Srikanth (lab technician at Balaji Diagnostics). The main supplier, Dr. Raviteja Chowdhary, a doctor at Neo Care Hospital, is absconding.

The police got tip-off that the five persons were blackmarketing the injections at high rates of Rs.50,000, against price of Rs. 314.86. They laid a trap near Maithri Hospital, Langer House, and apprehended the accused.

The injections are used to cure black fungus. As the demand for the injections is growing rapidly, they hatched a conspiracy to procure them from



their known sources and sell to needy patients. All accused are involved in medical field, including two doctors.

The gang used their clout over patients who visit their hospitals and lured them to purchase the injections claiming that they are in a short supply and can be bought only in blackmarket, said P Radhakishan Rao, DCP of Task Force.

He stated that "the organiser Dr. Chowdhary, along with fellow doctors Bachhu Ramacharan and Ghali Sainath, procured five injections of Bharat Serums and

Vaccines Ltd company (two) and United Biotech (P) Ltd (three) and contacted media-tors/medical field employees Bhonsle Suresh, Gannapuram Saivardhan Goud and Srikanth and set a deal with a customer for selling each vial for Rs. 50,000.

"While they were about to deliver the vials we apprehended them and handed over to Langer House police for booking of cases. Special teams are working to nab the main accused doctor," according to the DCP.



KIA India Pvt Ltd Managing Director and CEO Kookhyun Shim hands over donation documents to Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy at Tadepalli on Wednesday

KIA donates '5 cr to APSDMA

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

KIA India Pvt Ltd has contributed Rs 5 crore to Andhra Pradesh State Disaster Management Authority (APSDMA) towards Covid containment measures.

A delegation of the company requested that the money be used to buy medical equipment like oxygen concentrators, ventilators, cryogenic tankers, etc., KIA India Pvt Ltd managing

director and CEO Kookhyun Shim handed over the documents related to the funds transferred through NEFT to Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy at his camp office in Tadepalli on Wednesday.

Ministers Mekapati Goutham Reddy, Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, KIA India Pvt Ltd legal, corporate affairs head Jude Lee and KIA India Pvt Ltd principal advisor T Soma Shekar Reddy were present.

Couple attempts suicide at CM camp office

AMARAVATI

A COUPLE hailing from Krishna district attempted suicide at Chief Minister's camp office in Tadepalli on Wednesday. However, the security staff thwarted their attempt and shifted them to Tadepalli police station. Later, the woman who is suffering from epilepsy was shifted to a primary health centre. The couple, Naresh and Saraswati, of Krishna district who are in fi-

nancial problems, reached the CM camp office to submit a petition to the Chief Minister seeking assistance. However, due to Covid restrictions, when the security staff asked them to hand over the memorandum to them saying that they will forward it, the couple tried to attempt suicide by pouring petrol on themselves. The alert security personnel foiled their bid and shifted them to police station.

Graveyards turn 'personal property'

M M FAROOQUI
HYDERABAD

GRAVEYARDS are literally overcrowded in the City. There is no place for the dead to rest in peace. Rapid urbanisation has meant Hyderabad is fast running short of burial space amid increasing Covid fatalities. While men at the helm of affairs of burial grounds under the State Wakf Board now claim them as their 'personal property', when kin approach for finding graves for their loved ones.

Contrary to the directive by the Wakf Board that committees should not charge money, the pandemic has transformed this into an opportunity for making moolah to the 'graveyard mafia', which allegedly demands on an average around Rs 20,000 and more depending upon the location. Despite some places having ample space, the active involvement of local heavyweights the second wave of Corona has brought tears for many, while for some the situation has become a not-to-miss opportunity.

Several cases have come to light where men--whose names

- Pandemic has provided an opportunity for making moolah to 'graveyard mafia' to demand Rs 20,000 and more depending upon location
- "When each graveyard is seeing arrival of 5-10 bodies, authorities have completely lost control. Now local leaders rule the roost. Poor are denied burial, while well-to-do, who can grease their palm, is allowed," said a social activist



- Mohammed Saleem, Chairman of the Wakf Board, had warned erring graveyard committees against taking bribes for graves. "Those who faced this situation should send a complaint. We shall initiate action and suspend them in no time," was his assertion

are registered as 'caretakers' in the Wakf records---are claiming ownership of graveyards, collecting huge amounts. "In this pandemic, when each graveyard is seeing arrival of 5-10 bodies, the authorities have completely lost control. Now local leaders rule the roost. It is not only a case of Covid death; but poor are denied burial, while well-to-do, who can grease their palm, is allowed," said Mohammed Asif Hussain Sohail, a social activist.

Frustrated over the fast-changing scenario in most graveyards near his locality, recently, Sohail tweeted requesting for a place in crematoriums, which come under endow-

ments, while tagging Minister K T Rama Rao, Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, City Police Commissioner Anjani Kumar in his tweet.

Advocate Qudsia Tabassum of the Hum Foundation had a bitter experience when she tried to find a proper burial place for her relative. But, after ensuring the last rites, it is almost a month. The graveyard committee is yet to issue a certificate hindering the process at GHMC for a proper death certificate.

"It is a known fact that graveyards are being claimed as 'personal property'. We never thought that this day would

come. There is a need for people to unite and raise the issue by forming a consolidated forum," she felt. Social activists involved in burial of the dead cited several instances in which relatives made rounds of graveyards before finding a resting place, after approaching a local MLA or corporator, sometimes striking a deal. On several occasions Mohammed Saleem, Chairman of the Wakf Board, had warned the erring graveyard committees against taking bribes for graves. "Those who faced this situation should send a complaint. We shall initiate action and suspend them in no time," was his assertion.

YSRCP criticises Naidu's 'dramas' to avoid Assembly

Govt chief whip Srikanth Reddy says the Oppn leader should have cited Covid fear to boycott Assembly budget session instead of defaming the govt

Asserts the session will be conducted as per Covid-19 protocols

Faults Naidu for neglecting healthcare system during his rule

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CRITICISING the opposition TDP leaders over boycotting Assembly session fearing to take part in discussion, Government chief whip G Srikanth Reddy said that the government will conduct the business in compliance with the Covid-19 protocol.

Speaking to the media at party office in Tadepalli on Wednesday, the Rayachoti MLA said that the government was ready to discuss any issue, but the opposition TDP is enacting



Gadikota Srikanth Reddy

drama to avoid discussing public issues. He said that TDP president N Chandrababu Naidu could have cited Covid to boycotted the session, instead of defaming the government. The state government has been taking effective measures in controlling the Covid, right from increasing the testing centres to setting up Covid care centres in all constituencies with all required facilities. The MLA questioned whether the steps being taken against the

pandemic were not visible to Chandrababu.

Further, Srikanth Reddy stated that Chandrababu Naidu has completely neglected the health care system during his rule leaving everything crippled. He said that the state government has been taking measures from time to time to prevent oxygen shortage, constantly writing to the Centre seeking more quota.

He slammed the opposition leader for making "irresponsible" remarks against the state government and creating panic among the public and made it clear that they had no objection to purchasing vaccines from the manufacturers but the control of vaccine supply is still with the Centre.

On the arrest of K Raghurama Krishna Raju, he said that the MP is working under the direction of Chandrababu, who has been conspiring to destabilise the government. He said that CID had suo motu registered a case against Raghurama and presented him before the court, with no involvement of the government.

Union Minister bats for more licenses for vaccines

‘Is his boss listening’: Jairam Ramesh’s jibe after Gadkari suggestion

Congress on Wednesday took a dig at the Centre after Union Minister Nitin Gadkari suggested at an event that more pharma companies should be allowed to make Covid-19 vaccines in the country to scale up production.

Referring to Gadkari’s remarks, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh reminded that Manmohan Singh had already written a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April on ways to mitigate the vaccine shortage faced by India.

“This is what Dr Manmohan Singh had suggested on April 18th. But is his Boss listening?” Jairam Ramesh tweeted.

Addressing vice chancellors of universities in India virtually on Tuesday, Gadkari said, “If

the demand of vaccine is more than its supply, then it creates a problem. So, instead of one company, 10 more companies should be allowed to make vaccines by paying 10 percent royalty to the original patent holder of the vaccine.”

“Let them supply in country and later, if there’s a surplus, they may export. It can be done in 15-20 days,” ANI quoted Gadkari as saying.

The Road Transport Minister said the vaccine formulae should be shared with labs across the country to scale up production - a suggestion made previously by the Chief Ministers of Maharashtra and Delhi, Uddhav Thackeray and Arvind Kejriwal.

“I am sure there are two-three labs in each



state that have the capability and infrastructure. Share the formula and coordinate with them to increase production. Let them supply in country and later if there’s surplus, they can export stocks. This can be done in 15-20 days: This can be done to resolve the vaccine shortage,” Gadkari said.

On Thursday, Gadkari clarified that he was not aware of the government’s efforts to ramp up vaccine production. “I was unaware that the Ministry of Chemicals has started these efforts before I had given a suggestion yesterday. GoI is already facilitating vaccine manufacturing by 12 different plants/companies and rapid ramp up of production is expected in near future as a result of these efforts,” Gadkari

tweeted. In his letter to PM Modi on April 18, Manmohan Singh suggested that any vaccine that had been cleared for use by credible authorities such as the European Medicines Agency (EMA) or the US FDA should be allowed to be imported without insisting on domestic bridging trials. Several states have flagged a vaccine shortage and have not been able to start vaccinating the 18-44 age group even as the daily caseload stood at 2.67 lakh. India on Wednesday recorded its highest single-day toll of 4,529 Covid deaths.

Only three vaccines have so far been given emergency approval in India — Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V. However, Sputnik V is still not widely available in the country.

WINDOWS

12 booked for killing dolphin

SITAPUR: Twelve persons have been booked for killing a rare fresh water dolphin from the Sharda auxiliary canal. Fresh water dolphins are categorised as endangered species in the International Union for Conservation of Nature red book. The FIR was lodged after a video of the incident started doing the rounds on social media. Sitapur SP, Rakesh Prakash Singh said that one Prithivi Sahu has been arrested and two teams formed to arrest the other accused. He said a group of villagers in Hargaoon area, on Sunday, caught the dolphin from the auxiliary canal, which passes through the district and is used for fishing by the locals, in the fishing net and killed it.



A medic collects swab sample from a woman for Covid-19 tests, at National Institute of TB and Respiratory Diseases, in New Delhi on Wednesday

Buddhadeb stable

KOLKATA: The health condition of former West Bengal CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, who tested positive for Covid-19, is “stable”, health department sources said on Wednesday. His wife Mira Bhattacharya, who also contracted the virus and is undergoing treatment at a city hospital, is also doing fine, they said. The 77-year-old former CM, who is in home isolation and also suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), needs to go to hospital for other clinical examinations.

Mamata, Law Minister made parties in CBI plea

KOLKATA: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Law Minister Moloy Ghatak have been made parties in a petition by the CBI before the Calcutta High Court seeking transfer of the Narada sting tape case from the state. The bench will also hear petitions by ministers Subrata Mukherjee and Firhad Hakim, TMC MLA Madan Mitra and former Kolkata mayor Sovan Chatterjee for recall of its order staying the bail granted by a CBI court in connection with their arrest in the case, on Monday.

Besides Banerjee and Ghatak, the probe agency has also made

Vaccination: ‘No need for Centre’s nod’

HC wants BMC to start doorstep vaccination for select groups; vax 3 months after recovery

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI/PATNA

THE Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the Mumbai civic body if it was possible for it to introduce a door-to-door Covid-19 vaccination programme for senior citizens and disabled persons who are unable to visit inoculation centres. A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice GS Kulkarni said if the BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) was willing to start a door-to-door vaccination programme for these groups, the HC would grant it permission even though the Union government has not given nod for such a drive.

The bench noted that it seems the Union government was not keen on starting a door-to-door vaccination programme. If the BMC says it can start a door-to-door vaccination, we will give it permission. No need to wait for the Central governments nod.

The Union Health Ministry on Wednesday said vaccination can now be deferred by three months after clinical recovery from the illness. Accepting recommendations from the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for COVID-19 (NEGVAC), the government further said if an individual is infected with coronavirus after the first dose, the second dose should be also deferred by three months after recovering from the infection.

An atmosphere of fear and panic has gripped Muzzafarpur’s Sakra block in Bihar due to the death of 36 people in 27 days. While villagers expressed apprehension that the deaths could be due to Covid, the local administration has denied the claims.

The matter is being reported from Saramastapur Panchayat of Sakra block in the Muzzafarpur district, where most people have died only after symptoms like cough and fever.

India recorded 2,67,334 new cases in the past 24 hours, 3,89,851 recoveries and 4,529 deaths, which is the highest in a single day in India. 39 prisoners have tested positive for the infection at Gopalganj jail in Bihar. Gopalganj jail Superintendent Amit Kumar said 86 prisoners were confirmed to have tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday while on Tuesday, another 53 inmates were reported to be infected. He said all Covid-positive prisoners have been shifted to isolation wards in the jail premises and their treatment is underway.



A Covid-19 patient undergoing treatment at Shehnai Banquet Hall Isolation Centre, in New Delhi on Wednesday

Panic grips Bihar village as 36 die in 27 days
India reports highest ever 4,529 Covid deaths

Case against doc for not wearing mask

BENGALURU: A doctor has been booked under the Epidemic Act based on a complaint that he refused to wear a mask at a supermarket here, police said on Wednesday. The doctor, identified as B Srinivas Kakkiyala, did not wear a mask while shopping and allegedly refused to do so when asked by the supermarket staff, police sources said. The video of the heated argument between the staff and the doctor later went viral in the social media. The doctor allegedly justified his act. Based on a complaint from Ryan Rosario, a partner of the supermarket at Kadri here, a case was registered against the doctor under sections 4, 5 and 9 of Karnataka State Epidemic (prevention) Act 2020, the police said.

BJP loses two more leaders

JAIPUR: BJP MLA Gautam Lal Meena died of Covid-19 at a hospital in Udaipur on Wednesday. The 56-year-old Meena was MLA from Dhariawad constituency in Rajasthan’s Pratapgarh district. Meena is the fourth MLA in Rajasthan to succumb to coronavirus. The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet on Wednesday condoled the death of Minister of State for Revenue and Flood Control Vijay Kashyap. The Cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath passed a resolution condoling the death of Kashyap, a government spokesman said. The 56-year-old Kashyap succumbed to COVID-19 at a Gurgaon hospital on Tuesday night. He was an MLA from Muzaffarnagar’s Charthawal Assembly seat.

Fish sales fall over bodies floating

LUCKNOW: Ever since the dead bodies of suspected Covid patients have been found in the Ganga River, the sale of river fish has dipped in the city. “So far we have lost Rs 50,000. For the last 15 days, the sales have been reduced. No one is buying fishes because of fear. We demand from the government to increase the time for selling fish and also provide us some benefit so that we can run our family,” said Anil Shani, a fisherman. He further said when no one takes the fish, they put it back in the river. While speaking to ANI, a customer, Maqbool Ahmad from Sabzibagh said we are only buying small fishes because we think that they will not harm us.

NHPC ORGANISES VACCINATION CAMP



Following the call for large scale Covid vaccination by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and as per directions of RK Singh, Minister of State (Independent Charge of Power and New & Renewable Energy), NHPC Limited organised a two-day vaccination camp at National Power Training Institute (NPTI), Badarpur on May 18 and 19, in association with Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi, for employees (including contract employees and security personnel) and family members (18-44 years) of Ministry of Power, Govt of India, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Govt. of India and various CPSUs/ organisations under Ministry of Power and MNRE in Delhi / NCR region. A.K. Singh, CMD, NHPC visited the vaccination venue on the first day and expressed his gratitude to the NHPC team involved in setting up the camp for their dedication during this crisis period.

22 dead, 51 missing after barge sinks off Mumbai

MUMBAI: 51 ONGC workers are still missing after a barge that was carrying 261 people sank 35 nautical miles off the Mumbai coast on Monday as Cyclone Tauktae swept past. The Navy, which is leading the search and rescue operation, has recovered 22 bodies from the sunken barge.

A video tweeted by the Defence PRO (Mumbai) on Wednesday afternoon showed INS Kochi sailing into the city’s harbour this morning with 188 rescued persons from barge P-305. INS Kolkata also returned to Mumbai harbour, carrying others who were rescued, PTI reported.

“INS Kochi entering Mumbai harbour today morning along with rescued per-

sonnel from Barge P305. Naval ships Teg, Betwa and Beas, as well as P8I aircraft and Sea King helicopters are continuing with search & rescue ops,” the PRO Defence account tweeted. Nightmarish stories are emerging of people battling the elements to stay afloat, to stay alive, as naval ships race to their location and try and spot them amid the murky gloom of the storm.

“It was a horrific situation on the barge. I had not thought I would survive. But I swam in the waters for seven to eight hours with the determination to stay alive and was rescued by the Navy,” Manoj Gite, 19, one of those on board P-305, told news agency.

Is Remdesivir facing the axe in India’s Covid fight?

PEOPLE have thrown all caution to the wind, jostling in large crowds to procure the drug while politicians have been accused of hoarding it, but the jury seems to be still out on the efficacy of remdesivir in curing Covid-19, so much so that experts have suggested that it may be dropped as well from India’s Covid treatment protocol.

Created by the US-based Gilead Sciences, remdesivir has seen its demand shoot up ever since the US first drafted it as an emergency treatment for Covid-19 last year. It belongs to the category of antiviral drugs and was designed to counter diseases caused by RNA viruses, which includes the likes of the novel coronavirus. It was initially intended as a treatment for Hepatitis C but was then repur-

posed to counter the Ebola virus. However, when the Covid-19 pandemic broke, its makers saw the scope it could have as medication for the disease, according to News18 report.

In the US, the full course can cost upwards of \$3,000 (upwards of INR 2 lakh), depending on insurance cover. But amid the second wave surge of cases in India, domestic drug manufacturers slashed the price for 100mg vials of the injection by anywhere between Rs 1,000 to about Rs 3,000. While the treatment course is of six vials in the US, updated guidelines for its use issued by the Centre last year said that the dosage should be of 200mg on Day 1 followed by 100 mg doses daily for 4 more days for a total of a five-day course.

Last month, the government had also said



that efforts were underway to boost domestic capacity to close to 80 lakh vials per month from a little under 40 lakh.

While health officials have cited its efficacy in blocking the novel coronavirus, multiple clinical trials have suggested that it has next to no impact on curing the infection. Remdesivir has received emergency nod in India and, per Health Ministry guidelines, can only be administered within 10 days of onset of symptoms to patients displaying moderate to severe disease who need oxygen support. Further, it is not recommended for people with liver or kidney dysfunction or for patients who are recovering at home and are not on oxygen support.

However, in November last year, WHO had

in a “conditional recommendation” advised against the use of remdesivir in hospitalised patients “regardless of disease severity”. It had noted that there was “no evidence that remdesivir improves survival and other outcomes”.

Ganga Ram Hospital Chairperson Dr DS Rana told news agency ANI that “there is no such evidence regarding Remdesivir that it works in Covid-19 treatment. Medicines that do not have any activity to work, will have to be discontinued.

“Coming on the heels of the government’s decision to drop plasma therapy as a recommended line of treatment, this statement has further fuelled the controversy around remdesivir.



FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	73.86	South	
Euro	90.27	African Rand	5.95
UAE Dirham	20.5	Hong Kong Dollar	10.83
Thai Baht	2.56	Japanese Yen	0.77
British Pound	104.74	New Zealand Dollar	53.24
Australian Dollar	57.28	Saudi Riyal	21.44
Canadian Dollar	61.11	Swedish Krona	10.13
Swiss Franc	82.04	Singapore Dollar	56.03

DELHI THURSDAY 20 MAY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Bajaj extends free service

Bajaj Auto Ltd has extended the free service period of all its brands in India in light of the second wave of the Covid 19 pandemic and the consequent lockdowns or travel restrictions announced by several States across India. Hence, to offer support to its customers, Bajaj Auto is extending the free service benefits until July 31, 2021. The free service period of vehicles expiring between April 1 and May 31 will now be extended until July 31, 2021. The extension of the free service period is applicable on all two-wheelers and commercial vehicles. Rakesh Sharma, Executive Director, Bajaj Auto, said, "We acknowledge the challenges our customers are facing due to the disruption caused by the second wave of the Covid 19 pandemic".

Karur Vysya Bank donates

Karur Vysya Bank has been extending its support for fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. Continuing this support, B Ramesh Babu, Managing Director & CEO of Karur Vysya Bank handed over a demand draft for Rs 1 crore to V Senthil Balaji, Minister of Electricity, Prohibition & Excise, Government of Tamil Nadu recently. Besides, the bank has donated and installed an oxygen generator unit at the Coimbatore General Hospital by spending Rs 15 lakh. B Ramesh Babu, bank's Managing Director and CEO, said, "Karur Vysya Bank is committed to support the initiatives of the Central and State Governments in their fight during this pandemic. Our branches continue to function and our employees determinedly provide service, as always, to our valuable customers during these difficult times."

Hyundai's CSR initiative

Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF), the CSR arm of Hyundai Motor India Ltd. (HMITL) donated Rs 5 crore to the 'Chief Minister Public Relief Fund' of Tamil Nadu Government under Hyundai Cares 3.0 Covid-19 relief initiative, to strengthen the State's war against the second wave of the pandemic. The donation was handed over to Chief Minister of Tamilnadu M K Stalin. Additionally, a donation of Rs 5 crore worth of medicare equipment has been announced. SS Kim, MD & CEO, Hyundai Motor India, said, "Hyundai has always stood by the government of Tamil Nadu in its most trying times. Today, when the State is fighting strong against the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, we have once again put together a package to help the State overcome the crisis".

Sebi fines Cairn India

Markets regulator Sebi on Wednesday imposed a penalty of Rs 5.25 crore on Cairn India for making a misleading announcement regarding the buyback of shares in 2014. In addition, the regulator levied a fine of Rs 15 lakh each on P Elango, who was the CEO and director of Cairn, Aman Mehta, who was the director on the company's board, and Neeraj Sharma, who was director (risk assurance) and company secretary, Sebi said in an order. These three officials had signed the public advertisement regarding the buyback in January 2014 and facilitated the company in making the misleading announcement. After a detailed investigation, Sebi found that Cairn did not place adequate buy orders despite the availability of adequate sell orders at NSE.

Adani buys SoftBank's power unit for \$3.5 bn

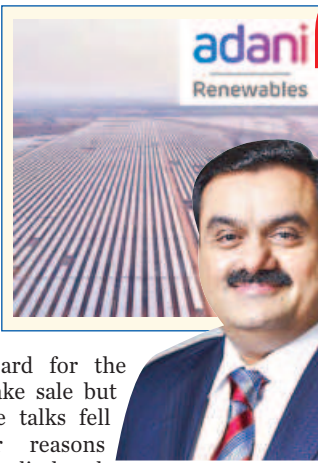
AGEL on Wednesday signed deal for acquiring 100% interest in SB Energy India from SoftBank Group (80%), Bharti Group (20%)

NEW DELHI

BILLIONAIRE Gautam Adani's Group on Wednesday announced the acquisition of SoftBank Group Corp's renewable power business in India for a deal value of \$3.5 billion (approximately Rs 25,500 crore), to become the world's largest solar company. In a statement, Adani Green Energy Ltd, the renewable energy unit of the port-to-energy conglomerate, said it has inked share purchase agreements to buy 100 per cent of SB Energy India from SoftBank and Bharti Group.

Without giving deal details, the statement said the transaction values SB Energy India at an enterprise valuation of approximately \$3.5 billion, it stated. The transaction marks the largest acquisition in the renewable energy sector in India. With the transaction, AGEL now has a portfolio of 24.3 gigawatts (GW) - enough to power more than 8.5 million homes, or nearly all the households in Australia (9.2 million) each year. SB Energy, where SoftBank held an 80 per cent stake and Bharti remaining 20 per cent, has a portfolio of 4,954 MW (4.95 GW) of solar and wind assets across four states in India, of which 1.4 GW are currently operational. All projects are backed by 25-year power purchase agreements with buyers.

SoftBank was initially talking to Canada Pension Plan Investment



This acquisition is another step towards the vision we stated in January 2020, wherein we laid out our plans to become the world's largest solar player by 2025

— Gautam Adani, Chairman, Adani Group

Board for the stake sale but the talks fell for reasons not disclosed

by either party. "AGEL today signed share purchase agreements for the acquisition of 100 per cent interest in SB Energy India from SoftBank Group (80 per cent) and Bharti Group (20 per cent)," the statement said. "The transaction marks the largest acquisition in the renewable energy sector in India." The target portfolio consists large-scale utility assets with 84 per cent solar capacity (4,180 MW), 9 per cent wind-solar hybrid capacity (450 MW) and 7 per cent wind capacity (324 MW).

The portfolio comprises 1,400 MW operational solar power capacity and a further 3,554 MW is under construction. All projects have 25-year power purchase agreements (PPAs) with sovereign-rated counterparties such as Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), NTPC and

NHPC. The operating assets forming part of the portfolio are primarily solar park-based projects and have been built following best-in-class governance, project development, construction, and operations and maintenance practices, resulting in this being one of the highest quality renewable portfolios in the country.

With this acquisition, AGEL will achieve a total renewable capacity of 24.3 GW and an operating renewable capacity of 4.9 GW.

The closing of the transaction is subject to customary approvals and conditions. Gautam Adani, Chairman, Adani Group, said: "This acquisition is another step towards the vision we stated in January 2020, wherein we laid out our plans to become the world's largest solar player by 2025 and thereafter the world's largest renewable company by 2030.



Implement RBI sops quickly, Das tells PSBs

MUMBAI

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday asked State-owned banks to quickly implement measures announced by the central bank recently in the "right earnest", and to continue focussing on steps to enhance the resilience of their balance sheets. Das during a meeting with the MDs and CEOs of public sector banks (PSBs) acknowledged the important role being played by PSBs in extending various banking facilities including credit facilities to individuals and businesses while tackling the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

"He impressed upon the banks to quickly implement the measures announced by RBI recently in the right earnest. He also urged the banks to continue focussing on steps to enhance the resilience of their balance sheets," the RBI said in a statement post the meeting held over video conference. Earlier this month, the Governor had announced a slew of measures, including term liquidity facility of Rs 50,000 crore to ease access to emergency health services, to further improve lending to MSME sector, restructuring of loans, and rationalisation of compliance to KYC, in wake of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sensex slips below 50k as investors book profits

BSE index sheds 291 pts, Nifty falls 78 pts

MUMBAI

MARKET benchmark Sensex succumbed to selling pressure on Wednesday as investors cashed in gains after a three-session rally, with banking and finance shares leading the selloff.

A bearish trend in global markets and a depreciating rupee added to the selling momentum, traders said. Giving up the 50,000 mark, the 30-share BSE index ended 290.69 points or 0.58 per cent lower at 49,902.64. On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty fell 77.95 points or 0.52 per cent to close at 15,030.15.

Bajaj Finserv was the top laggard in the Sensex pack, shedding 1.68 per cent, followed by HDFC, M&M, Bharti Airtel, UltraTech Cement, Kotak Bank and HDFC Bank. On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Nestle India, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Auto and Axis Bank were among the gainers, surging up to 1.82 per cent. "The recent sharp rally has triggered some caution for the near-term. The global market was tentative ahead of the announcement of Fed minutes, this was mirrored in the domestic market, though it is not expected to hawkish."

"Optimism gained from declin-

ing Covid cases resisted a sharp correction in domestic market," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. India added 2.67 lakh fresh Covid-19 cases in a day, though fatalities touched a record 4,529, pushing the coronavirus death toll to 2,83,248, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday. Sector-wise, BSE telecom, metal, finance, auto and bankex lost up to 1.16 per cent, while realty, power, healthcare and utilities indices closed higher.

In the broader markets, the BSE midcap and smallcap indices outperformed the benchmark, climbing up to 0.53 per cent. Global equities struggled as elevated commodity prices stoked inflation fears. In Asia, bourses in Shanghai and Tokyo ended on a negative note. Markets in Europe too were trading with losses in mid-session deals.

Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 1.96 per cent lower at \$67.36 per barrel. Halting its three-day winning run, the rupee declined by 13 paise to close at 73.18 against the US dollar. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets, as they purchased shares worth Rs 618.49 crore on Tuesday, as per provisional data.



Dr Reddy's in talks with RDIF on Sputnik V for other countries

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

DR Reddys Laboratories, which is in a pact with Russian Direct Investment Fund to sell 125 million people doses (250 million vials) of Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V in India, is holding parleys with RDIF for acquiring rights for more countries, a senior official of the Indian drug maker said.

Dr Reddy's which had received over two lakh vaccines from RDIF, recently soft-launched Sputnik V and tied up with Apollo Hospitals for piloting the vaccine. "We are also in discussions with them (RDIF) about quantities and rights, assets permit for other countries. So this is the overall view that we have at this stage of Sputnik," Chief Executive Officer of Dr Reddys, Erez Israeli said in a recent Earnings Conference Call.

In August 2020, Russia became the world's first country to register a coronavirus vaccine, Sputnik V. Subsequently, in September, Dr Reddy's and (RDIF entered into a partnership to conduct clinical trials of Sputnik V, which is developed



by the Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology.

Dr Reddy's Laboratories has received approval from the Indian drug regulator for restricted emergency use of Sputnik V. In addition, there are discussions with RDIF for Sputnik light, a single dose vaccine for Covid-19 being developed in Russia as well as additional engagement for the future for India, Israeli further said.

RDIF has tied up with six Indian drug makers to manufacture Sputnik V and their supplies are expected to roll out by August or September, he said. Replying to a query, Israeli said they hope that the supply of 125 million doses would be accomplished within 12 months, if everything is in place.

Heritage Foods posts ₹24 cr profit in Q4

HANS BUSINESS

HYDERABAD: Private dairy player Heritage Foods Ltd. reported a net profit at Rs 24.4 crore in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year ended on March 31, as compared to Rs 210 crore in the same quarter previous year. During the quarter, revenue from operations stood at Rs 619.4 crore against Rs 652.6 crore in corresponding quarter last year.

The company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 148.3 crore in FY 2021 as compared to Rs 169.4 crore in FY 2020. The consolidated revenue from operations was Rs 2,473 crore in FY 2021 against Rs 2,726 crore in FY 2020.

Brahmani Nara, Executive Director of the company, said: "As a result of improved profitability for FY2021, Heritage Foods has managed to reduce its debt significantly, and the Board has recommended a final dividend of 100 per cent."

Govt aims to conclude privatisation of PSUs

NEW DELHI

NOTWITHSTANDING the disruption to businesses caused by the second wave of Covid-19, the government is aiming to conclude privatisation of PSUs like Air India, BPCL and Shipping Corporation - where the divestment process has already started - this fiscal, sources said on Wednesday.

The worst outbreak of pandemic in the country has led to disrupting the timetable of scheduled activities such as physical due diligence because of travel restrictions. But the process is likely to get back on track from September, the sources with the direct knowledge of the government's privatisation plans said.

The process of privatisation of Air India, BPCL, Pawan Hans, BEML, Shipping Corp and NINL has already moved to the second stage after the government received multiple expressions of interest (EoI) for these CPSEs.

The Budget for 2021-22 has set

The process of privatisation of Air India, BPCL, Pawan Hans, BEML, Shipping Corp and NINL has already moved to the second stage

a disinvestment target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, higher than Rs 32,835 crore garnered in the last fiscal. Of the Rs 1.75 lakh crore, Rs 1 lakh crore is to come from selling government stake in public sector banks and financial institutions. Rs 75,000 crore would come as CPSE disinvestment receipts.

In her Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said strategic disinvestment of BPCL, Air India, Shipping Corporation of India, Container Corporation of India, IDBI Bank, BEML, Pawan Hans, Neelachal Ispat Nigam Ltd, among others, and IPO of LIC would be completed in 2021-22.

Optimus Pharma gets DCGI nod for Covid drug

HANS BUSINESS

HYDERABAD: City-based Optimus Pharma on Tuesday received DCGI nod for conducting phase III clinical trials for orally administered Molnupiravir capsules on patients with mild and moderate Covid-19. With severe shortage of antiviral drugs in the market against the SARS-CoV-2 infection, it is imperative that more drugs with potent antiviral activity against SARS-CoV-2 be introduced.

Optimus pharma said having internally developed the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) and the formulations for the product, it had filed for clinical trials with the DCGI.

"Optimus is all geared to immediately begin clinical trials on Molnupiravir on Covid -19 patients in India. The clinical trial will let us know the efficacy of this molecule on Covid patients," CMD Dr D Srinivas Reddy said.

Chat direct from 'Search' feature on Ozonetel now

The Hyderabad-based company integrated Google Business Message solution on its platform

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA BENGALURU

HYDERABAD-BASED Ozonetel, a leading on-demand cloud communication and telephony solutions provider, has integrated Google's Business Message solution on its platform.

Post this integration, customers can interact with the company through its chat service on the Google search page itself without going to the company's website. This new solution will reduce the lead response time for businesses, leading to more sales for the company through better customer acquisition.

"Google has come up with this innovative product. When an individual searches for a product, Google has enabled a chat button on the search page itself. Now, it is search and click, which is a



Sales increase by close to four times if contact is made in the first minute and around 78% of customers buy from their first responders

huge change," Chaitanya Chokkareddy, Chief Innovation Officer at Ozonetel told Bizz Buzz. Earlier, what used to happen is that people search the company on Google, which shows

the name. Then the individual has to click on the web page, enter into company's website to interact with the company through the chatbot or live agent. The new solution will now enable it to in-

teract with the company on the search page itself.

According to the company, Google invited selected partners including Ozonetel for introducing this solution which was launched last year on a pilot basis. "This started last year on a beta plan where Google invited certain partners among which we were also invited," said Chokkareddy.

"It is likely to increase our chat base. Our existing customers can buy this product as an add on and new customers can buy it on a subscription basis. We will definitely have the first mover advantage," he added.

Some of the key features provided by the Cloud Agent Google's Business Message Solution are 24*7 chatbot, which is an artificial intelligence-driven

chatbot that can greet customers, ascertain intent, and answer simple queries.

Intelligent Agent Routing is another key feature, that helps routing queries to live agents based on the nature of customer query, and agent availability. Smart Assist is another feature where agents can see AI-driven real-time suggestions and grammar checks that improve response time and chat quality.

As per estimates, sales increase by close to four times if contact is made in the first minute and around 78 per cent of customers buy from their first responders.

As availability is key to customer experience and sales, this new feature of Google integrated by Ozonetel can push up sales for enterprises through higher chances of conversion.

First batch of England-bound India cricketers reaches Mumbai

NEW DELHI

INDIA cricketers Ravichandran Ashwin, Washington Sundar, Mayank Agarwal, Mohammed Siraj and women's team captain Mithali Raj have reached Mumbai en route to the United Kingdom (UK), the Indian cricket board tweeted on Wednesday.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) tweeted photos of the players in flight. "First stop, Mumbai #TeamIndia," it said along with the images.

Some other cricketers like Wriddhiman Saha, who has just recovered from Covid-19, and the standby players will reach Mumbai on May 24. India skipper Virat Kohli and other players staying in Mumbai will also join the pre-departure bio-bubble on May 24.

The Indian men's and women's teams are expected to travel together to the UK. The men's team plays the World Test Championship (WTC) final



against New Zealand at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton between June 18 and 22. India men then face England in a five-Test series

from August 4 to September 14. The women cricketers, meanwhile, play England in a Test match, their first in seven years,

from June 16 to 19 after which they play three ODIs and as many T20Is from June 27 to July 15. (ANS)

BCCI match referee Mohapatra dies of Covid

BHUBANESWAR

FORMER Odisha cricket captain and match referee Prasanta Mohapatra died on Wednesday at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS-Bhubaneswar) here. He was 47.

Mohapatra's death comes a couple of days after another Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) match referee Rajendra Jadeja, also a former Saurashtra Ranji team captain, succumbed to Covid-19 at 65.

"Mr. Prasanta Mohapatra (Ex-Ranji Trophy Cricket & BCCI Match Referee) breathed his last today early morning at Bhubaneswar. On his sad and untimely demise the OCA expresses its deepest condolence. Our thoughts & prayers are with the bereaved family," tweeted Odisha Cricket Association on Wednesday. Mohapatra, a right-handed batsman, played 45 first-class matches (2196 runs with five centuries) and 17 domestic one-dayers from 1990-91 to 2002-03.

He officiated in over 40 domestic matches. His father, sculptor Raghunath Mohapatra had died nine days ago. AIIMS superintendent Sachidananda Mohanty told media, "While Raghunath Mohapatra passed away on May 9, his two sons were undergoing treatment. Although Prasanta later tested negative, his condition suddenly deteriorated last night and despite the best efforts of the doctors, he lost the battle at 7.51 am today. The condition of Jasobant is critical." (ANS)

Immediate focus on England Tests but WTC final special: Williamson

LONDON

NEW Zealand skipper Kane Williamson has said his team's immediate focus is on the two Test matches against England but there is a "lot of excitement" for the World Test Championship final against India which follows the series.

"The first challenge, which is the first Test against a very strong side (England), is what we need to be focussing on, and I know as a group that is what we will be talking about," said Williamson on Wednesday.

"At the same time, we are playing three Tests quite close together so there is in the back of your mind an eye on that (WTC final), which is a really exciting opportunity," the Black Caps skipper said on icc-cricket.com.

New Zealand will take on



England in the opening Test at Lord's from June 2, followed by the Test at Birmingham from June 10. The side then plays India in the inaugural WTC final at Southampton from June 18-22.

The Black Caps' squad is currently quarantining at the Hampshire Bowl, the location

of the WTC final.

Williamson said that playing the WTC final "is pretty special" and that the team was "really excited just being able to play Test cricket".

"I know the guys are really excited. Just being over here to play Test cricket is always a fantastic opportunity, but to play that third one, which is

the Test Championship final, is pretty special."

This will be New Zealand's first match since securing their spot in the WTC final, and Williamson is aware of the challenge facing his team in a country where they have not enjoyed a Test series win since 1999.

"For us, it is a progression thing that is important. In three Tests there is every opportunity to do that. We know we are up against some really tough challenges but I know the guys are really excited to face those. The first step is getting out and preparing for it."

"There is a lot of excitement in the camp and we always know how tough the challenge is coming over and playing against England in their own backyard. I know all the players are really excited at that challenge," he said. (ANS)

Siraj has gone from strength to strength since Aus tour: Gavaskar

NEW DELHI

FORMER India captain Sunil Gavaskar said that fast bowler Mohammed Siraj has got better since the tour of Australia earlier this year. Gavaskar noted Siraj's performances for Royal Challengers Bangalore in the 2021 Indian Premier League (IPL).

"Mohammed Siraj has gone from strength to strength after the tour of Australia and he was relentlessly at the batsmen even in the final over just as how he was

at the first over of the innings," Gavaskar wrote in a column for SportStar.

Siraj took six wickets in the tournament which was postponed halfway through the league stage due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Earlier in the year, he played an integral role in India beating Australia

2-1 Down Under in the absence of a number of key players.

Gavaskar also said that Devdutt Padikkal showed this season that he can be the one for future, rating his contribution for RCB in the same bracket as that of South African great AB de Villiers.

"The Bangalore team had a marvellous run thanks in the main to its batting dominated by the peerless AB de Villiers."

Young Devdutt Padikkal got a terrific century and looks a great prospect for the future in all forms of the game," wrote Gavaskar. (ANS)



Analysing Pro League games to prepare for Olympics: Sumit

BENGALURU

INDIAN men's hockey team mid-fielder Sumit said on Wednesday that the team is "closely watching the ongoing FIH Pro League matches" in Europe to prepare for the Tokyo Olympics in July.

India were scheduled to travel to Europe this month to play a series of Pro League games but the matches were postponed due to restrictions on travel from the country due to rising Covid-19 cases. "We have been closely watching the teams which are currently playing their Pro League matches. We are analysing their style of play and structure to use them during our practice sessions," said Sumit, who is training with the squad at the Sports Authority of India's centre at Bengaluru.

"We create the same match scenarios or use a particular team's structure during our internal practice games. It's really effective, and we are trying to

make the most out of it," added Sumit, who has played 66 matches for the national side. The 24-year-old player, who was a member of the team during

the successful tour of Argentina for the Pro League in April, said the wins against the reigning Olympic champions was an indication that India's preparations for the Olympics were on the

"right path".

"The results from the recent tours (Europe and Argentina) reflect that we are on the right path for the Olympics. However, we should play (more) attacking hockey, and try to convert the chances we get in the first 3-5 minutes, so that we can capitalise on the early leads."

"Comparing both the European and Argentina tour, I feel there has been a constant improvement, and we are working hard to maintain this consistency. On a personal level also, I think I can play more attacking hockey," he said. (ANS)



Inzamam lashes out at Pak board for ignoring Test cricket

KARACHI

FORMER Pakistan batsman Inzamam ul Haq has lashed out at Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for replacing a Test match with two T20 Internationals during the forthcoming tour of the West Indies saying that Test cricket shouldn't be sacrificed.

Keeping in mind this year's T20 World Cup, PCB and Cricket West Indies (CWI) swapped a Test match with two additional T20 Internationals to be played in the Caribbean in July-August.

"I don't mind if they want to play more T20s but Test cricket should not be sacrificed for this," Inzamam said on his YouTube channel. The month-long Pakistan tour from July 21 to August 24, will

comprise five T20Is and two Tests. The T20Is will be played in Barbados and Guyana while Jamaica will be the venue for the two Tests. Inzamam, who hit 8,830 in 120 Tests and 11,739 runs in 378 ODIs, said when Mohammed Amir decided to retire from Test cricket, he faced a lot of criticism for preferring T20s and league cricket over Test matches.

"The same happened with Wahab as well. But now the PCB is giving the same message by replacing Test matches with T20s. How can you stop players from quitting Test cricket, in future, if you are pursuing the same line of thought?" the former Pakistan skipper asked.

He added that the International Cricket Council (ICC) and various cricket boards need to see it because eventually

cricket players picking T20s over Tests will come back to hurt them.

"I request the ICC and other boards to see it because when the players will adopt the same approach, you will get hurt," he added.

He said that Pakistan shouldn't be too worried about lack of T20 matches ahead of World Cup.

"If you wanted more practice for the T20 World Cup, we should have asked them for T20s without reducing Test matches. If you ignore Test matches, it will hurt our cricket in the long run. Even if Pakistan didn't get more T20 matches against West Indies, we still would have had enough practice with matches scheduled against England and New Zealand," Inzamam stated. (ANS)

IOC ready to dispatch medical staff to Tokyo for Olympics: Bach

LAUSANNE

INTERNATIONAL Olympic Committee (IOC) president Thomas Bach said on Wednesday that the organisation is ready to send medical staff to Tokyo for this year's Olympic Games to support coronavirus countermeasures.

The IOC and local organisers are pressing ahead with the Games despite opposition in Japan amid the pandemic, DPA reports.

Bach told a video conference on the first day of a three-day coordination commission meeting that the IOC plans to dispatch additional medical personnel "to support the medical operations and the strict implementation of Covid-19 countermeasures in the Olympic Village and Olympic venues".

The meeting is the last between the IOC commission and Japanese organisers before the opening of the Games on July 23.

The IOC chief's words come at a



time when doctors and nurses in Japan have expressed strong opposition to the Games with hospitals overwhelmed by rising numbers of coronavirus infections.

Governors of Ibaraki and Chiba prefectures neighbouring Tokyo also said they have no plan to provide hospital beds to Olympians infected with the coronavirus.

Japanese people complain about the extremely slow pace of the vaccination in Japan. Only 1.6 per cent of the country's 125 million population has been fully vaccinated since the beginning of the vaccination effort in mid-February.

Tokyo has been under another Covid-19 state of emergency since

late April as the Japanese capital has been struggling to curb a fourth wave of infections.


The measure has also been imposed on eight other prefectures and it is scheduled to end on May 31.

Last week, Japan expanded the state of emergency to the nine prefectures, including Hiroshima, where Bach was scheduled to participate in a torch relay event on Monday. His trip to the region, however, was cancelled due to surging infections there.

Bach said more than 80 per cent of the residents in the Olympic Village will be vaccinated by the time of the Olympics.


"The most important principle is very clear: The Olympic Village is a safe place and Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 will be organised in a safe way," Bach said.

"We must concentrate on the delivery of these safe and secure Olympic Games because the opening ceremony is only 65 days away," he said. (ANS)



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