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WINDOWS

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR (WED)	06:34 PM
SAHER (THU)	04:41 AM



A halo around the sun caused by ice crystals is seen above quiet streets in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on Tuesday

Single-shot vaccine J&J seeks nod to conduct Phase-3 trials

NEW DELHI: Multinational pharma giant Johnson & Johnson (J&J) has sought permission to conduct phase 3 clinical trials of its single-shot Covid-19 vaccine in India. Sources said the company has sought an early meeting of the subject expert committee on Covid-19 of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to take a decision on its application. The development comes close to the heels of the central government deciding to fast-track emergency approvals for all foreign-produced coronavirus jabs that have been given a similar nod by the World Health Organization (WHO) or regulators in the United States, Europe, Britain or Japan on the backdrop of rising Covid-19 cases in the country and shortage of vaccines. Such vaccines will be given emergency use approval mandating the requirement of a post-approval parallel bridging clinical trial in place of conduct of local clinical trial under the provisions of the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules 2019, the Health ministry has said.

Press Freedom index India retains 142 of 180 spot

NEW DELHI: While India has not slipped further on the World Press Freedom Index 2021 published by the international journalism not-for-profit body, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), however, it continues to be counted among the countries classified "bad" for journalism and is termed as one of the most dangerous countries for journalists trying to do their jobs properly. The latest index released on Tuesday ranks 180 countries, topped, yet again, by Norway followed by Finland and Denmark, while Eritrea is at the bottom. China is ranked 177 and is only above North Korea at 179 and Turkmenistan at 178.

IRREGULAR by MANJUL

I have stopped visiting Mrityulok long ago. Outsourced my work to the govts.



Deserted streets near Khan tomb in New Delhi, on Tuesday

Delhi cops fine people for stepping out of homes

NEW DELHI: THE Delhi Police on Tuesday said people in the national capital largely remained indoors on the first day of the week-long lockdown, but some were penalised for stepping out of their homes unnecessarily. In several areas of the city, the police made announcements through loudspeakers to inform people about the lockdown and ask them to follow the Covid-19 guidelines issued by the government, they said. A senior police officer said while people facing an emergency were facilitated, those who were roaming without a valid reason were issued challans. They were also sensitised by police personnel regarding the Covid-19 guidelines.

Delhi HC warns of bigger disaster Court slams Centre over oxygen supply

NEW DELHI: THE Delhi High Court came down heavily on the Union government over Covid-19 crisis in the country saying "people will have blood on their hands", if medicines and resources are diverted without application of mind. "We will be doomed," a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said with regard to non-application of mind in allocation and diversion of resources and medicines. The High Court raised questions over Centre's decision to ban the use of oxygen for industrial purposes with effect from April 22 and said "why wait till April 22 to ban use of oxygen by industries? Why not immediately? People need oxygen now." "If nothing done to augment oxygen supply, country will head for bigger disaster; first priority has to be to save lives," the court said. The Centre informed the Delhi High Court that in order to ensure a continuous supply of oxygen for medical purposes the use of oxygen for industrial purposes has been banned except for certain critical industries with effect from April 22. The court also expressed displeasure over "huge wastage" of vaccines and asked the Centre to vaccinate whomsoever it can to ensure there is no wastage. "This is a huge wastage. Give it to those who want it. Whomsoever you can vaccinate, please vaccinate. Whether 16-year-old or 60-year-old, all need vaccination. The pandemic does not discriminate," the court said. "We hope the Centre is applying its mind based on need of each state when deciding where to send medicines and resources," it added. The court asked the Centre to act against people who are hoarding medicines and come out with some norms. The Centre also asserted that the government is taking all the possible steps and is further committed to take any steps and will provide feasible assistance to state government as and when required.

WAR ON CORONA Next 3 weeks crucial: Vardhan

NEW DELHI: The next three weeks are crucial with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic situation in the country, said Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Tuesday. "Centre working closely with States and UTs on public health measures to contain Covid-19. Next three weeks crucial! At a meeting held on Tuesday, UTs advised augmenting hospital infrastructure, ramping up testing, creating containment zones and strictly enforcing Covid appropriate behaviour," Vardhan wrote on Twitter. Earlier on Tuesday, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan along with Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla chaired a high-level meeting to review and discuss the Covid-19 status, management and response strategy. The meeting was held via video conferencing and attended by Dr V K Paul, member (health) of NITI Aayog, Dr Balram Bhargava, secretary of DHR and DG ICMR, the chief secretaries and DGPs of all the union territories of India.

Continued on Page 5

SCALE UP PRODUCTION PM tells vaccine manufacturers

NEW DELHI: PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday interacted with vaccine manufacturers from across the country via video conferencing and urged them to continuously scale up the production capacity so that everyone in India can be vaccinated as soon as possible. Commending the scientists for their efforts, Modi credited them for developing and manufacturing vaccines in record time. Noting the fact that vaccines manufactured in the country are the cheapest, the PM said that world's largest vaccine programme is underway in



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation on the second wave of coronavirus pandemic across the country, via video conferencing, in New Delhi on Tuesday

India. Modi remarked that throughout this process of developing and manufacturing vaccines, "the

country has constantly worked with the spirit of public-private partnership under the 'Mission Covid Suraksha' and created an end-to-end vaccine development ecosystem." "The government ensured that all the vaccine manufacturers not only get all possible help and logistic support, but also the process of vaccine approval is speedy and scientific," the PM said. He also assured all possible support and smooth approval process for the vaccine candidates which are currently under trial phase.

Continued on Page 5

A death every minute since Sunday

India reports 10,000 fresh Covid cases per hour

NEW DELHI	
PER HOUR DATA	
Sunday:	10,895 cases, 62 deaths
Monday:	11,408 cases, 67 deaths
Tuesday:	10,798 cases, 73 deaths

WITH the onslaught of the second wave of coronavirus, India is reporting over 10,000 fresh cases and 60 deaths per hour on an average since Sunday, suggests data from the Union Health Ministry. "Centre working closely with States and UTs on public health measures to contain Covid-19. Next three weeks crucial! At a meeting held on Tuesday, UTs advised augmenting hospital infrastructure, ramping up testing, creating containment zones and strictly enforcing Covid appropriate behaviour," Vardhan wrote on Twitter. Earlier on Tuesday, Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan along with Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla chaired a high-level meeting to review and discuss the Covid-19 status, management and response strategy. The meeting was held via video conferencing and attended by Dr V K Paul, member (health) of NITI Aayog, Dr Balram Bhargava, secretary of DHR and DG ICMR, the chief secretaries and DGPs of all the union territories of India.



On Monday, India reported a record single-day rise of infections (2,73,810) and deaths (1,619). With this, India's active cases surpassed the 19-lakh mark. Per hour on average, India reported 11,408 cases and 67 deaths on Monday. Tuesday was no better as India reported 2,59,170 fresh Coronavirus infections and 1,761 fatalities, making it 10,798 cases and 73 deaths per hour on average. Maharashtra has been reporting the highest number of cases and deaths since the last few weeks. On April 1, the State reported 39,544 cases and 227 deaths - 1,647 cases and 9 deaths per hour.

Continued on Page 5

Two of the triple-mutant varieties have the new mutation in the spike protein and have been found in samples collected from Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh - all second surge states. A third version of the strain has the mutation outside the spike protein but is still considered significant and has been observed in 17 samples, again from Maharashtra, Delhi and West Bengal. Sources said that West Bengal seems to be becoming the hotspot for such mutations. The new triple mutant could make the virus even more capable of evading human immune response.

Continued on Page 5

POLITICKLE by MANJUL

Bharat Biotech to boost Covaxin production to 70 cr doses per yr

HYDERABAD: THE Bharat Biotech International Ltd on Tuesday said it will ramp up production of its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin to about 70 crore doses on an annual basis. The expansion in production comes after the Centre provided Rs 150 crore grant. "Inactivated vaccines, while highly safe, are extremely complex and expensive to manufacture, resulting in lower yields when compared to live virus vaccines," the company said.

the Hyderabad-based company said in a statement on Tuesday. "The company is able to expand Covaxin manufacturing capacity in a short timeline, mainly due to the availability of new specially designed BSL-3 facilities, first of its kind for manufacturing in India that have been repurposed and pre-existing expertise and know how to manufacture, test and release highly purified inactivated viral vaccines," the company said.

Avoid India travel, US advises its citizens

WASHINGTON

AMID the surge of Covid-19 cases in India, the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has advised its citizens to avoid travelling to India, even if they are fully vaccinated. In its advisory, the CDC stated that there is "very high level of Covid-19" in India. In a statement, the CDC said: "Because of the current situation in India even fully vaccinated travellers may be at risk for getting and spreading Covid-19 variants and should avoid all travel to



India. If you must travel to India, get fully vaccinated before travel. All travellers should wear a mask, stay 6 feet from others, avoid crowds, and wash their hands." The CDC also issued travel recommendations for fully vaccinated travellers which stated: "If you are fully vaccinated, then do not have to get tested before leaving the United States, unless your destination requires it and you do not

UGC-NET PUT OFF

New dates 15 days ahead of exam

NEW DELHI: AS Covid-19 cases spike across the country, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has decided to postpone the UGC-National Eligibility Test (NET) scheduled to be held from May 2 to May 17. "Looking at the present situation of the pandemic and also taking into account the safety and well-being of the candidates and examination functionaries during Covid-19 outbreak, I have advised @DG_NTA to postpone the UGC-NET Dec 2020 cycle (May 2021) exams," Nishank tweeted. Until June 2018, the NET was conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in 84 subjects at 91 cities across the country for the university grants commission. But from December 2018, the UGC-NET is being conducted by the NTA.

Womenia



Health hacks for the work-from-home life

SIDDHI JAIN

The work-from-home routine in 2020 brought many families closer as they found themselves under the same roof for an extended period of time. As curfews restrict movement and people have to home shelter, setting health goals can help you achieve wellness as a family while you stay safe.

Madhuri Ruia, nutritionist and Pilates expert shares how you can become each other's cheerleaders by encouraging a healthier, happier lifestyle:

Invest in indoor fitness tools

The lockdown has turned up the heat on indoor fitness, pushing everyone to strive for a healthier way of living. Investing together in online fitness classes or even props like resistance bands and dumbbells is the perfect way for you and your siblings to stay on top of your fitness routine. Motivate each other daily and take consistency to another level by following the habit-forming 21/90 rule. This will not

Encourage fellow family members to maintain a good diet and exercise, as the lockdown life returns for many

only boost self-confidence, but will also leave you feeling rejuvenated and relaxed after a long day's work.

Take mini breaks

The solution for WFH stress is to take work-free breaks during the day. The lockdown made us realise that there is more to life than deadlines and virtual calls. These uncertain times have encouraged us to take a pause, be grateful and enjoy each moment as it comes. Small things like taking a 15-minute break with your family members every three hours for a cup of coffee, a game of catch or a quick comedy show will instantly liven up the

mood, making the day feel lighter and less mundane. The little moments help clear the headspace, which improves productivity, helping you, work better.

Embrace a nutty start to the day

While we focus on staying fit and toning our bodies, one thing that we often forget is to provide it with the right nutrition. Starting your day with nuts like almonds will give your body the energy boost it needs during the day. Almonds are rich in Vitamin B2, Vitamin E, magnesium, and phosphorus; nutrients that are known to provide energy that help keep you active. A handful of almonds may have satiating properties that promote a feeling of fullness, which helps limit unhealthy snacking by keeping hunger at bay. Almonds contain immunity supporting nutrients like zinc, copper, and folate. Starting your day the nutty way will help you and your siblings reap nutritious benefits that not only add a natural glow but also help manage diabetes and improve heart health.

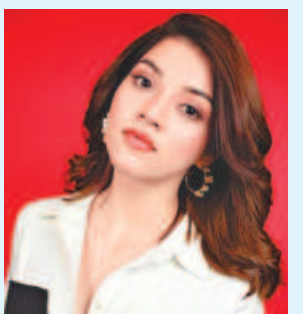
TWEET PATROL



MEHREEN PIRZADA

@MEHREENPIRZADA

My goes out to my people's covid sufferings
#VaccineForAll #StayIndoor #StaySafe
#BeSociallyResponsibleAware
#WearFaceshieldsMasks #HelpEachOther
#BeEachOthersStrength #HumanLifePrecious



Beauty, grooming and self-pampering during lockdown

The eye category has seen maximum acceleration followed by lips category. The premium beauty business is recovering at a faster pace and continues to accelerate online



People are looking to stay engaged at home through self-pampering, spending time on grooming and experimenting with make-up. After a tough 2020, most businesses saw a revival, some movement and an upswing in the first quarter of 2021. Mrunmay Mehta, Head, Beauty and Luxury Beauty at Amazon India gives an insight into the how the beauty business has fared over the past six months.

As most cities begin curfews and lockdowns once again, will there be a slump or rise in demand of beauty products? What are the beauty trends we can try at home and which grooming tools are a must have?

Mrunmay shares, "We have observed that customers are looking for ways to stay engaged at home through self-pampering, spending time on grooming and experimenting with makeup. The eye category has seen maximum acceleration followed by lips category. The premium beauty business is recovering at a faster pace and continues to accelerate online. The perfume category is also witnessing an increase in demand amongst customers. These categories will continue to accelerate online, given increased customer adoption of online as a buying channel in the new normal we live in. In the last 6 months, we have witnessed a surge in demand for beauty products such as eye-make up, matte and transfer proof lipsticks, skincare, and beauty tools & accessories on our platform."

Customers today are inspired by not just Bollywood but in fact a lot more by so many digital platforms, influencers, and social

media. Fashion and Beauty trends have been influenced by films for the longest time. Even today, this is largely evident in customers across markets including tier II & III cities.

In early 2020, we collaborated with Filmfare as the title sponsor of the 65th edition of Filmfare Awards to bring alive the connection between entertainment, fashion, and beauty. Besides, we also created a storefront to leverage the make-up looks of the characters from the 'Bandish Bandits' web series on Prime Video.

Mehta shares, "At Amazon, we also have a large affiliates program, where influencers can host their page on Amazon and direct traffic to it through their channels. Lastly, Amazon overall has multiple channels of customer engagement & acquisition across customer touchpoints such as FoundIt and Fashion Influencer Program, from which we continue to see a rapid increase in our customer base for Beauty as well. As the world lives with the pandemic, customers are looking to stay engaged at home through self-pampering, spending time on grooming and experimenting with make-up. The make-up and premium beauty business had taken a momentary pause in March 2020 but has slowly recovered to its pre-Covid performance with the advent of video conference calls."

Highlighting some broad trends on Amazon Beauty over the past six months:

Revival of makeup

With eyes becoming the new lips, within make-up, the eye category has seen maximum accel-

eration. Brands have quickly aligned themselves to innovate in the lips category by moving from gloss and shine lipsticks to promoting matte (transfer-proof and smudge-proof) lipsticks, tinted lip balms and tint this season, only to stay in line with the new norms- they can be worn with face masks.

See the rainbow

There is an emergence of joyful colours, be it on the lips, eyes, or the cheek. While minimalism as a trend continues, products will be used to add a dash of colour on the eyes (yellow, blue, pink etc.)

Natural effortless glam

A naturally glamorous and glowing face has made a comeback. Customers are now doubling down on highlighters and bronzers that offer a glowing face coupled with dramatic lashes and blushed cheeks.

Clean beauty

Today, customers are mindful about product ingredients and formulations. With people spending more time and research on their beauty routines, there has been a distinct rise in the adoption of natural, organic, and plant-based skincare and haircare as well as natural makeup products.

Salon at home

With customers facing limitations in visiting salons, the focus on professional skincare and haircare products has multiplied. We are seeing a surge in demand for professional brands on Amazon Beauty which were only popular with salons earlier.

Bulldogs are beautiful day

Bulldogs are known for the stocky physique, wrinkly faces, and short snouts. While not the most elegant of dogs, bulldogs are beloved by many. Many people find bulldogs to be cute and lovable. Bulldogs are Beautiful Day aims to show this appreciation through celebrating this adorable breed.

Bulldogs are Beautiful Day corresponds with the day that the bulldog was officially recognized by dog breeders back in 1886. Bulldogs are associated with the Asiatic Mastiff, which lived around 4,000 BC in Mesopotamia. The mastiff was introduced to Europe by traveling nomads.

Since then, breeders helped form the different kinds of bulldogs that exist today. These include the English bulldog, French bulldog, and American bulldog. As one of the most popular breeds, bulldogs are known to be lovable. They provide overall general happiness to every dog owner.

Some of the most famous bulldogs to have existed were Tillman, an English Bulldog with skateboarding skills that made him a celebrity. Another bulldog, Uga, was the official live mascot of the University of Georgia Bulldogs. Chesty was a bulldog take on the role of the next official mascot of the US Marine Corps. Each year, people celebrate Bulldogs are Beautiful Day by showing appreciation for these lovable, fuzzy creatures. At Drake University, an annual contest for the most beautiful bulldog is held. Owners showcase their bulldogs and walk the pageant runway, showing off their clever tricks and beauty.

Owners post funny videos of their bull-

dogs and treat their dogs by giving them goodies like treats and stuffed toys. People also take the time to learn the history of bulldogs and how



they earned their cute, wrinkled faces that everyone knows and loves.

If you own a bulldog, take this time to treat them well and show how much you appreciate them in your lives. Give them treats, let them sleep in your bed for the day, and dress them up in cute outfits. You can also share this love for your bulldog by posting pictures of you and your dog on your favourite social media websites.

If you believe your bulldog is beautiful, then enter your dog into a beauty contest. Maybe you can win first place as the most beautiful dog of them all, even though we all know that all dogs are beautiful in the end.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Our fear of pandemic gets instilled in our children: Lakshmi Manchu

YASHIKA MATHUR

Telugu actress Lakshmi Manchu, whose YouTube series "Chitti Chikamma" on parenting has been getting good response, says amid the latest Covid surge, parents need to be aware that their fear of the pandemic can affect their children, too. Mother of six-year-old daughter Nirvana, Lakshmi feels it is important to have a healthy dialogue with children around what is happening. "There is more need for content like this because we are clueless. Right now we are so scared because of the pandemic, and that fear is being instilled in our children," says Lakshmi. She says the effort on her show is to source content that helps, in this context. "Looking at content where we can do activities and how to really address our children's problems gives us more tools and power to handle our children," she says. The actress often brings her daughter on the show, especially if there is a fitness episode. "I believe that at times like this when kids are so glued to their phones, iPads and the television, it is important to encourage physical activities with our kids and let it be very simple. That is why I like brining Nirvana at my workout sessions, not that she does the entire session, but sometimes she likes to do certain workouts that she finds difficult or maybe she likes to show off how well she can stretch. All of this is encouragement for them to move and not be stuck in one place," says Lakshmi.



Ongole poet receives International recognition

MD AMEEN

Dr K Saroja Devi, a professor of English at Rise Krishna Sai Prakasham Group of Institutions, Ongole, got a distinct Honour by Cultural wing, government of Uruguay, South America (APUCNI) on the occasion of the Liberation day of Uruguay on April 19.

Dr Saroja Devi is a professor, writer, poet and soft skills trainer to the youth in Ongole. She has a prolonged career of 21 years in teaching of English and 15 years of experience as a writer and poet. Saroja Devi's poem titled 'Freedom for Universal Tolerance', has been translated into Spanish by Maria Vila, President of the Uruguay Cultural National International locally known as (APUCNI). The award presentation online was aired on Radio and Television in Uruguay on April 19. Uruguay was liberated from Spain on April 19, 1825 and the country celebrated independence in a grand manner. The Uruguay cultural department has chosen another poet from Andhra Pradesh for the presentation of certificate of appreciation on behalf of APUCNI.

The Uruguay authorities have chosen poets from 33 countries of four continents worldwide for the presentation of the Certificate of Appreciation. The people of Ongole particularly those associated with Literature and teaching profession felt proud on the achievement of poet, Dr K. Saroja devi.

Dr K Saroja received distinct Honour from Uruguay on Liberation Day. The award was received online



Dr Saroja Devi



Dr Saroja Devi is well known among the teaching profession and poets in Ongole. She was awarded Ph.D. in English from Sri Padmavati Mahila University, Tirupati for her research work on Ethical Intimations in the select Inter War American Fiction. During her prolonged career of 21 years in teaching, she helped many students develop the linguistic skills particularly the communication skills and soft skills. She is well known as a columnist in English papers and other magazines too. Dr Saroja Devi loves to convey her voice on Ethics, moral perspectives, communication aspects and personality traits. She is a life member of Indian Society of Authors and an editorial board member of IJMRAP journal.

She was also awarded Sahitya Sri by Kaffa International and Best teacher award by Jyothi Rao Bai Poole Society. Her outstanding achievement was she was one of the four Indians invited for presenting research paper at 42 LATEFL International Conference, Exeter University, United Kingdom in 2008 and was invited for presenting Poetry at SAARC Festival of Literature in 2009 at Grand Hotel, Agra. She is a resource person for Andhra Pradesh Human Resource Development Institute, Bapatla, A.P.

Responding on receiving the letter of appreciation from Uruguay, she said that she was delighted to receive the award and felt it was a memorable event in her life. Due to Corona pandemic, the Uruguay government presented the awards to the poets worldwide online. Dr Saroja Devi too received online and made Ongole poets proud with her achievement. She can be reached at sarojasudheer@gmail.com.

PM BUSY WITH RALLIES WHEN NATION UNDER SECOND WAVE OF COVID

How can he laugh?: Priyanka Gandhi

NEW DELHI

CONGRESS General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has said that she is totally devastated by the pandemic and the news of people dying without any medical support.

Speaking to IANS she said that this is not the time for the Prime Minister to campaign but to wipe the tears of the people's eyes and protect the citizens from the deadly virus. She said her party is working with compassion and is trying to help out the needy but she questions the Prime Minister --Is it time to laugh in political rallies?

Q. How do you see the government's response after the second wave of Covid-19 hit the country?

A. The government's response has been extremely disappointing. The Prime Minister is still continuing with his election campaign while people are battling against the worst wave of Covid.

At a time when the government should be focussing on fighting the catastrophic situation unfolding all around us, it appears to be practically absent. Even constructive suggestions from opposition parties are being dismissed as politicisation rather than being accepted in the spirit that the nation is in a grave crisis and every single life matters, therefore, all of us must stand together and do whatever we can to save lives.

The lack of planning and preparation between the first and the second wave is the worst act of negligence and incompetent governance I have ever witnessed.

Q. Do you think export of vaccines could have been avoided?

A. I would like to say that thanks to 70 years of forward-thinking governance, today India is the largest manufacturer of vaccines in the world. Yet, between January 2021 and March 2021, Modi ji's government enabled the export of six crore doses of vaccines to countries across the world.

One lakh doses were gifted to the Nepalese Army, Mauritius received 2 lakh doses as did numerous other nations. During the same period, only 3 to 4 crore doses of vaccines were administered to Indian citizens. Why did the Modi government prioritise overseas PR and self-promotion over Indian lives?

Q. Do you think the government was not prepared and was



caught off guard?

A. As the second wave peaked in other countries, in the last six months, India exported 1.1 million injections of Remdesivir. The export was stopped five days back. It is now clear that there is a shortage of Remdesivir, which is being reported from across the country. Why did the Modi government not ensure that production of Remdesivir was ramped up and made available to every Indian before allowing it to be exported to other countries?

Again, courtesy years of forward-thinking governance, today India is one of the largest producers of oxygen in the world. However, doctors, patients and their family members

are crying for oxygen in hospitals across India as the disease surges once more. In fact, it's not the production of oxygen that is a problem. India produces 7,500 MT of oxygen per day.

At the peak of the first wave of Covid, the collective requirement of our hospitals was less than half this quantity per day.

It's the transport of oxygen that is causing the shortage because less than 2,000 specialised trucks are available for the same.

What did the Modi government do to ensure the production and availability of adequate logistics to supply oxygen across India in the year between the first wave of the pandemic in March 2020 and the one we are

now facing? What did the Modi government do to increase India's capacity for hospital beds and ventilators in the last one year since Covid first hit us?

Q. In Uttar Pradesh, the second wave has been devastating. Look at the disturbing pictures coming from the state capital...

A. I have held several meetings with Congress leaders and workers across the state and discussed what we can do to be of support to the people during these tragic times. I have asked all our workers and leaders to be in constant communication with the public and do whatever is in their power to assist people with hospital beds, access to oxygen, medicines, etc. All our leaders and workers are doing as much as they can to this end.

Instead of providing the support and sensitivity needed at a time when almost every single family is battling the scourge, the UP government is acting as an aggressor towards the public. We are constantly raising issues that the government needs to address urgently in order to press them into action and direct their attention to areas in which immediate steps need to be taken. I have written to the Chief Minister about certain issues and will continue to attempt to impress upon him the need for the government to be transparent, provide access to facilities and help those affected.

It is our firm commitment towards the people of UP to remain constructive and supportive during this crisis. We will not politicise this unprecedented human tragedy under any circumstances. We fully understand our responsibility towards the people of UP. I have also offered our co-operation to the UP government.

Q. People are feeling helpless across the country, don't you think the government has failed to respond with necessary alacrity?

A. The Prime Minister has completely failed to provide a sense of safety, direction or leadership during this massive human crisis we are facing. It is shocking that just day before yesterday, he was on a public stage addressing thousands of people with no covid protocol and laughing while doing so. What is there to laugh about? The entire country is in tears.

There are no hospital beds available, medicines are running short, crematoriums are full,

frontline workers are exhausted...Where is the leadership? Where is the planning? Why are we short of facilities? Where is the money from the PM fund being used? Why has he done nothing to address the five major shortages of vaccines, beds, ventilators, oxygen and Remdesivir? Will he take responsibility for the bad planning and incompetence of his government?

And what about the millions of poor and the millions of honest workers in small businesses across the nation? What will they do now that we are faced with impending lockdowns and further suffering? What is the Modi government doing to support them?

UP government's own Sero Survey results showed 5 cr people might have got the virus, several other Sero Surveys showed signs of a second wave coming, why did the Modi government block some of this research and ignore its findings. Doctors, medical staff and frontline workers across the nation are risking their lives fighting the war against Covid and the Prime Minister has punished them by cancelling their insurance programmes.

Direct payments of over ₹2,600 cr made to farmers: Punjab Minister

CHANDIGARH

PUNJAB Food and Civil Supplies Minister Bharat Bhushan Ashu said under the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme, direct payments of more than Rs 2,600 crore have been made to accounts of farmers till Tuesday.

He said the payments of Rs 4,200 crore would be cleared by Wednesday.

He assured the farmers that every single grain produced by them would be procured by the state government. In a statement here, the minister said that 54 lakh metric tonnes of wheat has arrived in markets, out of which 50 lakh metric tonnes has already been procured and more than 20 lakh metric tonnes by various government agencies. He assured that both procurement as well as lifting would be speed up in coming days.

On the issue of 'bardana' (storage bags), Ashu said due to Covid-

19 and elections in West Bengal, many of the jute mills are shut, leading to shortage of jute bags across the country. He said they had even taken up this issue with the Jute Commissioner, but it also failed to help the state. He said that there was some shortage of 'bardana' initially, but now the matter has been resolved.

He said that on April 12, the Centre has allowed the state for the use of used 'bardana' by 'arhtiyas', for which Rs 41.90 per bag has been fixed.

On the issue of DBT, Ashu said the state government has already been making direct payments to the farmers since last 18 months and assured that payments to each and every farmer would be made within set stipulated time.

He said that in Punjab, both the farmers and the arhtiyas (commission agents), are happy from the ongoing wheat procurement. (IANS)

Remdesivir arranged by BJP was for govt, confirms Maha Minister

MUMBAI

IN what turned out to be a storm in a tea-cup, the 60,000 vials of Remdesivir injections procured by the Opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was intended for the Maharashtra government, Foods & Drugs Administration Minister Dr. Rajendra Shingane admitted here on Tuesday.

"I was aware of it. The BJP leaders had met me at my house along with the manufacturers' representatives. They offered to help us procure the Remdesivir stocks for the state government and I agreed to it," Dr. Shingane told a local private TV channel.

He added that the injection stock could not be for any other purpose and even the BJP leaders assured him accordingly, embarrassing the ruling Maha Vikas Aghadi allies Shiv Sena-Nationalist Congress Party-Congress.

Reacting to the minister's assertion, Leader of Opposition in Legislative Council Pravin Darekar confirmed that he had



taken a delegation of manufacturers to meet him.

"Minister Shingane had thanked us for our efforts and we also assured the injection doses

would be given to the state government," Darekar said.

It may be recalled that on Saturday-Sunday night, the Mumbai Police had 'seized' the stock

of injections that was being surreptitiously brought into the state from Union Territory of Daman and had even detained a company official.

Leader of Opposition (Assembly) Devendra Fadnis and Darekar had spent hours at the police station to sort out the matter saying the Maharashtra Food & Drugs Administration (FDA) had permitted the consignment.

After almost a night-long drama, the police allowed the company executive to go but on Sunday morning a huge row erupted between the BJP and MVA with both sides hurling allegations at each other.

Darekar said it is now up to people like NCP's Home Minister Dilip Walse-Patil, Minority Affairs Minister Nawab Malik, Sena MP Sanjay Raut, State Congress chief Nana Patole and even senior Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra to reply in the matter.

"I had been in touch with Minister Shingane right from the beginning, met him at his home and he agreed. Now, all the allegations by the ruling party leaders and the police station drama stands exposed," Darekar said. (IANS)



3rd UP Minister succumbs to Covid, govt announces weekend lockdown

LUCKNOW

UTTAR Pradesh Minister of State Hanuman Mishra succumbed to Covid on Tuesday at the Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences in Lucknow.

Hanuman Mishra was admitted to the hospital after he tested positive for the virus.

He is the third minister in the state to succumb to Covid. Earlier, last year, state ministers Kamal Rani Varun and Chetan Chauhan had died due to Covid.

Uttar Pradesh has been reporting the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the country after Maharashtra. Meanwhile, the state government on Tuesday announced its decision to impose a 'Corona Curfew' in the state with the rising number of Covid-19 cases.

The state has announced a statewide weekend lockdown that will come into force from April 24. As per the new directive, districts with more than 500 active Covid-19 cases will also remain under night curfew, effective between 8 p.m. to 7 a.m. every day, until further orders. (IANS)



Delhi Lockdown: Migrants queue up at bus stands to rush home

GURUGRAM

AFTER the Delhi government imposed a week long lockdown from Monday night to curb the spike in Covid cases, in a replay of last year's migrants crisis, a large number of people gathered at bus stations here on Tuesday to flee from the city, fearing the shutdown of the public transport may force them to walk hundreds of kilometers.

Last year, hundreds of migrant labourers had left the city on foot in the absence of public transport during the lockdown.

Hundreds of people including children, women and elderly queued up at Rajiv Chowk, Sector-12, Sector-34, Khandas and Sector-37 bus stations on Tuesday with their belongings to head home leaving their jobs and employment back in the city.

Ram Lal, a migrant labourer waiting for a bus at the bus stand, told IANS, "I am going to the village in Bihar due to the lockdown, how

can the poor man give rent and survive without earning. Due to lockdown in Delhi maximum employees of our company are working from home but we are helpless, we have no such facilities. Our company has been closed. I have to take care of my family. I will not come back here now."

Tulsi Kumar, another migrant labourer told IANS, "I am going to my village in Uttar Pradesh. After the lockdown, work will be stopped, then how will I take care of myself and my family. I will come back after the situation becomes normal." The labourers could be seen at several bus stops across the city. At Sector-12 bus stop where only one bus heads towards Madhya Pradesh before the lockdown in Delhi, now after the lockdown four buses are heading for Madhya Pradesh. "We are paying Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000 for our destination which is a huge amount, but we have no other option but to pay this amount as I just want to reach my

native place at any cost rather than stay here without any work," Rawal Singh told IANS.

Like them, many others from various parts of the city are heading to the bus stands from where they will catch a bus to their villages.

However, majority of them said, this time corona fear is not in their mind, the only thing in their mind is how to reach home without walking on foot.

It is estimated that nearly 20 per cent of labourers from Gurugram have left the district.

"The spike in Covid-19 cases is a worrisome concern for us but the lockdown in Delhi has panicked workers despite our request they are not ready to stay here. This will affect the industries a lot. Hundreds of workers have already left the city and more are going back. The industries are now facing labour crunch which will cause delays in productions," Aman Khanna, an owner of an automobile unit told IANS.

Rahul Gandhi tests Covid positive

NEW DELHI

CONGRESS leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday tested positive for Covid-19.

He shared this information on social media and asked people to follow Covid guidelines.

He tweeted, "After experiencing mild symptoms, I've just tested positive for COVID. All those who've been in contact with me recently, please follow all safety protocols and stay safe".

Congress leader P. Chidambaram wished him speedy recovery: "Learned that Mr Rahul Gandhi has tested positive and has isolated himself. Deeply concerned. I wish him a full and speedy recovery."

Earlier in the day, Rahul Gandhi demanded that the government should transfer money into the accounts of the migrants who are compelled to go back home due to the lockdown and pandemic. He tweeted in Hindi, "Migrants are again moving back, so this is the responsibility of the Union government to transfer money to their accounts. Will the government, which is blaming the public for the spread of the Covid, take such a public supportive step."

The Congress has questioned the government over the handling of the Covid pandemic. "Where has the money of Covid tax and the PM-CARES fund gone?" asked Congress spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala. (IANS)



Oxygen vehicles in UP to have GPS tracking

LUCKNOW

IN view of the reported black marketing of medical-grade oxygen, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has now asked the authorities to monitor all oxygen vehicles with GPS tracking devices.

"Provide police protection to all oxygen plants. Monitor oxygen vehicles through GPS devices. Take every possible step to prevent black marketing and profiteering of oxygen and other life-saving drugs," the Chief Minister said on Tuesday.

He directed authorities to ensure that each hospital has at least 36 hours of backup oxygen. According to the government spokesman, "Given the special circumstances, the chief minister has asked officials to ensure that oxygen produced at all small and large industrial units, including MSMEs, is used only for medical purposes. These oxygen plants should be connected to their nearest hospital. A comprehensive action plan in this regard should be prepared today itself."

The Chief Minister also informed that the process of setting up five new oxygen plants has started in the state. "For further preparedness, the setting up of oxygen plants in all hospitals with a capacity of more than 100 beds should be made compulsory. Modern technology like air separation units should be encouraged. Its capacity should be increased in the state," he said. (IANS)

Indian SaaS cos going global

INDIAN SaaS (software as a service) companies are scaling new heights with each passing quarter. The latest fundraising by cloud data protection and management solutions provider 'Druva' is a case in point. The company which provides services to the likes of NASA, Pfizer, and GameStop among others has raised \$147 million in its latest round of funding, which takes the valuation to over \$2 billion. Not only 'Druva', many other Indian SaaS startups including Zenoti, Freshworks, Zoho, Icertis are becoming significant players in the global SaaS market. Though many of them started operations in India, these companies are serving companies across the globe, especially in the all-important US market.

According to global consultancy firm Bain & Co, India has around 7,000 to 8,000 players in this space, which is almost double what it was five years ago. The consultancy firm suggests that Indian-heritage SaaS companies may clock \$18 billion to \$20 billion in rev-

enue and capture up to 9 per cent share of the global SaaS market by 2022. Similarly, IT industry body Nasscom is of the opinion that the Indian SaaS market is estimated to hit \$3.3 billion-\$3.4 billion by 2022, which will grow 6-fold by 2030.

Such an optimistic outlook also hinges on the fact that the SaaS adoption has increased manifold during the Covid pandemic period. As enterprises try to reach out to their targeted customers, they are increasingly taking the help of SaaS players to go digital. This has one distinct advantage. SaaS adoption doesn't demand any upfront cost and enterprises can pay on their usage basis. At a time when cash flow becomes all critical during the pandemic period, there is no better option to get customised solutions on a subscription basis.

Many analysts are of the opinion that though the pandemic will eventually fade away, the process of digitisation seems irreversible. This augurs well for

the Indian SaaS providers. Also, the business model of SaaS players is slightly different than other start-ups. For instance, SaaS companies offer a solution on a subscription basis. So, the cash flow starts from the beginning of operations. Unlike many other startups which burn a lot of cash before becoming profitable, SaaS companies can be breakeven in a short period with healthy cash flow statements.

After Indian IT services companies that continue to dominate the global market, Indian SaaS providers are the next generation companies with a prospect to play a significant role in the global market. This not only helps the Indian engineers in terms of hiring prospects but even the country also gets benefitted from productised software services offerings. As the technology world gets more productised amid the pandemic, Indian SaaS players are well-placed to cash in the emerging opportunities. In this context, the market regulator Sebi should come up with attractive public offering norms which will allow the Indian SaaS players to list in Indian bourses than going public in foreign bourses. This will enable investors to own shares in these companies with attractive growth prospects.



Monuments dwarfed by encroachments

BRIJ KHANDELWAL

ALTHOUGH Agra could not celebrate World Heritage Day on April 18 due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, conservationists and green activists have once again highlighted the failure of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to free the string of monuments in the city of encroachments that were seen as a major threat to the health and safety of these precious properties. "The increasing visual pollution was another cause of concern," warned environmentalist Devashish Bhattacharya, adding that high-rise buildings coming up in all parts have gravely distorted the original ambience around several structures.

With three world heritage monuments and half a dozen other historical structures, Agra continues to remain India's number one tourist centre, drawing more than seven million visitors annually (before the pandemic). The local bodies however failed to restrict illegal constructions around these buildings, thus compromising the architectural integrity of the city, Bhattacharya added.

Almost all Mughal monuments here have now been dwarfed by encroachments. While restricting space and cluttering up and thus destroying the beauty of the historical buildings, these encroachments now have reached such levels of proliferation that the very survival of some monuments is at stake, said Shrawan Kumar Singh of the Braj Mandal Heritage Conservation Society.

The Taj Mahal, surrounded by mohallas of the Taj Ganj locality, has been able to breathe easily because of the Supreme Court judgments seeking its conservation; international concern for its safety has also aided the cause of the preservation of the heritage monument.

Lesser monuments, however, have not experienced such luck. The Delhi Gate, close to the Raja Mandi station, finds itself threatened by new constructions, mostly private nursing homes and garages that were not there before. Mughal emperor Akbar's deserted capital, the Fatehpur Sikri complex, continues to be threatened by the illegal activities of the mining mafia, which has been carrying on operations without fear, even though the Supreme Court has given a categorical directive to district authorities to stop mining in the area.

The pre-historic caves with paintings in the vicinity are under threat. If the Union Culture Ministry did not act fast, these could be lost to posterity, said Bhattacharya, who is leading a one-man crusade to protect these valuable assets. The ASI has been regularly writing the district authorities to draw attention to the flagrant violation of the 1958 Ancient Monuments Act, but there has never been any positive response.

The ASI has circulated a list of about 50 monuments in Agra that come under the purview of the Monuments Protection Act. The Agra Development Authority (ADA) is responsible for ensuring there were no new constructions around these buildings.

ADA authorities, however, privately confess that demolition of all illegal structures was beyond their capacity. Political pressures would prevent any major offensive against encroachers.

The city of the Taj has numerous monuments which come under the protected list. Over the years, because of governmental indifference and corrupt practices, no action has been taken against people who built houses and places of worship around these monuments.

The Roman Catholic cemetery near the Civil Court is now surrounded by a movie hall, a petrol pump and a shopping complex.

Other historical buildings or remnants like Jodhabai's Chatri, Jaswant Singh ki Chatri, Chini ka Roza, Humayun's mosque, Mariam's tomb, Babar's Ram Bagh, Barakhambha, and scores of other valuable architectural pieces are under threat, as encroachments creep up on every inch of space. Some of the dilapidated landmarks are being used as cowsheds, or as havens for anti-social elements. The Yamuna floodplains that nourished and provided the natural ambience had been encroached upon all over. "It's been almost a decade that the National Green Tribunal, hearing a petition on this, had come out with a clear cut verdict. The situation is the same in Mathura and Vrindavan, where the river banks are under threat from encroachers," said Jagan Nath Poddar, convener of the Friends of Vrindavan. One wonders what happened to the newly constituted National Monuments Authority (NMA) which was mandated to come down heavily on illegal structures near protected monuments, said Surendra Sharma, president of the Heritage Conservation Society and a senior hotelier of Agra.

MACHINE LEARNING

Identifying Covid-related conspiracy theories on social media

A team of researchers has identified that a new Machine Learning (ML) programme accurately identifies Covid-19-related conspiracy theories on social media and models how they evolved.

The study showed that misinformation tweets contain more negative sentiment when compared to factual tweets and that conspiracy theory evolve, incorporating details from unrelated conspiracy theories as well as real-world events.

"A lot of ML studies related to misinformation on social media focus on identifying different kinds of conspiracy theories," said researcher Courtney Shelley from Los Alamos National Laboratory in the US.

For the study, published in the journal JMIR Public Health and Surveillance, the team used publicly available, anonymized Twitter data to characterize four Covid-19 conspiracy theory themes and provide context for each through the first five months of the pandemic.

The four themes the study examined were that 5G cell towers spread the virus; that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation engineered or has otherwise malicious intent related to Covid-19; that the virus was bioengineered or was developed in a laboratory; and that the Covid-19 vaccines, which were then all still in development, would be dangerous. "We began with a dataset of approximately 1.8 million tweets that contained Covid-19 keywords or were from health-related Twitter accounts," the researchers said.

"From this body of data, we identified subsets that matched the four conspiracy theories using pattern filtering, and hand-labelled several hundred tweets in each conspiracy theory category to construct training sets," they added.

Using the data collected for each of the four theories, the team built random forest ML, or Artificial Intelligence (AI), models that categorized tweets as Covid-19 misinformation or not.

Furthermore, the study found that a supervised learning technique could be used to automatically identify conspiracy theories and that an unsupervised learning approach (dynamic topic modelling) could be used to explore changes in word importance among topics within each theory. (ANS)

The dark side of colourful textiles

These bright, colourful clothes have a dark side as their colours cause severe negative impacts on the surrounding environment

SUGHOSH MADHAV

TEXTILES are not only the basic needs of a human being but have also become a fashion statement. But these bright, colourful clothes have a dark side as their colours cause severe negative impacts on the surrounding environment.

The textile industry occupies an exclusive place in India. One of the first industries to come into existence in the country, it accounts for 14 per cent of the total industrial manufacturing output.

The textile industry is extremely water-intensive. It requires a huge amount of water in different steps of processing, especially in wet processing. About 50-100 litres of water is necessary for the handling of a kilogram of textiles.

Thus, a huge amount of effluent is produced during textile processing, that can cause a severe ecological crisis as it is released onto bare land and water bodies after treatment or without treatment. Textile effluents are also used in irrigation in different parts of the country due to their high nutrient values.

Handling textiles is enormously challenging, chemically. It uses abundant, ecologically distant, non-biodegradable chemicals. In the handling of materials, textile industries utilise various colours, synthetic compounds, helper synthetics and estimating materials.

According to evaluations of the World Bank, around 17-20 per cent of all modern water contamination is exclusively caused by colouring and finishing measures. Approximately 72 distinctive poisonous synthetics are said to be available in water solely from colouring measures.

In a similar report, the World Bank likewise enumerated 30 distinct mixes, that are difficult to remove and are generally refractory in nature.

Besides, these profluent become profoundly poisonous due

to the presence of:

- Sulphur
- Naphthol
- Tank colours
- Nitrates
- Acidic corrosive
- Cleansers
- Chromium compounds
- Weighty metals like copper, arsenic, lead, cadmium, mercury, nickel and cobalt
- Certain assistant synthetic compounds

Other destructive synthetics present are formaldehyde-based colour fixing specialists, hydrocarbon-based conditioners and non-biodegradable colouring synthetic substances. Textile effluents also have usually high temperature and pH, both of which are tremendously destructive.

The occurrence of colour in wastewater is one of the key problems in textile manufacturing. Colours are easily visible to human eyes, even at very low concentration. Hence, the colour from textile effluents holds considerable aesthetic significance.

Total dissolved solids (TDS) present in the industry effluents are also a crucial parameter. The application of common salt and sulphur salt in various processes amplifies TDS intensity in the textile effluents.

Deadly poison

When the textile effluent is discharged into water bodies, it reduces the visibility of water as it contains colour. The low visibility of water is harmful to the flora and fauna of water bodies.

Sunlight does not penetrate coloured water. This reduces photosynthesis and the overall productivity of the aquatic ecosystem. Slats present in effluents increase TDS value of the water in freshwater bodies and make them unsuitable for domestic and irrigation purposes.

The high temperature and pH of the wastewater severely impact the water bodies. High temperature reduces the dissolved oxygen of the water bodies, which is essential for fishes and



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Handling textiles is enormously challenging, chemically. It uses abundant, ecologically distant, non-biodegradable chemicals. In the handling of materials, textile industries utilise various colours, synthetic compounds, helper synthetics and estimating materials.

other creatures. Slight alteration of pH is extremely destructive for aquatic life.

Colourful textiles are harmful to the environment not only during manufacturing but also after use. When they are dumped onto open soil or into water bodies, they release toxic heavy metals into the environment. So proper disposal is also necessary to avoid water and soil contamination.

Inorganic salts present in wastewater are acidic or alkaline in nature and diminish water quality. The organic compounds present in textile effluents are generally biodegradable. This reduces water quality as the degradation of these compounds lower the dissolved oxygen of the water bodies.

Heavy metals present in textile effluents are non-biodegradable in nature. These heavy metals go into the food chain by bioaccumulation and biomagnifications. Heavy metals can cause severe human health haz-

ards after entering human bodies through bathing and domestic use of water contaminated by textile effluents.

Textile effluents also contaminate groundwater in the vicinity of textile industries. Dyes cause skin and lung irritation, headaches, congenital malformations and nausea. The presence of mutagenic agents is also reported in dyes.

Incomplete degradation of chemicals may lead to the formation of aromatics. Aromatic amines are responsible for inducing cancer and tumours in humans.

In many parts of the country, textile effluents are used in irrigation with and without treatment. When farmers use treated or untreated wastewater in irrigation, textile effluents pollute the soil by various means.

The high salt content in textile effluents makes the soil less permeable and tough to plough. Heavy metals in textile effluents

bind with soil particles and enter the food chain. Textile effluents also hamper seed germination and change the root shoot ratio.

Proper management and handing of textile effluents is necessary to achieve the United Nations-mandated sustainable development goals. The application of recent and advance water-efficient techniques in textile processing reduces effluent generation.

The application of alternative non-toxic /less toxic chemicals and green dyes reduces the hazardous efficiency of textile effluents. Zero discharge technology in textile processing is also helpful in reducing the pollution hazard of textile industries. Awareness among people to utilise less number of multi-colour clothes is also helpful in reducing the demand for colourful cloth. Our life should be colourful but not always through colourful clothes.

(Courtesy: Down To Earth)

LETTERS

Serve the needy, stop politicking

THE writer Madabhushi Sridhar Acharyulu has rightly said that as the conduct and behaviour of politicians has deteriorated to such an extent that even calamity does not move their heart. The failure of the political class to stand up and come to the rescue of lakhs of people affected by the pandemic but away busy in electioneering dreaming of electoral victory at the cost of social catastrophe exposes the fact that for them life revolves around greed and avarice and not peoples' life.

It is shameful that everytime court had to intervene and remind them about their duties and responsibilities towards people and the society. When Right to health for every citizen is a fundamental right as enshrined in the constitution, it is surprising that on account of sense of lethargy and indifference, politicians failed to prioritise so far. As a result, there is no real strategy to deal with public health emergencies and still no preparedness plan for outbreaks or disaster management plan.

Knowing private hospitals flee the people causing much pain than real cure to the patients, Government's failure to come to the aid of suffering public who

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were endlessly and systematically exploited when it is the right of every citizen to get equitable justice and treatment at affordable costs. It is time, politicians keep aside politics during times of health emergency by going extra mile to exert pressure on government to fulfil the basic needs of people by providing critical care facilities, medicines on priority because providing quality health care for all and access to basic determinant of health is a basic right of every citizen.

KRSrinivasan, Secunderabad

Amartya Sen is not being factual

IT is audacious for Dr Amartya Sen, a non-resident Indian Nobel Laureate to make false comments that the BJP is trying to ignore Bengal's Muslims' interests and welfare with the help of non-Bengali Hindus. He further said that as opined by Gandhiji, Bengal always cherished unity and not division. How false and history-negationist his statements can be realised if one recalls that the Muslim League government of Premier, HS Suhrawardy launched a "Direct Action" of loot, murder, burning, and arson in Calcutta on August 16, 1946 to force Hindus, the opponents of partition of India to create the Islamic state of Pakistan, into submission to Muslim's demand. This Direct Action of Muslims of Bengal plunged whole of north India from Bengal to NWFP and Sindh into history's worse communal carnage.

Further, it was the 34-year-long Communist parties' rule and the 10-year Trinamul Congress rule in West Bengal and decades-long Congress rule in Assam that facilitated the infiltration of millions of Bangladesh Muslims (and of late, Rohingyas) into Bengal and Assam. This is obviously to the detriment of Hindus. These infiltrated Muslims for use as vote-banks by the Congress, Communist parties and the Trinamul Congress.

Amartya Sen tries to cover up his very well-known Marxist-Communist exercise to falsify history to support their belief and faith by flaunting his Nobel Laureate appellation. He gratuitously advises West Bengal's voters to reject BJP. He also commended the welfare policies of Mamata's TMC. Earlier for more than three decades he supported the Communist rule in West Bengal. The 44 years of anti-Bengal's Hindu governments has the approval of this Marxist academician. His record as the Chancellor of Nalanda University was one of infamy.

Dr T Hanuman Chowdary, Secunderabad

Ensure vaccination, avoid crowding

THE government's move to allow 18 years and above to get vaccinated through late should be welcomed. However, both Centre and States have to seriously take steps to end the shortage of vaccines across India as there is a large number of people already waiting for the

second shot and with the easing of the age limit there is bound to be a rush in vaccination centres which can lead to chaos. If the steps are not urgently taken to include more centres, with more youngsters joining the group can even lead to a stampede. Also, we can longer allow the people to stand in queue and send them back which can multiply the spread of the virus. So, everyone who gets registered and comes for vaccination should be vaccinated without fail.

N Nagarajan, Hyderabad

II

FIRST the CM of the Punjab was tested Covid positive, then it was the turn of the CM of Uttar Pradesh and now the CM of Telangana. Apart from these VIPs, many central and State Ministers, IAS and IPS officers have tested positive and alas, some of them lost their lives, all in the service the people and in the service of the country. All these VIP Covid patients don't face problems like finding beds in hospitals, getting a steady support of ventilators and supply of oxygen and high end medical attention round the clock. These are the problems of the general public. The irony is while these "servants of people" find VIP treatment, their 'Masters', the people themselves are deprived of it. Like death, corona is the 'leveller', that treats both the haves and the have nots the same way. But our leaders have made the pandemic look biased and a lover of the powerful and the rich.

MSomasekhra Prasad, Hyderabad

YSR ZERO-INTEREST ON CROP LOAN

Farmers get ₹128.47 cr subsidy

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday credited Rs 128.47 crore directly into the accounts of 6,27,906 farmers under 'YSR Zero-Interest Crop Loan Scheme' for 2019-20 rabi season benefiting those who availed loans up to Rs 1 lakh and repaid them in the stipulated time.

Addressing the beneficiaries and officials through video conference, the Chief Minister said that 60 per cent of the world's population is dependent on agriculture and promoting agriculture would create employment for 62 per cent of the population in the state. He said the state government's objective is to prioritise the welfare of farmers and farm labour and thus even cleared the pending arrears left by the previous government. Since the government came to power in June 2019, a total of Rs 1,132 crore was paid to 61,22,585 farmers under the zero-interest subsidy scheme. He urged the farmers to get enrolled under the e-crop database for availing interest subvention from June 2021.

The Chief Minister said that the government has been providing nine-hour free electricity to the farmers during day time



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy releases a cheque towards interest subsidy for farmers under YSR Zero-Interest Crop Loans Scheme at his camp office on Tuesday

6,27,906 farmers who availed loans up to Rs 1 lakh and repaid them for 2019-20 have been benefited

Says a total of Rs 1,132 cr has been paid to 61,22,585 farmers under the scheme since the YSRCP govt has come to power

benefiting over 18.78 lakh farmers by spending Rs 8,800 crore annually. Through this scheme, each farmer will be saving a minimum of Rs 46,000 every year. The state government has completed the capacity building of feeders to provide free power to farmers with a cost of Rs 1,700 crore.

Reiterating that farmer welfare is the top priority of the state government, Jagan Mohan Reddy stated that almost all the

promises made to the farmers have been fulfilled in the 22-month rule starting from YSR Rythu Bharosa, the first promise of Navaratnalu, benefiting 51.59 lakh farmers at an expenditure of Rs 13101 crore. The government has set up over 10,641 Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) to benefit the farmers in numerous ways, standing by the farmers from seeds to marketing.

Besides these, the government is providing input subsidy

to the farmers to cover the losses in the same crop season and credited Rs 1055 crore. In regard to crop insurance, the government has taken the responsibility of paying the insurance premium, providing insurance to the farmers on a timely basis. Also, the state government had set up a market intervention fund with Rs 3000 crore and providing a minimum support price for the crops to aid farmers.

Minister K Kannababu, principal secretary for agriculture Poonam Malakondaiah, AP Agri Mission Vice-Chairman M V S Nagi Reddy, officials of agriculture, marketing, were among those present at the event.

Daily Covid tally inches toward 9,000 in State

35 new deaths push the toll to 7,472

AMARAVATI

THE state reported 8,987 fresh coronavirus cases on Tuesday, the highest in a day after September 13, while 35 deaths were recorded, another high after October 15. The number of active cases also hit a high of 53,889 after October 4, even as 3,116 patients recovered in 24 hours ending 9 am on Tuesday.

According to the latest health bulletin, the total Covid-19 positives climbed to 9,76,987, recoveries to 9,15,626 and toll 7,472. Nellore district added a staggering 1,347 cases and Srikakulam 1,344 in 24 hours while Guntur reported 1,202 and Chittoor 1,063. East Godavari registered 851, Kurnool 758, Visakhapatnam 675, Krishna 441, Vizianagaram 330, Prakasam 305, Kadapa 297 and Anantapur 275 new cases, while West Godavari stopped just one short of a century. Nellore also reported the highest daily Covid-19 toll of eight, Chittoor and Kadapa five each, Anantapur, Krishna and Srikakulam three each. Kurnool and Prakasam had



two fresh fatalities each while East Godavari, Guntur, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram accounted for one each. In Vijayawada city, tragedy struck a lawyer's family as four members fell prey to coronavirus in a span of three days. Lawyer T Dinesh (37) died of Covid-19 on Tuesday afternoon, hours after his father succumbed. Three days earlier, Dinesh's mother and uncle too died of the infection.

Meanwhile, according to data released by the medical and health department, 892 Covid-infected people were undergoing treatment in ICU on ventilators in hospitals across the state. Another 3,924 were on oxygen support and 1,947 were in general wards. More than 36,000 patients were kept in home isolation and being provided essential medical supplies, according to the State Covid Nodal Officer Arja Srikanth.

Jagan, Guv greet Naidu on his b'day

AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy and Governor Biswa Bhusan Harichandan on Tuesday extended birthday greetings to TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu.

"Birthday greetings to Chandrababu Naidu. I wish good health and a happy life to you by God's blessings," said the Chief Minister.

Similarly, Harichandan extended his birthday wishes to the former Chief Minister. "Heartiest felicitations and

warm birthday greetings to Naidu," he said.

The Governor said that he prayed to Lord Jagannadh and Lord Balaji to bless Naidu with a healthy and long life in the service of people.

Responding to the greetings of Jagan mohan Reddy, Naidu thanked him.

Meanwhile, Chandrababu Naidu's 72nd birthday celebrations were held in a grand manner at TDP central office at Mangalagiri.

TDP leaders, including TD Janardhan, MLC P Ashok Babu,

former minister Alapati Rajendra Prasad, K Pattabhiram, M Srinivasa Reddy, N Brahman, Buchiramprasad and D Narendra participated in the celebrations by cutting a cake and raising slogans praising him.

Speaking on the occasion, TD Janardhan said Chandrababu Naidu is credited with development of the state. He said Naidu developed the state in all sectors despite financial crisis after state bifurcation. He stressed the need for leadership of Chandrababu Naidu again for the brighter prospects of the state.

Top Naxal with ₹20 lakh bounty surrenders to cops

- Jalandar Reddy hails from Bhoompally village in Siddipet district of Telangana
- The State govt will give him a reward of Rs 20 lakh, a house site, support for self-employment

AMARAVATI



DGP Gautam Sawang and other officials addressing a press conference along with surrendered Naxalite M Jalandar Reddy at DGP office in Mangalagiri on Tuesday

MUTTANAGARI Jalandar Reddy, a Naxalite with Rs 20 lakh bounty on his head, surrendered on Tuesday in the presence of director general of police (DGP) D Gautam Sawang.

According to the state police department, Jalandar Reddy surrendered because of lack of local public support, drying up of new recruits from tribals, disillusionment with the Maoist ideology, extensive police outreach programmes and others.

Reddy hails from Bhoompally village of Mirudoddi mandal in Telangana's Siddipet district.

He studied up to Intermediate at government junior college in

Siddipet district and got attracted to Maoist ideology, leading to his joining of the Naxalite ranks as a member of the radical students union in 1998.

Over the past several years, Reddy worked under various capacities within the different wings of Naxalism, including playing a leading role in the abduction of Vineel Krishna, Malkangiri district collector in 2011.

Appreciating his decision to give up Naxalism, the state government will give him a reward of Rs 20 lakh, along with a house plot

and if required agricultural land and support for self-employment.

Meanwhile, AP top cop appealed to the Maoists to shun armed struggle and join the mainstream, calling the Maoist party ideology as obsolete.

"Cadre who voluntarily surrender and join the mainstream will be facilitated according to the surrender and rehabilitation policy of the AP government. Reward amount on their names along with rehabilitation and employment opportunities will be provided," added Sawang.

Ministers' panel to monitor Covid situation

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE state government appointed a committee with five ministers to monitor the Covid vaccination drive and operations of state Covid Command Control Room.

The committee will be headed by health minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas. Buggana Rajendranath Reddy, Mekathoti Sucharitha, Botcha Satyanarayana and K Kannababu will be members of the committee.

It will meet at APIIC building at Mangalagiri on April 22 to discuss the current Covid situation, medical facilities available to patients and functioning of Covid Command Control Centre. Officials of medical and health to participate in the meeting.

Pawan faults decision to conduct SSC exams

Points out that even Centre's CBSE and neighbouring Telangana have cancelled board and Inter first year exams

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

JANA Sena president Pawan Kalyan criticised the state government's decision to conduct Class X examinations amidst present Covid pandemic.

In a statement here on Tuesday, Pawan Kalyan said that AP government was going ahead in holding exams when large number of students studying in various schools, residential schools and hostels and teachers were afflicted with the virus and undergoing treatment. There are as many as 6.4 lakh Class X and 10.5 lakh intermediate students are in the state who, along with their families, would be facing the coronavirus risk because of this decision, he said.

Dismissing the government's excuse of students losing job offers in military if the exams are not conducted in time, Pawan Kalyan said the Central government had already cancelled the CBSE Class X examinations and the Telangana government too followed the example.

The Jana Sena chief also pointed out that the Centre had cancelled the Class XI exams while the Telangana put off Intermediate first year examinations and promoting students to next class. Demanding that the AP government too follow their example, he said SSC and Intermediate first year examinations must be cancelled immediately and students be promoted to higher classes.

Next 3 weeks crucial: Vardhan

Continued from P1

In the meeting, the Home Secretary spoke about the steep growth in coronavirus infections across the country. He advised the UTs to increase RT-PCR testing along with the use of RAT (Rapid Antigen Test) for screening in clusters. The UTs shared the efforts they are undertaking for containment and management of the

cases. Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir and Lakshadweep stated that the rise in cases was due to a large number of inbound travellers.

The Chandigarh administration informed about the door-to-door counselling for increasing vaccination. It said that 905 of the patients in the UT are in home isolation and being monitored by mobile teams. The Delhi admin-

istration discussed shortage of beds and the efforts to augment this through central government's infrastructure and support from DRDO's newly operationalised Covid Hospital.

Dr V K Paul pointed out the criticality of the next three weeks for Covid response measures. The UT administrators were advised to plan in advance for three weeks.



Kamalapuram MLA P Ravindranath Reddy distributing cheque to the farmers under ZPIR scheme on Tuesday

37k famers receive ZPIR instalment

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KADAPA

AS many as 37,173 farmers got benefitted under Zero Per cent Interest Rate (ZPIR) scheme for 2019-20 rabi season in the district.

An amount of Rs 6.52 crores was credited to the accounts of farmers. During video conference with the Chief Minister on Tuesday, district collector Ch Harikiran told that ZPIR scheme is more beneficial to the farmers who borrowed crop loan up to Rs 1 lakh from the banks. He said that Rs 25.21 crores was credited in the accounts of 1,12,234 farmers in two instalments for last kharif season in the district. The collector lauded the move initiated by the government giving boost and confidence among the farmers in the district.

Kamalapuram MLA P Ravindranath Reddy praised Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy for his courageous decisions in implementing welfare schemes to all sections in the state despite

serious financial hurdles. He urged the farmers to utilise scheme in proper manner by paying outstanding in prompt manner.

Farmers who participated in the video conference thanked the Chief Minister for extending financial support during crop season.

One of the farmers L Srinivasulu Reddy of Peddaputhedu village of Valluru mandal narrated his experience that he had received Rs 24,000 under ZPIR scheme for the last kharif season and borrowed Rs 80,000 from the banks and paid them in time. He used the amount as investment for growing Buddasenaga crop without any financial problems.

He said that if farmers who borrowed from the banks would have benefited under this scheme if they pay outstanding in time.

Joint collector M Gouthami, agriculture advisory committee chairman N Prasad Reddy, animal husbandry joint director Dr N Satya Prakash and others were present.

Police arrest 'fun bucket' Bhargav for sexual assault on minor

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VISAKHAPATNAM

TIK Tok artiste Bhargav, who shot into fame through 'fun bucket', was taken into custody by Vizag police for sexually assaulting a minor, making her pregnant.

Sharing details at a press conference here on Tuesday, ACP of Disha women police station G Prem Kajal said the victim used to make Tik Tok videos and post them on social media platforms. After viewing some of her videos, Chippada Bhargav (25) approached her and reportedly proposed to her, the ACP mentioned.

When the victim avoided him, Bhargav began to threaten and blackmail her. Later, the police said the accused took the minor to his house and to Hyderabad under the pretext of providing opportunity to her in reality shows. The police mentioned that the accused assaulted the victim sexually and made her pregnant. Led by the Assistant Commissioner of Police, teams were formed and Bhargav was taken into custody at Kompally, Rangareddy district, Hyderabad on April 18. A mobile phone and a four-wheeler were seized from the accused.



ACP of Disha Women Police Station G Prem Kajal speaking to the media in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

- A mobile phone and four-wheeler seized from him

Scale up production

Continued from P1

The Prime Minister said the health infrastructure of India's private sector has played a big role in the country's fight against Covid-19 and in the coming days, the private sector will play an even more active role in the vaccination drive. "This will require better coordination between hospitals and industry," he said.

During the virtual conference, the vaccine manufacturers thanked the Prime Minister for the government's decision to allow vaccination for everyone above the age of 18 and various steps taken to give more incentives and flexibility.

They also discussed their plans to ramp up production, upcoming vaccine candidates and research on the new variants.

A death every minute since Sunday

Continued from P1

This has increased to 2,859 cases per hour and 20 deaths per hour as the State reported 68,631 cases and 503 deaths on Sunday.

As per the Union Health Ministry, 10 States account for 82.74 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (351). Delhi follows with 240 daily deaths.

Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan reported 77.67 per cent of the new cases on Tuesday.

3rd mutant flagged in 4 States

Continued from P1

Data also shows that in West Bengal, the B.1.617 strain was found in 133 out of 1373 samples; it was followed by three other surge states Maharashtra (122/1931), Karnataka (20/539), and Gujarat (16/859).

Genome sequencing, the study of genetic structures of an organism and the changes happening therein, produces a wealth of information that can throw light on the origins of the virus, the routes it has taken to reach a particular geography and the changes, or mutations, that are making the virus stronger or weaker.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Nod for subsidy policy for coal gasification plant

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has given its approval for a specific subsidy to promote this innovative technology of coal-gasification for the first time in India. Coal gasification plants are strategically important as coal prices are non-volatile and coal is abundantly available in the country


— Piyush Goyal, Union Minister



COVID DISRUPTION

Credai seeks support from FinMin

REPRESENTATIVES of realtors' body Credai met Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and sought government's support to deal with the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. They also presented the recommendations addressing challenges in the real estate sector

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	75.68	South	
Euro	91.24	African Rand	6.02
UAE Dirham	21.01	Hong Kong Dollar	11.1
Thai Baht	2.63	Japanese Yen	0.79
British Pound	105.81	New Zealand Dollar	54.54
Australian Dollar	58.87	Saudi Riyal	21.98
Canadian Dollar	60.46	Swedish Krona	10.26
Swiss Franc	82.57	Singapore Dollar	57.53

DELHI WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Cashfree in pact with Dukaan

Cashfree has announced its collaboration with Dukaan, a leading SaaS platform to create online stores, to enable seamless digital customer payment collections and disbursements for merchants who set up their digital stores through the platform. Through this partnership with Cashfree, over three million merchants associated with Dukaan across 3,200 tier two and three cities will have access to the online payment stack and end customers can make online payments directly to the digital shop owners. Akash Sinha, CEO and co-founder, Cashfree, said: "Cash on delivery orders in the Indian e-commerce space have been on a decline since last year. Our partnership with Dukaan showcases how setting up an e-commerce store with an ability to collect online payments can be convenient for both merchants and end customers."

Bajaj Auto's new bike

Bajaj Auto has launched the new Pulsar NS 125 in India. The new Pulsar NS 125 is an addition to the Pulsar 'NS' range of motorcycles. The range is packed with features such as 125cc B56 DTS-i engine which gives superior power delivery and immediate throttle response that delivers a power of 12 PS which is the highest in its segment. Its perimeter frame offers high-stiffness. The motorcycle is available at Rs 93,690. Sarang Kanade, president, Motorcycles, Bajaj Auto said: "We are excited to bring the pedigree of the higher cc Pulsar NS series bikes, for first-time performance riding enthusiasts. The thrill that the new Pulsar NS 125 is built to offer, will appeal to a large segment of customers."

Motorola unveils g series

Motorola has launched a g series devices, moto g60 and moto g40 fusion. The moto g60 is equipped with a 108 MP1 camera system and a 32MP selfie camera which gives quad pixel technology with 4x more light sensitivity. Along with a led flash, the result is sharper, brighter selfies no matter what the conditions. The phone will go on sale starting April 27 from 12pm onwards on Flipkart. The price of the product is Rs 17,999. The moto g40 fusion will be available in two variants 4GB RAM + 64GB storage, 6GB RAM + 128GB storage and features such as 64MP quad function camera with a 6000 mAh battery. The product will go on sale starting May 1 from 12 pm on Flipkart at Rs 13,999.

Demand for IVF on rise

Covid infections since last year have taken the world literally by storm and left a lot of people in a state of perennial confusion but one need not delay IVF (in-vitro fertilization) consultation as IVF clinics have started implementing many internationally recommended safety measures and guidelines, say experts. The demand of IVF treatment during the pandemic has seen a substantial surge as people have had time with family. Fertility Specialist from Dr Padmaja Fertility (IVF & Surrogacy), Dr. Padmaja Divakar said: "Infertility clinics are equipping themselves with special air cleaning and sanitizing systems Steps are being taken to minimize contact. Most blood investigations are done in the premises. Patients are also sent to the labs and clinics near their place of residence for tests".

Covid surge: GST, TDS filings haunt taxpayers

KUMUD DAS
MUMBAI

TAXPAYERS across the country are tense these days due to the fast arrival of due dates for filing tax returns as they find it difficult to do the job amid Covid crisis. The crucial dates like 20th April to 24th April (the due dates for filing of GST Return 3b) and 30th April (the due date for payment of TDS) are haunting the tax consultants and their clients the most these days in the wake of sudden spike in Covid cases across the country.

"I am tested positive for Covid-19 and isolated at home. Due to this, neither I nor my wife can visit bank for payment of taxes. The government should immediately relax the due dates to save the small business from increased liabilities of interest and penalties at this critical time," says Rohit Verma, a Noida based businessman. The taxpayers have resorted to Twitter to raise their voice through hashtags like '#Extend.Due.Date.Immediately' and '#Extend.Due.Dates'. These hashtags are trending on twitter for extension of due dates of GST and TDS returns in the wake of sudden rise of coronavirus cases. These tweets speak volumes the tough time taxpayers are having due to the surge in second wave of Covid-19 and their inability in filing tax return in the given timeline.

"With sudden wave of Covid-19, many tax payers and tax professionals who have got infected themselves

With second wave of Covid-19, taxpayers and tax professionals who got infected may not be able to pay taxes such as GST and TDS or file GST returns



or have to run around saving lives of near and dear ones may not be able to pay taxes such as GST and TDS or file GST returns before the due date," says a New Delhi-based Chartered Accountant Abhishek Aneja. Even last year, at the time of first wave of Covid-19, the central government had acted reasonably and came out with the required relaxations in the due dates. This is the need of the hour now as well, he added. The situation is so scary that some of the young CAs have died of the infection in the recent past, while they were busy conducting bank audits. "The finance and tax professionals are also struggling with office closure, staff shortage and physical documentation specially required for small business where they manage their entire accounting and tax work. All this is creating a problem for timely filing of returns," says Ajay Mohan, a New

Mumbai-based Registered Valuer (SFA) and management accountant. The central govt should extend dues dates of small businesses having turnover less than Rs 100 crore so that they could submit their compliances and avoid late payment and penalty for delay in filing returns, he added.

With above mentioned issues, small businesses have problem in filing of various returns of GST, Income tax, company law and labour law compliances. The small businesses are already facing financing problems and burden of late fees and penalty will further increase their woes. They could have avoided these fees and penalties if things would have been normal. But in this situation, they are helpless and are under financial and mental pressure for no fault of theirs. Sanjay Aggarwal, president, PHDCCI told Bizz Buzz that

the Union Finance Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman did speak to him over phone on Sunday to know his views on how to tackle the ongoing situation of second wave of Covid, but the very issue of extension of due date for filing of the return for direct and indirect taxes didn't figure in the interaction. "We are currently in the process of writing a letter to the government shortly, requesting the government to extend the due date of filing of returns by a minimum of 15 days, keeping in view the given scenario," Aggarwal said. The demand for extension of tax return filing dates is pouring in from various parts of the country. For example, the Federation of Trade Associations of Pune has raised a demand for extension of filing GST returns. In an interesting development, Maharashtra Chief Minister, Uddhav Thackeray has written a letter to Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, urging him to postpone the GST return submission or March & April at least for three months for small and medium taxpayers. Department of Trade and Taxes, GNCT of Delhi shall remain closed during the period of curfew imposed. Order dated April 19 issued by Special Commissioner T&T with specific directions to all the officers including the directions to work from home using VPN link. It has further added to the woes of the taxpayers.

States' lockdown hits economic activities: Crisil

MUMBAI

WITH the pandemic caseload remaining over 2.5 lakh for the second day, a report has warned of the grim economic scenario as with even limited restrictions on people's movement and some businesses, power consumption and e-way GST bill collections are already down. The report has also called for speeding up the vaccination drive that of late has been on the decline on a weekly basis.

With cases spreading very fast, more and more states are clamping down more localised restrictions on people movement and commerce, falling just short of a complete lockdown. This already has electricity consumption and GST e-way bills collection, which are used as proxies to track economic activity, softening somewhat and it needs to be seen whether this softening is a blip, or marks a shift in a trend, Crisil said in a note on Tues-



day. What proves to be a saving grace is that manufacturing and construction activities are operating, and travel and recreation services are also allowed in most states with social distancing measures. But a greater concern is the stuttering pace of vaccinations as the number of people vaccinated per million daily was lower at 2,408 for the week to April 18 compared to 2,554 in the week to April 11. As a result, as of April 18, only 16.4 per cent of population in 45-65 age-group is vaccinated, and those in the 65 and above age bracket, as much as 33.1 per cent are inoculated, said the report.

Market fails to hold initial gains amid Covid-19, lockdowns

Sensex, Nifty extend losses in choppy trade; banking, IT stocks drag

MUMBAI

DOMESTIC equity benchmarks Sensex and Nifty erased early gains to finish with losses for the second day on the trot on Tuesday, as surging Covid-19 cases and growing localised restrictions continued to dent investor sentiment.

The BSE Sensex slipped 243.62 points or 0.51 per cent to close the session at 47,705.80, an over two-month low. Intra-day, the BSE gauge rose as much as 529 points to touch the day's peak of 48,478.34. Likewise, the NSE Nifty climbed over 167 points to reclaim the key

14,500-level during the day, but surrendered all its gains to end at 14,296.40, showing a drop of 63.05 points or 0.44 per cent. On the Sensex chart, UltraTech Cement, HCL Tech, HDFC, Tech Mahindra, HDFC Bank and HUL emerged as the major laggards - falling as much as 4.70 per cent. On the other hand, Bajaj Finserv, Dr Reddy's, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Auto, M&M and Maruti were among the top gainers, climbing up to 3.70 per cent. Market analysts said a continued spike in fresh Covid-19 cases in the country and announcements of restrictions by several states



have clearly dented investor sentiments and posed a threat to earnings recovery. "Indian markets witnessed a bounce-back in its opening trade, however, failed to hold on to its early gains due to weak global cues and the possibility of a stricter lockdown in Maharashtra." Despite the vaccine drive kindling hopes of recovery, the trend in the market will depend on positive developments like decreasing Covid cases and lifting restrictions.

IT and FMCG were the sectoral laggards while mid and small-caps outperformed," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Sectorally, BSE IT index fell over one per cent, followed by tech with 0.77 per cent drop. Other major losers were basic materials, FMCG, finance and banking. However, healthcare, capital goods, telecom and industrials closed in the green.

T-Hub ties up with Digital Catapult

HYDERABAD

STARTUP incubator T-Hub has partnered with Digital Catapult to boost UK-India collaborations. The partnership has enabled the creation of 'The UK-India Immersive Technology Sustainability Expert Group.' It aims to increase the innovation quotient between the two countries in immersive technology and towards achieving net-zero emissions target by 2050. T-Hub scouted relevant startups, corporates and academia from India, while Digital Catapult, the UK's national innovation centre for advanced digital technologies, shortlisted startups, and academia from the UK. The project has been funded by the UK government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. On March 30, a half-day workshop was conducted for the expert group to agree on themes, discuss project ideas and challenges that immersive technologies can solve.

Sand mining resumes in Kaleshwaram

HANS BUSINESS
MAHADEVPUR (BHUPALPALLY DISTRICT)

WITH water level receding in the Medigadda (Lakshmi) barrage, the starting point of the multipurpose Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Scheme (KLIS), the sand mining resumed in the Godavari river near Mahadevpur and its surrounding areas of Jayashanker Bhupalpally district in Telangana. The temple village of Kaleshwaram after which the mega irrigation project is named is 17 kilometers away from this mandal headquarters. The Jayashanker Bhupalpally district, which shares its border with the Maharashtra State, is home to 23 sand reaches - the highest among all the Telangana districts - where sand quarrying takes place. Sand quarrying at most of these reaches resumed and dumping activity kicked off earlier this month.

Quarry contractors mine the sand using cranes and transport it to nearby dump yards from where customers lift the sand after purchasing it online from the Telangana State Mineral Development Corporation (TSMDC).

"Several sand quarries fall under the submergence areas of the Medigadda barrage. With the water level receding in the barrage, the quarrying activity has resumed here," Ravi Kumar, Project Officer, Mulugu, TSMDC, told Bizz Buzz. On deputation to the Mahadevpur area, he oversees 14 sand quarries in Mahadevpur, Bomma-



pur, Brahmanapally, Suraram, Begloor and Elikeshwaram villages. Villages like Palgula, Kuntlam are home to other reaches in the district. The sand quarrying is expected to reach full scale soon. "Mahadevpur-4 and 5 quarries started operations 15 days back, while Mahadevpur-1, 2, 3 quarries resumed operations a week ago. Brahmanapally and Bommapur quarries started a few days back," the Project Officer said.

However, transportation from dump yards is taking place at a few quarries only as it depends on the sales. At present, the corporation is releasing 50,000 to 60,000 cubic metres of sand daily from this area. Demand for fine sand which is used for plastering is very high and several quarries in this area produce fine sand. Sand from the Bhupalpally district is predominantly used for construction activities in Hyderabad, Warangal and a few other areas. However, Hyderabad is the main market. "All the sand is sold online," Ravi Kumar said.

