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Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min
temp. 38/18 °C

Don't worry! They are busy with account holders of Twitter, Facebook...!

New Delhi: Justice Rajesh Bindal was on Tuesday appointed as the acting chief justice of the Calcutta High Court, a law ministry notification said. Justice Bindal is the senior-most judge of the Calcutta HC. He has been appointed as acting chief justice with effect from April 29.

In a separate development, the court heard a 'quash petition' filed by ex-MLA Dhulipalla Narendra on the ACB filing a case against him in relation to alleged irregularities in the Sangam Dairy. A single judge bench headed by R Raghunandan Rao heard counsels from the petitioner and the state government and reserved the verdict.

While asking the Centre to inform it about the requirement of oxygen, its availability, steps to augment its production and distribution, the Supreme Court reiterated that it did not intend to stop different high courts from taking up Covid-related matters and that it will only concentrate on eliminating systemic problems which require nationwide coordination.

The government in its order said that only up to 20 participants are permitted to attend funerals and related activities.

“Regarding pricing of vaccination, different manufacturers are quoting different prices. There are powers under the Patents Act. This is a pandemic and a national crisis,” of the bench of Justices D.R. Chandrachud and Justices L. Nageswara Rao and Ravindra Bhat remarked.

- The Supreme Court urged the government to examine the necessity of invoking provisions under the Patent Act to regulate prices of Covid vaccines if necessary.

The court sought details on the availability of beds in hospitals for the infected.

On Monday, the Madras High Court in a stinging

Muthoot Family - 800 years of Business Legacy

IN BRIEF

JAGAN EXPRESSES GRIEF OVER DEATH OF SATYANARAYANA

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has expressed grief over the death of senior Congress leader and former Andhra Pradesh minister M. Satyanarayana Rao. He expressed profound sympathy to the family.

Satyanarayana Rao was recently admitted to the Nims for treatment of Coronavirus infection. He died on Tuesday morning while receiving treatment.

His hometown is Vedira in Ramadugu mandal of Karimnagar district in Telangana.

He was the general-secretary of the AICC, a three-time MP and a minister in the YSR Cabinet in 2004. He also served as the Joint Andhra Pradesh RTC chairman and PCC president. He was very close to former CM late Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

YSRC MLA Malladi Vishnu expressed shock over the death of Satyanarayana. He said that the late leader has stood by Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy during his Padayatra.

Telangana State Chief minister KCR expressed his condolence.

"MSR had a unique style of politics as a staunch Telangana supporter, as an MP and as a state minister. He was known for his straightforward nature," read the tweet from the CM's office.

The Telangana CM has advised TS chief secretary Somesh Kumar to ensure the final rites of MSR are held with state honours.

LOCKDOWN WIPED OUT ₹1 LAKH CR, SAYS CM JAGAN

From Page 1

"If the government loses one rupee due to the lockdown, the common man will lose ₹4. The lockdown had cost the government 20,000 crore in 2020, which means a loss of about ₹80,000 crore to the people."

On oxygen supply, the chief minister said 320 to 340 metric tonnes of oxygen is being supplied every day to state hospitals, and this is adequate at present.

"Those with SPO2 level less than 94 should be provided with oxygen," the CM noted.

Jagan said permission will be granted to only 50 people for marriages and officials must ensure people do not gather at gyms, parks and swimming pools. All the financial and commercial activities should continue but by adhering to Covid protocols, he said.

The chief minister said seven crore vaccine doses are being manufactured in the country per month, of which one crore was of Covaxin and the remaining the Covishield. Vaccination of two doses is completed for 11.30 lakh people and single dose for 45.48 lakh people in the state, all of age above 45. Vaccination will also be given to people above 18-45 years.

Jagan said district collectors should oversee the functioning of the 104 call center and ensure effective functioning. The 104 number should be registered in the minds of the people as a one-stop solution for all issues related to Covid.

He said beds should be arranged to Covid patients within three hours of calling the 104 center and an adequate number of doctors should be available for each of these call centers.

On beds in hospitals, the Chief Minister said collectors have identified a total of 355 hospitals across districts for treatment of Covid with a bed capacity of 28,377 in which 17,901 beds are occupied.

Treatment in these hospitals is completely free and medicines and health care will be extended to patients free of cost.

The Chief Minister said Joint Collector (Village/Ward Secretariat development) should completely focus on tackling the Covid situation in the districts. "The joint collector should ensure good sanitation facilities, quality food supply, availability of doctors and paramedical staff, setting up of help desks etc. They should monitor the performance of Aarogya Mitras through CCTV cameras. They should also coordinate with call centres and ensure all works are done on time."

The chief minister said Covid hospitals at district level should be divided into clusters and in-charges should be appointed for them. District-level Flying Squads should be set up by also including the medicine regulatory department officials in it.

For Covid treatment



A critically ill Covid-19 patient is shifted to VIMS Hospital in an ambulance for better treatment in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. — P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

Coronavirus spreads to agency area in EG

Movement of people to other places should be restricted: Experts

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 27

Covid-19 has spread to the agency area of Rampachodavaram and Chinturu mandals vigorously in East Godavari district, with more than 225 active cases and the infected patients being treated.

Three villages - Mothugudem, Kalleru and Kammuru - in Chinturu mandal were declared as containment zones due to severity of the Covid-19 pandemic. 21 children, studying at Kalleru Ashram School, are infected with Covid-19 while 15 villagers are also suffering from the virus. Two or three employees of the area, working in other places like Bhadrachalam, Jagdalpur and Visakhapatnam have visited the village during weekend holidays and got the virus to the area.

The officials opine that the virus spread into the area because of those employees.

Noticing the situation, Rampachodavaram ITDA project director Venkata Ramana has imposed sev-



A health worker gives vaccination to a woman outside the Giripuram health centre in Vijayawada on Tuesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

eral restrictions like reducing the business hours to 7 pm and closing shandy markets and preventing crowds in public places and others.

Venkata Ramana said that all necessary steps are being taken to render good medical treatment to the patients and at the same time organising awareness programmes to curb the virus. He said the

RT-PCR tests are being conducted at Primary Health Centres and the medical and health department personnel are giving medicines to home quarantine patients from time to time. However, he said that more than 110 cases reported and unfortunately two patients died in the division.

It is said that there is no Covid-19 testing centre in

the Chinturu Division. There was a proposal of setting up a covid-19 centre in the area, but it has not been materialised yet.

In the Rampachodavaram agency area division, nearly 105 active cases prevail. Many people in Rampachodavaram agency division are moving to other places like Rajamahendravaram and nearby places of Rampachodavaram and Visakhapatnam border areas, villages on way to Bhadrachalam and other places, which may increase the chances of spreading the virus.

The experts say that the movement of people to other places should be restricted for some time to curb the virus.

Assistant Project Officer of ITDA of Rampachodavaram Naidu said that a health care centre has been set up at Rampachodavaram, linking all PHCs. He said that the centre is coordinating 18 PHCs and action is being taken from time to time. He said that already vaccination is being done in the area.

MLA announces lockdown in Chandragiri constituency

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 27

Government whip and Chandragiri MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy on Tuesday sprang a surprise by announcing lockdown in his constituency.

At a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy were considering lockdown as a last resort, the ruling YSR Congress MLA took the initiative and announced that the shops would be allowed to open between 6 am and 10 am. "We will not allow any public movement after 10 am," he announced at a media conference in Tirupati. The lockdown will come into force in next three days, he added.

Bhaskar Reddy's unilateral decision on lockdown earned him a pat from the Opposition parties who

BJP DEMANDS HEALTH EMERGENCY

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 27

The vice-president of state BJP unit and former MLA P. Vishnu Kumar Raju demanded that the government impose a health emergency in the state due to the Covid-19 spreading like wildfire all over.

He said the patients were in panic for not finding beds in the hospitals, Covid-19 related medi-

cines in the medical shops, standing long for hours for testing and vaccination. "There is lack of proper planning in handling the situation," the BJP leader said.

He strongly condemned the government for deploying employees for demolition of alleged illegal buildings and shops when their services were required for Covid-19 management.

wanted the Chief Minister to learn a lesson on or two from his whip. The Chief Minister was targeted by the Opposition for going ahead with conducting SSC and other public examinations.

The MLA also announced that he would donate Rs 25 lakh to set up 100 oxygen beds in Chandragiri gov-

ernment hospital and 50 beds in Naravaripalli Primary Health Centre. Incidentally, former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu hails from Naravaripalli. "Measures are being taken to set up bulk cylinders at these hospitals for an uninterrupted supply of oxygen," said the MLA.

Jagananna Vasati Devena set for launch today

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted reviews of various welfare schemes and government departments during a meeting with district collectors on Tuesday. He said the Jagananna Vasati Devena would be launched on April 28, followed by Rythu Bharosa and Matsyakara Bharosa on May 13 and May 18 respectively. Payment of insurance premium for kharif 2020 will start on May 25.

While explaining the progress of house site pattas, the officials said that a total of 30,28,346 are to be distributed, of which 94 per cent or 28,54,983 have been distributed so far. Of 17,053 Jagananna colonies, pattas have been distributed to 16,450. Distribution of pattas is pending in Nellore, Guntur, Vizianagaram, Kadapa, East Godavari, and West Godavari districts.

The CM directed officials to complete the distribution within the next 15 days. He also held discussions regarding the status of fresh applica-

● **TENDER PROCESS** had been completed for 311 of the required 353 buildings. Further, the officials also stated that of the 55,607 anganwadi centres in the state, 27,438 were functioning in rented spaces.

tions for house sites and construction of new houses.

While the target for April is 2.50 crore work days, only 1.89 work days had been completed as of April 26, the CM said and directed the officials to ensure one crore work days are completed in every district in the next two months. Wage component needs to be improved in Nellore, Guntur, Krishna, West Godavari and Kurnool districts, he added.

He said that while 10,929 village secretariat buildings had been approved and construction had started, only 6,057 buildings were near-completion. Stating that construction had been delayed in Kadapa, Chittoor, Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Krishna, and Anantapur districts, he directed authorities to

ensure the construction of all buildings by the end of June.

Under Rythu Bharosa Kendras, 10,408 buildings had been approved, of which 2,649 were near-completion, the officials said. Construction of all buildings is expected to be completed by July.

While 8,585 buildings were approved for Dr Y.S.R. Health Clinics (rural), only 1,755 have been constructed. Officials stated that work was delayed in Anantapur, Visakhapatnam, Kurnool, Kadapa, East Godavari, and Guntur districts, adding that construction was expected to be completed by the end of August. There was also a need for 560 urban health centres in the state. Tender process had been completed for 311 of the required 353 buildings.

Further, the officials also stated that of the 55,607 anganwadi centres in the state, 27,438 were functioning in rented spaces. Under the Nadu Nedu scheme, work on construction of 4,706 new Anganwadi centres and renovation of 3,928 was underway.

Govt hands over Sangam dairy to APDDCL

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

After former Telugu Desam MLA Dhulipalla Narendra was arrested by the Anti-Corruption Bureau, and a preliminary report was submitted, the Andhra Pradesh government handed over Sangam dairy to the government-run AP Dairy Development Corporation Limited, and issued orders on Tuesday.

Narendra, who was the former chairman of Sangam dairy, was arrested on charges of illegalities. Meanwhile, the sub-collector of Tenali has been appointed to look after the dairy's operations with immediate effect.

Animal husbandry department special chief secretary Dr. Poonam Malakondaiah issued the order, which stated that the milk commissioners and registrar of milk cooperatives had submitted that certain irregularities, including misuse of government assets, had been committed by then chairman Narendra and Sangam dairy. Accordingly, the govern-

ment had requested the ACB to inquire into the allegations.

ACB's inquiry report declared that there was prima facie evidence concerning the involvement of the then chairman, then managing director, and other officials of Sangam dairy, along with then district cooperative office, Guntur, in transferring 10 acres of government land to a trust, which was set up in memory of Narendra's late father. Narendra allegedly used title deeds of properties belonging to the government and raised huge sums of money through loans.

In order to protect the interests of milk producers, employees and consumers, the unit's day-to-day activities shall continue unobstructed. Additionally, Tenali's sub-collector shall be present in the unit's premises to ensure that all operations continue smoothly.

Narendra had earlier filed a quash petition in the AP High Court, challenging the cases filed by the ACB. The HC had reserved its verdict.

TD alleges YSRC conspired to hand over AP dairies to Gujarat

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

TD leaders objected to the transfer of the dairy when the matter was still pending. Former minister and TD politburo member Nakka Anand Babu criticised the Jagan Mohan Reddy government of 'hatching a conspiracy' to destroy the dairy and hand it over to Gujarat-based Amul industries out of political vendetta.

Anand Babu said that lakhs of farmers, who depended on the Sangam dairy, would now be shattered because of the government's thoughtless activities.

He further alleged that the current regime was adopting backdoor meth-

● **ANAND BABU** FURTHER alleged that the current regime was adopting backdoor methods, in order to crush the dairy, even as the case was still pending.

ods, in order to crush the dairy, even as the case was still pending. Babu also deplored that while the Chief Minister and his ministers do not care about farmers whatsoever, they were also destroying other organisations that were helping the dairy farmers.

"For decades, the Sangam dairy has been taking up many novel activities to give better deals to the farmers.

It is a well-reputed dairy in the entire state but the current government just wants to crush all good organisations" he alleged, adding that local dairies in the state were being encroached, only to transfer their business to Amul illegally.

Anand Babu also claimed that there was a conspiracy to transfer AP companies and their properties to Gujarat-based companies. He said the Chief Minister was doing this solely to secure the blessings of the Prime Minister so as to escape from his CBI and ED cases, under which the management of several ports in the state have been handed over to a Gujarat-based company.

ANIMAL CARE

Joint action plan soon to handle stray elephant menace, submit it to Centre for its nod

Plan to set up elephant corridor in Koundinya

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Forest officials in an inter-state virtual meet have proposed to set up an elephant corridor in Koundinya forest to prevent elephants entering the human habitations and also to protect them. Forest officials from Tamil Nadu and

Karnataka attended a virtual meet held under the aegis of AP forest department on Tuesday. AP principal chief conservator of forests N. Prateep Kumar said that though the AP government had taken steps to prevent elephants to stray into human habitations from the forests, some of them from the

neighbouring states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were entering the AP forest and added that due to lack of food and water, elephants from Koundinya elephant sanctuary were straying into villages while some of them were getting electrocuted as some farmers set up electric fencing to protect their crops.

The officials said that the elephants from Tamil Nadu were reaching Koundinya forests in AP as the TN forest teams were opening fire on herds of elephants to disperse them while elephants from Karnataka too reaching the AP forests via Kupam.

The senior officials from the three states in the meet-

ing have come up with a series of suggestions and have resolved to meet at regular intervals and to solve the issue with coordination. They have opted to set up an elephant corridor as Koundinya forest is located in parts of three states and to appoint a nodal officer from each state. They have also planned to come up

with a joint action plan benefiting all the three states to handle the stray elephant menace and submit it to the Centre for its consent.

Karnataka chief conservator of forests (wildlife) Vijay Kumar Gopi, Tamil Nadu chief conservator of forests (wildlife) Munjamil Abbas and other senior officials were present.

IN BRIEF

WOMAN'S BODY
SHIFTED ON BIKE
IN PALASADC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 27

After futile attempts to get an ambulance or a vehicle, a man and his brother-in-law were forced to carry their mother's body on a motorcycle for a distance of 18 km. The incident took place in Palasa mandal of Srikakulam on Tuesday.

Reports said 50-year-old woman G. Chenchu of Killoyi tribal hamlet under Mandasa mandal in Srikakulam district fell ill. Her son Narendra and son-in-law Ramesh took her to Neelamani Durga Hospital in Palasa Town of the district for treatment, where she was referred to a diagnostic centre for a CT scan.

The woman underwent the CT scan but died before the report arrived. Later, the doctor going by the scan report said that the woman had Covid-19 symptoms. Hoping to arrange an ambulance or any other vehicle, the family kept waiting with the body before ferrying it to the cremation ground on a bike.

The revenue officials said that the last rites of the woman were performed as per the Covid-19 protocol.

TOMATO PRICES
TO CRASH
THIS SEASONDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, APRIL 27

Owing to higher production, compression of demand and market disruption amid Covid-19 second wave crisis, the prices of tomato have plummeted to their lowest in the current season.

Earlier this week, the price of tomato was ₹2-₹3 per kg in the wholesale markets of Palamaner and Madanapalle in Chittoor district, which is the largest supplier of this perishable additive to markets in the neighbouring states and few other north Indian states.

Due to high moisture-led short shelf life, coupled with high arrivals and impact of lack of demand from bulk users, the farmers and traders at the "wholesale mandis" were selling their tomato crop in a hurry to avoid its spoilage. The deteriorating quality of the stored tomato also led to a dramatic price fall.

GANG HELD FOR
ILLEGAL SALE OF
REMDESIVIRDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

A gang of seven members was arrested in Vijayawada on Tuesday for allegedly selling the remdesivir injections at exorbitant prices illegally. The gang was selling the injections at higher prices against the orders issued by the state government and making money.

The remdesivir injection is used by Covid-19 patients in the critical conditions and has very high demand in the state. Taking advantage of the situation, the gang resorted to selling the injection at a very high price. On a complaint received from a victim, the Patamata police in Vijayawada registered a case by arresting seven persons.

Patamata circle inspector Ravi Suresh Reddy and his team arrested the seven-member gang and seized cash of Rs 2,32,200 and two injections of expiry date. The circle Inspector said the gang was making money by diverting the injections from the hospitals.

The arrested gang members are Mande-pudi Mohana Krishna of Penamaluru, Maturi Srinivas Kumar of Kothapeta, Y. Ananta Reddy of Bhavanip-uram, Arigela Raja of Ramavarappadu, Gum-madi Naresh, Gollapudi Tarun Kumar and Myneni Veerendra Sivanath of Kanuru.

The gang collected money from one Hitesh Kumar, a resident of Moghalrajpuram, Vijayawada, for sale of injections. Hitesh needs remdesivir injection for his business partner's father. He contacted Mohan Krishna and Maturi Srinivas Kumar for the injections.

The duo had collected ₹58,000 for two injections on April 25 against the original price of only ₹4,800.

When Hitesh took the injections to the hospital for the treatment, the doctor noticed that two injections have an expiry date.

Later, Hitesh contacted Ananta Reddy for the injections. Reddy had collected ₹1,40,000 for four injections, each injection costing ₹35,000.



Elderly people wait for their turn to get administered with the second dose of Covid vaccine at Urban Primary Health Centre at Chinnawaltair in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

State faces uphill task to
transport liquid oxygen

Shortage of tankers to bring oxygen from other states

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA APRIL 27

Andhra Pradesh faces an uphill task to transport liquid medical oxygen to filling stations and hospitals here from other states due to shortage of cryogenic oxygen tankers.

Daily demand for medical oxygen to treat the Coronavirus patients in the state ranges from 340 tonnes to 360 tonnes. At times, this goes up to 390 tonnes. AP is maintaining the stocks of nearly 480 tonnes of medical oxygen a day. This means the quantum that is available is sufficient for the time being.

However, as the number of Coronavirus patients is rising rapidly, with many of them requiring medical oxygen, the available stocks may get exhausted.

- Daily demand for medical oxygen to treat the Coronavirus patients in the state ranges from 340 tonnes to 360 tonnes. At times, this goes up to 390 tonnes.
- AP is maintaining the stocks of nearly 480 tonnes of medical oxygen a day.
- Only about 60 oxygen tankers are available for transport of medical oxygen, be it from other states to here or for internal distribution to hospitals
- Transportation of LMO from states like Odisha to AP has become a major problem

The Centre has allotted liquid medical oxygen to AP, some 150 tonnes, from Angul in Odisha, 68 tonnes from Bellary in Karnataka, 10 tonnes from Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu, 100 tonnes from RINL, Visakhapatnam, 60 tonnes from Liquinox in Srikakulam and 40 tonnes from Ellen Berries in Visakhapatnam.

Though the total daily quantum of medical oxy-

gen thus allotted comes to 428 tonnes, the state is facing a tough task to transport this from Odisha, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, for want of oxygen tankers.

AP health authorities say it takes three to four days for the tankers to reach the supply from Odisha to this state for its local supply. Only about 60 oxygen tankers are available for transport of medical oxygen,

be it from other states to here or for internal distribution to hospitals within AP.

Unless AP manages to get more cryogenic oxygen tankers and receive additional quantum of medical oxygen, the state may not be able to meet the increasing demand for the oxygen in hospitals treating Coronavirus patients.

AP state nodal officer for medical oxygen S Shan Mohan said, "Transportation of LMO from states like Odisha to AP has become a major problem for us due to want of adequate number of cryogenic oxygen tankers. If the number of patients rises, we cannot ensure supply of adequate quantum. "The state government has requested the Centre for allocation of additional quantum of medical oxygen."

KGGH is fast filling up
with Covid-19 patientsDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL APRIL 27

With rising Covid cases, the Kurnool General Hospital would be converted into Covid Hospital, said hospital superintendent Dr G. Narendranath Reddy. Out of 1,200 beds, 750 are occupied by Covid patients.

A cause of concern is patients are suddenly turning critical as their lungs are turning bad, he said.

Dr Narendranath Reddy said that the hospital has total bed strength of 1,050 but 1,200 beds can be adjusted. Already 609 people were undergoing medical treatment for Covid-19 as in-house patients against the total 688 beds availability as per Monday records of the hospital.

If the hospital has to make 1,000 beds for Covid patients alone then it has to shift patients from various wards even Gynec, Paediatric and Neurosurgery. Already,

- The hospital has total bed strength of 1,050 but 1,200 beds can be adjusted. Already 609 people were undergoing medical treatment for Covid as in-house patients against the total 688 beds

the hospital authorities were using several wards to provide medical treatment to the Covid-19 patients, particularly at general medical wards, plastic surgery, ENT and others.

However in view of strengthening services to the patients, the hospital is now running only emergency services and no admissions were taken for general medicine, plastic surgeries, ENT, chest diseases and surgical services. But they were still continuing Paediatric, Gynec, Cardiology, Urology and Nephrology in the hospital based on emergencies, the hospital superintendent said.

The hospital doesn't have any oxygen supply issues since it has 750

beds with oxygen supply directly from oxygen units in the hospital and the transporter filling it regularly. There are two tankers with a total capacity of 21.5 kilo litres (one unit has 10,000 litres capacity and second unit has 11,500 litres) on the hospital premises.

In addition, a new oxygen generating unit is ready to function with capacity of 3,000 litres per minute.

District collector G. Veera Pandian on Tuesday evening visited the Kurnool GGH and interacted with doctors and told them to provide all facilities for Covid-19 patients without returning them. Make a special focus on quality of medications and food provisions. He then observed functioning of Oxygen plants and supply to the patients in the hospital. He also directed the hospital officials to recruit needed staff and doctors based on increasing admissions. He visited few private hospitals in the city.

Demand to start Corona Care
Centres in every municipalityDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Andhra Pradesh Urban Citizens Forum demanded starting of Covid-19 care centres in every municipality to offer treatment to Covid-19 infected people free of cost.

The APUCF leaders lamented that Coronavirus patients were facing severe difficulties due to the shortage of oxygen, medicines and beds but the government failing to improve the needed facilities in the government hospitals.

APUCF convener Ch. Babu Rao alleged that Covid-19 cases in the state are 10 times higher than the data shown by the officials. He said they have discussed various issues pertaining to the present Covid-19 situation during a meeting here on Tuesday. He alleged that the required number of Covid tests is not being carried by the government and the delay in giving the test report was paving way for further spread of the Coronavirus. He said that there is no truth in the state government's claim that there is no shortage in oxygen supply, beds, medicines and injections.

Babu Rao said the Prime Minister has totally failed to support the state and left everything to the state's fate. He alleged that the BJP and the PM are interested in conducting elections and to be in power but not showing interest to save the lives of the people during the pandemic.

He demanded to conduct

Experts: Patients should
opt for Covid Care centresK.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, APRIL 27

Health experts are suggesting people to opt for Covid Care Centres rather than rushing to the hospitals out of panic. After reports of people waiting in the queue at Covid-19 notified hospitals, health officials in Visakhapatnam said the patients having mild symptoms seem to be rushing to the hospitals due to panic.

"They can as well get admitted to the two Covid Centres which were opened in Visakhapatnam last year. The patients will get medical supervision, medicines and food. In case of emergency, an ambulance will shift them to hospital," said medical officer in-charge for Covid Care Centres Dr Malladi S. Sharma.

Visakhapatnam has two centres - one at Mudasarlova and another at Bakkannapalem - which can accommodate over 1,600 patients. Mudasarlova

council meetings in all Municipalities and Corporations to draw and implement Covid-19 prevention measures.

Babu Rao stated that the APUCF meeting passed a resolution demanding the government to set up at least one Covid-19 care centre in each municipality, to initiate special sanitation measures, spraying of sodi-

- At present, there are two Covid Care centres in Vizag

opened on Sunday with all the facilities and as on date 35 patients are being treated for mild symptoms.

He said the Centres would give them confidence that they are under medical supervision and will be shifted to a hospital in case of emergency.

"Under the present conditions, Covid Care Centre can find a bed for the patient which he cannot get on his own," said another medical official.

Citing an instance, the official said a 33-year-old patient from neighbouring state and living all alone in Vizag got admitted to a Covid Care Centre with mild symptoms. Hours later, his oxygen levels started falling. He was immediately shifted to VIMS in an ambulance and got admitted without much hassle.

um hypochlorite, setting up of containment zones, deploy additional staff and the officials in municipalities.

The state government should allocate additional funds to all municipalities and additional staff. Special measures must be taken to complete the electrical cemetery works on a war footing.

11,434 Covid
cases, 64 deathsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 27

Andhra Pradesh registered 11,434 fresh Coronavirus infections and 64 deaths in the last 24 hours.

State health authorities reported here on Tuesday that 11,434 out of 74,435 samples tested were found infected with Coronavirus.

Out of a total number of 1,61,43,083 samples tested in the state so far, 10,54,875 persons were found infected; of them, 9,47,629 have recovered while 99,446 are still under treatment.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, all 13 districts registered more than 250 infections each, with Guntur recording the highest at 2,028.

This was followed by 1,982 infections in Chittoor, 1,322 in Srikakulam, 1,237 in Nellore, 1,067 in Visakhapatnam, 702 in Anantapur, 633 in Vizianagaram, 544 in Krishna, 497 in Prakasam, 474 in Kurnool, 424 in West Godavari, 271 in Kadapa and 253 in East Godavari district.

Chittoor district continues to be the worst-affected with the highest number of Coronavirus cumulative active cases at 13,716, followed by 12,883

- Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, all 13 districts registered more than 250 infections each, with Guntur recording the highest at 2,028.

- The death toll so far rose to 7,800.

- Hospitals discharged 7,055 Covid patients after recovery in the state in the last 24 hours, the official statement said.

in Srikakulam, 10,024 in Nellore, 9,827 in East Godavari, 9,484 in Guntur, 8,249 in Visakhapatnam, 7,544 in Kurnool, 7,382 in Krishna, 6,366 in Anantapur, 5,172 in Prakasam, 4,295 in Vizianagaram, 2,378 in Kadapa and 2,126 in West Godavari. Vizianagaram district reported the highest tally of daily Covid deaths at eight followed by six each in Anantapur, East Godavari, Guntur, Nellore and Srikakulam, five in Chittoor; four each in Kurnool, Prakasam, Visakhapatnam and West Godavari, three in Krishna and two in Kadapa.

The death toll so far rose to 7,800.

Hospitals discharged 7,055 Covid patients after recovery in the state in the last 24 hours, the official statement said.

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For and on behalf of the President of India, the undersigned invites e-Tender for the following works up to 15-00 hours and the date mentioned below.

1. B/E/29/I/EGS/05/2021-22. **Name of work:** Vijayawada: Gudur- Duvvada Section-Improving reliability of power supply of level crossing gates by mini integrated power supply-Electrical arrangements. **Period of completion:** 120 days. **Tender value ₹:** 8689500/-, **E.M.D. ₹:** Nil, **Cost of Tender document ₹:** Nil, **Date of closing:** 17.05.2021

2. B/E/29/I/EGS/06/2021-22. **Name of work:** Vijayawada: Division- Annual Maintenance contract for package type air conditioners and Air-conditioners of various types & capacities at various locations in Vijayawada Division for a period of Two (02) years. **Period of completion:** 24 months, **Tender value ₹:** 2557548/-, **E.M.D. ₹:** Nil, **Cost of Tender document ₹:** 3000, **Date of closing:** 19.05.2021

The prospective tenderers are advised to visit website "www.ireps.gov.in" before the date of tender closing to note any changes/corrigenda for any tender.

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Call for buying oxygen concentrators

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR |
DC
NELLORE APRIL 27

A medical professional has advises the state government to buy portable oxygen concentrators on a war footing to save the lives of the people. The oxygen concentrators are designed to convert air into oxygen and they can be fixed to the hospital beds.

Senior physician at People's Poly Clinic popularly known as Ramachandra Reddy hospital, Dr M.V.

Ramanaiah, suggested that the government buy 100 oxygen concentrators for oxygen beds at the GGH, which is full to its brim with patients in Nellore.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, he said each unit will cost ₹40,000 to ₹60,000 depending on the brand. This is small pie for the government.

Dr Ramanaiah said medical experts in the government were well aware of the second wave of Coronavirus looming large over the country. The present crisis could

- The ₹50 lakh insurance package announced by the Centre last year is not adequate considering the high risk being taken by the medical and paramedical personnel, Dr Ramanaiah felt.

have been effectively handled if the lull between the first and second waves was utilised for developing the infrastructure and recruiting more of medical and paramedical staff.

An important functionary of Jana Vignan Vedika, Dr Ramanaiah lamented the sacking of the medical personnel hired last year for hospital duty and the delay in recruiting such staff again as the virus is playing havoc with lives.

"Lockdown can only slow down the pandemic. This is not a solution to contain the virus," the physician asserted while advising the government to declare a health emergency and make better use of the services of doctors in the private sector.

He stressed the need to build confidence among medical professionals involved in the treatment of Coronavirus patients by providing them an attractive insurance package to also take full care of their families in case any of them succumb to the deadly virus-hit.

The ₹50 lakh insurance package announced by the Centre last year is not adequate considering the high risk being taken by the medical and paramedical personnel, Dr Ramanaiah felt.

SHORT TAKES

VAJAPYEE'S NIECE KARUNA DIES OF COVID-19

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC RAIPUR, APRIL 27

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

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

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

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

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

MAHA MIN: NOT ENOUGH SUPPLY TO GIVE SHOT TO ALL

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 27

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bodies of 22 victims stuffed in one ambulance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile, BJP MLC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

Pune: Social group ensures dignified farewell to victims

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

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

A senior group member said their workload has

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

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

tradition," Khan said.

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

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

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

Fighting spirit on



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

— PTI



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

— PTI

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

— PTI

RELIGIOUS AFFAIR

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

Kumbh: Seers keep last Shahi Snan symbolic

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

82.54 per cent, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Tuesday. Uttarakhand reported 5,058 Covid-19 cases on Monday with Dehradun registering 2,034 cases and Haridwar 1,002 cases.

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

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

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

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

Guj: Night curfew in 9 more cities

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

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

It also announced curbs on APMCs, public transport, religious gatherings, funerals and marriage functions across the state. The night curfew from 8 pm to 6 am was already in place since April 7 in 20 cities, including Ahmedabad, Surat, Rajkot and Vadodara.

"Now, the state government has decided to enforce the night curfew in nine more cities — Himmatnagar, Navsari, Veraval, Valsad, Porbandar, Botad, Viramgam, Chhotuadeupur and Palanpur — from April 28," an official release said.

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

Informing further about the new curbs, the release said while essential services and factories will continue to function in these cities, the government has ordered closure of restaurants, swimming pools, cinema halls, shopping complexes and water parks in these 29 cities till May 5.

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

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

Public transport buses across the state would function with 50 per cent capacity, it added. Gujarat's Covid-19 tally crossed the 5 lakh-mark on Monday to reach 5,10,373 with the addition of 14,340 new cases, the highest rise in a single day so far. With a record 158 fatalities in a day, the Covid-19 toll rose to 6,486, as per the state health department. — PTI

CMYK

DECCAN Chronicle

28 APRIL 2021

EC failed in duty, sharp rebuke by HC welcome

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

A bench of the court, comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy, while hearing a petition seeking a direction for adherence to a strict protocol on the day of counting, singularly held the commission responsible for the second wave and went to the extent of suggesting that its officials be booked for murder. The court's rebuke of the panel, which stood as a mute spectator of the mammoth rallies which lakhs of people attended in utter dis-

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

regard of Covid-appropriate protocols, will be welcomed by the people who in their lakhs fall sick every day. The court did not mince its words when it asked the commission whether its members were on a different planet when these rallies were taking place. It also reminded the poll panel of the fact that the fruits of democracy could be enjoyed by citizens only if they are alive. Or, in other words, elections are not for elections' sake, but for the people's sake. The Calcutta high court had also made similar remarks last week, after observing that the commission had failed to implement its own guidelines while conducting elections during the pandemic.

The judges were reflecting the minds of all right-thinking people in this country, or even in the world, who have been petrified by the dance of death the pandemic has let loose in India. It did not demand superior wisdom to understand that the convergence of lakhs of people at a place to listen

to leaders would eventually end up as a superspreader event. The commission had the power to stop them but it looked the other way when leaders, including the country's Prime Minister, took pride in and announced that they have addressed the largest rallies of their lives during these elections. The explanation that it followed up on the procedure it had deployed in Bihar elections hardly wash. That a mishap did not happen is no reason why one should go easy on the rules especially while negotiating the fatal curves an extremely dangerous pandemic leaves behind.

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

Opinions still matter

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

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

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

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Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has responded since.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

POLL INTROSPECTION

There must be an introspection by all those who were instrumental in flagrant violations of Covid-appropriate behaviour during the election campaigns (*Madras HC: EC must be charged with murder, DC, April 27*). Now that the HC indicted the EC for the lapses and even went on to suggest murder charges against the officials for abetment, the onus falls on NHRC and those who lost their loved ones to file FIRs suitably.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

It's shocking that the Madras HC remained silent during elections rallies and is now coming down heavily on the Election Commission after hundreds of deaths. Even other state governments were aware about dangers of hosting election rallies but the judiciary remained silent.

Mahesh Kumar Kachhawah
Anantapur

SECOND WAVE

The second wave is spreading like wildfire and those afflicted are facing a crippling shortage of medical care (*Govt must wake up to reality, do a course correction swiftly, DC, April 27*). The crisis has opened a can of worms. The situation demands synergetic emergency and control and the government has to meet the crisis on a war footing.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

33 held in City for defying ban order

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

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

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

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

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

By arrangement with the Spectator

Freddy Gray



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

Joe Biden, 46th President of the United States, has never been able to keep his mouth shut.

Throughout his absurdly long career in politics, he has always said too much, made stuff up, gone too far. His friends and fans just shrug it off: "That's our Joe".

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,944.14	1.15
Nifty 50	14,653.00	1.16
S&P 500*	4,188.44	0.02
Dollar (₹)	74.65	0.12
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.67	0.30
Euro (₹)	90.07	0.37
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,906▲69	0.14
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.90	0.38
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.055	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.584	0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

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

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



■ Bid to avert IL&FS, PNB-like scams
Lenders require RBI nod to hire auditor

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

In a bid to improve the quality of financial reporting of lenders and to prevent IL&FS and Punjab National Bank-like scams, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Tuesday made it mandatory for lenders to take its prior approval for the appointment and re-appointment of statutory central auditors (SCAs) and statutory auditors. The apex bank also mandated that the statutory audit for entities with an asset size of at least Rs 15,000 crore at the end of the previous year should be conducted by a minimum of two audit firms. All other lenders of lesser size should appoint at least one audit firm to conduct the statutory audit, the apex bank said in its guidelines on appointment of statutory auditors of commercial banks (excluding regional rural banks), primary (urban) co-operative banks (UCBs) and non-banking finance companies (NBFCs). The guidelines will be applicable to commercial banks from financial year 2021-22. However, UCBs and NBFCs shall have the flexibility to adopt these guidelines from H2 of FY22 so that there is no disruption. The guidelines provide instructions for appointment of SCAs/ SAs, the number of auditors, their eligibility criteria, tenure and rotation, etc. while ensuring the independence of auditors. “The



revised Guidelines being issued will ensure that Statutory Auditors are appointed in a timely, transparent and effective manner,” the RBI said. Makarand Joshi, founding partner, MMJC and Associates—a corporate compliance firm—said, “Rotation of auditors is heavily relied upon by regulators to ensure that any element of true and fair view cannot be kept under wraps for a fairly long period. The issues in large NBFCs like IL&FS and DHFL witnessed over the past few years has been a wake-up call for the regulator. This is an attempt to improve transparency and reliability. The new norm would mean that management will have to invest time to make a new auditor familiar with working of NBFC or financial institution more frequently.” Public sector banks have to allot the top 20 branches (to be selected in order of the level of outstanding advances) to SCAs to cover a minimum of 15 per cent of the total gross advances of the bank by SCAs. For other entities—excluding payment banks and core investment companies—SCAs/SAs shall visit and audit at least the top 20 branches/top 20 per cent of the branches of the entities (in case of entities having less than 100 branches), to be selected in order of the level of outstanding advances, to cover a minimum 15 per cent of their total gross advances. Commercial banks (excluding RRBs) and UCBs will be required to take prior approval of RBI (Department of Supervision) for appointment/reappointment of statutory central auditors and statutory auditors, on an annual basis, the banking regulator said. In order to protect the independence of the auditors, lenders will have to appoint the SCAs/SAs for a continuous period of three years. Commercial banks and UCBs can remove the audit firms during this period only with the prior approval of the department.

Lenskart to hire 100+ for tech centre

FC BUREAU
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Lenskart, India's omni-channel eyewear brand, on Tuesday said that it will hire 100 engineers and designers for its newly opened technology centre in Hyderabad. This would be the latest addition to technology and research centres that several companies have set up in Hyderabad. “To accelerate the on-goings, Lenskart is looking to hire 100+ people, across engineering, product & design in the coming six months,” said Ramneek Khurana, co-founder, Lenskart. He also revealed that the company has acquired Hyderabad-based e-commerce start-up DailyJoy and would utilise the services of the target company's technicians to manage its Hyderabad technology centre. The cost of the acquisition, however, was not made public. Currently, Lenskart has a team of 150 staff. In the next six months, it would reach 250, with a majority of them working from Hyderabad. The new recruitment, he said, would be in engineering, product and data science functions. Lenskart has posted a modest rise in sales during the last fiscal because of the Covid-induced restrictions and change of customer behavioural pattern. However, it has witnessed a 50 per cent increase in its online sales.

Maruti expects second wave to boost car sales

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, APRIL 27



R.C. Bhargava

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, on Tuesday said a fresh surge in coronavirus cases in the country would strengthen demand for personal mobility, and that lockdowns in some cities had not yet hurt the carmaker's sales or production. Following a steep fall in car sales last year when the pandemic first hit, Maruti's sales picked up in India over the past two quarters as people opted out of public transport and poured their lockdown-led savings into big-ticket items such as cars. Still, Maruti's fourth-quarter results took a hit due to rising commodity prices and supply chain disruptions. Maruti has passed on some of the

costs to customers and already bumped up car prices twice this year. “With this second pandemic wave the demand for personal transport will, if anything, strengthen, not weaken. Because more and more people will want to have their personal transport,” R.C. Bhargava, chairman at Maruti Suzuki told reporters after Maruti posted a near 10 per cent drop in quarterly profit.

“If the current demand situation continues, April-June should be ‘decent,’ he said. The carmaker, which sells one out of two bought in the country, reported a 9.7 per cent year-on-year (YoY) decline in profit at Rs 1,166 crore for the March 2021 quarter, on the back of weak demand and higher commodity costs but revenue was strong. The New Delhi-based company reported a profit of Rs 1,291.7 crore in the year-ago period. Revenue from operations in Q4 FY21 stood at Rs 24,023.7 crore, up 32 per cent from Rs 18,198.7 crore in the year-ago period backed by strong double-digit growth in sales. Maruti Suzuki sold 4,92,235 vehicles in the March quarter, up 28 per cent YoY.

MARKET SENTIMENTS LOOK UP RETAIL TRADE COUNTS LOSSES

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 27

The Sensex gained over 500 points for the second day in a row, after the Covid scare seemed to come down due to a drop in fresh daily cases. The Sensex closed 558 points, or 1.15 per cent, up at 48,944 while Nifty-50 rose to 14,653, up 168 points. The BSE Mid-cap and Small-cap indices up 1.04 per cent and 1.49 per cent. The daily Covid cases on Monday was lower at 3.23 lakh compared to around 3.5 lakh on Sunday and Maharashtra also reported lower daily infections at 48,700. The market sentiment also got a boost as help started pouring in from many countries. “Investors’ expectations from earnings outcome by heavyweights, the progress of the vaccination drive and a dip in the Covid cases further boosted sentiments,” said Ajit Mishra, VP-research, Religare Broking. On Tuesday, FPIs were net sellers by Rs 1,454.75 crore.

Lock-down and restrictions in a few states has caused a business loss of Rs 5 lakh crore to unorganised traders, while the organised retail too estimates around 40 per cent loss in states affected by the second wave. The Confederation of Indian Traders says curfew and other restrictions has caused a business loss of about Rs 5 lakh crore in the past 25 days nationally. Out of Rs 5 lakh crore, the loss of retail traders is estimated to be about Rs 3.5 lakh crore and wholesale business of Rs 1.5 lakh crore. Delhi alone recorded a business loss of more than Rs 25,000 crore. The calculations are based on the trader feedback from 14 states, excluding West Bengal, NE, Punjab, Haryana, J&K and Goa. Interstate trade and loading and unloading activities also are getting affected due to night curfews.

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Boxer injured in Worlds bout dies

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

FC Goa play out yet another draw

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

Repsol Honda gear up for Spanish GP

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

Correa keeps Lazio in CL hunt

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

Rome, April 27: Joaquin Correa ensured Lazio kept their hopes of Champions League qualification alive on Monday with a double in a 3-0 win over AC Milan while Napoli jumped up to third thanks to a 2-0 triumph at Torino. Correa opened the scoring for Lazio with only a minute on the clock at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome and added the second five minutes after the break. Ciolo Immobile struck the third within three minutes left as Lazio moved five points off the Champions League spots with a game in hand on their rivals. “This was like a final for us, the last chance to stay in with a shout for the top four... It was a clear and dominant victory,” Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi told Sky Sport Italia. Inzaghi's side sit sixth, behind AC Milan who are level on 66 points with Napoli and Juventus — third and fourth respectively — but have dropped down to fifth after their second straight league defeat. They are 13 points behind leaders Inter Milan, who can win their first league title since 2010



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

on Saturday if they beat Crotone and second-placed Atalanta fail to win at Sassuolo on Sunday. Stefano Pioli's Milan, who started the weekend in second place, could have been beaten by a larger margin as Manuel Lazzari

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

frustrated by Correa's second, which was given after a lengthy VAR check following what he felt was a foul from Lucas Leiva on Hakan Calhanoglu. “I don't understand how it wasn't given as a foul on Calhanoglu, said Pioli.

THE RESULTS

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

“He looked at it again and from the replay you cannot say Leiva doesn't catch Calhanoglu and completely miss the ball.” Napoli moved into third thanks to third-half goals from Tiemoue Bakayoko and Victor Osimhen earlier on Monday. They could have been further ahead at the break following a dominant opening period in which Piotr Zieliński hit the post and Matteo Politano was unlucky to see his deflected shot slide wide. Lorenzo Insigne, playing his 300th Serie A match for Napoli, also hit the upright with a curling shot just before the hour mark. They failed to add to their tally but ran out winners to put pressure on their rivals. — AFP

SOCIEDAD EDGE PAST EIBAR TO KEEP HOLD ON EUROPA SPOT

Madrid, April 27: Alexander Isak scored a first-half winner as Real Sociedad defeated Basque Country rivals Eibar 1-0 to strengthen their hold on fifth place in the Spanish league. The win left Sociedad three points ahead of sixth-placed Real Betis and four points in front of seventh-placed Villarreal with five rounds remaining. The teams finishing in fifth and sixth places secure a Europa League berth next season. It was only the second win for Sociedad in their last seven league matches. It was the fifth consecutive loss for last-placed Eibar, which is winless in 16 straight league games.

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

It stayed seven points from escaping the relegation zone. Isak scored at Eibar's Ipurua Stadium with a shot from close range in the 26th minute. Sociedad next visit Huesca, while Eibar host Alavés, another relegation-threatened team. — AP

Iheanacho leads Foxes fightback to sink Palace

Leicester (United Kingdom), April 27: Leicester strengthened their grip on third place in the Premier League as Kelechi Iheanacho's superb strike capped a spirited fightback in Monday's 2-1 win against Crystal Palace. Brendan Rodgers' side trailed to Wilfried Zaha's first half goal. But Timothy Castagne equalised soon after the interval with his first goal since September. And Nigeria striker Iheanacho sealed Leicester's second successive victory when he scored with a thunder-

ous finish 10 minutes from full-time. Leicester are four points clear of fourth placed Chelsea and seven ahead of fifth placed West Ham as they bid to qualify for next season's Champions League. “It was a very important win for us. It was the third game in nine days so a tough schedule,” Rodgers said. “Going one behind against Palace, they're super organised and tough to break down. I thought the players were outstanding. They kept the calmness and control

and scored two very good goals.” With five games left, the FA Cup finalists have already matched their total of 62 points from last season. A late collapse cost the Foxes a place in the Champions League in 2020, but Rodgers' men are firmly on course to make amends thanks to the sparkling form of Iheanacho. “We spoke about it at the start of the season and put it to bed them. Our performance levels this season have shown that is in the past,” Rodgers said. — AFP

TOKYO | OLYMPICS

Host towns pull out over corona

Tokyo, April 27: Hundreds of Japanese towns and cities have been forced to rethink plans to host Olympic teams because the coronavirus will prevent public appearances and require costly safety measures. The western town of Okuizumo spent more than \$5 million preparing to welcome India's hockey team for a pre-Games training camp, only to scrap the visit because of Covid-19.

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

After sinking money into upgrading sports facilities, Okuizumo balked when it became clear it would have to provide bubble-like biosecurity measures with regular virus tests and medical care. “We wanted to have one of the world's top tier teams visit our town and show their skills to local children,” town official Katsumi Nagase said. “But that seems impossible now.” More than 500 municipalities signed up to host athletes and officials in a scheme aimed at broadening the Olympics' benefits beyond Tokyo. Some, like Okuizumo, have already scrapped plans to host overseas athletes, while others are devising careful programmes they hope will

keep everyone safe. Instead of giving residents the chance to meet elite athletes and try out new sports, towns will have to ditch any physical contact, school visits and public training sessions. Kurihara city in northern Miyagi prefecture was planning to host South Africa's hockey team, but decided the expense was no longer worth it given the limitations imposed by virus measures. “It's a project that will use our tax resources,” Hidenori Sasaki, an official with the local board of education, said. “If it becomes just athletes holding a training camp without any exchanges with local residents, local citizens won't enjoy the benefits.” In some cases, Olympic teams have cancelled, worried about the risk of infection before the Games. — AFP

HOCKEY UMPIRE'S MANAGER VIRENDRA DIES OF COVID-19

New Delhi, April 27: Indian hockey umpire's manager Virendra Singh has died of Covid-19 related complications and his demise was mourned by the game's governing body. Singh was 47. He died in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, on Monday. Virendra had officiated in a number of All India tournaments and National Championships. Mourners his demise, Hockey India president Gyanendra Ningombam said, “We at Hockey India are deeply saddened to learn about the untimely demise of Virendra Singh.” “SHOOTER DADI' CORONA POSTIVE, IN HOSPITAL Octogenarian shooter Chandro Tomar, nicknamed 'Shooter Dadi', has tested positive for Covid-19 and admitted to a hospital due to difficulty in breathing. The Twitter page of the 89-year-old legendary shooter, hailing from the Baghat village in Uttar Pradesh, posted the development. — PTI

ORANGE

Shikhar Dhawan, DC

265

KL Rahul, PBKS

240

Glenn Maxwell, RCB

223

PURPLE

Harshal Patel, RCB

17


Avesh Khan, DC

12

Rahul Chahar, MI

9

Off the field



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

— Twitter

Franchises focus on mental health now

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

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

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

Lee donates bitcoin worth ₹40 lakh

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

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

Kuggeleijn signed up as replacement

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

RETURN ASSURANCE

BCCI guarantees safe return to foreign players

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

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

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

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

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



RCB's Glenn Maxwell boards a flight to Ahmedabad.

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

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

AUSSIE PM RULES OUT GOVERNMENT HELP

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

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

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

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

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

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

of people who have tuned in,” he said.

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

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

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

RCB edge Capitals in thriller

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

for three at the halfway mark.

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

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

— PTI

LYNN ASKS CA TO ARRANGE A CHARTER FLIGHT

New Delhi, April 27: Mumbai Indians batsman Chris Lynn has requested Cricket Australia to arrange a chartered flight to take its players home after the IPL is over and revealed that his franchise will get all members of the team vaccinated next week.

“I texted back that as Cricket Australia make 10 per cent of every IPL contract was there a chance we could spend that money this year on a charter flight once the tournament is over?” Lynn told *News Corp media*.

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

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

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

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

— PTI

SCORECARD

Royal Challengers Bangalore: Virat Kohli b Avesh Khan 12, Devdutt Padikkal b Sharma 17, Rajat Patidar c Smith b Patel 31, Glenn Maxwell c Smith b Mishra 25, AB de Villiers (not out) 75, Washington Sundar c & b Rabada 6, Daniel Sams (not out) 3. **Extras (w 2) 2. Total (for five wickets in 20 overs) 171.** **FoW:** 1-30, 2-30, 3-60, 4-114, 5-139. **Bowling:** Ishant 4-1-26-1, Kagiso Rabada 4-0-38-1, Avesh Khan 4-0-24-1, Amit Mishra 3-0-27-1, Axar Patel 4-0-33-1, Marcus Stoinis 1-0-23-0.

Delhi Capitals: Prithvi Shaw c de Villiers b Patel 21, Shikhar Dhawan c Chahal b Jamieson 6, Steven Smith c de Villiers b Mohammed Siraj 4, Rishabh Pant (not out) 58, Marcus Stoinis c de Villiers b Patel 22, Shimron Hetmyer (not out) 53. **Extras (lb 4, w 2) 6. Total (for four wickets in 20 overs) 170.** **FoW:** 1-23, 2-28, 3-47, 4-92. **Bowling:** Daniel Sams 2-0-15-0, Mohammed Siraj 4-0-44-1, Kyle Jamieson 4-0-32-1, Washington Sundar 4-0-28-0, Harshal Patel 4-0-37-2, Yuzvendra Chahal 2-0-10-0.

Felt vulnerable in bubble: Zampa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sunrisers face an uphill challenge

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Live on TV

Chennai Super Kings vs Sunrisers Hyderabad from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

HEAD to HEAD

Matches 14

CSK 10 SRH 4

FOR THE RECORD

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

● Suresh Raina with 4.99 fours in 193 innings needs just one more to become the fourth batsman to complete 500 fours in IPL.

LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

● Sunrisers beat CSK by 7 runs at Dubai.

● CSK beat Sunrisers by 20 runs at Dubai.

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

order and over-reliance on the top order.

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

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

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

Cancelling IPL will not mitigate the colossal tragedy



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

many in agreement with this point of view too.

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

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

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

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

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

However, the BCCI can be

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

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

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

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