

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
KARIMNAGAR | SUNDAY | 2 MAY 2021

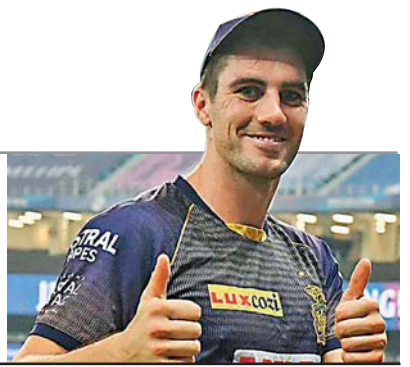


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**TABLOID**  
**IPL players chip in for Covid relief**



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## KCR takes over health, Etala minister sans job

Rao had ordered probe into Rajendar's alleged land-grab

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

On a day of swift developments, Etala Rajendar was on Saturday stripped of the health and family welfare portfolio.

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan has transferred the portfolio to Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao with immediate effect.

The decision was taken on the advice of the Chief Minister, a release from the Raj Bhavan said. Consequently, Rajendar is now minister without a portfolio.

Rajendar, who represents Huzurabad constituency, is in the thick of a controversy over allegations of encroaching assigned lands in Achampally and Hakimpet villages of Masaipet mandal in Medak district for his poultry farms.

Rao had ordered a probe on Friday into the allegations against Rajendar. Even as inquiry teams from Vigilance, ACB, revenue and survey departments were in Achampally and Hakimpet villages on Saturday, the decision to remove the portfolios from him was announced.

The decision shocked Rajendar and his supporters, who questioned the logic behind the hasty move when the inquiry report was yet to be submitted to the Chief Minister.

Rao had ordered two simultaneous investigations by Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and Vigilance DGP Poornachander Rao into the allegations and had sought a preliminary report. Official sources said that the preliminary inquiry report that was submitted to Rao by noon on Saturday and prima facie had found that the allegations against Etala were true.

**ETALA SAYS IT IS CM'S PREROGATIVE**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

Reacting to his removal as medical and health minister, Mr Etala Rajendar on Saturday said that it was the prerogative of the Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao to change Cabinet ministers. He even expressed happiness as the CM charge of the portfolio.

■ Report on Page 3

## Survey finds a few encroachments

**N. VAMSI SRINIVAS DC**  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

A comprehensive day-long survey by the Medak district revenue authorities on Saturday revealed that a few structures came up in assigned lands, which are in possession of Jamuna Hatcheries, owned by minister Etala Rajendar in Achampet and Hakimpet villages.

This is in sharp contrast to the minister's claims that the assigned lands were not put to use by his hatchery and that the original assignees are in possession of the land. The minister even dared the government to get a probe done by a sitting judge or any investigating agency.

Meanwhile, questions are being raised against the minister's hatchery raising ₹100 crore from Canara Bank mortgaging the Achampet lands.

Rajendar himself revealed about the bank loan given to Jamuna Hatcheries, which has paid-up capital of just ₹10 crore. The investigation against him is likely to focus on whether assigned lands were also shown as surety.

"Of the 116 acres owned

● **QUESTIONS ARE** being raised against the minister's hatchery raising ₹100 crore from Canara Bank mortgaging the Achampet lands. Rajendar himself revealed about the bank loan

by the minister's hatchery, 66 acres are of patta lands and the remaining 50 acres were assigned to poor in different spells," Medak collector Dr S. Harish told *Deccan Chronicle*.

"Though there were certain discrepancies in patta lands also, we will initially focus on assigned lands as their occupation by the third parties is illegal," he said.

The collector has submitted an interim report to Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar. Another major discrepancy found by the officials pertains to the change of land use. All the lands were classified as 'agriculture' and it is mandatory for the hatchery to obtain change of land use from 'agriculture' to 'non-agriculture' by paying the requisite fees.

■ Page 3: Minister's camp denies wrongdoing

## COVID TESTING IN HEALTH CENTRES RESTRICTED

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

The government appears to have decided to conduct only limited Covid-19 tests every day, if instructions doing the rounds in various districts are anything to go by.

Henceforth, only 50 tests should be conducted at each public health centres and urban health centres every day, while at community health centres, the limit has been fixed at 100. The highest number of daily tests — 200 — will be conducted at district general hospitals, as per the instructions, being relayed in WhatsApp groups administered by district administrations and district level health officials, to the field-level staff. With Covid-19 taking a firm grip in the community, and the state complaining to the Centre that it does not have enough testing kits, the latest restrictions will reveal the true extent of Covid-19 spread in the state. Most of the tests conducted are Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT), which detect the disease only if the person has a high viral load.

■ Page 2: RAT tests only 50% reliable

## Vigilance talks to villagers around Etala's hatcheries

**L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC**  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

Several teams of Vigilance

and Enforcement (V&E) wing and Revenue department are camping in Achampet and Hakimpet villages to probe into the land-grabbing allegations. V&E officials are led by an officer of the rank of Superintendent of Police Manohar while the revenue officials are led by District Collector S. Harish and Additional Collector Ramesh.

The teams spoke to farmers, whose lands were allegedly taken possession of forcibly by Jamuna Hatcheries, owned by Etala Rajendar.

Meanwhile, revenue offi-

cials, led by Toopran RDO Ramprakash also began an inquiry. Harish and Ramesh visited the villages to check the progress.

Teams from vigilance, ACB, revenue and survey department started inquiry at the ground-level at 8 am and completed it by evening. Farmers told the inquiry teams that Rajendar and his henchmen snatched their lands by threatening them and paid just ₹2 lakh to ₹3 lakh per acre. A team, led by Vigilance and Enforcement DG Purnachandra Rao, who is also DG of ACB, examined the lands in Hakimpet village.

A digital survey of 177 acres was carried out within three hours. The most advanced DGPS sur-

vey machines were used to ensure accuracy. All the surveyors in three revenue divisions of Medak district were deployed for accomplishing the digital survey within a few hours.

The survey covered not only lands where Jamuna Hatcheries is located but also the adjoining government and assigned lands. It is learnt that the company even mortgaged three acres of assigned land in Survey No. 130 of Achampet with Canara Bank, Abids branch in Hyderabad, and had obtained loans.

V&E SP Manohar told reporters that their inquiry could continue for another two or three more days, that is till they came to a conclusion.

## Vaccination for all adults starts



A woman gets inoculated with a dose of Covishield vaccine against the Covid-19 at a vaccination centre in Mumbai on May 1 on the first day of vaccination drive to all adults. Several states deferred the plan due to lack of vaccines. — AFP

## 12 patients die due to O2 shortage in Delhi hosp

**18 killed as hospital catches fire in Gujarat**

**BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC**  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD  
MAY 1

Twelve critical Covid-19 patients died at the Batra Hospital in Delhi's Mehrauli area allegedly due to oxygen shortage. Six of the 12 people who died had been admitted to the hospital's ICU (intensive care unit) and among the deceased is the hospital's gastroenteritis head, Dr R.K. Himthani (62).

"We ran out of oxygen at 11.45 am. Supply came at 1.35 pm (a second tanker reached at around 4 pm). We were out of oxygen for 1 hour and 20 mins," the hospital told the Delhi High Court which was holding the 11th day of hearings into a crisis triggered by a massive wave of Covid infections.

Meanwhile, at least 16 Covid-19 patients and two nurses died on Saturday when a four-storey hospital in Bharuch, Gujarat, caught fire. There were around 50 other patients when the blaze began at 1 am. It was put out.

■ Page 2: 230 left without oxygen for 80 minutes

## Sputnik vaccine arrives in Hyd

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1.

The stage is getting set for administering of Sputnik V, the Russian Covid-19 vaccine in the country with 1.5 lakh doses of the vaccine, arriving on Saturday at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport here in the city, aboard a special transport aircraft from Moscow.

The city-based drug major, Dr Reddy Labor-

atories, is the licensing partner for the vaccine in India. In a release, DRL said the first consignment of 1,50,000 doses of Sputnik V, will be rolled out subject to necessary clearances. The company said this initial consignment will be used across different channels as a pilot to line up the supply chain for the larger vaccination programme. Three million doses of Sputnik V are expected later this month.



Sputnik V vaccines arriving in Hyderabad on Saturday.

## Vote count under Covid fear

**New Delhi, May 1:** Counting of votes will be held on Sunday in the high-stakes Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry Assembly elections, overshadowed by the raging Covid pandemic.

There will be 2,364 counting halls as compared to 1,002 halls in 2016 in 822 Assembly constituencies, a more than 200 per cent increase, in view of the Covid guidelines, according to the Election Commission which had

drawn flak from the courts over the conduct of polls during the pandemic. At least 15 rounds of sanitisation will be carried out at each polling centre, besides social distancing and other precautions. — PTI

**COVID | EFFECT**

**Restrictions for indefinite period from May 4; Exceptions given to students, academics, scribes**

## US curbs travel from India, non-Americans restricted

**Washington, May 1:** US President Joe Biden has imposed restrictions on travel from India that stops most non-American citizens from entering the US for an indefinite period from May 4, citing the surging Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

Biden issued a proclamation on Friday restricting travel from India starting on May 4. Certain categories of students, academics, journalists and individuals have been exempted from the ban, the US State Department said.

US nationals, those having green cards, their non-citizen spouses and children below 21 years of age, are among the various categories exempted from the restrictions. The new travel restrictions have been

● **STUDENTS SEEKING** to apply for new F-1 or M-1 visas should check the status of visa services at the nearest embassy.

● **THOSE QUALIFIED** for F-1 or M-1 visas will automatically be considered for an NIE to travel

imposed for an indefinite period and will require another presidential proclamation to end it.

"I have determined that it is in the interests of the US to take action to restrict and suspend the entry into America, as non-immigrants, of non-citizens of the US who were physically present within India during the 14-day period preceding their entry or attempted entry into the

US," says the proclamation signed by Biden on Friday.

The decision has been taken at the recommendation of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), within the Department of Health and Human Services, which determined India is experiencing widespread, person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19.

After reviewing the public health situation within India, the CDC has concluded that proactive measures are required to protect the nation's public health from travellers entering the US from that jurisdiction, he said.

According to the State Department, the travel ban exemption to certain categories is in line with a sim-

ilar exemption that the US has granted to some categories of travellers from Brazil, China, Iran and or South Africa.

Students seeking to commence studies in the fall, academics, journalists and individuals who provide critical infrastructure support in countries affected by a geographic Covid-19 restriction may qualify for the exception, it said.

This includes qualified applicants who have been present in India, Brazil, China, Iran, or South Africa, it added.

As always, visa applicants should check the website of the nearest embassy or consulate for the most up-to-date information about visa appointment availability, the State Department said. — PTI

## Aussies from India to face 5-yr jail if they try to return

**Melbourne, May 1:** Australian citizens could face five-year jail term or hefty fines up to 66,000 dollars if they try to return home from India after Canberra made the journey temporarily illegal in an effort to curb the spread of the deadly viral infection in this country.

The temporary ban begins on Monday and applies to any travellers who have visited India within 14 days of their intended arrival date in Australia.

There are an estimated 9,000 Australians in India and over 600 of them are classified as vulnerable, according to *The Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper. The decision was announced by the health ministry on Friday after a meeting of the National Cabinet. The move aims at keeping the Coronavirus spread in check in Australia.

The decision was based on the proportion of overseas travellers in quarantine in Australia, who

have contracted the infection in India, health minister Greg Hunt said.

The move was due to an "unmanageable" number of arrivals from the country who have tested positive to Covid-19, he was quoted as saying by the state-run Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).

Breaches of the travel ban could lead to five years' imprisonment, a 66,000-Australian dollar (\$50,876) fine or both, the report said. — PTI

### WEATHER

**Max:** 35.6°C  
**Min:** 26.2°C  
**RH:** 44%  
**Rain:** Trace

**Forecast:** Cloudy sky. Rain likely in some parts. Max/Min temp. 38/26°C

### ASTROGUIDE

**Plava:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Chaitra Bahula Shashti till 2.55 pm  
**Star:** Purvashada till 9.01 am  
**Variyam:** 4.48 pm to 6.22 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 4.52 pm to 5.42 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 4.30 pm to 6 pm  
**HIJRI CALENDAR**  
Ramzan 19, 1442 AH  
**PRAYERS**  
**Fajar:** 4.46 am  
**Zohar:** 12.23 pm  
**Asar:** 4.39 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.43 pm  
**Isha:** 7.54 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 6.36 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.49 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 11.19 PM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 9.35 AM**

**RAMZAN TIMINGS**  
**IFTAR:** 6.42 PM (TODAY)  
**SEHRI:** 4.23 AM (TOMORROW)

### COUNTER POINT



**Hypertension, nausea, pain... don't worry, it's not Covid, it's due to counting!**

### SHORT TAKES

#### Time extended for tax compliance

**New Delhi:** The government on Saturday extended timelines for various income tax compliances, including the filing of belated or revised return for the 2019-20 fiscal, till May 31. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said it had received representations from various stakeholders for relaxation on compliance requirements.

#### SBI home loan rate cut to 6.70%

**Mumbai:** State Bank of India (SBI) Saturday said it has reduced home loan interest rate to 6.70 per cent. The lender said home loan interest rates are now starting from 6.70 per cent for loans up to ₹30 lakh and 6.95 per cent for loans above ₹30 lakh to ₹75 lakh. The interest rate on home loans above ₹75 lakh is 7.05 per cent, the bank said in a release.

#### GST collections hit ₹1.41 lakh cr

**New Delhi:** GST collections in April touched a record high of over ₹1.41 lakh crore, indicating sustained economic recovery, the Finance Ministry said on Saturday. The revenues for the month of April 2021 are 14 per cent higher than ₹1.23 lakh crore collected in March. During the month, the revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) are 21 per cent higher over March.

#### Poonawalla cites pressure for vax

**London:** Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla on Saturday spoke out about the pressures he was under over the production of Covid-19 vaccines to meet the ever-increasing demand in India. He told *The Times* in an interview about aggressive calls from some of the most powerful people in India, demanding supplies of Covishield. ■ Report on Page 5



## SHORT TAKES

## GOV. CALLS FOR BETTER PLAN TO FIGHT COVID

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Saturday called for a multi-pronged approach to contain the spread of Covid-19.

It is important to increase testing, intensifying vaccination, and ensuring that people adhere to Covid-appropriate behaviour to contain the pandemic, she said.

The Governor was addressing an international webinar organised by the Lead India Foundation, USA chapter, on promotion of public awareness to prevent the pandemic's spread.

Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan said, "There is great pressure on infrastructure with a massive number of patients rushing to hospitals. It is high time that we all adhered to preventive norms strictly and break the chain."

She expressed confidence that "India will bounce back from the impact of the pandemic and will emerge victorious with the collective resolve and effort of the people."

She saluted doctors and other frontline workers for their tireless and selfless services in saving millions of precious lives during this pandemic.

## HC: KEEP EYE ON VEG MARKETS FOR VIOLATIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 27

Telangana High Court has directed Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and police commissionerates within GHMC area to take necessary precautions and place curbs wherever violation of Coronavirus protocols is seen at weekly pavement vegetable markets in various localities of the twin cities.

A Division Bench of High Court headed by Chief Justice Hima Kohli sought details from GHMC as to locations, zones and circles where these vegetable markets are functioning. The bench wanted to know how many sanitation inspectors are being deployed to ensure adherence to Covid protocols.

The Division Bench was dealing with a PIL filed by law student Bhuvana complaining that WHO norms are being violated by neither wearing masks nor ensuring social distancing in the weekly markets.

Mayur Reddy, counsel for the petitioner, submitted that these markets witness large gatherings. They are hence hotspots of Coronavirus. People are also thrown together as these markets witness traffic jams, with vendors sitting on the road and buyers parking their vehicles while making their purchases.

## PVT HOSPS BILL CRITICAL PATIENTS, RUSH TO GOVT HOSP

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS  
ADILABAD, MAY.1

In old Adilabad district, private hospital managements are asking Covid patients who slipped into critical condition while undergoing treatment to go to government hospitals especially Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Adilabad after collecting huge money as charges for the treatment.

It is shocking to know that these hospitals provide treatment till the patient condition is not bad since they don't want to lose the charges for diagnosis. There is a lot of pressure on the government doctors since many covid patients are admitting in critical condition at RIMS, Adilabad and it would be good for patients if they admit a little early just after noticing the covid symptoms or when they were recording low oxygen saturation level. It is observed that the many private hospitals managements or doctors are escaping from their responsibility of saving the covid patients when they slipped into critical conditions while undergoing treatment and private hospitals managements were trying to save their skin or keeping themselves on the safer side. Private hospitals not taking a risk in saving the lives of the covid patients when they slipped into critical condition after collecting huge money from them in the name of charges before the patients fell critical.

In some cases, the private hospital's managements referring the critical Covid patients to Hyderabad.

## TS asks Centre to hike vax allotment to state

Chief Secretary tells Centre allocations not enough for TS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1.

The state government on Saturday said that it has asked the Centre to increase vaccine allocation for Telangana for May. Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar has written to the Centre to increase allocations saying what the Centre said it will send, will not be enough for the state.

The Centre allocated 4.4 lakh doses for May for vaccinating those between 18 and 44 years, who account of 1.72 crore in the state. The Centre allocated

## MEETING DECISIONS

CALL CENTRE (040-21111111) IN GHMC TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO COVID PATIENTS

## 5 lakh free

Covid medical kits to be added to the existing 7.5 lakh for those in home isolation, home delivery of medical kits;

Teams headed by IAS officers to procure essential drugs including Remdesivir and consumables;

VACANCIES IN all hospitals to be filled via walk in interviews; SENIOR IAS officers to head service improvement at major government hospitals in GHMC, and collectors to do the same in districts; Efforts to augment oxygen supplies with demand expected to grow.

another 8.35 lakh doses for the first fortnight of the month for the 45 plus

years category, while the state needs May against a requirement of 30.45 lakh

doses for this group of people.

Somesh Kumar chaired a high-powered review of the Covid-19 situation in the state following directions from Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, who on Saturday, took over the Health portfolio from Etala Rajendar. The meeting was attended by top officials. Among the decisions taken were creating oxygen lines for an additional 10,000 beds in government hospital taking the total such beds to 20,000 in the state, and increase Covid-19 beds from 49,133 to 60,000 beds.

## STORIES OF HOPE



Vasumana Ghosh, a representative of Give Hope Foundation organisation, providing protective gear, masks and nutritious healthy meals to frontline Covid workers as a part of its drive in Hyderabad.

SRIHARSHA KARAMCHATI



## What goes around, comes around!

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

A good turn deserves another. Putting this adage into practice, a young techie set up a website which soon started yielding positive results. According to Sriharsha Karamchati, he came across, while browsing online, an idea that appealed to him. The idea was that anyone who donates ₹50,000 for serving Covid-19 victims, irrespective of how they have done it, and post a receipt for the same on his website, would in turn get a free promotional film made by him. Karamchati said he came across the idea posted by Anshumani Rudhra who works at Google-Pay, and soon after he created a website. Interestingly, around 20 people who visited the site, began sharing information about it. "So far, around ₹20 lakh have been donated," he said. "One beneficiary is a young girl who lost her mother to Covid-19 and whose father is getting treated," he said.

VASUMANA GHOSH

## Frontline warriors get do-gooders' assistance

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY. 1

A few organisations are striving hard to make sure that frontline warriors against Covid-19 pandemic and other caregivers are not deprived of food, groceries and other bare necessities during their fight against the pandemic.

One such organisation, Give Hope Foundation, in association with a privately operated restaurant, started a campaign to help frontline Covid workers each day. As a part of its drive, the members of the organisation are providing protective gear, masks and nutritious healthy meals to them. Anybody can participate and donate groceries and other food items by scanning the Give Hope Foundation QR code.

Speaking to this newspaper, Vasumana Ghosh, a representative of the organisation said, "We have been active for some time, but in the last two weeks we have had some tremendous response for the drive."

"We have conducted various activities like supplying food and groceries to at old-age homes, orphanages, GHMC workers and schools during these Covid times," she said.

During the pandemic, the group has distributed ₹1.5 lakh worth masks and sanitisers to law and order departments, traffic police, GHMC workers and sanitation workers, she added.

Dr KHIZER HUSSAIN JUNAIDI



## Nights for needy: A doc of a different kind in city

ATHER MOIN | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

Every night, after the evening prayers, Dr Khizer Hussain Junaidi reaches his clinic in Mallepally. A pharmacology resident doctor at Gandhi Medical College, Dr Khizer spends almost the entire night seeing patients, counselling them about Covid-19, and tries to educate people not to be afraid of the disease but take every step to protect themselves from it, and provides the course of treatments for those whose families turn up at his clinic for help and guidance. During the month of Ramzan, Dr Khizer works at the clinic till Sehri, the pre-dawn meal, attending to an average of 150 people who visit his clinic. Once the word spread that there was a doctor willing to see Covid-19 suspects, or even patients, people began lining up, he said. Most of those who visit the night clinic are poor. "Most of my job here is educating families about taking precautions and spreading awareness about the disease," he said.



Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Missile Complex of DRDO hands over oxygen to Andhra Pradesh state, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Board and Secunderabad Cantonment to meet the scarcity.

handed over 200 oxygen cylinders to meet the urgent requirement of oxy-

## GHMC logs 23,704 cases in April, 611 died in state

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

With the Telangana state health department reporting 51 more deaths due to Covid-19 on Friday, the total number of fatalities due to the pandemic has touched 611 in April alone.

Total deaths due to Covid-19 so far in the state now stand at 2,312. The department also reported 7,754 new cases of Covid-19, taking the total number of cases to 4,43,360 so far. Of the total cases, 3,62,160 patients had recovered or deemed to have recovered from the disease so far, including 6,542 on Friday, claimed

the department.

Meanwhile, there was no let-up in new cases piling up in Hyderabad and the rest of the GHMC area from where 1,507 more people were tested Covid-19 positive. A total number of 23,704 cases were reported within the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits in April, the highest number in a month since the outbreak of the pandemic. Of the 1,34,584 cases recorded in Telangana state in the month, about 20 out of every 100 belong to Hyderabad city and its neighbouring areas.

According to the depart-

ment, 77,930 tests were conducted across the state on Friday. Of these, results from 5,186 were not included in the department's Covid-19 bulletin as the results have been still awaited. The number of active cases on Friday evening stood at 78,888, the department said.

After the GHMC area, Medchal-Malkajgiri district has reported 630 new cases, Ranga Reddy 544, Sangareddy 325, Karimnagar 281, Siddipet and Mahbubnagar 279 each, Nizamabad 267, Jagtial 255, Suryapet and Vikarabad 242 each, Nalgonda with 231 and Khammam 230 new cases.

## CM INSTRUCTS CS TO MONITOR COVID SITUATION

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 1

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Saturday instructed Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar to personally monitor Covid-19 situation in the state by reviewing the issue thrice a day.

The instructions were issued soon after the portfolio of medical and health was transferred from Etala Rajendar.

Rao asked Somesh Kumar to be cautious about Covid-19 surge in the state and ensure that there would be no problems in making available injections like remdesivir, vaccines, oxygen and beds in hospitals.

The CM also deputed special secretary in CMO P. Rajasekhara Reddy to regularly monitor the pandemic from the CMO. He sought all high-level officials in the medical and health department to be on alert and work to free the state from the clutches of corona as early as possible.

## FIRE ACCIDENT AT COVID HOSP IN NIZAMABAD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, MAY 1

A fire accident occurred at the Covid-19 hospital in Nizamabad on Saturday. Government General Hospital is designated as Covid-19 hospital and treating the patients. Fire engulfed the scanning room and the machinery and furniture was damaged in the mishap. Fire tenders were pressed into service to extinguish the fire. It is suspected that a short circuit caused the fire accident. Covid-19 patients were admitted on the top floors and the fire accident occurred in the ground floor.

## RAT tests only 50% reliable

From page 1

The overall reliability of RAT tests is only around 50 per cent while RT-PCR tests have 80 per cent reliability, but their ability to detect the presence of virus depends on the timing an infected person gets tested. However, with the government making it clear that only people with demonstrable symptoms are to be tested at its testing centres, it is not clear how those experiencing mild symptoms, or

those who may have come into close contact with others who tested positive, will be tested in Telangana.

It may be recalled that the Telangana High Court had repeatedly pulled up the state government for its poor testing rates following which testing was ramped up to one lakh plus for a few days. Subsequently, it was between 60,000 and 80,000 tests a day, with the numbers being on the lower side during the weekends.

## 230 left without O2 for 80 min

FROM PAGE 1

The death toll stood at 18, police official R a j e n d r a s i n h Chudasama said, "including 16 patients and two nurses." "Primary investigation revealed that the fire started due to a short circuit in the ICU of the hospital," he said.

Local people and the kin of patients helped in the rescue operation during which dozens of patients were shifted to other facilities by ambulance. Some were brought out of the building on wheelchairs or on make-shift stretchers of cloth.

Police also had to control a nearly 15,000-strong crowd which gathered outside the hospital after hearing about the fire, but no law and order issue was reported, an official release of the Bharuch police said.

Meanwhile, the Delhi High Court while hearing the shortage of oxygen said, "We hope no lives were lost," the court responded, to which the hospital said: "We have... including one of our own... one doctor."

About 230 people were left without oxygen for 80 minutes.

Batra hospital has 327

patients out of which 48 are in the critical care unit. It has been raising alarms since Saturday afternoon over depleting levels of oxygen supply.

"Once a patient is pushed to the edge without the support of oxygen, it is very difficult to revive him. Unfortunately, we are expecting more fatalities," said Sudhanshu Bankata, executive director of the hospital.

Dr Himthani, head of the gastroenterology department, was among those who died due to lack of oxygen, said Dr S.C.L. Gupta, medical director of the hospital. He had been admitted to the hospital for the last 15-20 days.

The hospital had sent out an SOS message about oxygen shortage on Saturday.

Dr Gupta said they had informed the authorities about lack of oxygen Saturday morning when they had 2,500 litres of the life-saving gas left. The oxygen tanker arrived at 1.35 pm, they said, adding that they were without oxygen for 80 minutes. Saturday was the second time in the space of a week that the hospital ran out of oxygen.

## MINISTER'S CAMP DENIES WRONGDOING

From Page 1

There is no record to establish that the change of land use was done and doubts were raised over the Canara Bank processing the loan without change of land use. Meanwhile, sources said that of the total 116 acres in possession of the hatchery, a few sheds and roads were constructed in about 20 acres, which included assigned lands. Even constructing a compound wall encompassing assigned lands attracts the provisions of Prohibition of Transfer Act 1977, a senior official pointed out.

Sources also said the minister's family members do not own much patta land in their name. There was a dispute over about 12-acre land between brothers of a family and one of them registered the land in the name of the minister's wife and son despite prohibitory orders.



## OTHER STORIES

## FIRE ACCIDENT AT GGH, NIZAMABAD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, MAY 1

Fire accident was occurred at Covid-19 hospital in Nizamabad on Saturday. Government General Hospital is designated as Covid-19 hospital and treating the patients. Fire engulfed at Scanning room and the machinery and furniture was damaged in the mishap. Fire tenders pressed into service to extinguish the smoke and flames. It is believed that short circuit is caused for the fire accident. Covid-19 patients were admitted in upstairs and the fire accident was occurred at ground floor.

## May day



CITU leader Bandari Shekar hoist flag on the occasion of May Day celebrations at municipal corporation office in Karimnagar on Saturday. —DC

## POLITICAL LEADERS UNDER COVID FEAR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, MAY 1

Physical distancing went for a major toss while the political parties conducted election canvassing across 66 divisions under the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC). All parties including TRS, BJP and Congress conducted campaign competing with each other. While parties stayed away from the door-to-door campaign, they organised several roadshows which cause mass gatherings.

At a time when the coronavirus cases are at an all-time high, the elections to ULBs have paved the way for the cases to increase further.

With the counting of votes scheduled to be held on May 3, the GWMC administration asked candidates to undergo tests and obtain a corona negative certificate if they wish to be present inside the counting hall. The tests were scheduled to be held on May 1 and 2. While 15 candidates were tested, two have been tested positive so far. As a result, the candidates and their followers are in fear they might have contracted the virus. Many are rushing to get themselves tested.

Meanwhile, Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao underwent the test but was found to be covid negative.

## BHADRAKALI TEMPLE CLOSED FOR TEN DAYS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, MAY 1

The historic Bhadrakali temple in Warangal has been declared closed for ten days after four of the temple staff were tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday.

Temple executive officer R. Sunitha announced on Saturday that the temple would remain closed from Sunday May 2 to May 11 for devotees seeking darshan of the goddess and also the vahana seva.

However, the daily prayers for the goddess would continue in the temple as usual sans any devotees, she said urging citizens to cooperate in curbing the spread of coronavirus.

## KCR made Etala scapegoat: Oppn

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 1

The opposition unanimously condemned the allegations made against former health minister Rajendar Etala, stating that he had become the scapegoat in a political drama, run by the Chief Minister.

K. Chandrasekhar Rao, and his family. Despite being a member of the ruling TRS, the MLA from Huzurabad found support in the opposition quarters. State leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party, Bethi Mahendar Reddy, questioned the Chief Minister, asking him why no CBI probe had been ordered when 'all kinds of mafia' was going on in Karimnagar with the support of Gangula Kamalakara, the backward class welfare, food and civil supplies minister.

Bethi Reddy alleged that for the past several years, the mafia was involved in smuggling sand and granite, land grabbing, contract work and transferring of government officials, among others. This was being done with the support of local ministers, and they were generating revenues worth thousands of crores, he added. In spite of bringing the issue of land grabbing of burials grounds and other areas to the attention of the state government, there was no action, he said. "Earlier, when a video of Kamalakara with a TV actress went viral online, why did the TRS supremo not respond?" he asked.

Bethi Reddy further said that Rajendar was a close associate of the Chief Minister and had led the separate Telangana movement along with the latter. "Rajendar was among those who helped in achieving separate statehood status for the region of Telangana. He is also a prominent BC community leader in the state. The

Chief Minister made him a target as he was enormously popular."

Further, he asked why the Chief Minister was issuing such orders against an important leader while sparing the local minister who was involved with the mafia. He demanded the state government and the Chief Minister to immediately conduct a probe against Kamalakara, and suspend him from the post.

Ambati Joji Reddy, the Telugu Desam's Karimnagar parliament segment president, alleged that while the Covid-19 virus was rapidly spreading through the state, the Chief Minister had conspired against the only loyal minister in TRS, and was using his media channels to spread false allegations and demoralise Rajendar.

"Unable to digest the fact that Rajendar was becoming popular due to his hard work to combat the spread of the Covid-19 virus, TRS leadership is trying to tarnish his image with unnecessary issues. When several ministers and MLAs were facing allegations of land grabbing, then why did the Chief Minister single out Rajendar? It is unfair to the leaders who worked hard towards the creation of Telangana state," he added. He also demanded an inquiry against those accused of land grabbing and 'all corrupt ministers and MLAs of TRS party, including the Chief Minister and his family'.

Ponaganti Kedari, the district secretary of the Communist Party of India, demanded immediate suspension of all ministers and MLAs facing allegations of land grabbing. He alleged that several complaints were made against TRS ministers, including Kamalakara, K.T. Rama Rao, P. Ajay Kumar, Malla Reddy, and Srinivas Goud regarding land grabbing, land mafia and corruption.

## After looting Covid-19 patients, pvt hops refers to govt centres

Pvt doctors are escaping from taking up responsibility of critical patients

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS  
ADILABAD, MAY 1

Managements of private hospitals in old Adilabad district are referring critical Coronavirus patients to government hospitals, especially Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Adilabad, after collecting huge money as charges for treatment.

A government doctor commented that private hospitals could at least refer their patients a bit earlier, so that they could be saved at the RIMS. "Private hospital doctors are escaping from taking up responsibility for Covid patients when they get into a critical condition," he lamented. Private hospitals are referring patients not only to RIMS, but also to Hyderabad.

Enquiries reveal that many Coronavirus patients thus referred are losing their lives just because private hospitals are shirking responsibility in treating them during the critical hours.

Doctors at RIMS are administering Remdesivir injections up to six doses free of cost to critical Covid patients undergoing treatment at the hospital. Ventilator and oxygen facilities too are being provided free, in addition to other medicines required. Against this, private hospitals are reportedly charging ₹25,000 for each Remdesivir injection, which is in huge demand. Even for oxygen, they are collecting ₹2,000 per hour.

Meanwhile, an 85-year-old patient Ramakistu, of Adilabad town admitted to RIMS after contracting Coronavirus has fully recovered and got discharged on Friday. Ramakistu thanked doctors Sumalatha Naitham and Naziya for successfully treating him in the Covid ward. A photograph of him thanking doctors has gone viral on social media.

● **ENQUIRIES REVEAL** that many Coronavirus patients thus referred are losing their lives just because private hospitals are shirking responsibility in treating them during the critical hours.

● **DOCTORS AT RIMS** are administering Remdesivir injections up to six doses free of cost to critical Covid patients undergoing treatment at the hospital. Ventilator and oxygen facilities too are being provided free, in addition to other medicines required.



Congress leaders distribute masks to the people at the bus stand circle in Karimnagar on Saturday. —DC

## TRS, BJP failed to prevent rapid spread of Covid: Cong

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 1

With the orders issued by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) and Pradesh Congress Committee, the leaders of Congress party under the leadership of City Congress president Komatireddy Narendar Reddy distributed masks to the auto workers and passengers in part of awareness programme here at Bus stand circle in Karimnagar on Saturday.

After distributing the masks, the District Congress Committee president, Dr Kavvampally Satyanarayana said that people are living in miserable conditions with inefficient governance of BJP at the centre and TRS in the state. As both the central and state government

did not take any steps and implement a perfect action plan, the second wave of Coronavirus is spreading at an alarming rate.

One of the ministers from the district is busy in land grabbing, the other is busy in personal works while the BJP state chief and Karimnagar MP is busy participating in election campaigns. He was not able to bring at least one oxygen tank or cylinder from the central government or even funds for preventing the virus means people can understand how much negligence both parties have towards them, he pointed out.

The leaders of both the BJP and TRS parties are ineligible and must resign from their posts immediately, he demanded.

Satyanarayana said that even though the Congress party is not in power, it always strives hard for the well being of the people. That is why in part of the call given by the AICC, masks are distributed freely along with opening of a free Covid-19 help line and Control room at the DCC office for providing free services to the people.

Congress party will take up people's welfare programmes further in the coming up days until both the parties open their eyes, he informed.

Congress leaders Uppari Ravi, Md.Taaz, Shravan Naik, Kommu Sunil, Mukku Bhaskar, Mamidi Satyanarayana Reddy, Gundeti Srinivas Reddy, Rolla Satish and Dandi Ravinder were among those who participated in the programme.

## BJP state chief visits Covid-19 isolation ward in Karimnagar

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 1

Bandi Sanjay Kumar, the Bharatiya Janata Party's state chief, visited the Covid-19 isolation ward established at Sports School in Karimnagar, after taking all necessary precautions, on Saturday.

The Karimnagar MP, after inspecting facilities provided for infected patients in the ward, interacted with patients undergoing treatment and wished them a quick recovery.



Bandi Sanjay in PPT suit

Kumar also advised patients to not worry about the virus, and asked them to follow suggestions made by doctors, without falling prey to

myths and rumours surrounding the disease.

"Unnecessary fear will lead to weakening of the immune system. One should be brave enough to face the battle to overcome the disease."

He also ordered the staff of the isolation ward to clean the premises and maintain good hygiene, and further told them to provide required medicines and food on time to infected patients undergoing treatment at the isolation ward.

## DROP IN COVID TESTS CAUSES FEAR, PANIC AMONG PEOPLE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY, MAY 1

The decrease in the number of Covid-19 tests in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts has been a cause of worry for the people. As the number of positive cases increased, people were seen thronging government area hospitals, primary, and urban health centres in order to get a rapid antigen test.

Primary contacts of positive patients, and people with Covid-19 symptoms were alarmed by the decrease in testing. Groups of people also protested over the drop in number of tests, in various parts of the two districts. Officials stated that the sudden decrease in number of tests was due to unavailability of testing kits.

On average, 8,000 tests were conducted everyday in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts. RT-PCR tests have resumed at select hospitals in the districts.

In Nizamabad district, for instance, the number of daily Covid-19 tests had dropped from 5,000 to 2,500, as a result of which, people were forced to shell anything between Rs 800 and 1,500 for RT-PCR tests.

Delay in treatment poses a severe threat to infected patients, which is why timely tests are the need of the hour.

However, medical and health department officials claimed that they were unable to ramp up testing due to the shortage of testing kits.

"The demand far exceeds the supply. It is a policy decision of the government. We are just facilitators," they said, and further asked people with severe symptoms to get tested at their nearest health centre.

● **IN NIZAMABAD** district, for instance, the number of daily Covid-19 tests had dropped from 5,000 to 2,500, as a result of which, people were forced to shell anything between Rs 800 and 1,500 for RT-PCR tests.

● **DELAY IN** treatment poses a severe threat to Covid-19 infected patients, which is why timely tests are the need of the hour.

## Support pours in favour of Etala

Karimnagar: The representatives of various peoples' organisations, along with the followers of former health minister, Etala Rajendar, condemned the allegations made against him, and warned those who framed Rajendar of severe consequences in the upcoming days if they were exposed in Karimnagar, on Saturday.

Rajendar's followers staged dharnas at several places across Karimnagar, and near Shamipet circle in Hyderabad, and performed rituals to rid him of evil eye.

Gande Radhika, the chairperson of Huzurabad municipality, condemned the allegations made against Rajendar, stating that the wealth he had accumulated was a result of his hard work over the years. "He only believes in hard work, and directs his followers to practice the same. Prior to entering politics, he had hundreds of acres of land, property and poultry farms. Although the Chief Minister was aware of this fact, he was

intentionally trying to blame Rajendar."

Dr Choppari Shankar, the state general secretary of Telangana mudiraj Mahasabha, alleged that TRS government-owned media channels were telecasting fake news about the former health minister, adding that he was the only leader in TRS with a 'clean image'.

"Rajendar is well known for his values, morality and honesty. Unable to digest the fact that he was getting increasingly popular among various sections of society, regardless of religion and caste lines, the Chief Minister himself, along with others had conspired to suppress his political growth." He stated that TRS leaders felt a threat from Rajendar, sensing that he would question them about disparity in the party, along with irregularities, and corruption in the state. "Unable to withstand his honesty and loyalty towards people, they tried to drag him into a land grabbing issue, which is totally baseless," he pointed out.

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## SHORT TAKES

## COUNTING OF VOTES IN UP AFTER SC'S NOD

**Lucknow, May 1:** Counting of votes for the panchayat polls in Uttar Pradesh will be held on Sunday with the Supreme Court on Saturday refusing to stay the process and the State Election Commission (SEC) saying the candidates and their agents will be allowed to enter the counting centres only if they have tested negative for Covid-19 in the 48 hours prior to the commencement of the counting process or taken both doses of the vaccine.

In a special urgent hearing on a holiday, a bench of justices AM Khanwilkar and Hrishikesh Roy passed the order after taking note of several notifications and assurances of the SEC that the Covid-19 protocols will be followed at all the 829 counting centres.

The court directed that there will be a strict curfew in the entire state till Tuesday morning and no victory rallies will be permitted. It also asked the SEC to fix the responsibility for observance of Covid-19 protocols at the counting centres on gazetted officers.

The bench directed the poll panel to preserve the CCTV footage of the counting centres till the Allahabad High Court concludes its hearings on the related petitions before it.

It also ordered that the government officials, candidates and their agents will have to produce RT-PCR test reports to show that they are Covid-19 negative before entering the counting centres.

The Uttar Pradesh Prathamik Shikshak Sangh (UPSSS), in a letter dated April 29 and addressed to the chief minister and the state election commissioner, had said if the counting of votes on May 2 was not cancelled, the teachers will boycott poll duty.

## GST REVENUES HITS A RECORD OF ₹1.41L CRORE

**New Delhi, May 1:** GST collections crossed the ₹1 lakh crore mark for the seventh month in a row and touched a record high of over ₹1.41 lakh crore in April, indicating economic recovery, the Finance Ministry said on Saturday. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections, which directly reflect the state of economic activity, in April are 14 per cent higher than ₹1.23 lakh crore mopped up in March.

In April last year, the revenue had plummeted to a record low of ₹32,172 crore, after the government imposed a nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of Coronavirus. As economic activity picked up, GST collections started crossing the ₹1 lakh crore mark since October last year.

The gross GST revenue collected in the month of April 2021 is at a record high of Rs 1,41,384 crore, of which CGST is ₹27,837 crore, SGST ₹35,621 crore, IGST 68,481 crore (including ₹29,599 crore collected on import of goods) and cess ₹9,445 crore (including ₹981 crore collected on import of goods). During April, revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) are 21 per cent higher than in March.

"GST revenues have not only crossed the ₹1 lakh crore mark successfully for the last seven months but have also shown a steady increase. These are clear indicators of sustained economic recovery during this period".

## Delhi extends lockdown till May 10 after 27,000 new cases

## National capital also battles shortage of beds, oxygen in its hospitals

**New Delhi, May 1:** Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced an extension of the ongoing lockdown in Delhi by another week on Saturday amid a sudden surge in Covid-19 cases as the national capital battles an acute shortage of beds and medical oxygen in its hospitals.

"Lockdown in Delhi is being extended by one week," Kejriwal said in a tweet.

The lockdown that was scheduled to be in force till 5 am on Monday now stands extended by another week till May 10.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), in its order on the extension of the lockdown, stated that a review of the pandemic situation showed that the numbers of positive cases, positivity rate as well as bed occupancy (oxygen-supported or ICU beds) in the dedicated Covid-19 hospitals are very high.

"...therefore, in order to contain the spread of the virus and break the transmission chain, the curfew needs to be extended for another week in the territory of NCT of Delhi (except for essential activities and services)," it said.

In view of the spiralling number of fresh Covid cases and a high positivity rate, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government imposed the lockdown in Delhi on April 19. It was subsequently extended by a week on April 25.

The DDMA has directed to extend the curfew (lockdown) on the movement of individuals (except for essential activities and services) till 5 am on May 10 or further orders, whichever is earlier.

The Covid situation in the national capital is extremely grim as the festering crisis due to the shortage of oxygen claimed 12 lives in the Batra hospital on Saturday, even as the Centre and the city government are involved in a blame game.

The number of fresh Covid cases is still soaring, despite the lockdown.

The number of positive cases in a 24-hour period stood at over 27,000 with a positivity rate of 32.69 per cent and 375 deaths, according to the Delhi government's health bulletin on Friday.

"We will have to watch the situation for a few more days whether the number of cases decreases or increases," Kejriwal had said on the first extension of the lockdown.

Chamber of Trade and Industry chairman Brijesh Goyal said 65 per cent of the traders are in favour of an extension of the lockdown.

Community platform LocalCircles said 75 per cent respondents in a survey conducted by it in the national capital favoured extending the lockdown.

Many believe that till Delhi goes back to a daily caseload of 10,000 and a test positivity rate of less than 10 per cent, the lockdown would be needed, LocalCircles chairman Sachin Taparia said. — PTI

● **THE NUMBER** of positive cases in a 24-hour period stood at over 27,000 with a positivity rate of 32.69 per cent and 375 deaths.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers prayers at Sis Ganj Sahib Gurudwara on the 400th Prakash Purab of Guru Teg Bahadur in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

## India records highest-ever 4,01,993 fresh Covid-19 cases in last 24 hours

**New Delhi, May 1:** India's daily coronavirus tally crossed the grim milestone of four lakh, while the death toll rose to 2,11,853 with 3,523 fresh fatalities, according to data updated by the Union Health Ministry on Saturday.

The infection tally rose to 1,91,64,969 with 4,01,993 new cases, while the active cases crossed the 32-lakh mark, the data updated at 8 am showed. Registering a steady increase, the active cases stood at 32,68,710, accounting for 17.06 per cent

of the total infections, while the national Covid-19 recovery rate has further dropped to 81.84 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,56,84,406, while the case fatality rate stands 1.11 per cent, the data stated.

India's Covid-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7; 30 lakh on August 23; 40 lakh on September 5; and 50 lakh on September 16. It went past 60 lakh on September 28; 70 lakh on October 11; crossed 80 lakh

on October 29; 90 lakh on November 20; and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of 1.50 crore on April 19. According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), 28,83,37,385 samples have been tested up to April 30, of which 19,45,299 were done on Friday.

The 3,523 new fatalities include 828 from Maharashtra, 375 from Delhi, 332 from Uttar Pradesh, 269 from Chhattisgarh, 217 from

Karnataka, 173 from Gujarat, 155 from Rajasthan, 122 from Uttarakhand and 120 from Jharkhand, 113 each from Punjab and Tamil Nadu. A total of 2,11,853 deaths have been reported so far in the country, including 68,813 from Maharashtra, 16,147 from Delhi, 15,523 from Karnataka, 14,046 from Tamil Nadu, 12,570 from Uttar Pradesh, 11,344 from West Bengal, 9,022 from Punjab and 8,581 from Chhattisgarh. — PTI

## States delay vaccination plan due to big shortage

**New Delhi, May 1:** India rolled out the third phase of its Covid-19 vaccination drive for those in the 18-45 age group on Saturday though the inoculation process failed to take off in some states due to shortage of vaccines.

While Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir among other states and union territories launched the vaccination drive, Karnataka and Odisha made only a symbolic start to it.

Blaming organisations authorised by the Centre for not making vaccines available, the Jharkhand government said it will announce fresh dates for the jobs once they reach the state.

Chief Minister Hemant Soren said he has sought the

Centre's intervention in facilitating procurement of at least 50 lakh vaccine doses. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Puducherry had also said on Friday that they do not have adequate stocks of vaccines to meet the expected rush of immunity seekers.

After these states expressed their inability to start the latest phase of the vaccination drive from May 1 citing paucity of doses, the Centre had said those, which have already coordinated with manufacturers, will kick off the drive on the designated date.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that inoculation of people in the 18-45 age group will begin in the national capital from Monday, adding 4.5

lakh vaccine doses have been received by the city government. He visited a vaccination centre at Saraswati Vihar for a "symbolic launch" of the nationwide drive. He also urged people not to queue up outside the vaccination centres, saying walk-ins are not allowed yet.

The Kerala government said that vaccination of those in the over 18 years age bracket will be delayed due to shortage of vaccines and urged the Centre to take steps immediately to ensure their availability.

"The vaccination of those above 18 years of age will be delayed by a few days. As efforts are on to procure vaccines from manufacturers, those in the 18 plus category cannot be given the jabs now," CM Vijayan said.

## FAUCI SUGGESTS LOCKDOWN TO CONTAIN COVID-19

**New Delhi, May 1:** Top US epidemiologist Anthony Fauci has suggested a lockdown for a few weeks in India as an immediate step to contain the spread of the coronavirus as its deadly second wave shows no signs of ebbing.

Fauci, in an interview to *The Indian Express*, said another most important thing in the immediate is to get supplies of oxygen, medication, PPEs.

He said looking at the magnitude of the crisis, India should look at putting together a crisis group that would meet and start getting things organised.

Without naming any government, he said one of the things that should have been recognised that "victory was declared maybe too prematurely". — PTI

## Got aggressive calls from the powerful: Adar

**London, May 1:** Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla on Saturday spoke out about the pressures he was under over the production of Covid-19 vaccines to meet the ever-increasing demand in India as the country battles through a devastating second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

In his first comments since he was provided with Y category security by the Indian government earlier this week, Poonawalla told *The Times* in an interview about receiving aggressive calls from some of the most powerful people in India, demanding supplies of Covishield — the Oxford AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine that the Serum Institute is producing in India.

That pressure is largely behind his decision to fly into London to be with his wife and children, the 40-year-old entrepreneur said.

"I'm staying here (London) an extended time because I don't want to go back to that situation. Everything falls on my shoulders but I can't do it alone...I don't want to be in a situation where you are just trying to do your job, and just because you can't supply the needs of X, Y or Z you really don't want to guess what they are going to do," Poonawalla told the newspaper.

The level of expectation and aggression is really unprecedented. It's overwhelming. Everyone feels they should get the vaccine. They can't understand why anyone else should get it before them, he said. — PTI



Adar Poonawalla

## India should not have exported vax: Ajit Pawar

**BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 1**

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has blamed the Union Government for the scarcity of Covid-19 vaccines in the country. The Centre's decision to export vaccines to other countries led to its shortage, he said.

"I feel the Centre should not have exported Covid-19 vaccines to other countries. There was no need to send vaccines abroad in the initial stage. Had that not happened, it would have been possible to vaccinate more people in Maharashtra and other states," said Mr Pawar to the media after the state foundation day event in Pune, of which he is the guardian minister.

"We had planned to start the third phase in a big way in the state, but due to inadequate supply of vaccines, it could not be done. The union government should now allow the states to import the vaccine, at least the number of vaccines that were sent out in the initial stages," he added.

Mr Pawar said the state government has allocated 6,500 crore for the third phase of vaccination, which has a target population of 5.81 crore and it is ready to pay lump sum cash for this.

The government has discussed the vaccine availability issue with Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla and Bharat Biotech. "However, it seems that we cannot fully rely on the two Indian firms. Hence, we are keen to import vaccines from foreign manufacturers with the permission of the Union government," he said.

Ever since the vaccination drive has started in the country, Maharashtra has continued to top the chart in terms of inoculating people. It has already reached a milestone of vaccinating 1.5 crore people in the state.

## Centre trying to defame Uddhav: Sena

**DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, MAY 1**

The Shiv Sena on Saturday launched a scathing attack on the Centre saying Delhi's rulers are trying to corner the state during the coronavirus pandemic as the state has a Chief Minister with a 'Marathi pride.' A conspiracy has been hatched to defame the state by creating political and economic chaos, alleged the party.

As Maharashtra celebrated its 61st foundation day on Saturday, the Sena said that the state is bravely fighting against the Covid-19 crisis. It blamed the Centre for "creating hurdles" in the battle. "The vaccination drive in Maharashtra has been halted due to Delhi's obstinate nature. Maharashtra is not being provided with adequate injections and medicines and it is also facing acute shortage of oxygen," said the Sena in an editorial in the party mouthpiece Saamana.

It alleged that Maharashtra is being cornered by the Delhi's rulers as the state has a CM and a government, which endorses 'Marathi Bana' (pride). "Though the governments in Delhi have changed, their enmity against Maharashtra has continued. The state has helped the country immensely in economic terms, but these governments have kept on robbing Maharashtra. Several projects and schemes in the state have been shifted to Gujarat with an aim to diminish Mumbai's importance and cut off Maharashtra's financial support," said the editorial.

## Queues for O2, beds, thanks to Modi: RG

**New Delhi, May 1:** As India logged a world record of over four lakh Coronavirus infections on Saturday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the entire world is shaken by what is happening here and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi for queues everywhere, whether for oxygen cylinders, for life-saving medicines, for hospital beds and even outside crematoriums.

"Rely on yourself is the motto. No one will come to help you. Definitely, not the prime minister," Gandhi said, while alleging that the Covid-19 situation has gone completely out of control for the Modi government, and wondered whether it was their way of making the states and the citizens truly

'Aatmanirbhar'. In an exclusive interview, the former Congress chief alleged that the government completely failed to understand or to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic, right from the very beginning, despite repeated warnings including from scientists. Training his guns on the prime minister and Home Minister Amit Shah, Gandhi said India must be the only country in the world facing this massive pandemic without the guidance of an expert and empowered group that is charged with fighting the virus and protecting the people, with planning ahead, anticipating needs and taking the decisions that will result in swift action to save lives. — PTI

## SAD | DEMISE

## Cine personalities take to Twitter to pay rich tributes

## Actor Bikramjeet passes away

**Mumbai, May 1:** Actor Bikramjeet Kanwarpal, who has appeared in films like *Page 3* and *2 States* as well as popular television show *Adaalat*, has died due to Coronavirus-related complications. He was 52.

The actor, who was admitted in a city hospital here, passed away on Saturday morning.

"He was admitted to hospital ten days ago at Seven Hills, he was later shifted to ICU as his condition worsened. He passed away today morning at around 5 am," Kanwarpal's close friend Himanshu Daddhawal said. After retiring from the Indian Army, Kanwarpal made his acting debut in early 2000. His other movie credits include *"Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year"*, *"Jab Tak Hai Jaan"*, *"Aarakshan"* and *"The Ghazi Attack"*. On television, some of his



Bikramjeet Kanwarpal

noteworthy performances were in Anil Kapoor-starrer *"24"*, *"Adaalat"*, *"Diya Aur Baati Hum"* and *"Yeh Hai Chahatein"*. He was last seen in Disney Plus Hotstar web series *"Special Ops"*. Kanwarpal is survived by his parents.

Soon after the news of the actor's demise, several cine

personalities took to Twitter to pay tributes to one of the most "disciplined, energetic and positive man".

Actor Neil Nitin Mukesh said Kanwarpal's sudden death has left him heartbroken. "Extremely sad news. I've known Major Bikramjeet for so many years.

He and I have worked on so many films together. The last being Bypass Road. Such a fantastic, encouraging and energetic human being he was and will always be remembered as. #RIP My dear friend will miss you," he wrote.

Music composer-singer Vishal Dadlani called him a man of dignity. "A man who lent dignity to everything he did, #BikramjeetKanwarpal carried the Fauji stamp. Jai Hind, Sir," he said.

Actor Siddhant Kapoor shared a photograph of him on his Instagram Stories.

"I'm so sorry major! Will have dinner with you on the other side some day! Love you may your beautiful soul RIP thank you for serving the nation, lost a friend and a co-star," he wrote.

Rohit Bose Roy remembered Bikramjeet for his jovial nature. "And we lose another one... The happiest, most gentlemanly, always positive and smiling Major Bikramjeet... RIP," he said.

Actor Bidita Bag said he was a disciplined man while serving in the army and also as an actor. "As an army officer he religiously served India. He was a disciplined man in his previous post as also in his current thespianic art. He was lively, vibrant, full of energy. My grief goes boundless that I would never ever get him as an inspiring co-actor. RIP #BikramjeetKanwarpal," she said. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

THUNDERSTORM  
KILLS 11, INJURES  
102 IN CHINA

**Beijing:** An extreme thunderstorm hit an eastern Chinese city, leaving 11 dead and 102 injured, with strong winds causing buildings and trees to collapse.

Nantong city, located in the eastern province of Jiangsu, was among the hardest-hit when the extreme weather swept the Yangtze Delta on Friday night, according to state-affiliated newspaper *Global Times*.

Rescuers evacuated 3,050 people, a local government notice said. Wind speeds of 162 kilometers (100 miles) per hour overturned a fishing ship. Two sailors were rescued and search operations were underway for the nine remaining crew, the notice said. Electricity has been restored in Nantong, and collapsed trees, damaged vehicles as well as windows that have been blown away were being cleared.

YEMEN FLOODING  
FROM SEASONAL  
RAINS KILLS 13

**Sanaa:** Floods swept through parts of Yemen amid heavy seasonal rains, leaving at least 13 people dead, including two children, security officials said on Saturday.

Fatalities were reported in the provinces of Sanaa, Ibb, Shabwa and Hodeida, where it began raining late last month, the officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media.

Heavy rains also pelted the provinces of Aden, Taiz and Hadramawt, where flooding damaged houses and vehicles, they said. Rescuers managed to save some residents trapped in their cars.

Yemen's National Meteorological Center issued statements in recent days warning Yemenis to stay away from flood ducts in affected areas and to take necessary precautions. Yemen's rainy season runs from April through August.

KYRGYZ, TAJIK  
LEADERS MOVE TO  
SAVE CEASEFIRE

**Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan:** The presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan spoke by telephone on Saturday hoping to maintain a fragile ceasefire after the worst border clashes between the ex-Soviet countries left at least 33 dead.

The talks came after Kyrgyzstan accused Tajikistan of violating the truce, but the press services of Kyrgyzstan's leader Sadyr Japarov and Tajikistan's Emomali Rakhmon said they discussed fulfilling the agreement reached on Thursday, when the fighting erupted.

Clashes between communities over land and water along the long-contested border are regular occurrences, with border guards often getting involved, however this week's violence was by far the most serious during the Central Asian pair's 30 years of independence.

Kyrgyzstan on Saturday announced two days of mourning and said that its death toll had risen from 31 to 33, with over a hundred other Kyrgyz injured and at least 30 properties destroyed in its southwestern Batken region.

AFGHAN SUICIDE  
BOMBING KILLS  
21, INJURES 90

**Kabul:** The death toll in a powerful suicide truck bombing that struck a guest house in eastern Afghanistan rose to 21 with as many as 90 others wounded, officials said on Saturday.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the late Friday night bombing in Pule-Alam, the capital of Logar province. There was no indication why the guest house was targeted.

In Afghanistan, guest houses are lodgings often provided for free by the government, usually for the poor, travellers and students. The Interior Ministry quickly blamed the Taliban. There was no immediate response from the Taliban. The attack came on the eve of the official date set for the start of the final withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan. The Taliban, who had demanded that all US troops pull out of Afghanistan by May 1, have not offered any guarantees for the safety of the departing troops. There was no indication the bombing was connected to the pullout.

## Covid situation in India tragic: Harris

We as a country have made a commitment to support the people in India, says V-P

**Washington, May 1:** Vice President Kamala Harris has described the Coronavirus situation in India as "tragic" and said the US has made a commitment to support the country in battling the challenge.

"There is no question that it is a great tragedy, in terms of the loss of life, and as I have said before, and I will say again, we as a country have made a commitment to the people of India to support them," Harris told reporters on Friday in Cincinnati, Ohio. "We have already made a commitment in terms of a dollar amount that will go to PPE and a number of other things. But it is tragic. My prayers go to the people on the suffering, the blatant suffering that is happening," Harris said in response to a question.

Earlier, the White House announced restrictions on travel from India because of "extraordinarily high Covid-19 case-loads" and multiple variants circulating there". Harris said she hasn't spoken to her family in India since the news of the ban was made public. On the advice of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Administration will restrict travel from India starting May 4, White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.

"The policy will be implemented in light of extraordinarily high COVID-19 case-loads and multiple variants circulating in India," Psaki said in a statement.

— PTI



Visitors wearing face masks gather at a viewing area overlooking the Forbidden City at a public park in Beijing on Saturday. Chinese tourists are expected to make a total of 18.3 million railway passenger trips on the first day of the country's five-day holiday for international labor day, according to an estimate by the state railway group, as tourists rush to travel domestically after the Coronavirus has been brought under control in China.

— AP

WHO approves Moderna  
vax for emergency use

**Geneva, May 1:** The World Health Organisation has given the go-ahead for emergency use of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine.

The mRNA vaccine from the US manufacturer joins vaccines from AstraZeneca, Pfizer-BioNTech and Johnson & Johnson in receiving the WHO's emergency use listing.

Similar approvals for

China's Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines are expected in the coming days and weeks, WHO has said.

The greenlight for Moderna's vaccine, announced late on Friday, took many months because of delays that WHO faced in getting data from the manufacturer. Many countries without their own advanced medical regulatory and assessment

offices rely on the WHO listing to decide whether to use vaccines. UN children's agency UNICEF also uses the listing to deploy vaccines in an emergency like the pandemic.

The announcement, however, wasn't likely to have an immediate impact on supplies of Moderna's vaccine for the developing world.

— AP

## CANADA

Global students not  
to be allowed entry

**Toronto, May 1:** Canada is all set to suspend entry of international students, including from India, to Ontario, the worst-hit province which is battling the third wave of the Coronavirus.

According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), an education service provider based in Ottawa, there were 530,540 international students in Canada in 2020, of which the maximum were from India (34 per cent) followed by China (22 per cent). Ontario has the maximum number of foreign students at 242,825 or 46 per cent, it said.

During a press confer-

ence on Friday, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that the government is considering halting the arrival of international students in Ontario, following a request from the province's premier Doug Ford to combat the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, the globalnews.ca reported. "Because currently Ontario is the only province to request it, we are happy to work more closely with them," he said. Trudeau said they will be "reaching out to their officials" to formalise the request.

However, there is no clarity as yet on when the change will take effect or how long it will last.

— PTI

New virus cases put  
New Zealand-Oz  
travel bubble at risk

**Wellington, May 1:** New Zealand's fledgling quarantine-free travel arrangement with Western Australia faced disruption for the second time in eight days on Saturday following fresh community cases of Covid-19 in Perth.

A worker at a managed isolation facility in the city and two people he shares accommodation with have tested positive, authorities said.

Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan said the state would not go into lockdown "at this point".

But New Zealand health ministry officials said

they had conducted a "rapid" assessment and had "determined scheduled direct flights from Western Australia to New Zealand should be immediately paused while a further assessment is carried out."

A flight scheduled to arrive in Auckland from Perth at 5.50am on Sunday (1750 GMT Saturday) has been cancelled, but travel to other Australian states and territories is not affected.

It is the second such disruption since the two countries opened their quarantine-free travel bubble on April 18.

— AFP

## AUSTRALIA

## Iran N-talks to resume in Vienna

**Vienna, May 1:** Parties to the Iran nuclear agreement are to resume on Saturday the third round of negotiations in Vienna aimed at bringing the United States back into the accord.

The deal, which curbs Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief, has been on life support since then US president Donald Trump bolted in 2018.

The remaining partners to the 2015 accord have been engaged in negotiations since early April to try to revive it.

The third round of talks started on Tuesday and, after several days of tech-

nical discussions between expert groups and delegations, will resume on Saturday.

After the talks, the delegations will return to their respective capitals.

The service of EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said in a statement that delegates from Britain, China, France, Germany, Iran and Russia

would meet in person at around 3 pm (1300 GMT).

"Participants will continue their discussions in view of a possible return of the United States to the JCPOA and on how to ensure the full and effective implementation of the JCPOA," the statement said, using the acronym of the agreement's formal name.

After the talks, the delegations will return to their respective capitals to receive instructions, Iran's foreign ministry said.

A European diplomat said that the American, European, Russian and

## IRELAND

INDIA ADDED TO  
MANDATORY  
QUARANTINE LIST

**London, May 1:** India is among the five countries that will be added to Ireland's mandatory hotel quarantine list from Tuesday, the Irish government has announced.

Besides India, the other countries that have been added to the list for mandatory quarantine from May 4 are Georgia, Iran, Mongolia and Costa Rica.

The passengers are required to pre-pay for their stay during the quarantine period.

— PTI

## NEPAL

22 ENTRY POINTS  
WITH INDIA SET  
TO BE CLOSED

**Kathmandu, May 1:** The Nepal government has decided to close 22 border points with India amid a sharp surge in Covid-19 cases in the neighbouring country.

The decision came after the Covid Crisis Management Coordination Committee on Friday recommended to the Council of Ministers to shut down 22 out of a total of 35 border points between Nepal and India, according to officials.

Now, only 13 border points between Nepal and India will now remain operational.

— PTI

## PAKISTAN

PAK TO REDUCE  
INBOUND GLOBAL  
FLIGHTS BY 20%

**Islamabad, May 1:** Pakistan has decided to reduce the inbound international flights up to 20 per cent of the current numbers from May 5 as part of measures to contain the spread of coronavirus in the country, authorities said on Saturday.

The National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), which is the main anti-corona body of Pakistan, said that the decision to decrease the number of inbound flights was taken in view of the prevailing pandemic situation.

In view of prevailing global and regional disease trends, Pakistan has decided to reduce inbound international travel from May 5 to May 20.

International flights to Pakistan will be reduced to 20 per cent during this period, the NCOC said in a statement.

It said that travelers from the existing list of 22 countries banned to enter Pakistan would remain in place.

— PTI

## HONG KONG

MIGRANT STAFF  
ALARMED AT RULES  
TO MAKE JAB MUST

**Hong Kong, May 1:** Hong Kong migrant worker groups on Saturday criticised plans to make Coronavirus vaccines compulsory for all foreign domestic helpers, labelling the move "discriminatory and unjust".

Health officials said they were planning to roll out mandatory inoculations for the 370,000 domestic helpers in the city, mostly poorly-paid women from the Philippines and Indonesia.

Those wanting to apply for work visas — or renew their current ones — would need to show they had been vaccinated, officials said on Friday.

If the plan goes ahead it would be the first time Hong Kong has directly tied working rights for foreigners to vaccines.

"This is clearly an act of discrimination and stigmatisation against migrant domestic workers," Dolores Balladares Pelaez, chair of United Filipinos in Hong Kong, told reporters.

— AFP

Final phase of  
Afghan pullout by  
NATO, U.S. begins

**Kabul, May 1:** The final phase of ending America's "forever war" in Afghanistan after 20 years formally began on Saturday, with the withdrawal of the last US and NATO troops by the end of summer.

President Joe Biden had set May 1 as the official start of the withdrawal of the remaining forces — about 2,500-3,500 US troops and about 7,000 NATO soldiers. Even before Saturday, the herculean task of packing up had begun. The military has been taking inventory, deciding what is shipped back to the US, what is handed to the Afghan security forces and what is sold as junk in Afghanistan's markets.

In recent weeks, the military has been flying out equipment on massive C-17 cargo planes. The US is estimated to have spent more than \$2 trillion in Afghanistan in the past two decades, according to the Costs of War project at Brown University, which documents the hidden costs of the US military engagement. Defence department officials and diplomats said the withdrawal has involved closing smaller bases over the last year. They said since Biden announced the end-of-summer withdrawal date in mid-April, only roughly 60 military personnel had left the country.

The US and its NATO allies went into Afghanistan together on October 7, 2001 to hunt the al-Qaida perpetrators of the 9/11 terrorist attacks who lived under the protection of the country's Taliban rulers. Two months later, the Taliban had been defeated and al-Qaida fighters and their

leader, Osama bin Laden, were on the run. In his withdrawal announcement last month, Biden said the initial mission was accomplished a decade ago when US Navy SEALs killed bin Laden in his hideout in neighbouring Pakistan. Since then, al-Qaida has been degraded, while the terrorist threat has "metastasised" into a global phenomenon that is not contained by keeping thousands of troops in one country, he said.

Until now the US and NATO have received no promises from the Taliban that they won't attack troops during the pullout. In a response to AP questions, Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen said the Taliban leadership was still mulling over its strategy. The insurgent group continues to accuse Washington of breaching the deal it signed with Biden's predecessor more than a year ago.

In that agreement, the US said it would have all troops out by May 1. In a statement on Saturday, Taliban military spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the passing of the May 1 deadline for a complete withdrawal "opened the way for (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) mujahidin to take every counteraction it deems appropriate against the occupying forces."

— AP

## ADVENTURE | JOY

## It is the greatest feeling ever, says a mother after park opens after 400 days

**Anaheim, United States:** Fans wearing Mickey Mouse ears lined up as Disneyland in California finally reopened Friday, more than 400 days after the pandemic forced an unprecedented closure for the self-styled "Happiest Place on Earth." "It is the greatest feeling ever!" said Momi Young-Wilkins, a 55-year-old mother as she brought her children to the world-famous park near Los Angeles.

"I promised my daughters we would be back here

on opening day, and I made it happen." Disneyland Park — the world's second-most visited theme park — and neighboring Disney California Adventure Park have been closed the longest of all the Mouse House's globe-spanning parks, delayed by California's sharp winter Covid spike and tough restrictions.

But with the Golden State now boasting the nation's lowest per capita infection rate, the sprawling resort flung open its gates Friday to the delight

of many of its most obsessive devotees.

Sisters Carla and Jasmine, 23 and 17, who preferred not to give their last name, used to visit "pretty much every day" before the pandemic.

"We would go after school, after work, and just go on rides, even if it was for a couple hours," said Carla, as they eagerly waited to re-enter.

"We've been excited for this opening day... it's very exciting and emotional!"

— AFP

Portugal reopens  
border, eases norms

**Lisbon, May 1:** Portugal reopened its land border with Spain on Saturday and began the final stage of its programme to ease Covid-19 restrictions.

The country was hit hard at the start of the year by a wave that saw 300 Coronavirus

deaths a day overwhelm hospitals.

But the measures have since helped bring the numbers down, with zero fatalities recorded on Friday for the second time in a week — the previous day without a Covid death was in August.

— AFP



## DECCAN Chronicle

2 MAY 2021



Shashi Warriar

Off the beaten track

### Criminal? Or practical, though only for temples?

People across southern India celebrated their new year, and other occasions, in the middle of April... “Celebrated” is the wrong word to use in the midst of the rising second wave of the coronavirus, but that was what it looked like. The little temple across the street, for instance, that came up illegally two years ago, had its second anniversary a few days before the new year. The temple committee announced a comprehensive day-long programme of festivities. There were to be six hours of noise and feasting: excruciating *bhajans* sung into a sound system that could be heard half-a-kilometre away, and a “traditional” lunch and dinner consisting mostly of rice and other starchy foods. Hundreds of people turned up, with vehicles crowding the narrow street, and not a mask in sight. And, of course, there were large piles of the garbage that the temple workers and visitors simply tossed across the wall into the vacant lot to its south.

A few days later came the new year, Ugadi in these parts, celebrated with vigour by crowds of devotees, accompanied by the noise, the feasting, and the garbage that seem to be an integral part of every celebration. Masks and social distancing were forgotten. Following shortly after was a week-long festival at one of the oldest and largest temples in the neighbourhood, involving three daily rounds of crowds and noise and gorging, and, of course, garbage in the aftermath. News emerged during the festival that the head of one of the large *akharas* involved in the Kumbh died of Covid-19 after getting the disease during the *mela*. Devotees either didn't know or didn't care, for the festivities went right on. The police filed a First Information Report against the temple committee for violating Covid guidelines, to no effect.

In the midst of all this came my wife's birthday. In the time of the pandemic, she gets Zoom calls and good wishes instead of visitors and presents, and she doesn't complain. My friend the professor from the business school called on Zoom, as he did last year, and, when he had finished with the greetings, I took the opportunity to pour out my complaints to him, about the crowds and the noise and the waste of food and the garbage.

He heard me out without batting an eyelid. “I have only bad news for you,” he said, when I had finished my rant.

“What do you mean?” I asked. “All this stuff is not going to stop in the near future,” he said. “It's how business evolves.”

“What do you mean, business?” I asked, mystified. “I thought we were talking about crowds and gluttony and noise and garbage associated with temples and blind faith.”

“Yes,” he said. “It's what happens when you convert faith into income. It's called monetisation.”

“Nonsense!” I said. “Relax,” he said. “Let me explain. Look at the Kumbh. It happens every twelve years, and millions of pilgrims gather for it: it's in the Guinness Book of World Records, you know, for the largest gathering of people.”

“So?” I asked. “Think about it. Taking care of several million people for several days means a lot of money. All of them eat and drink and sleep and pray and bathe in the Ganges. So somebody has to arrange travel and lodging and food and security and logistics. It's a huge, expensive affair. They clean up entire cities, build new roads, arrange for cities of tents, and for hundreds of tons of food. Think of just the food. It means grain and vegetables and spices and oils and fuel and cooks... You know all that. Figure it out for yourself.”

“Right,” I said. “But what does all that have to do with the temples here?” “Every festival is a smaller version of that,” he said. “Every celebration involves money. Where there's money there's business. Where there's business there's a business model. And every business model requires growth.”

“But the big temples are rich!” I said, for the faithful can be generous. “They've got enough!”

“It's all part of the business model,” he said. “Every temple wants more visitors. Every big temple collects lots of money. They do a little social service, feeding the poor every now and again, but that's it. The rest of the money they collect goes into getting more visitors. So they make it easier for people to get there. There are lots of old temples that were hard to get to: you had to walk cross-country to get to them, or climb steep old flights of stairs. All that is changing. They're building roads so you can get there easily... They've built a new road to Mansarovar that goes close to the Chinese border, that cuts three days off a five-day journey.”

That made sense. That big old temple nearby used to have a steep stone staircase to the shrine, and when it rained it got really slippery. They did it up last year, so now you can climb safely up even in the heaviest rainstorm. “Right,” I said.

“There's more,” he continued. “You have people who happen to be on temple committees organising bus tours on special occasions, or hotel accommodation. Running a temple is now a position of power, you know. It combines business and politics.”

I couldn't help agreeing. The temple committee had no trouble dealing with that police FIR. “I see,” I said.

“Blind faith leaves you unaware of its ill effects,” he continued. “There's a profit to be made out of that faith.” He paused. “You know, sometimes it looks like governing people is like growing mushrooms.”

“How so?” I asked, mystified.

“You keep them in the dark and feed them plenty of horses\*” he replied.

*Shashi Warriar has written fairy tales, thrillers, a semi-fictional biography, satires, and a love story. Besides writing, he teaches strategic communication at a business school.*

Subhani



### Reprieve, for now, from Yogi's victim-blaming



Pavan Varma

Chanakya's View

Yogi Adityanath, the saffron-dhari CM of UP, believes that everything in his state is hunky dory. There is no shortage of oxygen, hospital beds, ventilators, essential medicines. Those who say there are criminals in league with blackmarketeers and anti-social elements and must be dealt with stringently under the law. Like the proverbial pigeon that closes its eyes and believes that the cat has gone, Adityanath thinks that if he closes his eyes all the miseries that people in his state are facing will disappear.

But unlike the pigeon, Yogi has teeth to bite. On April 24, he asked his officials to take action under the draconian National Security Act (NSA) and the Gangsters Act against anti-social elements who spread ‘rumours’ and propaganda on social media and try to ‘spoil the atmosphere’. His additional director general of police, Prashant Kumar, added that those who desperately vent their anguish at the transparent mismanagement and shortages in the state, want to ‘tarnish the image of the government’, and FIRs will be filed against them. Hospitals were imperiously told to keep their mouth shut about the crisis of oxygen supplies, or else they will face the majesty of the law.

A PIL was filed by a social activist in the Allahabad high court against slapping of criminal charges on families of critical patients issuing an SOS on social media. The

PIL stated that people are afraid that they will be arrested for ‘spreading rumours about scarcities’. It further stated that some relatives were actually arrested for this crime.

The Supreme Court has now given a fitting rejoinder to the undemocratic high-handedness of the likes of the UP CM. The hon'ble court on April 30 said: “If a citizen ventilates his grievances through social media posts, there is no presumption that it is not genuine. There cannot be and should not be any clampdown on free speech. If anyone is booked for airing their grievance about non-supply of oxygen, medicines or availability of hospital bed, it will amount to a clampdown and we will treat it as contempt of this court (Emphasis mine).” For good measure the court further added: “Let a loud message go out to the states and the DGPs. We will brook no violation of the rights to free speech of a citizen when the country is going through a humanitarian crisis during a health emergency. Let there be free flow of information. Grievances aired through social media posts could actually help the government and local administration to attend to common deficiencies in the healthcare sector and attend to them speedily.”

Obviously, Adityanath disagrees. From the beginning of his term, his entire approach is to misuse the law for clamping down on anyone who remotely seems to suggest that all is not well in his

**On April 24, he asked his officials to take action under the draconian National Security Act (NSA) and the Gangsters Act against anti-social elements who spread ‘rumours’ and propaganda on social media and try to ‘spoil the atmosphere’**

state. Earlier, we have seen how sedition cases were slapped on journalists who had the temerity to report the poor quality of food being provided in midday meals in schools in the state. Really, Mr Adityanath? Sedition? As the Allahabad high court once exasperatedly alluded, the tendency of the CM to treat everything as my highway or the wilderness, has gone too far. Siddiqui Kappan, a journalist from Kerala, was arrested by the UP police on his way to Hathras to cover the dalit teenager's heinous gangrape. At that time the venerable Yogi had used his magisterial powers to prevent journalists from meeting the family, and done everything else to somehow hush up the case. Kappan, in poor health, has languished in jail ever since, until a recent judicial intervention to shift him to AIIMS.

The central government obviously thinks that Adityanath is doing the right thing. On April 25, it invoked the IT Act 2000 to instruct Twitter to remove for viewing in India over 50 posts that were critical of the government's handling of the pandemic. These tweets related to the shortages of medicines, beds, oxygen, the huge crowds at Kumbh Mela and the tragic visuals of mass cremations.

There is only one reason why governments begin to behave this way. It is the hubris of power. When people in power begin to believe that that power entitles them only to praise, and that all criticism is against the interests of the state, and those interests are their exclusive monopoly, they react in this undemocratic way. There is also the myth of the so-called “strong” leader. To my mind, Adityanath loves the image of the autocratic leader who will brook no opposition. Possibly, he draws his inspiration from the perceived persona of the PM himself, who as the “strong” leader has refused to hold a direct press conference ever since he came to power, and considered meeting with the leaders of the farmer's agitation as inimical to his strong-man image. The net consequence of such hubris is demagoguery, and the justification, at any cost, of gross incompetence in governance.

Democracy is a fragile plant. If those who have been elected to tend to it believe that the entire garden is their preserve, and everybody else is an unwarranted trespasser, the plant will wither. For the moment, Adityanath has been soundly put in his place by the Supreme Court. But, such tendencies do not evaporate by one reprimand. They become part of a mindset, and reinforce the actions of other would-be demagogues. To Adityanath, and his ilk, I have only this couplet in response: “*Yun dikhata hai aankhen mujhe baghban, jaise gulshan pe kuch haq hamara nahin*.” The gardener looks at me in such a way, as though I have no rights to the garden.

*The writer, an author and former diplomat, is in politics*

### LETTERS

#### PROFIT IN CRISIS

In this crisis, people are ready to spend liberally to save their loved ones. It has become an opportunity for black marketers to raise prices by hiding the supplies they have and creating demand. Everything from oximeter to remdesivir, is being sold at three times their original cost. This exploitation is the result of giving authority to private leaders. Neither the Centre nor states are trying to control it.

**Pydipati Krupa Nidhi**  
*Hyderabad*

#### VACCINES DIVERTED

I booked a vaccination slot at Community Health Centre (CHC) in Choutuppal and it was the only one available. I got confirmation and appointment through CoWIN site. When I went there today (Saturday) at the appointed time, I was told that vaccines are over. I saw a woman with a box of vaccines leave with her companion on a motorbike. When I returned disappointed, I was surprised when me and my wife got an SMS stating that we are vaccinated. I suspect vaccines are being diverted.

**Jack Joshua**  
*Hyderabad*

#### INDIA HIJACKED

It is time to review our federal structure vs “double engine” phrase used in recent elections. For sure the Constitution is being hijacked by a powerful party at the Centre and it will just not be a double engine but a one and only dictatorship. If the EC, judiciary, NSA and all related authorities are directed by people in power at Centre to mislead people in different federal parts of India, we must relate it to the Constitution of nation vs selfish political diplomacy.

**Naresh Sohanraj**  
*Secunderabad*

#### NIGHT CURFEW

Is the extension of night curfew for a week serving any purpose? Have Covid-19 cases plummeted? If the cases are surging, what will night curfew till May 8 achieve? People are suffering due to the curfew. They have not yet recuperated their losses suffered for the lockdown last year. The TS government must think out of the box and take a sagacious decision. People must not be led into mess.

**Zubair Khan**  
*Hyderabad*

### 50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

#### Union Ministry expanded: 18 new entrants

NEW DELHI, MAY. 1 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today expanded her council of Ministers by adding 18 new members to the existing total of 37 but only 17 turned up for the swearing-in ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan this afternoon.

A tribal member from Bihar, Mr. Kartik Oraon, who was appointed Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Communications, was not present to take the oath of office as he was not happy to be a Deputy Minister.

Shikha Mukerjee



### Revisiting the legend @100: Ray's iconic role to endure

Cultural power surpasses the transient aggregation of political heft in West Bengal. In the natural order of things, there is a rise and a fall of political leaders and political parties, and power waxes and wanes in proportion to the will exercised by the people as voters. Ousting a cultural icon from his, and more rarely her, space in the pantheon of secular deities is an entirely different matter; it has not happened in recent memory.

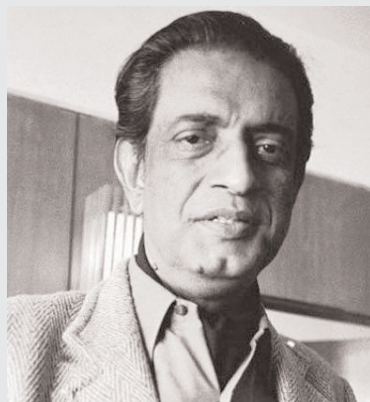
The deification of the creative genius is a metamorphosis that is imperceptible but very real. There are two pantheons in Bengal. The first is the conventional pantheon of the divine, crowded by so many avatars of the goddess or gods that only the cognoscenti know the difference. The second is the pantheon of cultural deities, reflecting a particular aspect of the Bengali sensibility, an eclectic array of political leaders, litterateurs, artists, musicians, performers and filmmakers, almost anyone who the Bengali considers to be uniquely gifted and on whom is bestowed the status of an icon.

Satyajit Ray is part of the second pantheon. His centenary year, which begins from May 2, is a moment when the process of this metamorphosis will

be visible. In these pandemic times, the homage, the tributes, the celebration and the cultural programmes may have to be in a virtual space, but that will not deter devotees of Ray's genius from honouring him by revisiting his work and his creativity in as many ways as possible.

The tributes will not be exclusive offerings of aficionados; the inclusivity of the celebrations will affirm his status as an icon. When Ray died in 1992, even manufacturers of objects as entirely mundane as shovels and construction equipment offered their tribute through advertisements, as a reflection of how significant the filmmaker's transition was from mere mortal to one of the pantheon. It did not matter that his films were never the sort of blockbusters that appealed to the masses. In the Bengali perception, Ray was an icon; his work was quintessentially Bengali, but his contribution was recognised as India's gift to world cinema.

It is revealing of West Bengal's unusual ethos that even the BJP, with its claim to being the world's largest party, scrambled to deploy Satyajit Ray to increase its appeal to the Bengali intelligentsia. If the BJP government in New Delhi lives up to its promise of an Oscar-like film award in the name of Satyajit Ray,



Satyajit Ray (1921-1992)

Bengalis may be pleased, but that is impossible to predict.

Satyajit Ray's oeuvre was not limited to making films, or writing his own scripts, or composing the music for his films. His work is part of the popular imagination. Snatches of his music from the fantasy series, *Goopey Gayne Bagha Bayne*, have become signatures in the culture of modern West Bengal. His *Hirak Rajar Deshe* is now the title of an animation series that is a regular satirical take on current politics on a local television channel. The dialogue of

his film series featuring the detective that he created, Feluda, is part of the language in which Bengalis think and speak. He pervades the mind and is embedded in the Bengali spirit.

He was not a filmmaker to begin with. He worked as an artist in advertising. He also designed book jackets that are now classics in the world of book design. He created fonts. He created a visual language through his films that is now part of the grammar of filmmaking. The trilogy, the first of which, *Pather Panchali (The Song of the Road)*, made in 1958, is the one of the greatest films ever made. It was the first of the total of 29 films and five documentaries that Ray made.

He worked with unknowns, including the legendary cinematographer Subrata Mitra, who improvised to create the amazing light in *Pather Panchali*, and the slew of films including *Jalsaghar*, *Teen Kanya*, *Charulata*, *Devi*, *Mahanagar* and *Nayak*. And through that work, men like Subrata Mitra emerged with their extraordinary talent. Soumitra Chatterjee, the legendary actor who passed away in 2020, was a Ray discovery. As were Sharmila Tagore, Aparna Sen and even Madhavi Mukherjee, who had worked in cinema before, but never displayed the

awesome talent she did in *Charulata*, which remains her most lyrical performance ever.

There were distinct periods in the work that Satyajit Ray did. His early films — *Apur Sansar*, *Parash Pathar*, *Jalsaghar*, followed by films like *Kanchenjunga* and *Abhijana*, documentaries including the film on Rabindranath Tagore commissioned on the insistence of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, *Bala*, on the great Bharatanatyam dancer Balasaraswati, who performs on the Madras Marina with the wind blowing her hair and snatching at her sari, are masterpieces.

The last three films by Ray — *Ganashatru (Enemy of the People)*, *Shakha Proshakha* and *Agantuk* — were very different. These were bold critiques on contemporary social issues, including the conflict between rational science and irrational religion, the idea of the civilised and the primitive, of what is normal and sickness of the mind. Ray did not start out as a filmmaker with an agenda. He was a storyteller. But he responded to the shifts and changes in the world at large and his conclusions were sharp, critical and almost a call to action.

*Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata*



OUR CRITIC'S RATING Outstanding ★★★★★ | Great ★★★★ | Good ★★★ | Okay ★★ | Poor ★ | Truly Terrible TT

# Harsh, unrelenting, brilliant

**Pebbles (Koozhangal)**  
(Tamil)  
**CAST:** Chellapandi, Karuththadaiyaan  
**DIRECTOR:** P.S. Vinothraj  
**RATING:** ★★★★★  
Will be available online, at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles

SUPARNA SHARMA

Writer-director P.S. Vinothraj's *Pebbles* is a film born out of a trauma that he was witness to. In 2015, his sister's husband threw her out of their house and she walked 13 kms to her mother's house, carrying her two-year-old child. *Pebbles* makes the husband walk and a young boy stalks him, taunting him with his silence and gaze that's a mix of anger and raging indifference. P.S. Vinothraj's debut film, which won the prestigious Tiger Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam in February this year, is a harsh, relentless, bare-foot trudge through a pale, malnourished land that seems stunned by the complete lack of water. It's dry to the bone and is slowly shedding itself, turning first to pebbles and then to sand. The film declares its intent at



the onset with two scenes — first when young Velu (Chellapandi) stands in silence looking at his father (Karuththadaiyaan) who has taken him out of his class is asking, "Do you love your mother or me?" Velu is to accompany his angry, drunk father to her mother's maternal house, to deliver the message that if she doesn't return, he'll remarry. They get onto a bus, and at the very next stop a woman gets on, carrying three plastic pots of water. The bus conductor charges for each pot.

Shot in Arittapatti, *Pebbles'* plot almost seems like a screenwriting and direction challenge. As if someone told Vinothraj, write and direct a movie that covers just half a day with two main characters, father and son. They both go to get his mom, but return because she has already returned home. *Pebbles* narrates this incident mostly with silence and through long, unrelenting shots that tell the story of the lifetime of a people and a land in pursuit of water. As the sun beats down on the

dusty land with dry, rocky mud, and we follow Velu and his father, listening to each footfall. We feel the harshness of the land on our own skin, and like Velu, who always stays at a safe distance from his father, we too fix him with a disdainful stare. This walk is interrupted by sudden bouts of violence and small digressions. En route we meet a family of two women, one girl and a man who are smoking out rats from a hole. We see the entire capturing and cooking process that involves breaking tiny legs, and

roasting. This brutality is life-sustaining in this brutal landscape. The camera of Parthib and Vignesh Kumulai is a character in *Pebbles*. It's us. Stalking, staring. But it's an angry stare. Like Velu's. When he picks up a broken piece of mirror, and while sucking on a pebble that's lodged in his cheek, aims the reflection on his father's bare back, we smile, like Velu. It feels right to surreptitiously assault the father's arrogant swag from this safe distance. The film is also an editing marvel. Ganesh Siva (editing) doesn't do us the favour of cutting the harshest scenes — of an endless walk, of slowly drawing out water, half a mug at a time from a little puddle, or when the father breaks his toe nail. It makes us watch all these, as if the movie is watching us fidget and get uncomfortable. The film's last scene is heart-breaking. Velu returns home with a puppy and he and his sister and playing with it. He then takes the pebble out and tosses it into a small mound of pebbles. We link this to the names he was scratching on a rock "Shanthi, Lakshmi, Velu, Ganapathy" and we know this is a trip he has made several times. And on each of these trips he has sucked on a pebble. *Pebbles will be playing at the Indian Film Festival of Los Angeles, from May 20-27. It's a virtual film festival and passes are available online.*



## Michael B. Jordan seeks revenge in *Without Remorse*

LINDSEY BAHR

In the new Tom Clancy adaptation, *Without Remorse*, Michael B. Jordan is a Navy SEAL about to trade military life for private security when his pregnant wife (Lauren London) is executed in their Washington D.C. home. It's part of a calculated ambush: The assassins are picking off the men in his unit because of a mishap in Aleppo where the Americans attacked the Russian military instead of Syrians. They were following orders without knowing the full story and soon the Russians are in the US retaliating. Jordan's John Kelly was the target, but he happened to be on the couch with noise canceling headphones and not the bed when they broke into his home. It's somewhat frustrating that movies like this tend to be so similar that it almost ensures zero emotional investment in the inciting incident whatsoever. The dead, pregnant wife is a launching off point and the screenplay (written by Taylor Sheridan and Will Staples) doesn't do us (or them) any favors. Never has there been a more generic couple than the Kellys. One of the precious few scenes with them together has them reminiscing about what appears to be a prom photo that's framed in their dining room. Soon enough, she's dead and John and the movie can really get started. I suppose it's just as well, since no one is coming to *Without Remorse* for a story about a couple. It just feels like a wasted opportunity to show Jordan in full expectant father mode instead of just fast-forwarding through loaded signifiers to get to a motive. The good news is that *Without Remorse* is pretty great when it comes to the action, and there is a lot of it. Director Stefano Sollima, who directed the "Sicario" sequel (which Sheridan wrote), keeps the engines moving forward and the set pieces dynamic and distinct from the start. And although John Kelly might not be the most layered guy on the page, it's impossible to take your eyes off him — the power of movie star charisma? He's best when he's playing opposite Jodie Turner-Smith, playing Lt. Cmdr. Karen Greer. She is steely and intimidating without being cliché and makes you want a spinoff about how she got her position. Clancy's novel was published in 1993 and it's a story that has been bouncing around Hollywood almost as long as it's been on shelves with everyone from Keanu Reeves to Tom Hardy circling the project at various points in the past two decades. But besides the names used, the book and the film seem to have almost nothing else in common. Instead of setting it during the Vietnam War, Sollima and the writers have made it modern with escalating tensions between Russian and the US Jamie Bell co-stars as a humorless and Robert Ritter as a suspect CIA officer who was the reason for the Aleppo snafu. Guy Pearce adds some gravitas as the Secretary of Defense. With its glossy pedigree, it will be no surprise to anyone that this was originally intended as a Paramount theatrical release before the pandemic. Although it has a few twists and turns that you might not see coming, *Without Remorse* is also in some ways exactly what you expect it'll be. It doesn't exactly have anything revelatory to say about global diplomacy or the American military and it takes itself very, very seriously, which makes it a little disarming to see Brett Gelman show up at a key moment. It's also setting up at least one sequel. Jordan will likely be replaying John Kelly (by the end he's John Clark) in *Rainbow Six*. Maybe by then the filmmakers will allow themselves to have some fun with his character. Even so, he's just the shot in the arm that the Clancy-verse needed. —AP

### Without Remorse

**CAST:** Michael B. Jordan, Jodie Turner-Smith, Jamie Bell, Guy Pearce, Lauren London  
**DIRECTOR:** Stefano Sollima  
**RATING:** ★★★★★  
Streaming Amazon Prime Video

### Another Round

**CAST:** Mads Mikkelsen, Thomas Bo Larsen, Magnus Millang, Lars Ranthe  
**DIRECTOR:** Thomas Vinterberg  
**RATING:** ★★★★★  
Streaming on BookMyShow

SUPARNA SHARMA

Danish write-director Thomas Vinterberg's film, *Another Round*, ends with a two-and-a-half minute joyous dance sequence. Performed by Mads Mikkelsen, a trained gymnast, it's a spontaneous, free-spirited metaphor for life, a suggestion of how to do it. It seems to say, take a swig and then take a leap of faith. You may find what you are looking for, or you may not. But it's worth trying. That's why, perhaps, last week the Academy bypassed Jasmila bani's absolutely brutal and brilliant Bosnian war drama, *Quo Vadis, Aida?*, and handed the Oscar for best international film to Vinterberg. The Academy likes happy endings, and that's also the need of the hour, whatever the reality. In that sense, *Another Round* was the perfect choice. It's a celebration of life, love and friendship that's framed in a personal tragedy. In his acceptance speech for the Oscar, Vinterberg said that the film is dedicated to his daughter Ida who tragically passed away when he was filming.



"Four days into shooting, the impossible happened. An accident on a highway took my daughter away. Someone looking into a cell phone," he said. His daughter had loved the script, he said. Probably because *Another Round* resonates in these worst of times — when we are living physically isolated and scared in our homes, but spend most of the time inside our heads, going over regrets, of things not attempted, of paths not walked, of emotions left unexplored. *Another Round* tells the story of four high school teachers in their 40s. There's the sports teacher

Tommy (Thomas Bo Larsen), psychology teacher Nikolaj (Magnus Millang), music teacher Peter (Lars Rante) and the history teacher, Martin (Mads Mikkelsen) who seems most obviously frozen by sadness. It's taken hold of his soul. "Am I boring?" Martin asks his wife, and breaks down at a dinner with his friends. They have all lost touch with their younger selves, their dreams, and are now mildly depressed versions of who they were. So when Nikolaj talks of Norwegian psychiatrist Finn Skårderud's claim that humans are born short of 0.05% Blood Alcohol Content, and to

function at our best — physically, intellectually and emotionally — we must drink, they order another round. The next day Martin tests this theory and his dull, confusing, rambling history class becomes engaging, fun. He tells the others and on Nikolaj's suggestion they all agree to test the theory under the ruse of conducting an experiment. A few swigs before and during work — to make up for the

0.05% shortage — and take notes. Alcohol transport them back to a version of themselves in their youth — carefree, getting thrills by breaking rules. It energises them into taking charge, it makes them smile, reach out, take risks, precipitate things. They reconnect with themselves, and that helps them connect with others. There's a family trip and sex, happy kids, and some heartwarming moments. But, there's also temptation to drink more, and soon some relationships, lives begin to capsize. There's a suspension and a death. "What is youth? A dream. What is love? The content of the dream." These lines, by Søren Kierkegaard, appear at the beginning of *Another Round* which is simultaneously funny, sad, real, scary, warm, joyous. It also has a fabulous soundtrack that should be downloaded immediately, especially *Cissy Strut* by The Meters and *What a Life* by Scarlet Pleasure. Every time you listen to them, you'll unfreeze. You'll feel like moving to the beats. You'll know that life is not just a sum total of the things we didn't do, the goals we didn't achieve. It is a collage of the moments we lived, the chances we took, the songs we sang, the joy we experienced.

Last week the Academy bypassed Jasmila Banic's absolutely brutal and brilliant Bosnian war drama, *Quo Vadis, Aida?*, and handed the Oscar for best international film to Vinterberg's *Another Round*

# Seyfried lends grounding presence to campy thriller



JOCELYN NOVECK

Hollywood thrillers in which sophisticated, attractive city folk move to creaky old country homes and experience scary things are a dime a dozen. Less common is when those Hollywood thrillers are based on the theology of 18th-century Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg. But here we are — a Swedenborgian thriller — and thus it's not a bad idea to read up a bit on the man, by which we mean to Google him, before diving into *Things Heard & Seen*, a well-cast and often entertaining but campy and sometimes obvious thriller starring Amanda Seyfried and James Norton. What you'll learn is that Swedenborg believed (among other things) that death was just a continuation of life — and that people lived on, in the spiritual world, past the expiration of their physical body. For the film's purposes, we'll boil it down for you: Ghosts! In fact the film, based on the novel "All Things Cease to Appear" by Elizabeth Brundage, begins with a Swedenborg quote: "Things that are

### Things Heard & Seen

**CAST:** Amanda Seyfried, James Norton, Natalia Dyer, Ana Sophia Heger, Charlotte Maier, Kristin Griffith  
**DIRECTOR:** Shari Springer Berman, Robert Pulcini  
**RATING:** ★★★★★  
Streaming on Netflix

in heaven are more real than things that are in the world." So even if you've skipped your theology homework (tsk tsk), this should alert you to a spectral influence in the story — maybe even a seance or two. We begin in the winter of 1980, when a perturbed-looking George Claire (Norton) drives up a snowy road to his isolated home. Immediately, it's obvious something terrible has happened. Flashback to the spring before, in a Manhattan apartment. George and wife Catherine (Seyfried) are celebrating the fourth birthday of their

daughter, Franny. George — handsome and chiseled, with the kind of tousled hair that looks breezy but you know he works on it — has an announcement to make: Not only has he completed his Ph.D in art history, but he's found a teaching job upstate. "Oh, at Bard?" asks a (snobby) friend. No, he replies, at a place called Saginaw. Nobody is impressed, but Catherine, despite having no desire to leave her coveted job as an art restorer, feels the need to support her husband. For one thing, she tells a friend, they need the money — his wealthy parents have finally cut him off. The friend warns Catherine she's giving up a lot to go live in a place filled with "rich horsey weekenders and full-time rednecks." But move they do, to beautiful Hudson Valley (writer-directors Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini draw out both the charm and the isolation of the place) and their chosen town, which is ominously called ... Chosen. (Certain things are unabashedly telegraphed in this film. Then again, sometimes they're red herrings. Maybe? Why is Catherine bulimic,

for example?) The house George has found, on an old dairy farm, is huge and creaky and needs work, but Catherine launches into the job. Soon, however, it becomes clear the family is not entirely alone. As happens in haunted house movies, there are strange noises and strange voices and dodgy electricity. There are also historical hints sprinkled through the home, suggesting past trauma. Catherine is much more attuned to these than George, who's spending most of his time trying to curry favor with colleagues in his art history department, including the chairman, Floyd DeBeers, who has a fascination not only with Swedenborg but his influence on prominent landscape painter George Inness (DeBeers is played by a deliciously august F. Murray Abraham.) Catherine also develops an affection for two brothers, Eddy and Cole, who live next door and offer to do odd jobs. As we suspect early on, there's more to these brothers and their connection to the home than meets the eye. —AP



## SHORT TAKES

## SL spinner takes 6 wickets on debut

**Pallekele, Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka left-arm spinner Praveen Jayawickrama took six wickets on his debut to dismiss Bangladesh for 251 and put the hosts in a strong position on day three of the second Test on Saturday. Jayawickrama, a replacement for the injured Lasith Embuldeniya, has had a modest record in first class cricket, but impressed at Pallekele with his six wickets for 92 to give Sri Lanka a healthy 242-run first-innings lead. He was backed by off-spinner Ramesh Mendis who took two wickets. Sri Lanka, who declared earlier on 493 for seven, did not enforce the follow on and were 17 for two. The first Test in the two-match series was a draw. — *AFP*

**Brief scores: Sri Lanka 493/7 decl. & 17/2 vs Bangladesh 251** (Tamim 92, Mominul 49, Jayawickrama 6-92).

## Hasan leads Pak's rout of Zimbabwe

**Harare:** Fast bowler Hasan Ali registered career best figures of 5/36 to lead Pakistan to a comprehensive innings and 116 run annihilation of Zimbabwe in the first Test in Harare on Saturday. The 26-year-old finished with 9/89 in the match as Zimbabwe's batting crumbled for the second time in the match, all out for 134 with an hour remaining on the third day at Harare sports club. The victory gives Pakistan a 1-0 lead in the two-match series. The second Test is also in Harare from May 7. Zimbabwe, who were bowled out for 176 in the first innings, were facing an innings defeat at tea with the total at 118-5. — *AFP*

**Brief scores: Zimbabwe 176 & 134 (Musakanda 43, Hasan 5/36) lost to Pakistan 426** (Fawad 140, Butt 91, Abid 60, Muzarabani 4/73).

## Disabled cricket series vs Bangla

**Hyderabad:** The Board of Disabled Cricket Association (India) is hosting Bangladesh in a cricket series comprising a Test, three One-Day Internationals and an equal number of T20s, from June 23 to July 20. Hyderabad will host the four-day opening Test and first ODI while the other two one-dayers will be held in Vizag and Bangalore. Later, all the three T20s will be played under lights in Jaipur. "This is the first international cricket series for physically challenged sportspersons," BDCA secretary K. Ramireddy said at a press conference attended by BDCA director Nadeemuddin, joint secretary Ravi Kumar Banjara, Indian team captain V. Vasanth Kumar and Chella Group CEO Eswaran, who termed his company's support to the series as corporate social responsibility.

## World 107 sends Zverev packing

**Munich, Germany:** Top seed Alexander Zverev crashed out of Munich's ATP clay court tournament after a shock defeat to qualifier Ilya Ivashka in the quarter-finals on Friday. Despite winning the opening set on a tie-breaker, Zverev, the 2017 and 2018 Munich champion, bowed out 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 3-6 after Ivashka of Belarus converted his first match point. The 27-year-old is ranked 101 places below world number six Zverev. "This is a match I should never have lost — I'm sad and disappointed," admitted Germany's Zverev. — *AFP*

## Live on TV

## CRICKET

**IPL:** Rajasthan Royals vs Sunrisers Hyderabad from 3.30 pm; Punjab Kings vs Delhi Capitals from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

## FORMULA ONE

**Portuguese Grand Prix:** Main Race from 7.25 pm on Star Sports 2 HD, 3

## FOOTBALL

**English Premier League:** Newcastle vs Arsenal from 6.30 pm; Manchester United vs Liverpool from 9 pm; Tottenham vs Sheffield United from 11 pm on Star Sports Select 2, HD

**Italian League:** Udinese vs Juventus from 9.30 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

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## MI in Poll position

## Pollards' unbeaten 87 off 34 balls downs table-toppers Chennai

**New Delhi, May 1:** Mumbai Indians beat table-toppers Chennai Super Kings by four wickets in their IPL match here on Saturday. Kieron Pollard blazed away to the fastest half-century of the ongoing league, reaching the landmark in 17 balls and remaining unbeaten on 87 off 34 balls at the end of the match.

CSK scored 218 for 4 after being asked to bat. Moeen Ali (58) and Faf du Plessis (50) shared a 108-run stand before Ambati Rayudu pumelled the MI bowling attack into submission with an unbeaten 72 off 27 balls at the Arun Jaitley Stadium.

Rayudu, who notched up his fifty in just 20 balls, went hammer and tongs with seven sixes and four fours during his stay in the middle.

For Mumbai, Pollard (2/12) snared two wickets while pacers Trent Boult (1/42) and Jasprit Bumrah (1/56) grabbed a wicket each.

In reply, MI were off to a brisk start with Rohit Sharma and Quinton de Kock putting on 71 runs for the first wicket in just 7.1 overs.

Three wickets fell in quick succession to leave Mumbai Indians at 81 for three in the 10th over, but Pollard took charge of the situation after that, hitting a barrage of sixes and fours to keep his team in the reckoning.

However, Sam Curran bowled a brilliant 17th over, in which he picked up the wicket of Krunal Pandya to break a threatening 81-run partnership while giving away only two runs, to bring CSK back into the match.

But Pollard won it for Mumbai Indians off the last ball. — *PTI*



Mumbai Indians' Kieron Pollard plays a shot against Chennai Super Kings in their IPL match at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi on Saturday. — *IPL*

## SCORECARD

**Chennai Super Kings:** Ruturaj Gaikwad c Hardik Pandya b Boult 4, Faf du Plessis c Bumrah b Pollard 50, Moeen Ali c de Kock b Bumrah 58, Suresh Raina c Krunal Pandya b Pollard 24, Ambati Rayudu not out 72, Ravindra Jadeja not out 22. Extras 10 (lb-2, w-7, nb-1) 10. **Total (for 4 wkts, in 20 overs) 218.** **FoW:** 4-1, 112-2, 116-3, 116-4. **Bowling:** Trent Boult 4-0-42-1, Dhawal Kulkarni 4-0-48-0, Jasprit Bumrah 4-0-56-1, Rahul Chahar 4-0-32-0, James Neesham 2-0-26-0.

**Mumbai Indians:** Quinton de Kock c & b Ali 38, Rohit Sharma (c) c Gaikwad b Thakur 35, Suryakumar Yadav c †Dhoni b Jadeja 3, Krunal Pandya lbw b Curran 32, Kieron Pollard not out 87, Hardik Pandya c du Plessis b Curran 16, James Neesham c Thakur b Curran 0, Dhawal Kulkarni not out 0. Extras (w-8) 8. **Total (for 6 wkts, in 20 overs) 219.** **FoW:** 1-71, 2-77, 3-81, 4, 5-202, 6-203. **Bowling:** Deepak Chahar 4-0-37-0, Sam Curran 4-0-34-3, Lungi Ngidi 4-0-62-0, Shardul Thakur 4-0-56-1, Ravindra Jadeja 3-0-29-1, Moeen Ali 1-0-1-1.

## Struggling SRH sack captain Warner

**New Delhi, May 1:** In a desperate attempt to arrest their slide, SunRisers Hyderabad have thrust Kane Williamson into the leadership role by removing David Warner as they prepare to take on Rajasthan Royals, who are also struggling like them, here on Sunday.

In a surprise move, SRH removed struggling Australian batsman

Warner from the captaincy on Saturday as the side has lost five of the six matches under him this IPL season.

The Royals are not faring any better as they have managed to win only two matches out of the six they have played. No wonder, the Royals are placed seventh just above SRH.

SRH are coming into Sunday's match after losing their last two matches

## HEAD to HEAD

**Matches 13**

**SRH 7 RR 6**

## LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

● Rajasthan Royals beat Sunrisers by 5 wickets at Dubai

● Sunrisers Hyderabad defeated Rajasthan Royals by 8 wickets at Dubai.

**STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER**

including the Super Over defeat against Chennai Super Kings.

SRH rely heavily on their top-order — Warner, Jonny Bairstow, Manish Pandey and Williamson — but they did not fire together.

There is a possibility that Warner could be dropped from the playing XI and West Indies captain Jason Holder is likely to replace him. — *PTI*

## BOTTAS TAKES POLE, DELAYS HAMI'S 100TH

**Portimao (Portugal), May 1:** Valtteri Bottas took pole position for the Portuguese Grand Prix with seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton completing a Mercedes front-row lock-out in qualifying on Saturday.

Hamilton's pursuit of a 100th pole at the track where last year he notched up his record 92nd win was delayed when Bottas earned the 17th of his career.

"It's a good feeling to be on pole," said Bottas.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen, one point off Hamilton in the drivers' standings, took third on Sunday's grid with his teammate Sergio Perez alongside him on the second row in Portimao.

Carlos Sainz for Ferrari came in fifth ahead of the Alpine of Esteban Ocon, Lando Norris, in a McLaren, and Charles Leclerc in the second Ferrari.

Hamilton paid tribute to Bottas "and our team" for us both to be on the front row. "It was not expected. We have to be happy for that, it was not the perfect lap but I gave it everything. You can never be satisfied, we exist to keep moving forward but I'm happy with what we're doing and the steps we're taking." — *AFP*

## Punjab spinners aim to trick DC

**Ahmedabad, May 1:** Young Punjab Kings spinners Harpreet Brar and Ravi Bishnoi wouldn't mind another dream day in office against a menacing Delhi Capitals here on Sunday, aiming to take a giant leap forward in their bid for an Indian Premier League play-off berth.

Brar's match-winning 3/19 was wonderfully complemented by Bishnoi's 2/19 as their combined haul of 5/36 in 8 overs decimated a star-studded Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Come Sunday, the duo will face a tougher task against the Delhi team which has a slightly better record against spin attacks with openers Shikhar Dhawan and Prithvi Shaw in imperious form.

Dhawan (311 runs) and Shaw (269 runs) have provided flying starts with five half-centuries between them along with 71 fours and 15 sixes. For any bowling unit, facing the Dhawan-Shaw duo is a scary proposition.

In fact, Bishnoi, who primarily bowls the googly,

## HEAD to HEAD

**Matches 27**

**PBKS 15 DC 12**

## FOR THE RECORD

● Lokesh Rahul with 96 sixes in 49 innings of as many matches, needs four sixes to become first batsman from Punjab Kings to complete a century of sixes in IPL.

● Axar Patel who took 24 wickets at an average of 32.58 in 32 innings of as many matches, needs just one wicket to become 13th bowler to complete 25 wickets for Delhi Capitals in IPL.

## LAST YEAR'S MATCHES

● Delhi Capitals beat Punjab Kings in Super over after match ended in a tie at Dubai.

● Punjab Kings defeated Delhi Capitals by 5 wickets at Dubai.

**STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER**

will like to challenge the DC skipper, who has a knack of hitting against the spin over deep mid-wicket region. The Narendra Modi Stadium track has shown that balls tend to grip and batting becomes difficult as the game progresses. — *PTI*

PURPLE CAP	
Harshal Patel, RCB	17
Avesh Khan, DC	13
Rahul Chahar, MI	11

ORANGE CAP	
K. L. Rahul, PBKS	331
Faf du Plessis, CSK	320
Shikhar Dhawan, DC	311

IPL POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
CSK	7	5	2	0	10	+1.263
DC	7	5	2	0	10	+0.466
RCB	7	5	2	0	10	-0.171
MI	7	4	3	0	8	+0.062
PBKS	7	3	4	0	6	-0.264
KKR	7	2	5	0	4	-0.494
RR	6	2	4	0	4	-0.69
SRH	6	1	5	0	2	-0.264

## City on brink of title glory after win

**London, May 1:** Manchester City are within touching distance of the Premier League title after Sergio Aguero and Ferran Torres sealed a 2-0 win at Crystal Palace on Saturday.

Pep Guardiola's side sit 13 points clear at the top and will be crowned champions if second-placed Manchester United lose against Liverpool on Sunday.

After a tepid first half in south London, it was fitting that Aguero — the architect of so many big moments in City's history — should open the scor-

ing with a typically lethal finish.

Torres killed off Palace two minutes later as City eased to an 11th successive away victory in the Premier League, equalling the English top-flight record.

Even if United do not slip up against Liverpool at Old Trafford, City have four matches left to secure the one win they need to clinch the title, starting with next Saturday's home game against Chelsea.

It is a matter of when not if City add the Premier League to the

## THE RESULTS

**Crystal Palace 0 Manchester City 2** (Aguero 57, Torres 59)

**Southampton 1 Leicester 1** (Ward-Prowse 61-pen) (Evans 68)

League Cup they won in April.

## FOXES SALVAGE DRAW AT SOUTHAMPTON

Leicester missed a chance to cement their grip on third place in the Premier League after a 1-

1 draw against 10-man Southampton.

Southampton had to play 80 minutes without Danish defender Jannik Vestergaard after he was sent off for a foul on Jamie Vardy.

But James Ward-Prowse's second half penalty briefly put Ralph Hasenhuttl's side ahead before Jonny Evans headed Leicester's equaliser.

Leicester remain in third place, but fourth placed Chelsea would close the gap to just two points if they beat Fulham on Saturday. — *AFP*



Leicester City's Jonny Evans (second from left) scores against Southampton in their English Premier League match at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton on Friday. — *AP*

## Torch relay detour, diving test event opens

**Tokyo, May 1:** The Tokyo Olympics torch relay will take another detour this weekend when it enters the southern island of Okinawa.

A leg of the relay on Okinawa's resort island of Miyakojima set for Sunday has been cancelled altogether with cases surging in Japan. Other legs on Okinawa will take place.

A 17-day state of emergency went into effect on April 25 in some areas in Japan, which has shut down department stores and bars in Tokyo and the country's second largest

metropolis of Osaka.

"We don't want people from outside the island coming in. Human life is at stake," Hayako Shimizu, a teacher in Miyakojima, said.

The relay, which will involve 10,000 runners from every corner of Japan, started six weeks ago and has been mostly on schedule despite major rerouting in Osaka and in Matsuyama City in near-by Ehime prefecture.

The relay is made up of a convoy of about a dozen vehicles with sponsors names festooned on them. The torch bearer follows,

● **A six-day, on-and-off diving event opened on Saturday in Tokyo with 225 athletes from from 46 countries — but no fans.**

each running for a couple of minutes, before giving the flame to the next runner who awaits holding another torch.

The torch relay — like planning for the postponed Olympics that are to open on July 23 — is filled with uncertainty, constant changes, and

questions about why it is taking place, and how it will take place.

A six-day, on-and-off diving event opened Saturday in Tokyo with 225 athletes from from 46 countries — but no fans.

It was not immediately clear where the athletes were staying or under what quarantine conditions, if any, they entered Japan. It's also not clear how many staff members accompanied the divers.

Contacted by AP, Tokyo organisers said it "understands that the athletes are entering Japan based on the guidelines provid-

ed by JASF (Japanese swimming federation) and approved by FINA."

It referred further enquires to FINA and local swim officials.

The Japanese news agency *Kyodo*, citing the Japanese Swimming Federation, said a coach of the Egyptian diving team tested positive for Covid-19 upon arrival in Japan. It said the rest of the team tested negative.

The diving event is one of several tests this month — all without fans.

Fans from abroad have already been banned. — *AP*

## KINGS RALLY TO SPOIL JAMES RETURN TO LA

**Los Angeles, May 1:** Los Angeles superstar LeBron James scored 16 points in his return from the longest absence of his NBA career on Friday, but the Sacramento Kings rallied to beat the Lakers 110-106 at Staples Center.

James, who missed 20 games with a sprained ankle, finished with eight rebounds and seven assists, but he also had five turnovers in 32 minutes of playing time. "I came out unscathed. It's a pretty good start," James said.

The reigning champion Lakers are pleased to have the four time NBA MVP back for the Lakers stretch drive, but James will have to shake off some expected rust in order to get into playoff form.

"For my first game in six weeks, I felt OK," James said. "My ankle was a little tight at times. As the games go on that will continue to improve." — *AFP*