

Womenia

TWEET PATROL



POOJA HEGDE
@HEGDEPOOJA

Thank you for all the love and healing wishes you have showered me with. I am doing good and have mild symptoms. You make me smile, Love you.



A pioneering auction dedicated to female artists in May

SIDDHI JAIN

In its first auction dedicated to female artists across the centuries, many of whom have been categorised or marginalised by history due to their gender, auction house Sotheby's will stage the '(Women) Artists' sale next month. It will explore the art historical contributions and personal stories of these artists across 400 years.

According to Sotheby's, artworks on sale range from a 1680s Dutch painting by a 22-year-old Rachel Ruysch to Dame Laura Knight, the first woman to be granted full membership of the Royal Academy in the 1930s, and a sculpture by YBA artist and first-female Turner Prize winner, Rachel Whiteread.

"The divisive classification 'women artists' but never 'male artists' is at the heart of a debate that has been disputed for decades, and yet continues to be a trap that is so often fallen into. Female artists should not be pigeon-holed nor segregated, which is precisely why we are holding a sale that appears to be doing exactly that – in order to turn the tables and open up this debate. Yes, these artists are women, but more importantly, they are artists," says Marina Ruiz Colomer, a contemporary art specialist in London.

According to Sotheby's Mei Moses, in the past five years the rise in prices for female artists have outpaced male artists by 29 per cent across the market. Notably, the record for any work by a living female artist is at \$12.5 million (approximately Rs 93 crores) for Jenny Saville's 'Propped', sold at Sotheby's London in October 2018.

"Many of the female artists we are offering here were well known and respected within their lifetimes, but history has not treated them kindly. They have come to be remembered as the wives of painters, as the ones that enabled their husbands, fathers and brothers to paint or as their muses, but rarely ever as they deserved to be: the artists in their own right! Recently museums and institutions have led the charge in reappraising the contributions of female artists. We need to explore their narrative and celebrate their contribution and achievement.



If we can bring visibility to just some of those through this sale, then we have made a step towards the right direction," says Lisa Stevenson, impressionist and modern art specialist.

Marina Abramovic, who is part of a related panel discussion on women in all art movements in May, explains that she was not concerned with gender when she emerged as an artist and still is not now. "I greatly admire Louise Bourgeois for having a family, a husband and a wonderful career but when I am looking at Spider 1994, I'm not wondering what gender of artist made the work."

However, she takes issue with the continued undervaluing of works for the majority of women artists: "I feel a really big injustice because work by women artists is under-priced. You still have people like Cindy Sherman, whose works are really well-priced, and I think that's a great justice to her. But there are some great people who don't have her profile and the work is wonderful."

Rachel Ruysch's (1664-1750) 'Forest floor still life with a pool' is the earliest piece in the sale, says Sotheby's. Painted at the age of just 22 in 1687, this has not been seen since it was acquired in The Hague in the 1950s. The daughter of a lecturer in anatomy and

eminent botanist whose samples she would copy, Ruysch purportedly delayed marriage to focus on her career until meeting fellow painter Juriaen Pool in her thirties. Though Ruysch had ten children, she continued painting into her eighties, while Pool gave up his own career in light of her talent. Ruysch achieved international fame in her own lifetime, invited to serve as court painter to Johann Wilhelm, Elector Palatine in Dusseldorf, with her works – which she always signed with her maiden name, even after marriage – commanding high prices. Just recently, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam announced that for the first time in its history, it will permanently exhibit works by women artists, including Ruysch, in its Gallery of Honour.

Painted in 1949 is Dorothea Tanning's (1910-2012) most surreal and dynamic 'The Witch', originally created for the ballet of the same name. Though Tanning was renowned for her painting, she was also commissioned to create costume and set designs for ballets choreographed and produced by the co-founder of the New York City Ballet, George Balanchine. Not only did Tanning become one of the most important Surrealist artists of the twentieth century, she



was also a strong believer in equality. She married fellow artist Max Ernst, and in addition to rejecting the label "woman artist" she similarly didn't want to be defined by her relationship. She once stated: 'I never heard him [Ernst] use the word "wife" in regard to me. He was very sorry about that wife thing.'

Sharing a similar view was German Dada artist Hannah Hoch (1889-1978) who, as one of the few female artists in the group, expressed interest in the social construct of the 'New Woman' – an idea that emerged in the late 19th century of a professional and androgynous woman who wanted to take her place in society as a man's equal.

Also on auction is Dame Laura Knight's (1877-1970) 'The Gift (The Flower)', among the largest of her canvases ever made. Arguably her generation's most popular female painter who pioneered for recognition of her fellow women counterparts, Knight had a long and celebrated career. She became the first woman elected to full membership of the Royal Academy in 1936, and her retrospective exhibition there in 1965 was the first for a woman.

The '(Women) Artists' sale will take place online from May 20-27.

Summer fashion that will never go out of style



Here are some summer fashion tips that will never go out of style. Think classic style, not trends. These style tips will work year after year.

Flowy tops, dresses & skirts are better than form-fitting

The summer calls for light fabrics that float in the wind. To give off the summer lovin' vibe, opt for flowy clothing instead of anything that is skin tight. Find clothing made in light cotton, silk, chiffon, lace or crochet. This applies to everything: dresses, skirts, tops, rompers, and even shorts.

Off-the-shoulder tops and dresses are always sexy

Every couple of years off-the-shoulder clothing becomes popular. All the stores have them in stock and everyone is wearing them. But off-the-shoulder tops and dresses are stylish every summer. Don't think of them as trendy or disposable, because they really are a fashion staple that you can wear every year.

Hats are a good idea

Everyone should own a hat! If

you don't own one it's probably because you haven't found the perfect one for you! They not only make a stylish summer statement but they also protect your face from the harmful sun rays. If you don't know what type of hat looks best on you, take a trip to a local hat shop (also called a milliner) and have the shop owner help you out. It pays to go to a hat expert that knows what styles look best on different people.

Wear jewelry in earth tones

Put away your large statement jewelry in dark or jewel tones, summer fashion calls for jewelry in earth tones. Look for bracelets, necklaces, and earrings in blues, gold, turquoise, pink, brown, green or even brightly patterned cotton bracelets.

Aviators are awesome

Looking for the perfect pair of summer sunnies but don't want to buy something that will go out of style by the time Labor Day comes around? If your face shape allows it, buy a pair of aviators. They have always been in style and will always be stylish.

Use conditioner

While the sun is drying out your hair, make sure you help restore some moisture and life to it by using a rinse-out conditioner. Get one that suits your hair type and texture. If you are going for a swim, remember to put on a leave-in conditioner on your hair and wear a swimming cap.

Shampoo with care

While you feel like shampooing your hair every day, doing so will cause more harm than good. Too much shampoo can dry up your scalp and hair even more. If you tend to sweat more on the scalp, and if your hair gets greasy and sweaty easily, go for a mild shampoo that is especially good for summers.

NEWS ROUNDUP



Elnaaz Norouzi: In Bollywood every actress has to look pretty for every role

YASHIKA MATHUR

Actress Elnaaz Norouzi, who was recently seen in the film "Hello Charlie" feels while Bollywood is undergoing many changes, the industry has to stop looking at actresses as just glamour quotients in the films. Asked if Bollywood needs to change the mentality of looking at actresses as just pretty faces, Elnaaz says: "It does need to change in our industry. The same notion is not followed in many other film industries but in Bollywood every actress needs to look pretty and for every role, they have to wear a lot of makeup. It is changing for the better now and I really glad about it."

"I don't just want to be part of films where my only job is to look pretty and dance. I also want to take up parts where I can show my acting calibre, just how I did with 'Sacred Games'," the Iranian-German actress told.

Elnaaz's role in "Hello Charlie" was that of Mona, a traditional 'vamp' prototype of Hindi films who is trying help her lover and the film's villain (played by Jackie Shroff) pull off his vile plan. She triggers off an important plot point.

"The primary reason for doing the film was the fact that my character was the catalyst to the entire story being in motion. I remember when my team and I were discussing, whether or not, I should do 'Hello

Charlie', the most important point that came up was I would be doing something in the film. In a film where there are so many actors, it is easy to forget a character in the whole narrative. It happens a lot, especially to a woman's character," says the actress.

BEAUTY FUNDA

Hair care routine

The hot summer sun is harmful to our skin, and we take due precautions for it. But it also has harmful effects on your hair. The heat from the sun causes weathering and oxidative damage to hair and make it dry, brittle, and stiff. The heat from the summer sun can turn your hair lifeless and limp. This happens because of the high humidity in the atmosphere. This humidity may settle on your hair and weigh it down, resulting in limp hair. The sweat and dust contributed by summers increase hair problems like dandruff, split ends, frizziness, and increased hair fall. Summers can be

harsh on your scalp, causing dryness and sunburn. The hair helps cover the skin from sun damage and may also protect the scalp from it. Dry scalp may end up damaging the hair roots. Exposure to sunlight can lead to serious hair damage, like dryness

Avoid too many cosmetics

Summers already dry your hair out and cause damage. A study shows that coloured hair can show significant changes from the effects of heat. Hence, make sure you go easy on any chemical hair treatments during this period. Avoid too much colouring,



whether at the spa or home. If you want to colour your hair or change the colour during summer, try and do it a month or two before the sun hits hard. You can also try organic ingredients to colour your locks.

TELL A STORY DAY

Tell a Story Day is celebrated in the United States, Scotland and the United Kingdom. The aim of the day is to get participants telling, sharing, and listening to each other's stories. It is a celebration of the art of oral storytelling in all of its many forms, whether it be fiction or non-fiction, a tall tale, or folklore. The stories may be told from memory or from a book. Events can be held in community centres, churches, homes and gardens, hospitals, libraries, schools, or more unusual venues!

The aim of the day is to encourage people of all ages and backgrounds to share stories. This could be reading one of your favorite books or creating your own story from your imagination; it doesn't matter, so long as you share a story. You can gather friends or family together and all read stories. A lot of schools will embrace this day as well by getting students to contribute a story or they will read a book together as a class.

Storytelling is an ancient practice that is used so knowledge can be handed down from one practice to another. It is a beautiful way for families and friends to pass on long told tales, histories, and family traditions with one and other. Not only can storytelling be educational, but entertaining as well. Most people would agree that a lot of the world's best stories have come from real-life experiences. When you consider just how special storytelling can be, it is only right that we have a day to pay honor to this.

Tell A Story Day was created by an entrepreneur called George Rafeedle. The first observance of this day occurred back in 2009, and it has been going strong ever since then! For the day itself, you can organise your own event with friends, family, or colleagues and create a magical world of enchanting fairy tales, scary ghost stories, or age-old family legends.



Sardar Patel Covid Centre will have 5K beds soon: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday announced that the capacity of the Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre in South Delhi will be increased to 5,000 beds in the coming days. The Sardar Patel Covid Care Centre at Radha Soami Beas, Chhatarpur in the National Capital has been operational from Monday morning. Chief Minister Kejriwal made a visit to the facility in the morning.



Addressing a virtual press conference, Kejriwal said,

"We are also trying to increase oxygen beds in Delhi.

Today morning, I visited the centre that has been created at the Radha Soami Satsang Beas. It has started functioning as of 10 AM today morning."

He further stated, "There are 150 beds as of now, in the next two to three days this will be pushed to 500 beds then 2000 beds and finally 5000 beds. We are also creating a 200 ICU bed facility at the Centre. We are creating several such centres in Delhi and hope they aid the people

of Delhi."

Kejriwal visited the Indo-Tibetan Border Police's Radha Soami COVID care facility in Delhi's Chhatarpur on Monday and thanked the Union government for providing doctors and medical staff at the centre which has 500 oxygen-supported beds. He said 200 ICU beds will be arranged at the facility.

"Visited the Radha Soami facility this morning, 500 oxygen beds start today. More beds will be added in the next

few days. We will also start 200 ICU beds here. Grateful to Babaji for helping us. Thank you Central government for providing doctors and medical staff of ITBP," Kejriwal tweeted after the visit.

The Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel COVID Care Centre (SPCCC) at Radha Soami Satsang Beas in south Delhi is operated by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police.

"SPCCC will provide treatment free of cost. No walk-in

admissions will be made," ITBP spokesperson Vivek Kumar Pandey had said, adding admission to the centre will be made on reference by the district surveillance officers.

A brief standard operating procedure issued on Sunday said patients after getting a reference from a DSO will report at the reception of the SPCCC and after initial documentation, their physical examination will be done and subsequently, they will be admitted.

Panchayat polls being held on court order: Yogi Govt

LUCKNOW

THE Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has said that it did not wish to conduct panchayat elections in the state in view of coronavirus pandemic but had to do so following the Allahabad high court's order which directed it to complete the poll process by May 10.

A government spokesman said, "The elections were due in December last year. The pandemic led to delay in reorganization and delimitation of panchayats. The writ petitions and subsequent decision of the high court compelled the state government to hold the election."

"In a writ petition filed by Vinod Upadhyay against the State of Uttar Pradesh, the Allahabad high court in its order dated February 4, directed the State Election Commission to complete the election process for panchayats by April 30. In compliance, the state government initiated the process of reservation and allotment by March 15," the spokesman said.



The state government said the panchayat polls were being conducted in keeping with Covid-19 protocols issued by the State Election Commission.

The four-phase panchayat elections started on April 15 and counting of votes and declaration of result will take place on May 2.

The spokesperson said the state government was committed

to ensuring the safety of voters.

For proper cleanliness, sanitation and prevention of infection in gram panchayats, special sanitation drive was undertaken in villages across 75 districts of the state.

Uttarakhand avalanche toll rises to 15



GOPESHWAR

THE death toll in an avalanche at Sumna near the Indo-China border in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district rose to 15 on Monday with the recovery of three more bodies, an official said.

Three people are still missing and efforts are on to locate them, Chamoli Disaster Management Officer N K Joshi said. Sumna, where the avalanche occurred on Friday, is located near the confluence of the Girthigad and Kiogad, two streams that originate from the Dhauli Ganga river, which witnessed a calamitous avalanche in February,

killing 80 people and leaving 126 missing. Joshi said the three bodies were recovered from the accident site on Monday morning.

Ten bodies were recovered from the avalanche site on Saturday and two on Sunday, he said confirming 15 deaths so far. He said the bodies are being taken to Joshimath for a post-mortem. Eleven of the dead have been identified and they all were residents of Jharkhand.

Seven people injured in the incident are undergoing treatment. Five of them are receiving treatment at Joshimath Army Hospital while two were taken to Dehradun.

Second Oxygen Express brings relief to UP

LUCKNOW

THE second Oxygen Express, loaded with 60,000 litres of liquid medical oxygen (LMO), reached Charbagh Railway Station in Lucknow on Monday to meet a shortage of the life-saving gas in hospitals treating severe Covid-19 patients across Uttar Pradesh.

The train, loaded with four oxygen tankers, each 15,000 litres in capacity, had left Bokaro in Jharkhand at around 2 p.m. on Sunday, said officials.

Two of the four tankers to have arrived on the Indian Railways' second Roll-On-Roll-Off (RORO) service, immediately left for Jhansi and Bareilly (one tanker for each destination) while the remaining two were stationed in Lucknow to meet the increased oxygen demand in the state capital.

The first RORO Oxygen Express, loaded with 30,000 litres of LMO, had arrived in the state on Saturday, said Sanjay Tripathi, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Lucknow, Northern Railways.

One more Oxygen Express, loaded with 75,000 litres of the life-



saving gas is expected to arrive in the state on Tuesday as part of state government's Operation Oxygen, he added.

Health Minister Jai Pratap Singh said the Central government had allocated 753 metric tonnes of oxygen for the state.

Uttar Pradesh reported 35,614 fresh Covid-19 cases and 208 deaths. Lucknow alone logged 5,187 fresh Covid-19 cases and 14 more deaths on Sunday, pushing up the death toll in the city to 1,654.

Railways' RORO service has also procured oxygen for Maharashtra

and its services have also been requested by other states that are severely hit by Covid-19's second wave.

Detailing the intricacies of the operation, Railways said in a statement: "Liquid oxygen, being a cryogenic cargo, has many limitations like maximum speed at which it can be carried, maximum acceleration and deceleration and loading restrictions like availability of liquid oxygen tankers and loading ramps. Route mapping also takes care of the maximum clearances available along the route."

Uttarakhand: 648 police personnel test positive

DEHRADUN

AS many as 684 Uttarakhand Police personnel have tested positive for coronavirus in recent days, an official said on Monday.

Director General of Police Ashok Kumar said of them, only one policewoman is in critical condition. The policewoman could not be given coronavirus vaccine as she is pregnant, Kumar said.

The DGP claimed that the police force is largely safe amid the second wave of this pandemic. "Ninety per cent of our police personnel have received both doses of coronavirus vaccine," he said. The DGP said 1,981 police personnel had contracted the infection before the vaccination programme was launched. Of them, 100 were admitted to hospitals and seven had died, the DGP said.



UP Govt orders 50 lakh doses of Covisheild, Covaxin each

LUCKNOW

TO ensure availability of adequate doses of COVID-19 vaccine in Uttar Pradesh, the state government has ordered 50 lakhs doses of Covishield and Covaxin each from manufacturing companies. Covishield is manufactured by Serum Institute of India and Covaxin by Bharat Biotech Limited. In a statement issued here on Sunday, the UP government said that in pursuance with the Centre's order, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is planning to take the vaccine across the state in an organised manner.

The state government has already offered the vaccine free of cost to everyone over the age of 18 from May 1, it said. The immunisation programme is going on at a rapid pace in the state, it said. So far, 1,17,77,209 vaccine doses have been given in the state. This includes 97,79,846 first doses and 19,97,363 second doses, the state-



ment said. Dr RK Dhiman, Director, Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS), said, "We can avoid hospitalisation by getting vaccinated. Not only this, the death rate also decreases. In such a situation, it is very important for us to get vaccinated." Adityanath also directed authorities to ensure that last rites of the COVID patients are performed at cremation grounds and graveyards according to their religious beliefs with strict COVID protocol in place. Taking cognisance of the complaints received from various districts in this regard and Termining the practice of extorting money from the relatives of dead COVID patients "inhuman", he took cognisance of complaints

received over the issue and warned of stern action against erring officials. The UP government also said that the central government has taken several steps to ensure uninterrupted supply and effective management of medicines, oxygen and other essential medical devices which are useful in treatment of corona patients. The Centre has also increased Uttar Pradesh's quota of the Remdesivir injection to 1,61,000 vials until April 30.

The state has received 1,22,000 vials of the medication so far. Adityanath ruled out any shortage of the anti-viral drug at COVID-dedicated hospitals, noting that it was being provided for free to the patients in government hospitals. He also said that private hospitals would be provided the drug by the central government at permissible rates. He called for reviewing the demand and supply of Remdesivir and maintaining transparency in its distribution.

NEW DELHI

AMID the shortage of oxygen in hospitals across the country the CSIR-CMERI indigenously developed oxygen enrichment technology may be effective in treating COVID-19 patients.

Harish Hirani, Director, CSIR-CMERI, said that the organisation developed an oxygen enrichment unit requiring easily available oil free reciprocating compressor, oxygen grade zeolite sieves and pneumatic components.

This technology has tremendous potential. He urged all the participant industries/entrepreneurs to come forward at this crucial juncture and manufacture the device at the earliest.

This unit can safely be placed in the isolation ward of the hospital for patients who are in dire need of oxygen. He added that



CSIR-CMERI will be providing manufacturing guidance to the technology transferees as well as provide information on raw materials sourcing.

Anupam Sinha, Sr. Principal Scientist, CSIR-CMERI, Durgapur presented the technical note on the oxygen enrichment

unit, which has been transferred to two industries. The unit is capable of delivering medical oxygen in the range of up to 15 LPM with oxygen purity of more than 90%. If required, this unit can even deliver up to 70 LPM at a purity of around 30%.

President, Industry association, Raipur along with several others from the industry and entrepreneurs participated in the webinar and interacted with the speakers on the subject. A good number of industries have shown interest in the CSIR-CMERI developed oxygen enrichment technology and expressed their willingness to start manufacturing with the cooperation of CSIR-CMERI.

The CSIR-Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute, Durgapur is a premier mechanical engineering research institute of the country under the Ministry of Science & Technology. The CSIR-CMERI has already invited Expression of Interest (EOI) from Indian companies/manufacturing agencies/MSMEs/Start ups for manufacturing oxygen enrichment units through technology transfer.

China’s Taiwan adventure

FOR the first time in half a century and more, the United States and Japan are occupying themselves with the security of the Taiwan Strait. This followed the meeting of the US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga recently. The statement of the two countries in this regard could be symbolic. But the US seems to be really worried about the security of the democratically run island as Beijing is threatening to invade it anytime claiming it as its own. Top ranking US Navy officials like Admiral John Aquilino recently told a Senate Armed Services committee that taking Taiwan is a “number one” priority for China’s Communist Party, while US Asia Pacific commander Philip Davidson has said publicly that China could invade Taiwan in the next six years.

Fears that China will soon launch a military attack against Taiwan have spiked. Three factors are feeding this anxiety. The first is the assessment by many outside experts that the People’s Liberation Army

(PLA), which includes China’s navy, air force, and strategic rocket arsenal, has reached or is very close to reaching such a level of strength that attempting to forcibly compel Taiwan to politically unify with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is a feasible policy option.

The second factor feeding fears of a cross-strait war is the recent intensification of PLA military pressure on Taiwan. Chinese warplanes flew near Taiwan almost daily in 2020. Up to 37 PLA aircraft at a time flew across the midline of the Taiwan Strait, breaking what was previously a taboo that both sides generally respected. This intimidation has continued into 2021. On one occasion in January, 13 Chinese military aircraft flew through Taiwan’s air defence identification zone. Chinese media said a PLA military exercise near the Taiwan Strait in September 2020 was “not a warning, but a rehearsal for a Taiwan takeover.”

The third factor contributing to the war anxiety is

the perception of a general increase in the aggressiveness of Beijing’s foreign policy. Observers point to China’s violent border clash with India, stiffening Chinese defence of the “nine-dash line” in the South China Sea as a Chinese territorial boundary, and the rise of “wolf warrior” diplomacy. Having lived under the threat of Chinese military action for the past 70 years, the island’s 23 million people have come to understand what they consider the strange paradox of Taiwan’s existence: even as China’s military might grows, invasion does not necessarily come any closer.

So, what could be the truth about such speculation? Some experts believe much of the threat assessment by the US military may actually be more of a reflection of a shift in US perceptions about China amid the deteriorating relationship between the world’s two economic giants. This conclusion is arrived at over an assessment of the military balance between China and the US. However, the invasion of Taiwan obviously carries significant risks. The invasion when it happens will inflict a great tragedy on Taiwan. Even China will not escape the collateral damage. If its rulers are wise, they would think twice before venturing into such foolhardiness.



Amid alarming spike in Covid cases, India-B’desh trade on

SUJIT CHAKRABORTY

AMID the alarming spike in the number of Covid-19 cases in both India and Bangladesh, the trade between the two neighbouring countries continues to be unaffected as exports-imports are being carried out by strictly enforcing the standard operating procedures (SOPs) laid down by the authorities of both the nations.

Both India and Bangladesh have restricted the movement of people between the two countries, but allowed the trade to continue, adhering to the SOPs.

According to the officials, around 40 trading points comprising Land Customs Stations (LCS) and three Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) along the 4,096 km India-Bangladesh borders in West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura are still operational, through which cross-border trades are taking place.

The Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh) border along West Bengal’s North 24 Parganas district and the Agartala (India)-Akhaura (Bangladesh) border along Tripura are the two main trading routes between India and Bangladesh.

Agartala-Akhaura ICP chief Debashish Nandi said that the officials are closely monitoring the maintenance of the Covid SOPs to ensure that the workers and drivers and their assistants from both India and Bangladesh always maintain the social distancing protocols.

“No laxity of the SOPs is being permitted in maintaining border trades, which are also very essential given the Covid induced economic situation,” Nandi told IANS.

The four ‘Border Haats’ (markets) in Tripura and Meghalaya along the India-Bangladesh frontier are also closed since March last year as a precautionary measure against novel coronavirus.

The National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) of Bangladesh on Covid-19, headed by professor Mohammad Shahidullah, has stressed the need to introduce strict cross-border travel restrictions amid the rapid surge in Covid cases and deaths.

The Assistant High Commissioner of Agartala-based Bangladesh Assistant High Commission, Mohammad Jobayed Hosen, said that no foreigners would be allowed to visit Bangladesh as the land routes are closed by the government for two weeks starting Monday.

“The Bangladeshi nationals whose visa period would expire within the next 15 days have been advised to return to the country. The Bangladesh diplomatic missions in India would facilitate their return,” Hosen told IANS.

He said that those Bangladeshi citizens, including students, who have a long-term visa can stay in India, following all the Covid safety guidelines. The envoy said that the Bangladesh government had earlier prohibited travel of foreigners by air, waterways or rail to Bangladesh. Since early last year, the Manipur and Mizoram governments have prohibited cross-border movement of people along India’s borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh in the two northeastern states as precautionary measures. The Indian government has recently approved the 6th multi-facilitated ICP at Sabroom along the India-Bangladesh borders to boost trade, economy and easier movement of people of the two neighbouring countries. A senior official of the Tripura Industry and Commerce Department said that the Central government has given approval for Rs 90.60 crore to acquire land for setting up the new ICP in Sabroom in southern Tripura, around 135 km south of Agartala.

According to the officials, the Indian government has already set up or is in the process of setting up five multi-facilitated and multi-utility ICPs in Petrapole-Benapole, Dawki (Meghalaya), Sutarkandi (Assam), Sonamur and Agartala (both Tripura) and the sixth one would be set up in Sabroom in southern Tripura. The works for the ICPs in Dawki and Sutarkandi are almost complete and they will be operational soon. The Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI), under the Union Home Ministry (MHA), has also set up one ICP each along the Pakistan and Myanmar borders and two along the Nepal borders.

Australia-type bushfire ravages Mizoram’s southern dists

SUBIR BHAUMIK

INDIAN Air Force helicopters with Bambi Buckets have been pressed into service to put out an Australia-type bushfire raging for two days in Mizoram’s Lunglei district.

Late on Sunday night, the fire had spread to Lunglei town and villages in the adjoining district of Lawngtlai.

Mizoram government firefighters, backed by Assam Rifles and Border Security Force troops and local volunteer groups have so far failed to put out the fire, officials said.

Late on Sunday evening, the Indian Air Force, receiving a SOS from Mizoram government, pressed into service two Mi-17V5 helicopters, equipped with specialised Bambi Buckets, to control the raging bushfire. The fire was sparked around 7 a.m. on Saturday possibly by some villagers who were trying to clear the hills near Lunglei town, possibly for shifting cultivation common in the hills of Northeast India. It snowballed into a raging bushfire spreading to ten village council areas in and around Lunglei town. By Sunday night, it had spread to three rural development blocks of Lawngtlai district. Officials said the helicopters have somewhat helped control the fire. “We have controlled much of the fire by Saturday evening itself,” said A. Kulothungan, DC, Lunglei district. “However, it erupted again on Sunday morning and is still raging. High winds and dry vegetation have caused the spread of the fire and it is now a huge challenge to put it out.”

Mizoram DIPR said in a press statement that the fire ravaged localities such as Zotlang, Serkawn, Chanmari in Lunglei town, even engulfing “some buildings”.

But it said the fire in Lunglei town “could be contained and doused before it caused any major loss to property.” “As the fire had spread close to human settlements, the administration evacuated residents. But no death or injuries to citizens or damage to their property were reported so far,” DC Kulothungan told IANS.

However, some damage was reported from Lawngtlai district. “In Bungtlang South, the fire completely destroyed fourteen houses. Nobody were injured but livestock perished in the fire,” said Marilyn Rualzakhumthangi, ADC, Lawngtlai district. “Smaller fires are still burning but that might not jeopardise human settlements but we cannot be complacent,” said ADC Rualzakhumthangi.

In February, Mizoram forest officials had said that around 1,300 forest fires were reported in the state in 2020.

They said around 1,090 incidents were caused due to Jhum or slash-and-burn cultivation, while 210 were due to natural causes. Jhum involves clearing a forest tract by slashing vegetation and burning it before planting seeds. The Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun says forests of the Northeast and central India regions are the most vulnerable areas to forest fires.

Forests in Assam, Mizoram and Tripura have been identified as ‘extremely prone’ to forest fire, not only because they have substantial forest cover but because in recent years, monsoon have been delayed and the vegetation dries up.



Vote is the oxygen for power seeking political parties. Oxygen is the life for voters. Vote in Telugu spells like O2. O2 is chemical name of oxygen. Rulers want your vote, and you want O2.

The Government and entire public in India knew that coronavirus was a pandemic and “disaster” by March 14, 2020. Within 10 days, whole nation suffered severe lockdown. The experience demands real improvement in medical infrastructure by many times than existing. Early in the pandemic, it became clear that oxygen would be one of the most precious commodities in the battle against the virus. The Governments knew it.

An Empowered Group of 11 Officers, formed by the Government suggested measures to implement an effective Covid response. That group warned the government of possible shortage of oxygen in April 2020, and again in November 2020. Another committee with nine members was set up study and suggest ensuring sufficient supply of oxygen. The demand increased from 1000 metric tonnes per day to 3000 during the peak of Covid in September. The present pathetic situation proves that government was non-responsive to these alarming bells.

By April 2020, Centre knew that oxygen generated in India is not at all sufficient if the demand is increased and all formal requirements were completed to sanction and establish the Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) Oxygen plants in 150 District Hospitals across the nation. The PSA technology separates gases from a mixture in the atmosphere to generate concentrated oxygen that can be supplied to hospital beds through a pipeline, negating the need for hospitals to buy pressurised liquid oxygen from other sources.

From April to October in 2020, the Government machinery did not act. It took the Narendra Modi government eight months to invite bids for new oxygen generation plants. On October 21, the Central Medical Services Society, an autonomous institution under the Union health ministry, floated a tender online calling for bidders to PSA oxygen plants. And till recently there is no whisper as to what happened to these tenders. Why was the tender process delayed? It was not caused by a lack of funds: the outlay for 162 oxygen plants (12 added later) is just Rs 201.58 crore. Long back money was allocated from the PM-Cares corpus.

The Central Medical Services Society is yet to say anything on the status of 162



plants. For long they gave the stock answer is “being closely reviewed for early completion of 100 percent of the plants.” The fact that this society was not answering questions about their status proves that they are nowhere near competition. This is height of inefficiency, non-responsiveness and complacency of in the governance. The Scroll.in claimed that when it called 60 hospitals across 14 states the responses proved that only 11 units were installed and only five of them are working. After publication of this story, the Health Ministry published several tweets, saying “Out of 162 PSA Oxygen plants, 33 have been installed....By end of April, 2021, 59 will be installed. By end of May, 2021, 80 will be installed.” It means that less than half the number of new sanctioned plants will be installed by end of May. This is clear case of complacency and lack of responsibility.

Now, the central government said that another 100 oxygen plants will be established out of the PM-Cares fund. Disaster Management is a law, there is a department, we have disaster continuously around us since more than a year. Forget about management, the government behaves as if it does not know that a disaster is round the corner. It is pathetic that Delhi High Court had to remind both national and state governments of its powers on Disaster Management Act to manage the supplies of Oxygen. Is it not a big failure of both the governments and all its departments?

The Delhi High Court on April 25 warned that it will “hang” any person who tries to obstruct oxygen supplies to hospitals. A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said, “You [be] rest assured that we will hang that man. We will not spare anyone.” It was during a special three-hour-long hearing on a weekend holiday on the issue of escalating oxygen crisis in various hospitals in Delhi. The

petition was moved by a group of private hospitals from the national capital amidst the shortage of oxygen supplies. The court called it was not wave, but tsunami.

The Court also noted the report of team of scientists from IIT Kanpur that a peak of this Covid was apprehended in mid-May. The HC asked the question which media is not asking and people have no scope to seek, “how are you going to tackle the augmentation of medical infrastructure like beds, oxygen, ventilators, medical staff and medicines, to manage the crisis. Tushar Mehta told the court that Government of India is importing oxygen.

Delhi needed and demanded 700 metric tonnes but Centre allocated 378 mt. Eight PSA (Pressure Swing Absorption) oxygen plants were planned for Delhi, but only one has been set up as per admission of the Union Health Ministry before the Delhi High Court. He was not sure whether the plant was operational. The Joint Secretary (Health), Nipun Vinayak, told the apex court that only one plant, at the Burari Hospital, has been installed so far. Three plants are stuck up with paperwork, while four are expected to be installed by April 30. BJP is blaming Delhi Government for this.

Madhya Pradesh needed huge quantum of oxygen, but the state has done little to augment its own oxygen production capacity, and authorities have woken up rather late to the need to ramp up infrastructure. Not only states but the Central government also took eight months into the pandemic to float a tender for 162 PSA oxygen plants across India, of which only 33 plants have been installed so far, as reported by news webportals. Delhi was making frantic appeals to centre and PM as it alleged that Uttar Pradesh and Haryana are blocking the supplies.

Very fact that six private hospitals were constrained to file writ petitions in High

Court seeking oxygen supplies which could have been solved by a phone call or written request had there been a responsive and responsible government, proves total absence of governance in National Capital. Maharaja Agrasen Hospital, Jaipur Golden Hospital, Batra Hospital and Saroj Super Speciality Hospital are supposed to attend to patients, but they are before the High Court over shortage of oxygen for treating seriously ill COVID-19 patients. “You (Centre) had assured us (on April 21) that 480 MT per day will reach Delhi. Tell us when will it come? We want a definitive date. The 480 MT per day is still to see the light of the day,” the bench said, adding that citizens of Delhi cannot be left to die like this.

One can see that the centre was trying to blame the states. The Centre told before court that one of the reasons for the shortage in supply was due to the Delhi government not providing cryogenic tankers for picking up liquid oxygen. Delhi government told the court that it was not an industrial state, and therefore, did not have access to such tankers. As the Court advised, it is for both state and centre to work together.

This delay could be result of distance between Delhi and production centres. Distribution network is both stressed and stretched. Real issue is bad planning. Delhi should get from seven states, which are than 1,000 km (625 miles) away, the court was told. Because of the hazardous nature of the substance, all liquid oxygen must be transported in a limited number of specialised tankers, requiring advance planning. They should have planned two or three weeks in advance. One year of suffering from Covid pandemic did not teach any alertness to either centre or states.

(The writer is Professor of Law, Bennett University and former Central Information Commissioner)

LETTERS

SCR clarifies on news report

PROPOS the news report - “New Railway terminal roof building flooded” (April 26) in The Hans India, Bengaluru edition, the following observations are offered for your consideration with an objective to put forth the factual position before the readers and the wider public.

The city of Bengaluru witnessed heavy downpour on April 23. At Sir M Visveswaraya Railway Terminal, Baiyyappanahalli, the roof of the main canopy building has been completed in Sept 2020 and has been tested without any leakages/defects during the last monsoon. On April 23, the valley gutter leading to the rainwater drain has overflowed resulting in ingress of rainwater into the main building for some time. The same stopped once the downpour subsided. The gutter will be examined thoroughly again, and remedial measures be put in place to prevent recurrence. The water management system of the entire premises is in the final leg of fine tuning. The system has been designed duly taking into account all the relevant parameters. The main water drainage system is in place, however the rain water harvesting system is undergoing final phase of checks, prior to its commissioning.

At present, the entire water from the roof of the main canopy, is being diverted to the main drainage system leading to the water recycling plant. This has resulted in the drain carrying more than its capacity owing to the sudden downpour, resulting in back flow into the subway. The accumulated subway water has naturally drained within half an hour of the cessation of the downpour. Our team of dedicated engineers have carried out a detailed survey at the spot immediately after the occurrence of the water inflow, with a view to identify and put remedial measures in place, where needed including to address contingencies resulting from sudden/higher downpour. It may be kindly be noted that, once the rainwater harvesting system gets commissioned, the smooth and uninterrupted flow of rainwater into the designated channels of drain shall be ensured. We assure all, through your medium, that we are committed to providing the best, safe and convenient travel experience to all our passengers.

Anesh Hegde, CPRO, South Western Railway, Hubballi

Grand comeback for CSK

THIS refers to the report ‘Jadeja heroics land CSK 69-run win (The Hans India, Sports Page, April 26, 2021). Chennai Super Kings’ talismanic captain MS Dhoni knows how to pull out the best from his players. And why not, he has been doing this job for more than a decade. Ravindra Jadeja’s excellence in the match against the Royal Challengers Bangalore is an epit-

ome of this.

After a thundering performance with the bat, the left arm all-rounder gave a jolt to the opponent with the ball too. But it was MS Dhoni who seemed quite evident guiding him from behind the stumps after each ball. After having a pathetic season last year in UAE, the Chennai Super Kings seems to have been back in form with four consecutive wins. It is imperative for the three time IPL champions to regain their lost glory.

Tushar Anand, Patna

Needed global cooperation

THIS refers to the write up by K Krishna Saagar Rao, ‘Unmindful of human reaction’, dated April 23. There have been incidents of similar kind earlier too, in which secret and dangerous laboratory experiments that had gone awry, which got released in the atmosphere inadvertently to pose peril to innocent population. There were events of such lab evolved bacteria and virus having been tested on humans on the sly to fathom the effect and efficacy on the population of poor nations of Africa and Asia, that had eluded rational verification or support from human rights organisations who would be first to appear on the scene for wrong reasons.

To achieve this in a greater measure, there is need for global cooperation and knowledge sharing without an excessive commercial mindset and calculations, by advanced nations.

Safety measures on May 2

It is with fear, anxiety and apprehension that the public and the authorities look forward to as the day of the election result of the states, which went for polling in April, is fast approaching. What causes anxiety and the rise in pulse beating is not the result but the revelry, hullabaloo and victory celebration that normally follow suit after the results are announced.

Especially in States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Bengal where high voltage campaigning took place there is no doubt that the political supporters and workers may do the same once the results are out. Leaders at the helm of political parties must act responsibly, reduce crowded celebrations and victory rallies taking into account the present fatal Covid crisis that has engulfed the whole nation.

M Pradyu, Kannur

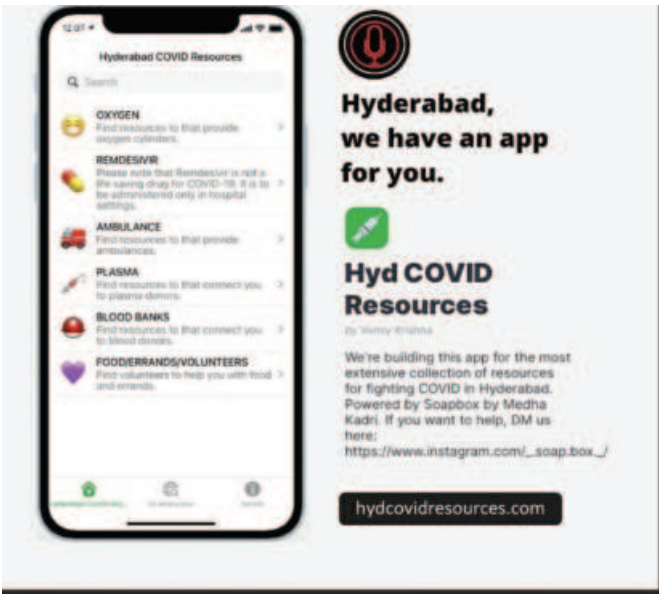
A resourceful tool for Covid-hit

App provides information on oxygen availability, plasma and medicines

MEGHNA NATH
HYDERABAD

EXTENDING helping hand in the fight against Covid-19, a group of youngsters developed an App 'The Hyderabad Covid Resources', this App helps provide access to resources like plasma, blood bank, meal providers, amongst other services. It is a progressive web app, which means that it works both on android, or I-phone or even the browser and gets updated every 30 minutes.

Speaking to The Hans India, its co-founder twenty-five-year-old Vensy Krishna said, "When my mother tested Covid positive in the first week of April we faced many hardships like finding hospital beds. So, I decided to help people get resources like oxygen, plasma and medicines. With the help of little technical stuff my friends Medha Kadri, a social work consultant and Ab-



hishek we developed the App."

Vensy Krishna, a lawyer and resident of Mehdiapatnam, developed the app along with his team on April 20. The app was

promoted on various social media platforms following which scores of people have started availing the resources. "By clicking the link

hydcovidresources.com people can get details. It is a progressive web app, so people don't have to download anything, and you don't even have to give any data. All the information is open," said Medha Kadri, a social work consultant. A group of 25 volunteers are working hard to verify information and also update the app every 30 minutes.

Through this app people can know about Covid-19 about availability of plasma, blood banks, meal services, doctor service, ambulance and many more. Moreover, the app is also linked to a few NGO which provide oxygen, free medical consultation and blood donation.

"We want to help people of Hyderabad. We want to help the government take better decisions at a time like this. This app is powered by the dedication of a team of volunteers," said Vensy Krishna.

Orders issued to promote Classes I to IX students

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Director of School Education (DSE) issued orders promoting all the students of classes I to IX in all the government, aided and private unaided schools for the academic years 2020-21.

Issuing proceedings to this effect here on Monday, the SDSE said that the Regional Joint Directorate of School Education and the District Education Officers were asked to implement the orders.

Meanwhile, the Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) in a statement asked all the principals of the government and private junior colleges to receive the assignment work for Ethics and Human values and Environmental Education from the students till April 30, 2021.

The principals were further asked to evaluate the assignment works and the marks of the same should be posted in the award list by May 3, 2022.

- Inter students can submit EHV and EE assignment works till April 30
- College principals are directed not to link the acceptance of assignment work with college dues and payments

Directing that the private college principals and managements not to link the acceptance of the assignment work with any college dues and payments, DSE warned, "Any complaints received from the students or parents to the board for non-acceptance of the assignment work and forcing the students to pay college dues will invite serious action against the erring managements and principals."

2,400 metric tons of garbage cleared

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

AS part of a special sanitation drive around 2,400 metric tons of wastage from the roads and streets has been cleared in the Khairatabad zone of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC). This was done in four days with the help of 600 sanitation workers.

After GHMC removed garbage bins from roads and streets in an attempt to make Hyderabad a bin-free city, each corner of the city including major roads were terribly littered. Following which the Municipal Administration and Urban Development (MA&UD) department directed GHMC to conduct a special sanitation drive and clear the wastage.

Only from the Khairatabad zone the GHMC sanitation wing lifted around 2,400 metric tons of garbage and transferred it to the garbage transfer station. Four-day special drive was held in Banjara Hills, Jubilee Hills, Venkateswara Colony, Shaikpet, Mehdiapatnam, Golconda, Somajiguda, and several other areas under the Khairatabad zone.

Moreover, the sanitation workers also spread awareness in residential areas not to throw household waste on roads, as exclusive tipper autos have been kept for collecting waste from houses.

Meanwhile GHMC had put 12 tipper autos to collect the wastage and warned the restaurants and hotel not to waste on streets. After lifting the garbage from the roads and streets, the garbage dumping site was disinfected and the open places were barricaded with green nets, and posters were installed 'Not to dump garbage, fine will be issued'.

SCR cancels few trains

HANS NEWS SERVICE
SECUNDERABAD

IN wake of poor occupancy amid the surge in Covid-19 cases, the South Central Railway has temporarily cancelled a few trains.

Trains from Secunderabad to Mumbai LTT (02235); Mumbai LTT to Secunderabad (02236); Secunderabad to Bidar (07010); Bidar to Hyderabad (07009); Secunderabad to Kurnool City (07027); Kurnool City to Secunderabad (07028) would not run between April 28 and June 1.

The SCR has also rescheduled the departure timing of Train No. 07229 from Thiruvananthapuram to Secunderabad. Instead of 7 a.m., the train will depart from Thiruvananthapuram at 9.30 a.m., from April 28 to May 12.

T- Congress to set up corona control rooms

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

AICC Telangana sets up control room at Gandhi Bhavan to provide assistance to corona victims. AICC State in-charge Manickam Tagore on Monday alleged that the Central and State governments had completely failed to curb the spread of Covid-19 virus. Speaking at his core committee meeting via Zoom App he said that as per the party high command directives, the Telangana Congress unit would stand by the corona victims. "A control room has been set up at Gandhi Bhavan phone no: 040-24601254 to provide assistance to the corona victims. Youth Congress and student unions would provide free masks, medicines and sanitizers to the victims and the people," he said.

Night curfew's dread vanishes into thin air

M M FAROOQUI
HYDERABAD

AS days pass by, the fear of night curfew slowly disappears from the collective psyche of the denizens. Despite police warnings, youth turn the bylanes into playing fields of cricket and football. Even though the City police have made an appeal to the public to ensure that night curfew is implemented to break the chain of Coronavirus, youngsters who don't wish to remain within the walls can be seen outside their houses, while some of them particularly in parts of Old City engage in games.

The night curfew which was imposed on April 20 has been strictly followed by people but as days passed by night curfew norms go for a toss. As youngsters are engaging themselves within the lanes with games like 'gully cricket', with whatever resources they have.

Usually in the City, during

Youth indulge in gully cricket and other activities



Ramzan people prefer to sleep after the Sehri (pre-dawn meal) and Fajr prayers. It has been observed that after night curfew's time begins and cops end their first round of patrolling, these youngsters are seen playing in colonies after 11 pm. They feel that the police might

not patrol further. On a visit to the areas in Old City including Yakutpura, Talabkatta, Moghalpura, Chanchalguda, Jahanuma, Bahadurpura, Nampally, Aghapura, Malpally, and some localities in Tolichowki the deserted roads are turned into playing fields where

youngsters were seen playing Cricket, shuttle-cock, football, cycling etc. Ironically, one of them is asked to keep a tight vigil on police vehicles passing, he is tasked to voice 'police aaray' on seeing the patrol vehicle. When asked why they were outside, a youth at Tolichowki replied, "Very rarely do we get such empty roads and we don't want to lose such an opportunity," said a group of boys playing tennis in bylane in Tolichowki.

Meanwhile even those girls, who always waited for an opportunity to play on roads, find the time to be a golden opportunity. Even families including husband and wife with their children were seen enjoying family game on a street in Gulshan Colony, Tolichowki.

Moreover, at some other places youth were seen loitering on roads even during the night curfew and not only youngsters but even elderly were seen sitting outside their houses on 'Chabutras'.

State-level task force for Covid control

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

THE government issued orders forming a State-level task force committee and district-level flying squads for containment, control and prevention of Covid.

The State level task force committee is formed with Satish Chandra, Spl Chief

Spl Chief Secretary Satish Chandra to head the team

Secretary, Higher Education as chairperson, K S Jawahar Reddy, K V Ravindranath Reddy, K V Rajendranath Reddy, Anil Kumar Singhal, K Bhaskar and Ravi Shankar as members.

District Collectors have been directed to form district-level

flying squads with representatives from Drugs Control Administration, Vigilance and Enforcement and Medical and Health Department.

The flying squads must inspect the hospitals frequently and ensure implementation of Covid guidelines.

9,881 new cases in 24 hrs

- 51 deaths reported and toll rises to 7,736
- Active cases go up to 95,131

AMARAVATI

ANDHRA Pradesh reported 9,881 fresh Covid-19 cases, taking the infection count to 10,43,441, while 51 fatalities pushed the toll to 7,736, the State government said on Monday.

The total recoveries stood at 9,40,574 with as many as 4,431 people recovering from the disease, an official bulletin said giving details during the last 24 hours ending 9 am on Monday.

The State has 95,131 active cases and over 74,000 samples were tested during the last 24 hours.

Chittoor and Nellore topped the toll chart with six casualties each followed by Kurnool and Vizianagaram

five each. Meanwhile, Health Minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas on Monday said as much as 30 per cent of medical oxygen is being wasted in hospitals.

"The State government received information that oxygen is being wasted. It has come to the notice of the government that nearly 30 per cent of the oxygen is being wasted in the State. Only those who need oxygen should only be given (in hospitals)," he said.

"The State needs 390 tonnes of oxygen per day but we are getting only 360 tonnes (from all sources). We are requesting the Centre also to enhance the supply," he added.

The Minister further said the supply of Remdesivir, an anti-viral drug to treat Covid-19 severe cases, is being monitored by the State government in order to curtail black-marketing.

VIRUS SURGE

GOVT TAKING STRICT MEASURES TO CONTAIN COVID: BOTCHA

- Points out that 104 call centre has been set up and beds are being provided to patients within two hours
- Govt ensuring availability of 50,000 beds across the State
- Flays Naidu, Lokesh for creating tension and confusion among people through their statements
- Asks how students can compete to secure admission in national-level institutions without appearing for State Board exams

HANS NEWS SERVICE|
AMARAVATI

ASSERTING that the State government under the leadership of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has been taking stringent measures to contain Covid-19 in the State, Minister Botcha Satya-



narayana said TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh were creating tension and confusion among the people for their political interests.

Speaking to the media at the party's Central office here on Monday, the Minister said the State government has laid special focus on bed availability, oxygen and medicines and taking measures to ensure 50,000 beds are available

across the State. He said the government has set up 104 call centre and providing beds to the required patients within two hours and added that a State command control centre has been set up. The higher officials have been kept on alert and they were monitoring the situation.

While the State government has been running from pillar to post to fight against the pandemic, Naidu

and yellow media were propagating false information to create unrest in the State. He said while the employees have been striving hard fighting against pandemic, the comments of Naidu and Lokesh were damaging their confidence.

Stating that officials took timely action with regard to oxygen supply at a hospital in Vizianagaram and saved precious lives of people, Botcha slammed Naidu for not praising the efforts of doctors and criticising the government over the issue. He said the government would welcome any reasonable suggestions from the Opposition and flayed Naidu for not giving at least one responsible suggestion to the government.

The Minister came down heavily on Nara Lokesh for demanding cancellation or postponement of class-10 and Intermediate exams and said the state government has taken the decision to conduct exams for the benefit and bright future of the students.

He questioned how the students can compete to secure admission in national-level institutions without writing the board exams.

He questioned Naidu and Lokesh why they didn't comment or react when Prime Minister Narendra Modi said lockdown is the last option.

Naidu lambasts State govt for its failure to ensure O2 supply to Covid hospitals

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

TDP national president and former Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday expressed shock and grief over the death of Covid patients reportedly due to lack of timely oxygen supply at the Maharaja Hospital in Vizianagaram.

Naidu deplored that the Jagan Mohan Reddy government had become so inefficient that it was not being able to provide even oxygen to coronavirus patients who were battling for their lives in the govern-

ment hospitals. When the people were losing their precious lives in the Covid treatment centres, it was unfortunate that the Chief Minister was just enjoying himself at his Tadepalli residence.

In a statement here, the TDP chief termed it as a total failure on the part of the YSRCP government not to ensure proper supply of oxygen at the hospitals at a very difficult time. The Jagan Reddy regime was not taking responsibility to extend the necessary help to the people. The Ministers were watching the situation like silent spectators. The situation was deteriorating in all the 13

districts with scarcity of oxygen beds increasing everywhere.

Naidu slammed the government for failing to provide correct information on the facilities for the Covid patients in the hospitals. In the Covid dash board, it was being shown that the oxygen beds were vacant and plenty of them available. But, when the patients were taken to the respective hospitals, they were not admitting them. They were saying that there was no oxygen supply.

The TDP chief demanded that the YSRCP government wake up from its slumber and

begin rendering genuine and sincere services to the people in this troubled time. The officials should turn all their focus to the availability of beds, oxygen and Remdesivir injections. These facilities should be expedited immediately in order to prevent the situation from going out of control. A new confidence should have to be created in the people.

Naidu expressed shock over the death of their party corporator Vanapalli Ravi Kumar in Visakhapatnam due to Covid-19. He conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members. From the beginning, Ravi

Kumar has been taking an active part in the party activities in the port city. It was unfortunate that Ravi Kumar fell victim to the Covid infection and breathed his last while taking treatment at the NRI hospital, the TDP chief said.

Naidu also condoled the death of Kathari Praveen, husband of Chittoor former mayor Hema Latha. Praveen's father Mohan also served as the mayor of Chittoor.. Their family has been actively engaged in strengthening the party in Chittoor right from the beginning. The TDP would extend all support to their family in this time of loss and pain.

Unable to get ventilator, doc dies at hospital he served for 50 yrs

BJP govt’s mismanagement and short-sightedness has turned the State into a ‘corona pradesh’

LUCKNOW

A SHARP increase in the number of critical Covid-19 cases has pushed the demand for ventilators to an all-time high in Uttar Pradesh. Finding a bed with a ventilator has become a battle for every critical patient and their kin, even if the patient is a doctor at the hospital.

For around 50 years, 85-year-old senior doctor JK Mishra served at Swarup Rani Nehru (SRN) Hospital in Prayagraj. But when he needed a ventilator due to Covid-related complications, he could not find one and died right in front of his wife at the same hospital he worked at for decades.

Dr JK Mishra developed symptoms of Covid-19 like shortness of breath and oxygen deprivation on April

13. Three days later, he was admitted to the SRN hospital. But soon after he was admitted, his condition deteriorated. The doctors advised that he should be shifted to a ventilator facility, but no beds were available in any critical care facility in the city.

As per the emergency medical officer of the SRN hospital, Suryabhan Kushwaha, the hospital has around 100 ventilators but all were occupied by the patients admitted before Dr Mishra.

"It was not possible to remove any other patient from the ventilator to arrange one for Dr Mishra," he said.

Meanwhile, BJP MP Ravi Kishan has written a letter to Gorakhpur District Magistrate Vijayendra Pandey, asking him to identify a location for setting up an oxygen plant in Gorakhpur.



The MP said that he would contribute Rs 40 lakh for the purpose.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Monday accused the Uttar Pradesh government of fudging coronavirus death number, saying the data shown by it is contradicted by the rush at crematoriums.

The former UP chief minister further alleged that the BJP government's mismanagement and short-sightedness has turned the state into a "corona pradesh". "Fake data is being given to show fewer deaths while a rush is being witnessed at crematoriums," Yadav said in a statement. "It is the government's failure that even BJP MPs and MLAs are not satisfied with the current state of affairs. The number of doctors, hospitals and other facilities given by the BJP is mostly fake. Such an insensitive govern-

ment was never seen in the state," he said. "The BJP should shun its pride of being in power. They should think like family members of Covid patients and ensure availability of oxygen at their homes," Akhilesh said, accusing the party of not paying any heed to experts' warning about the second wave of the infection.

The Minority Affairs Ministry has decided to give Haj Houses to the respective State government for utilisation as temporary care centres for Covid-19 patients.

"It has been decided to give Haj Houses in different states of the country to the state governments to utilise them as temporary "Corona Care Centre"," Minority Affairs Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said on Monday.

WINDOWS

Agra woman gangraped

AGRA: A woman in her early thirties was allegedly raped by a confectioner and his friends here, police said on Monday, adding one of the accused was detained. The woman, a cook, was allegedly gangraped on Sunday night when she had gone to cater for a wedding. A case was lodged at Barhan Police Station in Agra in Uttar Pradesh on the basis of a complaint made by her husband. She was left unconscious after the assault.



BJP candidate Anirban Ganguly of Bolpur Assembly Constituency seeks blessings from actor and BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty in Birbhum district of West Bengal on Monday

Station master kills self after killing wife

PATNA: A man allegedly killed his wife over a personal dispute in Bihar's capital Patna, near the Patrakar Nagar police station, and then committed suicide by jumping off the balcony of his flat. The man worked as a railway station master at Patna Junction. A police official said Atul Lal was a 50-year-old resident of Chitragupta Nagar, who had a fight with his 45-year-old wife Tulika Kumari over some personal issue. Following the scuffle, Atul allegedly killed his wife by slashing her throat with a sharp object and then committed suicide. Patrakar Nagar police station in-charge, Ravindra Kumar, said the police reached the site and took possession of both the bodies which have been sent for post-mortem.

CHENNAI/DELHI/SYDNEY

THE meeting of all recognised political parties chaired by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister K. Palaniswami on Monday decided to allow operation of Vedanta Ltd's Sterlite plant in Tuticorin to produce oxygen for four months with the power supplied by the state utility.

India on Monday recorded 3,52,991 new Covid-19 cases and 2,812 deaths in the last 24 hours. India's total tally of Covid-19 cases climbed to 1,73,13,163 while active cases have crossed the 28-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday.

Active cases in the ongoing second wave in India may peak at 38-48 lakh between May 14-18 and daily new infections could hit a high of 4.4 lakh from May 4-8, according to a mathematical model by IIT scientists who have revised their projections upwards.

Time has come to wear face mask at home too, Dr VK Paul of NITI Aayog said on Covid-19 situation. "There has been miss information being circulated around this, Covid 19 Vaccination can be administered during menstruation period," he said.

Poland is sending vaccines this week to have its diplomats in India immunised against COVID-19.

A Polish diplomat was evacuated Sunday from New Delhi in serious condition, together with his sick pregnant wife and four children, and brought to hospitals in Warsaw.

An Air India flight brought 318 oxygen concentrators to New Delhi from New York on Monday.

United States President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have assured India and its people of providing all assistance, including urgently sending necessary medical life-saving supplies and equipment, to help the country combat the deadly coronavirus crisis.

Meanwhile, the Centre also announced that two containers to transport medical oxygen are being imported from Dubai. Australia will send oxygen, ventilators and personal protective equipment to India as part of an immediate support package to the country which is battling with the latest surge of the COVID-19 cases, Health Minister Greg Hunt said on Monday.



Patients gets free oxygen, provided by NGO at an open space in Gurugram on Monday

TN to allow Sterlite plant to produce oxygen

Time has come to wear face mask at home too

O2 shortage: 5 die in Har

HISAR: Five COVID-19 patients, including one from Delhi, died at a private hospital here on Monday with relatives of the deceased holding a protest alleging that they died due to grave shortage of medical oxygen at the facility.

The five deaths came within 24 hours of two similar incidents in Haryana, wherein eight people died in two private facilities in Rewari and Gurgaon allegedly due to shortage of medical oxygen.

Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said a magisterial probe has been ordered into the incidents, responding to questions from reporters in Panipat. At the same time, he ruled out any shortage of medical oxygen in the state.



Indian tricolour lit up on a landmark in Dubai in solidarity with India as it fights a second wave

Thailand PM fined \$190

BANGKOK: Thailand's PM Prayuth Chan-ocha was fined 6,000 baht (\$190) for breaching rules aimed at containing the coronavirus by not wearing a face mask, the governor of Bangkok said. "I informed the PM this was a violation of rules", Bangkok Governor Aswin Kwanmuang wrote on his official Facebook page. The move came after a photograph of Prayuth appeared on his Facebook page showing him not wearing a mask in a meeting. Authorities in Thailand are imposing fines of up to 20,000 baht (\$640) for people who fail to wear face masks in public in 48 provinces, as the government struggles to cope with a new wave of coronavirus cases that is straining the medical system.

75% turnout in phase 7 of WB Assembly polls

NEW DELHI

A total of 75.06 per cent voter turnout was registered on Monday in phase seven of the West Bengal Assembly polls, the Election Commission said.

The poll panel noted that the turnout figures were provisional and were recorded at 5 pm when the voting was still on. Polling was held "peacefully" in 11,376 polling stations spread across 34 constituencies in West Bengal.

In a statement, the poll panel said 5,982 (52.58 per cent) out of 11,376 polling stations were monitored live

through webcasting.

During the ongoing elections till this phase in West Bengal, a record seizure of Rs 332.94 crore has been reported till date. The progressive seizure of all five states/UT as on date is Rs 1,035.54 crore (this includes seizures of Rs 12.11 crore in bye-elections also.) Fifteen live bombs were found in the Ballygunge assembly seat with the help of bomb squad and a fog squad.

On a tip off, 19 crude bombs were recovered in two bags near Hooghly Jute Mill Colony with the assistance of the Bomb Disposal Squad.



IMD predicts wet spell over several parts of country

NEW DELHI

THE India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday predicted a wet spell over several parts of the country, including central, south and northeast India, from April 26 to 30.

Thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds (speed reaching 30-40 kilometres per hour) are very likely at isolated places over Telangana, Kerala and Mahe from April 26. Lightning at isolated places over Gangetic West Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, central Maharashtra, Marathawada, Rayalaseema, south interior Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Karaikal on Monday. Heat wave conditions are very likely in isolated pockets over Gujarat and coastal Odisha, the IMD added.

On April 27, thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds (speed reaching 30-40 kmph) are very likely at isolated places over Uttarakhand, Assam, Meghalaya, central Maharashtra, Marathawada, Telangana, Kerala and Mahe. Lightning is also likely at isolated places over Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Gilgit-Baltistan, Muzaffarabad, HP, Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Konkan, Goa, coastal AP, Yanam, Rayalaseema, south Interior Karnataka and Tamilnadu, Puducherry and Karaikal. On April 28, thunderstorms with lightning are likely over Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, central Maharashtra, Marathawada, Telangana, Kerala and Mahe.



Armed forces recall retired medical staff to fight pandemic

NEW DELHI

ALL medical personnel of the armed forces who have retired or have taken pre-mature retirement in the last two years are being recalled to work in COVID-19 facilities within proximity of their present place of residence, the government said on Monday.

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat told Prime Minister Narendra Modi about this decision as they reviewed preparations and operations being undertaken by the armed forces to deal with the second wave of the pandemic raging across the country.

Other medical officers who retired from the armed forces earlier than two years have also been

requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency helplines, a statement said. Rawat also informed the prime minister that oxygen cylinders available with armed forces in various establishments will be released for hospitals.

Modi was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at Command HQ, Corps HQ, Division HQ & similar HQ of Navy and Air Force will be employed at hospitals. "The CDS informed the prime minister that nursing personnel are being employed in large numbers to complement the doctors at the hospitals," the statement said. Rawat also said they are creating medical facilities in large numbers and military medical infrastructure will be made available to civilians, where ever possible.



Modi reviewed the operations being undertaken by Indian Air Force as well to transport oxygen and other essentials in India and abroad.

Meanwhile, China's state-run Sichuan Airlines has suspended all its cargo flights to India for 15 days, causing major disruption to private traders' efforts to procure the much-needed oxygen concentrators and other medical supplies from China despite Beijing offering "support and assistance" to the country to deal with the latest surge of COVID-19 cases.

In a letter to the sales agents on Monday, the Sichuan Chuanhang Logistics Co. Ltd, the company which is part of the Sichuan Airlines said the airline has suspended its cargo flights on six routes, including Xian to Delhi, amid hectic efforts by private

traders from both sides to procure oxygen concentrators from China.

An association representing pilots of Air India on Monday urged the Delhi High Court to direct civil aviation regulator DGCA to suspend breath analyser tests due to the surge in the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the matter came up for hearing before Justice Prathiba M Singh, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) informed the court that there was a medical board recommendation of June last year permitting breath analyser tests (BAT). The Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA), however, told the court that the medical board recommendation was given in respect of BAT of air traffic controllers (ATCs).

TODAY'S QUOTE

Covid survivors opting for insurance

“ Covid-19 survivors are now coming for life insurance, more so post the raging second wave of the pandemic. The Covid situation has led to higher awareness around the need for protection and the inadequacy of the current insurance coverage. The company has provided Rs 165 crore as Covid reserve for FY22. — Vibha Padalkar, MD & CEO, HDFC Life Insurance



MEDICAL OXYGEN

Steel Plants cuts oxygen stock

STEEL plants have reduced their oxygen stock to just half a day from 3.5 days earlier to fulfil the shortage of the life-saving gas being used in the treatment of Covid-19 patients. The plants supplied 3,131.84 tonnes LMO on Sunday to various health facilities across the states.

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)

US Dollar	75.48	South	
Euro	91.33	African Rand	6.03
UAE Dirham	20.95	Hong Kong Dollar	11.07
Thai Baht	2.61	Japanese Yen	0.8
British Pound	105.04	New Zealand Dollar	54.49
Australian Dollar	58.78	Saudi Riyal	21.92
Canadian Dollar	60.57	Swedish Krona	10.26
Swiss Franc	82.56	Singapore Dollar	57.5

DELHI TUESDAY 27 APRIL 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Fitr unveils fitness challenge

FITTR has announced the launch of the 13th edition of its transformation challenge. This edition has categories like individual, partner and senior. As a part of the challenge, the participants are required to upload a video every week in the suggested format to showcase their week-on-week progress. The participants are evaluated on multiple factors such as muscle gain, fat loss, and consistency from the past transformation challenges. People who are 18 years and above can participate. Jitendra Chouksey, Founder and CEO, Fitr, said: “We have come a long way since we first started the Transformation Challenge almost five years back. It is indeed delightful and motivating to witness so many people rise up to the challenge of investing in a healthy body and mind.”

iQoo's new range

SMARTPHONE maker iQoo has unveiled the iQoo 7 series of smartphones in India. The iQoo 7 Legend has equipped with Qualcomm Snapdragon 888 5G mobile platform combined with an enhanced LPDDR5 flash drive for faster sequential read and write speed. Meanwhile, the iQoo 7 is equipped with the Qualcomm Snapdragon 870 and an intelligent display chip, providing powerful CPU and GPU. The iQoo 7 with 8GB+12GB is priced at Rs 31,990. The 7 Legend is priced at Rs 39,990 with 8GB+12GB. All the variants will be available to pre-order from May 1, 2021. Gagan Arora, Director-Marketing, iQoo said: “Our endeavour is to provide powerful products that bring ultimate joy and excitement to our tech savvy consumers. With the iQoo 7 series, we have taken a step further in that direction.”

SuperBottoms raises \$2mn

SUPERBOTTOMS, known for its reusable cloth diapers for babies, has announced that it has raised \$2 million in series A funding from Saama Capital and DSG Consumer Partners. Run by a core team of mothers, the company also raised its first external capital of Rs 1.6 crore in November 2018, in a round led by Titan Capital, investment office of Snapdeal founders, Kunal Bahl and Rohit Bansal with Venture Catalysts also participating in that round. Pallavi Utagi, Founder, SuperBottoms, said: “It's the unstinted support of the parent community that underlies our organic growth into a trustworthy brand. The funds raised will be invested in initiatives that will help spread awareness around the concept of cloth diapering.”

Crompton's new product

CROMPTON Greaves Consumer Electricals Ltd has launched another innovation with IoT-enabled coolers the Optimus 65 IoT Desert Coolers. The product is upgraded with instant enhanced cooling ensures air delivery with its blade having diameter 457.2 mm at 5500 m3/hr., with added high-density honeycomb cooling pads and provides humidity control. It is equipped with an easy-to-clean large ice chamber that includes an autofill, auto-drain feature to manage water with utmost ease. Sachin Phartiyal, Vice President, Appliance Business - Crompton Greaves Consumer Electricals Ltd. said: “Comfort with ‘Smart’ functionality is the overarching theme that the consumer seeks followed by relief from the heat in the summer season. As consumers have now adjusted to the new normal, we strive to focus on solutions that can make their lives better from instant cooling”.

KG-D6 BLOCK

Reliance, BP start 2nd deepwater gas field

NEW DELHI

RELiance Industries Ltd and its partner BP Plc on Monday announced the start of production from the second set of new discoveries in the eastern offshore KG-D6 block, helping the nation augment clean fuel output.

Reliance-BP, which had commenced output from R Cluster in December last year, started production from the Satellite Cluster, the two firms said in a statement. “Satellite Cluster field comes onstream two months ahead of schedule despite Covid-19 challenges,” it said.

The start of production augurs well for a nation that is looking to raise the share of natural gas in its energy basket from 6.2 per cent currently to 15 per cent by 2030, to help cut carbon emissions.

Domestic gas production of about 78 million metric standard cubic meter per day (mmscmd) meets just half of the demand. Helped by output from KG-D6 and 15 mmscmd of peak production planned from the adjacent KG-D5 block of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) will help domestic gas output reach 122 mmscmd in 2023-24. Reliance-BP is developing three deep-water gas developments in block KG-D6 - R Cluster, Satellite Cluster and MJ - which together are expected to produce around 30 million standard cubic meters per day of natural gas by 2023, meeting up to 15 per cent of India's gas demand. The developments will each utilize the existing hub infrastructure in



the KG-D6 block, the statement said.

Reliance is the operator of the block with a 66.67 per cent participating interest and BP holds the remaining 33.33 per cent. The Satellite Cluster is the second of the three developments to come onstream, following the startup of R Cluster in December 2020. It had originally been scheduled to start production in mid-2021. The field is located about 60 km from the existing onshore terminal at Kakinada, in Andhra Pradesh in water depths of up to 1,850 meters. While R-Cluster is expected to reach plateau gas production of about 12.9 mmscmd in 2021, Satellite Cluster will have a peak output of 6 mmscmd. MJ field will have a peak output of 12 mmscmd. “The (Satellite) field will produce gas from four reservoirs utilizing a total of five wells and is

expected to reach gas production of up to 6 mmscmd. Together, the R Cluster and Satellite Cluster are expected to contribute to about 20 per cent of India's current gas production,” the statement said.

The third KG D6 development, MJ, is expected to come onstream towards the latter half of 2022. Oil-to-telecom conglomerate Reliance has so far made 19 gas discoveries in the KG-D6 block. Of these, D-1 and D-3 — the largest among the lot — were brought into production from April 2009 and MA, the only oilfield in the block was put to production in September 2008. While the MA field stopped producing in 2019, the output from D-1 and D-3 ceased in February 2020. Other discoveries have either been surrendered or taken away by the government for not meeting timelines for beginning production.



Former Maruti MD Khattar passes away

NEW DELHI

FORMER managing director of Maruti Suzuki India, Jagdish Khattar, passed away on Monday morning following a cardiac arrest, according to people close to him. Khattar (79), a former bureaucrat, was considered as one of the most high-profile leaders of the Indian automotive industry, laying the foundation for Maruti's future growth after the government began its disinvestment in 2002 and gradually exited from its joint venture with Suzuki Motor Corporation (SMC).

He had joined the then Maruti Udyog Ltd in July 1993 as director (marketing) and went on to become Executive Director (Marketing) in the next six years. He was promoted as joint managing director in 1999, a year that saw various disagreements between SMC and the government. Khattar was appointed to the post of MD of Maruti Udyog Ltd, as per an agreement between the partners, who agreed to appoint their nominee for a three-year term.

Even as the government and the Japanese partner continued to squabble over various issues, including ownership and technology transfer, Khattar had also to deal with industrial relations issues when workers at the company's Gurgaon plant went on an indefinite strike in 2000 demanding wage hikes, incentives and pensions, among others.

COVID EFFECT

Oxford Economics lowers India's GDP forecast to 10.2%

NEW DELHI

GLOBAL forecasting firm Oxford Economics on Monday revised downwards its India GDP growth forecast for 2021 to 10.2 per cent from 11.8 per cent previously, citing the country's escalating health burden, faltering vaccination rate and lack of a convincing government strategy to contain the pandemic.

Oxford Economics also said that notwithstanding the likelihood of further mobility restrictions, it expects India's targeted lockdown approach, less stringent restrictions, and resilient consumer and business behaviour to mitigate the economic impact of the second wave, “India's escalating health burden, faltering vaccination rate, and lack of a convincing government strategy to contain the pandemic have prompted us to downgrade our 2021 GDP growth forecast to 10.2 per cent from 11.8 per cent previously,” it said.

The global forecasting firm added it expects GDP to contract sequentially in the second quarter. “But if struggling health systems force more states to resort to stricter lockdowns like Maharashtra, we will likely lower our growth forecast further,” it added.

Oxford Economics said India's health system has collapsed in the worst-hit states, with even the national capital Delhi facing acute shortage of oxygen and Covid-19 hospital beds.



“While the official mortality rate has edged lower, it masks a rapidly rising death count. Deaths are now doubling every ten days (as opposed to an average of 29 days in the first wave) and even this figure is likely butressed by delayed or under-reporting of deaths,” it noted.

India is struggling with a second wave of the pandemic with more than 3,00,000 daily new coronavirus cases being reported in the past few days, and hospitals in several states are reeling under a shortage of medical oxygen and beds.

The IMF has projected an impressive 12.5 per cent growth rate for India in 2021, while S&P Global Ratings has said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 11 per cent in the current fiscal.

In its last policy review, the RBI had projected a GDP growth rate of 10.5 per cent for FY'22. According to India's statistics office, the economy projected to contract 8 per cent in 2020-21 while the Economic Survey 2020-21 sees 11 per cent growth in 2021-22.

New Zonal Manager takes charge at LIC Hyd

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

M JAGANNATH on Monday took charge as Zonal Manager of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), South Central Zone, Hyderabad, covering Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka in its jurisdiction.

He is a commerce graduate, having many academic qualifications such as CA (Inter), PG Diploma in Marketing, International PG Diploma in Life Insurance, General Insurance and Risk Management from the Institute of Insurance and Risk Management (IIRM), Hyderabad. He is also an Associate Member of the Insurance Institute of India, Mumbai.

Before taking charge of the current role, he was the Regional Manager (Marketing),



Karnataka unit. He also worked in the same capacity as well as Regional Manager (Bancassurance) at Hyderabad. Joining the corporation as a Direct Recruit Officer in 1988, he has worked in various capacities in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala. He was selected for a foreign assignment and served as Chief Executive Officer and Manager Director of LIC (Lanka) Ltd between 2009 and 2013, the company said in a statement.

Sensex surges 508 points

STOCK MARKET RALLIES AMID MIXED GLOBAL CUES

MUMBAI

MARKET benchmarks made a winning start to the week on Monday as investors snapped up banking, consumption and energy stocks despite a grim situation on the Covid-19 front.

A rebounding rupee, which climbed 28 paise against the US dollar, added to the momentum, traders said. The 30-share BSE Sensex opened on the front foot and remained in the positive territory throughout the session, closing at 48,386.51 - up 508.06 points or 1.06 per cent.

On similar lines, the broader NSE Nifty jumped 143.65 points or 1 per cent to finish at 14,485. Axis Bank was the top performer in the Sensex pack, rallying 4.40 per cent. ICICI Bank spurted 3.63 per cent after the company re-

ported a nearly four-fold jump in March quarter consolidated profit over the weekend. UltraTech Cement, SBI, HUL, PowerGrid, Bajaj Auto and Reliance Industries were among the other prominent gainers.

On the other hand, HCL Tech, HDFC Bank, Maruti, Sun Pharma, TCS, NTPC and ITC were the laggards, dropping up to 2.87 per cent. “Domestic equities shrugged off rising Covid-19 cases and rebounded mainly led by sharp recovery in financials,” said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Barring pharma, most of key sectoral indices traded in green. Strong March quarter performance led ICICI Bank to recovery sharply, while HCL Technologies wit-

nessed sell-off due to subdued 4Q performance, he added. The market may remain volatile in the coming days as Covid cases continue to be high, with April F&O expiry and upcoming FOMC meeting being crucial events this week, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

With 3,52,991 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day, the highest so far, India's total tally of Covid-19 cases has climbed to 1,73,13,163 while active cases have crossed the 28-lakh mark, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Monday. The death toll increased to 1,95,123 with a record 2,812 new fatalities.

Sectorally, the BSE realty, metal, basic materials, bankex, energy, consumer durables and finance indices rallied as much as 3.68 per cent, while healthcare ended in the red. Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices spurted up to 0.88 per cent.

PowerGrid InvIT IPO to open on April 29

NEW DELHI

POWER Grid Infrastructure Investment Trust has fixed a price band of Rs 99-100 per unit for its Rs 7,735 crore initial share sale, which will open for public subscription on April 29. The issue will close on May 3 and the bidding for anchor investors will open on April 28, according to the company's statement on Monday. Power Grid Infrastructure Investment (PowerGrid InvIT) is owned by State-run Power Grid Corporation of India.

This will be the first Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) in the country to be floated by a public sector company. The IPO comprises fresh issue of shares worth Rs 4,993.48 crore and offer for sale to the tune of Rs 2,741.50 crore by selling shareholders. The PowerGrid InvIT units are proposed to be listed on National Stock Exchange and BSE. InvITs are instruments on the pattern of mutual funds and are designed to pool small sums of money from a number of investors to invest in assets that give cash flow over a period of time.

Tech Mahindra profit up by 35% to ₹1,081.4 cr

NEW DELHI

IT major Tech Mahindra on Monday posted a 34.6 per cent rise in consolidated net profit to Rs 1,081.4 crore for the March 2020 quarter. Its net profit stood at Rs 803.9 crore in the corresponding period a year ago, Tech Mahindra said in a regulatory filing. The Mumbai-based company saw its consolidated revenue from operations increasing 2.5 per cent to Rs 9,729.9 crore as against Rs 9,490.2 crore in the year-ago quarter, it added. For the full financial year, the net profit was up 9.8 per cent to Rs 4,428 crore, while revenue from operations was higher by 2.7 per cent to Rs 37,855.1 crore as compared to 2019-20. Tech Mahindra Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer C P Gurnani said, “Our continued focus on cutting-



edge technologies has expanded client engagement with large deal wins this quarter. We are witnessing strong demand acceleration.” He added that the health and wellness of Tech Mahindra associates and community at large, Milind Kulkarni, chief financial officer at Tech Mahindra, said the company has witnessed substantial margin improvement and cash flow generation during the year. “Our focus on delivery transformation will continue, as we increasingly witness a structural shift towards digital to adapt to the new normal,” he added.

Blackstone to invest \$2.8 bn in Mphasis

The total shareholding of funds managed by it will be 82% post the open offer

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA
BENGALURU

GLOBAL private equity major Blackstone on Monday said funds managed by the PE firm has entered into a definitive agreement to buy majority stake in IT services firm, Mphasis. As part of the deal, it has made an open offer to acquire additional 26 per cent stake in the mid-tier IT services firm Mphasis Ltd for Rs 8,262 crore (around \$1.10 billion).

A wholly-owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), UC Investments (Office of the Chief Investment Officer of The Regents, University of California) and GIC will co-invest along with Blackstone. The offer price is fixed at Rs 1,677.16 per share, which is around three per cent less than the market price of Mphasis' share on Monday. In total, Blackstone has committed up to \$2.8 billion to acquire a controlling stake in Mphasis.

THE BLACKSTONE DEAL

- The PE giant makes an open offer to acquire 26% additional stake for \$1.1 billion
- The rest fund is earmarked to buy stake (up to 55.31%) from existing promoter Marble II Pte - another Blackstone fund.
- Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), UC Investments & GIC will co-invest in the current round
- Marble II Pte will be reclassified as a public shareholder with no board position
- The share price of Mphasis ended 1.4% up in NSE at Rs 1,720 on Monday

Currently, Blackstone's another fund Marble II Pte Ltd holds 56 per cent stake in the mid-tier IT services firm. As per the proposed structuring of the deal, two funds of Blackstone-Blackstone Capital Partners Asia and

NQ LP and Blackstone Capital Partners (CYM) VIII AIV along with ADIA, GIC and UC Investments will acquire up to 55.31 per cent stake from current promoter Marble II Pte Ltd. According to market regulator Sebi regulations, this acquisition will

Fear factor at IPL: Early exits as Covid cases surge in India; BCCI says league will go on

NEW DELHI

ANXIETY pierced through IPL's bio-secure bubble on Monday with leading Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin and some Australian players withdrawing from the league amid the escalating COVID-19 crisis in India even as the BCCI insisted that the glitzy league will go on.

The 34-year-old Ashwin, competing for Delhi Capitals, decided to take a break saying that his family is currently "putting up a fight against COVID-19" and he wants to support them. He hopes to return to the side "if things go in the right direction".

However, Andrew Tye (Rajasthan Royals) and the duo of Kane Richardson and Adam Zampa (both Royal Challengers Bangalore) withdrew as apprehension set in after a couple of weeks went by smoothly for the league being held in front of empty stands across six venues.

The BCCI, on its part, insisted that the event will continue and it wouldn't come in

the way of those wanting to leave. "As of now, IPL is going ahead. Obviously, if anyone wants to leave, that's perfectly fine," a senior Board official said on conditions of anonymity.

While leg-spinner Zampa was bought for Rs 1.5 crore, RCB spent Rs 4 crore to buy pacer Richardson at the players' auction. Richardson featured in one match for RCB, returning figures of 1 for 29 in three overs against Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai, but Zampa couldn't make it to the playing XI this season. The 34-year-old Tye had also not got a game with the Royals so far and his contract with the franchise was worth Rs one crore.

India is recording over 3 lakh daily cases for the past few days and the health infrastructure is struggling to handle the rise with shortage of oxygen and some crucial medicines adding to the crisis.

Kolkata Knight Riders mentor David Hussey acknowledged that Australians in the IPL are a "bit nervous" about getting back home in the wake of the situation here.

"Everyone is sort of a bit nervous about

whether they can get back into Australia. I dare say there will be a few other Australians a bit nervous about getting back into Australia," Hussey, a former Australia international, told the 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

However, not all Australians are willing to leave. Kolkata Knight Riders' Rs 15 crore buy Pat Cummins said he has been advised that the Indian government views the league as a welcome distraction from the gloom. He also donated USD 50,000 to the PM CARES Funds to help oxygen supplies in hospitals.

Another pacer Nathan Coulter-Nile, who has

a Rs 5 crore deal with Mumbai Indians would rather be in the bio-bubble than risk a trip back home at this point. "I feel like it's safer for me to stay in the bubble than try and get home at the moment," he told 'cricket.com.au'.

Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting said he is aware of the "grim" situation outside the IPL bio-bubble but would want the league to continue for it is a welcome escape for a few hours. Cricket Australia and the Australian Cricketers' Association also issued a joint statement on Monday, saying that they are monitoring the situation.

"Cricket Australia and the Aus-

tralian Cricketers' Association remain in regular contact with Australian players, coaches and commentators taking part in the Indian Premier League, which is being conducted under strict bio-security protocols," the two bodies said.

"We will continue to listen to feedback from those on the ground in India and the advice of the Australian Government. Our thoughts are with the people of India at this difficult time."

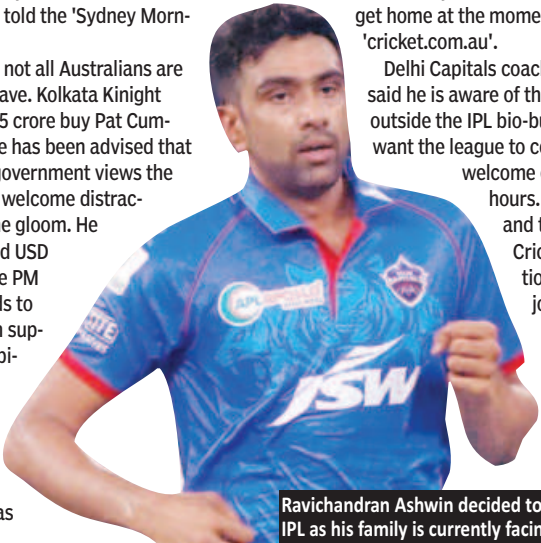
Several England and New Zealand players are also competing in the event but haven't yet spoken about their concerns. "We continue to monitor and work with the players on an individual basis. Our thoughts are with the people of India during these difficult times," a spokesperson of the England and Wales Cricket Board told PTI.

The players from New Zealand, including stars such as Kane Williamson and Trent Boult, are expected to leave early in any case as they have a Test series against England starting June 2. They will have to head back

in last week of May to be available for it because of quarantine rules. The IPL final is scheduled to be held on May 30 in Ahmedabad.

Australia, it is learnt, might arrange a chartered flight for its IPL cricketers once their engagement is over. As many as 14 Australian players now remain in the event, including stars such as Steve Smith (DC), David Warner (SunRisers Hyderabad) and Pat Cummins (Kolkata Knight Riders), as well as coaches Ricky Ponting (DC) and Simon Katich (RCB). Commentators Matthew Hayden, Brett Lee, Michael Slater and Lisa Sthalekar are also among the Australians involved with the league right now.

Earlier, Rajasthan Royals' South African bowling all-rounder Chris Morris, who is the costliest player in the IPL, had spoken about how the COVID situation in India has become a talking point in the team meetings. "It is quite difficult to comprehend what is happening," he said at a recent press conference. (PTI)



Ravichandran Ashwin decided to take a break from IPL as his family is currently facing Covid issues

DC to take on RCB in 'battle of equals'

AHMEDABAD

FRESH from their victory over SunRisers Hyderabad in the Super Over on Sunday night, Delhi Capitals (DC) will take on Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Tuesday.

Both teams are on eight points, with DC just above RCB in second place thanks to better net run rate (NRR). RCB's NRR took a dip after Sunday's afternoon match that saw them succumb to Chennai Super Kings (CSK) by 69 runs for their first loss of this season.

Prior to the loss to CSK, RCB had won all their four matches. While their middle-order boasts of big-hitters like Glenn Maxwell and AB de Villiers, their openers De-



Avesh Khan of Delhi Capitals celebrates the wicket of Virat Singh of SunRisers Hyderabad during the IPL match against the SunRisers Hyderabad at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Sunday. DC beat SRH in what was the first Super Over of the 2021 IPL

Indian Premier League

vdutt Padikkal and skipper Virat Kohli have recently struck form.

Padikkal, who scored a century against Rajasthan Royals on Thursday, continued his good form on Sunday although it was cut short. His departure saw RCB lose track.

DC, who saw the return of Axar Patel on Sunday after the left-arm spinner recovered from a bout of Covid-19, will miss their ace off-spinner R Ashwin who left for home after Sunday's game since he wants to be with his family during the Covid-19 pandemic.

While Ashwin said he could return later, DC don't have much worries since the spin duo Amit Mishra and Patel look in form.

Both did well against SRH, conceding 57 runs in their eight overs, and picking three

POINTS TABLE									
Team	Played	Won	Lost	NetRR	Pts				
1 CSK	5	4	1	+1.612	8				
2 DC	5	4	1	+0.334	8				
3 RCB	5	4	1	+0.096	8				
4 MI	5	2	3	-0.032	4				
5 PBKS	5	2	3	-0.428	4				
6 RR	5	2	3	-0.681	4				
7 SRH	5	1	4	-0.180	2				
8 KKR	5	1	4	-0.675	2				

wickets.

It will be interesting to see how Kagiso Rabada & Co bowl to the likes of Maxwell and de Villiers who have played quickfire knocks. DC bowlers' battle with these two RCB hard-hitters as well as opener Padikkal could well decide the course of the match.

DC's top order looks settled and strong.

SQUADS

Delhi Capitals
Rishabh Pant (captain/wicketkeeper), Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Ajinkya Rahane, Steve Smith, Sam Billings, Shimron Hetmyer, Ishant Sharma, Kagiso Rabada, Anrich Nortje, Umesh Yadav, Tom Curran, Avesh Khan, Lalit Yadav, Pravin Dubey, Ripal Patel, Lukman Meriwala, M Siddharth, Marcus Stoinis, Axar Patel, Ravichandran Ashwin, Chris Woakes, Vishnu Vinod (wicketkeeper), Aditya Tare (wicket-keeper).

Royal Challengers Bangalore
Virat Kohli (captain), Devdutt Padikkal, Finn Allen (wicket-keeper), AB de Villiers (wicket-keeper), Pavan Deshpande, Washington Sundar, Daniel Sams, Yuzvendra Chahal, Adam Zampa, Shahbaz Ahmed, Mohammed Siraj, Navdeep Saini, Kane Richardson, Harshal Patel, Glenn Maxwell, Sachin Baby, Rajat Patidar, Mohammed Azharuddeen, Kyle Jamieson, Daniel Christian, Suyash Prabhudessai, K.S. Bharat.

RCB pace bowler Harshal Patel, who is the leading wickettaker in the tournament, will have to regain confidence after his last over on Sunday cost 37 runs as Ravindra Jadeja smashed him for five sixes and a four. (IANS)

Match starts at 7.30pm

Indian women's hockey captain Rani, six others test +ve for Covid-19

NEW DELHI

SEVEN members of the Indian women's hockey team, including captain Rani Rampal, and two support staff members on Monday tested positive for COVID-19 ahead of a training camp at the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Centre in Bengaluru.

All the players and support staff are asymptomatic and have been placed under observation at the SAI centre.

"They were tested on April 24, post quarantine after their return from their respective home towns to their training base at SAI Bengaluru, as per the laid down protocol," the SAI said in a statement.

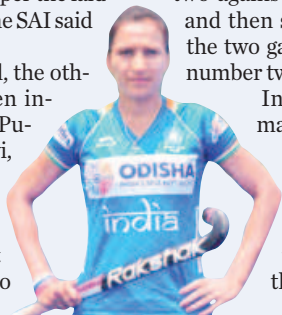
Besides Rampal, the others who have been infected are Savita Punia, Sharmila Devi, Rajani, Navjot Kaur, Navneet Kaur and Sushila. The two support staff members who

have tested positive are video analyst Amrutaprakash and scientific advisor Wayne Lombard.

The Indian women's hockey core group had returned to the national camp in Bengaluru on Sunday last to restart the preparations for the Tokyo Olympics after a 10-day break. The 25-member Olympic core group underwent mandatory quarantine before the commencement of training.

In January, the team toured Argentina where it played seven matches. The side drew two matches against the host country's junior team, lost the next two against Argentina B side and then suffered defeats in the two games against world number two senior team.

In the tour of Germany in February-March, the Indian women's team lost all its four matches against the world number three home side. (PTI)



'How are companies spending so much on IPL when its public is struggling'

PERTH

RAJASTHAN Royals' Australia pace bowler Andrew Tye, who left his franchise and departed for Australia on Sunday, expressed surprise over companies owning Indian Premier League (IPL) franchises spending so much when the Indian public is struggling for basic medical amenities.



"From a player safety point of view, we're safe now but is it going to stay safe?" he was quoted as saying by cricket.com.au upon arrival in his country.

"But looking at it from an Indian point of view, how are these companies and franchises spending so much money, and the government, on the IPL when there's people not being able to get accepted into hospital?"

The right-arm pace bowler said sport should continue if it relieves stress but he also said that everyone doesn't share this view.

"If sport can continue and be one of those avenues to relieve stress or give a glimmer of hope that the world is OK and there is light at the end of the tunnel, I think it should go ahead," he added.

"But I know that's not everyone's feelings and I completely respect everyone's views from all angles."

Tye, who returned to Australia via Doha, after pulling out of IPL citing 'personal reasons; confirmed that he returned to ensure that he doesn't get locked out of Australia which is imposing travel restrictions on people returning from India.

"I just thought I should try and get on the front foot and get home before I got locked out of the country," said Tye, who got married this month, shortly before he left for India.

"I think I've had 11 days at home and out of the bubble since August. I just wanted to get home. Dealing with the stress of bubble life has taken its toll." (IANS)

ICC first to announce qualifiers for CWG

DUBAI

THE International Cricket Council (ICC) on Monday became the first governing body for any sport to announce the qualifying teams for the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games (CWG).

The CWG is scheduled to be held between July 28 to August 8 next year.

Cricket is making a re-entry to the multi-sport event with women's cricket featuring in the Games for the first time in 22 editions and men's cricket for only the second time ever.

The only time cricket was a part of the quadrennial event was in Kuala Lumpur (1998), when a men's ODI competition -- won by South Africa -- was held.

As per the format, the six qualifiers who will join home team England in the eight-team Twenty20 competition are Australia, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, and a country

from the West Indies. These countries have secured qualification on the basis of their standings in the ICC Women's T20I team rankings on April 1, 2021.

As per the qualification process, the winner of a 'Designated Qualifying Event' will determine which country from the Caribbean gets to participate, as athletes will be representing their individual countries and not the West Indies as they do at ICC events.

The eighth and last participating team will be decided through a 'Qualifying Tournament' to be held before January 31 next year, details of which will be announced later.

The 2022 Commonwealth Games will see 4,500 athletes from 72 nations and territories



compete over 11 days. It will also be the first major multi-sport event in history to award more medals to women than men.

The Commonwealth Games cricket tournament will take place at the Edgbaston Stadium, with tickets set to go on sale later this year.

ICC acting chief executive Geoff Allardice said on Monday that, "We are proud to be part of Birmingham 2022 and it is a fantastic opportunity for us to continue to grow the women's game globally."

"We are committed to maintaining the momentum that saw 86,174 fans packed into the Melbourne Cricket Ground for the final of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup last year and Birmingham 2022 gives us another global stage on which to show-

case the women's game."

Commonwealth Games Federation president Dame Louise Martin said, "It is an exciting milestone to be announcing the first teams to qualify for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Cricket is a sport that is synonymous with the Commonwealth, and we are excited to have it back in the Games for the first time since the men's competition at Kuala Lumpur 1998."

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur said, "It's great to be confirmed a place in the Commonwealth Games. We are raring to go, confident of doing well after having made the final of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in Australia last year."

"It is an awesome opportunity for both the women's game and cricket to make a mark at the prestigious multi-discipline Games and we hope to return with loads of good memories," she said. (IANS)

City win 4th Carabao Cup title in row, Utd held by Leeds

LONDON

AYMERIC Laporte's 82nd-minute header gave Manchester City a 1-0 win over Tottenham in the Carabao Cup final to give Pep Guardiola's side their first title of the season.

Laporte nodded home a free kick taken by Kevin de Bruyne. Manchester City dominated the game from start to finish with 13 shots against a rival that managed just one shot, Xinhua reports.

Manchester City have now won the Carabao Cup for four consecutive seasons, which should be a huge morale boost ahead of the first leg of their Champions League semifinal against Paris Saint-Germain this week.

Meanwhile, the game was watched by 8,000 fans in Wembley Stadium, 2,000 of whom were from Manchester.

In the Premier League, second-place Manchester United dropped two points as they were held to a 0-0 draw away to Leeds United.

Manchester United had the better of the chances in a tight game, with Marcos Rashford seeing a



free-kick tipped over towards the end of the first half, while Mason Greenwood also saw a couple of chances well saved by Leeds keeper, Illan Meslier.

Chelsea took a big step towards assuring a place in next season's Champions League with a 1-0 win away to West Ham on Saturday evening.

Timo Werner's straightforward finish from Christian Pulisic's low cross shortly before the break decided the game. West Ham ended with 10 men after Fabian Balbuena was sent off for serious foul play nine minutes from time.

Liverpool's hopes of qualifying for the Champions League suffered a blow as misses in attack, and a defensive error condemned them to a 1-1 draw at home to Newcastle.

Mo Salah opened the scoring after three minutes, and Liverpool should have sealed the win, only for Joe Wilcock to equalize in the 95th minute - his second late goal in a week.

Thousands of Arsenal fans protested over their owners' plans to join the Super League ahead of Friday's 1-0 defeat to Everton, which came after keeper Bernd

Leno who fumbled a cross over his own line in the 76th minute of the game.

David McGoldrick's 19th-minute goal gave already relegated Sheffield United a rare win over Brighton, who missed the chance to all but confirm their top-flight future.

Burnley, however, made no mistake and took three vital points with a 4-0 win away to a demotivated-looking Wolves.

Chris Wood was Burnley's hero with a first-half hat-trick to just about assure the win before Ashley Westwood put the icing on the cake with Burnley's four-goal, which came five minutes from time.

Keinan Davis's 92nd-minute equalizer for Aston Villa gave them a 2-2 draw at home to West Brom in a result that just about ends the visitors' hopes of survival.

Anwar El Ghazi had put Villa ahead from the penalty spot, but a penalty from Matheus Pereira and an own goal from Tyrone Mings gave West Brom hopes of three vital points until Davis's late goal.

Nadal wins his 12th Barcelona Open title

BARCELONA

RAFAEL Nadal beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-7, 7-5 in the final of the 68th edition of the Banco Sabadell Barcelona Open, which is better known as the Conde de Godo Trophy, to claim the title for the 12th time in his career.

Nadal had knocked Ilya Ivashka, Kei Nishikori, Cameron Norrie, and Pablo Carreno Busta on his way to the final, playing on his favoured clay surface, Xinhua reports.

The Mallorcan-born player had two match points in the second set, which he eventually lost on a tie-break to the fifth-ranked player in the world, but he claimed the title after an exciting third set to repeat his 2018 triumph against Tsitsipas in the same competition. Tsitsipas gave Nadal all sorts of problems with his serve, which reached 215 kilometers an hour, and he had only suf-

fered one break on his way to Sunday's match.

However, in front of what is virtually his home crowd, Nadal made full use of his experience and his power from the baseline.

Speaking to the press after the final, Nadal said the satisfaction of winning the Conde de Godo had not dimmed after all of the years of his long career, and he welcomed the presence of a limited number of fans in the stands.

"The title means a lot more to me, playing it with an audience after the year that we have had," commented Nadal, who also had words for his rival. "Stefanos is an incredible opponent, the number 1 of the year, and I knew how hard the final was going to be. It has everything, and it is a very important victory for me," he continued.

The title is the 87th of his career and the first since he won the French Open (Roland Garros) last year and shows Nadal is returning to form after his disappointment in Monte Carlo and ahead of the forthcoming Mutua Madrid Open, which starts next week. (IANS)

