

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA  
KARIMNAGAR | TUESDAY | 27 APRIL 2021



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## No escape from Covid-19 heat



A man runs between pyres at a mass cremation of Covid-19 victims and others at Gazipur crematorium in New Delhi on Monday.

— PTI

# CM to review Covid crisis in Telangana on April 29

## Daytime curbs likely as night curfew ineffective

**L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 26**

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is likely to take stock of Covid situation in the state at a high level meeting in Pragathi Bhavan on Thursday, April 29. Official sources said the state government is seriously considering imposition of curbs during daytime as well from May 3, as night curfew has failed in bringing down the number of Corona positive cases in Telangana.

The state government had imposed night curfew across the state from April 20. It is to continue till May 1.

The CM is expected to visit Yashoda Hospital, Somajiguda, again on Tuesday to undergo Covid-19 tests. He is likely to return to Pragathi

## COVID CASES IN TS CROSS 4 LAKH

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 26**

Telangana on Monday added 6,551 new cases, pushing the Covid tally to over 4.01 lakh, while the toll rose to 1,734 with five more fatalities.

■ Report on Page 2

Bhavan on Wednesday. Incidentally, the Chief Minister had on April 24 announced free corona vaccination for the entire population in the state. Sources said the CM will finalise modalities and guidelines for free vaccination of all people 18 years of age and above at the high-level meeting. While the municipal

elections will be over on April 30, their votes will be counted on May 3. Votes polled in for Nagarjunasagar assembly by-poll will be counted a day earlier on May 2.

Sources disclose that Rao is seriously mulling over imposition of daytime curbs anytime after May 3 to check the spread of Coronavirus. He feels that will be a better option as the state is witnessing a sharp rise in Covid cases, which crossed the 8,000-mark on Sunday, besides recording 38 deaths on the day.

The Chief Minister has already ordered cancellation of all exams until Intermediate first year. Summer vacations for schools and colleges have also been declared from April 27 to May 31 as part of Coronavirus-containment measures.

# Class I to IX students in TS promoted, no exams

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD APRIL 26**

The Telangana government on Monday issued orders promoting all students from Classes I to IX in government, aided and private unaided schools this academic year to the next higher class without examinations. As many as 53,79,388 students have been promoted thus.

The order came a day after the state government declared summer vacation for schools from April 27 to May 31.

The government already cancelled SSC public exams and Intermediate first-year exams this year and postponed Intermediate second-year exams.

Inter first-year students were promoted to second-year without exams. As many as 5,21,392 students were declared passed in SSC without exams this year. In the current academic year, all schools and colleges remained closed from March 2020 till February 2021 following the Coronavirus-linked lockdown. The schools were reopened in February for students of Class VI to X as advised by the state government.

Students were confined to their homes, attending online classes for most part of the academic year. The government allowed schools to conduct offline classes for Class IX and X students from February 1

and for Class VI, VII and VIII students from February 24.

However, with a fresh rise in Coronavirus cases in schools, residential schools and hostels, the government ordered closure of all schools and colleges in Telangana from March 24.

Education minister P. Sabitha Indra Reddy said a decision on reopening of schools and colleges will be taken on June 1 after a review of the Covid situation. The previous academic year, all students till Class XII (Intermediate) were promoted to higher classes without exams as the final exams could not be held due to the Corona lockdown.

**BRIBE | SYNDICATE**

**₹500 to ₹2,000 charged to clean rooms, pass on food from home**

# Covid patients exploited at TIMS

**NAVEEN KUMAR | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 26**

Hundreds of Covid-19 patients are being "exploited" in the state-run Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS) Hospital in Gachibowli. Families and attenders narrate their horror stories of the dealings with the lower-level management, who are allegedly running the institution as a syndicate.

The TIMS is charging a fee ranging from ₹500 to ₹2,000 via digital payment for facility to attend to the patients, cleaning the room and even passing on

to patients the home-cooked food.

Sharing the plight, a man whose wife aged 50 is undergoing treatment at the hospital since Wednesday said, "Once you enter the place, the stench of overflowing gutter is too nauseating to bear with. From there on, you need to start paying the security guard and the staffers to get things done." "They fixed the gutter issue after four days of complaining," he said.

"The canteen food is so bad that families are opting to get food and other edibles from home. Once delivered at the entrance

● **FAMILIES OF patients say the housekeeping staff and nurses demand money for injections, medicines and other duties, citing lack of manpower.**

● **EVEN AMBULANCE drivers demand money for a free service**

counter, these take as long as two hours to reach the patient. The receptionist touts the excuse, "We are understaffed, you have to wait."

"Oftentimes, the food we send never reaches the patient. When questioned about it, they dismiss it

with a shrug. People here have also lost their mobile phones," he said.

A *Deccan Chronicle* correspondent found the ambulance service from TIMS, supposedly free, having charged ₹15,000 to take a patient from Narepally to Gachibowli. The driver also demanded an extra ₹4,000 for the 2-hour waiting at the hospital till the management found a bed. "Admission was put on hold till a payment was made to the staff, resulting in the death of the patient," his family alleged later.

"I was told by the driver that though the government claims it's free, they

are risking their lives with Covid patients and needed be paid. My brother-in-law was virtually murdered by these people here. If he had been admitted upon arrival, his life could have been saved. He battled for life and breathed his last after waiting for two hours in the ambulance outside the hospital," shared the grieving attender.

Families say the housekeeping staff and nurses demand money for injections, medicines and other basic duties, citing lack of manpower.

■ Page 2: Receptionist charges ₹2,000 to check pulse

## TN LETS STERILITE TO OPEN UNIT TO MAKE OXYGEN

**G BABU JAYAKUMAR and D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, APRIL 26**

The Tamil Nadu government decided to allow Sterilite Industries to produce Oxygen at its Copper Smelter plant in Thoothukudi on Monday even as Advocate General Vijay Narayan told the Madras High Court that most of the oxygen manufactured there was of industrial quality and not fit for medical use.

Though the nod to open the oxygen manufacturing plant alone was given for four months, on a temporary basis, at an all-party meeting, attended by representatives of 'recognised political parties,' leaders of a few other political parties came down heavily on the decision.

Among the conditions laid out for Sterilite were that none of the other units in the Thoothukudi plant can be opened or operated and the that the oxygen produced in the next four months, which may be extended in view of the continuing pandemic, should be primarily supplied to hospitals in Tamil Nadu.

**DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, APRIL 26**

The Madras High Court came down heavily on the Election Commission (EC) on Monday with scathing comments on how it was the "only institution" responsible for the second wave of the deadly coronavirus that is sweeping the country as it did not stop political parties from holding election rallies.

A bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy, hearing a petition on whether there were adequate Covid safety procedures in place during vote counting at the Karur constituency, went so far as to say, "Election Commission officers should be booked on murder charges probably."

"Despite repeated orders of this court going on like a broken record at the foot of at least every election petition entertained that Covid protocol ought to be maintained during the campaign time the significance of adhering to such protocol may have been lost on the Election Commission going by the puerile silence on the part of the Commission as cam-

# Madras HC: EC must be charged with murder

**Slams poll panel for allowing rallies, spreading Covid-19**

**Bengaluru, April 26:**

The Karnataka government on Monday announced more restrictions in what it termed as a 'close down' across the state for 14 days from Tuesday night in a bid to control the huge spike in Covid-19 cases in the state.

The state cabinet led by Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa also decided to provide Covid vaccinations free of cost at government hospitals for those between 18-44 years of age.

"Strict measures to control Covid will be taken. From tomorrow night till the next 14 days, there will be a close down for the

whole state," Yediyurappa said.

Speaking to reporters after a three-hour long Cabinet meeting here, he said shops selling essential commodities will be allowed to remain open only from 6 am to 10 am.

"The agriculture sector, manufacturing sector, construction sector and medical and essential sectors will continue to operate," he said.

Night curfew, which is in place now between 9 pm to 6 am, would continue, the Chief Minister said. Transport services would not ply during the close down period.

— PTI

EC's standing counsel when he told the court that measures had been put in place to ensure Covid protocol during vote counting. The court has asked for a suitable blueprint from EC on how Covid safety norms will be followed on counting day

# Serum, Bharat Biotech told to cut vaccine prices

**VINEETA PANDEY | DC with agencies input NEW DELHI, APRIL 26**

Reacting to criticism from several states and political parties over profiteering during a major health crisis, and many asking that there be uniform pricing of vaccines for the Central and state governments, the BJP-led government on Monday asked Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech to the lower prices of their Covid-19 vaccines – Covishield and Covaxin, respectively.

It is learnt that the issue of vaccine pricing was discussed at a meeting chaired by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba on Monday after the two companies announced their vaccine prices. It is expected the two companies will now come up with revised, reduced pricing for their vaccines.

The price for Covaxin was fixed at ₹600 per dose for state governments and at ₹1,200 per dose for private hospitals, while Covishield was priced at ₹400 per dose for state governments and ₹600 per dose for private hospitals. Both vaccines are available

# Biden assures Modi of steadfast support

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, APRIL 26**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached out to the US President Joe Biden who assured him of America's "shoulder-to-shoulder steadfast support and solidarity" by deploying resources such as oxygen-related supplies, therapeutics, ventilators.

In a phone conversation late Monday evening, Modi highlighted the importance of smooth and efficient supply chains of vaccine raw materials

and medicines and Mr Biden assured him that the US would identify sources of raw materials to be made available for the manufacture of Covishield vaccines.

Prime Minister Modi also conveyed to the American President India's commitment to contain the Covid pandemic globally through vaccine "Maitri" (India's vaccine exports), and its participation in Covax and the Quad Vaccine Initiatives.

■ Page 4: PM, Suga firm on India-Japan bilateral ties

able to the Central government at a rate of ₹150 per dose. Several states including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Delhi, Maharashtra and Rajasthan have announced that they will administer these vaccines free of cost to their 18-plus population from May 1.

A huge rush for vaccines is expected as India continues to report a very high number of daily Covid-19 cases. On Monday, the country registered nearly 3.19 lakh fresh cases and 2,812 deaths, putting a huge load on an already fragile healthcare system.

# KCR, KTR monitor campaign virtually

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, APRIL 26**

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and TRS working president and IT minister K.T. Rama Rao, both confined to their homes after contracting Covid-19, are monitoring the ruling party's campaigns and strategies for municipal elections on April 30 on a daily basis via teleconferences with in-charge ministers and party leaders of respective districts.

Incidentally, the Chief Minister has remained

quarantined at his farmhouse in Erravelli since April 19 and Rama Rao has been under home isolation in Pragathi Bhavan since April 23 after the father and son due tested positive for Coronavirus.

Elections are scheduled on April 30 in municipal corporations of Warangal and Khammam, apart from the five municipalities of Siddipet, Jadcherla, Atchampet, Nakrekal and Kothur.

■ Page 2: KCR, KTR set clean sweep target

**PG 2: 'TRS BLOCKING WARANGAL PLANS'**

## WEATHER

**Max:** 38.9°C  
**Min:** 26.5°C  
**RH:** 26%  
**Rainfall:** Nil

**Forecast:** Cloudy sky. Rain likely. Max/Min temp. 39/27 °C

## ASTROGUIDE

**Plava:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Chaitra Shuddha Pournami till 9 am; Chaitra Bahula Padyami till 5.14 am (Wednesday)  
**Star:** Swati till 8.07 pm  
**Variyam:** 1.03 am to 2.27 am (Wednesday)  
**Durmuhurtam:** 8.27 am to 9.17 am; 11.05 pm to 11.50 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm

**HJRI CALENDAR**

**Ramzan** 14,1442 AH

**PRAYERS**

**Fajar:** 4.50 am

**Zohar:** 12.24 pm

**Asar:** 4.39 pm

**Maghrib:** 6.41 pm

**Isha:** 7.51 pm

**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.51 AM

**SUNSET TODAY** 6.35 PM

**MOONSET** 5.56 AM

**MOONRISE** 6.57 PM

## RAMZAN TIMINGS

**IFTAR:** 6.41 PM (TODAY)

**SEHRI:** 4.26 AM (TOMORROW)

## COUNTER POINT



**Shh! Don't say no oxygen. You might be booked under the Gangster Act!**

## SHORT TAKES

### IMD predicts wet spell till April 30

**New Delhi:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted a wet spell over several parts of India, including central, south and northeast India, from April 26 to 30. Thunderstorms with lightning and gusty winds (speed reaching 30-40 km per hour) are very likely at over Telangana, Kerala and Mahe.

### SC advances summer vacation

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Monday decided to advance its summer vacation, which will now commence from May 8 in view of sudden surge in Covid cases. Chief Justice N.V. Ramana on his first working day held an "emergency meeting" with bar bodies to take stock of rising pandemic situation.

### Wear masks at home too: Centre

**New Delhi:** The government said it is time people start wearing masks at homes as well, and refrain from inviting guests. Addressing a press meet here, NITI Aayog member (health) Dr V.K. Paul said if there is a Covid-positive person at home, he or she must wear a mask to prevent others from getting infected.

■ Report on Page 4

### Nomadland wins Oscar glory

**Los Angeles:** Meditative road drama *Nomadland* got the Oscar for best picture as well as best director for Chloe Zhao, the first woman of colour to get the coveted trophy, at the 93rd Academy Awards, a socially distanced event. It won Frances McDormand her third best actress award, Anthony Hopkins won best actor award for film *The Father*.

■ Report on tabloid



## OTHER STORIES

## HC LETS ONLY 21 PEOPLE IN VHP, BAJRANG DAL YATRA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

Telangana High Court on Monday permitted Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Bajrang Dal to take out “Veer Hanuman Vijaya Yatra” on occasion of Hanuman Jayanthi on Tuesday, April 27. It, however, restricted the number of participants in the yatra to only 21.

Justice K. Lakshman of the High Court was dealing with a petition filed by VHP and Subhash Chander, convener of Bajrang Dal, against Hyderabad police rejecting their application seeking permission for the yatra on occasion of Hanuman Jayanthi.

In their plea, petitioners sought directions from the court approving the holding of yatra from Gowliguda Ram Mandir to Tadbun Hanuman Temple via RTC Crossroads, Bible House, Mahankali Street, and Paradise with 50-60 devotees taking part in it.

While according conditional permission, Justice Lakshman directed VHP and Bajrang Dal to restrict the number of participants to 21. Only one person per bike will be allowed and all participants will have to strictly adhere to Covid-19 guidelines issued by the union of India and state government. The Vijay Yatra should commence at Gowliguda Ram Mandir at 9:30 a.m. and conclude at Hanuman Mandir, Tadbun, by 1:30 p.m.

## CONG. SETS UP COVID CONTROL ROOM AT GANDHI BHAVAN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

AICC in-charge of Telangana Manickam Tagore on Monday said Coronavirus situation in the country and Telangana is dire and people are in panic, as both centre and state governments have completely failed in curbing the spread of virus.

Addressing a virtual core committee meeting attended by CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka, PCC working president Ponnamp Prabhakar and others; Tagore asked state Congress leaders to stand by Covid-19 victims, as per directives of AICC. He pointed out that Telangana Congress has set up a control room at Gandhi Bhavan. Those affected by the virus could dial 040 - 24601254 for any assistance.

The AICC Telangana in-charge said Congress party should provide details of plasma centers, availability of oxygen cylinders in hospitals and ensure that comprehensive information is given to patients when they call the control room number. He asked youth Congress and student unions to work hard and help Coronavirus victims by providing free masks, medicines and sanitisers to the needy.

Tagore said both the centre and state have completely failed in standing by the people in this dire situation. In this regard, he asked district Congress leaders to set up control rooms in their areas too. He said there should be no politics while helping people.

Speaking on the occasion, CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka said the state government has failed in providing even minimum requirements like oxygen to Covid-19 patients.

## CA ENDS LIFE BY SUICIDE AT HUSSAINSAGAR

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

A chartered accountant living in Bagh Amberpet reportedly killed himself by jumping in Hussainsagar Lake owing to financial issues.

According to police, 44-year-old Abhay Kumar Jain, a resident of DD colony, left his house on Friday morning saying he was going out on some work. As he did not return home till late evening, his family members tried to contact him over his mobile but they found it switched off.

After several attempts to reach him via friends, the family lodged a complaint with Nallakunta police station. Rangopalpet police said the body of Abhay Kumar was fished out from Hussainsagar Lake on Saturday. Inquiries revealed that Abhay had entered into an agreement with an acquaintance and sold a land. However, the acquaintance wanted him to return the money as he was no more interested in the land. Due to harassment, Abhay might have taken the extreme step, police said.

## Kids can breathe easy in Covid times: Doctors

But they are carriers of infection, must stay away from elders

SANJAY SAMUEL  
PAUL | DC  
HYDERABAD APRIL 24

In the season of hopelessness, here comes good news for parents and children. Paediatricians say children will not be affected severely by Covid-19. This, they reason, is because of anatomical factors in children's lungs and lesser presence of ACE2 receptors.

Doctors say paediatric cases will not require hospitalisation because, among other factors, kids do not require much of oxygen support. Yet, children should be kept away from the elderly as, “Kids act as the carriers of infection.”

If parents are infected, do not leave the children with their grandparents or with the relatives at homes where the elderly are present. Elders are the worst victims of the lethal virus due also to such practices, say doctors.

When any Covid-19 symptom is noticed in children, they should be referred to a doctor. Take a Covid-19 test on them too if any family member is tested positive. Parents are suggested not to give overdose of vitamins and health supplements to children.

As the mutant variant of Covid-19 is fast spreading, children should be stopped from playing in groups, be it in gated communities or apartments. There is a perception that children are safe from the virus-hit, they being inside the premises of the

## STAYING SAFE



Children of stranded migrant workers wait to board a special train to Bihar state from MGR central railway station after the government eased a nationwide lockdown imposed as a preventive measure against the Covid-19.

- Mask for those above age 2 with constant hand-wash and sanitation.
- All required vaccinations betaken.
- If someone is infected in the family, child should be tested without fail.
- If someone is infected in the family, vaccination of the child should be postponed for two weeks from the time they recover.

- Children should be hydrated constantly.
- Children should be barred from attending gatherings, birthday parties etc.
- Children should not take part in group camps or group sporting activities.
- Children should not move from one house to another while playing in gated communities or apartment complexes.
- Parents should not overdose the children with vitamins and health supplements.

community. Fact is that these are the groups through which the virus travels and spreads.

Dr E. Arjun, president of the Indian Academy of Paediatricians, said, “There will not be severity in the paediatric cases because of the anatomical factors in children's lungs. ACE2 receptors are low in children, but there is the multisystem inflammatory syndrome after they get treated from Covid-19.”

“Parents should not worry about the Covid-19 status of their children in the paediatric group. Rather, worry about themselves and the elderly living with them in the house. These children could be carrying the disease and infecting them as well the elders in the family.”

Dr Suchitra Dontamala, associate professor in the paediatric and neonatology wing at Gandhi

Hospital, explained that the new variant has moved from surface to air. Now, it is air-borne though its severity is less in children. Systematic care is advised in children. Children with comorbidity conditions will require Covid-19 treatment. All the required vaccines should be given on time. If family members are infected, the children's vaccination should be delayed by two weeks from the time of their recovery. If there are fever, vomiting, loose motion, headache, stomach ache, dry cough, consult a doctor. “A baby born to a Covid-19 positive mother need be breast-fed and those who conceived with IVF and got infected need not worry. The proper treatment by physician is needed and accordingly the delivery can be done,” said Dr Suchitra.

Dr Karuna Madap, paediatric Covid-19-care physician, said, “Children are exposed to the super-spreading virus. The containment and restrictions have been more relaxed this time than what we experienced during the first wave. There was an elapse in those strict restrictions, followed by a sudden spike in the cases.”

She added, “In this mutant variant of Coronavirus, the symptoms are fever, cold and conjunctivitis. In adults, we are seeing conjunctivitis, rashes, body pain and fever as symptoms.”

## RWAs provides support to CM in tackling Covid

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

Residents’ Welfare Associations (RWAs) of Hyderabad city have written to Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao that he utilise their services in the battle against second wave of Coronavirus pandemic.

In a letter drafted for the CM, United Federation of Residents’ Welfare Associations (UFERWAS) said it has been consistently working with various colony and apartment welfare associations in ensuring better civic amenities to citizens. It has also been in continuous dialogue with GHMC, metro water board, police and related departments.

“With Covid-19 putting the limited resources of government departments under stress, UFERWAS is volunteering to offer services of its members in strengthening efforts of the government machinery,” the organisation said in its letter.

The federation claims it has already mobilised colony-wise teams comprising resident doctors, eminent citizens and servicemen to maintain

- UFERWAS SAID it has been consistently working with various colony, apartment welfare associations in ensuring civic amenities to citizens.

contact with all residents, identify cases of virus and counsel residents to keep a tab on condition of positive cases.

It has requested officials to establish Zonal Coordination Teams (ZCTs) in each of the six zones of GHMC comprising 10 members each to monitor the pandemic situation.

ZCTs would keep track of hospitals, beds, charges, testing centres, patients’ support and vaccination facilities. They sought support from police, GHMC and related agencies in this regard.

UFERWAS wanted hostels, hotels and guest houses identified in each zone, so that they can be converted into isolation / temporary care centres with skeletal staff from hospitals and volunteers.

## KCR, KTR set clean sweep target

From Page 1

K. Chandrashekar Rao and Rama Rao have set the target of a clean sweep for TRS leaders in these municipal polls. Both are obtaining survey reports on a daily basis on party's prospects and alerting leaders on deficiencies.

Emphasis of both the Chief Minister and the IT minister is on retaining Warangal and Khammam corporations with absolute majority, it is learnt.

Since these will be the final elections in Telangana before 2023 Assembly polls, both K. Chandrashekar Rao and Rama Rao are giving utmost priority to achieving a resounding result in these municipal polls. Their aim is to send a clear signal that there is no alternative to the TRS in the state.

The party working pres-

- EMPHASIS OF both the CM, IT minister is on retaining Warangal and Khammam corporations with absolute majority, it is learnt.

ident has given a call to all TRS leaders and cadres in districts to hoist party flags on Tuesday, April 27, the day on which the TRS was formed. Rama Rao said although the party had planned to organise TRS Formation Day celebrations in a grand manner, as this year marks completion of two decades of party's existence, they have put all festivities on hold due to ongoing pandemic in the state. TRS secretary general and Rajya Sabha member K. Keshava Rao will unfurl the party flag at Telangana Bhavan on Tuesday.

## Distress calls flood Kavitha's helpline

L. VENKAT RAM  
REDDY | DC  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

TRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha's Covid-19 helpline is being flooded with distress calls from people across the state.

On April 12, Kavitha posted on Twitter that anyone who requires assistance to deal with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic can contact her Hyderabad and Nizamabad offices on the following numbers: 040-23599999 / 8985699999 / 08462-250666 (NZ).

“My team will be available round the clock for your service,” the former Nizamabad MP said. The helpline is receiving at least 300 calls per day. A separate back end team has been working non-stop to provide as much help as possible.

While Kavitha's team focuses on her constituency Nizamabad — they were also directed to take

- MY TEAM will be available round the clock for your service, said Kalvakuntla Kavitha.

care of any request they get on her social media accounts. She reviews the situation every night around 8 pm to understand flow of calls, requirements and what can be expected next day. Nizamabad, which shares borders with Maharashtra, saw a massive surge in cases after the second wave of Covid outbreak resulted in intensified panic in the region.

At this stage of pandemic, where every minute is crucial to saving somebody's precious life, Kavitha, who is personally monitoring every call for help, is responding with immediate relief.

“In the Covid period, here are very few unidentified bodies. However, all such bodies are cremated by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation. We also wrote to the authorities seeking their permission to cremate such bodies by according them with some respect. We are waiting for the nod,” added a representative.

To discourage paddy cultivation due to abundant rice stocks available in the state, the target for paddy crop sown area was cut down to 48.67 lakh acres against 53.33 lakh acres last kharif.

## TRS BLOCKS WARANGAL'S RISE: KISHAN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, APRIL 26

While the Central government sanctioned several projects to speed up development of Warangal, the TRS government in the state kept obstructing them and denying the benefits to the people, alleged Union minister of state for home affairs G. Kishan Reddy, on Monday.

Campaigning for the BJP candidates for the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) elections, he said the Warangal ring road was laid at a cost of ₹550 crore. The other half of the road project was to be taken up by the state but it did not execute the works. As a result, the development of Warangal remained stalled, he said.

The Union minister said the smart city mission halted midway because the state did not provide its share of the funds while the Central government gave its share.

Kishan Reddy pointed out that a railway rakes overhauling unit was allotted for Kazipet, but the state was taking things easy and is yet to hand over the full lot of land. The same with the airport project at Mamnoon. The BJP wanted to re-launch flight from the airport but the negligence of the state meant a loss for the people.

The super-specialty hospital constructed on the Kakatiya Medical College campus under the PMSSY scheme is not being useful to the poor yet because the state failed to release its share of the funds, he said.

“Even a dialysis centre and an oxygen plant were sanctioned here by the BJP government, the minister said.

Kishan Reddy said, “All these projects will be completed only when the BJP is elected to power in the GWMC. We will then push the state government to act fast. Even if the TRS is once again given the power here, its leaders will be afraid to question KCR and his son KTR,” the Union minister stated.

## STATE SETS 1.62 CR ACRES TARGET FOR KHARIF CROP

L. VENKAT RAM  
REDDY | DC  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

The state government has set itself an ambitious target to achieve crop sown area of 1.62 crore acres for the upcoming kharif season. This is 27 lakh acres higher when compared with kharif last year.

The agriculture department has released ‘kharif plan’ for June to September. The state government has decided to give priority to cotton, red gram crops over paddy in line with its policy to encourage market-driven agriculture to ensure remunerative price for farmers in the open market. Accordingly, the department has kept ready required seeds to meet the increasing demand.

“The department estimated that 15.12 lakh quintals of seeds are required to achieve crop sown area target of 1.62 crore acres. But we have kept 18.54 lakh quintals of seeds ready as a precautionary measure to avoid shortage in kharif on the expectations of bountiful rains this year besides increasing irrigation facilities due to Kaleshwaram and tanks brimming with water even during summer,” said B. Janardhan Reddy, commissioner of agriculture. The department aims to achieve crop sown area of 80 lakh acres for cotton against 60.63 lakh acres last kharif.

To discourage paddy cultivation due to abundant rice stocks available in the state, the target for paddy crop sown area was cut down to 48.67 lakh acres against 53.33 lakh acres last kharif.

## Positive news



A tanker supplies medical oxygen gas for Covid-19 patients, amid a shortage of the gas, at King Koti Hospital in Hyderabad, on Monday.

## COVID CASES RISE TO 4 LAKH WITH 6,551 NEW CASES IN TELANGANA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

Telangana on Monday added 6,551 new cases to its Covid tally, pushing the aggregate to over 4.01 lakh, while the death toll rose to 1,734 with five more fatalities.

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) limits accounted for the most number of cases with 1,418, followed by Medchal, Malkajgiri (554), and Ranga Reddy (482), a government bulletin said on Monday providing details as of 8 pm on April 26.

The total number of cases stood at 4,01,783 while with 3,804 patients recovering, the total recoveries were at 3,34,144. The state has 11,617 active cases and

- GHMC LIMITS accounted for the most number of cases with 1,418 followed by Medchal, Malkajgiri with 554 cases.

74,274 samples were tested. The samples tested per million population was over 73,275, the bulletin said. The case fatality rate in the state was 0.50 per cent, while it was 1.1 per cent across the country.

The recovery rate in Telangana was 83.16 per cent, while it was 82.6 per cent in the country.

There are 47 micro containment zones in the Hyderabad district, which is the highest in the state. Overall, the state has 282 micro containment zones.

## COVID-19 WOES: RECEPTIONIST CHARGES ₹2000 TO CHECK PULSE

From Page 1

“Since the patient does not carry a mobile phone, they hand over theirs and ask them to call the family and make a payment. Not a muscle is moved until the demanded amount is credited. They ask anything between ₹500 to ₹2,000 to allow a visit to the patient. The worst part is that nurses work in three shifts and each one demands a payment. The receptionist charges ₹2,000 to just check the pulse rate of the patient,” shared an attendant.

Speaking about how the management is not shifting his locked-up wife into the ward from a room she was made to share with a mentally challenged patient, a 55-year-

old said he has been requesting this for days but in vain.

“One room is shared by two patients and my wife is sharing hers with a mentally challenged. The patient refuses her tablets and food and harasses my wife, keeps running out of the ward and does not flush after using the toilet. The action taken by the management is to simply keep the room locked so that the woman will not run out. We are asked to pay money to the staff to clean the washroom,” he said.

Meanwhile, others shared experiences of how they have never seen anyone disinfect the place. Bodies of the dead remain unattended on the bedside, beside the beds of other patients.

fied, we will hand it over to the GHMC, which, in turn, disposes of the body.”

There is no proper mechanism in place to identify such bodies.

One body was detected recently in one of the police station limits under Cyberabad Commissionerate.

A few days earlier, in the same police station, his missing complaint had been registered.

For the cops, it took

almost a week to connect between the two, and that too after the family of the complaint approached the police.

Representative from Satya Harishchandra Foundation said the person who went missing under one police station can be found dead in another police station limits in another district. So we are collecting data from across the state and along with pictures we try

to trace the missing persons.



## OTHER STORIES

### UNIDENTIFIED MAN DIES BY SUICIDE AT GOVT HOSPITAL

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, APRIL 26.

An unidentified person, suspected to be a Covid-19 positive patient, died by suicide at the Government General hospital in Nizamabad on Monday.

The man, whose body was found in a pool of blood on the hospital premises, may have jumped off the fifth floor of the building. The body was immediately shifted to the mortuary.

The man is suspected to have taken his life after seeing in-patients and dead bodies of Covid-19 patients. He had been admitted to the Covid-19 ward on Sunday. I Town police rushed to the spot, and have registered a case.

Meanwhile, district collector C. Narayana Reddy said that an unknown person had killed self at the Government General hospital premises. "The deceased is not a patient and police are investigating the case," he said.

## HUSBAND CARRIES WIFE BODY TO GRAVEYARD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAMAREDDY, APRIL 26

In a tragic incident, a woman beggar died at Kamareddy railway station premises and no one came forward to shift the body to the graveyard. The deceased is identified as Nagalaxmi. In hapless condition, Swamy the husband of Nagalaxmi carried the body on his shoulder to reach the graveyard 2 kms away from the railway station.

Nagalaxmi died on Sunday evening and no one came forward to help for last rites suspecting that she had died of Covid-19. Railway police and others collected ₹2500 donation and handed it over to Swamy for last rites. But auto drivers or others hesitated to help the victims.

Finally, Swamy shifted body on his shoulders to the graveyard and completed the last rites. The couple have a son and they live begging at railway station premises.

## NEED NOT PANIC OVER MILD COVID SIGNS: KIMS MD

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

Patients with mild Covid-19 symptoms need not flock to hospitals, said KIMS MD B. Bhaskar Rao here on Monday, adding there however is a lot of misuse of drugs in the present context. "Some patients are demanding that they be treated with Remdesivir.

This is not a silver bullet that can cure Covid19 infection. There are three methods of treatment, isolation, monitoring and drugs," he said. "People must begin using a pulse oximeter and find out the respective oxygen levels. Even if it wavers a bit, doesn't matter. With this, we can also understand if there has been any progression in the infection."

As it turns out, people are admitting themselves into hospitals at the slightest sign of Covid-19. They have to check the symptoms, see the severity of the problem and then only seek hospitalization. Avoidable admissions to hospitals are creating a shortage of beds for the really needy patients. Many are diagnosing and treating themselves with a wide variety of drugs. This meant misuse of drugs.

Oxygen therapy is for patients with breathing difficulties. "The oxygen requirement is proportionate to the disease's progression. Doctors must be taken into confidence," he said.

Bhaskar Rao suggested that, in future, the government must bring law and make sure all flats, hotels and high-rise structures have oxygen pipeline.

● **MANY** are diagnosing and treating themselves with a wide variety of drugs. This meant misuse of drugs. Oxygen therapy is for patients with breathing difficulties. "The oxygen requirement is proportionate to the disease's progression. Doctors must be taken into confidence," he said.

# TRS yet to fulfil poll vows: Revanth

BJP, TRS are foes in Telangana state, friends in Delhi, says Cong MP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, APRIL 26

Pointing out the failures of the TRS party as part of the campaign for the GWMC elections, TPCC working president A. Revanth Reddy demanded the TRS to explain why the Kakatiya Mega Textile Park which was inaugurated three years ago was not making any progress. The fate of IT park was also similar, he added. Revanth found fault with the TRS leaders neglecting the shifting of the dumping yard even though it has turned hazardous for the people in Madikonda and Rampur. Training guns at the TRS and BJP, Revanth said, "On the surface, both the parties appear volatile trading charges against each other, but in reality its the other way around. They are foes in Telangana and friends in Delhi."

He slammed both the parties for not setting up the railway coach factory that was sanctioned by the then UPA government.

Revanth claimed that whatever development took place in Warangal was between 2004 and 2014 during the Congress rule.

"Why did the BJP not provide the flood relief to the victims by convincing the centre instead of blaming the KCR Government?" he posed.

"KCR who promised double bedroom houses to the slum-dwellers in 2015 is yet to fulfil it," he said. Later speaking to media persons, he expressed concern over the state of Ekasila Park. "It has become haven for the



TPCC working president, Malkajgiri MP, A. Revanth Reddy takes part in a campaign rally in Warangal on Monday. —BY ARRANGEMENT

## GWMC ELECTIONS TO TEST SURVIVAL OF CONGRESS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, APRIL 26

The Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) elections have turned out to be a matter of life and death for the Congress. The grand old party, which once had a dominant presence in the area is now struggling to pick itself up from losing existence.

Out of the five constituencies under the GWMC, the Congress has grip in none of them. Out

of the 58 divisions it contested in 2016 it could only win in four. One division from Wardhannapet constituency and three from Warangal East. During the last five years, several Congress leaders left the party along with their followers. As a result, the party does not even have a cadre in some areas. The presence of former MLC Konda Muralidhar Rao and former MLA Konda Surekha in Warangal East, may seem

to boost the party.

In the Warangal West constituency, to which Warangal Urban and Warangal Rural DCC President Naini Rajender Reddy is acting as in-charge, the party has lost even its foundations after the 2018 elections.

However, there is a vague chance of the Congress winning in some divisions in Kazipet area which are overseen by Jangaon DCC president Janga Raghava Reddy.

time when people were distressed without proper facilities for the treatment of coronavirus, he said.

"The TRS leadership kept Warangal in the hands of Panchayat Raj Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao who is much

like a chameleon. Did he have guts to ask KCR for funds for the development of Warangal?" Revanth said.

He demanded the government to fill all the 1,450 vacant jobs in the MGM Hospital, besides improving its facilities.

## KHAMMAM LOST MEDICAL COLLEGE DUE TO AJAY: BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, APRIL 26

BJP national general secretary Daggupati Purandeswari said that the people of Khammam lost the chance of getting medical college hospital due to the Minister for Transport Puvvada Ajay Kumar. She said that the same college has gone to Suryapet district.

"The Minister used his influence at the government for not coming to the medical college in Khammam. Ajay feared that the government medical college will hit the interests of his own medical college in Khammam", she said. BJP leader visited various wards in Khammam and campaigned for party candidates.

She said that Ajay is seeking votes by laying a few roads in the town. The definition of development is not mere laying roads and uplifting the people will be the main point in it. She said that the ministers and MLAs are looting the natural resources.

The Minister Ajay appointed his friend as SUDA (Stambhadri Urban Development Authority) chairman and works are being allocated to his followers. She said that the BJP government has given constitutional provision to the BC Commission. TRS government is diverting Centre funds to its schemes and in turn blaming NDA.

## PATIENT'S KIN URGES ACTION OVER NEGLIGENCE IN COVID TREATMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, APRIL 26

Former civil surgeon and hospital administrator of Gandhi hospital in Hyderabad Dr G. Hanumanlu said that ineligible doctors are treating Covid-19 patients in few private hospitals of Nizamabad. He also said that a senior resident of government medical college in Nizamabad are treating Covid-19 patients in a private hospital at Hyderabad road against the conduct rules.

Dr Hanumanlu submitted a complaint to the district collector C. Narayana Reddy, GMC principal and other authorities in Nizamabad and Hyderabad respectively on Monday. He said that detailed inquiry should be conducted against few doctors and private hospitals for gross irregularities.

Dr Hanumanlu said that their family members were admitted in a private hospital in Nizamabad for Covid-19 treatment, but hospital management and few doctors ignored the safety of patients. There is no response from concerned persons on Covid-19 treatment, he said. "We are spending lakhs of rupees for medical treatment, but the private hospital management are not showing any responsibility about patients", he lamented.

# Rice worth ₹19 crore lies rotten in hostels

A. RAVINDRA SESHU | DC  
KHAMMAM, APRIL 26

The quality of rice, which had been stored in welfare hostels in the district before the lockdown last year, was found to be rotten. The officials, who visited various welfare hostels, including residential schools for tribals and scheduled castes, found that the rice, worth Rs 19 crore, was inedible.

In a report to the government, the officials stated that nearly 64,347 quintals of rice, including 29,311 quintals in Khammam division, 29,435 quintals in Sattupalli division, and 5,600 quintals in Madhira division was found to be rotten.

The rice, which was stored in bags and had not been opened since the past 14 months, were kept in store rooms of 211 welfare hostels and residential schools in the district. It was collected from the hostels and has been placed at mandal-level stock points.

With dampness, mould growth, a rancid smell and holes on the grains, the government has decided to sell the rice through auction. This rice could prove useful to poultry and dairy farms.

The government had purchased the rice, after spending ₹19 crore, through lifting centres. It is expected that they may only get back eight percent of the total value through this sale.

# G. Narayana 'icon of hope' for plasma

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

Cometh the hour, rises a leader. The ever-increasing Covid-19 cases, particularly those requiring hospitalization with severe symptoms, has driven up the demand and scale of requests for plasma donors.

Gudur Narayana Reddy, himself a Corona patient who fought the disease and recovered successfully, has been leading an effort for about a year now to help provide plasma from Covid-19 recovered patients to those undergoing treatment and need it.

He set up the www.telanganaplasmadonors.com to encourage donors and connect them with Covid-19 patients. He has been seeing a lot of requests during the second Covid wave too.

January and February were months when there was not much of a demand but it has now picked up as the disease began spinning out of control, he said. "This may even erupt into a bigger crisis," Narayana Reddy said.

He said his group of volunteers are also getting requests from Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Guntur and Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh but in that state, there are no organised efforts.

"We are guiding individual volunteers coming forward to donate plasma and encouraging them to get in touch with the district collectors who could connect with hospitals," he added.

Narayana Reddy said that any Covid-19 recovered person willing to donate plasma should do so within 90 days from the day he or she tested positive but only after full recovery.

Those without symptoms typically do not have enough antibodies but those with moderate or severe symptoms have more antibodies. He also said that the state government which promised a centralized plasma collection and distribution system, has not kept its word.

Back in Telangana, he said "we have been able to cater to a majority of requests in Hyderabad, from Karimnagar, and Warangal districts." He said when possible, the group has been also trying to help patients find doses of Remdesivir injections.

"I am not speaking here as a BJP leader but as a social worker. The government should not have been hiding the truth about



Gudur Narayana Reddy

● **NARAYANA REDDY** said that any Covid-19 recovered person willing to donate plasma should do so within 90 days from the day he or she tested positive but only after full recovery. Those without symptoms typically do not have enough antibodies but those with moderate or severe symptoms have more antibodies. He also said that the state government which promised a centralized plasma collection and distribution system, has not kept its word.

Covid numbers. People have become careless because they think it is not much. Had the truth been told, people would have had an element of fear and taken more care of themselves and their families," he said.

Gudur is a busy man as his efforts have led to a viraling of his phone number on social media. His phone is constantly ringing or buzzing, with requests for plasma from patients' family members or friends, and also encouragingly, from volunteers.

Across the country now, Gudur is constantly spending time, and money, to connect donors with patients and help.

"Gudur is the Sonu Sood for plasma seekers," messaged the son of a plasma recipient. "When systems fail or falter, society looks up to individuals. He has been the icon of hope."

Gudur smiles and moves to the next call, saying, "there is a long way before we emerge out of the Covid pandemic as a country. Till then, we have to stand for each other."

He is doing just that and people are grateful. "I am doing my little bit," he says modestly. "What I have done is little more than nothing compared to the frontline warriors, doctors, nurses, para-medics, and volunteers. And the scientists who have made the vaccines."

PILLALAMARRI  
SRINIVAS | DC  
ADILABAD, APRIL 26

Many people in erstwhile Adilabad district, who have contracted Coronavirus, have died of cardiac arrest. Doctors attribute several such deaths to fear psychosis and anxiety while undergoing treatment in the hospital.

Doctors are thus emphasising on the need to create awareness among patients that Covid-19 virus is not a killing disease; that most of them recover provided they get themselves treated properly.

According to unofficial sources, more than 10 virus-positive patients have died of cardiac arrest in the last 15 days in old Adilabad district, some of them while undergoing treatment and a few soon after developing Coronavirus symptoms.

Doctors say there is a rise in cases of people dying of heart attack on knowing that they have contracted Covid-19. It is learnt that a woman fainted when a doctor advised her to get tested for Coronavirus since she was symptomatic.

There is a wrong notion among many in this backward district that those of catch the virus will die. Recently, even an MPDO and two teachers died of cardiac arrest after they tested positive for Covid-19.

A doctor working at Rajiv Gandhi Institute of

# Amidst public cooperation, Indur sees dip in Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, APRIL 26

Amid rising Covid-19 cases, people of all sections have been strictly adhering to the protocol, with people in both rural and urban areas wearing face masks and using hand sanitisers. A large number of people have also been practising social-distancing norms.

On Monday, this correspondent visited Nizamabad rural, Makloor, and Nandipet mandals to observe if Covid-19 protocols were being followed. Interestingly, shepherds were seen wearing face masks even in forest areas, away from crowds.

Tractor drivers, street vendors, and others were also seen wearing masks.

People were also seen following Covid-19 norms while going on with their daily routine. In Nandipet's market, which is located in Armour Assembly constituency limits and is frequented by people from over 50 villages, commercial establish-

● **PEOPLE WERE** also seen following Covid-19 norms while going on with their daily routine. In Nandipet's market, which is located in Armour Assembly constituency limits and is frequented by people from over 50 villages, commercial establishments' brisk business has not been hampered due to the Covid-19 effect.

● **SOCIAL GROUPS** and government authorities have created awareness on Covid-19 during the first as well as second wave. Government offices, banks, and private offices have also provided hand sanitizers for their staff and visitors.

ments' brisk business has not been hampered due to the Covid-19 effect

Social groups and government authorities have created awareness on Covid-19 during the first as well as second wave. Government offices, banks, and private offices have also provided hand sanitizers for their staff and visitors. Office security and other staff have also been advising visitors to wear face masks and maintain social distance. "We heard about the dangerous impact of Covid-19 if we neglect face masks and social distance. Earlier, we used to move around freely in

forest areas and take precautions for snakes. But now, we are taking extra precautions for Covid-19," said Mallesh, a shepherd.

The impact of Covid-19 is slowly decreasing in Nizamabad district, owing to good response from the public. People in villages and towns have also been co-operating to ease the impact of the pandemic. Rapid Antigen tests for Covid-19 decreased to 3,657 on Sunday, and the number of positive cases also declined to 435.

Earlier, around 6,000 tests were conducted, of which more than 500 cases were positive.

Medical Sciences (RIMS), Adilabad, said the number of Coronavirus patients dying of cardiac arrest is on the rise during the second wave of the

virus. The doctor said "Such patients would certainly recover if their cases are detected early and they get treated properly". He, however, main-

tained that round the clock oxygen supply facility and emergency medicines are a must for Covid patients to recover and survive.

CORONA | CRISIS

MAJOR COFFIN SUPPLIERS IN HYD ARE SELLING 20 TO 25 BOXES A DAY

# Coffins fall short, as Covid deaths rise

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, APRIL 26

The Hyderabad coffin-makers are unable to keep up with the steadily growing requests for coffins to bury the dead. The demand has shot up after the second Sunday of April and shows no sign of a fall, they say.

It was mostly the Christian community that used coffins to bury the dead. Covid-19 has changed the scenario.

A major coffin supplier in the city is selling 20 to 25 boxes a day whereas smaller ones are selling eight to ten, against two to four a day before the current Covid-19 surge.

To meet the increasing demand, the coffin and casket makers are hiring more craftsmen to help meet the demand.

Interior designer Anusha Stanley Namburi, who lost her brother in a private hospital at Nampally on Monday,

began calling her friends and others to get a coffin. "With much difficulty, we managed to get one from Trimulgherry. It took a few hours. We wanted a jumbo-sized box, but the one available was a normal one," she said.

Ivor Fernandez of Heaven-Bond is a firm of coffin-makers and hears services at Khajaguda that is popular in the Christian community for the past 25 years said, "For the past 15 days,

there has been a sudden spurt in demand for coffins and caskets. We are selling 20 to 25 boxes a day, against the normal four to five."

"There used to be around 10 workers and we have hired eight more to meet the demand," adding, there is also no break for the hearses. "The three hearses we have are now working extra shifts."

Md Arif, who runs a coffin outlet at Narayanguda

Cemetery, said, "Because of the shortage, we are sending back six to eight customers for the past 15 days. Our shelves are getting emptied as soon the day starts. The carpenters who were working for us have fallen sick. Some of the workers, who were migrants, fearing a lockdown, left for their native places."

He added: "We suspended the hearses services as many of the dead are Covid-19 cases."

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## SHORT TAKES

## PM, SUGA FIRM ON INDIA-JAPAN BILATERAL TIES

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 26

In a “summit telephone talk” with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday that lasted 25 minutes, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga “expressed serious concerns about China’s continued and strengthened unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas, including the Coast Guard Law”.

The reference to China was made in a statement on the telephone talk released by Japan but there was no reference to it in a separate statement on the conversation that was released by New Delhi. The Japanese statement reflects increasing alarm in Japan over Chinese strategic intent, with a reiteration of the concerns first raised by PM Suga when he earlier spoke to PM Modi last month.

“The two leaders confirmed the importance of Japan-India bilateral cooperation and multilateral cooperation, including Japan-Australia-India-U.S. quadrilateral cooperation, towards realising a Free and Open Indo-Pacific. They also shared the view to continue their effort on building a rules-based free and open international order,” Japan said.

Japanese Foreign Ministry further said, “PM Suga stated that he hopes to further develop the cooperation.”

## PM, CDS REVIEW COVID OPERATIONS BY ARMED FORCES

PAWAN BALI | DC  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 26

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday reviewed with Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat the preparations and operations undertaken by the Armed forces to assist in Covid-19 situation in the country.

CDS briefed the PM that all medical personnel from armed forces who have retired or taken pre-mature retirement in the last 2 years are being recalled to work in Covid facilities within proximity of their present place of residence. Other medical officers who retired earlier have also been requested to make their services available for consultation through medical emergency help lines.

Prime Minister was also informed that all medical officers on staff appointments at Command Headquarters (HQ), Corps HQ, Division HQ and 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. CDS said that oxygen cylinders available with armed forces in various establishments will be released for hospitals.

The CDS also said that they are creating medical facilities in large numbers and where possible military medical infrastructure will be made available to civilians.

## COVID REPORT NOT REQUIRED: HC TO HOSPITALS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, APRIL 26

The Delhi High Court on Monday directed hospitals in the national capital to “scrupulously follow” the AAP government’s circular on not to insist on Covid positive test reports before admitting patients showing symptoms of Coronavirus.

A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh also directed the Delhi government to “widely publicise” its April 23 circular on the matter.

The order came while disposing of a PIL seeking directions to the Delhi government to order hospitals not to insist on Covid positive reports to hospitalise patients who show symptoms of Coronavirus.

The petitioner, Jaideep Ahuja, told the bench that the Uttar Pradesh government has passed such a direction on not insisting on RT-PCR positive test reports for admitting patients.

The Delhi government told the court that its Health department has issued a circular on April 23 directing hospitals in the city not to insist on Covid positive test reports to admit patients who are showing symptoms of Coronavirus infection.

MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, APRIL 26

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Monday said that there will be no shortage of oxygen, ICU and isolation beds in the state for next 10 days and in between state has started augmenting its resources to build up its capacity to face any eventuality due to pandemic.

Pointing out that the state government has made arrangements to import oxygen from neighbouring Bhutan, Sarma told reporters that the oxygen production capacity of the state has reached to 61 MT per day while storage capacity has already been expanded to 468 MT.

Informing that they are going to operationalise three more oxygen plants soon, he said that there will be no shortage of Remdesivir too as he requested drug manufacturer Sun Pharma to expedite the production at its Palasbari plant to 80,000 vials per week.

Sarma said that he visited Sun Pharma’s Palasbari plant near Guwahati on Sunday and requested them to scale up production to ensure that there is no shortage in the state. “The Sun Pharma’s production unit in Guwahati can produce 80,000 Remdesivirs every week,” he added.

He said, “There is a new oxygen plant being set up in Bhutan. We have made arrangements to procure oxygen from there if required.”

Sarma said that the Assam government was not aware of an oxygen plant in Dimapur in Nagaland, and now it will sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the neighbouring state for procurement.

“The oxygen level that we are able to manage, I think there will not be any problem until several thousand patients arrive at the hospitals,” he added.

“ICU beds have also been ramped up. I believe we will be able to manage the Covid-19 crisis very fast like last year,” Sarma who also expressed surprise over the Congress memorandum to the Election Commission accusing him of violating election code of conduct for his initiative to face the Covid situation, said.

About the possibility of lockdown in Assam, he said that there is no necessity for any such drastic step at this moment.

“When do we announce a lockdown? It is done when there is no oxygen, injection, medicine, kit in hospitals, then we get temporary relief by implementing lockdown,” said the minister adding that Assam is fully geared up to face the Covid crisis.

“We have already placed the order for the vaccine also. In a day or two we will come to know the delivery process and accordingly the state will plan out its vaccination drive for 18 plus citizens,” said the minister.



1) Mass cremation of Covid-19 victims and others takes place at Gazipur Crematorium, in New Delhi on Monday.

2) Relatives of Covid-19 patients wait to refill cylinders with medical oxygen, during the second wave of Coronavirus pandemic, in Gurugram on Monday.

3) People wait in a queue to receive a dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at NESCO Jumbo Covid-19 Vaccination Centre at Goregaon in Mumbai on Monday.

— PTI



## Covid-19 crisis to worsen in Punjab, lockdown not an option: Amarinder

**Chandigarh, April 26:** Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh here on Monday said he is against the imposition of a Coronavirus lockdown even as he predicted that the pandemic situation is expected to get worse in the state.

The Chief Minister made the comment at a meeting, a day after the daily infection count in the state crossed the 7,000-mark, the highest single-day rise since the outbreak of the pandemic last year.

The Chief Minister said the situation is expected to worsen, especially in south Punjab. He said Ludhiana district alone reported 1,300-plus cases on Sunday.

According to a statement, the Chief Minister said while stringent measures are being taken to tackle the surge in cases, he is not “proposing” a lockdown in the state as it

● **CHIEF MINISTER** said while stringent measures are being taken to tackle the surge in cases, he is not ‘proposing’ a lockdown in the state as it leads to economic woes and the exodus of migrant workers.

● **HE DIRECTED** health department to follow up with Centre for vaccine supplies as the state presently has only 1.76 lakh Covishield and 22,000 Covaxin doses left.

leads to economic woes and the exodus of migrant workers.

The Chief Minister said at another meeting that the state government is making all efforts to secure medical oxygen to supplement its depleting stocks.

Of the 105 tonnes of medical oxygen quota, the state is getting only 85 tonnes as the rest is being diverted to the PGIMER, Chandigarh, he said.

The Chief Minister also directed the health department to follow up with the Centre for vaccine supplies as the state presently has only 1.76 lakh Covishield and 22,000 Covaxin doses left.

Reacting to reports of threats of a strike by health workers, the Chief Minister said such actions will be met with dismissal “as we cannot tolerate this kind of nonsense in a war-like situation”.

Meanwhile, the Army Western Command assure to revive the state’s defunct oxygen plants.

Lt Gen R.P. Singh, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Command, at a virtual meeting with the Chief Minister offered to provide staff to run a 100-bed Covid facility proposed to be set up at the building loaned to the state government by the Council of Scientific and

Industrial Research for the purpose.

15 trained nurses have already been sent to Patiala to support the civic staff, he said.

Army officials said though their resources were stressed on account of requirements from other states, they will extend all possible help to Punjab to tackle the situation.

The Chief Minister later said the government will also approach the Union home ministry to provide manpower and ICU beds through the Border Security Force (BSF).

Health secretary Hussan Lal told the Chief Minister at a meeting that 2,000 beds will be added at government and private hospitals. While 900 beds will be added at government medical colleges in Patiala, Amritsar and Faridkot, 542 will be added at private colleges, he said.

— PTI

## 7th phase by and large peaceful, over 75% vote

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI & PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI | DC with agency inputs**  
KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, APRIL 26

The seventh phase of the Assembly elections in 34 seats spread over five districts in West Bengal recorded 75.06 per cent polling that went off peacefully except some stray incidents of violence in Murshidabad on Monday.

While nine seats in Murshidabad saw voter turnout of 80.30 per cent, six constituencies in South Dinajpur of North Bengal saw 80.21 per cent polling with 78.76 per cent and 70.34 per cent voting in six seats of Malda and nine in Burdwan West respectively from 7 am to 5 pm.

However four hot seats - Bhowanipore, Rasbehari, Ballygunge and Kolkata Port - in South Kolkata clocked only 59.91 per cent polling during which chief minister Mamata Banerjee and her MP nephew cast their votes. A revised figure of polling is expected from the Election Commission on Tuesday.

Unlike other districts, Murshidabad remained tense since morning.

At Senapara, Raninagar Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate Mashwara Khatun’s car was attacked and her polling agent was beaten up by armed Trinamul Congress workers. The police had to rescue her.

Allegations again surfaced against the Central paramilitary forces of ransacking Raninagar block TMC president Mizanur Rahman’s residence and destroying food. When district TMC president and MP Abu Taher Khan went there, angry workers of his

party shouted “Go Back” slogans at him.

He was soon seen leaving in his car in face of the protest. At Gurapala High School in Nabagram, the Central forces allegedly beat an elderly TMC worker so much that he had to be admitted at Nabagram Hospital.

Later the CM, while lashing out at the Central forces over its excessive use of force, said, “We will lodge an FIR against the CRPF in these incidents.”

In Farakka, an aged TMC worker, Janmejy Mondal, was injured in an attack by the Bharatiya Janata Party workers armed with sharp-cutting weapons. He was admitted at the Farakka Hospital.

Murshidabad Congress candidate Niyazuddin Sheikh was caught by the TMC workers distributing money hidden in masks at a booth in Gudhia High School. But Mr Ahmed claimed that he distributed only masks to the voters for their protection from Covid-19. The Election Commission has sought a report of the incident.

Also, Jalangi Sanjukta Morcha candidate Saiful Islam Mollah from the CPI(M) and his three associates were attacked by the TMC workers with bamboo poles and sticks at Chohanpara.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission transferred a few police officers as West Bengal voted in the seventh phase of assembly polls on Monday, officials said.

Shantanu Sinha Biswas, an inspector at the Directorate of Economic Offences, was transferred to the office of the DIG Jalpaiguri Range as a crime inspector, they said.

## SAFETY | FIRST

## Government urges people to avoid stepping out unnecessarily

## Mask up even indoors: Centre

**New Delhi, April 26:** As a second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic rips through the country, the government on Monday said it is time people start wearing masks inside their homes as well, and refrain from inviting guests.

Addressing a press conference here, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr V.K. Paul said if there is a Covid-positive person inside the house, he or she must wear the mask so as to prevent other family members from getting infected.

“Rather, I’ll say that the time has come that we start wearing masks even otherwise inside our homes. We used to talk

about wearing it outside homes, but the way the infection has spread, it will be better if we wear mask inside our homes if we are sitting with someone,” he said.

“But, definitely, if there is a Covid-19 positive person, that person must wear the mask and others inside the house also must wear a mask and the positive person should be kept in a different room,” Paul underlined.

His statement came days after a new assessment published in *The Lancet journal* said there is consistent, strong evidence to prove that the SARS-CoV-2 virus, behind the pandemic, is predominantly trans-

mitted through the air.

Paul added that people should also avoid stepping out of their houses unnecessarily and not invite guests at home.

He also suggested if the house lacks such facilities for isolation, then people may go to isolation centres, known as corona care centres. Getting admitted to a hospital is not the only option, Paul said. “Hospital beds are used for the needy people.”

Highlighting the importance of vaccination, Paul said, “We cannot let the pace of Covid-19 vaccination decline or slacken in the face of the emerging situation. In fact, it should be escalated and with that

intent the government of India brought a revised (vaccination) policy. We believe and are confident that will bring in more acceleration,” he said.

AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria, who also addressed the press conference, sought greater community participation to ensure optimal utilisation of hospital facilities.

“We see now there is unnecessary panic among people which is causing more harm than good. Those who test positive even if their oxygen saturation levels are normal and have mild symptoms, they also want to get admitted.

“It is causing a lot of rush outside hospitals and

suffering to genuine patients as they do not get proper treatment. Also, hoarding of drugs at homes is causing unnecessary shortage of essential drugs in markets and also leads to misuse of drugs,” he said.

Underlining the importance of oxygen in the treatment strategy for Covid-19 patients, Dr Guleria said its misuse must be avoided.

There should be judicious use of oxygen therapy, he said, adding, hospital authorities should make sure there is no leakage of oxygen at their facilities, and also advised prising to increase oxygen levels in the body.

— PTI



IN BRIEF

Russia expels Italian diplomat

Moscow, April 26: Moscow said Monday it was expelling an Italian diplomat in response to the “unfriendly” removal of two Russian officials from Rome in March over an espionage scandal.

The foreign ministry said it had summoned Italy’s ambassador and informed him that Russia was declaring “persona non grata” Rome’s naval attaché in Moscow, who would have 24 hours to leave the country.

Rome announced late last month it was expelling the two Russian officials after an Italian navy captain was caught by police selling confidential military documents to a Russian embassy official.

Romania to expel Russian diplomat

Bucharest, April 26: Romania said Monday it will expel a Russian diplomat, the latest European country to do so in solidarity with the Czech Republic, which is involved in a spat with Moscow.

The deputy military attaché at the Russian embassy in Bucharest, Alexei Grichayev, would be declared “persona non grata... in view of his activities and actions contrary to the Convention of Vienna on diplomatic relations,” the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Romania’s foreign minister Bogdan Aurescu summoned Russian ambassador Valery Kuzmin to his offices on Monday, according to the statement.

Jihadists kill 31 Nigerian soldiers

Kano, Nigeria, April 26: At least 31 Nigerian soldiers were killed when IS-aligned jihadists ambushed a military convoy escorting weapons and overran a base in northeast Nigeria’s Borno state, military sources said on Monday.

Fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) attacked the convoy with rocket-propelled grenades on Sunday in the town of Mainok outside the regional capital Maiduguri before storming the nearby base.

The attack was the deadliest this year against Nigeria’s army which has been battling a decade-long jihadist insurgency in the region that has killed 36,000 people.

’14 protests: 108 on trial in Turkey

Ankara, April 26: Turkey on Monday put 108 Kurdish politicians on trial for their alleged roles in deadly 2014 protests that erupted as jihadists from the Islamic State group overran the Syrian town of Kobane.

The case against current and former members of the pro-Kurdish HDP party — including its two former co-leaders — stems from one of the darker episodes of the decade-long Syria war. Thirty-seven people died in violent demonstrations against the Turkish army’s invasion in the face of an IS offensive against the largely Kurdish northern Syrian town.

The jihadists were driven out of Kobane in January 2015 by US-backed Syrian Kurdish fighters that Turkey officially views as terrorists.

AFGHANISTAN ATTACKS KILL 12 POLICEMEN

Kabul, April 26: At least 12 Afghan policemen were killed on Sunday, including seven who were ambushed by the Taliban south of the capital, officials said, as fighting continued in the violence-racked country.

The two separate attacks in the provinces of Logar and Kandahar came as the top US military commander in Afghanistan, General Scott Miller, said work had begun to withdraw the remaining American forces as ordered by President Joe Biden this month.

“Seven policemen were killed and three wounded when the Taliban ambushed their vehicles in Mohammad Agha district of Logar province,” Dedar Lawang, spokesman for the provincial governor, said.

The policemen were part of a security force guarding copper mines in Logar, south of the capital Kabul.

Police from Logar province confirmed the attack.

Afghanistan, whose economy has been severely impacted by decades of conflict and endemic corruption, has reserves of copper, iron, cobalt and lithium. In a separate attack on Sunday, a suicide bomber ran an explosives-laden car into a police vehicle in the southern Taliban bastion of Kandahar, killing five policemen.

EU mounts legal action on AstraZeneca for vax delay

Charges vaccine maker for failing to respect terms of contract

Brussels, April 26: The European Commission on Monday said it has launched a legal action against vaccine maker AstraZeneca for failing to respect the terms of its contract with the EU.

Spokesman Stefan De Keersmaecker said, “The Commission has started last Friday legal action against the company AstraZeneca on the basis of breaches of the advance purchase agreement.” He said that the reason for the legal action was that “some terms of the contract have not been respected” and that “the company has not been in a position to come up with a reliable strategy to ensure a timely delivery of doses.” Contract with EU foresaw an initial 300 million doses for distribution among the 27 countries, with option for a further 100 million. But only 30 million doses were delivered.

— AP



A lone woman walks past stalls in an almost-empty shopping alley in Bangkok on Monday, amid an expansion of lockdown restrictions to halt a surge in Covid-19 cases.

— AFP

Burj Khalifa lit up with Tricolour

Dubai, April 26: Prominent iconic buildings, including the Burj Khalifa, in the UAE were lit up with the Tricolour to show solidarity with India as it grapples with a growing Covid-19 crisis.

The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) headquarters and the world’s tallest building, Burj Khalifa, in Dubai were lit up with the colours of the Indian flag in solidarity with India as it responds to a

second Covid-19 wave, the official WAM news agency reported.

“As #India battles the gruesome war against #COVID19, its friend #UAE sends its best wishes. Glowing star @BurjKhalifa in #Dubai lits up in Flag of India to showcase its support,” Indian Embassy in the UAE tweeted on Sunday. The embassy also tweeted a video of the Burj Khalifa displaying the Indian flag and #staystrongIndia.

— PTI

Google, MS Indo-American CEOs pledge aid to India

Houston/Washington, April 26: Google CEO Sundar Pichai and his Microsoft counterpart Satya Nadella have assured help to India. “Devastated to see the worsening Covid crisis in India. Google & Googlers are providing ₹135 crore in funding to @GiveIndia, @UNICEF for medical supplies, orgs supporting high-risk communities, and grants to help spread critical information,” Google CEO Pichai said in a tweet.

Nadella said that his

company will continue to use its resources and technology for relief efforts and support for buying oxygen devices. Nadella said he was “heartbroken” by the current Coronavirus situation in India. “I am heartbroken by the current situation in India. I’m grateful the US government is mobilising to help. Microsoft will continue to use its voice, resources, and technology to aid relief efforts, and support the purchase of critical oxygen concentration

devices,” he said.

US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris have assured India and its people of providing all assistance, including urgently sending necessary medical lifesaving supplies and equipment, to help the country combat the deadly crisis. “Just as India sent assistance to the United States as our hospitals were strained early in the pandemic, we are determined to help India in its time of need,” Biden said.

— PTI

Boris in soup for ‘dying’ talk

London, April 26: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced a call to resign on Monday after claims he dismissed the prospect of thousands dying from Covid-19, as a row over government “sleaze” escalated.

In a front-page headline, the *Daily Mail* newspaper reported Johnson had said he would rather see “bodies pile high in their thousands” than impose a third Coronavirus lockdown. Ultimately, Johnson did order a new round of restrictions in January.

But he is now locked in a

damaging war of words with his former top aide Dominic Cummings over his Coronavirus policies last year and financial dealings.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said the *Daily Mail* report, based on unnamed sources, was “not true” and had been “categorically denied by practically everyone.”

“None of this is serious. The prime minister has been utterly focused on delivering, alongside Cabinet colleagues, the response to Covid,” he told *Sky News*.

— AFP

UK VAX FOR ALL AGED 44, ABOVE

London, April 26: Everyone aged 44 and above in Britain will now be able to book their Covid-19 jab starting on Monday as the UK’s National Health Service (NHS) vaccine programme expands further to more younger age groups. Around half a million 44-year-olds will receive a text message inviting them to get their jab.

— PTI

World military spending grows

Stockholm, April 26: Military expenditure worldwide rose to nearly \$2 trillion in 2020, defying the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, researchers said Monday.

Global military spending increased by 2.6 percent to \$1,981 billion in 2020, when global GDP shrank 4.4 percent, according to a report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Diego Lopes da Silva, one of report’s authors, said the development was unexpected. “Because of the pandemic, one would

think military spending would decrease,” he said.

“But it’s possible to conclude with some certainty that Covid-19 did not have a significant impact on global military spending, in 2020 at least,” Lopes da Silva said.

He cautioned however that due to the nature of military spending, it could take time for countries “to adapt to the shock”. The fact that military spending continued to increase in a year with an economic downturn meant the share of military spending out of total GDP had risen.

— AFP

MISINFORMATION OF VIRUS: FB BLOCKS OZ MP

Sydney, April 26: Facebook removed Australian member of parliament Craig Kelly’s page for repeatedly peddling pandemic misinformation, the social media giant said Monday.

Kelly previously had posts blocked on the platform and was forced to quit the governing Liberal Party, amid controversial statements on vaccine safety, lockdowns and unproven Covid treatments.

Facebook said it removed his popular page permanently after “repeated violations” of its policies.

— AFP

CHINA CARGO FLIGHTS TO INDIA SUSPENDED

Beijing, April 26: 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 the country despite Beijing reiterating its readiness to help India.

“China has been following the situation in India and expressed readiness to help curb the latest surge,” FM spokesman Wang Wenbin said.

— PTI

Zarif’s leaked recording offers blunt comments

Dubai, April 26: A recording of Iran’s foreign minister offering a blunt appraisal of diplomacy and the limits of power within the Islamic Republic has leaked out publicly, providing a rare look inside the country’s theocracy.

The release of the comments by Mohammad Javad Zarif set off a firestorm within Iran, where officials carefully mind their words amid a cut-throat political environment that includes the powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, ultimately overseen by the country’s supreme leader. Zarif has been suggested as a possible candidate for Iran’s June 18 presidential election as well.

Outside of Iran, Zarif’s comments could also affect talks in Vienna aimed at finding a way for Tehran and the US to both come into compliance with Ira-

n’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Already, sabotage targeted Iran’s nuclear facility at Natanz during the talks as Tehran has begun enriching a small amount of uranium up to 60% purity, which edges the country closer to weapons-grade levels. After the leak became public, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh did not dispute the tape’s authenticity. He told journalists on Monday that the recording represented just a portion of a seven-hour interview Zarif gave to a well-known economist that was to be held for posterity by a think tank associated with the Iranian presidency.

Khatibzadeh called the release of the recording “illegal” and described it as “selectively” edited.

— AP

Germany flays Navalny curbs

Berlin, April 26: Germany condemned an order by Russian prosecutors Monday to suspend all activities by jailed opposition figure Alexei Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and its regional network.

Chancellor Angela Merkel’s spokesman Steffen Seibert said “using the instruments of fighting terror against politically undesirable opinions is in no way compatible with the principles of the rule of law”.

A Moscow court had begun a preliminary hearing into designating FBK and its regional offices as “extremist” after prosecutors requested they be added to a list of “terrorist and extremist” organisations run by Russia’s Anti-Terrorism Committee.

The Moscow City Court confirmed that the activities of the group’s regional network were suspended, but clarified that prosecutors had the power to make the decision and

said a final court ruling on designating the group as extremist was still due.

Russia’s list of extremist organisations currently consists of 33 including the Islamic State, Al-Qaeda and the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

The groups are banned from operating in Russia and participating in their activities can result in lengthy prison terms.

Navalny, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s most prominent opponent, was arrested in January on returning to Russia from Berlin after recovering from a near-fatal poisoning attack he says was orchestrated by the Kremlin.

Moscow denies the allegation.

He is serving two-and-a-half years on old fraud charges — which he says are politically motivated — in a penal colony in the town of Pokrov east of Moscow.

— AFP

Suu Kyi court date postponed

Yangon, April 26: Myanmar’s junta again postponed court proceedings against deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi on Monday her lawyers said, as they fight for permission to visit her 12 weeks after she was detained.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted the Nobel laureate in a February 1 coup, shutting the country back into junta rule after a brief experiment with democracy. Large swathes of the population have taken to the streets in protest, with security forces unleashing a brutal campaign to quell the massive uprising.

Meanwhile Suu Kyi has been under house arrest, with the junta charging her under six cases — including for sedition and having unlicensed walkie-talkies. But movement on her case was once again delayed until May 10, her lawyer Min Min Soe said Monday after a hearing.

Twelve weeks since Suu Kyi was detained, Min Min Soe said they still have not received permis-

sion to meet their client face-to-face — one of many hurdles the team has faced.

“When the judge asked (police) which stage they have reached, they replied they couldn’t tell specifically,” she said, adding that Suu Kyi was frustrated by the slow pace.

“I think she is not getting access to watch news and TV. I do not think she knows the current situation happening in the country,” she said.

Besides not being able to meet with Suu Kyi, junta-imposed mobile data shutdowns have also prevented video-conferencing in previous hearings.

The most serious charge Suu Kyi faces falls under Myanmar’s official secrets law, with a hearing due in Yangon on May 6.

Nationwide protests continued Monday, with demonstrators holding signs that said “Free our leaders” and waving red flags emblazoned with a golden peacock — the symbol of Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy Party.

— AFP

NUCLEAR | DISASTER

Dozens gather in ghost town of Pripyat, hold candle vigil

Ukraine marks 35 years since Chernobyl

Kiev, April 26: President Volodymyr Zelensky was due Monday to visit the Chernobyl exclusion zone and address Ukrainians to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the world’s worst nuclear disaster.

The exclusion zone is a 30-kilometre (20-mile) radius around the nuclear power plant that was evacuated in the aftermath of an explosion and was deemed unsafe for humans to

live for thousands of years. Ahead of his arrival, dozens of people gathered in the nearby ghost town of Pripyat and held an overnight vigil with candles in memory of the those who lost their lives in the accident.

The deaths of some 30 people were directly linked to the explosion in the fourth reactor at Chernobyl during a safety test on April 26, 1986.

But thousands more are feared to have died in the years that followed from radiation poisoning across Ukraine as well as its northern neighbour Belarus and Russia to the east.

The exact number of victims remains a subject of intense debate because the Soviet authorities kept most of the information about the disaster hidden.

Hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated

from the area around the disaster site, and the exclusion zone has now become a ghostly uninhabited region. About 600,000 emergency workers and state employees who became known as “liquidators” were dispatched with little or no protective gear to help clean up the aftermath of the disaster.

A 2005 United Nations report estimated that up to 4,000 people could eventu-

ally perish from the invisible poison in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

The Greenpeace environmental group issued its own study the following year estimating that 100,000 people had already lost their lives as a result of the accident.

In November 2016, a massive metal dome was erected over the remains of the reactor.

— AFP



# DECCAN Chronicle

27 APRIL 2021

## Govt must wake up to reality, do a course correction swiftly

The world is waking up to the tragedy that India has found itself in, with scores of people dying for want of oxygen and critical drug shortages in several parts of the country. The United States, which had only last week insisted that its job was to vaccinate Americans first and held back critical raw materials for vaccine production in India, has now promised to speed up the delivery of such goods; and it is now “pursuing options to generate oxygen on an urgent basis” in India. Going by reports, these will include oxygen aggregators and concentrators. The European Union, France, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also started sending vital medical supplies. Even Pakistan has offered to send help to India.

The world media is awash with the details on how the NDA government’s lackadaisical approach during the interregnum between the first and second waves of the pandemic have landed India in the mess. And they cannot be faulted. Reports of the parliamentary committee on health in February warning about “an unprecedented increase in the demand for non-invasive oxygen cylinders and instances of lack of oxygen cylinders” have already appeared.

**Reports of the parliamentary committee on health in February warning about “an unprecedented increase in the demand for non-invasive oxygen cylinders and instances of lack of oxygen cylinders” have already appeared.**

sanctioned will not meet with a similar fate. From the responses, one cannot be faulted if one thought that the Government of India was the last to get a grip of the crisis.

Augmenting healthcare infrastructure is a long-term programme even in the face of a pandemic. The immediate, effective and assured tool to fight it is universal vaccinations, but the government has been displaying a lack of urgency about that too. The mandarins deciding vaccine policy are yet to wake up from their slumber and see the unfolding events. Parliament has passed a budget with a sum that will be sufficient to inoculate every eligible Indian free of cost if it bought the doses at the price the manufacturers decided in the first phase. The government has several legal and administrative options, including the compulsory licensing route, to enhance production. However, it seems to be in no hurry and, worse, it has passed the responsibility for inoculation first to the state governments and then to citizens. The government may, at least now, make a course correction in order to obviate a similar global initiative to vaccinate Indians.

## Oscars in pandemic times

Asanised Oscars ceremony was befitting in the dark times the world is going through. Even then, it didn’t have to end the way it did with the oldest actor to win the coveted prize, Anthony Hopkins, not tuning in even by video from his home in Wales. Hollywood, well-known for its love of a cinematic climax to all stories big and small, also didn’t quite time it right. An empty stage with a golden Oscar statuette and then just the titles was a strange but, perhaps, symbolic climax to a ceremony which, clubbed with a narcissistic red carpet and extravagant parties, used to represent the glitz and glamour of the movies.

“It has been quite a year, and we are still smack dab in the middle of it,” Regina King said in reference to the pandemic as well as the verdict on the George Floyd killing. “Our love of movies helped to get us through,” she added. That is significant because in many people’s reckoning some parts of life must go on despite the pandemic. And what can be better than entertainment brought to people’s homes on a screen? We would do well to remember that 97 per cent of people have proved immune to the infernal pathogen. Perhaps much the same argument drives the IPL, which is India’s biggest entertainment extravaganza.

This year’s awards were a “woke” Hollywood’s ode to diversity, with Chloe Zhao, of Chinese origin, becoming the first woman of colour to win the best director statuette.

colour to win the best director statuette. Predictably too, China rubbed her out because she is not in sync with its nationalistic ideals. Empathy was at the very heart of the prize that went to Frances McDormand who starred in *Nomadland*, with real-life actor-nomads from marginalised, itinerant communities in a post-recession United States reflecting an American dream gone awry. The greatest disappointment may have been in black actor Chadwick Boseman not winning best actor posthumously while Hopkins won it for portraying an older man with dementia in *The Father*. It was, however, a historic day for women and people of colour, and no one can complain about that.

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Subhani



## Covid mess to cost govt dear at home & abroad



K.C. Singh

On March 12, US President Joe Biden convened the inaugural summit of the “Quad” countries, comprising Australia, India, Japan and the United States, held in a virtual format. Their joint statement headlined “The Spirit of the Quad” emphasised the combating of Covid-19. In the last paragraph, they committed to combining medical, financing, manufacturing and delivery as well as development capabilities to address the “historic crisis”. India was seen as the hub of vaccine manufacture and the vanguard in this battle.

Covid-19’s second wave hit India soon afterwards, with India’s leadership preoccupied with crucial state elections, the Kumbh Mela and cricket. The mutant virus had begun wreaking havoc in Britain. Unmindful of this, India was exporting AstraZeneca (Covishield) vaccines to friendly developing countries and fulfilling its Covax commitments. The cases began spiking, first in Maharashtra and Punjab, and finally in the nation’s capital, Delhi. Two virus variants, the British B.1.1.7 and a local double mutant B.1.617, may have accelerated the spread. The Quad spirit of cooperation ran into vaccine nationalism when India’s pleas to the US for assistance were rudely rejected. The public discourse started getting toxic, especially in the social media, with escalating criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his deputy, home minister Amit Shah, for campaigning without masks and amidst mammoth crowds. The Election Commission irresponsibly conceded the BJP’s desire for the eight-phase, month-long polls in West Bengal.

Alongside, the lackadaisical vaccination programme started, with frontline workers and

then the older, more vulnerable population. But as the vaccination was stepped up, the demand began outpacing the supply. Instead of being the “Vishwa Guru” and global factory for vaccines, India now blocked exports. The Serum Institute of India, producing the AstraZeneca vaccine Covishield, and Bharat Biotech, producing Covaxin, fell behind their production targets. The European Union sued SII for breach of commitments. In turn, it complained its production was being hampered by US restrictions on raw material exports.

India-US relations came under strain as public opinion in India soured. Both sides failed to communicate their respective concerns properly. In America, newly elected President Joe Biden assumed office, promising to undo the harm done by the unscientific and populist approach of his predecessor Donald Trump. He invoked the old Defence Production Act (DPA), within two weeks of assuming office, to marshal all resources. His target of 200 million shots in the first 100 days was achieved before time. The US also started building up a strategic reserve of vaccines, now amounting to over 300 million surplus shots. But the DPA constrains the export of vaccines. Consequently, the four million doses given to Mexico and Canada were called a loan.

The US had other considerations for not sharing its vaccines. Both Pfizer and Moderna have obtained liability protection from the US government for civil or criminal liability for any untoward health episode post-vaccination. If exported, they would seek similar protection from the importing nations. Only about one-third of the US population has been fully vaccinated so far and thus a fresh surge of cases was troubling. The new spike is driven by mutated ver-

sions, the efficacy of vaccines against which is still unclear. The British mutant B.1.1.7 is believed to be 60 per cent more contagious and 67 per cent deadlier. As per the Centres for Disease Control (CDC) data, adults in their 20s to 50s are getting hospitalised in the Midwest, South and Northwest. *The New York Times* said: “From Minnesota to New Jersey to North Carolina, younger people are making up a growing share of hospitalisations”. Currently, 45,000 persons are hospitalised in the US.

Thus, an India unprepared for the second surge ignored US concerns when publicly seeking relaxations of DPA restrictions on the export of vaccine production raw material and a possible loan of unused AstraZeneca vaccines, so far unapproved for emergency use. The initial rejection was taken as a snub and allowed to play in public. China’s glee was palpable as its English mouthpiece *Global Times* chided India for depending on the US and not seeking Beijing’s help. Russia also rushed to supply oxygen, etc.

When India’s mishandling and the fresh surge became lead news in the US media, and after mass cremation pictures appeared on the front pages of its major newspapers, the Democrats and the Biden administration finally woke up. The liberal wing of the Democratic Party, which the Indian government and especially external affairs minister S. Jaishankar chided over their criticism of India’s Kashmir policy, now came to India’s rescue. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan tweeted on April 25 that after he talked to India’s NSA Ajit Doval the US agreed to “deploying more supplies and resources” to aid India as both nations had the greatest number of cases globally. Among this

**When India’s mishandling and the fresh surge became lead news in the US, the Democrats and the US administration finally woke up.**

would be raw materials, protection kits, therapeutics, rapid diagnostic kits, ventilators, etc.

The US Development Finance Corporation will aid the expansion of vaccine manufacture by Hyderabad-based Biological E Ltd, which has finished its Phases 1 and 2 trials. Baylor Medical College has provided the proven and simpler yeast-based expression technology. The company is to produce one billion doses by the end of 2022 at an affordable price. This is the magic bullet for the developing and underdeveloped world, now without access to a vaccine. Africa doesn’t have even a vaccine producer now. Globally, the developed nations, with 16 per cent of the world population, have cornered 52 per cent of vaccines. But the US has still not cleared the export of unused AstraZeneca vaccines. President Joe Biden said the US was helping India in its hour of need as India it them in the past, but the focus is on capacity building.

How does India return to being seen as the world’s vaccine hub rather than a troubled victim? Political mismanagement, electoral partisanship, religious pandering and the lack of foresight have damaged India’s image. It has left China smirking, though on the positive side Pakistan’s political comments and public opinion have been empathetic. The current electoral cycle ends on April 29 in West Bengal, but immediately another begins as the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election is due in February 2022. Has the government learnt the lesson that public health and safety must remain above politics? Also, US help will come laced with unsaid conditions. For one, majoritarianism and the democracy deficit may invite more forceful US intervention. India’s Kashmir, Pakistan and Afghanistan policies will also see closer US monitoring. The mismanaged pandemic at home will diminish the government’s political space both at home and abroad.

*The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh*

### LETTERS

#### VACCINATION

The initiative to give vaccine free to all is appreciated. However, safety protocols must be adhered to. Also blood sugar, BP reports must be normal, and RT-PCR should be negative at the time of vaccination and certified by qualified doctors. This will prevent adverse reactions in the future.

**Dr Rebecca Priyadarshini**  
*Hyderabad*

The Aadhaar number of all PDS card holders are linked to ration card. The government should modify CoWIN portal in such a way that for the age group 18 to 45, they can add BPL/priority card number and Aadhaar number. After a verification, they must be allowed to schedule their vaccination at government centres.

**K. Radhakrishnan**  
*Hyderabad*

The time has come to vaccinate all the people for free. The Centre and state governments should join hands for this endeavour and finish this task like the polio campaign. There is no other important work for governments right now other than fighting the pandemic.

**M. Mohan Rao**  
*Hyderabad*

#### SOCIAL DISCIPLINE

All politicians must join hands during this national crisis and appoint volunteers as marshals in their constituency to enforce face mask and social distancing.

**B. Ramamurthy**  
*Hyderabad*

### 50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

### Curbs imposed on diplomats, others

NEW DELHI, APRIL, 26

Relations between India and Pakistan headed for a diplomatic show-down today with India ordering retaliatory measures on the movement of Pakistani diplomatic and other personnel in India.

Under the new measures, effective from 1800 hours today, all diplomatic officers of Pakistani missions in India, their wives, children and domestic servants of Pakistan nationality will be required to obtain prior permission of the Government of India for their exit from India.

In a note handed over today to Mr. Sajjad Haider, Pakistan’s High Commissioner here, India outlined the measures it has imposed following those already enforced by Pakistan.

Aakar Patel



## India’s health calamity has exposed flaws in Guj Model

Just before the 2014 election, two of India’s most famous economists had a public quarrel. Because they were academics the language was mostly polite, but the disagreement was not minor. It was about the so-called “Gujarat Model”. Jagdish Bhagwati took the side of Narendra Modi, and Amartya Sen took the opposite side. In brief, the Bhagwati-Modi view was to prioritise economic growth over social spending. Sen’s view was that economic growth was not possible without social spending.

Sen did not oppose a liberalised business environment: his concern was primarily what the government did. Bhagwati did not oppose social spending: his concern was what the government should not do.

Both sides had rational arguments, but Sen had one unanswerable question: Could anyone name a nation that had become developed without a healthy and well-educated population? The answer to that was no. There is no nation on the world that has ignored investing in the health and education of its population and become developed. It is social spend-

ing that leads to growth and not the other way around. You cannot have a population that is not very literate and not very healthy and expect that industrialists will do all the work necessary to make a nation developed. The state and the government have the primary responsibility and function in this area.

The “Gujarat Model believes that if the government supports industrialists by offering them subsidies, ease of doing business, freedom from workers’ unions and holding vibrant Gujarat melas — if it does this for a sufficiently long period, then the benefits will accrue to the general population because it is business that makes the economy strong.

The Sen model believes that a healthy and educated population is both an end in itself and a means to achieving economic prosperity. It was in fact possible for the government to create a healthy and educated population even when it had no real economic strength, and Cuba is an example of this. There is no example of a developed nation that had a Third World education and healthcare system. For this reason, the

State must focus on building a strong education system and a strong healthcare system and prioritise its spending in these areas. Sen supports schemes like MNREGA and the right to food, Narendra Modi opposed MNREGA and called it a monument to failure. The Congress Party said this week that in 25 years under the BJP, including 12 years under Mr Modi, Gujarat did not build a single new government hospital. The BJP has not denied the claim, meaning that it is correct. Of course, many Vibrant Gujarat summits were held. What did they produce ultimately? The answer is not development, whatever definition we can use for it. Yes, it is true that some Gujaratis have become very wealthy, a few even managing to triple their wealth in 2020 a year, when many of us lost work. But for the majority there was no benefit. The large industries that came up in Gujarat did not employ a lot of people. This is why the most dominant political community of the state, the Patidars, took to the streets demanding reservations in jobs.

The sacrifice that was made by the population for the Gujarat Model was

very great. Gujarat was low on the Human Development Index and in 2012 Mr Modi told the *Wall Street Journal* that malnutrition in his state was high because its girls were “fashion conscious” and didn’t want to drink milk.

This sort of contempt and ignorance of fundamental issues has come at a cost to India. The Sen model is not only about expenditure, it is also about the focus of the State. A government which believes that it is the well-being of its citizenry as measured through their health and education will be geared and organised in a particular way. It will not be caught scrambling one year after a global pandemic because it does not have enough oxygen or medicines or beds. The Gujarat Model expected that the private sector would take care of health because it was a business and there would be consumers. That is not how the rest of the world has achieved it.

It is not necessary to say today that Bhagwati was totally wrong because he was, and we can see that all around us. As India suffers and the ruling party is on the defensive, the

truth is that the only way that this wave will pass is if exponential growth of the virus stops on its own. The intervention of the government is so poor and so weak that it cannot by itself do anything significant to save us. In the short term we have to suffer the consequences and there is no option.

This is the reason why Prime Minister Modi has been missing from the public eye after stopping his rallies in West Bengal abruptly. The reason why Mr Modi was furious that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal showed their interaction to the rest of us was not because it was a breach of protocol but because the truth was exposed and it was embarrassing. At a moment of crisis, we are choosing to run away from the fact that core beliefs about what the government should do have been proven wrong. We should have an honest discussion once again about the Bhagwati and Sen debate and what we should do in the medium and long term.

*The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist*



quick  
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48386.51	1.06
Nifty 50	14485.00	1.00
S&P 500*	4,189.51	0.22
Dollar (₹)	74.73	0.39
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.99	0.11
Euro (₹)	90.41	0.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,976*	0.17
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.57	-0.82
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.038	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.568	0.001

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Mankind Pharma to give ₹100 cr to families of dead

Mankind Pharma will donate Rs 100 crore to the families of deceased doctors, police officers, pharmacists, and other healthcare workers who have lost their lives fighting the pandemic. The firm plans to start releasing the money with immediate effect and hopes to complete it within three months, Mankind said in a statement. The firm said it is standing alongside the families of the heroes who lost their lives.



## GAMES

## SHORT TAKES

## Hockey captain Rani, 6 others +ve

**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. — PTI

## Nadal bags 12th Barcelona crown

**Barcelona:** Rafael Nadal saved a championship point to beat Stefanos Tsitsipas 6-4, 6-7 (6/8), 7-5 on Sunday and claim a 12th Barcelona Open title in the ATP's longest match of 2021. He secured his first title of the year and 87th of his career, denying Tsitsipas back-to-back triumphs following his maiden Masters 1000 title at Monte Carlo last week. Nadal avenged his Australian Open quarter-final loss to Tsitsipas and will return to second in the ATP rankings on Monday by climbing back above Daniil Medvedev after his marathon 3-hour 38-minute win. — AFP

## Cirstea wins WTA title after 13 years

**Istanbul:** Romania's Sorana Cirstea said she "didn't expect" to win the Istanbul claycourt tournament on Sunday, her second career title coming 13 years after her first. The 31-year-old Romanian defeated top-seeded Elise Mertens of Belgium 6-1, 7-6 (7/3) in the final having not dropped a set all week. Cirstea, ranked at 67 in the world, captured her maiden title at Tashkent in 2008. Sunday was her fifth final, having made her maiden championship match as a 17-year-old qualifier at Budapest 2007. "I'm very, very happy for this trophy," Cirstea said at the winner's ceremony. — AFP

Age ceiling for top tier set at 70 years  
Bank chief's tenure capped at 15 yearsFALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, APRIL 26

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday fixed the tenure of managing directors and chief executive officers (MD & CEO) and whole-time directors (WTD) in private sector banks at 15 years and prescribed the maximum age of 70 years for such functionaries.

The central bank also said a CEO, MD or WTD, who is a promoter or major shareholder of a bank as well, will not be eligible to hold these posts for more than 12 years, with an extension of up to 15 years permitted at its sole discretion. Bank chiefs and WTDs who are not promoters will be eligible for a second-term even after the 15-year period after a three-year break. During this three-year gap, the individual shall not be associated with the bank or its group entities in any capacity. The RBI also said the chairman of the board



must be an independent director. It also listed other guidelines on the pay of non-executive directors, age limits and setting up of audits, remuneration and risk-management committees.

The RBI has given banks until October 1 to comply with the rules.

Analysts pointed that promoter Uday Kotak, who has been at the helm of Kotak Mahindra Bank for over 12 years, had been re-appointed for a term of three years starting January 2021, may not be immediately impacted.

Similarly, the RBI approved the reappointment of N. Kamakodi, MD & CEO of City Union Bank,

for three years effective May 1, 2020 will continue. Kamakodi has been heading the bank since 2011.

"However, one will have to wait and see as to what view the RBI takes on Bandhan Bank. Does the limit include the MD and CEO's tenure when he was heading Bandhan as an NBFC? Similarly, the MDs of Federal Bank, DCB Bank and RBL Bank have been there for long but the upper limit of 15 years may not have an immediate impact on these banks," said an analyst.

J.N. Gupta, former executive director of Sebi, said, "I am unable to understand as to why the RBI feels that independent directors and non-executive directors should be paid a fixed sum which is in total contradiction with the provisions of the Companies Act. Secondly, how can a promoter who owns substantial equity in the bank be asked to sit on the fence and watch non-interested parties manage the bank."

## AUTO INDUSTRY VETERAN JAGDISH KHATTAR PASSES AWAY

**New Delhi, April 26:** Former managing director of Maruti Suzuki India, Jagdish Khattar, passed away 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 indus-



Jagdish Khattar

try, 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).

Maruti Suzuki chairman R. C. Bhargava, who persuaded Khattar to leave IAS and join Maruti, termed him as a "first class person" and his demise as a "big loss" both personally as well as for the automotive industry. — PTI

## MPHASIS OWNERSHIP CHANGE TO SET OFF OPEN OFFER

**New Delhi, April 26:** Shares of Mphasis Ltd closed with a gain of over 1.6 per cent on Monday after Blackstone said funds managed it will acquire a majority stake in the mid-sized IT firm.

This, the private equity firm said, will trigger an open offer for acquisition of up to 26 per cent stake for about Rs 8,262 crore.

A wholly owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, UC Investments (Office of the Chief Investment Officer of The Regents, University of California) and others will co-invest with Blackstone PE fund in the company, a statement said.

A different fund managed by Blackstone had acquired a controlling stake in Mphasis from Hewlett Packard Enterprise in September 2016.

Based on the open offer subscription, the blended purchase price will vary between Rs 1,452 and Rs 1,497 per share and the purchase consideration will vary between Rs 15,200 crore and Rs 21,000 crore (about \$2 bn-2.8 bn), the statement said.

At the end of March 2021 quarter, Marble II Pte Ltd, a fund managed by Blackstone, held 56.03 per cent stake in Mphasis.

Mphasis in a regulatory filing said Marble II will sell up to 55.31 per cent stake as part of a share purchase pact signed on Monday. — PTI

## Price gap of ready and under construction houses narrows

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, APRIL 26

Sluggish demand has narrowed down the price difference between ready-to-move-in and under-construction residential units to as low as 3 per cent.

The price gap between ready and or under-construction housing, which has been narrowing since 2017, has come down to 3 to 5 per cent, indicating the sluggishness in demand in the market, finds Anarock Property Consultants.

In 2017, the price gap stood at 9 to 12 per cent and it had narrowed to 5-8 per cent in 2018.

In Mumbai, the price difference shrunk from 12



per cent in 2017 to 3 per cent in Q1 2021. In the case of Bengaluru, it was 12 per cent and 4 per cent and Pune, the gap narrowed from 12 per cent to 5 per cent.

According to Anarock, average prices of ready-to-occupy homes in Delhi NCR were Rs 4,650 per sq.

ft. and for under-construction ones Rs 4,500 per sq. ft. In Mumbai it stood at Rs 10,700 per sq ft and Rs 10,350 per sq ft respectively.

Apart from sluggish demand, unsold stock too held back the price rise of ready-to-occupy homes in these years. Construction delays and stalled projects also made customers averse to investing in under-construction units. Further, ready-to-occupy homes do not attract GST and this has been an added attraction.

"The shrunk price gap works well for end-users as well as investors," said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Property Consultants.

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

## TECH MAHINDRA Q4 NET UP 34.6% TO ₹1,080 CR

**Mumbai, April 26:** Tech Mahindra reported a 34.6 per cent jump in net profit to Rs 1,081 crore for the March 2020 quarter and guided towards targeting for a double-digit revenue growth in FY22. Its post-tax net profit grew 9.8 per cent to Rs 4,428 crore in 2020-21, on the back of a 2.7 per cent growth in overall revenues to Rs 37,855 crore. CEO and MD C. P. Gurnani said 2020-21 was the "repair" year when the company faced the pandemic impact, and promised 2021-22 to be a "growth year". — PTI

## TATA MOTORS TO CUT PRODUCTION

**Pune, April 26:** Tata Motors said it has decided to "calibrate" production of its vehicles with actual demand to prevent oversupply and a pile up of inventory at the company and dealers. It did not give any details about the likely quantum of

reduction in production. "The lockdown enforced in various parts of the country is expected to impact vehicle demand temporarily," the auto major said, adding, Hence, the firm has set in motion a comprehensive 'Business Agility Plan' to protect and serve the interests of its customers, dealers and suppliers. — Michael Gonsalves

## POWERGRID INVIT'S IPO THIS WK



**Mumbai, April 26:** Powergrid InvIT will come out with India's first PSU infrastructure investment trust IPO on Thursday, April 29. The IPO seeks to raise Rs 7,734.92 crore from units sold at a price band of Rs 99 to Rs 100 apiece. IRB InvIT and Indi Grid InvIT are already listed on the stock exchanges. An InvIT is a collective investment scheme similar to a mutual fund that invests in infrastructure projects. The Powergrid InvIT IPO comprises fresh issue of units for up to Rs 4,993.48 crore and the selling unitholder is offering units aggregating up to Rs 2,741.50 crore. — Ravi Ranjan Prasad

## FOUR IN A ROW FOR CITY

## Guardiola's men outclass Tottenham to retain League Cup in front of fans

**London, April 26:** Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said winning felt much better with fans in attendance after beating Tottenham 1-0 at Wembley to lift the League Cup for the fourth consecutive year in front of 8,000 supporters on Sunday.

Aymeric Laporte's header eight minutes from time finally rewarded a dominant performance from City as they extended Spurs' 13-year wait to win a trophy.

For the first time in 13 months, a football match in England had designated fans from both teams inside the stadium in one of a series of test events at the 90,000 capacity Wembley as coronavirus restrictions are eased.

"It's not full, but it is much better," said Guardiola. "To celebrate with them is much better."

"We played really well. We are incredibly happy to win the first title, four in a row in this competition, but especially because in the last 33 games, we won 30."

Defeat by Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-finals last weekend means City cannot claim an unprecedented



Manchester City players celebrate with the trophy after winning the League Cup final against Tottenham Hotspur 1-0 at the Wembley Stadium in London on Sunday. — AP

ed quadruple of trophies this season.

However, they remain on course for a treble with the first leg of their Champions League semi-final against Paris Saint-Germain to come on Wednesday before possibly

sealing the Premier League title next weekend.

Victory takes Guardiola's personal tally of major trophies to 25 across his spells in charge of Barcelona, Bayern Munich and City, seven of which have come in England.

"I was in big clubs: Barcelona, Bayern Munich and here, that's why it is easier to do it," added the Catalan modestly.

By contrast, Tottenham's long wait for just one goes on. Spurs could have no complaints, though, at the

end of a chaotic week that saw them sack Jose Mourinho on Monday and, along with City and four other English clubs, pull out of a proposed European Super League amid fan fury.

Son Heung-min was reduced to tears after full-time, but in caretaker boss Ryan Mason's second game in charge, Spurs were completely outclassed by a far superior side.

"It's difficult to take for everyone associated with the football club," said former Tottenham midfielder Mason.

"It hurts. I know that feeling and it is normal that they are hurting. This group of players care deeply about this football club. We tried, it wasn't enough today and it's tough to take."

After a slight dip in form in recent weeks, City were back to their best as they pinned Tottenham back from the first whistle and should have won by a far more comfortable scoreline.

Hugo Lloris's goal lived a charmed life, particularly during the first half.

— AFP

## Deepika, Atanu trap triple gold

**Guatemala City, April 26:** Indian archery's star couple Deepika Kumari and Atanu Das led the show with two individual gold medals as the country capped its best ever performance in a World Cup, claiming three golds and a bronze in the tournament's first stage here.

Former world number one Deepika claimed her career's third individual World Cup gold to add to the team's triumph, while her husband Das grabbed his first ever World Cup individual medal in style winning the men's recurve individual final.

The two are now automatically qualified for this season's most-coveted Archery World Cup Final.

"We travel together, train together, compete together and win together," Das, who got married to Deepika in June last year after a two-year courtship, said after claiming the gold medal on Sunday.

"She knows what I like, and I know what she likes."

This was the best ever World Cup finish by India's recurve archers with two individual and one team gold medals in their return to the top International calendar year event after almost two years.

Also, this was India's best ever individual recurve men's result since

● This was the best ever World Cup finish by India's recurve archers with two individual and one team gold medals in their return to the top International calendar year event after almost two years.

Jayanta Talukdar triumphed in Croatia way back in 2009.

India started with the women's trio of Deepika, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Banti winning the first team gold after seven years. They scripted a stunning turnaround to down fancied Mexico 5-4 (27-26) in an intriguing shoot-off.

The performance rubbed off on the mixed pair of Das and Bhakat as they bagged a bronze, upsetting top seeds USA 6-2 with yet another fightback at the Sports Complex Los Arcos here.

But the icing on the cake came in the individual events later in the day when Deepika and Das bagged two individual golds in their respective events.

This was Deepika's third career stage win and first since Salt Lake City 2018. — PTI

## TOKYO TO DECIDE ON FAN LIMIT BY END OF MONTH

**Tokyo, April 26:** Tokyo 2020 President Seiko Hashimoto said on Monday that she will decide the upper limit of spectators for the Olympics and Paralympics by the end of April.

"As for the upper limit of spectators, we will make a decision on that regard by the end of April. In order to flexibly address the virus situation including the state of emergency, we will work closely with the IOC, IPC, the central government and the Tokyo metropolitan government in order to gain consensus," said Hashimoto during Tokyo 2020 executive board meeting held in the capital.

Hashimoto noted that she was highly aware of concern about the virus resurgence as the state of emergency has been issued in Tokyo and three other prefectures but will have anti-virus measures that address all the possible issues that may be caused by holding the games amid the pandemic. — AP





