

"How is the government so oblivious of the reality on the ground? You cannot have people dying because of no oxygen. You take your own sweet time and people die," it had said.

Womenia



It's a good idea to keep one day in the week to give yourself a home facial. It helps to keep the skin in a good condition and also to counteract the effects of pollution and dirt, which are present in the air in most cities. It helps to refresh the skin and rejuvenate it after a week of stress, strain and fatigue

NATURAL FACIAL AT HOME FOR GLOWING SKIN

Every year, summers take a toll on the skin. The burning sun and hot winds tend to damage the natural skin glow and make it dull, rough and dark. An increase in temperatures during the summer months, combined with humidity and heat end up with excessive sebum around the T-zone, itchy rashes, sunburn, and premature signs of ageing.

Our skin suffers from roughness, summer tans and clogs pores because of dust, pollution and heatwaves. This can lead to blackheads, itchiness and loss of your beautiful skin tone.

Most people spend a lot of money on chemical products or face treatments, assuming this will do the trick. But let me tell you, ultimately, they are using chemicals only. This is where the skincare home remedies come in handy that helps glow your skin naturally that prove to be the best alternative to the chemical-based products.

It's a good idea to keep one day in the week to give yourself a home facial. It helps to keep the skin in a good condition and also to counteract the effects of pollution and dirt, which are present in the air in most cities. First take a head band or scarf, place it just above the forehead, along the hairline and tie it at the back just above the neck. This is to protect the hair.

Start by cleansing the skin thoroughly. Choose the cleanser according to skin type gel or cream cleanser for normal to dry skin; cleansing milk or lotion for normal to oily and combination skins. Apply it on the face. Take cotton wool pads, wet them and squeeze out the water. Using these, wipe your skin with upwards and outwards strokes. On the forehead, use strokes from just above the bridge of the nose, going on ei-

ther side towards the temples, following a gentle arc. Pay special attention to the corners of the nostrils and don't forget the neck area. Wash the face with plenty of water. While the face is still damp, apply a facial scrub for deep pore cleansing. This is particularly good for oily skins and blackheads. However, if you have spots, pimples, acne, rashes or any eruptions, avoid using a scrub. Facial scrubs are easily available nowadays. You can also use home ingredients, like almond meal, oats, or rice flour. Add a little rose water, or yogurt and apply on the skin. Rub the skin gently with it and wash the face with plain water.

If you have a normal to dry skin, nourishing should come next. Apply the nourishing cream, wet your hands with water and massage the cream into the skin, using outwards and upwards strokes.

Use extremely gentle strokes for the area around the eyes, using only your ring finger. The motion should be outwards and care should be taken to see that the skin is not pulled or stretched. For the neck, use strokes from the chin downwards. Continue the massage for three to four minutes and wipe your skin with damp cotton wool or a clean, moist face towel. Avoid applying cream if the skin is oily, but nourish the neck area. Next, apply a face mask. Mix together two teaspoons choker (wheat bran) one teaspoon each ground almonds, rose water, curd and honey into a paste. This is suitable for all skin types. Apply this on the face, leaving out lips and area around the eyes. Take two cotton wool pads and soak them in rosewater, for eye pads. While the mask dries, lie down, close your eyes and put the eye pads on the eyelids. Allow your body to relax. This kind of relax-

ation is a beauty treatment in itself.

After 20 to 30 minutes, wash off the face mask with water. Next, soak cotton wool pads with chilled rosewater and wipe the skin with it. Stroke the skin too, with the rose water pads and pat your skin briskly with it. This helps to tone the skin, close the pores and add a healthy glow.

Precaution while doing a facial

- Don't wash your face that night. Your skin needs a chance to relax. Your facial will have left it quite clean, so there's no need to wash your face before bedtime.
- Do not apply makeup immediately after treating your skin to a facial. Give your skin moderate time to breathe.
- Give facial every week using skin-friendly organic products to improve your skin texture. The synthetic products may damage your skin.
- Make advance preparations and keep all ingredients ready before starting your facial to complete all steps efficiently.
- Keep your self tension free in a quiet and calm atmosphere to achieve the best results.
- Stay out of the sun. The new skin cells exposed by your facial are sensitive. Give them a few days out of the sun and, if you have to go out, use a high SPF sunscreen. Use umbrella while going out of home to avoid direct sun light
- Avoid any gradients which does not suit your skin type and in case if you feel discomfortable with any ingredients then rinse it off immediately and cleanse your face.
- Drink plenty of water/Soup or Juices to keep your skin refreshed and hydrated.

Dia Mirza: We need to mobilise greater momentum than ever before

Every year on April 22, Earth Day marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement in 1970. Actor, producer, and Champion for Nature Dia Mirza who has been articulating concerns about climate change, environmental degradation, depleting forest cover, single use plastics, shrinking animal habitats and a lot more for years, has a special message to mark the occasion. She says, "The ongoing pandemic has made it abundantly clear that we have to change the way we live, produce, manufacture and consume. Today, the health of every single human-being and our collective harmony hangs in the balance and is closely linked with the well-being of mother nature. This year's theme, 'Restore Our Earth' is meant to bring back individual and collective focus on the processes, green technologies, and ideas that can heal, repair and restore the planet. How we do it is the question. What we need to begin with is the dissemination of environmental literacy at all possible levels because we cannot save what we are ignorant about. The Earth Day theme this year is a clarion call to restore the balance of the natural world on which all of life depends."

She also believes that climate awareness, coupled with restorative technological solutions, massive reforestation campaigns, sustainable business practices and regenerative agriculture among many other proactive steps will be needed to turn the clock back.



TWEET PATROL



DISHA PATANI

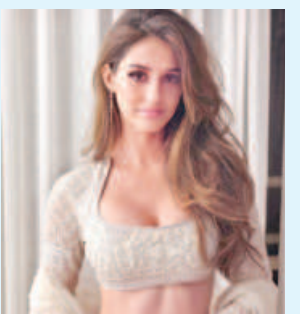
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Effortless styling this summer

TEJAL SINHA

The warmth of the summer sun, bright captivating hues in the sky, golden nectar from mangoes dripping across a child's chin, bees buzzing by; The first feeling of cool gushing waves dancing across our feet amidst the scorching sand, a romantic rendezvous with the relaxing weather- it's the season of undying love, oh could summer last forever?

In an versatile concept, FabIndia Apparel is all set to launch 'The Fab Summer of 2021' Collection, within which the brand is carrying 5 multifaceted capsule collections. The first to be launched online and across the 330 retail outlets established by the brand across the country is the 'Endless Summer' collection. Adorning deep rooted values of sustainability, the brand actively engages with sustaining traditional practices in various craft clusters using natural or regenerated fabrics. On offer are majoritarily soft and breathable cottons, lightweight linens- perfect for stylish summer looks and pastel cot-silks for formal or occasion wear. Doused with Soothing summer colours, liberally used on whites and



broken-whites on light-weight cottons, Black-n-white monochromes, Soft Pastel shades with Metallic accents, Natural Indigos, madder reds and earthy mustards for a craft repertoire form the colour spectrum of the collection; a refreshing treat to the eyes.

How to style your outfits this summer?

Opt for airy silhouettes

This Summer of 2021 is the summer to be safe, relax, focus on your health and take care of yourself. Opt for styles that give the body room to breathe and make your feel comfortable. Think apparel like caftans, comfy dresses, A-line kurtas and tunics.

Steer clear of dark colours

Adorn bold or pastel hues that reflect the sun's rays as opposed to reflecting them-causing people to feel hot. Pastels, whites, pop colours are your best friends this season.

Wear outfits made from breathable fabrics

Cotton is Kind! Cotton is King! Stay away from polyester, nylon and heavier fabrics to remain cool.

Choose sleeveless styles

Go airy and breathable; opt for sleeveless ensembles to ensure maximum air flow.

Linen pants vs jeans

Ditch the denims, go for lighter materials- airy linen pants are a phenomenal alternative to adorn in order to feel cool and breezy.

Off shoulder styles

A chic yet comfortable style to ramp up your summer look could be spectacular off shoulder garments.

Opt for effortless accessorizing

Hats are your best friends this summer. Block the harsh summer rays while making a statement with a classic hat.

Focus on the correct footwear

Slippers, sandals, flip flops are great options to stay stylish and comfortable this season

Layer your ensembles

From cotton cover ups to stylish dusters, layer your outfits for optimum sun protection without facing the heat wave.

Confidence is key

Stay Safe and Wear your confidence, regardless of your outfit choices

Kriti Sanon reveals her special 'morning facial' routine

Actress Kriti Sanon has revealed her morning facial routine involves fur, kisses and licks! Kriti posted an Instagram clip on Thursday morning, where she is seen cuddling her two pet dogs. "My Morning Facial," she wrote as caption. Kriti has just wrapped up shooting for the upcoming film "Bhediya", which also stars Varun Dhawan. The supernatural film is directed by Amar Kaushik, and the film is slated to release on April 14 next year.

Besides "Bhediya", Kriti will be seen in the film "Mimi", which is based on surrogacy. She also stars with Akshay Kumar in the action comedy "Bachchan Pandey", and with Tiger Shroff in the action drama "Ganpath". Kriti's line-up of films also includes "Hum Do Hamare Do" with Rajkumar Rao and "Adipurush" with Prabhas and Saif Ali Khan.

NEWS ROUNDUP



A DAY OF SILENCE

Created in 1996 and held every April — April 23 this year — Day of Silence is a campaign that seeks to shed light on what many LGBTQ youth experience daily.

Initially intended to focus on this problem within the school system, it has since expanded into workplaces, university campuses, and sporting events. Yearly, millions participate by staying silent for the duration of their day, representing the silencing of LGBTQ students.

Day of Silence takes place every April — this year on April 23. Millions are expected to participate in planned silence across universities, workplaces, and sporting events.

Day of Silence was created by a University of Virginia student named Maria Pulzetti. She felt that LGBTQ youth were consistently silenced and ignored by parents and administrators, and that their concerns and complaints were falling on deaf ears. Inspired by this, Maria created the Day of Silence as a one-time event held during the University's LGBTQ pride week. She believed the day would promote awareness amongst those who might not have been tuned into these issues, by surrounding them with a silence they couldn't help but notice.

In 1997, one year after the day's creation, it went national, with over 100 institutions participating.



In 2000, GLSEN, one of the largest LGBTQ education networks in the country, adopted the Day of Silence as one of their official projects. Today, students at all levels participate in the day. Many participants choose to wear tape over their mouths or Xs on their hands to further call attention to the movement.

How to observe day of silence

At the end of day, the silence is typically broken with a rally or speaking event, allowing all participants to end their vow together. Take the Vow

After all, this is the whole point, right? Spending the day in silence draws attention to these pressing issues, and may invite productive conversation with work or school mates.

A movement is always more powerful with numbers. Encourage your friends to participate with you, and make the silence that much louder.

Educate yourself — that way, once you can speak again, you can educate others who may be curious about your vow and why you took it.

Making efforts to airlift oxygen from Odisha: Kejriwal

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi government is making efforts to airlift its enhanced quota of oxygen supply from Odisha, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Thursday, as several city hospitals reported shortage of oxygen amid rising cases of coronavirus. Kejriwal thanked the Centre and the high court for their efforts towards raising Delhi's oxygen quota for treating Covid 19 patients, and said supplies have started reaching the national capital.

He also urged the Central government and Haryana government to facilitate "smooth passage" to vehicles carrying medical oxygen to Delhi. A major

chunk of the freshly allotted quota of oxygen to Delhi comes from Odisha, which is hundreds of kilometres away, and the Delhi government is planning to airlift it to save time at this critical juncture in the fight against coronavirus, Kejriwal said in an online media briefing.

Later, the chief minister received a call from his Odisha counterpart Naveen Patnaik, assuring complete support to Delhi government in lifting oxygen. "Recd a call from Sh Naveen Patnaik ji. He has assured complete support to Delhi in facilitating lifting of Delhi's quota of oxygen from Orissa. He has put a spl officer on the job. Thank u sooo much Sir. Delhi is indeed grateful,"



Kejriwal tweeted, Kejriwal also spoke to Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar and sought his help in facilitating

transport of oxygen trucks from the neighbouring state to Delhi, and claimed he assured "full support". He said Delhi had a

daily quota of 378 MT of medical oxygen that has been increased to 480 MT, and thanked the Central government for it. But, he said, more supplies are needed as according to estimates Delhi needs 700 MT of oxygen daily.

Delhi received its quota of oxygen as fixed by the Centre from other states, he said, but claimed, some states stopped trucks headed to the national capital. "This is not fair. This is a huge calamity and we need to fight it unitedly. If we are divided, India will not survive," Kejriwal said. He appealed to state governments to help each other and promised to provide them surplus oxygen, medicines and doctors if the COVID-19

situation came under control in Delhi. The newly increased quota of oxygen is going to be supplied primarily from Odisha and the Delhi government is trying its best to airlift oxygen from the state to cut down on the time in its transportation, Kejriwal said. With the rise in coronavirus cases in the country, demands for oxygen cylinders, medicines and vaccination has increased and its shortage is being felt, he said.

"We, in Delhi, have also faced an acute shortage of oxygen cylinders. The Delhi government has spent a number of sleepless nights trying to arrange oxygen in hospitals and other COVID care centres to try and ensure that no patient suf-

fers due to lack of it." The problem that has arisen is that the states in which these oxygen manufacturers are based are not allowing oxygen cylinders to come to Delhi, he claimed. "They say they want to use the oxygen in their own states. Trucks supplying oxygen are being stopped. We are thankful to the Central government and the Delhi High Court who have aided us in this situation. Trucks have slowly started reaching Delhi," he said. "This is a collective crisis. If we decide to split ourselves into Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, West Bengal, India will not survive. We need to come together and unite as Indians and as human beings," Kejriwal appealed.

Police averts crisis, manages to restore oxygen at hospital

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi Police averted a major crisis after it managed to restore oxygen supply to a hospital here where over 350 COVID patients are undergoing treatment, officials said on Thursday.

On Wednesday night, chief engineer of Batra hospital, R K Baniwal, informed the police that the oxygen at their facility will only last for two hours and they were not sure when their supply will be restored, police said.

The police immediately formed several teams and assigned different tasks to each of them, officials said.

"After enquiring from the hospital and its nodal officer, it was found that one tanker was supposed to come to the hospital



from Panipat and the other from Modi Nagar.

However, the authorities were not able to get any update on their location," said Atul Kumar

Thakur, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South). The police somehow managed to contact the drivers of the tankers through the nodal officers and

owners of the suppliers, the official said.

Meanwhile, a team headed by SHO K M Pur was sent to Mohan Co-operative area in Badarpur with 60 empty oxygen cylinders so that they could be filled while others teams led by SHO Madan Garhi, SHO Neb Sarai and SHO Greater Kailash were sent to escort the tankers bringing oxygen after obtaining their live locations, said the officer.

The team managed to restore oxygen supply within three hours, said the police. On Thursday, shortage of oxygen was also reported at Max hospital, Saket, police said. The police found out that the oxygen tanker, which was to deliver the gas at the hospital, was on its way to the facility from UP's Kashipur.

5 patients die at UP hospital, family allege oxygen shortage

ALIGARH

IN yet another case of oxygen supply shortage, five Covid-19 patients died at a private hospital in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh. The incident took place at Naurangabad locality in Gandhi Park area.

Shyam Kashyap, whose 50-year-old brother Anil was among those who died at the hospital, told media persons that hospital authorities tried to cover up the lapse by arranging 40 oxygen cylinders after the tragedy took place.

"If the hospital had sufficient stock of oxygen, then why did it suddenly ask authorities for oxygen supply at 9 pm on Wednesday?" he asked.

However, Dr Sanjeev Sharma, the owner of the hospital, denied the claims and said the hospital had adequate oxygen stock.

Agitated family members of the



deceased persons created a ruckus at the hospital, following which senior police officials rushed to the spot and defused the tension.

The hospital owner said none of the patients died due to lack of oxygen.

Sharma said all five persons were on a ventilator and their

death was a "mere coincidence".

Meanwhile, City Magistrate Vineet Kumar said, "At around 9 pm on Wednesday, the hospital authorities called for an emergency supply of oxygen which was given by 10 pm."

Kumar said the incident was being investigated.

5 DEAD IN RAIN-RELATED INCIDENTS

LUCKNOW

FIVE people died in rain-related incidents in UP as a thunderstorm lashed parts of the state accompanied with gusty winds, a Meteorological department spokesperson said.

"Two people died in Ayodhya and one each in Lakhimpur Kheri, Gonda, Firozabad in incidents of felling of trees and other in the rain/thunderstorm that hit the state on Wednesday night," the official said.

CM Yogi Adityanath directed officials to provide Rs four lakh financial assistance to the families of those killed in the dust/thunderstorm-related incidents. He asked them to ascertain the losses incurred and also sought a report from the relief commissioner. According to the Met officer, light to moderate rain and thunderstorm occurred at a few places over eastern UP and at isolated places in the western part of the state. Lucknow, Barabanki, Gonda and Sitapur received 3 cm downpour each, and Elgin Bridge (Barabanki), Maharajganj, Ballia, Shrawasti, Unnao, Bareilly and Moradabad recorded 2 cm each, the official said.

'UP govt buying wheat from middlemen instead of farmers'

LUCKNOW

SAMAJWADI Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Thursday alleged that the Uttar Pradesh government has stopped buying wheat from farmers on the pretext of the coronavirus pandemic and is instead purchasing it from middlemen as part of a "conspiracy" to benefit them.

He questioned the government over the state's rising procurement graph when purchase centres at most places are closed and demanded a probe into the matter.

"The BJP is suffering from indecisiveness. On the pretext of the COVID pandemic, the BJP government has stopped buying wheat from farmers. It is presenting a false figure of procurement. It seems a conspiracy has been hatched to benefit middlemen by purchasing wheat from them to meet the target," Yadav said in a statement issued here.

He asked how the state's procurement graph is climbing when purchase centres at most places are closed, there is a shortage of sacks and cash, and farmers have returned. Yadav further alleged that farmers have been forced to sell wheat in the market at a price



lower than the minimum support price (MSP). "If the farmer is getting the (minimum) support price for wheat at Rs 1,975 per quintal, as claimed by the government, then why is he agitating? The truth is that farmers are forced to sell wheat in the market for Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,700 per quintal," he said.

"If the chief minister has the courage, then he should conduct a fair investigation into the entire matter," he added. Taking a dig at Adityanath, Yadav said the star campaigner chief minister does not have the time to see the plight of farmers who are debt-ridden and living in pathetic conditions.

Three women held hostage on suspicion of being child lifters

GHAZIABAD

RESIDENTS in Loni of Ghaziabad held three women on suspicion of being child-lifters, were rescued by police, officials said. The locals pelted stones at the police who came to rescue the

women.

"Thirteen people have been arrested for attacking the police team with stones. We have also registered a case under sections of IPC, Disaster Management Act, 2005 and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property

Act, 1984, against 200 people in this connection," SP (rural) Iraj Raja said.

He said the rescued women were found to be innocent and were handed over to their family members. The officer said a child was allegedly kidnapped by

unknown miscreants on April 14. The locals found the three women roaming in the area the next day and held them hostage on suspicion of being child-lifters.

Police teams are raiding the hideouts of absconding accused, Raja added.

Remdesivir not effective in patients requiring ventilation: PGI doctor

CHANDIGARH

REMDESIVIR -- an antiviral drug -- does not have any effect in reducing mortality and it is not effective for patients requiring high oxygen support or ventilation, a senior doctor with the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) said here on Thursday.

G.D. Puri, HoD of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care, PGIMER, said that if the drug has to be rationally used, it should be used within the first seven to eight days in Covid-19 patients developing room air hypoxia, meaning oxygen saturation less than 94 percent.

Remdesivir was the first drug to be approved by the US FDA for the treatment of Covid-19 patients.

"It is not likely to be beneficial after 10 days in patients who are already on ventilator support. It has a potential to worsen renal functions and may cause arrhythmia, so it needs to be used with caution and under strict monitoring. There are very limited indications of using Remdesivir and a very narrow therapeutic window, so it



should be used judiciously," he said.

The only medicine with definite effect on reducing mortality in critically ill patients is steroids (dexamethasone), which is beneficial only when Covid positive patients develop hypoxia at room air, Puri said.

Use of steroids in patients not having room air hypoxia is associated with the increased risk of mortality. So steroids have to be used judiciously under medical supervision, the doctor warned.

On the use of Tocilizumab, he said it is a strong immune system suppressant and is indicated to control "cytokine storms" rapidly. Its use has to be guided by the clinical condition of the patient, Puri said.

Since it can increase the incidence

of secondary bacterial infections in the patients, it should be used only after ruling out significant bacterial or fungal infections, he added.

In case it is not available, good supportive care, steroids and ventilation may be tried, the doctor added.

Meanwhile, after reviewing the availability of antiviral drug Remdesivir in Karnataka, it has been decided that allocation of 25,000 vials will be made over and above the allocation made for the state up to April 30, Chemicals and Fertilisers Minister Sadananda Gowda said on Thursday.

Earlier on Wednesday, Gowda had said the government's decision to waive off customs duty on Remdesivir, used in the treatment of COVID-19, would help in augmenting the supply of the medicine in the wake of soaring coronavirus cases in the country. "Reviewed situation of availability of #Remdesivir in State of Karnataka upon request of State Govt. It has been decided that an additional allocation of 25000 vials will be made over an above allocation made for Karnataka upto April 30, 2021," Gowda tweeted.





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US, Russia engaging in blow hot, blow cold moves

UNITED States President Joe Biden on April 15 signed an executive order that imposes a slew of new sanctions against Russia, as well as expelling 10 diplomats from the US, in response to a massive Russian hacking campaign that breached vital federal agencies, as well as for election interference. This could be the beginning of a 'hot war of words' for now that could turn into a season of 'cold war' between the two giants.

The measures include sanctions on six Russian companies that support the country's cyber activities, in addition to sanctions on 32 individuals and entities accused of attempting to interfere in last year's presidential election, including by spreading disinformation. The 10 diplomats being expelled include representatives of Russian intelligence services, the White House said. Biden

also barred U.S. financial institutions from taking part in the primary market for rouble-denominated Russian sovereign bonds from June 14.

The U.S. banks have been barred from taking part in the primary market for non-rouble sovereign bonds since 2019. He did not prohibit them, however, from buying such debt in the secondary market, a step likely to have a far more dramatic effect on the Russian bond and currency markets, which fell as news of the sanctions seeped out before recovering some losses. But, this could soon follow too.

Biden said he warned Russia President Vladimir Putin about the sanctions when they spoke by telephone in a "candid, respectful conversation" on April 13. "I was clear with President Putin that we could have gone further, but I chose

not to do so. I chose to be proportionate," Biden said in remarks at the White House on April 15. The United States is not looking to kick-off a cycle of escalation and conflict with Russia. We want a stable, predictable relationship," the US president said.

But, the action hints otherwise and Putin is not the one to take it lightly. Biden reiterated he has invited the Russian leader to a summit meeting to be held in Europe that would allow the two world powers to engage in direct talks on arms control and security issues including Iran and North Korea. Despite Biden's hope and expectation to work out a modus vivendi, the impact could be otherwise. The US has also gone ahead and assured all its allies of an unwavering support. The sanctions, foreshadowed for weeks by the US ad-

ministration, represent the first retaliatory action announced against the Kremlin for last year's cyber-attack, familiarly known as the SolarWinds breach.

In that intrusion, Russian hackers are believed to have infected widely used software with malicious code, enabling them to access the networks of at least nine agencies in what US officials believe was an intelligence-gathering operation aimed at mining government secrets. It is being said that the most recent punitive actions were also motivated by Moscow "targeting dissidents or journalists" and the undermining of "security in countries and regions important to the United States national security", apparent references to the alleged Russian nerve-agent attack on opposition leader Alexei Navalny and a recent build-up of troops along the border of Ukraine. Unacceptable behaviour puts consequences in place.



Achieving holistic wellness Comprehensive food supplements, a powerful tool

DR M SURESH BABU AND DR D ASHA DEVI

CCMB developed two different products with Cordyceps militaris. One is the food supplement CoronaAid that was launched in October 2020 and the other is in the form of drug or anti-viral. Since researchers at CCMB and the company Clone Deals have proved the efficacy in a laboratory, they received the permission from regulatory authorities to launch the product as a food supplement. CCMB is providing support to researchers and startups who are working in the field of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has given approval to CoronaAid. The CoronaAid, is also available in the form of liquid.

The food-supplement, CoronaAid is made out of mushroom Cordyceps militaris, which grows in Himalayan region and is known for its anti-viral, anti-aging, anti-tumour, anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory properties. The mushroom powder preparation is also mixed with curcumin, which is another active ingredient to prepare CoronaAid Anti-Viral Immunity Booster Oral Suspension food supplement.

Cordyceps militaris consists of an active ingredient Cordycepin, which is known to prevent formation of new DNA and RNA strands. Clone Deals has collaborated with researchers from CCMB and have established the potency of cordycepin in stopping the growth of SARS-CoV-2 in cell-culture system i.e. in a laboratory.

In a joint effort, CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), ICMR-National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) and Bharat Biotech have estimated the seroprevalence of antibodies against the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 in Hyderabad city.

This study of around 9,000 samples, finds that around 54 per cent of Hyderabadis show antibodies against SARS-CoV-2, indicating prior exposure to the coronavirus. The study brings a comprehensive perspective of potentially protective immune response against the coronavirus in the city's population. The data indicates that the population of Hyderabad might be slowly moving towards herd immunity, which will be certainly accelerated by the ongoing vaccination effort.

Methodology

Scientists checked for antibodies against the virus in people across 30 wards of the city. Over 300 individuals, from each ward, all of them older than 10 years, were tested. Most of the wards showed a similarly uniform range of seroprevalence, of 50-60 per cent. However, a few wards showed as much as 70 per cent or as low as 30 per cent as well. Women showed a marginally higher seropositivity rate (56 per cent) than men (53 per cent). Those above 70 years of age showed a lower seropositivity (49 per cent), perhaps because of limited mobility and extra care taken by older individuals during the pandemic.

If we ensure that we follow hygiene protocols such as regular handwashing, using masks effectively and preventing symptomatic people from public mixing, we can start getting back to normalcy more comfortably. Detecting and isolating the positive cases early on can help prevent the spread among other family members in a home setting too. There is an immediate need for the governments to control all the activities involving clustering of people into groups to control the current "dangerous" trend in the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the country and across many States, assert top scientists involved in combating the SARS-CoV-2 virus

Unsurprisingly, those who had Covid-19 positive cases in their own households, showed the maximum seropositivity of 78 per cent. This was followed by those with known Covid-19 contacts outside their household (68 per cent). Scientists at NIN observed that those in houses with a larger number of rooms and small family size households had low prevalence of coronavirus infection.

This study also showed that more than 75 per cent of the seropositive population did not know that they had contracted coronavirus infection. This suggests seroconversion, which is antibody formation has happened even with silent infections. According to the study, individuals who had suffered the prominent Covid-19 symptoms as well as those who were asymptomatic had equivalent seroprevalence of around 54 per cent. About 18 per cent of the study group had been tested earlier and found positive for the coronavirus while 90 per cent was found to be seropositive, suggesting that they retain the antibody response.

CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and CSIR-Institute of Microbial Technology (IMTech), Chandigarh has released their data on the air-borne nature of coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2. Scientists have worked with six hospitals, three in Hyderabad and three in Chandigarh to find if the virus particles can be found in air samples in the hospital wards. They used an air sampler that can collect the virus particles, and then looked for their presence using RT-PCR.

In this study, the virus was found in air samples from Covid-19 wards from hospitals but not from non-Covid-19 wards. This suggests that the demarcation of hospital zones has been an effective strategy. The study also showed the chances of picking up SARS-CoV-2 in the air is directly related to a number of Covid-19 positive cases in the room, their symptomatic status and the duration of exposure.

When Covid-19 individuals spent long hours in a room, the virus is found in the air for more than two hours even farther than 2 metres from their seating places. But for asymptomatic cases, they showed the virus does not spread farther from them when they are seated in a room without perceived airflow due to a fan or AC.

If we ensure that we follow hygiene protocols such as regular handwashing, using masks effectively and preventing symptomatic people from public mixing, we can start getting back to normalcy more comfortably. Detecting and isolating the positive cases early on can help prevent the spread among other family members in a home setting too. There is an immediate need for the governments to control all the activities involving clustering of people into groups to control the current "dangerous" trend in the rising number of Covid-19 cases in the country and across many States, assert top scientists involved in combating the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Congregations and group activities to be curtailed including political meetings, rallies, road shows, markets, religious gatherings, cinema halls, restaurants, bars, pubs and any indoor events. "People meeting in groups in any of these activities are a recipe for disaster. We have to minimise crowding because lockdowns affect the economy and livelihoods, so we have to ensure non-essential things are stopped. If we have to keep a control on the virus, we have to wear masks all the time when we step outside the house even for walking the dog, or it is like being naked. It may also be prudent to change clothes after an outdoor visit to be doubly cautious.

(The authors are State president, Praja Science Vedika, Hyderabad and Professor, SNIST, Hyderabad respectively)

Covid-19: Unmindful human reaction



MOST of the 'end-of-the-world' fiction movies project giant monsters wiping out human race. Some show oceans rising, asteroids smashing into the planet, an alien attack on human species or a massive nuclear war... which ends it all. However, there are not many science fiction movies so far, on how a contagious microbe will challenge the entire humanity, especially in the most technologically advanced period of human existence, the 21st century.

It happened, and here we are today facing the seemingly biggest challenge to human race ever – the COVID19. Since March 2020, the entire world has witnessed a 'freeze on human activity' like never in the recorded history. So far, there are close to 141 million corona virus infections and over 3.1 million deaths world-wide.

The rise of this contagious microbe from China and it's spread to the entire world in a span of 4 to 5 months, with around 3.4 per cent of possible death rate is certainly alarming.

However, the degree of global panic and quantum withdrawal from normal life and livelihood of human beings, looks certainly disproportionate.

In the recorded history of Anthropology there was never a period, that human habitat and ecosystem was bereft of disease and death. Human species always co-existed with many forms of disease and continue to do so, even in the contemporary time of its existence.

There was simply no ideal habitat on this planet free of disease and death, in the entire time-line of evolution of life, from a single cell species to the current complex human form. Panicking the way, the entire global human community is, in response to Covid-19 certainly raises more red flags than just few. There needs to be a thorough study on sweeping reactions by all nations across the world, in facing up to the challenge posed by this viral microbe, in comparison with what human race has fought in the past.

I have a big question... Is Covid-19 a single biggest challenge to hu-

manity? I don't think so. The human community has been living with more regular, self-inflicted and mundane causes of disease and death.

Humans have been co-existing for hundreds of years with many diseases which are triggered through less thorough-upkeep of self and the habitat they live in. The mammoth number of deaths due to social maladies and disease in the world we live in, outsizes and out-numbers the infection and death rate of Covid-19.

Let's look at worldwide deaths annually with social maladies and community disease, just for a new perspective:

- 1.35 million people die in road accidents
- 2.6 million children die of hunger
- 17.9 million deaths with heart disease
- 3.17 million deaths with COPD [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease]
- 9.6 million deaths with Cancer
- 1.54 million deaths with Alzheimer's
- 1.59 million deaths with Diabetes
- 1.4 million deaths with Tuberculosis
- 1.39 million deaths with Diarrhoea

That is a staggering 40.54 million deaths every year in the organised human society across the world.

The above stated deaths are a regular phenomenon across the world annually for many decades, and the numbers are only rising year on year. However, none of these deaths have shocked us to a level, where the entire human enterprise had to be paused and even stalled multiple times.

The shocking fact of this over-reactionary global lock-downs is, that everyone knows it's not a real solution. A transmittable contagion can't be contained by just by locking oneself at home, it must be attacked either with treatment after infection or a vaccination of impeccable efficacy. One need to also understand that no other animal on this planet, other than human beings have this luxury of these two survival options.

Our ancestors from distant past have faced deadly contagions too. It is not for the first time a contagion has infected humans. In the pre-recorded anthropological history, there were many kinds of plagues which hit all over the planet and infected all animals including humans. However, human race survived the onslaught for thousands of years, and so did many other animals on this planet.

The easier acceptance of death as a natural outcome or inadver-



I believe, it's all about the level of 'acceptance of death' and the prism from which 'life' was seen by our ancestors, which made it easier to fight adversity of any shape and form. It's unthinkable that in 21st century, the entire human race has surrendered to a contagious microbe in the fear of disease and death. This phase, will certainly be recorded in the history of human evolution, that human species which has risen to the top of the food chain on this planet, has submitted and surrendered its fighting spirit and regressed into a cave mode, in unfounded fear of a miniscule percentage of death

tently developing immunity to these kind of diseases over a period, was the only ingenious method in those times.

However, even with more empowered options which exist today, it is shocking that human race is trying to hide, than fight. There's clearly something wrong with the way, we are currently fighting the challenges in comparison to our ancestors. It is important for all of us to remember, we did not survive and evolve all these centuries by hiding in caves, we did by fighting it out.

In very distant history in Circa 3000 BC there was a pre-historic epidemic. There were Plague of Athens of 430 BC, Antonine Plague of 165 AD, the Black-Death of 1346, American Plague of 16th century and 20 other deadly contagions which infected humans. In the recent century Spanish Flu of 1918, Asian Flu, Swine Flu, AIDS and others have infected hundreds of thousands and led to massive number of deaths.

Traditional knowledge is linked to understanding nature's cycles of balancing life on this planet. Critical understanding of cause and effect of human behaviours, simple understanding and acceptance of life and death cycles, have allowed the human species in the past, to keep moving ahead with their enterprise by taking natural chances and building natural immunity as a result.

Some weak elements in the

current human communities have too shallow knowledge of the spirit for human survival. They are not just trying to foolishly hide from a highly infectious contagion, which will eventually infect everyone including them, but also forcing, violating and manipulating millions of others to join their tribe of unwise, fake and sadistic crusaders.

Life is all pervasive, and so is death. I am not advocating foolish adventurism to those who have health-issues and co-morbidities. However, the rest can't afford to sit idle at home losing their livelihoods and natural immunity to fight and survive not just Covid-19 but many other social and community maladies.

The dumb zealots who know very little of the mega human pursuit for thriving and surviving against adversity, are enjoying their temporary and sadistic control over small colonies of people, apartment blocks, housing societies, containment zones, cities and even states, illiterately imagining they are able to control this crawling contagion. These folks are doing more damage to the individual freedoms attained by centuries of human endeavor in structured societies.

I believe, it's all about the level of 'acceptance of death' and the prism from which 'life' was seen by our ancestors, which made it easier to fight adversity of any shape and form.

LETTERS

Tragic incident

THE sad and unfortunate death of twenty four Covid-19 patients who died at Zakir Hussain Municipal Hospital at Nashik in Maharashtra due to disruption in oxygen supply to them for over thirty minutes owing to leak in tanker outside the hospital is an indicator in the lacunae in vital life support systems in the hospitals in the country. It is observed that the second wave of the pandemic in the country is requiring hospitalisation of more patients who are in need of ventilators or oxygen masks. The death rate too has grown more steeply compared to last year, when patients were not in dire need to use oxygen. The new situation has brought about an unmanageable demand for oxygen cylinders, and tankers carrying liquid oxygen to cater to various hospitals in the country. Such a situation was

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not imagined before. The state governments in the country must become more independent and self-reliant in procuring oxygen cylinders for the patients who are in need for it, without unduly becoming dependent on the Centre. There is however a limit to what the Centre can do under the prevailing circumstances as the country is in need for more cryogenic tankers to supply liquid oxygen reach and cater to the entire country. The preventive measures that the already suggested and recommended are only 'mantra' against Covid-19, by way of wearing a mask and maintaining a reasonable social distance coupled with other personal hygienic measures, about which the countrymen must always be alert and observant.

S Lakshmi, Hyderabad

Unwanted vaccine politics

IT is highly condemnable that the GOI has chosen to play vaccine politics with the lives of the people in the states. The policy of differential Covishield

vaccine price of Rs.400 for states and Rs.150 for centre, (Congress slams centre over Covishield policy, THI, 22 April) reminds us, the character of "Shylock" in the Merchant of Venice by Shakespeare. It is unfair and unprecedented. Being a responsible government, how can it be a lower price for Centre and higher price for States? Certainly it is anti-people and in these perilous pandemic times, we the people demand, the GOI to supply the Covid-19 vaccine free of cost to the people.

PH Hema Sagar, Secunderabad

II

NDA, Government at Centre could not control the first wave of Covid-19 exceedingly well, at the same time NDA failed miserably to exercise adequate control on the second wave of Covid-19. NDA is more immersed in electioneering and getting power in various States. It did not develop adequate infrastructure to deal with the second wave of Covid-19. At least now, they should prepare themselves well and bring out the control measures to prevent the spread

of Covid-19 and save people's lives.

Sambasiva Rao Choda, Hyderabad

III

THERE have been many heart wrenching scenes all over the nations as people try to get hospital beds, oxygen or medicines for their loved ones. Surely the government should have expected a second wave, as many other nations had already reported it. There was a great deal of complacency on the part of the citizens and the government who believed that the worst was over. However, the second wave has been more damaging than the first and is likely to touch the three lakh daily infections soon. Even as the governments are grappling with the situation, conditions have worsened and people are suffering with no end in sight. Even with all this the Prime Minister and the Home Minister have not ended their rallies in Bengal. Winning the state has become more important than the lives of the citizens.

Anthony Henriques, Mumbai

TS govt fires at Centre on ‘one nation two vaccine prices’



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

“ONE Nation- two different vaccine prices” has invited strong criticism from the Telangana

Government. State Industry and IT minister KT Rama Rao and Medical and Health minister E Rajendar took pot shots at the union government accusing it of putting heavy financial burden on the states in taking up the massive corona vaccination programmes from May one onwards.

KTR on his twitter handle wrote, “We agreed for one nation one tax (GST). But now we see, one nation- two different vaccine prices. For Govt of India @150 and state governments @ Rs 400. Can't the government of India subsume any additional cost from PM CARES and help

rapid vaccination across India”, he tweeted.

State health minister also came down heavily on the Centre for showing indifference towards Telangana in the supply of vaccines, Oxygen and other medicines required to provide treatment to the Covid patients. He held the Centre responsible for the continuous shortage of medical oxygen in the State. He strongly opposed fixing huge price for the vaccines which is being supplied to the states only.

“The corona patients from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh were also admitted to the hospitals in Telangana. As a result the demand for Remdesivir injections have increased but the centre fell on deaf ears to the request for more supply,” the Health Minister fumed.

SEC curtails campaign time to 72 hours before polls

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

SIGHTING the flouting of Covid-19 norms by the political party leaders and star campaigners, the State Election Commission (SEC) on Thursday curtailed the campaign time. The campaign time would end at 5 pm on April 27 that is 72 hours before the commencement of polls.

Elections in Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation, Khammam Municipal Corporation and also in the municipalities of Siddipet in Siddipet district, Atchamper in Nagarkurnool district, Nakrekal in Nalgonda district, Jadcherla in Mahabubnagar district, and Kothur in Rangareddy district are to be held on April 30 and results would be announced on May 3.

The Commission has taken note of several instances of election meetings and campaigns wherein norms of social distancing and wearing of masks have been flouted in bla-

- The campaign time will end at 5 pm on April 27 in the two corporations and five municipalities
- Elections to be held on April 30 and results to be announced on May 3

tant disregard to the Commission's Covid-19 guidelines. Taking serious note of the repeated violations by star campaigners, political leaders and candidates who are supposed to be torchbearers for campaign against Covid-19 the SEC directed that the campaign time would end at 5 pm on April 27 in the two corporations and five municipalities. Generally the election campaign ends 48 hours before the poll. The elections would be held on April 30 and results would be announced on May 3.

The announcement was made after SEC Chairman, C Parthasarathi held a meeting with senior officials over conduct of election especially after the requisitions from the politi-

cal parties and High Court. Furthermore, the Commission asked all the campaigners and voters to wear face mask, maintain social distancing.

He also asked the officials to ensure that sanitisers are made available at entry of polling stations, large halls should be identified and utilised for election purpose to ensure social distancing norms are followed and that adequate vehicles are available for polling staff.

He also directed the election staff to have Aarogya Setu application in their mobile phones. “A Nodal officer should be designated at district/municipal Corporation, mandal level and staff training should be taken up in big halls and can also give virtual training, there should be markings at every six feet distance to maintain physical distancing,” the Commissioner directed. He also said that it is the responsibility of the political parties which organises meetings to provide masks and sanitisers at public meeting sites.

HYDERABAD-BENGALURU ROUTE

Varying bus fares give unintended benefit to passengers

K CHANDRASHEKAR
HYDERABAD

IF you are travelling from Hyderabad to Bengaluru in a TSRTC bus, keep an eye on the depot from which the bus is coming as you can save around Rs 60 with several depot buses charging different rates for the ticket. The situation of the passengers who book online are also at a loss because they pay in advance. According to the official sources, super luxury buses to Bengaluru are operated by seven depots in the State including Hyderabad-1, Hyderabad-2, Sangareddy, Zaheerabad, Karimnagar, Miyapur and Picket. However, buses of these depots have different fares for the same distance.

The passengers travelling from Hyderabad to Bengaluru in the buses of Karimnagar, Miyapur and Picket depot are paying Rs 845 to Rs 850 per ticket. However, the passengers travelling in the buses of the depot including Hyderabad-1, Hyderabad-2, Sangareddy and Zaheerabad are pay-



ing Rs 815 for the same ticket. There are 20 A/c buses and ten non-A/c buses on the Bengaluru route.

Sudhakar Sharma, who travelled recently by booking an online ticket, said that when he enquired from his fellow passenger, he said that the fare was Rs 815. Sudhakar complained to the authorities and he was told that the tickets are issued as per the TIMs (ticket issuing machines) program. Sudhakar said, “We can understand if the difference is Rs 20 or Rs 30 as reservation charges but the difference is Rs 60, which is not fair for the people who book

online tickets.”

According to sources, the problem has started during the last one week. When the personnel brought this to the notice of the higher officials, they said that it should not have happened as the TIMs are programmed as per the stages. The authorities are now trying to find out where the mistake has occurred or was there any mischief by the programmers.

The clueless staff had to scratch their heads when the passengers began to question the discrepancies in the ticket fares and want their higher officials to resolve the issue immediately.

Unani puts Covid recovery on fast-track

Clinical trials by Dr Mujtaba Ali Hashmi getting upbeat response

ESA BIN ABDUL REHMAN
HYDERABAD

AT a time when the corona virus cases are on constant surge a few doctors from AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy) are amplifying their support to arrest the spread of corona virus by carrying out clinical trials on Broad Spectrum Antiviral Prophylactic Medicine (BSAPM – Unani), an Indian way of treatment that helps boosting immunity system and even getting upbeat results.

The clinical trials on Broad Spectrum Antiviral Prophylactic Medicine (BSAPM), said to have been helping people in boosting their immunity and it is widely considered as the most essential component to fight the contagion. Dr Mujtaba Ali Hashmi, BUMS (Osm) & MD (Gyn. & Obs) claimed to have been working on the subject for years.

Dr Hashmi, who is also the Chairman of Dr Hashmi's Unani Medicine Observation and Research Foundation Hyderabad,



said, “the literature in Unani system of medicine show the use of Broad Spectrum Antiviral Prophylactic Medicine (BSAPM) to induce immunity and herd immunity against various types of virus infected diseases. The ancient empirical evidence proves that the herd immunity through administration of BSAPM shown that the pandemic called the “Anthonine Plaque” of 165 to 180 AD (Plaque of Galen) was successfully eradicated. Thus, there is a need to take a scientific study of

BSAPM (Unani) to prevent the spread of novel Coronavirus.”

The research is solely focussed on improving the immune system that would allow people to develop a strong immunity that would help them fight the seasonal diseases and even contagion alike. “We have taken up research work on Broad Spectrum Antiviral Prophylactic Medicine (Unani system of treatment) to boost immunity and herd immunity in order to arrest the spread of the Novel coronavirus,” he ex-

plained. Research paper of Dr Hashmi was published on 19th May 2020 and widely viewed by researchers across the globe.

“So far 100 subjects have gone through the clinical trials in which we have administered oral medicine in the form of tablets i.e. one tablet each before food in morning and night. The doses were administered to the age group of 9 to 80 years,” he said.

After getting registered with the Clinical Trials Registry, India (CTRI), ICMR – National Institute of Medical Statistics recently, Dr Hashmi took up his research work and have come across with encouraging response of his preventive medicine on subjects. “During the trial it was observed that the immunity level of the subjects have improved and this medicine is targeting spike proteins which is a primary cause of multiplying the virus in the host subject. There are a total 100 subjects gone through the trial without any adverse effect of the oral medicine administered to them,” claimed Dr Hashmi.

State records 10,759 new infections

- 31 deaths reported in 24 hours
- The single day number of new positive cases is highest after Sept 10 last year

AMARAVATI

THE state inched closer to the one million coronavirus cases mark as it reported 10,759 afresh in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Thursday, the single largest number in a day after September 10. The latest health bulletin put the states cumulative coronavirus infection count stopped at 9,97,462 from 1.58 crore tests, at an overall positivity rate of over 6.27 per cent. In the 24 hours ending 9 am on Thursday, the state also reported 3,992 recoveries and 31 deaths. Andhra Pradesh now has 66,944 active cases after a total of 9,22,977 recoveries and 7,541 deaths, according to the bulletin. The state government, however, asked the citizens not to panic as it was geared up to handle the situation effectively.

It, however, wanted the people to “behave responsibly” and take all precautions to contain the infection spread. Chittoor district reported 1,474, Kurnool 1,367, Srikakulam 1,336, Guntur 1,186, East Godavari 992, Visakhapatnam 844, Nellore 816, Anantapur 789, Krishna 679, Vizianagaram 562, Prakasam 345 and Kadapa 279 new cases in a day. West Godavari reported 90. Visakhapatnam crossed 70,000 total cases while Vizianagaram went past 45,000, the lowest in the state.

Chittoor and Krishna also saw five fresh Covid-19 fatalities each, Kurnool, Nellore, Prakasam and Srikakulam three each, East Godavari, Guntur and Vizianagaram two each, Anantapuram, Kadapa and Visakhapatnam one each in a day.



Ministers Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas, Mekatothi Sucharitha, Botcha Satyanarayana, Audimulapu Suresh, Kurasala Kannababu take part in Cabinet sub-committee meet on Covid situation at APIIC building in Mangalagiri on Thursday

Cabinet panel warns pvt hospitals over fees

- Says Covid patients should be charged as per the fee structure prescribed by the State govt
- The 5-member Cabinet sub-committee, which reviewed the Covid situation in the State, stresses that there is no shortage of oxygen

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

DEPUTY Chief Minister and convener of five-member Cabinet sub-committee appointed to monitor the Covid situation in the state Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas warned private hospital managements of serious action if they collect excess fee from Covid patients than prescribed by the government. The committee met at APIIC office at Mangalagiri on Thursday to discuss the present Covid situation and make suggestions to the state government.

Later, speaking to media persons, the convener Alla Kali Kr-

ishna Srinivas said that the oxygen reserves were sufficient and if necessary the state government would make arrangements to get oxygen from other states. He said Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy directed the officials to explore ways to set up oxygen plants in the state. The minister said that sub-committee discussed increasing the number of Covid centres, strengthening the 104 call centre and steps to prevent spread of coronavirus. An action plan was formulated to prevent oxygen shortage in hospitals. He said as per officials, 360 tonne oxygen was necessary per day. However, with increase in Covid cases, the demand rose by another 100 to 150 metric tonne a day. The state government was discussing import of oxygen from neighbouring states to prevent shortage. Referring to vaccination programme, the health minister said that AP was ahead in vaccination programme and 49 lakh people were given shots so far. He said the state government was administering 6 lakh doses of vaccines per day.

Edu Minister slams Lokesh for seeking exam cancellation

- Says the govt is trying to save the academic year for Class X and Inter students by holding exams following Covid guidelines

AMARAVATI

MINISTER for education A Suresh said that the state government has been trying to save the academic year for students of Class X and Intermediate by conducting the examinations duly following the Covid-19 guidelines. Speaking to media persons here on Thursday, Suresh said with the increasing number of Covid cases, the government had closed the academic year for students of Classes 1 to 9 without conducting examinations and also vacated students of welfare hostels. Soon a decision will be taken on universities, after review of the current status of classes, examinations and academic progress, he said. Referring to TDP general secretary Nara Lokesh's letter to Chief Minister on Class X examinations, the minister said while the state government was trying to save the academic year of students following Covid guidelines, Lokesh has been resorting to mudslinging on the state government.

Atchanna demands ₹10k aid to private school staff

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AMARAVATI

TDP state president K Atchannaidu demanded that the state government pay Rs 10,000 stipend as corona package to private teachers, non-teaching staff of the schools who lost their jobs due to coronavirus. He also appealed that they be provided interest-free loans through banks and employment in outsourcing opportunities in public sector companies.

In a letter to Chief Minister on Thursday, he said that the teachers, who play a key role in taking the country forward, were facing several problems due to the pandemic. “More than 5 lakh teaching and non-teaching employees are working in private schools in the state. Schools have been closed rendering most of them jobless. Some teachers have turned vegetable sellers, some as cobblers, while others have become construction workers to feed their families. The government has failed miserably in supporting private school teachers,” he said in the letter.

The former minister said that YSRCP government had ignored teachers working in private educational institutions since the first wave of corona last year. So far, 159 private school teachers had died due to lack of livelihood. However, Jagan Mohan Reddy had failed to respond. Atchannaidu added that the Telangana government was distributing 25 kg rice along with Rs 2,000 per month to support private teachers adding that other states too were helping the private teachers.

CM wants ‘clean’ land survey



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewing YSR Jagananna Saswatha Bhoomi Hakku-Bhoo Rakshana scheme at his camp office on Thursday

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AMARAVATI

CHIEF Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy held a review meeting on YSR Jagananna Saswatha Bhoomi Hakku-Bhoo Rakshana scheme and directed the officials to ensure that there would be no corruption in the comprehensive land survey and no farmer is troubled.

During a review held at camp office here on Thursday, the Chief Minister said there should be no scope for corruption in the survey process failing which the whole programme will get bad name. He asked them to check twice during the survey and ensure accuracy.

He directed the officials to get Land Titling Act approved by the Central government as the whole land records and data was being updated and added to ensure no shortage of funds to the scheme. He said there should be no delay in supply of survey stones as the land survey will be completed soon and added that no money should be collected from farmers for setting up boundary stones. He said one hoarding should be placed in every village/ward secretariat with details of government schemes and programmes and permanent hoardings should be set up in important junctions.

The Chief Minister said sub-registrar offices should be set up in the 51 villages where the comprehensive land survey has been

completed and added that by the time the purification of records, record updation and setting up of survey stones were completed, sub-registrar offices should be set up and directed the officials to make necessary arrangements for setting up registrar offices in village secretariats.

He said a steering committee should be created for conducting comprehensive land survey smoothly and the committee should hold a review meeting once in a week and added that land administration chief commissioner will play a vital role in the process.

The officials informed the Chief Minister that SOP (Standard Ownership Policy) has been prepared for comprehensive land survey of 17,460 villages and 47,861 habitations in an area of 1.26 lakh km across the state. They said the survey is being conducted in 13 villages, one village in each district, and then in 51 villages, with one village in each division, and 650 villages with one village in each mandal in the first phase.

They said collecting comprehensive information in 51 villages is completed and the survey would be completed by July. In regard to 650 villages, survey using drones is completed in 545 villages and 2,693 images of agricultural lands and habitations were collected and the survey will be completed by January 2022.

In just 10 days 6 Lucknow scribes fall prey to medical shortage

A senior official says that it is near impossible to arrange beds for anyone, leave alone journalists

LUCKNOW

SHORTAGE of ventilators, oxygen cylinders and hospital beds has led to the death of over half-a-dozen journalists in Lucknow in the past 10 days. All these scribes had to struggle for hours to get admitted to the hospitals after they developed Covid symptoms.

Some of them arranged for oxygen cylinders on their own but, could not get ventilator support.

Sacchidanand Gupta of 'Jadeed Amal', an Urdu newspaper, passed away on April 14 because he could not get ventilator support on time.

Vinay Srivastava, a veteran journalist, kept tweeting to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his media advisors for medical assistance as his oxygen levels kept going down, but help came only after he passed away.

Tavishi Srivastava, the political editor of 'Pioneer', could not get admitted to a hospital after she complained of breathless.

For hours on April 18, her colleagues tried to arrange for an oxygen cylinder and medical aid. Finally, a senior journalist from Delhi managed to get her admitted to the King George's Medical University, but it was already too late as she passed away hours later. Pawan Mishra, a young journalist, died two days ago. His family claims that he needed ventilator support but never got one.

Ankit Shukla, 32, died earlier this week of Covid while Waseem left for another world on Wednesday. Pramod Srivastava, 48, the newly elected member of the UP State Accredited Journalist Committee 2021, elections for which were held on March 21, died last



month due to Covid. At least a dozen journalists at present are Covid infected and battling for better medical facilities. More than 20 family members of scribes are also hospitalised at currently.

Journalists' unions are now demanding that beds should be reserved for scribes and the state government should also recognise them as Corona warriors.

The President of UP State Accredited Correspondents' Committee, Hemant Tiwari, has written a letter to the Chief Minister, seeking compensation for journalists who have lost their lives to Covid.

Meanwhile, a senior government official said that it was near impossible to arrange for beds "for anyone, leave alone journalists".

"The situation is critical and we all have to put up with it till the infrastructure is expanded," he said.

WINDOWS

No mask: Doc fined ₹10K

JHANSI: A doctor has been fined for not wearing a mask while treating patients at his clinic.

The Kotwali Police have slapped a challan of Rs 10,000 on a doctor in the old city who was treating patients without wearing a mask.

According to reports, a police team was on a routine checking on Tuesday evening in Nariya Bazar in the old city area where they found a doctor sitting with a number of patients in a small cabin.

The clinic was small and patients were sitting huddled together, most of them without wearing masks.



A health worker does thermal check on a voter at a polling station during the 6th phase of West Bengal polls at Khardha on Thursday

Pfizer 'non-profit' price for vaccine

NEW DELHI: Global pharma major Pfizer on Thursday said it has offered a not-for-profit price for its vaccine for the government immunisation programme in India and it remains committed to continuing engagement with the government to make the vaccine available in the country. The company also said during the pandemic phase it will supply the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 mRNA vaccine only through government contracts. "Pfizer remains committed to continuing our engagement with the Government towards making the Pfizer and BioNTech vaccine available for use in the government's immunization programme in the country", a Pfizer spokesperson said in an email response to PTI.

O2 CRISIS: 'WE CAN'T BREATHE, CRY'

BJP MLA compares Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla with a dacoit

NEW DELHI: Addressing a tweet to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, poll strategist Prashant Kishor spotlighted India's "we can't breathe" cry - conveying the sense of desperation among thousands over the lack of oxygen supply in hospitals amid a deadly second wave of coronavirus sweeping the country. Oxygen should be made available to "at least keep calm", he wrote.

Earlier, the Delhi High Court tore into the Centre over its handling of the city's oxygen crisis, and across the country.

"The citizen can only fall back on the State. It is the responsibility of the government. Beg... borrow... or steal, it is your job."

An oxygen tanker was waylaid in Haryana and vaccines have also been stolen. Another step towards anarchy.

In a sharp letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Raj Thackeray said he was shocked to learn that the Centre now plans to control the purchase and distribution of the Remdesivir injection, a key drug used in the treatment of Covid-19.

Meanwhile, as many as 1,710 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were stolen from the PPC centre at Civil Hospital in Haryana's Jind district, officials said on Thursday. Senior Congress leader and former Delhi government minister AK Walia died of COVID-19 in the early hours of Thursday, party leaders said. He was 72.



A family member of a patient rests outside LLR Hospital in Kanpur on Thursday

Former Delhi Minister AK Walia succumbs 1,710 doses of vaccine stolen from hospital

300 passengers flee airport to avoid test

SILCHAR: Over 300 passengers, who landed at the Silchar airport on Wednesday, created disorder and fled the facility to escape mandatory COVID-19 testing, officials said on Thursday, and asserted criminal action will be initiated against them.

Cachar district Additional Deputy Commissioner Sumit Sattawan said a total of 690 passengers arrived at the airport from various parts of the country aboard six aircraft. He said they were supposed to undergo swab tests at the airport and the nearby Tikol Model Hospital.

"Around 300 people created chaos at both places, mainly over payment of Rs 500 for the tests," he said.

Sitaram Yechury's son passes away

NEW DELHI: CPM General Secretary Sitaram Yechury said his son Ashish died of COVID-19 in the morning.

Ashish, a journalist by profession who would have celebrated his 35th birthday on June 9, was recovering well at Gurgaon's Medanta Hospital, people close to the family added. They described his sudden death at 5.30 am after a two-week battle with the disease as a shock.

Meanwhile, Mithilesh Kumar Tiwari, a BJP MLA from Bihar, tweeted about the death of Sitaram Yechury's son who passed away.

Kumar's tweet called Yechury a 'Chinese supporter' and said his son died of 'Chinese corona'.

500 docs, staff of 2 hospitals affected

PATNA: During the ongoing second wave, above 500 doctors and health workers of the two leading hospitals in Patna-AIIMS and Patna Medical College and Hospital have been infected by the virus, sources in the two hospitals said.

Altogether 384 employees of AIIMS Patna, including doctors, nurses, safai karamchari and others have come under the impact of the virus in course of the dangerous second wave so far, its Medical Superintendent C M Singh told PTI.

Singh said he does not have the breakdown, but in total there are 384 infected AIIMS staff here. PMCH Superintendent Dr Indu Sekhar Thakur said more than 125 of its staff have tested positive so far.

100 Sikh pilgrims test +ve on return from Pak

CHANDIGARH: Hundred Sikh pilgrims from among 800 who went to Pakistan to celebrate Baisakhi have tested positive for coronavirus on their return, officials have said.

The Sikh devotees from India had gone to Lahore's Gurdwara Panja Sahib on the last day of Baisakhi. Officials said 100 of them have tested positive after they took a rapid antigen test. Some 350 were tested for COVID-19 using rapid antigen method.

Now, some of them who have returned to Amritsar will be tested using the more accurate RT-PCR method, officials have said.

The Foreign Ministry has been in touch with the pilgrims to ensure their safety, officials said.

The Pakistani High Commission in Delhi had issued visas to over 1,100 Sikh pilgrims for Baisakhi travel. Under the framework of the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974, a large number of pilgrims from India visit Pakistan to attend festivals every year.

In view of the fast-spreading Covid-19 infection in the country, the Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB) on Thursday decided to temporarily suspend the registration for this year's Yatra to the Amarnath Cave shrine.

"The situation is being constantly monitored and it would be reopened once the situation improves," the SASB said.

Singapore Health Ministry said it will not allow entry to long-term visa holders and short-term visitors with recent travel history to India, which is battling a second wave of Covid-19 infections.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday said to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the new COVID-19 vaccine policy, terming it as arbitrary and discriminatory and urged him to intervene immediately to reverse it.

In a letter to the prime minister, the Congress chief alleged that the new vaccine policy implies that the central government has abdicated its responsibility of providing free vaccine to all Indians between 18 and 45 years of age.

Covid surge: Nithyananda Kailasa bans Indians

NEW DELHI

WITH the rising COVID-19 cases across the world, it is not unusual to dream of escaping to a remote island. And if 'Kailasa' - the 'nation' that self-styled godman Nithyananda claims to have founded in 2019 - was on your list of places to travel to, we have bad news for you. In a statement, Nithyananda announced that devotees from India would not be allowed to enter his island. Nithyananda has been hiding on the island located off the coast of Ecuador since 2019. He absconded after being accused of sexual assault. Since then, Nithyananda has appealed to the United Nations to declare the Kailasa as a separate country.



In the latest statement, he wrote, "All Kailasians, Ekailasians, volunteers associated with these de facto embassies of Kailasa are to quarantine themselves and adhere to the precautionary measures advised by the local laws."

In the past, Nithyananda has grabbed eyeballs on social media with videos and tweets about his 'Hindu sovereign nation'. Besides its own cabinet and Prime Minister, the island has a dedicated website. About the island, the website says, "Kailasa is a nation without borders created by dispossessed Hindus from around the world who lost the right to practice Hinduism authentically in their own countries."

In August 2020, Nithyananda even launched his very own 'Reserve Bank of Kailasa'. The official currency of the island was declared to be 'Kailashian dollars'. The

Court's TN Seshan reference in rap to Election Commission on Bengal polls

KOLKATA: The Election Commission was censured by the Calcutta High Court over its handling of the mammoth eight-phase election in Bengal in the middle of a lethal Covid second wave. Amid concerns that poll rallies might become super-spreader events, the court observed that the Commission is not doing enough in this respect even though it has the powers to do so.

"The Election Commission is empowered to act, but what is it doing about polls in these Covid times? The EC is just passing circulars and leaving it to the people. But the EC has implementing authority," the court said. Commenting that the Commission "is not doing one-tenth of what TN Seshan had done", the judges warned that if Commission did not take action, the court will, according to NDTV report.

Later, Election Commission restricted campaigning in Bengal, only public meetings with 500 people allowed amid rising Covid cases.



The sixth phase of the West Bengal assembly election held on Thursday for 43 seats recorded a voter turnout of 79.09 per cent till 5 pm.

India needs to be prepared to fight Covid for years to come

NEW DELHI

As India faces the daunting task to make life-saving oxygen cylinders and key Covid drugs available amid the raging second wave of the pandemic, top health experts said on Thursday that the country needs to prepare itself for a long haul -- at least for the next 2-3 years -- unless oral drugs that can effectively kill the virus are available over the counter.

The Centre and the State governments need a well chalked-out plan for the next couple of years -- unlike the current scary situation -- to deal with the pandemic, which will become like a seasonal flu, they said.

"The future remains a mystery. Covid may continue for long if the strains remain infectious, and hit us

hard a multiple times in the years to come, or it may disappear if the virus mutates to a very docile one similar to flu," Neha Gupta, infectious diseases specialist at the Medanta-The Medicity, told IANS.

"The ideal situation will be oral drugs which can effectively kill the virus and are safe to use on OPD basis. Till then, mask, hand hygiene and social distancing are of paramount importance for us and must remain a part of our lives for years to come," she elaborated.

Covid-19 may be seasonal like flu, according to researchers from the University of Illinois, Chicago. "One conclusion is that the disease may be seasonal, like the flu. This is very relevant to what we should expect from now on after the vaccine controls these first waves of Covid-19," said Gustavo Caetano-



Anolles in a paper published in the journal 'Evolutionary Bioinformatics'. While temperature and latitude are unmistakably correlated with Covid-19 cases, researchers said that climate is only one factor driving seasonal Covid-19 incidence worldwide - something that we are currently witnessing in India.

According to V. Ramana Prasad, senior pulmonologist at the KIMS Hospital in Hyderabad, Covid is now going to be there in the community forever, like any other communicable disease.

"The only option for any country is to vaccinate majority of its people so that the disease severity comes down both in terms of morbidity and mortality. After two-three years, it may become endemic and we may see sporadic spurt of Covid cases, like Swine Flu," Prasad told IANS. The virus is changing at its own

pace, and mutations are affected by factors other than temperature or latitude.

"We don't know exactly what these factors are, but we can now say that seasonal effects are independent of the genetic makeup of the virus," said Caetano-Anolles.

India is now facing more lethal variants, even a triple-mutant one.

The B1617 variant, first detected in Maharashtra, contains mutations from two separate virus variants - E484Q and L452R. The third mutation evolved from the double mutation where three different Covid strains combined to form a new variant.

Two of these triple-mutant varieties have been found in samples collected from Maharashtra, Delhi, West Bengal and Chhattisgarh.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Rising Covid cases add uncertainty to growth

“THE renewed jump in Covid-19 infections in several parts of the country and the associated localised and regional lockdowns add uncertainty to the growth outlook. Demand pull is still weak, RBI remain focused on reviving the economy


— Shaktikanta Das, RBI Governor



TABLETS

Apple pips Samsung to take 2nd spot

RIDING on the surge in remote work, learning and fun activities at home during the pandemic, Apple dethroned Samsung to take the second position in the India tablet market with a market share of 29 per cent in the January-March quarter of 2021. In Q1 2021, Apple iPads continued to perform exceptionally in India

FOREX (buy rates in ₹)			
US Dollar	75.69		South
Euro	91.17		African Rand6.04
UAE Dirham	21.01		Hong Kong Dollar11.11
Thai Baht	2.63		Japanese Yen0.8
British Pound	105.37		New Zealand Dollar54.4
Australian Dollar	58.68		Saudi Riyal21.97
Canadian Dollar	60.57		Swedish Krona10.25
Swiss Franc	82.72		Singapore Dollar57.59

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BIZ BRIEFS

Axis launches app for mkts

Axis Direct, the flagship brand of Axis Securities, has announced the launch of its new mobile app 'Axis Direct RING' to make investment in stock markets simple, fast, and rewarding. The app provides a detailed overview of all the major Indian stock markets and exchanges, and offers a wide range of trading tools, such as screeners, intuitive charts, detailed quotes, price alert notifications, research calls, and updates. It seamlessly access all the market instruments, such as equity, F&O, currency, commodity, and mutual funds, across exchanges. "The launch of Axis Direct RING is another step in our endeavour to enhance the experience of our customers. This mobile app offers a super-fast trading interface and real-time access to stock prices," said B Gopkumar, MD and CEO, Axis Securities.

Levi's unveils new campaign

Levi's, an apparel company, has launched a new spring campaign "Buy Better, Wear Longer", to raise awareness on shared responsibility on the environmental impacts of apparel production and consumption. The campaign was featured by Jaden Smith, Xiye Bastida, Melati Wijsen, Xiutezcaltl, Emma Chamberlain and Marcus Rashford MBE. The campaign will be carried out on all Levi's platforms globally in an effort to share this message far and wide. "Ultimately, Levi's denim is meant to be worn for generations, not seasons. So, we are also using this campaign to encourage consumers to be more intentional about their apparel choices: to wear each item longer, for example, to buy SecondHand, or to use our in-store tailor shops to extend the life of their garments," said Jennifer Sey, Brand President.

Taneira's exhibition

Taneira, a brand from Titan, is hosting a four-day exhibition and sale of handcrafted sarees from April 22 to 25, 2021 at the Tanishq Showroom in Rajahmundry, Andhra Pradesh. The exhibition will showcase Taneira's exclusive collection of nearly 1,500 handcrafted sarees from Banaras, Kanjeevaram, Tussar, Maheshwari, Chanderi, and other weaving regions of India. The brand is offering up to 30 per cent off on select products. "We are bringing our newest range sarees handcrafted across varied crafts from Banaras, Kanjeevaram, South Silk, Tussar, Silk-cotton, Maheshwari, to Chanderi, in addition to our exclusive summer designs. We are confident that these collections from various parts of India as well as our in-house designs will receive a warm welcome by the elegant women here," said Rajeshwari Srinivasan, Chief Operating Officer, Taneira.

M&As jump over 17%

Merger and acquisitions surged 17.4 per cent in the March quarter to \$25.3 billion across 97 deals, according to a report. According to the report collated by Mergermarket, relaxation in the pandemic restrictions as well as investor optimism due to vaccines rollout and government stimulus have helped the delay activities. But, it is unlikely to sustain into the second quarter given the ferocity of the second wave, even though pharma and technology firms are expected to continue to attract investments, it added. Though the deal value jumped 17.4 per cent to \$25.3 billion across 97 deals, over \$21.6 billion across 122 deals, which means the deal volume is down 20.5 per cent.

S&P projects 11% upswing in FY22 GDP

Says lockdowns will impact the economic recovery

NEW DELHI

S&P Global Ratings on Thursday said the Indian economy is projected to grow at 11 per cent in the current fiscal, but flagged the "substantial" impact of broader lockdowns on the economy.

In its report on Asia-Pacific Financial Institutions, S&P said the control of Covid-19 remains a key risk for the economy. New infections have spiked in recent weeks and the country is in the middle of a second pandemic wave. "Our forecast growth of 11 per cent for India in 2021 is followed by a 6.1 per cent-6.4 per cent forecast increase for the next couple of years... Some targeted lockdowns have already been implemented and more will likely be needed. The impact of broader lockdowns on the economy could be substantial, depending on their length and scope," it said. S&P, which currently has a 'BBB-' rating on India with a stable outlook, has forecast an 11 per cent growth in the Indian GDP for the fiscal beginning April 1 on account of a fast economic reopening and fiscal stimulus.

As per official estimates, the Indian economy contracted 8 per cent in 2020-21 fiscal, which ended March 31, 2021. Last week, another global rating agency Moody's Investors Service had said the second wave of Covid infections presents a risk to India's



growth forecast, but double-digit GDP growth is likely in 2021 given the low level of activity last year. India is in the middle of the second wave of Covid pandemic and has witnessed over 3.14 lakh new infections and 2,104 deaths on Wednesday. Active Covid cases in the country stand at over 22.91 lakh. In the report, S&P said credit conditions have improved for Asia-Pacific banks over the past quarter.

Economies are recovering smartly, countries are rolling out vaccinations, and regional financing circumstances remain supportive. And yet, the pandemic has so seriously set back the finances of households and corporates, with deeply negative effects on lenders, S&P said. It ex-

pects banks may need years to fully recover. Public authorities across Asia-Pacific have blunted the economic effects of Covid-19. This includes an unprecedented level of fiscal and monetary policy support for households and corporates and measures to encourage banks to lend and show forbearance toward stressed borrowers. But for this support, the hit on the Asia-Pacific financial institutions would have been much more significant. "Public authorities will likely continue to have a key effect on banking sector creditworthiness over the next six to 18 months. They must maintain a delicate balancing act of not withdrawing support too early or, alternatively, not overshooting," S&P added.

LIC earns highest ever premium in FY21

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

LIC has closed its last fiscal with a new business premium of Rs 1.84 lakh crore as per provisional figures. The insurer also paid Rs. 1.34 lakh crore as claims to policyholders.

LIC said that it has achieved its highest ever first year premium income of Rs. 5,64,06 crore under individual assurance business with a 10.11 per cent growth over last year and also procured an impressive 2.10 crore policies, out of which 46.72 lakh were procured in the month of March alone, with a growth of 298.82 per cent over last year for the corresponding month.

The market share garnered by LIC comes to 81.04 per cent in number of policies for the month of March 2021 and 74.58 per cent for the year. For

first year premium, the market share is 64.74 per cent for March and 66.18 per cent for the whole year.

LIC's pension and group schemes vertical also created a new record by clocking its highest ever new business premium income of Rs. 1,27,768 crore over a huge base of Rs



1,26,749 crore in the previous year. Number of new schemes is also a new record of 31,795.

With the addition of 3,45,469 agents, the corporation now has a strong sales force of 13,53,808 agents. This year LIC has created 16,564 MDRT qualifiers, the highest ever. Also, the corporation has created 26,997 Centurion agents.

Sensex snaps 2-day losing run

MUMBAI

After skidding 501 points in opening session, BSE pared losses to end 0.79% higher at 48,081

EQUITY benchmarks darted up on Thursday after two sessions of losses as investors piled into banking and finance stocks even as the deteriorating Covid-19 situation remained a concern.

The benchmarks were propped up by bargain-hunting in select frontline counters as well as supportive global cues, traders said. After skidding 501 points in the opening session, the 30-share BSE Sensex pared all losses to end 374.87 points or 0.79 per cent higher at 48,080.67. Similarly, the broader NSE Nifty jumped 109.75 points or 0.77 per cent to finish at 14,406.15.

ICICI Bank was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, spurring 3.60 per cent, followed by HDFC, Bajaj Auto, HDFC Bank, SBI, Kotak Bank, Bajaj Finance and Axis Bank. On the other hand, Titan, HUL, Asian Paints, Nestle India, UltraTech Cement and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards, shedding up to 2.75 per cent.

A persistent rise in Covid-19

cases across the country and enhanced mobility restrictions imposed by number of states are expected to remain as key drags for the market in the near term. This has certainly started posing as a threat to corporate earnings recovery. "Notably, possibility of supply disruption and increased Covid-19 cases in hinterland area can further hurt economic momentum. We believe market is expected to remain volatile until we see a reversal in Covid-19 cases," said Binod Modi, Head - Strategy at Reliance Securities.

India registered over 3.14 lakh new coronavirus cases in a day, the highest-ever single-day count recorded in any country, taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases in the country to 1,59,30,965, as per the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

The oxygen crisis, precipitated by the second wave which has left tens of thousands hospitalised, appeared to intensify with complaints of shortage from several states. Sector-wise, bank, finance, metal, realty and basic materials indices rose up to 2.14 per cent, while consumer durables, FMCG, IT and tech closed lower.

Broader BSE midcap and small cap indices rose up to 0.59 per cent. Global markets were largely in the positive territory as investors monitored the vaccination progress and economic recovery in multiple countries, though the unabated rise in Covid-19 cases remained an overhang. In Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended on a positive note, while Shanghai was in the red. Bourses in Europe were trading with gains in mid-session deals. Meanwhile, international oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.51 per cent lower at \$64.99 per barrel. The rupee weakened further by 6 paise to close at 74.94 against the US dollar as a persistent rise in COVID-19 cases and enhanced restrictions imposed by a number of states weighed on investor sentiment.



Rupee down 6 paise to 74.94 against US dollar

MUMBAI

THE rupee weakened further by 6 paise to close at 74.94 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday as a persistent rise in Covid-19 cases and enhanced restrictions imposed by a number of states weighed on investor sentiment.

At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 75.25 against the greenback and traded in the range of 74.82 to 75.26 during the day.

The rupee finally ended at 74.94 against the American currency, registering a fall of 6 paise over its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee had settled at 74.88 against the American currency. Forex and equity markets were closed on Wednesday on account of 'Ram Navami'.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.07 per cent to 91.09.

Covid-19 surge will take toll on IPOs

ROHIT VAID
MUMBAI

Expected trend assumes significance since many unicorns plan to go public

COVID resurgence is expected to not only impact India's secondary markets but also the FY22 IPO season. The expected trend assumes significance since many unicorns plan to go public in the next six to eight months.

In financial parlance, a unicorn represents a startup which has a market valuation of over a billion dollars based on the capital generated in its previous funding rounds. Accordingly, the money flow situation in the secondary market with respect to the Covid resurgence will impact unicorns' ability to give early stage investors an exit.

"Covid resurgence will have an effect on the secondary market indices which will impact IPO subscription levels," HDFC Securities' Retail Research Head Deepak Jasani, told.

"The IPO pricing is also important. In case sufficient money is left on the table for investors, then IPOs can sail smoothly." Till recently, many Unicorns have announced plans to tap the IPO market.

"When will this happen will depend on a number of factors including the pressure on such companies to exit, secondary market conditions, track record of recent IPOs etc." At present, more than a dozen companies have received market regulator's approval, and another dozen are awaiting the same to go public.

"Companies like SBI Cards, which went public during the early stages of the pandemic, were heavily affected during their initial public offering and were listed at a discounted price," said Gaurav Garg, Head of Research at CapitalVia.



"Even this year, we've seen how the rising number of Covid-19 cases has affected MacroTech's developer listing. So, if this trend persists, we could see a drop in IPOs." Besides, IPOs as a means of raising money for giving exit to investors have gained importance lately. "After the strong IPO show in FY21, we expect a similar trend in FY22 but only after the current consolidation phase that has

been triggered by the Covid resurgence subsidies," said Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

"Once the market start making gains then we expect all kinds of companies to go public - be it unicorns or others. Many have already attained regulatory clearance to enter the primary market. Last fiscal, India Inc. raised more than Rs 30,000 crore.

"Infection rate is expected to reduce in the coming weeks, as noticed in developed countries, and unlikely to impact the future outlook of businesses and thus IPOs market. It is great time, especially for new generation businesses, to raise money from the market," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Apollo seeks green corridor for oxygen supply

NEW DELHI

AMID the shortage of oxygen supply, Apollo Hospital's Joint Managing director Sangita Reddy has demanded a green corridor for the movement of oxygen tankers to the hospitals. In a series of tweets, she has tagged the Prime Minister office, Union Ministers Rajnath Singh and Piyush Goyal to help as she earlier alleged that the Haryana Police was creating hurdles.

"As I tweet, an oxygen tanker is outside the gate of Air Liquide Panipat plant at IOCL and he is not being allowed inside Haryana police are stopping it and not letting the oxygen out of Haryana. Need urgent intervention," she said.

In an update later, she said that "the driver has just been allowed



inside and hopefully the oxygen will be sent out soon". Reddy urged ambulances and tankers should be given quick green corridor movement. "While we ramp up prod and redirect IND supply of #Oxygen the URGENT factor is to allow free movement of tankers across State borders Govt pls tag O2 tankers as AMBULANCES!! Create a green corridor 4 tanker movement with CRPF escort The situation is CRITICAL for Hospitals and Drs" She said in her tweet.

Sushil ignored, Amit replaces Mann for wrestling's final Oly qualifier

NEW DELHI

FORMER Asian champion Amit Dhankar (74kg) on Thursday replaced national gold-medalist Sandeep Mann in the Indian wrestling team for the upcoming World Olympic Qualifying Tournament, signalling the end of the road for veteran Sushil Kumar.

The tournament, to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria from May 6-9, will be the last qualifying event before the Tokyo Games. One of the country's most accomplished athletes, Sushil won a silver in the 2012 London Olympics, four years after a bronze in Beijing.

After not being considered for selection, the 37-year-old Sushil told PTI, "To stay alive is more important at this stage. I have not spoken to WFI as yet, will speak to them." The team was picked by the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) after a meeting of its selection committee, the federation said in a press release signed by its assistant secretary Vinod Tomar. Besides Dhankar, the others in the free style team included Satyavrat Kadian (97kg) and Sumit (125kg).

"In free style, the committee has made replacement in 74 kg. Sandeep Mann, selected for Asian Qualifier and Asian Championship, didn't produce satisfactory performance. Hence, the committee decided to give chance to Amit Dhankar who secured second position in the selection trials held on March 16," the WFI said in the release.

The greco roman team comprised Sachin Rana (60kg), Aashu (67kg), Gurpreet Singh (77 kg), Sunil (87 kg), Deepanshu (97 kg) and Naveen Kumar (130 kg). "In greco roman style, the committee made replacements in 60 Kg, and 97 Kg.

The wrestlers selected in these weight categories -- Gyanendra and Ravi respectively gave poor performance in both competitions (Asian qualifier and Asian championship).

"Hence, the panel gave chance to Sachin Rana and Deepanshu who won 2nd positions in the selection trials. Seema (50kg), Nisha (68kg) and Pooja (76kg) formed the Indian women's team.

"The committee didn't feel it appropriate to make any replacement in these weight categories as all these wrestlers secured medals either in Qualifying competition or Asian championship." (PTI)

INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE

Fleming attributes shift in attitude to CSK's turnaround

MUMBAI

CHENNAI Super Kings coach Stephen Fleming has ascribed the team's turnaround, after the flop show in last IPL, to a shift in attitude and addition of some key personnel.

Three-time champions CSK are occupying the top spot following three successive wins in the ongoing league, less than six months after failing to make the tournament's playoffs for the first time, in the UAE.

"Winning three out of four probably exceeded the expectations. We felt maybe three out of five or if we got a couple would be good," Fleming said at the post-match media interaction after beating Kolkata Knight Riders on Wednesday. "We're very proud of the way the batting in particular is standing up that's two 190s and two 220s So, we're playing well in that department and that's by design which is good."

While Sam Curran has carried forward his form from the last season, the real value addition has been the off-spin all-rounder Moeen Ali, who is giving them the flexibility with his hard-hitting approach at No. 3.

"I think we've added some players that made a difference already, but the attitude is probably the number one thing, so real mind shift.

"It's probably both of those things, just making sure that we have a lot of batting that you can play a high-risk game and that gives confidence to



Ruturaj Gaikwad of Chennai Super Kings raises his bat after his fifty during the IPL match against the Kolkata Knight Riders at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Wednesday.

the players to play a certain way.

"We felt we were a little bit thin last year to play a high-risk game. So we had to really swivel around and change more attitude than anything in this year," Fleming said.

Backing the players has been CSK skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's success mantra, and opener Ruturaj Gaikwad repaid the faith by returning to form with a 42-ball 64, which set it up for Faf du Plessis (95 not out from 60 balls) to finish the innings on a rousing note.

"We told him to just keep playing, we rate him very highly. I know there's a bit of pressure on him from the outside, but inside the camp there was absolutely no doubt that what he's capable of," Fleming said of Gaikwad, who had made 5, 5 and 10 in the previous three innings.

the points table.

Morgan fined Rs 12 lakh for slow over-rate: KKR captain Eoin Morgan has been fined Rs 12 lakh for maintaining a slow over-rate during their IPL match against Chennai Super Kings here at the Wankhede Stadium.

"As it was his team's first offence of the season under the IPL's Code of Conduct relating to minimum over-rate offences, Morgan was fined Rs 12 lakh," said the IPL.

KKR's lower order put up a brave fight but could not get their team past the finishing line on Wednesday, as CSK beat them by 18 runs in a high-scoring encounter. (PTI)

POINTS TABLE									
Team	Played	Won	Lost	Tied	Net	RR	Pts		
1 CSK	4	3	1	0	+1.142	6			
2 RCB	3	3	0	0	+0.750	6			
3 DC	4	3	1	0	+0.426	6			
4 MI	4	2	2	0	+0.187	4			
5 SRH	4	1	3	0	-0.228	2			
6 KKR	4	1	3	0	-0.700	2			
7 RR	3	1	2	0	-0.719	2			
8 PBKS	4	1	3	0	-0.824	2			



Gitika celebrates her win

Boxing: Gitika, Babyrojisana clinch gold medals at youth world championship

NEW DELHI

INDIAN boxers Gitika (48kg) and Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg) clinched gold medals in the youth world championships in Kielce, Poland, notching up dominating victories in the finals on Thursday.

While Gitika prevailed 5-0 over Poland's Natalia Kuczevska, Babyrojisana defeated Valeriia Linkova of Russia by a similar margin after a close opening round. Gitika opened the proceedings for India and she grunted her way to domination, outpunching her hapless opponent. Also striking was Gitika's impeccable footwork and balance.

Kuczevska, on the other hand, looked clueless for most part, rarely managing to connect and unable to cope with the sheer pace and aggression of her rival. Gitika gave Kuczevska a bloodied nose in the third round, refusing to take her foot off the

pedal even for a second.

Babyrojisana, on the other hand, fought out a more intense battle. Both the boxers spent the opening round taking a measure of each other but the Indian landed enough straights to get a 3-2 verdict in her favour in the first three minutes.

The engagement picked up in the second round and it was the Manipuri who grabbed the upper-hand, negating the Russian's height advantage with some ferocious hooks. Linkova was also guilty of not defending well as Babyrojisana clinched the second round unanimously.

In the final three minutes, Babyrojisana, a product of M C Mary Kom's academy in Manipur, stepped up the pressure with an attack-first approach to seal the bout. A total of eight Indians have made the finals, seven of them women. The lone male finalist Sachin (56kg) will fight on Friday. (PTI)

Mumbai Indians seeks consistency; Punjab eyes return to winning ways

CHENNAI

MUMBAI Indians would be aiming to address their batting woes to achieve consistency while Punjab Kings would be desperate to arrest their overall slide when the two sides clash in an IPL match here on Friday.

The Rohit Sharma-led Mumbai crashed to defeat against Delhi Capitals following an inept batting performance and will look for redemption. The skipper shone with the bat, but others could not get going and the misfiring middle-order would be a major concern for the side.

The MI bowlers have more often than not risen to the occasion and won matches for the team. However, they couldn't do so

against Delhi and would like the batters to put up bigger scores for them to do the job.

Rohit looked in good touch against Delhi. However, Suryakumar Yadav and Ishan Kishan, stars of the team's victorious 2020 campaign, have not been able to make match-winning contributions and that has hurt MI along with middling performances from Kieron Pollard and the Pandya brothers -- Hardik and Krunal.

It is still early days in this year's IPL but Mumbai Indians would like its players to find form and consistency and a match against an under-performing Punjab could well be the beginning.

Punjab have flattered to deceive after a winning start. Being shot out for 120 by

SQUADS

Mumbai Indians
Rohit Sharma, Adam Milne, Aditya Tare, Anmolpreet Singh, Anukul Roy, Arjun Tendulkar, Chris Lynn, Dhawal Kulkarni, Hardik Pandya, Ishan Kishan, James Neesham, Jasprit Bumrah, Jayant Yadav, Kieron Pollard, Krunal Pandya, Marco Jansen, Mohsin Khan, Nathan Coulter-Nile, Piyush Chawla, Quinton De Kock (WK), Rahul Chahar, Saurabh Tiwary, Suryakumar Yadav, Trent Boult, Yuvraj Singh.

Punjab Kings
KL Rahul (c & wk), Mayank Agarwal, Chris Gayle, Mandeep Singh, Prabhsimran Singh, Nicholas Pooran (wk), Sarfraz Khan, Deepak Hooda, Murugan Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, Harpreet Brar, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ishan Porel, Darshan Nalband, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Jhye Richardson, Shikhar Dhawan, Riley Meredith, Moises Henriques, Lalaj Saxena, Utkarsh Singh, Fabian Allen, Saurabh Kumar.

Sunrisers Hyderabad on Wednesday hinted at bigger problems for the KL Rahul-led team, which has more than one issue to resolve, especially its composition.

The formidable batting unit hasn't hit the straps, save for Rahul and Mayank

Agarwal and the bowling has been pedestrian. "Universe Boss" Chris Gayle has not been able to boss over proceedings while his fellow West Indian Nicholas Pooran, expected to provide the big shots in the middle, has come a cropper so far.

Three straight losses would have definitely dented Punjab's morale and the team needs to recover quickly or else its play-off hopes would slip fast. Rahul has got two fifties in four games so far but has lacked support from others. His captaincy has not inspired a lot of confidence and muddled team selection has compounded his woes. Deepak Hooda showed what he is capable of, but greater consistency would be needed from him if the team has to prosper.

They bet on Australian pace imports Jhye Richardson and Riley Meredith to up the ante but they have proved expensive and already lost their place in the XI. Punjab may look to bring in the talented Ravi Bishnoi in place of Murugan Ashwin and fit in Chris Jordan in the XI. (PTI)

Amit Panghal in semis of boxing tourney in Russia

NEW DELHI

OLYMPIC-bound world silver-medallist Amit Panghal (52kg) was assured of at least a bronze at the Governor's Cup in St. Petersburg, Russia after he advanced to the semifinals but five other Indian boxers bowed out following opening round losses.

The Haryana-boxer, who is also the reigning Asian Games champion, prevailed 5-0 against local favourite Tamir Galanov to make the last-four stage.

However, Sumit Sangwan



(81kg), Mohammed Hussamuddin (57kg), Naman Tanwar (91kg), the Olympic-bound Ashish Kumar (75kg) and Vinod Tanwar (49kg) made early exits.

While Vinod lost to Russia's Igor Tsaregorodtsev (49kg) 2-3, Sumit went down 0-5 to Uzbekistan's Dishod Ruzmetov (81kg).

Naman, a Commonwealth Games bronze-medallist, was beaten 0-5 by Kazakhstan's Aybek Oralbay (91kg). Ashish, on the other hand, lost a close one to Russia's Nikita Kuzmin (75kg), going down 2-3.

Hussamuddin, however, lost to Uzbekistan's Miraziz Murzakhalilov (57kg) in a unanimous verdict. (PTI)

MADRID

THE Super League is far from dead and its clubs have not given up on the idea of the breakaway competition despite having to shelve the project just a few days after it was announced, Real Madrid president Florentino Perez said on Thursday.

Perez, who would have been the new league's founding chairman, said the clubs behind the Super League will continue working on a way to make the competition work, even if changes have to be made to its format.

He said the Super League is on "standby" and the group is open to discussing ideas with European soccer's governing body and other entities to help the game amid the coronavirus pandemic. Perez said he was certain that a "very similar" competition would soon be created. "We are going to keep working," Perez told Spanish radio network SER in an interview after midnight local time. "We are looking for ways of getting this done. It would be a shame not to get it done."

The Super League was announced on Sunday but essentially folded after the English clubs involved in the project pulled out on Tuesday amid escalating backlash from their supporters and warnings from the British government that legislation could be introduced to thwart them.

On Wednesday, Atletico Madrid and the three Italian clubs in the project -- Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan -- also opted out. That left Real Madrid and Barcelona as the only clubs still officially in the new league.

Perez said no one was really leaving, though. "They haven't left," the Madrid president said. "We are all still together, thinking of ways of making this happen."

Perez admitted that they should have explained the project better, and said he was "sad and disappointed" with the "avalanche of aggression" and "orchestrated" criticism that surfaced everywhere.

"Each president was prepared to speak, but



then the next day we got killed," Perez said. "We weren't expecting it. It was like we had launched an atomic bomb. It looked like that they already knew about it and were waiting for us."

Super League backer says breakaway competition is on standby

He said one of the English clubs was not really interested in the project from the start and that was "contagious" for the rest of the Premier League owners who were afraid of the criticism at home.

The English clubs initially involved in the project were Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham. While some Premier League clubs apologised to their fans while pulling back on Tuesday, the teams which dropped out on Wednesday admitted defeat but tried to show they still believe in the project.

"While Juventus remains convinced of the soundness of the project's sport, commercial and legal premises, it believes that at present there are limited chances that the project be completed in the form originally conceived," the Italian club said.

"We accepted the invitation to participate

in the Super League project with the genuine intention to deliver the best possible European competition for football fans around the world and in the best interest of the club and our own fans," the AC Milan club said.

"Change is not always easy, but evolution is necessary for progress, and the structures of European football have evolved and changed over the decades."

Inter Milan said it was committed to delivering the best soccer experience for fans because "innovation and inclusion have been part of our DNA since our foundation." "Our commitment with all stakeholders to im-

prove the football industry will never change," Inter said in a statement.

On Monday, UEFA threatened to ban players from the participating teams from playing in this year's European Championship and next year's World Cup. A Madrid court later issued a preliminary ruling stopping UEFA, FIFA and its members from acting against the creation of the new league.

The Super League was intended to be a 20-team competition with 15 founding members guaranteed a spot every season and five other teams rotating in and out. The lack of relegation for the founding members raised concerns about the consequences for smaller clubs in the domestic leagues around the continent. Perez said the group was ready to discuss changes. "We will keep working and talking to everyone," he said. "We are open to whatever is best for soccer." (AP)

Barca maintains support despite backlash

BARCELONA: Barcelona president Joan Laporta maintained his support for the Super League on Thursday despite the quick exit of 10 of the 12 founding clubs in the breakaway competition.

The Super League, which provoked a backlash by other clubs, fans and authorities around Europe, was announced by a dozen top clubs in England, Spain and Italy on Sunday, but it quickly collapsed and is now officially backed only by Barcelona and Real Madrid.

"It is absolutely necessary," Laporta said on Catalan public television in his first public comments on the project. "The biggest clubs create the most financial resources and we must have our say in deciding how the earnings are shared."

Barcelona's finances have been hard hit by the pandemic, which has compounded problems in a budget that was already loaded by the highest payroll in soccer last season. Laporta's financial challenges include trying to convince Lionel Messi to sign a new contract when his expires this year.

The 12 elite clubs wanted to boost their revenues by cutting UEFA out of the equation and replacing the Champions League with the new tournament of 20 teams.

"There have been pressures placed on some clubs, but the proposal is still standing," Laporta said. "We have very important investments, our salaries are very high, and those must be taken into consideration, along with sporting merits." (AP)