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WINDOWS



Only one priest performs 'Ganga Aarti' in view of the second wave of Covid-19, at a Ganga ghat, in Varanasi on Thursday

New Zealand bans travel from India

MELBOURNE/ WELLINGTON

NEW ZEALAND has for the first time imposed a temporary ban on travellers coming from India, including its citizens, from April 11 to 28 due to a surge in Covid-19 cases among visitors to this country, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said on Thursday. The travel restriction comes after New Zealand recorded 23 new positive coronavirus cases in managed isolation on Thursday, of which 17 came from India, Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield was quoted as saying by media reports. While arrivals from India had triggered the risk assessment, Prime Minister Ardern said the government would be looking at risks posed by other Covid-19 hotspot countries. The ban will begin from 4 pm local time on April 11 and will be in place until April 28, she said.

Covid 2nd wave likely to boost FMCG sales

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA

BENGALURU: The second wave of the Covid pandemic is likely to rev up the sales of daily necessities like groceries and related products though discretionary spend will take a backseat. The FMCG companies operating in the food, staples, and beverages space are expected to benefit from the current wave, experts said. But relocating at many places in the country due to rising Covid cases will negatively impact the sales of those products, required for outdoor activities. "Just like last year, packaged foods and consumer staples are likely to do well if lockdown curbs are imposed in many places across the country. However, discretionary spend will suffer as consumers will be more conservative in their spending patterns," said a Mumbai-based analyst. ►P7



Davai Bhi Kadai Bhi

PM asks States to check laxity in containing Covid-19

CALLS FOR VACCINE FESTIVAL FROM APRIL 11-14

- Corona cases crossed peak stage
- No nationwide lockdown
- Night curfew can be imposed, and it should be called as corona curfew
- Reduce vaccine wastage
- Many State Governments not alert
- State Govts forgot tracing, testing and treatment
- People also not taking it seriously
- Government, celebrities and others should create awareness on need for using clean masks in proper way, hand sanitising along with motivating them to take vaccine

NEW DELHI

NOTING that administration was appearing lax in many states amid a rising number of Covid-19 cases, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday urged chief ministers to strengthen their efforts for the next 2-3 weeks to check the spread of the virus on a "war-footing". He also called for observing a vaccine festival between April 11-14 to inoculate the maximum number of eligible beneficiaries. In his interaction with chief ministers to discuss the Covid-19 situation and the ongoing vaccination drive, Modi asserted that the country had much more resources to deal with the virus than before and the focus should be on micro-containment zones. "There is a need to improve the governance system. I understand that because of the one-year battle, the system can

88 IIT Roorkee students test positive

DEHRADUN

NEARLY 88 students of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Roorkee in Uttarakhand's Haridwar district have tested positive for coronavirus, an institute official said on Thursday. Sonika Shrivastava, a spokesperson of the institute, said all the 88 students have been kept in the Ganga hostel within the IIT premises which has been converted into a special Covid care centre. Nearly five hostels have been sealed. However, there is no disruption in the online classes of the institute, she said. Shrivastava made it clear that the institute was strictly adhering to all the Covid-19 guidelines of the state government. "We are very strict on covid guidelines," she said.

experience tiredness and there can be laxity, but we must tighten it for 2-3 weeks and strengthen the governance," he said. Modi emphasised on "Test, Track, Treat", Covid-appropriate behaviour and Covid management to contain

Modi takes second dose



Prime Minister Narendra Modi receives the second dose of Covid-19 vaccine, at AIIMS in New Delhi on Thursday

34 LAKH DOSES A DAY India leads in vaccine drive

WITH an average of 34,30,502 anti-coronavirus doses being given per day, India has topped globally in terms of the number of jabs administered daily, the Union Health Ministry said on Thursday. Cumulatively, 9,01,98,673 vaccine doses have been given so far through 13,77,304 sessions, according to a provisional report till 7 am. These include

89,68,151 healthcare workers (HCWs) and 97,67,538 frontline workers (FLWs) who have taken the first dose and 54,18,084 HCWs and 44,11,609 FLWs who have taken the second dose.

TOP 10 STATES

MAHARASHTRA, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Kerala and Punjab

Ten States showing upward trajectory have shown a steep rise in the daily Covid-19 cases accounting for 84.21 per cent of the 1,26,789 new infections.

the pandemic. Along with public participation, our hard-working doctors and health-care staff have helped a lot in handling the situation and are still doing it, he said. "With administration appearing lax in many states, rise in cases has

increased problems. To stop the spread of the virus, there is a need to work on a war-footing," he said.

The daily count of positive cases has reached a new record high of over 1.26 lakh.

HC: MCD staff can't do 'goondagardi' in name of protest

NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court Thursday said that while the MCD sanitation employees and unions have a right to protest against non-payment of salaries, they cannot create nuisance or do 'gundagardi' by throwing garbage on roads and restrain staff from working.

A bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli made it clear that such conduct will not be spared and stern action will be taken against the erring union leaders and their members. The MCD Swachhata Karamchari Union leaders, who gave the strike call, appeared before the court and assured it that they will not resort to any such conduct in future. The court said since the president and secretary of the union have appeared, it does not wish to pursue the bailable warrants issued earlier against them. "We have impressed upon the president and secretary of the union that though they are entitled to exercise their rights as provided by the law to raise their grievances, they do not have a right to create nuisance and take law into their hands by spilling garbage on roads and restraining others from performing their duties," the bench said. The high court disposed of a petition by East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC) seeking direction to Delhi Police and Delhi government to ensure that there is no obstruction in the performance of its duties, its officials and employees, including safai karamcharis who are willing to work. EDMC had earlier said several safai karamcharis union had called for a strike in March and that they shall be restrained from throwing garbage on streets or hampering functioning of the corporation.

On Thursday, EDMC standing counsel Manu Chaturvedi informed the court that a permanent grievance redressal cell has been set up by the corporation at zonal and head quarter level to address the employees' grievances. He said no strike or protest has been carried out by the unions after the court's March 4 order. During the hearing, advocate Prakash Kumar, representing the president and secretary of the union, claimed that they were not served with the court notice and petition copy and assured that they will not call for strike in future. To this, the high court said, "If there is a grievance, you have a right to raise it and nobody is taking away your right. But you cannot create nuisance and 'gundagardi'. We will not allow this and will come down heavily with an iron hand."



Kejri reviews progress of flat construction for slum dwellers

NEW DELHI

DELHI Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday reviewed the progress of flats being constructed under the AAP government's rehabilitation policy for slum dwellers and instructed officials to expedite their allocation to the beneficiaries.

Construction of 89,400 flats on 237 acres of land for economically weaker sections (EWS) will be completed by 2025 in three phases under the 'Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan' policy.

The flats are being built within a radius of five kilometres of slums. Kejriwal asked officials to notice the obstacles in implementation of the scheme so that they could be effectively removed and families living in slums can be shifted to their flats soon, said a Delhi government statement. Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) officials informed the chief minister in the meeting that 18,084 flats under the scheme were "almost" ready, it said.

Urban Development Minister Satyendar Jain and senior officials of DUSIB and Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC) were present in the review meeting. Officials said 34,260 flats are being built by the DSIIDC. Of these, 17,660 flats are ready and 16,600 are under construction.

In addition, 4,833 flats have been allotted to homeless families living in slums while the process of allocation of 7,031 flats is underway and will be completed soon, they said.

Matrimonial row can't be reason to revoke passport, HC tells Centre

NEW DELHI

A matrimonial dispute cannot be the reason to revoke a person's passport without giving him any hearing, the Delhi High Court has said.

Justice Prathiba M Singh said that revocation of passport was a strong measure and it cannot be done without even hearing the person affected. "A matrimonial case can't stop his passport forever. It is only a matrimonial dispute. Why don't you restore his passport," the court said, adding "it is too unfair what you (Centre) people are doing. Why are you taking sides?" The observations by the court came on a man's plea seeking setting aside of a May 2020 order upholding the revocation of his passport. The Centre contended that once a passport is revoked it cannot be restored and the petitioner would have to apply afresh.

Delhi riots: Police oppose bail pleas of JNU students, claim larger conspiracy

NEW DELHI

Delhi Police contended before the Delhi High Court on Tuesday that JNU students Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita, arrested in connection with the communal riots in north-east Delhi last year, were part of a larger conspiracy to threaten the unity, integrity and harmony of the country.

The police made the submissions in response to the appeals filed by Narwal and Kalita challenging a trial court's order dismissing their bail pleas in an Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) case related to the riots. A bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and Anup Jairam Bhambhani listed the matter for Friday for conclusion of arguments on behalf of the police. Special Public Prosecutor Amit Mahajan, representing Delhi Police, opposed the pleas and claimed that Narwal and Kalita were well aware of the acts being carried out during the riots and that it would lead to consequences which could be disastrous. He said the case against them is not only based on statements of witnesses and these conspiracies cannot be recorded on camera and that it is proved through circumstantial evidences. "Appellants were part of a larger conspiracy which was to threaten the unity, integrity and harmony of the country. It is not necessary that they need to be involved in every act. As long as they were aware that their act can threaten unity and integrity of the country, they are covered under Section 15 (terrorist act) of UAPA," he contended while reading out relevant portion of WhatsApp chats between accused and others.

Mahajan said the accused agreed to be part of WhatsApp



groups and presumption would be that they were aware of acts of every conspirator and would be equally liable. Earlier, advocate Adit S Pujari, appearing for the two students, had argued before the bench that the investigation in the case was "tainted". Narwal and Kalita, who are also members of Pinjra Tod (break the cage) group, were arrested last year in May in connection with the communal riots in north-east Delhi and are in judicial custody. They were arrested by the Crime Branch of Delhi Police and booked under various sections of the Indian Penal Code including rioting, unlawful assembly and attempt to murder.

Naxals release abducted CoBRA commando in Chhattisgarh

BIJAPUR

CoBRA commando Rakeshwar Singh Manhas, who was abducted by Naxals after the last week's fierce gun-battle in Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, was released on Thursday, police said. Manhas, who belonged to the 210th battalion of Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), an elite unit of the CRPF, had gone missing after the gunfight on Saturday and later reported to be in the captivity of the Naxals.

The Naxals handed over the jawan, who hails from Jammu, to a group of facilitators in the forest along the Bijapur and Sukma border

in the presence of a large number of villagers, police said. "At around 4.30 pm, the abducted jawan returned to Tarrem Police Station safely along with the facilitators, who went inside the jungle to trace out his location," Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P said. He is being admitted to Basaguda field hospital for medical examination and treatment, he said. Some media persons accompanied the facilitators and recorded the video of his release.

The visuals showed some armed Naxals, with faces covered, freeing the jawan tied with ropes. The team of facilitators included

Padma Shri awardee Dharampal Saini from Mata Rukhmani Ashram, Jagdalpur and Telam Boraiyya, senior leader of tribal community in Bijapur. Local journalists Ganesh Mishra and Mukesh Chandrakar also played an important role in his release, police said. Manhas was part of a squad that had gone for an anti-Naxal operation in the jungles on the Bijapur and Sukma border on the night of April 2, hours before the deadly ambush. The gunfight had broken out between the security forces and the ultras between Tekalguda and Jonaguda villages, in which 22 troopers were killed and 31 others injured.

On Tuesday, the outlawed CPI (Maoist) had issued a statement in Hindi saying its cadres had abducted Manhas from the site of the ambush and demanded that the Chhattisgarh government appoint mediators to ensure his safe release.

The Maoists, however, had not raised any formal demands for the release of the commando. Out of the 22 martyred personnel, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) lost eight personnel, including seven CoBRA commandos and one jawan of its 'Bastariya' battalion, eight from the DRG and six from the Special Task Force.



Womenia

SUMMER BEAUTY WITH COCONUT OIL

With summer finally rolling in, everyone gets excited about spending more time outdoors. Excessive heat during summer will dry up all the natural oil from your body. In order to keep your skin soft and good-looking using coconut oil is one of the best remedies to try out this summer season. The versatile tropical oil is one of those do-it-all miracle oils that might as well be the beauty world's holy water.

This amazing natural multi-tasker will hydrate your skin, fight frizz and can even reduce premature signs of ageing. Coconut oil is not just an all-natural skin remedy but it's also a cost-effective way of caring for your skin, especially face.

Popularly called as 'miracle oils', it is a multitasker which has one of the highest concentrations of fatty acid among the different types of oils. These fatty acids, which are antimicrobial and antibacterial, also help hydrate and soothe the skin, and is suitable for all types of skins including sensitive skin. Besides being a frizz-tamer and wonder treatment for tresses, it protects skin from sun damage and sunburn which is one of the highest risk factors for skin cancer. It acts as shield by sitting on top of the skin and blocking or deflecting UV rays. Coconut oil mainly virgin oil is full of beauty surprises. Virgin coconut oil is non-comedogenic, which means that it is less likely to clog pores or cause congestion, making it suitable even for those with oilier complexions.

Coconut oil contains medium-chain fatty acids, like Lauric acid, which are said to be beneficial for the skin. Coconut Oil is packed with Vitamin E and other essential amino acids which help to repair and strengthen skin, and maintain healthy skin barrier



Shahnaz Husain

Before buying a coconut oil bottle, just check the label to make sure it's extra virgin coconut oil that hasn't been hydrogenated, bleached or refined in any way with fragrances or dyes



functions while preventing moisture loss. There is no doubt that coconut oil has a great skin softening ability too and helps to make the skin soft and smooth.

Mix a 2-3 tbsp of coconut oil with your moisturizer and apply on your arms and legs. Gently massage with your hands to get a softer and a smoother skin. It may be applied on the lips and is also said to protect the skin from the damage caused by exposure to ultraviolet rays of the sun.

You can add a few drops of coconut to any of your lip balm or chap stick, this will help in making your lips moist and getting rid of dry lips. You can also add sugar and exfoliate your lips this way. Coconut oil may be applied on

the lips and left on overnight. Or, it can be left on for 15 minutes and wiped off with moist cotton wool. The advantage is that, unlike other preparations that may contain synthetic ingredients, coconut oil can be safely applied on the lips and even ingested. Another advantage is that unlike other oils, coconut oil does not become rancid.

If there is a cut or wound on the skin, applying organic Coconut Oil to the skin, will help in the protection of from microbial infections.

It is said to protect the skin better than nourishing cream. It also helps to heal cracks on the lips. In fact, it can be used to remove make-up from the face, including the lips as the oils help to break down heavy or waterproof makeup without clogging up your pores. Coconut Oil has the power to make your hair grow healthier, thicker and longer.

Add a thin layer of coconut oil to your (clean) face and neck before bedtime. Massage the oil into your skin in circular motions for a few minutes, and let it work its moisturizing magic while you sleep. Doing so every night before

sleep will help reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles and reduce premature ageing.

If you have acne-prone or oily skin but still want to reap the hydrating benefits of coconut, add a few drops of the oil to your regular night cream instead. Mix some baking soda in with the coconut oil to create a very gentle exfoliating scrub for acne. Apply to the skin and gently rub in circles to remove dead skin cells and treat acne. Rinse off and pat dry. If the skin under your eyes is dry and dark use coconut oil to get rid of the problem. Dab a little oil on cotton and massage the skin under your eye before going to bed. Just be sure you don't actually get any coconut oil in your eyes.

If you have sensitive skin or can't tolerate the ingredients of shaving gels and creams, try using coconut oil instead.

Simply slather coconut oil over your face and shave per usual. The coconut oil acts as a protective lather between the blade and the skin, preventing irritation and razor burn. It will also leave the area so moisturized that you might not need to use lotion after your shower.

TWEET PATROL



RAVEENA TANDON
@TANDONRAVEENA

Where my heart wants to be, and my soul already is ,to walk free amongst the civilised of nature , away from the brutality of Humanity....
#walkingonthewildside #bornfree #callofthewild #missing #wannagoback. pics- #mypersonalcollection



Dia Mirza: We need to be more aware of reasons that cause natural disasters

The actor and champion of nature tweets the hope that the region would receive adequate help

worst since 2016.

Pained by the devastation, Dia tweeted, "Since January this year, there have been 983 incidents of forest fire in the state affecting 1,292 hectares of land. #Uttarakhand battles 40 active forest fires, IAF sends help.Hope the state receives adequate help."

Dia adds that she once quoted Baba Dioum, a Senegalese forestry engineer in a blog, the gist of which was that in the end we will conserve only what we love.

She further adds, "Do we love our forests enough to protect them is a question that niggles at me every time such



devastation takes place in Uttarakhand. Uttarakhand is the birthplace of the Ganga and its forests feed many important river systems that are the life source of millions. This is a state with 71% forest cover, over 743 bird species (this represents about 60% of India's avian biodiversity), 102 mammals, 72 species of reptiles and 439 species of butterflies. This is also the home of an estimated 340 wild tigers in two nature parks, Rajaji National Park and Corbett. So, this state literally cradles our future. And to see it go up in flames like this repeatedly is very painful because I have been to these forests and have absorbed their serenity and majesty."

She reminds that every single fire poses a massive risk to flora and fauna, to fire fighters and forest rangers one of whom told her of the role that the timber mafia often plays in causing such tragedies.

She adds, "There is also neglect and a lack of awareness that precipitates the intensity of such a crisis. Our natural resource management needs to be better. As every person I spoke to in Uttarakhand once told me, we need to be more aware of the reasons that cause deforestation, pollution of the rivers, illegal mining and soil erosion. We have to understand how interdependent the human existence and mother nature are. Rivers will dry up if the forests that feed them are not protected. It will take the active participation of public and private partnership to secure our natural resources."

The actor has been routinely talking about environmental issues that don't get mainstreamed and is also producing a series of short films that will expand the significance of the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) with compelling narratives. These films aim to highlight the importance of interlinked SDG goals which have been designed to achieve a more sustainable future and a healthier planet for all.

Don't let work schedule, stress dampen your glow

PUJA GUPTA

With hectic schedules and change in lifestyles, not only our beauty regime goes for a toss but also our sleeping patterns and dietary habits. Experts from across the world suggest that this is when you need to take more care of your skin as the stress, lack of rest and irregular food habits quicken the process of ageing and skin degeneration.

Sun exposure, persistent environmental onslaught, depletion of moisture and stress are factors that leave an indelible mark on our skin as we age, causing worries and concerns. Surely, you do not want to look 45 at 35.

Today, we have many popular procedures and treatments that give you quick results and these modern time elixirs can do wonders. And, they are just apt for both men and women, who are always on run and don't have enough time to have a proper skin and healthcare regime. Dr Geeta Grewal, Chief Consultant & Cosmetic Surgeon, 9Muses Wellness Clinic explains more:

Smile without those wrinkles

You must have noticed that when you smile, there are a bunch of fine lines and wrinkles around your eyes and that might be ruining your beautiful picture. And, trust us these fine lines around your eyes that have come because of irregular sleep and too much stress make you look older. In order to reduce the appearances of these fine lines and wrinkles, one can opt for dermal fillers like Juvederm. Even Botox is a good option.



Say goodbye to acne scars

We all know that acne scars or marks are the most stubborn marks that take ages to get rid of. Sometimes they don't go either. And you must be hiding them with concealer's everyday but still you're not getting a long-lasting result. In this case, a minimally invasive anti-scar procedure is perfect for you. The procedure just takes 2-3 sessions of half an hour and your scars will vanish.

Bring back your youthful glow

Similar to our body, our face is covered with dead skin cells, which die and get replaced when their purpose is served. So, if we don't exfoliate our skin in a regular interval of time then the process of getting the dead cells replaced takes a back seat. Advanced non ablative (not damaging skin) treatments keep the top skin layer safe and building energy in deeper skin layers, effectively removing the sticky

dead skin cells - treatments like laser carbon face treatment. Such treatments take maximum 30 minutes, carbon binds to dead cells dirt and grime, carbon seeps deep into pores and helps in deep pore clean-up and when zapped with laser helps to shrink the pore size, it not only gives glow but also stimulates collagen production and removes skin tan instantly.

Get rid of hair thinning and hair loss

Often when you're on the go, the harmful effect of irregular sleeping and dieting patterns can be first observed in your scalp. You will have hair-loss or hair thinning issues. So, in order to say goodbye to these hair issues you can have Platelet Rich Plasma (PPP) hair treatment. The hair restoration treatment is suitable for both men and women. It's a completely natural and non-invasive treatment, in which the patient's own plasma is used.

BEAUTY FUNDA

Minimal make-up during summer

Summer is full of wonderful things but melting makeup, smeared eyeliner, and super-sticky lipstick are not among them. When it comes to summer beauty products, sunscreen is probably the only thing you should be layering on thick. Makeup is a whole different story, seeing as anything you put on whether it be a foundation, eye shadow, or bronzer will most likely melt off the minute you step into the sweltering summer heat.

Start with moisturizer

The way you care for your skin is just as important as the makeup you apply to it. Use an oil-free moisturizer in the morning, you should opt for an oil-free foundation for-



mula to match.

Layer on sunscreen and UV protection

Besides hydrating your skin, you also want to make sure it's properly protected from the sun and that means wearing sunscreen every single day, even under your makeup.

You should be re-applying sunscreen every two hours, but that can be hard when you're out and

about especially when you don't want to use your hands. Use dish soap to clean an old liquid foundation compact and cushion. Let dry. Soak the cushion with your favourite face sunscreen inside the compact. To re-apply, dip a sponge applicator into the cushion and dab on your face.

Invest in a powerhouse makeup primer

You won't regret the few seconds it takes to apply a primer, which goes on after moisturizer but before face makeup. Primers are definitely the way to go in summer. They don't feel at all like a heavy, additional layer, and they really help hold makeup in place.



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

UNICORN DAY

What mythological creature has been more beloved over the centuries than the unicorn? Symbols of purity and enchantment, unicorns are loved by both children and adults alike and are integral parts of many fairy tales and legends. For all the roles they've played in literature, cinematography, and art as a whole, unicorns more than deserve their own day!

Unicorns were mentioned as far back as antiquity, ancient Greek writers believed they lived in the faraway and exotic country

of India, which was then largely unknown to Europeans. However, the unicorn was then thought to be a powerful, fierce animal that was not to be meddled with. Unicorn Day was created to celebrate these majestic creatures and help adults remember how much more fun life can be when we let a little magic in sometimes. The best way to celebrate this day would be to find a fun, fanciful activity. How about inviting some friends over to bake colourful cupcakes you can then top with colourful icing and sprinkles.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Dhvani Bhanushali overwhelmed to meet veteran composer Anandji

Singer Dhvani Bhanushali had a chance to interact with her idol, veteran composer Anandji of the acclaimed yesteryears duo Kalyanji-Anandji, on 'Indian Idol 12'. She performed for the senior musician, too.

"I have always admired and looked up to Anand Sir's work. He is an inspiration to all of us and has given the industry some amazing music. It was such an overwhelming feeling to finally get to meet him. Since we both are Kutchi, we had our little conversation in Kutchi language and bonded

over our love for music," she says.

The veteran composer also complimented Dhvani on her voice after she performed.

"He also told me that he found my voice very western and soothing. I feel blessed

to get to perform in front of him and share some happy moments which I will cherish for life," she says.


Dhvani was on the show for the promotion of her latest single 'Radha'. However, she also sang her chart-buster 'Vaaste' on the show.

A contemporary love song, 'Radha' has been penned by Kunaal Verma and composed by Abhijit Vaghani.



The order was imposed with immediate effect till April 30.

A photograph showing a forest fire. Bright orange and yellow flames are visible on the left and right sides, with thick white smoke rising from the center. In the foreground, there is a large, moss-covered log and some green vegetation. The background shows a dense forest of tall, thin trees.






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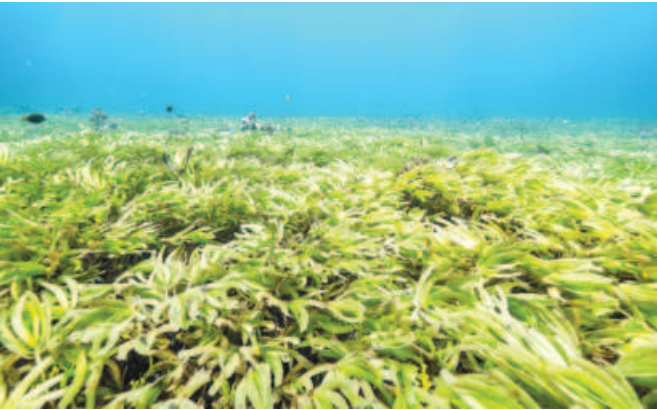
Pandemic unleashed: It’s time for self-restraint again

A team of scientists from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has identified a set of most plausible cases of reinfection of SARS-CoV2 virus in India. The scientists examined the cases of 1,300 individuals who had tested positive for the virus twice and had undergone tests even between the two positive results. The study found that the cases of 58 of the 1,300 individuals, or 4.5%, could actually be classified as possible reinfections. In these 58, the two positive results had come at least 102 days apart, and they also had a negative test result in between. The study is based on telephone interviews with people selected from ICMR’s laboratory database of at least 80 million individuals tested between January 22 and October 7, 2020. The government has been working on

a definition for ‘reinfection’ of cases since October. The 4.5% who were found infected were people infected in the first wave. “This is an averaged out figure over a period of about eight months — January to October, 2020 —, which will vary with behaviour and intensity of epidemic,” said Dr Balram Bhargava, Director General, ICMR. India has now breached one lakh cases limit and deaths have touched more than 700, as a month-long surge continued in the country. With this, the country’s tally has risen to 12,485,509 and its death toll to 164,623, the Health Ministry’s dashboard showed at 8 am of April 4. India, the third-worst country hit by the pandemic, on April 3 reported 89,129 Covid-19 cases in a day, the highest daily rise in around six-and-half-months. This was the highest daily

figure since September 20 last year — 92,605 infections were recorded in 24 hours on that day. The 714 fatalities in a day were also the highest since October 21. The number of daily Covid-19 cases peaked on September 17 last year with 97,894 infections recorded on that day. India began witnessing a gradual decline in cases of the coronavirus disease after that. India has again begun to record the highest number of daily infections in the world. Even in terms of the seven-day rolling average of daily cases, a more reliable indicator of trends, India’s tally of nearly 73,000 is the highest in the world, especially since Brazil’s graph has been declining over the past few days. It’s not yet clear why the State of Maharashtra is reporting more than half of India’s daily infections, while other populous States,

such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal, are yet to witness a steep rise. There is no shortage of potentially super-spreader gatherings in West Bengal, where large political gatherings are being organised every day. Maharashtra’s Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, in his televised address on April 2, said his State is not “hiding” anything, which was a swipe at the low testing numbers of the other States. What is of utmost interest here is not just the number of cases per day but the percentage of reinfection. This should come as a warning to all those who think they would never again be reinfected having gone through the agony of Covid-19. Indians have shown remarkable restraint during the last year’s lockdown. It is time for a self-restraint again. The danger is not yet completely over.



Shrinking sea meadows store more carbon than forests

ALESSANDRA PRENTICE & CHRISTOPHE VAN DER PERRE

HUNDREDS of miles from the nearest shore, ribbon-like fronds flutter in the ocean currents sweeping across an underwater mountain plateau the size of Switzerland. A remote-powered camera glides through the sunlit, turquoise waters of this corner of the western Indian Ocean, capturing rare footage of what scientists believe is the world’s largest seagrass meadow.

Human activity is helping destroy the equivalent of a soccer field of these seagrasses every 30 minutes around the world, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). And scientists are now racing to take stock of what remains.

“There are a lot of unknowns — even things as simple as how much seagrass we have,” said Oxford University earth observation scientist Gwilym Rowlands, who is helping the Seychelles government map the island nation’s seagrass and estimate how much carbon it stores.

“If you look at the map data for seagrass, there are huge holes” in what we know. Seagrasses play a large role in regulating ocean environments, storing more than twice as much carbon from planet-warming carbon dioxide (CO2) per square mile as forests do on land, according to a 2012 study in the journal Nature Geoscience. Countries that hope to earn credit toward bringing down their CO2 emissions could tally their seagrasses and the carbon they store, a first step toward accrediting carbon offsets for eventual trading on an open market.

The grasses also curb the acidity of surrounding waters — an especially important function as the ocean absorbs more CO2 from the atmosphere and becomes more acidic. But seagrasses provide some buffer from acidification, which can damage animals’ shells and disrupt fish behaviours. In one study published March 31 in the journal Global Change Biology, scientists at the University of California, Davis, found that seagrasses dotted along the California coast could reduce local acidity by up to 30% for extended periods.

The plants also help clean polluted water, support fisheries, protect coasts from erosion, and trap micro-plastics, said the study’s lead author Aurora Ricart. “What is even cooler is that these habitats are present everywhere,” she said.

While most seagrasses fringe coastlines around the world, the shallowness of Saya de Malha allows sunlight to filter to the seabed, creating an aquatic prairie in the Indian Ocean that provides shelter, nurseries and feeding grounds for thousands of marine species.

The bank’s isolation has helped protect it from coastal threats, including pollution and dredging. But even such remote stretches of international waters face increasing incursions from shipping and industrial fishing. In March, scientists from institutions including Britain’s Exeter University travelled with Greenpeace on an expedition to collect some of the first field data on the area’s wildlife, including its little-studied beds of seagrass.

With the boat bobbing for days above the plateau, the researchers gathered bits of grass floating in the water, tweezing them into bottles for analysis back on shore. Data on seagrass meadows are patchy, but research so far estimates the grasses cover over 300,000 square km (115,000 square miles), distributed across all continents apart from Antarctica, according to UNEP. That would be an area the size of Italy.

It is not yet known how much carbon is locked into Saya de Malha, but globally the tangled roots of seagrasses are estimated to trap over 10% of the carbon buried in ocean sediment per year.

“This has massive implications for the (world’s) climate change mitigation efforts,” said Dimos Tragano, lead scientist on a German Aerospace Center project developing software to improve seagrass tracking using satellite imagery and other data. That effort has been helped by recent advances in cloud computing and data storage, he said. “We are in such an exciting period.” Seagrass meadows are believed to be retreating around 7% per year globally, according to the most recent seagrass census published in a 2009 study in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. It notes the estimate was based on incomplete data available at the time. The more closely studied areas illustrate the harm human activity can cause. Pollution from mining and damage by fisheries may have helped to eliminate 92% of mainland Britain’s seagrasses in over a century, according to a March 4 study in the journal Frontiers in Plant Science.

If still intact, these could have supported around 400 million fish and stored up to 11.5 million tonnes of carbon — equivalent to 3% of Britain’s CO2 emissions in 2017, the study said.

This year, Seychelles began assessing its coastal seagrass carbon stock for the first time, and at least 10 countries have said seagrasses would play a part in their climate action plans, according to UNEP.

Seychelles and Mauritius, which have joint jurisdiction over the Saya de Malha’s seabed, should count up and care for the wealth of seagrass on their shared doorstep, said James Michel, who served 12 years as president of the Seychelles until 2016. “Then we’ll be in a better position to know how to not only preserve it, but also to manage it to ensure that it is protected for the future.”

SURGICAL STRIKE



K KRISHNA SAAGAR RAO

MAMATA Banerjee, the other day, has publicly sought ‘Muslim vote’ in a public rally, and tutored them not to divide their vote between other infamous ‘secular-parties’ who are contesting assembly elections in West Bengal. She minced no words; she is referring to Congress and AIMIM. Her direct plea to the Muslim electorate is, ‘TMC is more secular than Congress and the MIM’. All these three parties which brazenly appease and suck-up openly for Muslim-vote, are termed as ‘secular-parties’ in the popular Indian dictionary.

The definition of ‘Secularism’ has to come this shameful state in India. Many self-appointed watch dogs of ‘secularism’, continue to fool themselves and general public by defending this mark of secularism.

Imagine the degree of defective-mindset of the ‘educated-iliterates’ in this country. In fact, this bunch of scholarly-elites across the country callously label BJP as ‘non-secular party’, the reverse of what they understand as ‘secular’. It is below juvenile to educate these people to stop and reflect, on the scale of disservice they are doing to this nation, with their fleeting ignorance and blind ideological leaning.

India has been suffering the onslaught of ‘fake-secularism’ since amendments to article 290 of the Indian constitution in 1956 by Jawaharlal Nehru, and insertion of the word ‘secular’ during emergency period by his daughter Indira Gandhi in 1975. Both these episodes are pre-meditated and deviant political plots to keep Indian voters forever divided, using ‘religion-card’ by the power-hungry Nehru family.

Below are some eye-openers for ‘fake-seculars’:

Nehru insults dr ambedkar

In retrospect, what is shocking is the brazenness in pre-empting

this political conspiracy by Jawaharlal Nehru in bringing-in this amendment to the constitution, just 5 years after it was adopted. ‘Secularism’ was not considered as an important word to be explicitly spelt out in the constitution by the 299-member constituent assembly and Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar. During the process of constitution design, in 11 sessions held over 3 years of confabulations, members of the constituent assembly have not found ‘secularism’ appropriate to be adopted into the constitution.

However, it is evident that Jawaharlal Nehru felt an urgent need for a political instrument to transfer power to his family successor, so he acted methodically with no remorse.

Any national leader from that period with a minimal knowledge of the inherent tolerance of ‘Hindustan’ [as India originally was recognized before British invasion], would not dare insult it by highlighting the need for ‘secularism’ in the constitution.

Nehru’s cruel political timing

As the first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru has clearly faltered and indulged in heartless, frivolous power-politics since 1945. After achieving freedom from 700 years of foreign oppression and slavery, Nehru should have envisioned large goals and took massive governance initiatives to lead India towards reclaiming the lost glory and supremacy as a great civilization. Instead, he indulged in petty power politics.

It’s heartless and inhuman that the first prime minister of India has thought of making ‘religion’ a political instrument for power, in the backdrop of a freshly divided nation and unprecedented bloodbath during partition.

Jawaharlal Nehru successfully brought ‘religion’ as the basis for his politics and governance, through his hurried initiative of bringing-in Hindu Code Act in 1951, and passing ‘Religious personal laws’ by 1956.

Despite being an active participant of unfair and bloody partition of this great nation on the basis of ‘religion’, how could Jawaharlal Nehru bring ‘Religion’ back into play, in India? What was his motive behind passing ‘Religious personal laws’ even before the memories of bloody partition faded?

I strongly believe, it is Jawaharlal Nehru’s political learnings of ‘divide and rule’ from British,



As the first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru has clearly faltered and indulged in heartless, frivolous power-politics since 1945. After achieving freedom from 700 years of foreign oppression and slavery, Nehru should have envisioned large goals and took massive governance initiatives to lead India towards reclaiming the lost glory and supremacy as a great civilization. Instead, he indulged in petty power politics. It’s heartless and inhuman that the first Prime Minister of India has thought of making ‘religion’ a political instrument for power, in the backdrop of a freshly divided nation and unprecedented bloodbath during partition. Jawaharlal Nehru successfully brought ‘religion’ as the basis for his politics and governance, through his hurried initiative of bringing-in Hindu Code Act in 1951, and passing ‘religious personal laws’ by 1956. Despite being an active participant of unfair and bloody partition of this great nation on the basis of ‘religion’, how could Jawaharlal Nehru bring ‘religion’ back into play, in India? What was his motive behind passing ‘religious personal laws’ even before the memories of bloody partition faded?

which has led him to divide India on the basis of ‘religion’ all over again after 1956. In fact, his petty ‘divisive-political-plot’ worked successfully, to keep four generations of his family dynasty in power, for around 60 years.

Fake-secularism since 1956

‘Fake-Secularism’ was deployed by Nehru and his clan successfully since 1956. Generation after generation, Congress party and its leaders could fool the majority in India that their ‘Secularism’ is a great ideal and is central to the ‘Idea of India’. In real, fake-secularism was the ‘Idea of Con-

gress’ to continue in power.

Real secularism in a parliamentary democracy is about separating religion from governance. It is not about considering religion as a primary identity of a national, to deliver governance.

Law and justice system is an important organ of governance in a democracy. How does ‘religious personal laws’ passed in 1956, and are currently still in force, justify real ‘Secularism’? Does it not clearly violate the basic tenet of state separating religion from governance? Does it not amount to state recognizing religious identity and allowing each reli-

gion to have their own laws?

Is this ‘real-secularism’ or ‘fake-secularism’?

Which other secular democracies in the world have religious personal laws? the answer is - none.

The unprecedented haste of Indira Gandhi in imposing ‘Emergency’ on one hand, and inserting word ‘Secular’ in the preamble of the Constitution, with no discussion or debate in the parliament, exposes the deceptive and divisive political conspiracy.

Congress party and its scions have developed a proprietary product - ‘fake-secularism’ and used it as a divisive electoral instrument for decades. In fact, they have also extended this product as ‘franchise’ to all other regional family political enterprises across the nation, to use it liberally.

What Mamata Banerjee is doing in West Bengal is to replicate decades of Congress divisive tactics successfully, by using ‘fake-secularism’. So are all regional parties across India. Its horrendous that, this template has become acceptable and executable in Indian electoral eco-system for this long.

There are innumerable instances and examples to explain how this phoney brand of ‘fake-secularism’ has been used on Indian electorate for seven decades.

It is high time, that voters see through these evil designs of family run political enterprises, to divide and rule India.

(The author is the chief spokesperson of the BJP Telangana State, an organisational strategist & a leadership coach)

‘Vaccine war’ between Centre, Maharashtra

QUAID NAJMI

WITH the State reportedly left with barely one and half day’s doses, a vaccine “war” has been raging between Maharashtra and the Centre in the past couple of days with State Health Minister Rajesh Tope now on Thursday comparing the grim situation in the State vis-a-vis Bharatiya Janata Party-ruled States like Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh.

Hours after Tope on Wednesday said that the State had only 3 days doses of the Covid vaccines in stock, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan hit back, virtually blaming Maharashtra for the current spread of the pandemic across the country.

“Throughout the last year, I have been a witness to the mis-governance and utter casual approach of the Maharashtra government in battling the virus. The lackadaisical attitude of the state government has singularly bogged down the entire country’s

efforts to fight the virus,” he had said.

He also deplored attempts by some state governments to “distract attention” from their failures and spread panic among the people, even as the Centre rushed 7.50 lakh doses to the state on Thursday.

Stung by the missive, Tope pointed out that though there is no dispute with the Centre over the vaccine supplies, the situation of the biggest state in the country was grimmer and hence it needed more doses to combat the pandemic.

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) President Sharad Pawar also spoke with Harsh Vardhan on Wednesday on the prevailing Covid status in Maharashtra and said the latter had assured all help in tackling it.

As the Centre on Thursday informed that the state would be given 17.50 lakh doses from April 15, but Tope said the state’s demand is at least 40 lakh vaccines per week in view of the terrible

spread here compared with other States.

“Gujarat with a population of 6 crore with 17,000 active cases, was given 1 crore doses of the vaccine, but Maharashtra with a double (12 crore) population and (now) 5 lakh active cases was given only 1.04 crore doses, of which barely 9 lakh jabs are left. Accordingly, vaccination has been stopped in Satara, Sangli and Parnel in Raigad,” said Tope.

Similarly, he sought to know why Uttar Pradesh gets 48 lakh doses, Madhya Pradesh 40 lakh, Gujarat 30 lakh and Haryana 24 lakh - all ruled by BJP - compared with only 7.50 lakh doses from Maharashtra, the worst-hit in the country.

He said this State has the highest number of active patients but also topped the country in terms of the vaccination programme as per the Centre’s own figures released this week.

“We shall maintain the level of 6 lakh doses per week and won’t go beyond it at this stage. But at



least give us 40 lakh vaccine every week,” Tope appealed, adding out that the progressive total cases in the State have crossed 30 lakh.

Tope reiterated the demand by Chief Minister Uddhav Thack-

eray to allow vaccine production at the Haffkine Institute in Mumbai and appealed that the Centre and State must unitedly fight to overcome the challenges of Covid pandemic.

He said that Maharashtra is a big State demographically and geographically with 55 percent of the total active cases in the country, but compared to the deaths per million cases, the fatality rate

figure is much lower than other States.

“This has been appreciated not only by the Centre but also taken note of by other global publications and the national media. The State is handling the crises strictly as per the norms of the Centre and the ICMR in all respects,” Tope asserted.

At the meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi later on Thursday, he said he would be raising four demands - at least 1.6 crore, or 40 lakhs per week, vaccine doses, adequate supply of Remdesivir medicine with a price cap, permission to requisition oxygen from neighbouring States, and overcoming the shortages of ventilators as the State grapples with the virus.

The Minister said that many developed countries have started vaccinating citizens above the age of 18 and considering the growing number of Covid patients in the State, appealed for giving doses to all in the 18-40 age groups too.

BOUNTEOUS RAINFALL LAST YEAR: NO PARCHED THROATS OR LANDS THIS YEAR

Groundwater table levels rise in State by 2.16 metres

- Improvement in ground water level is attributed to good rainfall the State received last year
- State received 865 mm of normal rainfall up to March 31, 2021. The rainfall ranges from 864 mm (Nalgonda district) to 2,064 mm (Mulugu) and thus there is a 46 per cent more rainfall during this period in the state as compared to normal annual rainfall up to March 2021
- Actual rainfall of 1,262 mm against 865 mm of normal rainfall up to March 31, 2021
- Central Jal Shakti Mission declared TS only State to provide safe drinking water

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

WITH the rising day temperatures, Telangana is heading for scorching summer but on water front there is some good news for the State.

According to the ground water department, there was a net rise in groundwater level of 2.16 metres during March 2021 as compared to the same month last year. The rise is observed in 27 districts and fall in remaining six districts.

Average groundwater level in the State during March 2021 is 8.35 meters below ground level (m bgl) and it varies from 3.50 m bgl (Wanaparthy) to 14.87 m bgl (Medak). Out of 33 districts, only in one district, average water level is 10 m bgl.

A minimum rise of 0.15 m is observed in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district and maximum rise of 8.11 m in Sangareddy district. A minimum fall of 0.09 m is observed in Bhupalapally and max-

Hot summer, yet good tidings on water front



8.35 M BGL
Average groundwater level in March 2021

3.5 M BGL TO 14.87 M BGL
Variation least in Wanaparthy, maximum in Medak

FALL IN 6 DIST
Rise observed in the remaining 27 districts

1,262 MM
Actual rainfall as against 865 mm normal rainfall

₹32,500 CR

Govt expenditure on drinking water in last 6.5 years

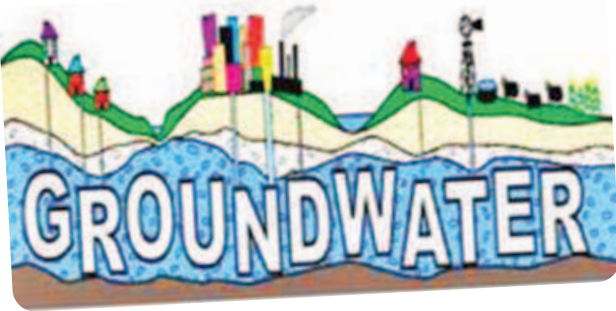
imum fall of -1.16 m in Jagityal district.

This will surely come as a relief for people, especially in those districts which see water scarcity during peak summer.

A net average rise of 2.93 m in groundwater levels is observed during March 2021 as compared to May 2020 and rise is observed in 30 districts (0.19 m Adilabad to 8.92 m in Sangareddy) and fall is observed in remaining three districts, the department said.

The improvement in ground water level is also attributed to the good rainfall the State received last year.

According to Ground Water Department, during the water year 2020-21, the state received actual rainfall of 1,262 mm against 865 mm of normal rainfall up to March 31, 2021. The rainfall ranges from 864 mm (Nalgonda district) to 2,064 mm (Mulugu) and thus there is a 46



GOVT HAILS MISSION BHAGIRATHA

On the whole, there are 57,26,804 household tap connections, 65 intake wells, 109 water treatment plants, 1,49,905 km long pipelines and 13,901 service crossings constructed as part of this mega scheme

per cent more rainfall during this period in the state as compared to normal annual rainfall up to March 2021.

Twenty seven districts received Excess rainfall (+20% to 130%) and remaining six districts received normal rainfall (-17 to 6%).

Authorities hope that the improvement in ground water level will avoid a situation where people have to rely on water supply through tankers. The State government claims that its Mission Bhagiratha completely put to an end to the drinking water problem. The scheme is termed as a torchbearer for the entire country.

The Central Jal Shakti Mission has declared that Telangana is the only State in the country, which is providing safe and pure drinking water through pipes to all the households, schools and Anganwadi centres.

Prior to 2014, drinking water supply was provided, that too partially, to just 5,672 habitations. Now, protected drinking water is supplied

to 24,543 habitations to every household, every day through pipes and taps, Governor Tamilasai Soundararajan said during his speech in State Assembly on the first day of the budget session last month.

On the whole, there are 57,26,804 household tap connections, 65 intake wells, 109 water treatment plants, 1,49,905 km long pipelines and 13,901 service crossings constructed as part of this mega scheme.

During the last six-and-a-half years, the State government spent Rs 32,500 crore to solve the drinking water problem in the state.

Mission Kakatiya, Telangana government initiative helped in improving water availability. Under this programme, the government embarked on revival of 45,000 tanks. With tanks now brimming with water, the area under cultivation has also increased. The programme also resulted in the increase in ground water levels.

This has been proved by the data released by the Centre on the ground water levels. It analysed ground water levels in 549 wells in the State. The report stated that out of the 549 wells, ground water has increased by 91 per cent in 498 wells.

Light rain of 1 cm in TS



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

LIGHT rain up to one cm occurred at isolated places over Telangana during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 am on Thursday, with Sirpuru in Kumaram Bheem district recording one cm of rain, the IMD bulletin said. The rain was caused by the trough running from interior Tamil Nadu to north interior Karnataka.

The bulletin warned that thunderstorms with lightning are very likely to occur on April 11 and 12 at isolated places across the State.

In Hyderabad, partly cloudy sky will prevail on April 9 and 10 with the day temperatures of 38 and 39 deg C respectively. From April 11 to 14 there will be one or two spells of rain or thundershowers. On April 13 & 14 thundery development is forecast. Day temperatures during four days will be 38, 37, 37 & 38 deg C respectively.

Meanwhile, the highest maximum temperature of 42 degrees Celsius was recorded in Adilabad during the last 24 hours ending at 8.30 am on Thursday, the same as that prevailed the previous day. There was no large

● Warning of thunderstorms with lightning forecast in State on April 11 & 12

● In Hyderabad, partly cloudy sky will prevail on April 9 & 10 with day temperatures of 38 & 39 deg C respectively. From April 11 to 14 there will be one or two spells of rain or thundershowers. On April 13 & 14 thundery development is forecast. Day temperatures during four days will be 38, 37, 37 & 38 deg C respectively

● Adilabad registers highest max temp of 42 deg C; Nizamabad 40.9, Medak 40.2, Bhadrachalam & Nalgonda 39 each

change in day temperatures in most parts. They were above normal in some parts and below normal by 1.6 to 3 degrees Celsius in some others.

The other temperatures in the State were: Nizamabad 40.9, Medak 40.2, Bhadrachalam & Nalgonda 39 each, Mahbubnagar 38.9, Ramagundam 38.8, Dundigal & Hyderabad 38.3 each, Hakimpet 37.8, Hanamkonda 37, Khammam 36.6.

State stares at vaccine shortage

● Officials inform the Chief Minister that the current stock is enough for only 2 days

● CM directs them to alert Central govt to get vaccines as per demand

● Rules out imposition of any lockdowns despite rising cases as the State suffered Rs 21,000 cr loss last year

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

AMIDST alarming increase in coronavirus cases in the state, officials are expressing concern over shortage of Covid vaccines. As per the data provided by officials, the Covid vaccines are sufficient for only two days and the state is likely to run out of stocks soon.

Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted a review on health, especially on increasing corona cases in the state. Health officials informed the Chief Minister that they are giving vaccinating 1.4 lakh people a day but are facing shortage of vaccines. They explained that the vaccines are not being supplied as per the demand. The officials said only three lakh doses of vaccines are available in the state at present. Reacting on the issue, the Chief Minister directed the officials to consult the Union health ministry for supply of sufficient doses of vaccines as per the demand.

The Chief Minister said the vaccination should be carried out as per the guidelines of the Central government. He said the Covid vaccination programme should be extended to rural areas also.



Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy reviewing Covid situation and progress of works under Nadu-Nedu (Health) at his camp office in Tadepalli on Wednesday

AP logs 2,558 new Covid cases, 6 deaths

Corona cases double in a week from 1,271 on April 1

AMARAVATI

ANDHRA Pradesh added 2,558 fresh cases of coronavirus on Thursday, pushing the gross up to 9.15 lakh.

The new figure means the number positive cases have doubled within a week. As per the data provided by Covid state command control room, 1271 corona positive cases were reported on April 1 and the number now touched 2,558 within a week.

In 24 hours ending 9 am on Thursday, 915 patients had recovered and six succumbed to Covid-19, the latest bulletin said.

The active caseload increased further to 14,913 after a total of 8,93,651 recoveries and 7,268 deaths, the bulletin said.

The overall infection recovery rate slid to 97.6 per cent, while the percentage of active cases increased to

1.6. The case fatality rate remained stable at 0.8 per cent, government data said.

In the last week, the average growth rate of coronavirus cases in AP was 0.2 per cent per day.

Nine out of 13 districts in the state reported more than 130 fresh cases each with Chittoor topping with 465, followed by Guntur with 399 in 24 hours.

Kurnool district added 344, Visakhapatnam 290, SPS Nellore 204, Srikakulam 185, Prakasam 153, Krishna 152 and Anantapur 131 new cases.

Kadapa logged 94, East Godavari 58, Vizianagaram 46 and West Godavari 37 in a day.

Guntur, Krishna, Kurnool, SPS Nellore, Prakasam and Visakhapatnam saw one fresh Covid-19 fatality each.

lockdown, the Chief Minister said that the state suffered Rs 21,000 crore loss last year due to corona pandemic. The officials informed him that more number cases are being reported in Guntur, Chittoor, Visakhapatnam and Krishna districts.

Referring to YSR Health Clinics, the Chief Minister said that the hospitals should be painted to provide a pleasant atmosphere in the premises of the clinics.

On 16 new medical colleges to be set up in the

state, the Chief Minister said the land acquisition should be completed for all medical colleges and the construction should start by July 1. He said hospital development funds should be released as per schedule for better management of government hospitals. He said that the government hospitals should be developed on par with private hospitals. Minister for health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas, chief secretary Aditya Nath Das and other officials were present.

Seer demands bringing TTD under RTI purview

HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

SRI Peetam Peetadhipathi Swamy Paripoornanda on Thursday demanded bringing TTD under the purview of RTI (Right to Information Act) for enhancing transparency in the in the biggest Hindu religious institution administering the famed Tirumala temple.

Speaking to the media here, the Sri Peetam seer criticised the TTD for not implementing RTI and asked why the TTD was opposing RTI. "Is it the fear of RTI would dig out corruption, irregularities and expose the many bigwigs' acts?" he said.

Finding fault with TTD for delay in releasing white paper on TTD properties, covering all aspects including donation of landed properties received, properties sold and the status of the properties with the TTD, he

wanted the TTD to release it immediately to keep it assurance on making public the details of TTD properties.

TTD chairman Y V Subba Reddy (who as YSRCP Chittoor district in-charge) is active in the party campaign and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy (who is scheduled to address a meeting in support of his party candidate on April 14 for the Tirupati Parliamentary byelection), have the right to seek votes if they fulfil the assurance on the release of white paper on TTD properties, he said. Sharply reacting to the endowments minister's recent disclosure that 375 temples were ruined in the state, he said the responsibility of protecting the temples squarely lies on the shoulders of the government as the temples are under the control of government unlike the other places of worship of Christians and Muslims. He found fault with Jagan for remain-

ing silent on the neglect of temples.

Replying to a question on the encroachment of valuable lands of mutts and Hindu religious institutions in the city, he said there is every need to take up a struggle to save the lands.

On the remarks of Tirumala temple chief priest A V Ramana Deekhitulu eulogising Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy as Maha Vishnu, he said it was very sad and a sin.

Later, in the evening, Paripoornanda participated in a rally in which BJP nominee K Ratna Prabha, leaders, including national secretary Sunil Deodhar and Jana Sena senior leader Dr Hari Prasad participated. The rally which took off from Town Club circle to Vivekananda statue where Swamiji and others addressed a gathering seeking voters to elect the BJP candidate.

Covid count crosses 2,000 mark in State

No let-up in steep increase in new infections across the State

A total of 303 people recovered, taking the cumulative recoveries to 3,03,601. The recovery rate has slipped further to 95.26 per cent, however, still above the national average of 91.7 per cent

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

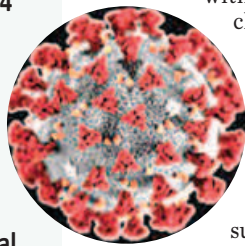
TELANGANA reported 2,055 new cases during the last 24 hours and the daily count crossed 2000 mark on Thursday as the State continues to see massive surge in new infections. The fresh infections pushed the State's cumulative tally to 3,18,704. Other districts also saw a spike in rising Covid cases.

Seven more people succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours that ended 8 pm on Tuesday, taking the death toll to 1,741. According to the Director of Public Health and Family Welfare, the fatality rate remains at 0.54 per cent against the national average of 1.30 per cent.

According to the Director of Public Health and Family Welfare, the fatality rate remains at 0.54 per cent

COVID STATS

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| New cases | 2,055 |
| Cumulative tally | 3,18,704 |
| Active cases | 13,362 |
| Home/hospital isolations | 8,263 |
| Fatalities | 7 |
| Death toll | 1,741 |
| Fatality rate | 0.54% (national average at 1.3%) |
| tests conducted | 87,332 |



Greater Hyderabad reported 398 cases, the highest in the state while districts bordering it continue to witness a surge. Medchal, Malkajgiri and Rangareddy districts reported 214 and 174 cases respectively.

Nizamabad district bordering Maharashtra saw a big surge for third consecutive day to record 169 new cases. Nirmal registered 100 new cases followed by Jagtial (99), Karimnagar (77), Warangal Urban (74), Sangareddy (65), Mahaboobnagar (60), Kamareddy (58), Mancheril (57), Nalgonda (54) and Khammam (50).

The admissions into hospitals treating Covid cases have also gone up to 5,099 from 4,983 the previous day. The authorities further ramped up testing. Of the total 87,332 tests conducted during last 24 hours, 75,909 samples were tested in government laboratories and 11,423 in private labs. With this, the number of tests conducted in the state so far climbed to 1,06,59,953. Samples tested per million population rose to 2,86,403.

Court allows ASI to survey Kashi Temple, Gyanvapi Mosque complex

Supreme Court to hear plea to declare 'Ram Sethu' national heritage monument on April 26

VARANASI

A Varanasi court has ordered an archaeological survey of the Kashi Vishwanath Temple-Gyanvapi mosque site.

The court, on Thursday, gave its approval for survey of Kashi Vishwanath temple and Gyanvapi Mosque complex by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). The court further directed the Uttar Pradesh government to bear the cost of the survey. The ASI is likely to set up a five-member team that will visit the campus soon.

The court order came on a petition filed by a local lawyer Vijay Shankar Rastogi, who had demanded that the land entailing the Gyanvapi Mosque be restored to Hindus. The petition was filed in December 2019 on behalf of Swayambhu Jyotirlinga Bhagwan Vishweshwar in the court of civil judge.

The petitioner claimed that Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, in 1664, had pulled down a portion of the 2000-year-old Kashi Vishwanath temple to build the mosque in its place. The petitioner requested for a survey of the entire Gyanvapi compound by the ASI. He had filed the petition as the 'next friend' of Swayambhu Jyotirlinga Bhagwan Vishweshwar. In January 2020, Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee had filed an objection against the petition. The Gyanvapi mosque management committee had opposed the petition.

The petitioner had further contended that the Kashi Vishwanath temple was built by Maharaja Vikramaditya about 2,050 years ago, but Mughal emperor Aurangzeb destroyed the temple in 1664 and used its remains to construct a mosque, which is known as Gyanvapi masjid, on a portion of the temple land.



The petitioner requested the court to issue directions for the removal of the mosque from the temple land and give back its possession to the temple trust.

The first petition was filed in the Varanasi civil court in 1991 on behalf of Swayambhu Jyotirlinga Bhagwan Vishweshwar seeking permission for worship in Gyanvapi.

The petition contended that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act was not applicable to the suit as the mosque was constructed over a partly demolished temple and many parts of the temple exist even today. In 1998, Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee moved the High Court contending that the mandir-masjid dispute could not be adjudicated by a civil court as it was barred by the law.

The High Court stayed the proceedings in the lower

court which had continued for the past 22 years.

In February 2020, the petitioners approached the lower court again with a plea to resume the hearing as the High Court had not extended the stay in the past six months.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court on Thursday said it will hear on April 26 the plea of BJP leader Subramanian Swamy seeking a direction to the Centre for declaring 'Ram Sethu' as a national heritage monument.

A bench comprising Chief Justice S A Bobde and Justices A S Bopanna and V Ramasubramanian was urged by Swamy that the plea needed an urgent hearing. The CJ, who would superannuate on April 23, said, "let next CJ (Justice N V Ramana) deal with this issue. I do not have so much time. This issue requires time and I don't have it."

WINDOWS



A medic shows the doses of Covid-19 vaccine during an inoculation drive, at a vaccination camp in Nagpur, on Thursday

Rohingyas 'won't' be deported: SC

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Thursday said that Rohingyas detained in Jammu shall not be deported to Myanmar without following the prescribed process. A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde passed the order on a plea seeking immediate release of detained Rohingyas refugees in Jammu and a direction to restrain the Centre from deporting them to Myanmar. The Centre had earlier opposed the plea saying that the country cannot be the 'capital' for illegal immigrants. During the arguments, advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the petitioner, had said that Rohingyas children were subjected to killing, maiming and sexual exploitation by the Myanmar military which has failed to respect international humanitarian law.

Gunfight in Shopian district

SRINAGAR: An encounter broke out between the terrorists and security forces in South Kashmir's Shopian district on Thursday, officials said. The gunfight took place after a joint team of the police and the Army cordoned off the area and launched a search operation on the basis of specific information about the presence of terrorists. As the security forces zeroed in on the spot where terrorists were hiding they came under a heavy volume of fire that triggered the encounter.

Kannur continues to be tense

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Following the brutal murder of a Muslim League worker that took place at Kuthuparamba, near Kannur, hours after the Tuesday's assembly election, the bastion of the CPI-M continues to be tense. While the local police have termed this as a political murder, the CPM has denied this. A special team has been formed to probe the murder. As soon as the voting ended in Kerala on Tuesday night, violence broke out at Kannur -- between the Left workers and members of the Indian Union Muslim League that led to the death of 22-year-old Manzoor, an IUML worker, while his brother is being treated at a hospital in Kozhikode.

VACCINE OVER IN MUMBAI

Six States complain of vaccine shortage, Centre says 'no scarcity'

Lucknow crematorium workers face rush of Coronavirus bodies

MUMBAI/NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

MUMBAI Mayor Kishori Pednekar on Thursday said that the ongoing COVID-19 vaccination drive in city will come to a halt from Friday as the stock of vaccine doses in the city is about to end.

She said that the vaccination drive could continue only if the city receives enough doses.

"The vaccination drive in the city will definitely come to a halt from Friday..Only if the city gets the supply (of vaccines), the drive will continue," Pednekar said.

"The existing stock of vaccine doses could last only till today(Thursday) evening.

Twenty-six vaccination centres have been shut in Mumbai. Of the centres that shut, 23 centres are located in Navi Mumbai. Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar has spoken to Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan on the issue. Later, Pawar said the Centre has assured to help Maharashtra where the Covid-19 situation is currently 'grim'.

Six states have complained of vaccine shortage, which they fear, will lead to rising in cases. Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Odisha and Telangana – are staring at a coronavirus vaccine shortage.

Union Minister Prakash Javadekar alleged that five lakh doses of the vaccines were wasted in Maharashtra due to a lack of planning by the State government.

A family of a patient on ventilator in a Nashik hospital was asked to transfer her to



A beneficiary stands outside a closed vaccination centre after the Covid-19 vaccine got out of stock, on Thursday

another hospital because the oxygen supply was only sufficient for a few more hours.

Lucknow's electric crematorium has been witnessing an unusual rush of ambulances these past many days as Covid-19-related casualties pile-up.

Munna (identified only by his first name) is the city municipal corporation employee, along with three others, handling cremations, and his hands are evidently full. On Wednesday alone, they put in a 19-hour shift together, cremating 23 bodies.

Two of them, in PPE suits, carry the departed from the ambulances to the incinerator;

the other two, including Munna, bleach their first duo.

Private hospitals in Nagpur were left without a ventilator bed and just 27 ICU beds as critical patients rise in the city on Wednesday morning. In the evening too there were just three ventilator beds available at (Government Medical College and Hospital) GMCH.

The Delhi High Court on Thursday sought response of the Centre and the Election Commission on a plea seeking to ensure that masks are worn mandatorily by everyone involved in poll campaigns during the ongoing elections in various states and union territories.



Samajwadi Party MP Jaya Bachchan during an election campaign in support of TMC candidate from Shibpur constituency Manoj Tiwary, in Howrah on Thursday

Mithun Chakraborty's roadshow disallowed in Kolkata's Behala

KOLKATA

THE BJP was denied permission to hold a roadshow of Bollywood superstar Mithun Chakraborty, who had recently joined the saffron camp, in Behala area of the city on Thursday, following which a group of party activists held a demonstration in front of a police station.

The agitation was led by actor-turned-politician Srabanti Chatterjee, who is contesting from the Behala Paschim assembly constituency on a BJP ticket, party sources said.

"The Kolkata Police did not allow our leader Mithun Chakraborty to campaign for me in the constituency without citing any reason. "The Trinamool Congress

cannot avert its imminent loss by such an undemocratic act of preventing us from campaigning. Is the state government scared of losing power?," the popular Bengali actor said.

The saffron party activists shouted slogans against the ruling TMC in front of the Parnasree Police Station.

BJP sources said the party sought permission to hold a door-to-door campaign by the Bollywood superstar in the Behala area after the city police had cancelled its roadshow plea on Wednesday night.

"The door-to-door campaign by him was also not granted at the last minute," they claimed.

The Kolkata Police declined to make any comment on the issue.

Setback for Deshmukh

NEW DELHI

In a setback to Maharashtra government and its former Home Minister Anil Deshmukh, the Supreme Court Thursday dismissed their pleas challenging the Bombay High Court order directing a CBI probe into allegations of corruption and misconduct levelled against him by former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh. "Looking at the personas involved and the nature of the allegations, it requires investigation by an independent agency. It is a matter of public confidence," a bench comprising Justices S K Kaul and Hemant Gupta said.

"We don't want to interfere with the orders of high court directing preliminary inquiry by CBI," the bench said. It is only preliminary enquiry and nothing is wrong in it when serious allegations are made by senior officer against a senior minister, the bench said when counsel for Deshmukh alleged that oral allegations were made without any substance and CBI probe was ordered without hearing him. The bench said that two persons involved in the case were the police commissioner and the home minister and they were working together till they fall apart.

Senior advocate A M Singhvi, appearing for Maharashtra, said that it was aggrieved by CBI probe as the consent for it was withdrawn by the state earlier. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for Deshmukh, argued that court has to stay on guard when allegations are made and probe is sought against a constitutional machinery. He said there should be some material for levelling allegations. After the high court order on April 5, Deshmukh, a veteran politician and NCP leader from Vidarbha, had resigned from the state government.



Anil Deshmukh

court finally ended up directing the probe. In his appeal, Deshmukh had said that the high court order raises issues of seminal importance which "impact not just the federal structure of the country, impact on our polity, but also the manner in which, and the institutions through which investigations are to be conducted".

He had said that without lodging an FIR, the court could have directed that an application be filed before the magistrate for investigation under section 156(3) of the CrPC.



125 pigs found dead in Mizoram

LUNGSEN

AS many as 125 pigs have died at Mizoram's Lungsen village since March 21. According to an official, a preliminary test indicated African Swine Fever (ASF) as the main cause behind the unusual pig deaths in a Mizoram village.

Samples from the dead pigs were tested at the College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry in Selesih near Aizawl on Monday as a part of the preliminary investigation. Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department Joint Director (Livestock Health) Dr Lalhmingshanga said. "African Swine Fever is highly suspected to be the main cause of the deaths as revealed in the preliminary test," he said.

Tissue and blood samples were sent to the National Institute of High-Security Animal Disease (NIHSAD) in Bhopal on Wednesday for a confirmatory test, he said.

Dassault rejects wrongdoing in Rafale deal

NEW DELHI

FRENCH aerospace major Dassault Aviation on Thursday rejected fresh allegations of corruption in the Rafale fighter jet deal with India, saying no violations were reported in the frame of the contract.

The assertion by the manufacturer of the Rafale jets came days after French publication 'Mediapart', citing an investigation by the country's anti-corruption agency, reported that Dassault Aviation had paid about one million Euros to an Indian middleman.

"Numerous controls are carried out by official organisations, including the French Anti Corruption Agency. No violations were reported, notably in the frame of the contract with India for the acquisition of 36 Rafales," a Dassault Aviation spokesperson said. The official said Dassault Aviation

reiterated that it acts in strict compliance with the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Anti Bribery Convention and national laws.

"Since the early 2000s, Dassault Aviation has implemented strict internal procedures to prevent corruption, guaranteeing the integrity, ethics and reputation of the company in its industrial and commercial relations," the spokesperson said. The NDA government had signed a Rs 59,000-crore deal on September 23, 2016 to procure 36 Rafale jets from French aerospace major Dassault Aviation after a nearly seven-year exercise to procure 126 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) for the Indian Air Force did not fructify during the UPA regime. Prior to the Lok Sabha elections in 2019, the Congress raised several questions about the deal, including on rates of the aircraft, and alleged corruption but the government rejected all the charges.

CBI questions Vaze, Param, summons DCP

MUMBAI

THE Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday questioned arrested Mumbai Police officer Sachin Vaze, former city Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh and two others in connection with the preliminary enquiry it registered for the probe into allegations of corruption against former state Home Minister Anil Deshmukh.

A CBI source related to probe told IANS: "The agency sleuths have recorded the statement of Vaze, who is presently in NIA custody."

The source said that the CBI is also

recording the statement of Singh, who dropped a letter bomb on March 20, accusing Deshmukh of asking Vaze and other Mumbai Police personnel to extort Rs 100 crore monthly from bars, hotels and restaurants.

Besides the two, the agency also recorded the statement of ACP Sanjay Patil and petitioner Jayshri Patil in connection with its PE.

The source said that the agency has also called DCP Raju Bhujbal for questioning in connection with its probe.

The names of Sanjay Patil and Bhujbal were taken by Singh in his letter to Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

The CBI had registered a PE on Tuesday night. Two teams of CBI-led by SP level officer have arrived in Mumbai on Tuesday and Wednesday to probe the matter. The Bombay High Court directed the CBI to conduct a preliminary probe against Deshmukh on Monday. Soon after the ruling, Deshmukh stepped down from his post.

The NIA has arrested Vaze on March 13 after taking over the case of the explosive laden SUV found outside Reliance Industries chief Mukesh Ambani's residence. Vaze is also being probed in the mysterious death of businessman Mansukh Hiran.

TODAY'S QUOTE

Amazon adds 2.5 lakh new sellers amid pandemic

“ Amazon India has witnessed a strong growth in seller addition and rise in number of 'croeapati' businesses on the platform even during the pandemic-hit year. More than 2.5 lakh new sellers have joined since last year, and that the rate at which sellers have come online has gone by 50% post Covid-19

— Amit Agarwal, Amazon Global Senior VP



FUND RAISING

Gupshup enters unicorn club, raises \$100 mn

MESSAGING platform Gupshup on Thursday said it has raised \$100 million (about Rs 746.6 crore) in funding from Tiger Global Management, valuing the company at \$1.4 billion. The company has raised \$150 million in funding to date from investors like Helion Venture Partners and Globespan Capital among others.

| FOREX (buy rates in ₹) | | | |
|------------------------|--------|--------------------|-------|
| US Dollar | 75.07 | South | |
| Euro | 89.21 | African Rand | 5.9 |
| UAE Dirham | 20.84 | Hong Kong Dollar | 10.98 |
| Thai Baht | 2.6 | Japanese Yen | 0.78 |
| British Pound | 103.31 | New Zealand Dollar | 52.78 |
| Australian Dollar | 57.32 | Saudi Riyal | 21.79 |
| Canadian Dollar | 59.55 | Swedish Krona | 9.94 |
| Swiss Franc | 80.86 | Singapore Dollar | 56.57 |

DELHI FRIDAY 9 APRIL 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

IIFL activates 11 lakh accounts

IIFL Securities Ltd has said that it has activated 11 lakh frozen Karvy demat accounts and they can now trade or invest on its platform. The company has won the official bid to acquire all demat accounts held by Karvy Stock Broking with National Securities Depository Ltd and Central Depository Services Ltd. The asset under management for 11 lakh Karvy demat accounts stands at Rs 3 lakh crore. The bidding process which began in early February has finally ended the ordeal of 11 lakh investors whose account has been frozen for over a year. Sandeep Bhardwaj, CEO, Retail, IIFL Securities said: "It gives me immense pleasure to welcome all Karvy account holders. Now their accounts are officially unfrozen, and they can start trading or investing with IIFL Securities."

Realme unveils C series

REALME has unveiled the additions to its C series realme C20, C21 and C25. realme C20 is equipped with large 16.5cm display, a 5000 mAh battery, 8 MP AI camera. The smartphone is available at a price of Rs 6,799 for the first one million customers. realme C21 comes with features such as 13MP AI triple camera, instant fingerprint sensor, which is priced at Rs 8,999. realme C25 is powered with G70 chipset, 6000 mAh massive battery and 8MP selfie camera to take clear selfies. The product is available at Rs 9,999. Madhav Sheth, Vice President, Chief Executive Officer, realme India and Europe, said: "Our entry-level C series has always seen a tremendous response from the customers. This has contributed to achieving over 32 million C-series users globally."

Forevermark's new collection

FOREVERMARK has introduced the Forevermark Icon collection, a celebration of the brand's distinctive icon motif, which has been intrinsic to its DNA since its inception. The new collection has been reimagined in a new diamond jewellery line. The collection includes sixty-two pieces comprising hooped earrings, chic cufflinks, asymmetric bangles, rings and pendants, crafted from 18K yellow, white and rose gold. "The Forevermark Icon collection is very special and holds deep meaning for us as a brand. We wanted to honour the legacy of our icon motif, but to elevate it, incorporating our beautiful diamonds into modern, exquisite and intricate jewellery pieces, that is a personal expression of style," said Sachin Jain, Managing Director, De Beers, India.

Hyundai Alcazar on display

HYUNDAI Motor India has showcased the quintessence of manufacturing magnificence Hyundai Alcazar, its upcoming six and seven-seater premium SUV at the picturesque Alila Fort, Bishangarh. The company began a new development journey by forming the Alcazar Lab comprising of members across multiple teams & functions. The product was conceptualized over myriad hours of research, development, innovation and ideation. Crafted to epitomize manufacturing magnificence, the new SUV harmonizes space, premiumness, performance, convenience, safety and technology. SS Kim, MD & CEO, Hyundai Motor India, said: "With a deep-rooted understanding of our customer's aspirations, our R&D Centre has invested countless man hours to ensure every aspect of Hyundai Alcazar exudes magnificence. Hyundai Alcazar is well set to enter a new segment."

Covid 2nd wave likely to boost FMCG sales

DISCRETIONARY PRODUCTS LIKE HAIR OIL, DEODORANT, AND MANY MORE SUCH PRODUCTS ARE LIKELY TO SEE FALL IN SALES

DEBASIS MOHAPATRA
BENGALURU

THE second wave of the Covid pandemic is likely to rev up the sales of daily necessities like groceries and related products though discretionary spend will take a backseat. The FMCG companies operating in the food, staples, and beverages space are expected to benefit from the current wave, experts said. But relocating at many places in the country due to rising Covid cases will negatively impact the sales of those products, required for outdoor activities.

"Just like last year, packaged foods and consumer staples are likely to do well if lockdown curbs are imposed in many places across the country. However, discretionary spend will suffer as consumers will be more conservative in their spending patterns," said a Mumbai-based analyst.

India is going through the second wave of Covid pandemic with more than one lakh cases reported on Wednesday. Many places including big cities like Mumbai, Pune, Bengaluru, Noida

THE SECOND WAVE TOLL

- India registering more than 1 lakh daily cases, highest in world
- Consumer staples are already seeing an uptick in demand
- Consumers may stock up on biscuits, snacks, edible oils, and staples
- FMCG firms have begun to see brisk sales of their products
- FMCG major Britannia posted stellar sales growth of 26% last year



Though analysts are yet to quantify the extent of impact due to the second wave of the pandemic, global research firm Nielsen has projected higher sales for this year

have seen some forms of lockdown to contain the spread of the virus.

This has led to a higher stocking of biscuits, salty snacks, instant noodles, frozen foods, edible oils, and other such staples by consumers. FMCG firms like Britannia, ITC, Marico, HUL, Nestle have begun to see brisk sales of their products, industry sources said. Even e-grocery companies like BigBasket and Grofers have started seeing booking of a higher number of slots in cities like Ben-

galuru, sources added. Last year FMCG major Britannia Industries had posted a stellar sales growth of 26 per cent in the first quarter ended June 2020 amid lockdown measures. Analysts said there is a likelihood of attaining such high growth this year also if the pandemic forces States to announce widespread lockdown measures. April-June quarter of the financial year is one of the best periods for FMCG firms as most sales happen during this quarter.

Markets eke out slim gains amid Covid-19 resurgence

SENSEX ZOOMS 84 PTS, NIFTY INCHES 55 PTS; METAL, IT STOCKS SPARKLE

MUMBAI

THE BSE Sensex gave up early gains but managed to close in the green on Thursday as concerns over rising coronavirus infections and resultant restrictions across the country kept investors on the edge.

A depreciating trend in the rupee also weighed on risk sentiment, traders said. Rising for the third session on the trot, the 30-share BSE benchmark settled 84.45 points or 0.17 per cent higher at 49,746.21.

The broader NSE Nifty advanced 54.75 points or 0.37 per cent to 14,873.80. UltraTech Cement was

the top performer among the SENSEX constituents, rallying



4.24 per cent, followed by Titan, Tech Mahindra, Nestle India, TCS, Bajaj Finserv and L&T. On the other hand, IndusInd Bank, ONGC, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Auto, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank were among the laggards, slipping up to 1.07 per cent. Domestic market continued its optimistic rally supported by dovish monetary policy, though it witnessed consolidation during the second half due to selling in banking stocks. "Metal stocks led the sectorial rally on a strong outlook supported by rising steel prices and production. Q4 earnings season has started and the market is expected to have a stock-centric rally in the coming days which has a very broad positive view," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. Sectorally, BSE metal, basic materials, consumer durables, industrials, IT and tech rallied as much as 4.44 per cent, while power, utilities, bankex and finance indices fell up to 1.04 per cent.

Flipkart's Best Price starts discount offers

VIJAYAWADA

FLIPKART Wholesale, digital B2B marketplace of Flipkart, has kick started 'Online Shopping Dhamaka Month' for members of its cash-and-carry business 'Best Price' till April 30, 2021. Members of Best Price cash-and-carry business can order online through the Best Price app and website and avail up to 15 per cent savings on daily essentials as well as free delivery on orders across a wide selection of products. "E-commerce has emerged as a safe and convenient means of purchase, and the online shopping dhamaka month is a great opportunity for small retailers, kiranas and O&I shoppers to boost sales and profitability. Our top priority is the growth and prosperity of small kiranas across the country, with utmost focus on their safety," said Adarsh Menon, Senior Vice President and Head, Flipkart Wholesale.

MY Home Group, Hyderabad-based real estate company, has announced that by the end of this year it will achieve the milestone of 35 million square feet mark in total constructed space deliveries to its customers. On its 35th anniversary celebrations, the company had started online bookings and also introduced the virtual view of project sites (3D home visualisation).

As it is celebrating 35 years in business, the company is coming up with commercial project including the largest office space in Asia with over 27 million square feet at Kokapet, a villa project as 'My Home Ankura', and a premium lifestyle apartments complex 'My Home Tridasa' at Telapur, Hyderabad.

The group has already delivered 27 million square feet of constructed space and will deliver another 8 million square feet of built up area this year. The company has achieved this feat with the dedicated work by 10,000 plus employees. The company has so far completed over 25 projects

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD



Rupee plunges to 5-mth low of 74.58 against \$

MUMBAI

THE Indian rupee weakened further by 11 paise against the US currency to close at its weakest level in nearly five months on Thursday amid fears that a rapid resurgence of Covid cases in the country can disrupt economic recovery.

Logging its fourth straight session loss, the domestic currency settled at 74.58 to the US dollar – the lowest level for the rupee since November 13, 2019. At the interbank forex market, the local unit opened at 74.38 against the greenback and traded in the range of 74.19 to 74.93 during the day.

On Wednesday, the Indian rupee nosedived 105 paise to mark its biggest single-session drop in over 20 months. Over the past four sessions, the domestic unit has lost 146 paise in its valuation against the US dollar.



BMW's 6 GT series to be made in India

BMW 6 GT series upgraded version with three new variants launched

ARCHANA RAO
NEW DELHI

LUXURY vehicle giant BMW India on Thursday launched the upgraded version of its BMW 6 GT series with three new variants. The newest addition in the Sedan category comes in three variant and ranges between Rs 67.9 lakhs to Rs. 77.9 lakhs. This luxury sedan is being manufactured in India.

Speaking on the launch of the new luxury car variants, Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India, said, "the new BMW series has the practicality of a crossover, dynamics of sports-car, the silhouette of a fast pact, and the luxury of a sedan. The

personality of BMW 6 series distinguishes it clearly from the crowd and is the reason for its long-lasting success." The new 6 Series will be available for purchase in three variants – 620d priced at Rs 68.9 lakhs, 630d priced at Rs. 77.90 lacks and 630i priced at Rs 67.90 lakhs. Bawah also said that the three models will be produced locally in India. According to the BMW India, the three variants have been built on an intelligent lightweight construction that contributes to increased driving dynamics and efficiency, besides reducing weight. The car uses weight-optimised materials such as high-tensile steel, aluminium and magnesium.

Equity MFs see ₹9k crore inflow in March

NEW DELHI

AFTER eight months of consecutive outflows, equity mutual funds witnessed a net inflow of Rs 9,115 crore in March amid correction in the stock market.

Barring multi-cap and value fund categories, all the equity schemes saw inflow last month, data from the Association of Mutual Funds in India (Amfi) showed on Thursday. However, investors pulled out Rs 52,528 crore from debt mutual funds last month, after investing Rs 1,735 crore in February, owing to advance tax payments and other year ending commitments. Overall, the mutual fund industry witnessed a net outflow of Rs 29,745 crore across all segments during the period under review, compared with a net inflow of Rs 4,090 crore in February. According to the data, net inflow in equity and equity-linked open-ended schemes was at Rs 9,115 crore in March, compared with an outflow of Rs 4,534 crore in February. Prior to this inflow, equity schemes had been witnessing a net outflow since July 2020.

My Home plans big as it celebrates 35 yrs

It's a success story of building quality homes, say promoters



Shyam Rao Jupally (3rd from left), Managing Director, My Home Constructions, Ramu Rao Jupally (4th from left), Whole Time Director, My Home Group, and other directors pose for a photograph on the occasion of 35 years celebration of My Home Group, in Hyderabad on Thursday

covering the 35 million square feet of constructed space and sells around 4 million square feet every year. The group has a turnover of Rs 6,000 crore and the upcoming projects are to the tune of Rs 40,000 crore.

"I am filled with gratitude, as we reach our 35 years' milestone. Our successes are a testament to the values of hard work, dedication and entrepreneurial spirit, qualities that are central to our family's legacy. We have built quality homes for over 10,000 families and are coming up with var-

ious projects in the next few years," said Rameswar Rao Jupally, Chairman, My Home Group.

Also, we are constructing our dream project near Shamshabad, which is an environmental-friendly sustainable city that would be my contribution to future generations for a peaceful living, he added.

"We have always listened to the needs of our customers and constantly brought innovation into our projects to cater to their evolving needs. Keeping the pandemic in con-

text, to aid our customers buy new homes from the convenience of their own homes, we have fast-tracked the introduction of digital solutions like 3D home visualisation and buying homes online," Shyam Rao Jupally, Managing Director, My Home Constructions, told the media here on Thursday.

Ramu Rao Jupally, Whole Time Director, My Home Group, said: "We are glad that we played at a substantial role in flying growth of Hyderabad real estate sector for the last

three and half decades. As we accelerate from here, we want to reinforce our robust leadership in real estate sector and set new benchmarks in the industry".

Only with strong vision and deep philosophy, we at My Home have been continuously witnessing the progressive learning curve in terms of construction technologies, from brick and mortar technology to the latest pre-cast technology, platinum rated green projects to central cooling system to residential projects, he added.

Our residential projects echo the latest global lifestyle developments and amenities that have transformed the industry; be it introducing premium apartments with a swimming pool and terrace garden to Hyderabad market through My Home Fernhill in 1998 or introducing club house; bulk municipal water connections, jogging track at My Home Navadweepa in 2005 or introducing prepaid electrical connections, gas and maintenance systems and fiber to home connection at the first gated community with 2,000 plus flats at My Home Jewel in 2010, Ramu Rao said.

Mussanah Open Championship

Unprecedented four Indian sailors make cut for Tokyo

Vishnu, Ganapathy-Varun pair qualify for Olympics; Kumanan on Wednesday became first Indian woman sailor to qualify

NEW DELHI

IN a historic first for India, four sailors from the country will compete at this year's Olympics after Vishnu Saravanan and the pair of Ganapathy Chengappa and Varun Thakkar qualify for Tokyo at the Asian Qualifiers in Oman on Thursday.

This was after Nethra Kumanan on Wednesday became the first Indian woman sailor to qualify for the Olympics in the laser radial event in the Mussanah Open Championship, which is an Asian Olympic qualifying event. It is also the first time that India will compete in three sailing events in the Olympics. So far, India had competed in only one event in all the earlier Olympics though two sailors represented the country on four occasions.

"Yes, history has been scripted. Four Indian sailors have qualified for Olympics to compete in three events. It's the maximum number of sailors qualified and also in number of events," Yachting Association of India joint secretary general Capt Jitendra Dixit told PTI.

Tomasz Januszewski, the Indian sailing coach, said it was a result of "years of hard work by sailors, their parents and coaches. "Sincere congratulations to our champions for creating this historic day and taking Indian sailing to a whole new level," he told PTI from Oman.

He also thanked the Sports Ministry, the Sports Authority of India and the Yachting Association of India for constant support. "I personally hope that it is the start of a new era in Indian sailing. Sailors and the community behind them are amazing. It is time for them to become recognised and start shining, locally and internationally," Januszewski added.

On Thursday, Saravanan was the first to qualify for the Tokyo Games in Laser Standard Class after finishing second in the overall standings. Later, the duo of Chengappa and Thakkar finished on top of the points table in the 49er Class. The two had won a bronze



(From left to right) Ganapathy Chengappa, Nethra Kumanan, Vishnu Saravanan and Varun Thakkar

medal in the 2018 Asian Games in Indonesia.

"I congratulate Indian athletes Nethra Kumanan, KC Ganapathy and Varun Thakkar who have qualified for Tokyo Olympic in sailing. I'm particularly proud of the quota of Nethra, who is India's first-ever female sailor to qualify for the Olympics!" tweeted sports minister Kiren Rijiju.

Two sailors make a team in the 49er Class while laser class is a single sailor event. Also, two sailors qualify for Tokyo Olympics from laser class events while only one team can do so in the 49er class. Saravanan was third till the penultimate day on Wednesday but won the medal race on Thursday to jump to second place overall with 53 points and book a Tokyo Olympics quota.

"Our athletes are making a mark in all disciplines!" Rijiju said. The Indian pipped Thailand's Keerati Bualong (57 points), who was second till Wednesday, for the Tokyo Games spot. Singapore's Ryan Lo Jun Han (31 points) was first overall in the Laser Standard Class table.

"Till Wednesday, Vishnu was third behind the Thai sailor though both were on same points. Today in the medal race, Vishnu finished first and so naturally he ended above

the Thai sailor in points table," Dixit said.

"Two sailors qualify for Olympics in laser class and Vishnu finished second. The Singapore sailor was well above Vishnu before today and so Vishnu could not dislodge him (from top position)."

Kumanan finished sixth in the laser radial class medal race on Thursday but still ended at second overall with 30 points to confirm the Olympics spot. Dutchwoman Emma Savelon (29 points), who finished fourth in the medal race on Thursday, topped the standings but she can't be considered for the Asian qualifying spot.

Stephanie Norton of Hong Kong, who finished third overall, also qualified. There have been four instances of two Indian sailors qualifying for the Olympics earlier but they took part in the same event.

The Indian pair of Farokh Tarapore and Dhruv Bhandari competed in the 470 class in the 1984 Olympics. Tarapore and Kelly Rao took part in the same event in the 1988 Games. Tarapore -- in his third Olympics -- and Cyrus Cama took part in the same 470 class in the 1992 Barcelona Games before Malav Shroff and Sumeet Patel competed in 49er class skiff in the 2004 Athens Olympics. (PTI)

Gnanasekaran continues good run in Polish Superliga

NEW DELHI

INDIA'S ace table tennis player Sathiyam Gnanasekaran continued his good run in the Polish Superliga by winning his eighth league match on Wednesday night.

In a thrilling encounter, the 28-year-old Gnanasekaran defeated Jiri Vrablik 3-2 to help Jaroslav score a 3-1 win over Dekorglass Dzialdowo in the first leg of the semi-fi-

nals.

"The second leg will be played on Sunday. We hope to sustain our efforts in the away match," he told IANS from Poland.

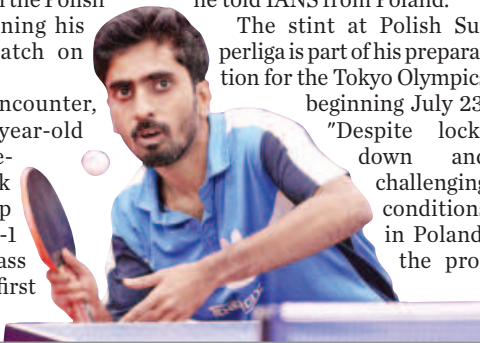
The stint at Polish Superliga is part of his preparation for the Tokyo Olympics beginning July 23. "Despite lockdown and challenging conditions in Poland, the pro-

fessional league has turned out to be a good platform to polish my competitive skills," he said.

Last month, Gnanasekaran was one of the two Indian men's table tennis players to qualify for Olympics during the Asian qualification tournament in Doha.

Achanta Sharath Kamal is the other Indian to make Olympic cut in men's category.

In February, Gnanasekaran won the men's singles title upsetting his more experienced rival Kamal in the 82nd National Table Tennis Championships held in Panchkula, Haryana. (IANS)



Siraj, Sundar add to RCB's int'l star power

CHENNAI

ROYAL Challengers Bangalore won't just have the benefit of long-time international stars like Glenn Maxwell, Kyle Jamieson besides Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers, they will also be able to dish out young Indian players who have become national heroes within a gap of six months.

Both Washington Sundar and weren't big names in the previous edition of IPL in UAE just six months ago. However, in the last six months, they have per-



formed well for India in Test series against Australia and England to become RCB's star players.

Pace bowler Navdeep Saini is the other one who played in Australia and although he got injured, a stint with the India Test team will likely benefit him in the IPL 2021.

RCB skipper Virat Kohli said that a good stint with the national team is bound to give the players confidence.

"From personal point of view, I can vouch that if you do well for your national team, it is always exciting to come to the IPL, and that's something I came to know as a youngster -- bringing in the confidence that I gained at the international level back in to the IPL setup," said Kohli while addressing the media in a virtual interaction on Thursday.

"Watching guys like Washington Sundar, Navdeep Saini, Mohammed Siraj come into their own. Yuzi (Yuzvendra Chahal) has been there for a while. You obviously want these guys to show their personality and confidence for RCB as well and then maybe we can pull together stronger as a team and then move in the right direction," added Kohli. (IANS)

India gears up to show its cricket prowess

CHENNAI

AMID rising Covid-19 cases and some uncertainty over the safety of the bio-secure environment, the Indian Premier League's 14th edition gets underway here from Friday.

Five-time champions Mumbai Indians, looking for a hat-trick of titles, will take on Royal Challengers Bangalore, who are yet to win an IPL title, in the first match of the tournament.

This is the second successive edition of the tournament that will be held behind closed doors after the one last year that was held in the UAE.

The tournament assumes significance for not just the Indian cricket board but also various other boards as well as the International Cricket Council (ICC).

It is being taken as a test event ahead of the T20 World Cup that will be held in India later this year.

The safe and smooth conduct of the tournament will be important for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) as it looks to show to the ICC that it has the capability to host the multi-nation tournament during the times of pandemic.

The ICC interim chief executive officer (CEO) Geoff Allardice told media on Wednesday that while the T20 World Cup in India is on schedule, the global body has made back-up plans.

"We are certainly proceeding with the event as planned. We have plan B, but we haven't activated those plans yet. We are working with the BCCI, we

But the good thing is that we are back in India and one more positive thing about this edition like last year is that there is no home advantage. Everyone is playing at neutral venues and the strength of your squad really comes to the fore. This is precisely why last IPL was competitive and until about the last 3-4 games, everyone was in the reckoning to qualify [for the playoffs] which I think is great for the tournament. The viewership went through the roof which I expect to be the case this time around as well. The [2021] tournament is going to be competitive,

—Virat Kohli



IPL IN NUMBERS

* 60 the number of matches to be played, including the final.

* 56 matches in league phase. Ten each in Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata and Bengaluru. Ahmedabad and Delhi will host eight league matches.

* 4 playoff games, all in Ahmedabad.

* 11 the number of double-headers.

* 3 the number of times each team will travel during the league phase.

do have backup plans that can be activated if the time comes," he had said at a virtual media interaction.

The overseas cricketers playing in the league will also be under as much scrutiny from their respective boards as the Indian players from the BCCI as teams look to finalise their squads and plans for the T20 World Cup.

The IPL 2021 tournament will see the caravan model for the first time with matches this season to be held at six venues and no team playing at home.

The first phase of league games -- comprising 20 matches -- will be held in Chennai and Mumbai while the action for the next batch of league games -- 16 in number -- will be held in Ahmedabad and Delhi.

The league action will then move to Bengaluru and Kolkata -- for the last 20 league matches. The playoffs will be held at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad.

The BCCI thinks that ensuring no team playing at home in the caravan model, will make it a level-playing field for all teams.

The tournament returning home after an edition in UAE will also bring good news to the spinners who have traditionally done well in the tournament. In the last edition in UAE, the fast bowlers dominated the wicket-takers' list. Seven of the top 10 wicket-takers were pace bowlers with Delhi Capitals' Kagiso Rabada winning the Purple Cap, picking 30 wickets.

The biggest challenge for the teams will be how keep players motivated during times when there cannot be any outdoor activity.

In the UAE, team hotels had private beaches. However, in India the team hotels don't have private beaches and it will be only the team room where the players can get together and spend time.

Many of the players have already expressed how tough life is in a bio-bubble. Some of the top international players have already pulled out. The likes of Mark Wood and Dale Steyn didn't appear at the mini-auction. Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Marsh and Josh Philippe pulled out just prior to the start of the tournament. Still, majority of the foreign stars will be there.

French Open postponed by a week

PARIS

THE French Open has been postponed by a week due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the French Tennis Federation (FFT) said in a statement on Thursday. The clay court Grand Slam will be held from May 30 to June 11, with the qualifying rounds scheduled for May 24 to 28. The FFT said that the decision was made in response to France President Emmanuel Macron's announcement last month that a scheduled to progressively get cultural and sporting events in the country back up and running would be set up from mid-May onwards, subject to the improvement of the health situation.

"Using this as their starting point, the FFT worked in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the relevant government services on potential scenarios for

organising Roland-Garros, while taking the international sporting calendar into account," said the FFT. "In this context, it appeared that postponing the tournament by one week would be the best solution. Hence the qualifying rounds will be held from Monday 24 to Friday 28 May and will be followed by the main draw, from Sunday 30 May to Sunday 13 June," it further said.

The FFT further said that limited number of fans will be allowed at the event.

"I am delighted that the discussions with the public authorities, the governing bodies of international tennis, our partners and broadcasters, and the ongoing work with the WTA and ATP, have made it possible for us to postpone the 2021 Roland-Garros tournament by a week. I thank them for this," said FFT president Gilles Moretton. (IANS)