

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | SATURDAY | 15 MAY 2021

## WEATHER



Max: 39.0°C  
Min: 19°C  
RH: 38%  
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.  
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 39/19 °C

## ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana

Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Tadiya till 7.58 am

Star: Mrigasira till 8.37 am

Varjyam: 5.55 pm to 7.41 pm

Durmuhurtam: 5.48 am to 7.31 am

Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am

HUIRI CALENDAR

Shawwal 2,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 5.08 am

Zohar: 12.05 pm

Asar: 4.11 pm

Maghrib: 5.47 pm

Isha: 7.02 pm

SUNRISE TOMORROW 06.08 AM

SUNSET TODAY 06.33 PM

MOONSET 8.52 PM

MOONRISE 8.21 AM

## COUNTER POINT



Our study shows there is no oxygen in many parts of planet Earth!

## SHORT TAKES

### Monsoon to reach Kerala on May 31

**New Delhi:** The southwest monsoon is likely to arrive over Kerala on May 31, a day earlier than its normal onset date, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday. The normal onset date of the monsoon over Kerala is June 1. "This year, the onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala is likely to be on 31st May with a model error of plus/minus 4 days," the IMD said.

### Cyclone Tauktae set to intensify

**New Delhi:** The depression in the Arabian Sea is likely to intensify into a "very severe cyclonic storm" on May 17 and cross the Gujarat coast a day later, the IMD said on Friday. It may intensify further into a severe cyclonic storm by Saturday night. From May 16-19, it may intensify into a "very severe cyclonic storm" with a wind speed of 150-160 kilometres per hour gusting up to 175 kmph.

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40 tonne O2 to reach Krishnapatnam today

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Over 2,000 bodies found in Ganga river

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**Coach Raman blasts star culture in women's team**

## TABLOID

**Don't be influencers of insensitivity**

### YSRC REBEL MP RAJU ARRESTED FOR HATE SPEECH

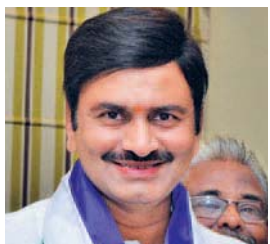
DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Narasapur MP K. Raghu Rama Krishna Raju was arrested by the AP CID sleuths at his residence in Hyderabad on Friday. The MP has been allegedly promoting hatred among certain communities with his speeches and had also been continuously targeting state government, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and other leaders.

His criticism turned even personal against the CM and he was making unsavoury remarks on every activity, be it the implementation of several welfare schemes or Covid-19 management and vaccination.

Additional DG-CID, P.V. Sunil Kumar, ordered a preliminary inquiry against the MP and found that he was making speeches on a regular basis to create tensions among various communities.

■ **Page 3: Minister Balineni justifies arrest**



Raghurama Krishna Raju

### YOUTH CONGRESS CHIEF QUIZZED ON COVID HELP

**New Delhi, May 14:** Indian Youth Congress (IYC) president Srinivas BV on Friday said the Delhi Police's Crime Branch questioned him about the assistance being provided by him to people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Police called me this morning and came to my office around 11.45 am. They questioned how I was doing it," he said.

However, the Delhi Police said the questioning was done following a Delhi High Court order. The High Court has directed the city police to conduct inquiry into politicians involved in distribution of Covid-19 medicines and other items, and take steps for lodging of FIR in case of offence, a senior police officer said. In compliance with the directions of the high court, inquiry is being conducted into several people, the officer said. On May 4, the HC had asked the police to examine politicians allegedly procuring and distributing Remdesivir.

—PTI

### In prayer



Muslims take part in special prayers for Id-ul-Fitr celebrations at Macca Masjid at Jagadamba junction in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

## Centre to let states import WHO approved vaccines

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 14

In a major relief to states facing acute shortage of vaccines, the Centre has hinted at allowing import of vaccines approved by WHO directly by the states.

In this context, Telangana would invite global tenders to procure vaccines while Andhra Pradesh has already called for quotations.

It is learnt that the states can directly release new vaccines without further trials to test efficacy in Indian environs.

Keeping in view the supply position in the next two months, Telangana State will complete the second dose vaccination to those above 45 years on a top priority basis in May and June.

An in-principle decision on this was taken by



Deepak Sapra, global head of custom pharma services at Dr Reddy's Laboratories receives the first shot of Sputnik V vaccine against Covid-19 in Hyderabad on Friday.

the task force headed by minister K.T. Rama Rao here on Friday. Sources said TS will also focus on initiating a vaccination drive for super-spreaders like delivery personnel, banking staff and cab/auto drivers in these

### FIRST DOSE OF SPUTNIK V ADMINISTERED

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 14

The first dose of Sputnik V, Russian-made Covid-19 vaccine, was administered on Friday as part of its soft launch in Hyderabad, according to Dr Reddy's Laboratories, which is partnering with the Russian Direct Investment Fund.

■ **MORE REPORTS ON FC**

two months itself depending on vaccine availability.

The vaccination for the 18-45 agegroup will have to wait till July.

■ **Page 3: KTR seeks long-term vax policy**

## CM writes to PM seeking more medical oxygen

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy will write a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to enhance allocation of medical oxygen to AP shortly.

Principal secretary (transport) M.T. Krishna Babu said here on Friday that the centre had allocated three additional ISO containers and 110 metric tonnes of liquid medical oxygen (LMO) from Reliance, Jamnagar, to AP, and added that the three containers would be handed

over at Durgapur on Saturday.

The official said that two cryogenic containers carrying 20 tonnes of LMO each had started from Durgapur Steel Plant in a train and it would reach Krishnapatnam Port in Nellore district by 4 pm on Saturday.

Another train carrying 60 tonnes of

LMO would start from Durgapur on Saturday and would reach Nellore in 24 hours. The two trains would be running in opposite direction to ensure supply of 60 tonnes of LMO to Rayalaseema districts and also to Nellore district.

The principal secretary looking after supply of storage of medical oxygen said that one more train carrying six ISO containers with 110 tonnes of LMO from Reliance, Jamnagar, had started and would reach Guntur station by Saturday night.

## PM salutes Dalit farmer for relying on nature

DC CORRESPONDENT ANANTAPUR, MAY 14

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lauded a woman farmer practising natural farming as a role model for farmers across the country. He also noted the Dalit woman earns four times investment.

Praising her for her initiative to train 170 tribal women farmers in her village, the PM opined that major parts of country would be greener if everyone followed her example.

The Kisan (Prime Minister's Kisan Samman Fund) 2021-22 Scheme was



Vannuramma

launched by the Prime Minister on Friday through a video conference and he interacted with a few farmers from different parts of the country on the occasion.

Vannuramma, a woman

farmer from Duradakunta village in Kalyanadurgam mandal, was among those who had the opportunity to interact with the Prime Minister. She had four children and lost her husband a few years ago. Though the family had four acres of dry land, she eked out a living as a farm labourer till two years ago, leaving the land for nearly 10 years as they could not bear losses.

Her life took a positive turn after she started practicing natural farming in 2 acres.

■ **Page 3: Farmer gets yield throughout the year**

## DEEPER | REACH

## Modi urges citizens to wear masks, maintain social distancing Covid spreading to rural India: PM

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 14

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday warned that the Covid-19 pandemic was rapidly spreading in rural areas, as he urged all citizens to take precautions, wear masks and keep social distancing in order to check the spread of the disease that has claimed over 2.6 lakh lives.

The Centre, he said, was working on a "war footing" to check the second wave of infections and was setting up new hospitals and oxygen generating plants while augmenting supplies of medicines and vaccines.

"I want to warn you about corona. This pandemic is spreading fast in rural villages. Every government is making efforts to stop this. But awareness of this among rural people and the cooperation of panchayats is equally important," the Prime Minister said, saying the country was facing an "invisible enemy".

Speaking at the release of the eighth installment of financial benefits under the PM-Kisan scheme via video conferencing, Mr Modi added: "You have never disappointed the nation. We hope this time too, to protect yourself and your family from Covid, all necessary

● **THE CENTRE**, he said was working on a "war footing" to check the second wave of infections and was setting up new hospitals and oxygen generating plants while augmenting supplies of medicines and vaccines.

precautions are taken. Wearing masks properly and regularly is important."

Facing the world's worst health crisis, India has reported over three lakh daily infections for 22 consecutive days.

The health ministry said India logged 3,43,144 new

infections in the last 24 hours, taking the case tally to 2,40,46,809. The tally of total cases crossed 2.4 crores on Friday. With 4,000 more deaths, the toll stands at 2,62,317 since the pandemic first struck India over a year ago. While 2,00,79,599 people have recovered from the virus across India, the number of active cases is 37,04,893. The bulk of new infections is said to be coming from rural areas.

On Friday, Mumbai reported 1,657 new cases, and over 2,572 recoveries and 62 deaths in the last 24 hours. Seeing a dip in the number of positive cases,

Delhi on Friday reported 8,506 new cases, the lowest since April 10, with the positivity rate falling to 12.40 per cent; and 289 more deaths.

The Kerala government on Friday extended the strict statewide lockdown to fight the pandemic till May 23.

The health ministry said Friday it would supply a total of 191.99 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines -- Covishield and Covaxin -- to the states and Union territories free of cost from May 16 to May 31. These include 162.5 lakh Covidshield doses and 29.49 lakh Covaxin doses.

## TS HC: Do not stop Covid ambulances

Stays circular stopping other state patients

VUJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 14

The Telangana High Court on Friday stayed the implementation of a circular issued by the state government on May 11, with guidelines to streamline the influx of ambulances carrying Covid-19 patients from other states into Telangana for hospitalisation.

The court made it clear that the orders would come into effect forthwith, as against the police waiting for receipt of an order copy from the court.

The court directed the Advocate General and principal secretary, health, who was present, to immediately communicate the orders to the government and said the instructions should immediately be passed to the police authorities along the borders, as not to stop ambulances carrying Covid patients from other states.

Because of Id-ul-Fitr and other holidays the order copy could be delayed, the court directed them to pass necessary orders at the field level.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijayen Reddy was dealing with an urgent case of PIL filed by Garimella Venkata Krishna Rao, who challenged the circular issued by the Telangana State government.

Justice Hima Kohli came down heavily on the government for issuing the circular, which indirectly restrained treatment to Covid patients of other states in hospitals in Hyderabad.

Chief Justice Kohli observed, "The Telangana

## 2 Covid patients die waiting at TS border

D.SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC KURNOOL, MAY 14

Two Covid-19 patients died in ambulances as the Telangana state police stopped the vehicles at Pullur toll plaza on the inter-state border at Andhra Pradesh near here on Friday. A seriously ill patient has been admitted to the General Hospital here after the denial of entry into TS.

The dead were reportedly from Kadapa and Nandyal towns. At least 60 ambulances have been returned since the midnight of Thursday, a source said.

It was a day of hope against hope at Pullur toll plaza. Ambulances carrying critically ill patients were stopped from going to Hyderabad as the cops at Jogulamba-Gadwal strictly implemented the TS Chief Secretary's orders which laid down entry norms like producing an e-pass and prior hospital bed confirmation for the patients-in transit.

● **KURNOOL SP** Kagineelli Fakkeerappa said no one died while waiting at the border checkpoint. He said out of 14 ambulances stuck there, 6 had patients and others were empty

However, Kurnool SP Kagineelli Fakkeerappa said no one died while waiting at the border checkpoint. "In all, 14 ambulances got stuck out here, of which six were with patients and eight empty. Four patients were shifted back to various hospitals in Kurnool and they are stable."

He said, "This information is authentic as it was verified from all sources."

After the TS High Court issuing a stay of operation of the TS Chief Secretary's orders curbing ambulances, the Jogulamba-Gadwal SP Ranjan Ratan Kumar said the status quo continues at the Pullur toll plaza.

■ **Page 2: Cops yet to get orders to back off**

government circular is nothing but an override of Constitutional rights by restricting citizens' entry into the state and restraining medical treatment, overreach of National Highway Authorities Act by stopping ambulances at the borders without approval of the Central government and overruling of the Supreme

Court's recent orders, which clearly stated as that no patient shall be refused admission in a hospital on the ground of his residence."

The Chief Justice further observed that the state had done indirectly what it could not do directly.

■ **Page 2: HC warns TS against circumventing order**

## AP to do house-to-house fever survey from today

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Andhra Pradesh government will take up a door-to-door survey for fever from Saturday as part of its efforts to check spread of Coronavirus in the state.

Principal secretary (Health) told media that medical officials, ANMs and Asha workers of all districts will take up door-to-door surveys for identifying people suffering with fever. Those found feverish will be given Covid medicine kits and informed how they can treat themselves at home. The health official said the move is aimed at controlling the spread of virus in addition to bringing down pressure on hospitals from patients who

would otherwise throng hospitals though they are not in a serious condition.

He underlined that health personnel are administering the second dose of vaccination all over the state. There is no rush of people at Covid vaccination centres. He pointed out that the state government has by itself purchased Covaxin doses for administering the second dose to people without waiting for supply of vaccine from the centre.

The principal secretary asserted that the number of patients discharged from hospitals after treatment of Coronavirus is going up. This has brought down the pressure on hospitals. In the last 24 hours, 4,306 patients have been discharged from the state,

while 5,523 patients are currently undergoing treatment in various hospitals. He disclosed that gap between admissions and discharges at hospitals is coming down. He hoped more patients are going to be discharged in the state during the next two to three days. The official said that AP has received 590 metric tonnes of medical oxygen in the last 24 hours. Tamil Nadu government has informed AP that it will be unable to supply it medical oxygen for the next 5-6 days because of trouble at its Chennai oxygen plant. Following this, state officials have spoken to the centre, Kerala and Karnataka and made alternative arrangements, he added.



## IN BRIEF

### KURNOOL SP GOES TO RESCUE OF GASPING PATIENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, MAY 14

It was a life and death question at Pullur toll plaza as the condition of Covid patients on oxygen support turned precarious with dipping levels of oxygen. Despite their serious condition, the Telangana police refused to allow ambulances from AP into their state. Seeing the plight of their kin and fearing the worst, the attendants made frantic calls to officials and their contacts to come to their rescue and arrange oxygen for the dying patients.

Learning of their plight, Kurnool SP Dr Kagineeli Fakkeerappa swung into action and rushed stocks of oxygen cylinders from Police Welfare Hospital to the border. He also quickly went from ambulance to ambulance, checking patients' oxygen levels and putting on them on cylinders wherever needed. On widespread praise for him, he mere said saving lives was the need of the hour and that they were doing what they could. Patients also profusely thanked him for his timely help.

The SP said that every day hundreds of patients from neighbouring Mahbubnagar come to Kurnool for medical facilities and all are provided without any restrictions. "What is more needed now is saving lives than brooding over narrow interests," he observed. In contrast, Jogulamba-Gadwal district SP Ranjan Rathan Kumar drew flak from the people from AP side for not responding to the plight of critical patients.

● **SP SWUNG** into action and rushed stocks of O2 cylinders from Police Welfare Hospital to the border. He also quickly went from ambulance to ambulance, checking patients' O2 levels and putting on them on cylinders wherever needed.

## SAJJALA SLAMS TS ACT OF BLOCKING AMBULANCES

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

The Advisor (Public Affairs) to the state government, Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, called it unfortunate on the part of Telangana government not to allow ambulances with Coronavirus-infected patients from parts of AP to reach Hyderabad for treatment, even as the Telangana High Court issued directions to the Telangana government earlier not to stop ambulances coming from other states at inter-state borders.

He told media persons here on Friday that it was time everyone worked with humanity and called upon the TS government to allow ambulances from AP into Telangana on humanitarian grounds, stating that the entire country was going through an unprecedented health crisis due to Coronavirus pandemic.

Reacting sharply to the TS government insistence on letters from hospitals and also passes for entering their state to get medical treatment, Reddy said that it was not possible to follow them, given the prevalence of an emergency situation.

Maintaining that people prefer to visit cities having better medical infrastructure, he said that AP patients were facing trouble to reach Hyderabad, while there were no restrictions on reaching Chennai and Bengaluru.

Referring to the post-bifurcation scenario, he slammed the former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for failing to develop a super specialty hospital in AP during his five-year regime and opined that if any such facility was developed, the people should not have faced such an ordeal as there were facing at present. He castigated Naidu for giving up AP rights on common capital Hyderabad up to 2024 by involving in cheap politics.

Reddy said that CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy was holding talks with the Telangana government to resolve the issue at the earliest and added that the state government had been making all efforts to contain the spread of the virus, provide better medical facilities, vaccinate all people and also deliver welfare schemes without any hindrance even during the peak Covid-19 times.

He also said that the state government had spent ₹68,000 crore for welfare farmers in the last 23 months and even directly credited ₹89,000 crore into the accounts of beneficiaries under various schemes.

# Ambulances with Covid-hit stopped at TS border again

AP police turn Good Samaritans, help patients get permits from TS Covid centre

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

The Telangana state police yet again stopped ambulances carrying Coronavirus-infected patients from parts of AP at the border points, but help was at hand from the AP police to facilitate some of these to proceed to Hyderabad with a special nod from the TS Covid Control Centre.

The stoppage was done on the pretext that these ambulances were not having admission permits from the respective hospitals they were heading for in Telangana and from the TS Covid Control Centre (TSCCC). Patients and their families were put to hardships from the week hours on Friday.

The Telangana state government had issued a direction that the infected patients coming to Hyderabad for medical treatment must carry proof of bed confirmation from the hospital they were going to and nod from the TSCCC. The Telangana state police turned away several of the ambulances and patients therein.

At the Garikapadu check post in Jaggaiahpetta of Krishna district, nearly 15 ambulances arrived from the early hours on Friday from parts of Vijayawada, Guntur, East Godavari and West Godavari districts carrying the Covid-19 patients. The TS police allowed in three to four of these ambulances as they showed the permissions.

The AP police swiftly turned Good Samaritans by helping the critically ill patients to obtain mandatory permission from the TSCCC and to proceed to Hyderabad.

A head constable was deputed by the AP police at the check post for the purpose. He contacted the TS authorities by phone and also sent necessary papers through WhatsApp to get permission in just a few minutes.

Krishna SP M. Ravindra Babu said, "We helped some critically ill infected patients to get necessary approval from the Telangana state Covid Control Centre as they lacked it even though they got allocation of beds in some hospitals in Hyderabad. However, some ambulances were sent back for want of necessary approvals by the TS police."

At Ramapuram crossroad checkpoint in Kodad, TS police stopped nearly 30 ambulances coming from parts of AP and turned them away, saying they should first get valid permission to be allowed to go to Hyderabad.

A local police officer said, "Some of the Covid patients and their kin are talking to executives in hospitals in Hyderabad and getting confirmation of beds vaguely without taking the hospital management into confidence. As per rule, a bed in the hospital should be confirmed and hospital management has to inform the state covid control centre and get its approval. Unless both the permissions are there with the patients, we are not allowing any ambulance to cross the check post irrespective of whether or not the condition of a patient is critical."

Meanwhile, AP BJP state general secretary S. Vishnuvardhan Reddy appealed to the chief ministers of both AP and TS to intervene and resolve the issue. He asked AP CM as to why he was unable to get the Telangana govern-



Telangana police stops an ambulance near Ramapuram crossroad at a checkpoint on Friday.

— DC

## A-G opposes TS imposing curbs on ambulance entry

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Andhra Pradesh Advocate-General S. Sriram strongly opposed the Telangana government's move imposing curbs to allow ambulances carrying Coronavirus-infected patients to visit Hyderabad from various parts of AP for getting medical treatment.

The AP government impleaded in the case heard by the Telangana High Court on Friday. Its advocate general argued that inter-state movement of the people is a fundamental right mentioned under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution and imposing restrictions on travel between both the states was unconstitutional. Referring to the provisions in the circular and also Epidemic Diseases

● **EPIDEMIC DISEASES Act, 1897 and Disaster Management Act, 2005, do not permit blocking patients, based on place of residence.**

Act, 1897 and Disaster Management Act, 2005, he argued such provisions would not permit a state to discriminate against patients on the basis of their place of residence and said that any power to classify persons for specific measures under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, on the basis of their residence would be unconstitutional.

The AG submitted to the court that the medical infrastructure in the country, irrespective of the state in which it is located, is a national asset, and mentioned that the Supreme Court had issued directions to ensure seam-

less coordination among all the states.

Referring to the circular issued by the TS government on May 11, the AG said that it was issued to get over the judgement of the TS High Court not to impose curbs on the movement of the Covid-19 patients from AP to TS. He informed the court that the circular issued by the TS government, was sent to the AP government by mail on Thursday night, and from Friday morning, the ambulances carrying the patients were stopped at the TS borders. He submitted to the court that issuing separate restrictions for Covid-19 infected patients belonging to other states was constitutionally impermissible and said that such regulations should not be issued under any provision of the law.

## HC warns TS against circumventing order

From page 1

Suspending the implementation of the circular, the court warned the Telangana government not to take any further step to issue fresh orders or guidelines or circular to circumvent or put the pedals on inter-state movements of ambulances carrying Covid-19 patients from neighbouring states.

The court also directed the government not to insist the patients or their attendants coming from other states to apply in a prescribed format to the control room set up by the government. In case, if a patient or attendant applies to the said control room, they should be assisted in securing hospital admission.

The High Court made it clear that there was no requirement of any authorisation from the control room for an ambulance carrying a Covid-19 patient seeking hospital admission anywhere in Telangana or Hyderabad.

Justice Vijaysen Reddy observed that it was the choice or risk of the patient, who came from faraway places to get admission in any particular hospital. "They will take care of their lives, despite their admission

into hospital or not, let them get into the state," Justice Reddy said.

Defending the circular, Advocate-General B.S. Prasad explained to the court that the government had taken this measure honestly considering the best interests of TS citizens. Further, he submitted that the circular did not prohibit any ingressions of other state people or treatment to them in Telangana. "It was just streamlining the influx so as not to create havoc on the ground that the oxygen supply and medicines are not sufficiently allocated to Telangana State by the Union government. Moreover, the allocations promised were also not fully supplied," Prasad submitted.

Syed Ali Murtuza Rizvi, principal secretary, health, submitted that 45 per cent of beds of all hospitals in Hyderabad was occupied with other state patients and 86 per cent of beds with patients other than the GHMC area.

"It would be problematic for the patients residing under GHMC limits to get an emergency bed. Other states like Maharashtra and Delhi are prohibiting entry from other states. We didn't issue any such order. By considering the

Referring to the TS government allowing foreigners to visit Hyderabad for treatment, he asked why it was not allowing patients from AP.

TS AP state president K. Atchannaidu slammed the AP government for failing to hold talks with the Telangana government on this matter.

"Any unnatural death due to medical malpractice or lapse should be accounted for. It must be a parameter of human rights standards prevailing in a society," he maintained.

Healthcare system must form the backbone of public sector: It could be delegated only partially to private sector, which considers patients as consumers. Thus patients in private hospital must be brought within the framework of Consumer Protection Act. Patients should have right to claim damages from government and insurance companies, the veda-

## TS COPS YET TO GET ORDERS TO BACK OFF

From page 1

"We have not received any order to ease the flow of ambulances."

The SP who visited the toll plaza earlier in the day asked the police manning the border checkpoint to be fully vigilant and not allow any ambulances. When asked the SP as to why there was a strict vigil on patients visiting Hyderabad, he disconnected the call.

It was chaos at the Pullur toll plaza on Friday as TS police stopped ambulances.

The Gadwal police scrutinised ambulances for documents. At least 60 ambulances have been sent back from midnight of Thursday till Friday afternoon. It is said two critically ill patients on oxygen support in ambulances died at the toll plaza as they were kept waiting for permission to cross the border. One more critically ill patient, denied permission, was admitted in Kurnool GGH.

Kurnool MLA M.A. Hafeez Khan requested the border police to allow patients to proceed. The cops, in turn, cited the CS order. Jogulamba Gadwal district SP Ranjan Rathan Kumar visited the toll plaza and reviewed the situation.

Hafeez Khan got to know in the morning that dozens of ambulances were stranded at the Pullur toll plaza. He rushed to the place and found patients in varying degrees of seriousness on the wait for entry to TS. He managed to send two ambulances to Hyderabad based on the extremely serious nature of the condition.

Meanwhile, TD Kurnool unit president Somisetty Venkateswarlu and BJP district president P Rama Swamy reached the toll plaza and entered Telangana side and started a street protest. Demanding that the TS police allow all ambulances to go through, they said the restrictions must be withdrawn immediately.

The TS police drove them back to AP "You agitate from Andhra's side only. Not here," cops told them. YSRC MLAs Katasani Rambhupal Reddy and Arthur also reached the spot but failed to convince the cops.

● **The Gadwal police scrutinised ambulances for documents. At least 60 ambulances have been sent back from midnight of Thursday till Friday afternoon. It is said two critically ill patients on O2 support in ambulances died.**

## Ministers review situation at KGH

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 14

Minister for health and deputy chief minister Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani), tourism minister Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao and district in-charge minister Kurasala Kannababu held a meeting with the top management of King George Hospital (KGH) on Friday. They reviewed oxygen supply position, availability of beds, availability of specialist and general doctors and nursing staff for effective management of Covid-19.

Speaking on the occasion, the health minister said that the medical officials should ensure that oxygen was not wasted and awareness should be created among the patients on the need for rational use of oxygen. He suggested that one nodal officer be appointed for management of oxygen and allotment of beds. He asked the superintendent of KGH, Dr P. Mythili, to supervise the services through CCTV cameras. The minister also asked the nodal officials to reduce the wait-

ing time for admission of patients in order to save their lives.

Kurasala Kannababu asked joint collector K. Venugopal Reddy to instruct GVMC commissioner to increase the capacity at the Chavulamadam crematorium ground by installing more sheds.

Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao observed that timely assistance and all cooperation should be provided to KGH superintendent since she has been overloaded with work.

Later, speaking to the media personnel, Alla Nani said the CSR block in KGH has 840 beds, and 1,500 doctors and supporting staff have been rendering service round-the-clock. Additional staff members were being recruited on the instructions from the Chief Minister.

He said that CSR-KGH was in constant need of 18 tonnes of oxygen, which was being ensured. "Not only local patients, people from Vizianagaram and Srikulam districts are availing of treatment at the CSR Block," he added.

## ARJA SRIKANT APPOINTED SPECIAL OFFICER FOR COVID AWARENESS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Transport, roads and buildings special secretary Arja Srikant has been appointed as special officer for publicity, media and social media management pertaining to Covid.

The state government issued an order on Friday, entrusting all relief coor-

dination activities to the special secretary to have one-point of contact for all philanthropic and voluntary organisations, and to coordinate with corporates coming forward to provide assistance in form of donation of medicines, oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders, life supporting medical equipments like ventilators and others.

## CM failed in getting O2, vax: Atchannaidu

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 14

Telugu Desam Party state president Kinjarapu Atchannaidu has alleged that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy miserably failed to source oxygen that resulted in death of several Covid-19 patients in the state. The CM also neglected in getting the vaccine by not reserving the doses unlike other states.

Addressing a press conference at the party office here on Friday, the TD state president said the central government gave an opportunity to get the vaccine quota reserved from the manufacturing companies by paying an advance between April 20 and April 30. Several states availed of this opportunity and got their quota of vaccine. "The CM only invested in schemes that fetched commissions for him and his leaders, but not in the

crucial vaccine. This is the primary reason for the present vaccine crisis in the state," he alleged.

He said that Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra had already invited global tenders, which the Chief Minister had failed to do. However, the state won the dubious first position in wastage of vaccine, he added.

He alleged that the CM did not pay advance to Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India as they would not pay commission. The CM was rather showing interest in Russian manufacturer of vaccine since the franchisee and promoter of Hetero Drugs happened to be his friend. He was more interested in sand reach tenders, taking over of dairies and filing false cases against TDP leaders for questioning his mistakes than attending to the life and death problems of the people, he criticised.

## LOKESH SEEKS FREE VACCINATION FOR ALL

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Telugu Desam national general secretary N. Lokesh wrote a letter to Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, urging him to provide free Covid-19 vaccine to all the people in the state in order to

save them from getting infected by the virus during the second wave of the pandemic. He asked the Chief Minister to come out with a while paper on state government's action plan to provide vaccine free of cost to all the people in the state.

## TD MLA ASKS GOVT TO HAVE MORE O2 BEDS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, MAY 14

Palakole MLA Nimmala Rama Naidu has appealed to the state government to increase oxygen beds to cater to the needs of patients. He visited the government hospitals in West Godavari district on Friday and took stock. He

said though Covid-19 deaths are increasing, the government failed to increase oxygen beds in the hospitals and quality medical treatment is missing. Chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy is not able to question Telangana CM when TS stopped AP ambulances at the borders, he said.

**COVID | AID | Vedika prez claims CM supported kin of victims at Tirupati, ignored those at Anantapur, Hindupur**

## Praja Science Vedika demands ex gratia for lives lost in hosp

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, MAY 14

Praja Science Vedika has demanded ex gratia for families of those who have lost their lives due to shortage of oxygen in public hospitals like Government General Hospital and Cancer

Hospital in Anantapur and Hindupur.

Vedika president Dr. M. Suresh Babu pointed out that while Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced ex-gratia for victims of Ruia hospital in Tirupati, who died due to failure of oxygen supply in Covid-19 ward,

he had ignored people of Anantapur and Hindupur who had suffered deaths on similar grounds.

Dr. Suresh Babu observed that the contemporary Covid-19 pandemic has made extremely short the time between life and death in case of medical malpractice or lapse.

Referring to the TS government allowing foreigners to visit Hyderabad for treatment, he asked why it was not allowing patients from AP.

TS AP state president K. Atchannaidu slammed the AP government for failing to hold talks with the Telangana government on this matter.

Healthcare system must form the backbone of public sector: It could be dele-

gated only partially to private sector, which considers patients as consumers. Thus patients in private hospital must be brought within the framework of Consumer Protection Act. Patients should have right to claim damages from government and insurance companies, the veda-

ka president underlined.

About 50 people have died in Government General Hospitals, Super Speciality Hospital, and Cancer Hospital in Anantapur, Hindupur and Kadiri due to lack of oxygen or negligence by doctors or staff operating ventilators.

The state government should order an enquiry into these deaths and cases should be booked against those responsible, Dr Suresh Babu said.

The government must provide reasonable compensation to families of all the deceased, Dr Suresh Babu added



## IN BRIEF

## TS GOVERNOR HALTS AT KADAPA AIRPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, MAY 14

Telangana Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan, who is also Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, made a transit halt at Kadapa Airport on Friday morning while on way to Puducherry from Hyderabad. Dr Soundararajan was received at the airport by district collector Chevuru Harikiran and SP Anbu Rajan on Friday at 10:25 a.m. She halted for 30 minutes before leaving for Puducherry at 11.05 a.m.

Airport director Pusalra Sivaprasad, Kadapa and Valluru tahsildars Shivaramireddy and Suhasini, and Kadapa DSP Sunil were present at the airport.

## KTR SEEKS LONG-TERM VAX POLICY

From Page 1

The import of vaccine apart from allowing more companies to manufacture Covaxin along with Bharat Biotech dominated the discussions at the task force meeting with the representatives of several vaccine manufacturers at Pragati Bhavan. Senior officials Jayesh Ranjan, Vikas Raj, Rajasekhara Reddy, Rahul Bojja were among those who took part. Rama Rao who inquired about the progress of vaccine-making by other companies, promised full help from the government to expedite the commercialization of Covid vaccines. While exploring all possible ways to procure more stocks of C-vaccines, the minister advised the task force to draw up a long-term vaccine policy.

On import of vaccines, the task force decided to study the availability, the manufacturers' existing commitments etc. Representatives from Natco Pharma, Biological E Ltd, Bharath Biotech, Serum Institute, Sanofi India, Virchow Biotech, Zyudus Cadila, Hetero Drugs, Gland Pharma, Indian Immunologicals, and Dr Reddy's Labs took part in the meeting.

## PANIC DRIVES 3 OF A COVID-INFECTED FAMILY TO SUICIDE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIZIANAGARAM, MAY 14

Three members of a family, who were infected by Covid-19, died by suicide by jumping into a well in Nallabelli village in Vepada mandal in the district on Friday.

The local police identified them as Udadtha Satyanarayana Gupta (62), his wife Satyavathi (57) and her mother Venkata Subbamma (84). A native of Nallabelli village, Satyanarayana Gupta migrated to Chodavaram in Visakhapatnam district 10 years ago in search of livelihood and started his own business.

However, due to the pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, his business suffered huge losses. He wound up his business and returned to his home village recently.

All the three members tested positive and panicked, fearing the virus would kill them. On Friday, they consumed pesticide and jumped into a nearby well. The locals found their bodies and informed the police.

## 22,108 NEW COVID CASES, 96 DEATHS IN STATE

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Andhra Pradesh registered 22,018 fresh Coronavirus infections and 96 deaths in the last 24 hours.

The state health authorities reported here on Friday that out of 89,087 samples tested, 22,018 persons were found infected with confirmed Coronavirus.

Out of a total number of 1,77,91,220 samples tested so far in the state, 13,88,803 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 11,75,843 were recovered while 2,03,787 are still active with the virus.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus infections, out of 13 districts, 11 reported more than 1,000 cases with East Godavari registering the highest number at 3,432 followed by 2,708 in Chittoor, 2,213 in Anantapur, 2,200 in Visakhapatnam, 1,733 each in Guntur and Nellore, 1,460 in Kadapa, 1,436 in West Godavari, 1,265 in Prakasam, 1,213 in Kurnool, 1,031 in Kri-

## Purchasing essentials



People came out to purchase the essentials at the Poorna Market during curfew relaxation hours in Visakhapatnam on Friday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

## Morale boost for docs as patients get better

## Better care and amenities resulting in higher recoveries

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, MAY 14

True to the saying that every dark cloud has a silver lining, the number of people recovering from infections during the Corona second wave is increasing by the day, providing great relief to the doctors. New cases are rising and so are discharges. The measures taken by the authorities and doctors in Covid management are yielding good results. Good healing practices, caring and nutrition are getting patients out of the jaws of the deadly disease. Hundreds are being discharged every day in the district.

While 1,447 new cases were registered on Thursday, 1,130 recovered from the disease and

● The Covid second wave in the district started in March but intensified towards the end of April. However, mortality is low.

● According to officials, only one per cent of deaths were reported in March, April and May.

were discharged from hospitals. On Friday, new positive cases touched 1,460 and 620 patients were discharged from the hospitals.

The medical and health department is making headway under the direction of District Collector Chevuru Harikiran. Even those without symptoms are being paid attention to see if they are corona positive. A CT scan is being performed to determine if there is any serious illness. Also, ECG, oxygen and other infections are being closely monitored.

active cases were in the district and 68,285 people recovered from the disease and were discharged.

Dr Mundla Sureshwar Reddy, nodal officer, District Covid Hospital, Fatima Medical College, told *Deccan Chronicle* that by following the advice of doctors and taking their medication timely, one can overcome Corona completely. Those with mild symptoms can stay in home isolation and take medication. He called upon the public to be courageous while facing the infection. One should check blood oxygen levels periodically and visit doctors if they fall abnormally. He assured that good treatment was being provided at the Covid hospitals.

Dr Mundla Sureshwar Reddy, nodal officer, District Covid Hospital, Fatima Medical College, told *Deccan Chronicle* that by following the advice of doctors and taking their medication timely, one can overcome Corona completely. Those with mild symptoms can stay in home isolation and take medication. He called upon the public to be courageous while facing the infection. One should check blood oxygen levels periodically and visit doctors if they fall abnormally. He assured that good treatment was being provided at the Covid hospitals.

## STAGE SET FOR SUPPLY OF O2 FROM LOCAL UNIT

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MAY 14

A team of technicians at the Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam, led by Kumar Dipayan, Navy Commander, and revenue officials headed by sub-collector of Gudur Ronanki Gopalakrishna, were working at a frenetic pace on Friday to restore a defunct oxygen plant near Gudur by night.

Speaking to this newspaper, Gopalakrishna said their target was to fill the first cylinder by 10 pm on Friday. He said that he posted a team of officials to monitor the oxygen generation and filling operations at the revived unit and prevent any diversion round the clock. "The unit M/s Krishna Teja Air Products produces four tonnes of oxygen from air per day. The oxygen can be filled into 440 cylinders having 10 litres capacity each. The production can address the needs of private hospitals involved in Covid-19 treatment in SPSR Nellore district," he informed.

He said APSPDCL has waived off outstanding power dues to the extent of nearly Rs 3 crore, paving way for the restoration of the unit.

## 40 tonne O2 to reach Krishnapatnam today

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NELLORE, MAY 14

The first Oxygen Express loaded with the container tankers of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) has commenced its journey from Durgapur in West Bengal to Krishnapatnam Port in Andhra Pradesh.

These container tankers, after getting filled with LMO, have commenced their journey to Krishnapatnam Port in AP. The two container tankers together are carrying 40 metric tonnes of oxygen.

According to a communique from the South Central Railways, the LMO being transported in these tanks is a cryogenic cargo which has many limitations like maximum speed at which it can be carried, maximum acceleration and deceleration and loading restrictions such as availability of liquid oxygen tankers, loading ramps.

The route mapping of the train along with green corridor is done, taking into consideration all these factors (including ensuring adequate clearance along the route in terms of



First Oxygen Express to Andhra Pradesh Loaded with LMO in Container Tankers ready to start from Durgapur in West Bengal.

curves, RUBs and FOBs). The Oxygen Express trains have been started by the Indian Railways to provide safe, secure, hassle-free and fast transportation of oxygen to the different parts of the country during these critical times. Under this initiative, the road tankers (both empty as well as loaded) are transported by the railways through Ro-Ro (Roll on - Roll off) service.

The Oxygen Express trains are operated at the request of the state governments. While the States provide the tankers, the Railways undertake to bring the oxygen supplies to the requisitioning state in the fastest feasible mode.

Accordingly, SCR has been operating these trains to meet the needs

of the states covered by the zone. The zone has also operated four Oxygen Express trains for Telangana.

Now, the first train that commenced its journey from Durgapur with LMO filled tankers for a distance 1,650 km is expected to reach the Krishnapatnam Port in AP on May 15.

Gajanan Mallya, the SCR General Manager, has assured that they will continue to give utmost priority to the running of the Oxygen Express trains. Any request received on this front would be immediately processed so as to operate the trains at the earliest. He advised all the officers and staff to maintain continuous monitoring of the movement of this train along the green corridor.

## Imams, muezzins to get enhanced honorarium, archakas, pastors too

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

The AP government has enhanced the remuneration/honorarium to imams and muezzins as a Ramadan tofa, by issuing an order recently. "As the state government is committed to promote communal peace and harmony and wanted peaceful coexistence of people of all castes and religions, it enhanced the financial support to three important religious communities," an official release said.

Accordingly, Imams serving in mosques would get monthly honorarium of ₹10,000 as against the present ₹5,000. Muezzins would get a raise to ₹5,000 from ₹3,000.

Archaka in category-1 would get a raise to ₹15,625 from ₹10,000 and those serving in category-2 would get ₹10,000 instead of the present ₹5,000.

Pastors serving in churches would get ₹5,000.

## MUSLIMS CELEBRATE RAMZAN ON LOW KEY AMIDST PANDEMIC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 14

Muslims celebrated the festival of Id-u-Fitr with traditional gaiety and fervour on Friday, though on a low key this year as in 2020, in view of the prevalence of Covid-19 pandemic in the state.

Muslims in new clothes offered special prayers at their homes — and some in mosques after getting permission from the local authorities in limited numbers.

All idghas and open places of worship were closed to prevent congregational prayers. Mo mass prayers were offered in any part of the state unlike regular practice of hundreds of Muslims gathering together to offer festival prayers.

## Minister Balineni justifies arrest

From page 1

Narasapur MP K. Raghu Rama Krishna Raju was found targeting the government dignitaries, causing a loss of public faith in them. His hate speeches against the communities and the state government dignitaries are being circulated in social media groups and he allegedly entered into a conspiracy with a section of media to promote his speeches causing a disturbance in public order.

A case was booked under sections 124 A, 153 A, 505 read with 120 B of IPC and was arrested.

Earlier, when the CID sleuths arrived at his residence in Gachibowli to arrest him, his security personnel (CRPF) called the local police to confirm whether the sleuths from AP were from the CID. Based on confirmation by the Gachibowli CI G. Suresh, the CID personnel were allowed to arrest the MP.

Reacting to the incident, minister Balineni Srinivasa

Reddy justified his arrest, saying that it should have been done earlier. The people would not tolerate it if the state government and the CM were commented upon badly. He found fault with the MP for failing to visit his Lok Sabha constituency to inspect developmental works.

Another minister Ch. Sriranganatha Raju asked for disciplinary action by the party leadership against the MP and also felt the need for taking up an inquiry into the cases booked against him in Narasapur limits.

Raju has for long been carrying out a campaign against the state government. The state government, after taking his personal attacks on the CM and the state government in good faith, finally said enough was enough and submitted a requisition to the Lok Sabha to disqualify him from its membership as he had been indulging in anti-party activities despite getting elected on the ticket of YSR Congress.

## FARMER GETS YIELD THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

From page 1

She succeeded to get yields throughout the year. She also showed the PM the vegetables grown in the land.

"The government gave me four acres of assigned land. That land had been barren for ten years. I did nature farming in 2 acres. I grew three types of crops – millets, peanuts and vegetables. The total investment for the 3 crops was Rs 27,000 and I could make a profit of Rs 1.07 lakh per acre," a beaming Vannuramma briefed Modi.

Confident of sustained yields through this farming, she was training around 170

tribal women from the Tanda (tribal village) next to her village in nature farming.

Impressed by her success story, the Prime Minister appreciated her for taking to natural farming. "The country is getting a boost of confidence from the farmers. The nature farming you have done as a Dalit woman stands as an ideal for other farmers. I sincerely salute you," Modi said.

Collector Gandham Chandrudu specially congratulated Vannuramma on briefing the Prime Minister on her successful journey as a progressive farmer.



## TENDER NOTICE

On behalf of the President of India, Sr. Division Signal & Telecom Engineer, Hyderabad Division, South Central Railway, Secunderabad invites open tenders for the following works through e-procurement up to 15.30 hours of 07.06.2021

Tender Dated: 12.05.2021

Sl. No: 1 Tender No: Y/SG/36/2021-22/04 Name of the work: Hyderabad Division - Signalling arrangements in connection with (1) GJ:- Through renewal of Glued joints for a total of 1031 Nos. (60kg-4 & 52kg-1027) at various locations (2) SEJ:- Through renewal of SEJ for a total sets of 81 sets (52kg) at various locations SEJ - 81 sets in connection with the work of TTR(TWS) - 109 sets, SEJ - 81 sets & GJ - 1031 Nos' (3) SC-DHNE Section-CTR(P) - 6.55 km (4) SC-DHNE Section-CTR(S) - 0.53 km & TRR(S) - 3.22 km (5) Construction of Pit line for a length of 80 M for ART & MRV at Nizamabad yard (6) Extension of Platforms by 130 mtrs each at SANR station. Approx value: Rs. 45,74,497.13

Sl. No: 2 Tender No: Y/SG/36/2021-22/05 Name of the work: Hyderabad Division:- SC-MUE Section :- Signalling arrangements in connection With the work of Subways in lieu of Level crossing No. 246 & 247 Approx value: Rs. 1,04,77,893.88

For further details visit the website www.ireps.gov.in injury

Division Signal & Telecom Engineer, Co-ord/Hyderabad

E-Tender Notice No. 12-2021 dt: 12.05.2021

Senior Divisional Engineer/Coordination/Guntakal acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites E-Tenders for the following works

Closing date & Time: 11-06-2021 at 15:00 hrs

S.No: 1 Tender no: Engg-GTL-North-1000 Description of work: Guntakal Division-SW-I: GY-WD Section: Proposed construction of Road Under Bridge (Subway) in lieu of LC no 191 at km 470/5-6 between MGW-ASP stations as 1x6.00x5.00m RCC Box by Box Pushing method. SW-II: GY-WD Section: Proposed construction of Road Under Bridges (Subway) in lieu of LC no 193 at km 483/1-2 in ASP-NRR as 1x6.00x5.00m RCC Box & LC no 194 at km 488/7-8 between NRR-AD stations as 1x6.00x5.00m RCC Box by Box Pushing method. (Two Packet System). Advertised Value: Rs. 18,82,66,340.88Ps

S.No: 2 Tender no: Engg-GTL-North-1001 Description of work: Guntakal Division-SW-I: GY-WD Section: Proposed construction of Road Under Bridge (Subway) in lieu of LC no 210 at km 542/5-6 between MALM-MTU stations as 1x6.00x5.00m RCC Box by Box Pushing method SW-II: GY-WD Section: Proposed construction of Road Under Bridge (Subway) in lieu of LC no 212 at km 546/3-4 between MALM-MTU stations as 2x4.50x5.00m RCC Box by Box Pushing method SW-III: GY-WD Section: Proposed construction of Road Under Bridges (Subway) in lieu of LC no. 223 at km 593/1-2 between KSN-CGTA stations as 1x6.00x5.00m RCC Box by Box Pushing method (Two Packet System). Advertised Value: Rs. 19,78,49,390.05ps

Note: Tenderers are required to submit/upload bid security declaration along with their offer into IREPS in lieu of EMD.

For Bid document and other details login to <https://ireps.gov.in>

Any corrigenda will be issued on line only.

Divisional Railway Manager/ Works/Guntakal

A0479

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <https://www.ireps.gov.in> or [www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in)

## KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD. (A Government of India Undertaking)

Tender No.: KR/KW/OL/W/2021/05-CB  
The Konkarn Railway Corporation Limited has invited following open tender on [ireps.gov.in](https://ireps.gov.in) system. Name of the Work: Protective works inside Pernem tunnel between KM 384/6-7 for 63 mtrs. length under SEN/MAC section. Priority Work (Excluding ongoing work portion). Cost of the Work: ₹ 249.07 Lakhs Excluding GST. Closing Date & Time: 04/06/2021 at 15:00 Hrs. For further details, contact Office of Sr. Regional Engineer, Konkarn Railway Corporation Ltd., Karwar. For more details visit (<https://www.ireps.gov.in>)

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SHORT TAKES

PARENTS GRIEVE AS COVID-19 SNATCHES KIDS

New Delhi, May 13: Nine-month-old Krishu, the only child to his blind parents, succumbed to Covid-19 at a Delhi government-run hospital on Thursday, while his father, battled the deadly virus at another hospital.

On Thursday evening, Jitender Singh 'Shunty', a former BJP MLA, buried Krishu in a corner of the Old Seemapuri cremation ground.

This was the second time in two days that Singh was burying a child so young.

The 59-year-old humanitarian, who has given dignified cremations to over 2,000 strangers during the second wave of Covid-19, buried five-month-old Pari on Wednesday evening, near the spot where Krishu now rests.

A relative of Krishu said the boy was the only child to his parents who live in Dilshad Garden in East Delhi.

"Both the parents are blind," he said, choking on his tears.

Krishu's mother contracted the infection around 18 days ago and since she breastfed the child, he also became ill, the relative said.

A few days ago, Krishu was admitted to the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, where he died in the early hours of Thursday.

His father, Shashank Shekar, 26, is battling for his life in the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Tahirpur.

"He doesn't know he lost his beloved Krishu today. Now, I don't want to lose his father too," the mother, Jyoti, said, as she broke down over the phone.

BJP LEADER'S KIN BOOKED FOR OPENING SHOP

Budaun (UP), May 14: The brother of a BJP leader here was booked for allegedly opening his garment shop in the local market amid the Covid-19 lockdown, an official said on Friday.

The police identified the accused as Jyoti Prakash, the brother of Badaun district's BJP president Ashok Bharti.

An FIR was lodged against Prakash under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for disobeying duly promulgated public servant's order after he was found having opened his garment shop, City ASP Praveen Singh Chauhan said.

Prakash was found having opened his shop by city magistrate Amit Kumar and Circle officer Chandrapal as they were patrolling the city to enforce the lockdown, the ASP said.

As the two officials entered the shop, they even found customers sitting inside it purchasing different articles, Chauhan said.

As the two officials questioned the BJP leader's brother, he entered into an argument with them with his son and employees too joining them in a bid to browbeat them, following which an FIR was lodged against all the accused.

Chauhan said a probe is on in the matter.

COVID CONTINUES TO WREAK HAVOC ON LIVES IN J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, MAY 14

Id-ul-Fitr was celebrated in a subdued manner in Jammu and Kashmir as Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc upon lives. As many as 115 more people fell prey to the deadly virus whereas about 7,500 new positive cases surfaced in the twin Union territories of J&K and Ladakh during the past two days.

The local religious groups and the mosque committees in J&K had around midnight on Wednesday endorsed Pakistan Central

Ruete-e-Hilal Committee's testimony of the sighting of the Shawwal (Eid) moon. However, no big Eid congregations could be held anywhere in the UT due to the restrictions imposed to contain Covid-19 pandemic. Only small groups of Muslims offered Id prayers in locality mosques or in the lawns of residential houses with complete adherence to the Covid Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines. Eid was celebrated similar fashion in Kargil and most other parts of Ladakh with rest of the country on Friday.

The local police and Central armed police forces have continued to enforce the 'corona curfew' in twin capitals of Srinagar and Jammu and all other major cities and towns.

Over 2,000 bodies found in Ganga river

Health ministry is in close touch with UP, Bihar govt to ensure immediate check to stop the spread

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 14

The Union home ministry has received inputs that nearly 2,000 bodies have been retrieved from the Ganga by various district administrations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the last one week or so, according to sources.

Officials say that these bodies are most likely of Corona patients who died in remote villages along the Ganga.

Since most of the villagers are extremely poor and not able to finance the last rites of their family members, they have been dumping the bodies in the river. Both UP and Bihar share a long river bank of the Ganga of more than 1,400 km.

The Union home ministry is in close touch with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar governments to ensure that dumping of bodies in the Ganga is checked immediately as this could lead to further spread of the Corona pandemic in the two states.

Ministry sources said the trend of dumping bodies was being noticed largely in four districts of Kanpur, Ghazipur, Unnao and Balia from where bodies were also going further downstream to Bihar. Both states have been asked to take immediate corrective steps.

After the discovery of the dead bodies floating in the Ganga, almost all bodies were disposed of with proper religious rituals. Local police have been directed to start intensified patrolling along the river and spread awareness among the villagers not to dispose of bodies in the river as this could lead to fresh health issues.

Earlier, Bihar had also raised this issue saying that most dead bodies floating in the Ganga were coming downstream from UP and were getting piled up near Balia.

Both states have mobilised massive resources as the home ministry has cautioned them that dumping of Corona victims in the Ganga can lead to massive contamination of river water which in turn will lead to greater health issues in the coming days.

There is considerable concern among Central agencies over the spread of the Corona virus in rural areas, particularly in the populous states of UP and Bihar.



Jama Masjid wears a deserted look on the occasion of Id-ul-Fitr, marking the end of the fasting month of Ramzan, during the ongoing Covid-induced lockdown, in New Delhi, on Friday.

— PTI



96-year-old Pushpa Sharma poses for a photo with her family, after she recovered from Covid-19, at her residence in Shahdara area of New Delhi.

— PTI

48 UNDERTRIALS IN BERHAMPUR JAIL TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 14

Forty-eight under-trial prisoners (UTPs) lodged at Odisha's Berhampur Circle Jail have tested positive for coronavirus.

The jail authorities on Friday informed that swab samples of 84 UTPs were sent for RT-PCR test two days ago and reports of 48 came out positive.

Currently, a total 927 prisoners are lodged in the jail, he added.

Earlier in the first phase of the pandemic, several inmates of the jail had contracted the virus.

A few other jails, including Jharpura Circle Jail in Bhubaneswar and Choudwar Circle Jail in Cuttack, had also reported some Covid cases.

The state government, meanwhile on Friday, issued advisory for children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women against infection. Hand washing with soap and water must be advocated for at least 40 seconds instead of 20 seconds.

All children above two years advised to wear masks as per recommendation of Indian Academy of Pediatrics mandatorily before stepping out.



A paramilitary personnel punishes women for breaking Covid-induced curfew rules in Guwahati, on Friday.

— PTI

10.7K O2 concentrators sent to states

New Delhi, May 14: A total of 10,796 oxygen concentrators, 12,269 oxygen cylinders, 19 oxygen generation plants and about 4.2 lakh Remdesivir vials received as global aid were delivered or dispatched through road and air to various states and union territories from April to May 13, the health ministry said on Friday.

The major consignments received on May 12/13 from Indonesia, Luxembourg, Oman, South Korea, the UK, USISPF, Finland and Greece include oxygen concentrators (1,506), oxy-

gen cylinders (434) and ventilators/BIPAP/CPAP (58).

Cumulatively, 10,796 oxygen concentrators, 12,269 oxygen cylinders, 19 oxygen generation plants, 6,497 ventilators or Bi PAP; about 4.2 lakh Remdesivir vials have been delivered or dispatched through road and air from April 27 to May 13, the ministry said.

"Effective immediate allocation, and streamlined delivery to the recipient states and union territories and institutions is an ongoing exercise," it said.

The Union health min-

istry is comprehensively monitoring this on a regular basis.

A dedicated coordination cell has been created in the ministry to coordinate the receipt and allocation of foreign Covid relief material as grants, aid and donations. This cell started functioning from April 26.

A standard operating procedure has been framed and implemented by the health ministry since May 2, 2021.

The government of India, at the forefront of the "whole of government" approach to combat the ongoing Covid-19, has

been receiving international donations and aid of COVID-19 relief medical supplies and equipment since April 27 from different countries or organisations to augment its efforts in fighting the unprecedented surge of cases.

Through a streamlined and systematic mechanism, various ministries and departments of the government of India have seamlessly collaborated for expeditiously delivering the incoming global aid to states and union territories, the ministry said.

— PTI

'Havan' to ward off Covid: Min

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAY 14

Unfazed by criticism from several quarters for her recent remarks that 'havan' can ward off Covid-19, Madhya Pradesh tourism minister Usha Thakur said one can shield oneself from the virus if one adopted the Vedic way of life.

"I can establish with evidence that one can stay healthy by following Vedic way of life. I stand by my statement that 'yagya' can keep the third wave of Coronavirus pandemic at bay", she told reporters here late on Thursday.

The minister a couple of days ago created a flutter

when she exhorted people to perform yagya, describing it an ancient practice, going on since ages, to purify our environment for keeping the third Covid wave away.

"We all have the responsibility of purifying our environment. The practice of performing yagya to end a pandemic has been prevalent since time immemorial. This is yagya treatment (to ward off the virus). It is not bigotry or ritualism. If we cleanse the environment by performing yagya, then the third pandemic wave will not even touch India", she had said while inaugurating a Covid care Centre in Indore on May 12.

Now, Delhi seeks help to store excess oxygen

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI MAY 14

After demanding adequate supply of oxygen from the Centre last week, Delhi now seeks help to store excess stock of liquid medical oxygen (LMO), from other states. Owing to the logistical hurdle which supposedly resulted into the increased turnaround time for the tankers and paucity of space to store the liquid medical oxygen, Delhi is now seeking help for storage facilities from neighbouring states.

On May 11, The Indian government's Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) had written to the additional secretary at the depart-

ment for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) under the commerce ministry, said that excess LMO was available with Delhi, but authorities there could not ensure smooth supply from manufacturers as well as availability of tankers. As per the findings conducted by PESO, Since May 9, the Delhi government has been trying to get alternate storage space in nearby states, especially at the LMO manufacturers' premises, to store excess LMO in their storage tanks.

It is also revealed that on May 10, the Delhi government lifted had lifted only 150 MT of LMO on from their plants at Panipat and

Roorkee against the allocated quota of 190 MT and then returned the remaining back to the plant due to non-availability of storage space or less demand in Delhi and requested not to release 42 MT of LMO from Panipat and Roorkee Plant and rather store the remaining amounts in their storage tanks.

Seeing a high-pitched battle for liquid oxygen last week, by Delhi government, Dr Sambit Patra, BJP National Spokesperson, on Friday addressing a press conference said that Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), failed to build storage facility (LMO) and now are seeking help from neighbouring states.

UP: 3 prisoners killed in clash

Chitrakoot, May 14: Three prisoners were shot dead in a clash at Ragauli district jail here on Friday, police said. One of them died in an exchange of fire with jail officials after he shot dead the other two prisoners, jailor S. P. Tripathi said.

The deceased inmates have been identified as Anshu Dixit, Merazuddin alias Meraj Ali and Mukeem Kala, officials said in Lucknow. "Dixit shot dead Ali and Kala, and held some of the other prisoners at gunpoint and threatened to kill them. He was later killed in the exchange of fire with police," IG, Chitrakoot Range, K Satyanarain said.

Taking note of the inci-

dent, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said a joint team of Divisional Commissioner D. K. Singh and IG, Chitrakoot and DIG (prison) Sanjeev Tripathi will submit a report in this regard.

Asked how weapons reached inside the jail, the IG said, "The matter is being investigated." He said all the three inmates were hardcore criminals and had a number of criminal cases pending against them. However, Ragauli district jailor S. P. Tripathi earlier in the day said Dixit had snatched the service revolver of a jail staff when the official intervened in the argument between the inmates.

— PTI

COVID | BLUES

Maha govt to undertake a campaign to spread awareness over fungal infection, health crisis

Mucormycosis cases increasing in Maha post Covid

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 14

Maharashtra's healthcare infrastructure, which is already under severe pressure due to coronavirus pandemic, is facing further strain due to the rise of Mucormycosis, a dreaded fungal infection, which has taken 52 lives in the state since the outbreak of Covid last year.

Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus,

has been found in some coronavirus patients, both recovering and recovered. Its symptoms include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision.

Black fungus is mostly found among coronavirus patients who have diabetes, fluctuation in sugar level or increased iron level in the blood. However, it is not found to be infectious like the Covid.

"All the deceased have been the coronavirus patients, who had recovered from the viral infection, but later they succumbed to the black fungus infection. The immune system of such patients is weak which makes them more susceptible to this fungal infection," said an official from the state health department.

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope had said there could be more than

2,000 cases of black fungus in the state. In Mumbai alone, 111 mucormycosis patients have been found so far. "A mucormycosis patient needs to be seen by various experts such as ENT, ophthalmologists and neurologists among others. The medicines of the disease are expensive. Hence, patients hit by the disease will be treated for free at 1,000 hospitals covered under the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Jan Arogya

Yojana, the state's flagship medical insurance scheme," Mr Tope said.

There are complaints about the injections used for treating Mucormycosis patients being sold at higher than the actual price and their rates will be capped, he added.

The Maharashtra Government will also undertake a campaign to spread awareness among people about the fungal infection, said health officials.



Beneficiaries stand in a queue to receive Covid-19 vaccine dose outside NMMC Hospital in Vashi.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## TURKISH TOURISM VIDEO TAKEN DOWN AFTER BACKLASH

Istanbul: A video promoting tourism in Turkey amid the pandemic has caused an uproar on social media for showing tourism employees wearing masks that read "Enjoy, I'm vaccinated."

The video was published on the social media accounts of official travel guide Go Turkiye on Thursday and was taken down later that day. It aimed to promote travel to Turkey as a "safe haven" for foreigners and showed unmasked tourists being served in hotels on the Turkish coast.

Opposition parties and critics on social media said the promotional video was an insult to Turks. A hashtag calling for the tourism minister to resign was trending on Twitter on Friday. Tourism workers have been prioritised to receive their vaccinations and the country's foreign minister promised "we will vaccinate all people tourists may see by the end of May."

## AS A GESTURE, MYANMAR FREES JAPANESE SCRIBE

Bangkok: An arrested Japanese freelance reporter left for home on Friday after being released by Myanmar's ruling junta in what it called a gesture of friendship to Japan, Japanese officials and Myanmar state media said.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said Yuki Kigazumi was released after efforts by Japanese diplomats and others. The reporter boarded a plane at Yangon's airport and was expected to arrive in Japan on Friday night.

Myanmar's army-run *Myawaddy* TV said Kitzumi was arrested on April 18 for "inciting" anti-military civil disobedience and riots. "Although the journalist is a lawbreaker, the case will be closed and he will be released at the request of the Special Envoy of the Japanese Government for National Reconciliation in Myanmar, in view of the close ties and future relations between Myanmar and Japan," the junta said in a statement read on TV.

## UN ENVOY ASKS THAI AID IN ENDING MYANMAR CRISIS

Bangkok: The United Nations' special envoy on Myanmar met with Thailand's prime minister on Friday as she continues efforts to end violence in Myanmar sparked by a military takeover in February.

The envoy, Christine Schraner Burgener, told Prayuth Chan-ocha in Bangkok that she hopes Thailand will find ways to work with Myanmar's military to ease the unrest, the prime minister's office said in a statement. The army's seizure of power has been opposed by a broad cross-section of Myanmar's population, and the junta has responded with a violent crackdown that has cost hundreds of lives.

The escalation of violence and the junta's failure to restore order has led to fears the country could become a failed state, impacting neighboring Thailand and the whole region. Prayuth told Schraner Burgener his government is ready to listen and exchange information that could be beneficial, according to the statement, which said the two also discussed humanitarian assistance for affected people.

## PUTIN ALLY, OPPN MIN. UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN UKRAINE

Kyiv (Ukraine): A top Ukrainian opposition politician with close links to Russian President Vladimir Putin was placed under house arrest on Thursday, days after being charged with treason.

Viktor Medvedchuk, who heads the Opposition Platform for Life party, the largest opposition force in parliament, denies the charges brought against him last week and says they're politically motivated.

Medvedchuk, who has close personal ties with Putin, the godfather of Medvedchuk's daughter, could face 15 years in prison if tried and convicted. Prosecutors had asked a court in Kyiv to put Medvedchuk in jail, but a judge ordered house arrest instead.

Medvedchuk, 66 is accused of transferring oil and gas production licenses from one of the fields in Crimea to Russian authorities. Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula in 2014, weeks after Ukraine's former Moscow-friendly president was ousted by protesters.

Medvedchuk is also charged with allegedly disclosing secret data on the deployment of Ukrainian military units last year.

## U.S. VOWS TO STAND BY ALLY AUSTRALIA AGAINST CHINA

Washington, May 14: The Biden administration has vowed to stand by Australia in its worsening trade and other disputes with China.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Australian counterpart on Thursday that the US will not leave Australia alone on the field or maybe I should say alone on the pitch in the face of economic coercion by China.

"That's what allies do," he said. "We have each other's backs so we can face threats and challenges from the position of collective strength."

Like the United States and China, Australia and China are in the midst of several major disputes as Beijing seeks to apply pressure over commerce and influence. Blinken said the the United States and Australia are bound together by deeply held shared values that no other nation, including China, can uproot.

Blinken and Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne both said that presenting a united front to China is key. — AP

## HONG KONG FREEZES JIMMY LAI'S ASSETS

Hong Kong, May 14: Hong Kong authorities on Friday announced that they had frozen the assets of billionaire pro-democracy tycoon Jimmy Lai, including shares in his media publications, for breaching the city's national security law.

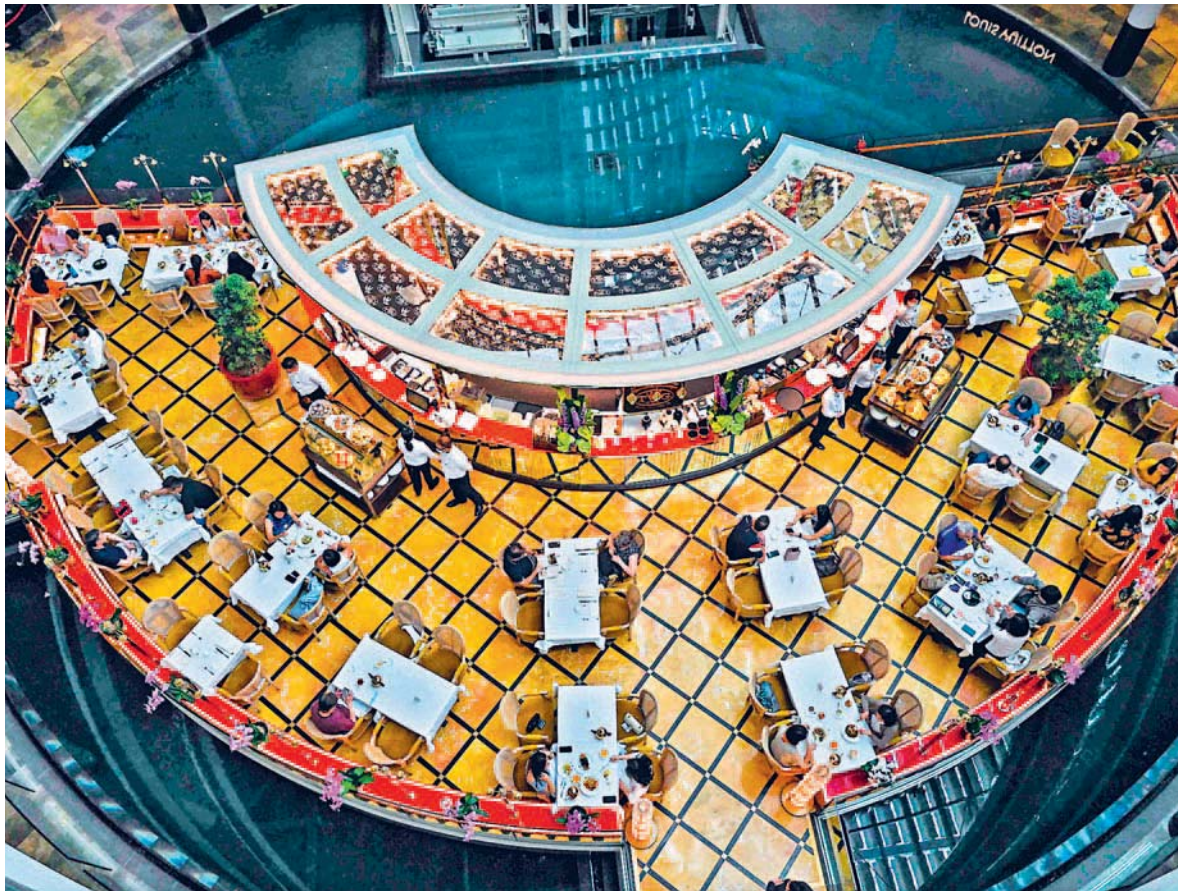
The security bureau said it had issued an order to freeze Lai's shares in Next Digital media group and "the property in the local bank accounts of three companies owned by him".

A rags to riches billionaire, media tycoon Lai has long been a thorn in Beijing's side thanks to his caustic tabloids and unapologetic support for democracy.

His *Apple Daily* newspaper has staunchly backed Hong Kong's pro-democracy cause, including the huge and often violent protests that swept the international financial hub in 2019. — AFP

## No mask for fully vaccinated in US

Covid test, quarantine waived for travel; Biden says Americans can now greet with a smile



Ahead of the tightening of restrictions due to the surge in Covid-19 cases in the country, people dine at a restaurant in a shopping mall in Singapore on Friday. — AFP

## Indian strain doubles in 1 week in UK

London, May 14: The case numbers related to the B.1.617.2 variant of Covid-19, first identified in India, have more than doubled within a week in the UK, resulting in further surge testing and enhanced vaccine measures to be deployed in parts of the country where the strain is beginning to spread "increasingly rapidly".

Public Health England (PHE) said on Thursday

● **UK HEALTH** Secretary Matt Hancock said that the health authorities are monitoring the situation "very carefully" and will not hesitate to take further action if necessary.

that its latest analysis shows the number of cases of the highly transmissible variant first

detected in Maharashtra has risen from 520 last week to 1,313 cases this week. Most cases are in the northwest of England, with some in London, and additional measures are being put in place to "rapidly break chains of transmission".

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock said that the health authorities are monitoring the situation "very carefully" and will not hesitate to take fur-

ther action if necessary, indicating that the roadmap to lifting all lockdown measures from June 21 may have to be reassessed. "This data demonstrates why our swift and decisive measures are in place. Everyone has a part to play in controlling this variant, from participating in surge testing, to following the rules, to getting the jab," said Hancock. — PTI

## Washington state schools to resume full-time classes

Olympia (Washington), May 14: Washington authorities said on Thursday all schools in the state must provide full-time, in-person education for students for the 2021-22 school year and that students and staff will still be required to wear masks.

The Washington state Department of Health released guidelines that included mitigation efforts they said were

designed to stop the spread of the Coronavirus. The mask directive could prove controversial, as the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday moved to ease indoor mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated people.

Currently people over the age of 12 are eligible for Covid-19 vaccines in Washington state. About 1.1 million students attend

public schools in Washington state. The Washington state schools directive for fall calls for all people in K-12 schools to wear masks indoors – as well as outdoors if six feet of distancing can't be maintained.

State authorities are recommending Covid vaccinations and testing programs but are not requiring them for in-person instruction in the fall. — AP

## 12 killed in Kabul bomb blast

Kabul, May 14: A bomb ripped through a mosque in northern Kabul during Friday prayers and killed 12 worshippers, Afghan police said.

Spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said the mosque's imam, Mofiti Naiman, was among the dead. Another 15 people were wounded. The bomb exploded as prayers had begun. No one claimed responsibility for the bombing, but initial police investigations suggest the Imam may have been the target, Faramarz said.

A worshipper at the mosque, Muhibullah Sahebzada, said he had just stepped into the mosque when the explosion went off. Stunned, he

● **THE EXPLOSION** comes on the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the warring Taliban and Afghan government.

heard the sound of screams, including children, as smoke filled the mosque. Sahebzada said he saw several bodies on the mosque floor and at least one child was among the wounded.

It appeared the explosive device had been hidden inside then pulpit at the front of the mosque. "I was afraid of a second explosion so I came immediately to my home" he

said. An image circulating on social media showed three bodies lying on the floor of the mosque, which showed minor damage.

The explosion comes on the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the warring Taliban and Afghan government. The pause was for the Islamic festival Id-ul-Fitr, which follows the fasting month of Ramadan. Until now many of the attacks in the capital have been claimed by the local Islamic State affiliate, but both the Taliban and government blame each other.

The most recent attack last week killed over 90 people, many of them pupils leaving a girls'

school when a powerful car bomb exploded. The Taliban denied involvement and condemned the attack.

The relentless violence comes as the US and allied NATO forces continue with their final withdrawal from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of war. Just this week the last of the US troops left southern Kandahar Air Base, while some NATO troops still remained. At the war's peak more than 30,000 US troops were stationed in Kandahar, the Taliban heartland. Kandahar was the second largest US base in Afghanistan after Bagram north of the Afghan capital. — AP

## 2 detained Indians freed after outrage in Scotland

London, May 14: Two Indians detained by British Border Force officials on suspicion of immigration offences in the Scottish city of Glasgow have been released after residents swarmed the street for eight hours to block their van from leaving, according to media reports.

The two were released on bail pending further investigation. Hundreds of residents had surrounded the Border Agency van in the Pollokshields area of Glasgow to try to prevent immigration officers from

● **HUNDREDS OF** residents had surrounded the Border Agency van in Glasgow to try to prevent immigration officers from removing the men.

removing the men. One person lay underneath the van, according to the reports.

The protesters chanted "Leave our neighbours, let them go" and "Cops go home" being heard as a ring of police stood around the van, local Scottish newspapers said. Officers said they were

freeing the men for the safety of everyone involved following a stand-off in Glasgow. The protest prompted Scottish prime minister Nicola Sturgeon to accuse the Home Office of creating "a dangerous and unacceptable situation". "Doing this on Id, in the heart of our Muslim community, and in the midst of a serious Covid outbreak was staggeringly irresponsible – but the even deeper problem is an appalling asylum and immigration policy," she said. — PTI

## FINANCIAL TROUBLE

With over half of Lebanese population in economic crisis, people depend on NGOs for pet food

## Poverty takes toll on the lives of pets in Lebanon

Beirut, May 14: Ibrahim al-Dika had raised his Belgian shepherd Lexi since she was a tiny pup, but then Lebanon's economic crisis made him jobless and he had to sell her to repay a bank loan.

"It got to the point where I was no longer able to feed her, the bank was pressuring me, and I hit a wall," said the 26-year-old, devastated beside her empty kennel outside his Beirut home.

"I didn't sell a car or a telephone. I sold a soul. I sold a part of me." Can you afford to keep your pet? Animal activists say this is a dilemma a growing num-

ber of Lebanese owners are facing as their purchasing power nosedives.

Tens of thousands of Lebanese have lost their jobs or seen their income reduced to a pittance due to Lebanon's worst economic crisis in decades.

As many families struggle to stay afloat, activists say increasingly more pet owners are asking for help to feed or re-home their animals, selling them, or in the worst cases abandoning them.

Dika, after losing his father to illness, was laid off last year when his employer, a fashion retailer, closed shop, affecting

his ability to support his mother and brother.

He had spent around a year caring for Lexi, and training her to sit, heel, give him the paw, and play dead. But when the bank started calling, he saw no option other than to sell her. He drove over a few days later to check in on her, and Lexi thought he had come to take her home. "She leapt straight into my car," he said. "She broke my heart the way she looked at me."

With more than half of Lebanon's population now living in poverty, many Lebanese have to depend on non-governmental

organisations to get by – even to feed their pets.

Amal Ramadan, 39, said she used to make donations to animal charity PAW. But these days it is her receiving free bags of food from them for her pit bull and bichon, Nelly and Fluffy.

Her monthly salary working in car rental, once equivalent to \$1,000, is now worth just \$120 because of the Lebanese currency's sharp devaluation.

But as the price of imported pet food, meat and veterinary care soars, activists said some other animals have not been so lucky. — AFP



Founder of Woof N wags shelter Joe Okdjian plays with rescued dogs in the shelter on the outskirts of the village of Kfar Chellal in south of Beirut. As people struggle economically, activists say more pet owners are asking for help to feed or re-home their animals, selling them, or in the worst cases abandoning them. — AFP



# DECCAN Chronicle

15 MAY 2021

## Opp. letter key first step govt must take on board

Leaders of 12 Opposition parties have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that his government rework its vaccination policy and announce a universal free vaccination programme against Covid-19 and provide immediate financial relief to the people who have been hit by the second wave of the pandemic. The Union government must procure vaccines centrally from all available sources for the purpose and fully spend the budgetary allocation of ₹35,000 crores for vaccination and the money in the PM-Cares Fund in the fight against the pandemic, they said.

India is now witnessing the more fatal second wave of the pandemic and is left with no option but to declare an all-out war against the coronavirus. The steps the Opposition has listed invariably could be part of the strategy even an expert would lay out. On the other hand, the vaccine policy the government now follows is deeply flawed: It has left the job to the state governments and the private sector to source doses from Indian or foreign

**The government must see the Opposition leaders' letter to the Prime Minister as an invitation to open a joint front in the war against the virus**

manufacturers to inoculate people aged between 18 and 45 years. The government has also given the vaccine manufacturers the freedom to fix the price of the life-saving vaccine. These are not steps any government would dare take in the face of a pandemic. The government has also faced uncomfortable questions from various high courts and the Supreme Court on the question of availability of vaccines, oxygen and life-saving drugs.

The government must see the Opposition leaders' letter to the Prime Minister as an invitation to open a joint front in the war against the virus. The government now says the country will get 216 crore doses by December-end. This is a welcome announcement as the quantity is enough to inoculate all the eligible persons in this country. With an assured supply of the doses, the government must now set a practical deadline for vaccinating at least 70 per cent of the population which, experts say, is a necessary condition to attain herd immunity, and roll out a programme with definite milestones. The state governments and the private sector can be drafted for the success of the mission. The programme should work in a reverse engineering mode and ensure that every bottleneck is cleared.

The Opposition has called for the postponement of the Grand Vista project as well as scrapping of the three laws that would govern the agriculture sector in this country. We find these demands are a digression. This nation has far too many issues left unaddressed for centuries, but the challenge the virus poses eclipses them all.

The nation is going through one of the most difficult phases in its history, and it's time all the people joined together and fought off the enemy, a microorganism, as one man. Shorn of the political points in it and the rhetoric, the Opposition leaders' letter can be seen as a first step. The government should drop the recalcitrant attitude it has shown towards the earlier Opposition positions and instead take this as an opportunity to work together to save the nation from further devastation.

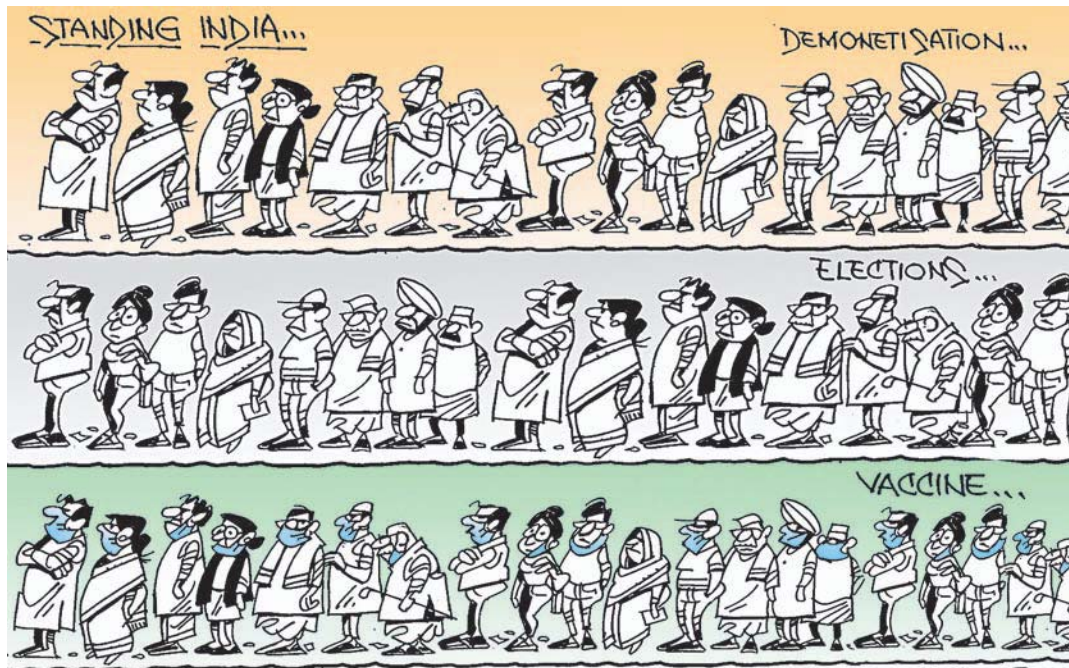
## Courting transparency

The Chief Justice's idea of live-streaming and telecasting live proceedings of the Supreme Court is to be welcomed. The CJI is seeking a consensus within the court to try and take forward a path breaking concept, which can bering transparency and openness that can reinforce the faith of the public in the judicial system. The idea was mooted in a 2018 case in the top court and experiments were conducted in the Gujarat high court, which telecast proceedings on the YouTube channel. The pandemic may have enforced virtual hearings on the judiciary but it does appear the experience can prove beneficial if it leads to telecasts and live-streaming from the Supreme Court of India.

Progress in the form of open media access was seen recently in online media portals being able to hear court proceedings. In fact, it was the reporting in online portals of the observations of Madras high court judges on the Election Commission of India that brought out the severity of issues surrounding polls in the time of the pandemic. Contentious though the comments were and also frowned upon by the top court, such access to reporting of court proceedings by the media allowed the matter to come out in the public domain.

There may be much that is opaque in the manner in which the wheels of justice move, especially in areas like the process of nomination of judges to the higher judiciary. While such matters should be confidential and handled between the collegium and the executive branch of government in power, there is no reason why the proceedings in celebrated cases cannot be telecast live so that the wider legal fraternity as well as members of the public can witness them. Of course, the matter of what is live-streamed or telecast should lie strictly in the control of the highest judiciary so that issues like those that popped up in the famous O.J. Simpson case in the US do not crop up.

Subhani



## What'll it take for Modi to stop playing ostrich?



Shobhaa's Take

The Hindi word for the two-toed, flightless largest living bird known as the ostrich is "shuturmurg". I bet you didn't know that! Well, India is full of shuturmurgs right now, most of them working for the government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi can't seem to make up his mind — to be a peacock or an ostrich. Which is maybe why he plays both, depending on the occasion. Of course, the ostrich in him makes sure he sees nothing and says nothing, while he watches India being turned into the world's biggest funeral pyre. Ostriches are known to run really fast when they are being chased by enemies (real or imaginary). Since our PM is staying put and not running, it's safe to assume he has zero enemies chasing him. The peacock in him makes sure his rare public appearances are perfectly colour coordinated and his flowing snowy beard well-groomed. He is now beginning to resemble the biblical Moses rather than Tagore or an Indian sage. But, unfortunately for citizens, he doesn't bear tablets in his hands nor an iPad with 10 or 20 or even 100 commandments. He says nothing at all. For a man known to like the sound of his own voice (six years of Modinama), one wonders about the stony radio silence.

Meanwhile, home minister Amit Shah stays in purdah as meme-makers go into overdrive ("Students' union files a missing person's report for Amit Bhai"). With two of the most important men in India not around during the country's biggest crisis, we are stuck with a headless chicken (the absentee government) in charge. In

charge of WHAT, you ask. Hello! In charge of us: the hapless citizens of this great nation. Guys — get this clearly — we are adrift, minus life jackets. There is no sighting of the captain who seems to have abandoned the ship. So please don't stress over minor issues and keep asking: "Where's the roadmap for the future? How do we tackle the acute vaccine shortage? What happens when the third wave hits India?" Bhagwan ka naam lo — and hope for the best. The roadmap doesn't exist.

A distraught friend from Jaipur was close to tears when he said: "People are dying on the streets. But the government reports only six deaths, while the funeral homes report 57 — that's how wide the gap is." From all corners of India, citizens are sending out pathetic appeals for oxygen cylinders, beds, oximeters, vaccines — anything to save their loved ones. There is only a stone wall in front of them. Isn't it unbelievable and horrifying that our PM keeps mum through such an unprecedented tragedy? Why? It's an absolute mystery! Why has the "Great Communicator" not expressed sympathy, reassured citizens and calmed an agitated nation? Forget an apology. Forget owning up his responsibility. Forget taking charge. Such a cavalier and heartless attitude speaks of bad politics and terrible image management. Here's a man who rose to the pinnacle of power through image manipulation. He understands the impact of optics, he's the master of the social media game — and yet he refuses to pacify his countrymen and countrywomen. Unless we are overlooking the arrogance of megalomani-

acs through history — those who cruelly control their own people through fear, terror tactics, severe punishment and the threat of death.

At this point, death is at our door regardless — what's left to "fear"? Experts are warning us the times ahead will be a lot worse. In a masterly, timely and balanced essay Dr Devi Shetty gives readers a no-frills, straight-up perspective on what awaits us. The picture is far from pretty. That we are woefully short of ICUs is known. But so far, these were meant for adults. The third wave is likely to affect our infants and children — hospitals are simply not geared to meet this challenge. As always, Dr Shetty doesn't merely paint a grim picture and leave it there, he also offers strategic solutions. Why doesn't our PM induct him to lead a crack Covid team and stall the inevitable disaster?

All along, India wasted precious time and resources not enforcing Covid-19 protocols strictly. An old clip of Assam's then BJP health minister (who is now chief minister) Himanta Biswa Sarma is doing the rounds. In that he tells a persistent reporter that masks are "not necessary" as there's not even a single Covid-19 case in his state. That's the level of brazenness, plus a lack of education of our elected representatives. This week former Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Rawat said: "Corona is also a creature and has the right to live." Insane!! D.V. Sadananda Gowda, another brilliant minister

(chemicals and fertilisers) asks unnecessarily: "If vaccines are not produced yet, should we hang ourselves?" To which net-zines retorted: "What an idea, Sirji!" Chief ministers are callously playing with the lives of citizens, sitting back and averting their eyes from the pileup of corpses. Unless, of course, those corpses are found floating in the holy Ganga! That's when a few politicians sit up and ask for an inquiry. Kyon? Because the holy Ganga has been polluted — not because those who threw the half-burnt, plastic-wrapped bodies into the river may have been left with no other choice! We are running out of firewood for pyres. We will soon run out of space for graves.

These are humanitarian issues. Our leaders lack humanity. They don't have to be scientists or Covid experts. They just need to be human. And tell people that no matter what, help will reach them. Instead, all energies are focused on completing the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista construction in New Delhi: Prime Minister Modi's pet project. Imagine the irony: a man the world admired for rising to the highest position in the country after starting his life as a humble *chaiwalla* and sleeping on a hard floor now wants to reside in an opulent multi-crore palace, financed by us!

Today, there are a number of Indians who are demanding the Prime Minister's resignation (as would happen in any other civilised country) and holding him directly responsible for this unspeakable tragedy. Others are seriously nominating an actor (Sonu Sood) for PM, in recognition of his sustained work during the pandemic. Rather an actor who delivers and feels the pain of his fellow citizens than a wannabe superstar who has forgotten his dialogues.

*Kuch na Kaho... Kuch bhi na kaho...*

Instagram handle: @ShobhaaDe; Twitter: @DeShobhaa

**Our leaders lack humanity. They just need to be human. And tell people that no matter what, help will reach them. Instead, all energies are focused on completing the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista construction...**

### LETTERS

#### FAILED VACCINATION

This pandemic is a national calamity. The Centre and states must stop welfare schemes and divert funds to the health sector. Instead of blaming states, the Centre should involve and call global tenders for vaccine manufacturing to overcome the shortage. We should learn from America as they administered 27 crore doses whereas India has administered only 17 crore doses till now. This shows India's negligence. It has the duty to control the vaccine shortage and save the lives of people.

D. Ravikumar  
Yendada, Visakhapatnam

#### CONFLICT IN GAZA

It is the US which has armed Israel to the teeth with sophisticated weaponry and Iron Dome cover (*De-escalate conflict in Gaza, US must step in, DC, May 15*). It is always supporting to defeat Hamas that controls Gaza. It will be wishful thinking to expect Biden to be a peace maker as all of us are aware where his interests are directed. Will Putin and Erdogan be silent spectators and allow Biden to have a lead role?

Parthasarathy Mandadi  
Tirupati

Fighting between Israel and Palestine will continue sporadically like India and Pakistan. It only needs a spark to ignite as it happened in this case due to intolerant Jews interfering with Muslims' Ramzan celebrations at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Narendra Modi, who is a common friend of both countries, should take the lead in this case despite his preoccupation here due to Covid-19.

K. Nehru Patnaik  
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

## DECCAN Chronicle

### Govt. takes charge of insurance

NEW DELHI, MAY 14.

Officers of the Controller of Insurance in the Union Finance Ministry today formally assumed charge of the general insurance companies whose management was taken over by the Government through an Ordinance last night.

Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



*"It's called hiding and running Or Silence, Exile and Cunning All with Capital letters To unchain Envy's fetters*

*Always beat about the Bush Suspense keeps hearers Khush Language and idiom mix The ideal poetic fix?"*

— From Chowpatty Repartee by Bachchoo

## Why is Labour, once a force in British politics, on the rocks?

Apologies! Heres' a political quiz: Question 1: In which democracy is the party, which has very often been in power since the late 1940s, now on the brink of collapse?

Question 2: In which democratic country has the governing party come to power through an appeal to irrational or non-rational factors?

Question 3: Which government was slow to react to the Covid pandemic and caused as a consequence an avoidable number of deaths?

Congratulations, gentle reader — perhaps the questions were too easy and the answers obvious: But you got it — the answer to all three questions is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland!

The Opposition Labour Party has lost its appeal and is falling apart; the Tories appealed not to rational material advance of classes but to emotional xenophobia and BoJo's government will be castigated in the forthcoming inquiry into the handling of the Covid-19 emergency, for not implementing lockdown measures in the face of rampant public contagion.

So, why is the Labour Party, a force in British politics since its formation in 1906, on its uppers if not on the rocks? Last week, on May 6, the UK held elections for several local council seats — control of the municipalities. Labour lost 267 of them while the Tories gained 294. The biggest disaster for Labour on May 6 was the single byelection for the Westminster Parliament held in the northeastern port of Hartlepool. For seventy years this town has voted Labour. This time it changed to Conservative. What the media in Britain characterise as another brick in the "red wall" turning blue!

In 2019, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party lost disastrously to Boris Johnson's Brexiteer buccaneering Tories. BoJo's 80-seat majority in the House of Commons was made up substantially of MPs from constituencies in this red

wall — the towns and cities of the Midlands and the North who were traditionally Labour, as they had vast populations of the working class. Did these "natural" Labour voters have a change of heart or even of DNA?

No, gentle reader, they voted with a change of allegiance towards the party that promised to "Get Brexit Done" and so ban European citizens from coming into the country, whether they came into their own red wall constituency or not.

Why? Go back a few governments and we have the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher who closed down the mines and mills, destroyed swathes of traditional manufacture and opened up Britain's markets, for example, to Polish coal and Asian textiles.

It left millions of people in the red wall territories unemployed. Subsequent Labour governments did very little to make the economic revival of these towns and cities their priority. Albeit there was a lot else to do and the 2008 world financial crisis didn't assist those Labour governments either.

Membership of the European Union gave European citizens — Poles, Hungarians, Spaniards and others

from the 27 countries — the right to come to Britain and work. These workers brought skills which had become scarce or prohibitively expensive in UK cities. For instance, in London, if you needed a plumber or a builder, the most convenient, cheapest and reliable one to do the work would be Eastern European.

Apart from an innate xenophobia, which no columnist can honestly quantify, there was the definite canard in the British working classes that these "foreign" workers were undercutting British wages. There were other more nebulous reasons — a faux-nostalgia for a supposedly vanishing British culture, eroded by the presence of other languages, religions, cuisine etc. "Keep Johnny Foreigner out" was the unspoken credo of the Brexiteers.

And the Labour Party was split on the issue. Jeremy Corbyn and several leftish infiltrators and open "Trotskyists" (Yes, gentle reader, in 2019!) were wholehearted Brexiteers. They made no assessments of the damage to Britain and to its working classes or to its security. They were following the 1960s and 1970s' contention of their hero Tony Benn who called the EU a "capitalist club". They would leave it and join Russia, China, the United

States, India and other great "socialist" nations and with them defeat pernicious capitalist clubs. No, gentle reader, this is not an extract from Monty Python or any other satirical show. These advocates, some of them my friends, really believed and preached this.

What had started out in 1906 as a party of workers, mostly unionised, has, a hundred years on, become the political vehicle of an urban elite who would support Jeremy Corbyn's plans to nationalise the railways and take its ownership away from French and Dutch capitalist companies. They would support taxing the very rich, plugging the tax-dodge holes that the Tories and Rishi Sunak have left gaping. What they would also support is what has come to be known as the "woke" agenda. And most important, they (including yours truly) are decidedly anti-Brexit.

Labour has become two factions — the red wall xenophobes and the liberal, partially if dedicatedly, "woke" (not quite yours truly) urban membership. These are political enemies and can't present the country with a unified Opposition. Kali's heads can look both ways and manifest her powers — the Labour Party's can't.



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,732.55	0.09
Nifty 50	14,677.80	-0.13
S&P 500*	4,168.54	1.36
Dollar (₹)	73.28	0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.05	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,110.146	0.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.44	2.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.645	-0.023

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## ADB sanctioned \$3.92 billion loan to India in 2020

The Asian Development Bank on Friday said it has committed a record \$3.92 billion in sovereign loans for 13 projects to India in 2020, including \$1.8 billion in Covid-19 related projects to support the government's pandemic response. The agency said it has provided emergency assistance to contain the disease and establish social protection measures for relief to the poor and other vulnerable groups.

## Forex reserves swell by \$1.4b to cross \$589b



The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$1.444 billion to \$589.465 billion in the week ended May 7, 2021, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended April 30, 2021, the reserves had risen by \$3.913 billion to \$588.02 billion. The reserves had touched a lifetime high of \$590.185 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021. The increase in reserves was on account of a rise in foreign currency assets.

## Vandita Kaul is appointed Bol's nominee director

State-owned Bank of India (BOI) on Friday said the government has appointed Vandita Kaul, additional secretary in the finance ministry, to its board as a nominee director. The bank said it has received the communication from the finance ministry about Kaul's nomination on May 13, 2021. Bank of India has a total of eight members on its board, including the MD and CEO Atanu Kumar Das.

## Mphasis Q4 net profit declines 10.2% to ₹316 cr

Mphasis has reported a 10.2 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to ₹316.9 crore in the March 2021 quarter. Its net profit stood at ₹353.2 crore in the year-ago period, the company said. Its revenue from operations grew 7.5 per cent to ₹2,524.2 crore in the quarter from ₹2,346.1 crore in the year-ago period, it added. For the full fiscal 2019-20, Mphasis' net profit was up 2.7 per cent to ₹1,216.8 crore from ₹1,184 crore.



## Akshaya Tritiya didn't end up as dud Gold sales muted but not a washout

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 14

Despite the lockdowns in key gold-buying states, Akshaya Tritiya was not a complete wash-out this year as it was the last year. The jewellery industry expects close to one-third of the usual sales to have happened this time.

Consumer sentiment remained muted and offline sales were severely affected due to lockdown in major cities and gold-consuming states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. Further, the sentiments were affected by an uneasy air of fear.

According to PR. Somasundaram, managing director, India, World Gold Council, there were certain markets that were still open and hence it was not a complete washout as last year.

"Many organised jewellers have adopted digital and omnichannel strategies to reach out to their consumers, learning from the lockdown experience of 2020. Coupled with decent pre-bookings before lockdown, these steps could redeem the festival from being a complete washout and present a slightly improved picture than last year," he said.

He expects almost one-third of the usual Akshaya Tritiya sales to have happened this time. Usually, 20 to 30 tonnes of gold is sold during Akshaya Tritiya. Some of the organised players and

## Gold bond's price fixed at ₹4,777 gm

**Mumbai, May 14:** The issue price for Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22, which will open for subscription for five days from May 17, has been fixed at ₹4,777 per gram, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday.

The government has decided to issue the bonds in six tranches from May 2021 to September 2021. The RBI will issue the bonds on behalf of the Government of India.

"The nominal value of the bond based on the simple average closing price for gold of 999 purity of the last three business days of the week preceding the subscription peri-

od...works out to ₹4,777 per gram of gold," it said.

The government, in consultation with the RBI, has decided to offer a discount of ₹50 per gram less than the nominal value to those investors applying online and the payment against the application is made through digital mode.

"For such investors, the issue price of the gold bond will be ₹4,727 per gram of gold," the RBI said. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22 Series-I or first tranche will be open for subscription from May 17, 2021, to May 21, 2021, and bonds will be issued on May 25. — *PTI*

online companies saw a good jump in digital buying. "In 2020 August sold around 15 kg of Digi Gold on Akshaya Tritiya and in 2021 it has increased by almost 100 per cent to around 30 kg of gold. Gold coins and gold bars in the range of ₹3,000-4,000 was preferred by buyers this year," said Ketan Kothari, director, Augmont.

Some of the jewellers saw good demand for gold coins that were booked on calls to be delivered post-lockdown. However, the lockdown in almost all of the south Indian states

affected the sales of some retail chains.

"Most markets in India remained closed and the overall sentiment was muted. Only 20 per cent of our showrooms were operational and they functioned under strict guidelines with reduced working hours. As expected, traction in these showrooms was minimal. It is not appropriate to compare this year's Akshaya Tritiya with any of the pre-Covid years," said Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director, Kalyan Jewellers.

## CHIP SHORTAGE TO COST \$110B

As the semiconductor shortage hobbling the global automotive industry has worsened, its cost as a hit to sales has almost doubled to \$110 billion, up from an earlier estimate of \$61 billion, according to AlixPartners, a global consulting firm.

It also now says the world's carmakers will lose 3.9 million vehicles of production to the chip shortage this year, more than its prediction four months ago of 2.2 million or 4.6 per cent of the total production. — *Bloomberg*

## SENSEX NOT PRICING IN COVID LOCKDOWN

India's Covid-19 crisis has so far failed to spark a deep stock selloff like that seen last year, and some asset managers point to less stringent curbs on the activity as one factor at least for now. Even as the nation reports more than 300,000 confirmed infections and over 4,000 deaths a day, India's benchmark equity index has been moving in line with regional peers. The Sensex has declined 6.6 per cent from a mid-February peak, compared to a 23 per cent fall last March. — *Bloomberg*

## BIG TECH FIRMS ENTER FRAY TO SAVE JOBS OF STAFF'S SPOUSES

**New York, May 14:** Big Tech is wading into a legal fight over visas in an attempt to preserve the jobs of spouses of its foreign employees who are working in the US.

Amazon.com Inc., Apple Inc., Google, Microsoft Corp. and more than 20 other companies and organisations, including the US Chamber of Commerce, on Friday, urged a federal court in Washington to reject a lawsuit seeking to eliminate work authorisation for more than 90,000 H-4 visa holders.

Eliminating H-4 visas "would not only siphon off US gross domestic product but gift that productivity — and the innovation that comes with it — to other nations, harming America's global economic competitiveness into the future," the companies and organisations said in a so-called friend-of-court brief.

Under the Obama-era "H-4 Rule," the US department of homeland security in 2015 issued visas to spouses, more than 90 per cent of whom are women, of more than 580,000 highly skilled workers who live in the US on H-1B visas, according to the companies' filing. H-4 visas are critical to couples' decisions to come to the US, buy homes and raise children, they argue. The Trump administration attempted to dismantle the rule, but never executed its decision. — *Bloomberg*

## Dr Reddy's set to focus on Sputnik shots, Covid drugs

**New Delhi, May 14:** Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Friday reported a 29 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹557 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2021.

The Hyderabad-based drug major had posted a net profit of ₹781 crore in the January-March period of 2019-20.

Net sales, however, rose to ₹4,608 crore in the quarter under review as compared with ₹4,336.1 crore in the fourth quarter of 2019-20. Dr Reddy's Laboratories said in a regulatory filing.

For 2020-21 fiscal year, the company posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,952 crore as against ₹2,026 crore in 2019-20.

Net sales increased to ₹18,420 crore during the last fiscal year as compared with ₹16,357 crore in 2019-20.

"In FY 21, we continued to grow across all our businesses, enhance productivity and strengthen our development pipeline," Dr Reddy's Laboratories co-chairman and MD G.V. Prasad said.

The company is prioritising its efforts to launch Sputnik V vaccine across India while working on the development and com-

## Farmers got ₹1.35L cr under PM-Kisan: Modi

**New Delhi, May 14:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the Centre has transferred around ₹1.35,000 crore so far under the PM-KISAN scheme with the payment of the eighth instalment on Friday and is also procuring a higher quantity of paddy and wheat at MSP to boost farmers' income.

Out of the total amount disbursed since the launch of the scheme in February 2019, Modi said around ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is helping farmers in these difficult times.

The Prime Minister on Friday released the eighth instalment of ₹20,667 crore to more than 9.5 crore farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme via video conference.

Under the scheme, which became effective from December 2018, the Centre provides ₹6,000

per year to eligible farmers in three equal instalments of ₹2,000. Addressing the event, Modi said farmers have performed their duties even during this Covid-19 pandemic and helped the country achieve record production of foodgrains and horticulture crops.

He said the PM-KISAN scheme was launched to help farmers, especially small and marginal ones, in meeting their input costs. He said around 10 crore farmers have received the 8th instalment. "To West Bengal farm-

ers, the benefit has begun to reach for the first time. Today, lakhs of farmers in West Bengal have got their first instalment. Gradually when the names of farmers are sent to the Centre, the number of beneficiaries will increase," he added.

Overall, around 11 crore farmers have received around Rs 1,35,000 crore under the PM-KISAN scheme so far, Modi said, adding that about ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"PM-KISAN is benefiting small and marginal farmers. In these difficult times, this money is helping these farmers a lot. So far under the scheme, about 11 crore farmers have got ₹1.35 lakh crore in their bank accounts. There are no middlemen," Modi said.

The government is continuously making efforts to ensure benefits to farmers reach directly at a faster pace, the Prime Minister added. — *PTI*

## India's exports up 3-fold in April

**New Delhi, May 14:** India's exports in April jumped nearly three-fold to \$30.63 billion from \$10.36 billion in the same month last year, according to government data released on Friday.

Imports too rose to \$45.72 billion last month as against \$17.12 billion in April 2020, the data showed. The trade deficit widened to \$15.10 billion

as against \$6.76 billion in April 2020.

Exports in April last year had plunged by a record 60.28 per cent due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown.

In March this year, exports grew by 60.29 per cent to \$34.45 billion.

Due to the low base effect, exports in April 2021 recorded a growth rate of 195.72 per cent.

Oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.66 billion in the corresponding month last year.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive growth in April include gems and jewellery, leather, electronic goods, oil meals, cashew, engineering, petroleum products, marine products and chemicals. — *PTI*

## GO AIRLINES FILES DRHP FOR ₹3,600-CR IPO

**New Delhi, May 14:** Go Airlines, which has rebranded itself as 'Go First', has filed preliminary papers for an initial share sale worth ₹3,600 crore and the proceeds will be mainly used to repay dues amid the aviation industry facing strong headwinds due to the coronavirus pandemic.

After taking to the skies 15 years ago, the Wadia group-promoted budget carrier — which has ambitious expansion plans — is looking to mop up the amount through the issuance of fresh equity shares. It also has plans to raise up to ₹1,500 crore by way of a pre-IPO placement.

Once the shares get listed, Go Airlines (India) Ltd will be the third operational scheduled carrier after SpiceJet and IndiGo to trade on Indian bourses. "We expect competitive conditions in our industry to intensify further as new entrants emerge and as existing competitors seek to extend their operations and flight frequencies over routes that we operate," as per the DRHP. It also noted that the aviation industry faces significant business challenges due to Covid. — *PTI*

## COVID | WARRIORS Centre for special drive for fin services staff

## Vaccinate bank staff, says finmin

**New Delhi, May 14:** The finance ministry on Friday asked state governments to accord priority to employees of banks and insurance companies for Covid-19 vaccination, saying they are exposed to high risks during these difficult times.

Department of financial services secretary Debasish Panda, in a letter, addressed to chief secretaries of states and union territories, said states should consider a special dispensation for vaccination of staff of banks, insurance companies, business correspondents, payment systems



and other financial services providers on priority.

Tagging the letter, he said in a tweet, "Kudos to our Bankers, Insurers, Payment Service Providers, Bank Mitras for

ensuring uninterrupted delivery of banking and financial services to people in need during these challenging times."

He also mentioned that many of these employees have succumbed to

Covid-19. "All state/UT governments are requested to instruct local authorities to provide them necessary help and support in ensuring delivery of banking and financial services. Vaccinating them on priority will mitigate their high exposure to risk in the delivery of public service," he said.

Raising the issues of some instances of manhandling by state law enforcement authorities during local lockdowns, the letter also asked state administration to ensure easy movement of officials for discharge of duty. — *PTI*



## SHORT TAKES

## Shaw stopped for pass, gets it soon

**Mumbai:** India batsman Prithvi Shaw was stopped while on his way to Goa in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra for travelling without an E-Pass, a police official said on Friday. The incident took place at Amboli on Wednesday when the cricketer was heading for Goa in his car, said the official. He was allowed to leave after obtaining a pass. Shaw was going to Goa for vacation, he said. The Maharashtra government has made it mandatory to obtain a pass for travelling in its efforts to contain the second wave of the pandemic. After the police stopped him in Amboli, he applied for the pass online afresh and got it in an hour. — PTI

## Hussey Covid free, Saha still positive

**New Delhi:** Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey has recovered from Covid-19, paving the way for his return to Australia on Sunday but Sunrisers Hyderabad's Wriddhiman Saha has received conflicting results in two coronavirus tests, prolonging his isolation. Saha, who has been named in India's squad for the World Test Championship final and the subsequent Test series against England, is hoping to join the squad's bio-bubble in Mumbai on May 25. His inclusion is subject to fitness. Both Hussey and Saha had first tested positive during the now suspended IPL. "Hussey has returned with negative RT-PCR results and has recovered well," CSK CEO Kashi Viswanathan said on Friday. — PTI

## Nadal rallies past Shapovalov in QF

**Rome:** When it comes to long, grueling clay-court battles, nobody is better than Rafael Nadal. Nearing his 35th birthday, the Spanish great showed he's still got the stamina to withstand much younger challengers in a 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (3) comeback win over 22-year-old Denis Shapovalov on Thursday that secured him a spot in the Italian Open quarterfinals. Nadal, a nine-time champion in Rome, will next face Alexander Zverev, the 2017 Rome champion. He also won in a comeback, beating Kei Nishikori 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. Earlier, top-ranked Novak Djokovic cruised past Spanish qualifier Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-2 6-1. — AP

## Tvesa off to good start in Capetown

**Capetown:** India's Tvesa Malik made a good start before dropping two bogeys to finish at even-par 72 and lie tied fifth after the first round of the Investec South African Women's Open golf tournament here. Tvesa had a share of the lead for some part of the day before faltering. Lee-Anne Pace and Welsh Lydia Hall, who carded two-under 70 each on the opening day, shared the lead.

## SHARMA MAKES CUT AT BRITISH MASTERS

Shubhankar Sharma helped avert an Indian wipeout as he made up for a disappointing first round with 1-under 71 in the second round to make the cut at the Betfred British Masters in Wishaw, UK. — PTI

## Indian shooters hit range next week

**New Delhi:** In quarantine till May 19, India's Olympic-bound shooters are keeping themselves busy with dry firing in their respective hotel rooms at Zagreb before they hit the range next week. According to a warm welcome by the Croatian shooting fraternity, including world number three rifle shooter Peter Gorsa, the Indian team will take part as a guest invitee in the European Championship from May 20 to June 6 at Osijek. After the continental event, the Indian shooters will compete in the ISSF World Cup, slated to be held in same city from May 22 to July 3. — PTI

## Live on TV

## FOOTBALL

**FA Cup Final:** Chelsea vs Leicester from 9.45 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

## UFC

**Fight Night:** Charles Oliveira vs Michael Chandler and other bouts from 7.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2

## COACH POTATO

Raman writes to Ganguly, Dravid on 'Prima Donna Culture' in women team

**New Delhi, May 14:** Ousted Indian women's cricket team coach W. V. Raman has written to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, alleging that there is a "prima donna culture" in the national team and it needs to change.

In the mail that has also been marked to National Cricket Academy head Rahul Dravid, Raman has also offered to present a roadmap for women's cricket in the country, if asked.

In a surprising move, the former India Test player was not retained as the head coach of the senior women's team by the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) which picked Ramesh Powar for the top job. Raman's major achievements included a runners-up finish for the side at the women's T20 World Cup last year.

"As far as I know, Raman has said that he has always 'believed in team being placed above everybody else, and insisted that no individual can really be a prima donna'," a source privy to Raman's mail said.

The stylish former left-hander's crisp letter to the two former captains is sure to ruffle a few feathers given that it has always been the coaches who have either stepped aside or sacked following fallout with players, most notably ODI captain Mithali Raj.

While Raman's letter didn't name anyone, it is understood that he has spoken extensively about the star culture that prevails in the team, which he said is probably doing more harm than good.

While repeated calls to Raman went unanswered, a source in the know of things did admit that a mail to both Ganguly and Dravid has gone out. "Raman has asked Dada



(Ganguly) that if a past accomplished performer feels constrained by this culture, then he (Ganguly) as a former India captain, should take a call on this matter, whether the coach is asking for too much," the source added.

Raman, it is learnt, is dismayed by allegations that he is not proactive as a coach. He has recalled how he oversaw three training sessions (for Trailblazers, Velocity and Supernovas) between 1 pm to 9 pm in humid UAE conditions during the last T20 challenge.

"In case the president and secretary want to hear his opinion on allegations about his work ethic, he can explain."

The letter has been copied to Dravid because Raman sincerely believes that he can contribute towards building a roadmap for Indian women's cricket. — PTI

## Raman, David were not on same page for SA selection

**New Delhi, May 14:** Former opener W. V. Raman's unceremonious ouster from the Indian women's team head coach's position has opened a can of worms with both the Madan Lal-headed Cricket Advisory Committee and Neetu David-led selection panel coming under the scanner of BCCI bigwigs.

It has been confirmed from multiple sources that Raman had red-flagged the kind of squad that David, Arati Vaidya, Renu Margrate, Mithu Mukherjee and V. Kalpana picked for the South Africa series, for which teen batting sensa-

tion Shafali Verma was not picked for the ODIs and senior pacer Shikha Pandey was inexplicably dropped.

While both David and Raman couldn't be contacted for corroboration, it is understood that the BCCI nowadays records all selection meetings. The just-removed coach didn't approve the changes.

"Do you know what kind of logic was given for dropping Shikha and Shafali? It is beyond comprehension," a peeved senior official said.

The selectors said that Pandey was unfit because she hasn't worked hard

on training during lockdown and was "overweight".

"But when they were asked to prove their point, they couldn't simply do it," the official alleged.

In the case of Shafali, her fielding was questioned and put forth as the reason for her non-selection in the ODI team.

"If Raman had a counter-question that if Shafali's fielding is a problem for 50-over cricket, then it is bigger problem in T20 format where it is more important. Then how is she being selected in T20 format," the official asked. — PTI

## Rookie Roy gets maiden call-up for England tour

**New Delhi, May 14:** Rookie wicketkeeper-batter Indrani Roy from Jharkhand was rewarded with maiden Test and ODI call-up for India's tour of England next month but senior left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad missed out due to an injury.

The Neetu David-led selection panel made a course correction with teen batting sensation Shafali Verma and seasoned pacer Shikha Pandey making it to all three squads after their South Africa home series snubs.

Sneh Rana and Indrani were two stellar performers in the National One-Day competition and thus got their call-ups.

The likes of Monica

## THE FIXTURES

■ **Test:** June 16-19 (Bristol)  
■ **1st ODI:** June 27 (Bristol)  
■ **2nd ODI (D/N):** June 30 (Taunton)  
■ **3rd ODI:** July 3 (Worcester)  
■ **1st T20 (D/N):** July 9 (Northants)  
■ **2nd T20:** July 11 (Hove)  
■ **3rd T20 (D/N):** July 15 (Chelmsford)

Patel, C. Prathyusha have been dropped from the squad altogether.

As expected Mithali Raj will lead the team for the one-off Test, to be played at Bristol from June 16 to 19 and the three One-Day Internationals while Harmanpreet Kaur will take over the reins during the three T20 Internationals.

— PTI

## SQUADS

**Test & ODI:** Mithali Raj (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur (vice-captain), Punam Raut, Priya Punia, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Indrani Roy (wicket-keeper), Jhulan Goswami, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav.

**T20:** Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana (vice-captain), Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh, Harleen Deol, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Indrani Roy (wicket-keeper), Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav, Simaran Dil Bahadur.

## VIHARI AND TEAM COMES TO THE AID OF COVID PATIENTS

**New Delhi, May 14:** Crushing the pain barrier to save a Test match is by no measure a small feat but for Hanuma Vihari, the biggest satisfaction these days comes from being able to arrange a hospital bed or oxygen cylinders for desperate Covid-19 patients through a network of friends.

Vihari, while being in the UK for his county stint, has used his Twitter handle to amplify appeals for help. He has also created a team of 100 volunteers, comprising friends and followers from across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka.

Just like Congress leader B.V. Srinivas in New Delhi, Vihari's friends and followers have reached people with plasma, oxygen cylinders and arranged food and hospital beds for patients.

"I don't want to glorify myself. I am doing it with the intention of helping people at the ground level, who actually need every help possible in these difficult times. It is just the start," the 27-year-old said.

Vihari left for England in early April to play in the English county for Warwickshire.

Vihari, like every Indian, has been shocked by the obstacles that Covid-19 patients and their families have encountered on a daily basis.

"With the second wave being so strong, getting a bed became a difficulty and that is something which is unthinkable. So, I decided to use my followers as my volunteers and help as many people as I can," Vihari, who has more than 110,000 followers, said.

— PTI

## Japan to expand virus emergency

**Tokyo, May 14:** Japan on Friday further expanded a Coronavirus state of emergency from six areas, including Tokyo, to nine, as Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga repeated his determination to hold the Olympics in just over two months.

Japan has been struggling to slow infections ahead of the Games. The three additions are Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, where the Olympic marathon will be held, and Hiroshima and Okayama in western Japan.

Despite the worsening infections, Suga stressed his commitment to holding the games safely and securely while protecting Japanese by strictly controlling the movements of foreign participants, including possibly expelling journalists covering the event if they defy regulations.

"I understand there are various difficulties, but the priority is to stop the further spread of infections and protect the people's lives and health," Suga said.

The three additional areas will join Tokyo, Osaka and four other prefectures already under the

● **The three additional areas will join Tokyo, Osaka and four other prefectures already under the emergency Coronavirus restrictions through May 31, Japan PM Suga announced at a government taskforce meeting on Friday.**

emergency coronavirus restrictions through May 31, Suga announced at a government taskforce meeting Friday. Bars, karaoke parlors and most entertainment facilities are required to close. Business owners who comply will be compensated; those who don't could face fines.

"Infections are escalating extremely rapidly in populated areas," Suga said. "As new variants continue to spread, we judged that now is a very important time to stop the further spread of infections."

It was the second expansion of the emergency in just one week.

Suga said he will decide on a possible further extension by evaluating the virus situation at the end of May. — AP



Lawyer Kenji Utsunomiya, a representative of an anti-Olympics group, shows an anti-Olympic banner after submitting a petition to the Tokyo government calling for the cancellation of the Tokyo Olympics on Friday. — AP

## PETITION SUBMITTED TO CANCEL TOKYO GAMES

**Tokyo, May 14:** An online petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled has been submitted to the Tokyo government with over 350,000 signatures on Friday morning.

The rollout of the petition comes with Tokyo, Osaka and several other areas under a state of emergency with coronavirus infections rising particularly new variants.

The postponed Olympics are to open in just under three months on July 23rd.

The petition will also be sent to International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, who cancelled a planned trip to Japan this month due to surging cases of Covid-19 in the country, and to International Paralympics Committee President Andrew Parsons.

Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics cancelled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen. The petition was organised by Kenji Utsunomiya, a lawyer who has run several times for Tokyo governor. — AP

## Irfan negative in second Covid test

**New Delhi, May 14:** Olympic-bound race walker K.T. Irfan and four other elite track-and-field athletes have returned negative for Covid-19 in a confirmatory second test conducted at Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, the nodal body said on Friday.

Irfan was among five athletes who tested positive for Covid-19 at the centre in a weekly test conducted on May 7.

But the SAI on Friday confirmed that all these athletes, who got their first jab of Covid-19 vaccine on April 29, have returned negative in the second test conducted on Thursday.

However, the SAI said out of 22 athletes, who underwent the tests, one is still positive but it didn't disclose any further details.

"All have tested negative in the second test conducted yesterday, the results of which came on Friday morning. All athletes at the SAI campus across the country are being tested on a weekly basis," a SAI source said.

A total of 16 tests were conducted on Friday,

which included two steeplechase athletes, two male race walkers, a male middle and long distance runner, two female middle and long distance athletes, four para athletes, besides a para coach and an NCOE athlete.

During the weekly test conducted May 6 and 7, 22 athletes tested positive for coronavirus.

"They were asymptomatic and isolated and kept under medical observation. 21 of the 22 athletes have since tested negative after a repeat RT PCR test was done," the SAI stated in a release.

"Among those who have tested negative are, race walker K.T. Irfan, middle and long distance athletes P.U. Chitra and Sandeep Kumar and para athlete Mariyappan Thangavelu. Hockey players Chinglensena Singh and Vivek Sagar Prasad are also among those who have tested negative," the SAI said in a statement.

At SAI Bengaluru, where athletes in hockey, track and field and para-athletics are based, all have been vaccinated on April 29.

— PTI