

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | SATURDAY | 24 APRIL 2021

WEATHER

Max: 37°C
Min: 25.4°C
RH: 38%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Rain likely in some parts.
Max/Min temp. 38/25°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Dwadasi
till 7.11 pm
Star: Purnvaphalguni till 6.20 am;
Uttaraphalguni till
4.21 am (Sunday)
Varjyam: 12.57 pm to 2.25 pm
Durmuhurtam: 5.57 am to
7.37 am
Rahukalam: 9 am to 10.30 am
HUIRI CALENDAR
Ramzan 11,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.51 am
Zohar: 12.24 pm
Asar: 4.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.40 pm
Isha: 7.50 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.34 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.54 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 2.55 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 3.03 AM

RAMZAN TIMINGS
IFTAR: 6.40 PM (TODAY)
SEHRI: 4.29 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT



I am getting more oxygen under the tree than in the ICU!

SHORT TAKES

Justice Bobde retires as CJI

New Delhi: Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde said Friday he was leaving the Supreme Court with the satisfaction that he did his best in leading the institution and leaves with “happiness, goodwill and very fond memories”. “I leave with the satisfaction that I did my best. I hand over the baton to Justice Ramana who will, I am sure, very ably lead the court,” CJI Bobde said.

India adds 3,32L Covid-19 cases

New Delhi: India added a record over 3.32 lakh new coronavirus cases in a single day taking the country's tally to 1,62,63,695, while active cases crossed the 24-lakh mark, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Friday. The death toll caused by Covid-19 increased to 1,86,920 with a record 2,263 new fatalities.

RBI bars Amex on new customers

Mumbai: The RBI on Friday imposed restrictions on American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International from onboarding new domestic customers onto their card networks over non-compliance with the central bank's norms on storage of payment system data.

■ Full report on Page 7

Centre sent WB's O2 to UP: Mamata

Kolkata: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday accused the Centre of diverting tonnes of oxygen from the state to others ruled by the BJP, such as Uttar Pradesh, after she skipped Prime Minister Narendra Modi's high-level meet with other CMs on Covid-19.

■ Full report on Page 4



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WORLD | 5

US defends curbs on Covid vax items

Modi asks states to act against hoarding

PM asks states to prevent panic drug buying

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 23

As the shortage of medical oxygen exacerbates, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday urged states and Union Territories to get strict with hoarding and black marketing of essential medicines, injections and oxygen.

During a meeting with the Chief Ministers of 11 states and Union Territories which have reported the maximum number of cases, the Prime Minister said the Central government is working on all possible ways to reduce the travel time and turnaround time of oxygen tankers. For this, the railways has started Oxygen Express and empty oxygen tankers are also being transported by the Indian Air Force to reduce one-way travel time.

He said the Centre has provided more than 15 crore doses of essential medicines to the states free of cost and urged them not to neglect the safety of hospitals. He further said awareness must be increased to alleviate panic purchasing of medicines.

Though the PM's meetings with CMs are never aired live, the Delhi Chief Minister's Office telecasted Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's appeal to Modi during the meeting. Modi, however, did not appreciate the Delhi CMO's move. Terming the conduct “inappropriate,” Modi said this is the first time a



Chief Minister has broken the protocol and showed live a meeting between the PM and CMs.

Mr Kejriwal apologised to the PM for this but his office issued a statement, saying “the CM address was shared live because there has never been any instruction, written or verbal, from the Central government stating that the said interaction could not be shared live.”

“There have been multiple occasions of similar interactions where matters of public importance which had no confidential information were shared live. However, if any inconvenience was caused we highly regret that” the Delhi CMO said even as the Central government accused Mr Kejriwal of playing politics over oxygen.

Noting that the virus was affecting several states as well as tier-2 and tier-3 cities, the Prime Minister assured the Centre's full support to all the states in this fight and added that the health ministry is also in touch is monitoring the situation closely and issuing necessary advice to the states from time to time.

PATIENTS DIED IN MAJOR FIRE AT COVID CENTRE

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, APRIL 23

At least 14 Covid patients have died in a major fire accident at a Covid centre at Virar in Palghar district in the wee hours of Friday. The fire broke out at around 3 am in the ICU on the second floor of the four-storeyed Vijay Vallabh Hospital. There were 17 Covid patients in the ICU. The surviving patients under critical care have been moved to nearby hospitals in Mumbai.

SUPPLY OF FREE FOOD GRAINS VIA PDS TO BEGIN

New Delhi, April 23: The Central government on Friday decided to resume providing free food grains to 80 crore poor beneficiaries in May and June to help them tide over the economic hardship in the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, a move that would cost the exchequer around ₹26,000 crore. “We will provide 5-kg additional food grains for free to PDS beneficiaries under the PMGKAY for two months — May and June,” food and PDS secretary Sudhanshu Pandey said. — PTI

1,500 sq yd plot in Hyd for ₹2L!

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

A 1,500-square yard plot in upmarket Jubilee Hills which would cost at least ₹50 crore was sold for just ₹1.91 lakh and registered in the name of a person who allegedly impersonated a non-resident Indian.

Claiming that the sale concluded by the previous managing committee of the Jubilee Hills Cooperative Housing Society was fraudulent, B. Ravindranath, the newly-elected president of the society, has approached the Telangana High Court and sought a direction to the police to register a case against his predecessors.

Ravindranath, in the affidavit filed in the High Court, said that the Hyderabad police commissioner, DCP, Central Crime Station, and the station house officer of Jubilee Hills police, had been ignoring the detailed

complaint that he had lodged along with evidence and failed to register a first information report under pressure “from very top functionaries of the state.”

According to his complaint, a copy of which is available with this newspaper, the society allotted Plot 853F to one B. Sirisha in 1988. Three years later, the same was transferred to one Ch Sirisha, who is now a citizen of the US. The registration could not be completed at that time as she was a minor.

Almost three decades later, T. Narendra Chowdary, former president of the society, and secretary T. Hanumantha Rao registered the plot to Sirisha just a few days after the nationwide lockdown was lifted on June 1 last year. Chowdary allegedly paid the requisite registration fee of ₹45 lakh.

■ Page 2: Buyer executed a gift deed to another man

SPORTS | 8

Injured Natarajan out of IPL

TABLOID

DSP most wanted in Bollywood now



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Governor asks TSEC to submit civic poll report

Poll chief informs Gov that Covid protocol will be followed

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

Governor Tamilisai Sounda-rarajan on Friday sought a detailed report from the State Election Commission on the holding of polls for the Warangal and Khammam municipal corporations and five municipalities that has been scheduled for April 30.

The Governor, who is presently in Puducherry, called State Election Commissioner C. Partha Sarathi and discussed the polls amidst media reports on the rapid increase in Covid-19 positive cases due to public gatherings in connection with the polls.

She was also reacting to representations made by the Opposition parties including the BJP and the Congress urging that the elections be postponed.

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy wrote a letter to the Governor to stop the elections to the urban local bodies in view of the pandemic and the Supreme Court itself declaring it as a national emergency.



A drive through testing facility in Hyderabad that was launched on Friday near the Meridian School in Madhapur.

— DC

Official sources told this correspondent that the Governor was concerned about the safety of people and wanted to know the measures taken by the SEC to ensure that the

political parties strictly follow Covid 19 restrictions. The Governor is under pressure from political parties and social groups to order the postponement

of the elections as, otherwise, the lives of thousands of people would be at risk.

■ Page 2: Notified polls were never put off, says CEO

HC calls state's statements on Covid as sackful of salt

VUJJINI
VAMSHIDHARA I DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

Going by the Covid-related details given by the Telangana government and the “confusing” statements from ministers and bureaucrats about Covid, the Telangana High Court on Friday observed that the state government was not being candid enough in dealing with the second wave of Covid-19.

A division bench com-

prising Chief Justice Hima Kohli and Justice B. Vijaysen Reddy observed that it would appear that the details submitted by the government to the court on Covid are a “sackful of salt, window-dressing and fudged numbers.”

“On one hand, the secretary to medical and health appeared before the court two days ago and said the state is fully equipped with beds, infrastructure, oxygen and life-saving medicines to treat the

Covid-infected. On the other, your health minister says the state faced more than 120 tonnes of oxygen deficiency due to the failure of the Centre to supply it, which contention should be trusted? How such a paucity of oxygen and medicines in one day? Is it that the situation became critical within a day,” Chief Justice Kohli asked the government.

■ Page 2: HC hits out at Centre on vaccine doses

Punjab Kings beat Mumbai Indians



Players of the Punjab Kings celebrate the wicket of Quinton de Kock of Mumbai Indians during their IPL match at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Friday. Punjab won by nine wickets. ■ Full report on Page 8. — IPL

ELECTION | TIME

TRS, Congress see many rebels sprouting up

Parties face rebel challenge

ANUDEEP CEREMILLA |
DC
WARANGAL, APRIL 23

The presence of rebel candidates in contention in several divisions is troubling major parties, as part of the GWMC elections. The TRS and Congress, in particular, have a lot of rebel leaders contesting against the official candidates.

Due to the delayed announcement of official candidates, there was no chance of convincing the

Due to the delayed announcement, there was no chance of convincing the rebels to withdraw.

other aspirants who filed nominations to withdraw.

To avoid leaders who were not chosen from protesting, the list of chosen candidates has been kept a secret until the last minute. Some leaders did announce that they would not campaign against the party's chosen candidate but still their presence on

the ballot paper could lead to a split of votes.

Other leaders, who claim they deserve to contest and win the election, are challenging the official candidates and campaigning against them.

With the exception of the divisions announced on Wednesday, the TRS rebels stood in contention in most positions. The selected candidates had no chance to convince the other aspirants to withdraw their nominations.

While most of the TRS sit-

ting corporators did not get tickets, others managed to get their family members to contest in their place due to the changed reservations.

The BJP has suspended two leaders in contention against the official candidate. BJP district president Rao Padma said action against President of division 55, Bura Srikanth Goud and 31st division president Perugu Suresh as per the directions of the state disciplinary committee.

Nizamabad surpassed state's average in Coronavirus cases

NARENDER
PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY,
APRIL 23

Nizamabad district has surpassed the state average of Covid-19 positive cases and recorded a huge number of cases in the last few days. As on April 23, the state average of Covid-19 positive cases stands at 5.87 per cent, whereas in Nizamabad district it reached 12.03 per cent. Rapid spread of Covid-19 affected all age group peo-

ple in rural and urban areas simultaneously.

200 beds set up in Covid-19 care centres at Model school, Perkit, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya at Amdapur and Nursing college at Makloor in Nizamabad district. Each 50 beds arranged at model schools in Banswada, Yellareddy towns and Telangana University south campus in Bhiknoor in Kamareddy respectively.

However, Covid-19 tests have been conducted in 42 centres in Nizamabad dis-

trict and 29 centres in Kamareddy district. In all government centres, only Rapid Antigen Tests were conducted to identify the Covid-19 cases. A few people approached private laboratories for RTPCR tests for Covid-19, which is costly and more accurate, the sources said.

Due to various reasons, a few Covid patients freely roam in public places, resulting in hike cases.

■ Page 2: Maha border may have hit Nizamabad

SHORT TAKES

POLLS WILL
BECOME 'SUPER
SPREADER': UTTAMDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

State Congress president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy on Friday sought the intervention of Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan for the cancellation of the municipal polls scheduled on April 30. He warned that the elections would become 'super spreaders' of Covid-19.

He said that the process should be stopped now, and resumed when the pandemic subsides. The Governor's intervention had been sought since the State Election Commission had refused to stop the process despite the urging of senior leaders. The way the SEC was conducting the elections was "unbecoming and highly biased." Uttam Kumar Reddy said that the SEC has done the pre-poll preparations in a hurried manner while the Covid-19 second wave was sweeping across the state. Even the Supreme Court had called it a "health emergency," he pointed out. He said the SEC was not meeting political delegations.

He alleged the SEC was following the directives of its "political masters" to complete the polling on April 30 as they wanted to ensure that the voters are not influenced by the adverse result in the Nagarjunasagar byelection which would be out on May 2. He pointed out that the High Court of Telangana has observed that SEC was the right body to take decision on the elections as the number of infections and deaths were on the rise. However, instead of taking a decision by itself, the SEC referred the matter to the government.

He pointed out that the health minister had described the pandemic situation as "very severe" but the government has asked the SEC to continue the poll process.

On the other hand, the TRS government has failed miserably in strengthening medical infrastructure. Private hospitals are fleeing poor patients. While treatment to Covid is free in Andhra Pradesh, it was not included in Aarogya Sri in Telangana state, he said. "Not a single ventilator bed is available in any government or private hospital. There is a severe shortage of oxygen and vaccines," the Congress leader said. Despite this, the government was rushing to hold the elections.

'100 DEAD'
IN TIMS AND
GANDHI HOSPITALSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23.

Irrespective of what the state government says about daily Covid-19 numbers and deaths from the disease in the state, Friday turned out to be a shocker of sorts with anywhere between 80- and 100 deaths being reported from the state's two biggest Covid-19 treatment facilities, the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (TIMS), at Gachibowli, and the Gandhi Hospital.

It was reliably learnt that more than 30 deaths occurred at TIMS on Friday, more than one every hour, and most of these deaths were in the wards treating around 600 Covid-19 patients. There have been constant reports from TIMS that oxygen saturations for many patients was not being maintained because of the required pressures in the pipelines supplying the life-saving gas into the wards, was not being reached. On Thursday, TIMS had 20 deaths from among its patients. TIMS, as is Gandhi, is a Covid-19 only hospital.

Meanwhile, upwards of some 50 deaths were reported from Gandhi on Friday, though officials maintained that this was not the case. However, it was reliably learnt that this was indeed the case from multiple sources. Gandhi Hospital, as do other government or private hospitals in the state do not make public the deaths among patients.

Officials maintain that not every death is because of Covid-19 and explain about an elaborate procedure that a committee follows to determine the cause of death of each patient. Most deaths are attributed to comorbidities – other health conditions a patient may have been suffering from.

When asked if the comorbidities are not aggravated because of Covid-19 infection and in such circumstances, should a death not be declared as a Covid-19 death, officials say that a person is declared as dead from Covid-19 only if the disease is the causing factor.

Only TRS fights from all seats

Rebels from all parties remain in the fray, file papers as independents

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

Except for the Telangana Rastra Samiti (TRS), none of the major parties could field candidates for all the divisions in the two municipal corporations and five municipalities that are going to the polls on April 30.

However, rebels from the TRS, Congress and the BJP remained in the fray even after the deadline for withdrawal of nominations ended on Thursday. The rebels filed their papers as independents or as candidates of parties recognised in other states and other parties registered with the TS Election

● **THE TRS** has fielded candidates for all 43 wards in the Siddipet municipality, the BJP could put up candidates for 40 wards and Congress 30. The other parties which fielded candidates include CPI and CPM one each, AIMIM 4 and 116 Independents.

Commission (TSEC). In the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC), the TRS and the BJP fielded candidates for all the 66 divisions, the Congress 65, the CPI and the CPIM 16. There were 52 candidates from other registered parties and 237 Independents are in

● **TRS CANDIDATES** filed nominations for all 27 wards of the Jadcherla municipality. The Congress managed 25 and the BJP 22. Others who filed nominations include CPI three, CPM one, AIMIM seven and Independents 27.

In the Khammam Municipal Corporation (KMC), the TRS has fielded 57 candidates and allotted three divisions to the CPI. The BJP could field candidates for 47 divisions and the Congress 48. Among the others, CPM fielded nine candidates, Telugu Desam

Independents 67 and recognised parties in other states and other registered parties with TSEC 12.

The TRS has fielded candidates for all 43 wards in the Siddipet municipality, the BJP could put up candidates for 40 wards and Congress 30. The other parties which fielded candidates include CPI and CPM one each, AIMIM 4 and 116 Independents.

In Nakrekal municipality, of the 20 wards, the TRS fielded candidates for all of them. The BJP could put up 14 and the Congress 16. Candidates of other parties who filed nominations include the

CPM three, TD one, other registered parties 14 and Independents 25.

TRS candidates filed nominations for all 27 wards of the Jadcherla municipality. The Congress managed 25 and the BJP 22. Others who filed nominations include CPI three, CPM one, AIMIM seven and Independents 27.

Atchampet and Kothur municipalities are exceptions, where the three major parties have fielded candidates for all the wards. Atchampet municipality has 20 wards and Kothur 12. In Atchampet, 6 Independents are in fray while in Kothur there are 11 Independents.



Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on hunger strike at Nakrekal market yard on Friday.

— DC

Will go on fast again for farmers: Venkat Reddy

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

Bhongir MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy on Friday sat on hunger strike at Nakrekal market yard, demanding that the government purchase paddy from the procurement centres in the erstwhile Nalgonda district.

He said that responding to his hunger strike Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar had

agreed to purchase paddy from farmers. The MP said that CS had assured the purchase of 10,000 paddy bags per day and would also arrange manpower in this regard.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Venkat Reddy said that he would once again sit on an indefinite fast if the government did not keep its promise.

He said that the farmers had been waiting

for a month for the government to purchase the produce.

The government, however, had been ignoring them after the Nagarjunasagar bypoll was concluded on April 16. He said that paddy brought to market yards was damaged due to unseasonal rainfall. As promised by the government, it should purchase every grain from the farmers, Venkat Reddy demanded.

Bandi thanks PM for arranging O2 supplies

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for undertaking an effort to supply oxygen to Telangana state through Indian Air Force aircraft for the first time in the country. He asked the people to support the Prime Minister in his efforts to save lives amid the Covid-19 pandemic. He said in a statement on Friday that the people are getting angry as the state

government was criticising the Prime Minister. He praised the Modi government's "impartial" provision of oxygen, medicines, testing kits and PPEs for people who were affected with Covid but the state ministers were levelling allegations against the Centre.

He said the Prime Minister was holding a review with officials to take measures to control the pandemic.

In another statement, former MLC N. Ramchander Rao said that it was unfortunate

that TRS leaders were criticising the Centre for the pricing of vaccination. He said the Centre made it very clear that all those aged above 45 years will be vaccinated for and those above 18 years would be vaccinated from May 1.

He alleged that the state government was trying to cover up its own failures and blaming the Centre. The former MLC said that state government bore the responsibility for the shortage of medical personnel and infrastructure.

Notified polls were never put off: CEO

From Page 1

The SEC is said to have briefed the Governor about various precautions taken by the commission including making social distancing and mask mandatory for voters on polling day. He referred to the Panchayat Raj Act necessitating the SEC to take concurrence of

the state government on conducting polls. He explained that the campaign in municipal polls was very localised.

When contacted, Partha Sarathi said he was constantly monitoring with collectors and top police officials on whether or not the candidates were following Covid regulations.

There are no public meetings, he said, adding that the campaign would end three days before polls instead of the regular 48 hours.

"Elections are held in West Bengal also with all precautions and there are no precedents of elections being postponed after notification was issued," he added.

Mallu: Create action plan to control Covid

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

Former Congress MP Mallu Ravi on Friday asked the state government to make a comprehensive action plan to curtail the spread of Covid-19. He asked the government to constitute a committee comprising IAS and IPS officers to help citizens as well as set up a toll-free number.

Ravi said that the government should form health committees especially in the Hyderabad police limits with a comprehensive action plan.

Covid19 patients have been living in panic since they were deprived of ventilators, oxygen cylinders and hospital beds.

The Congress said that IAS, IPS and health officials at the district level should coordinate and provide medicines, oxygen cylinders and ventilators during an emergency. He also demanded postponement of the April 30 civic polls.

Earlier on the day, AICC secretary and former MLA S.A. Sampath Kumar performed a maha puja at

the Bhagyalakshmi temple at Charminar for the quick recovery of party leader Rahul Gandhi and former prime minister Manmohan Singh, who are down with Covid-19. He challenged ministers K.T. Rama Rao and Etala Rajendar on their "fake figures and hidden facts" regarding Covid19 pandemic situation. He also questioned BJP state president Bandi Sanjay on the Central government's negligence and failure in supplying Covid-19 related equipment.

HC hits out at Centre on vaccine doses

FROM PAGE 1

Advising the government that it should be candid enough, the court said that the state might be looking at things in terms of revenues and expenses. But when the life of the citizens is in danger, it should be given utmost importance.

The bench was dealing with the batch of petitions related to Covid management.

The court also criticised the Union government's strict controls vis-a-vis allocation of medicines and oxygen to states.

"You (Union government) take over even the vaccines and medicines manufactured in the state. You don't give to the state what they require and dole them out to other states. Where are the citizens of the Telangana state to go when there is a demand and necessity," observed CJ Kohli.

"In the last 10 days, only 21,500 remdesivir vials were distributed to Telangana, whereas the demand is very high. We need an answer from the central government," the CJ observed and directed assistant solicitor general Namavarapu Rajeshwara Rao, representing the Centre, to come with details immediately.

But, post lunch session, additional solicitor general Surya Karan Reddy came in and requested a day's time to submit the details.

The assistant solicitor general complained against the Telangana state government, saying that it was not attentive enough in appointing a nodal officer as suggested by the Centre to co-ordinate. The court asked the state why such a delay and advised it to make the appointment in a day's time.

Finding fault with the state government for its "all is well" type of contentions and sub-

missions and stating the situation is under control, the court said "It was a dismal performance by the state, where the people are afraid to go to hospitals, and even if they go, beds are not be available and RT-PCR test reports are being demanded for entry to the hospitals.

"In which ivory tower we are living? Go to the ground level, where the Below Poverty Line and middle class people are suffering to get admission to hospitals and patients dying at the hospitals' doors and hospitals could not admit patients. A major concern is also the non-availability of medicines in government hospitals. Even I came across one such issue, one person accessed me for medicine (remdesivir and another life-saving drug), which is not available in hospitals. Even I couldn't help them," Chief Justice Kohli observed.

The CJ also observed that the figures of the government about the fatality rate due to Covid were fudged. "You are saying only 198 deaths in last 20 days, that too in Hyderabad. It would be (much more). Nobody is there at crematorium to say how many bodies are getting cremated.

We are getting reports that bodies were being burnt by putting all together in one go due to scarcity of wood. You (bureaucrats) are sitting somewhere and saying that 'no such situation is there'. Why don't you go and figure out as to how many bodies are burnt or buried in the crematoriums," CJ Kohli asked.

The court also pointed to the flaws in submissions related to RT-PCR tests. The state government has said it was conducting 30,000 to 40,000 tests in a day, whereas reports say only 3.57 lakh tests were conducted in the last 21 days. But

Minister KTR tests positive before polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

IT and industries minister K.T. Rama Rao, the TRS working president, has tested positive for Covid-19 just ahead of the elections to urban local bodies on April 30. Rama Rao posted on Twitter: "I have tested Covid positive with mild symptoms. Currently isolated at home. Those who have met me in the last few days, kindly follow the Covid protocol, get tested and take care."

Incidentally, Rama Rao accompanied his father and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao to Yashoda Hospital on Wednesday. Also with the CM was his nephew, Rajya Sabha member J. Santosh

Kumar to the hospital who tested positive on Thursday. Three members of the CM's family including the CM testing positive within a span of four days sent shockwaves among the TRS leaders and cadre.

Ministers, party MLAs, MLCs, MPs and other leaders took to Twitter wishing and praying for the speedy recovery of the CM, Rama Rao and Santosh. Party leaders and cadre performed special pujas at all the major temples for their speedy recovery.

Sources said Rama Rao, MLC K. Kavitha and Santosh, who stayed at the farmhouse where the CM is under home isolation since April 19, returned to their homes after Rama Rao and Santosh tested positive.

BUYER EXECUTED
A GIFT DEED TO
ANOTHER MAN

FROM PAGE 1

The complainant alleged that the photograph of Sirisha is different from the photo in the voter ID and there were a lot of variations in the signatures of the purchaser. It is a clear case of impersonation as the original Sirisha did not come to India, he claimed.

The phone number of Sirisha shown in the registration fee challan belongs to a document writer, he alleged.

Making matter more serious, the owner of Plot 1278, Road 63A of Jubilee Hills, which was shown as Sirisha's address in the voter ID card, lodged a complaint with the police stating that he had owned the place for more than 25 years and no one named Sirisha had ever resided there. Within days of registering the property in her name, the so called Sirisha executed a gift deed in the name of a person called Sirihari who the complainant alleged was a 'benami'. Society president Ravindranath demanded that it should be probed if both were eligible to conclude a gift deed as per the income-tax laws.

MAHA BORDER
MAY HAVE HIT
NIZAMABAD

FROM PAGE 1

There is no supervision from authorities to trace the movement of positive cases. Mild to severe symptoms and primary, secondary contacts have also thronged testing centres for Covid-19 tests. It is believed that the alarming Covid-19 situation in neighbouring Maharashtra state has shown impact on Nizamabad district.

Meanwhile, the officials did not declare the Covid-19 deaths at the district level. Only local information shared on social media and print/electronic media showed the deaths of Covid-19. Shockingly, deaths of political leaders, employees and others created sensation among the people during the pandemic. In Kamareddy district, an average daily 200 Covid-19 positive cases reported for the last one week.

6,206 new Covid-19 cases, 29 die

2.11 LAKH ABOVE 45 YEARS VACCINATED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

The state government administered a total of 2,11,244 doses of Covid-19 vaccine to health-care workers, frontline workers and individuals aged 45 years and above on Thursday, as per the health department tally.

Of these, 1,86,457 received the first dose while the

remaining received the second dose. So far 31,59,780 persons have received their first dose of the Covid vaccine in the state. Another 4,42,954 individuals have received their second dose.

On Thursday, 1,89,358 persons aged 45 years and above were vaccinated at government facilities, whereas in private hospitals 15,866 persons got their shots.

The GHMC area was followed by Medchal-Malkajgiri district with 502 cases and Nizamabad 406. As of 8 pm on Thursday, the active cases stood at 52,726.

A total of 1,05,602 samples

were collected for testing on Thursday, and reports pertaining to 5,531 were awaited. Of the samples, 49.9 per cent belonged to primary contacts and 12.1 per cent to secondary contacts of infected persons.

Power utilities affected by Corona

KDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 23

The Coronavirus pandemic has badly attacked staff at the power utilities in the state. Nearly 700 employees working in TS Transco, TS Genco, the northern and southern distribution companies (TSSPDCL and TSNPDCL) have tested positive for Covid so far, as per official statistics.

Data show that 113 employees working in TS Genco, 30 in TS Transco, 328 in TSSPDCL and 306 in TSNPDCL have contracted the Coronavirus from April 1 to 22. However, employee unions in the power utilities claim that over 1,200 employees were infected in the Covid second wave. They say the majority of the

employees who were infected included engineers and artisans involved in maintenance and power restoration works. Singareni Collieries is also witnessing increasing Coronavirus cases among its employees. Nearly 1,000 cases were reported so far, 148 on Wednesday alone.

Nearly 28,000 regular employees, 22,000 artisans and another 5,000 contract/outsourcing employees totalling nearly 55,000 staff working in power utilities in the state. Staff alleged that the management did not take any steps to set up their own hospital to treat staff members as was done by the APSRTC. The only medical facility available to power staff is a small dispensary running from Vidyut Soudha premises, the headquarters of

power utilities. Officials claimed that required measures were taken to ensure that power distribution and generation are not affected by using the available workforce effectively.

D. Prabhakar Rao, TS Transco and Genco chairman and managing director, told *Deccan Chronicle*, "The power staff work round the clock in shifts to ensure uninterrupted power supply to hospitals, laboratories, residential, commercial and all other sectors. They have to travel and attend duties at ground-level to resolve power supply issues. They face the risk of contracting virus while performing duties."

He said that the corporation had sought vaccination for the power staff in the first

phase. "But it was not done," he said. Instructions were issued to power staff to undergo vaccination at hospitals of their convenience.

The increasing cases has created panic among staff and their family members. Members of the Telangana Electricity Engineers Association met Prabhakar Rao on Friday and submitted a representation seeking certain preventive measures to minimise Covid cases in power utilities.

Association general secretary N. Sivaji said, "More than 100 Coronavirus cases were registered throughout TS Genco. These employees are facing problems due to non-availability of oxygen, ventilator beds facility in the hospitals even at Hyderabad."

OTHER STORIES

POLITICIANS STAY INDOOR AMIDST COVID-19 FEAR

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, APRIL 23

Many political leaders have remained indoors with the increased incidents of political leaders got tested positive for Covid-19 for the last few days.

The political leaders who neglected the Covid-19 pandemic in the first wave are now taking serious note of it. Many political leaders have been vaccinated.

Political leaders have stopped meeting people unlike in the past and wearing masks and maintain physical distance at mass gatherings.

Jogu Ramanna was seen any time wearing mask who was busy in campaigning in the villages for the elections to be held for the Adilabad rural ZPTC seat.

Same is the case with BJP and Congress leaders who were campaigning for the same elections to be held.

Two days ago, the birthday of a senior political leaders of Congress party was celebrated with covid norms by keeping sanitiser and wearing masks and not taking hands on the occasion.

THREE FROM FAMILY DROWN IN MANAIR RIVER

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, APRIL 23

Out of the eight members who went for swimming in Manair river, three were drowned in the water here in Neerukulla village of Sultanabad mandal in Peddapalli district on Friday.

According to the police, the deceased were identified as Jogula Manoj, Jogula Ashish and Penta Rahul. Eight people belonging to a family attended a function in Itharajpally.

After the function they ventured into the river for swimming in view of the summer season. Among eight three members were girls. When they are playing in the water, Ashish, a nine years old boy who went deep washed away in the water and drowned.

The other four boys tried to rescue Ashish, but they too were washed away with the increase in the water level in the river. The girls who were on the shore shouted for help. Reacting immediately, the locals managed to save two but Manoj and Rahul, along with Ashish, who were washed away with heavy flow of water were dead. Ashish and Manoj belonged to Itharajpally while Rahul belonged to Vemulawada.

The police said that upon receiving the information from the locals, they reached the spot and with the help of expert swimmers carried out rescue operations and excavated three dead bodies of Ashish, Manoj and Rahul and sent the dead bodies for post-mortem.

The police recalled that in the past, two children who died ventured into the water at the same spot. In view of that they installed a danger sign board with indications.

Delay in tests, results spreading Covid faster

Many asymptomatic people are unknowingly transmitting the virus

PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, APRIL 23

Many people are hesitant to come to the PHCs for Covid tests in view of the soaring temperatures. Even for those who come in, their patience is being tested with the delay in the tests. Also, a shortage of rapid test kits is felt at various places.

These are leading to an increase in the number of Covid positive cases and faster spread of the virus in the old Adilabad district. Several people with symptoms complained about the huge delay in tests at PHCs and in giving the results.

The medical staff is spending considerable time collecting names from the people who visit the test centres and this also delays the process. Many elderly persons are going back home without getting tested, unable to bear with the strain and weather conditions for long. There are snags in conducting the RTPCR tests at RIMS, Adilabad.

In some places, the medical staff is asking the people to wait till as many as 50 people gather, and then would collect samples.

There are also allegations that some medical staff are asking for bribe to give the test result immediately, at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS).

Many asymptomatic people are unknowingly transmitting the Covid virus to others.

People are freely moving and mingling without taking Covid precautions on assumption they were not affected by the pandemic.

Many who are already affected by the virus but did not get test results yet as positive are carelessly moving around among the public.

Some political leaders have criticised alleged negligence on part of the medical staff in conducting the tests and the delay in giving the results.

It is also noted that there is no proper supervision of the medical staff involved in the medical tests at PHCs and urban health centers. Meanwhile, adding to the overall confusion, the health department has stopped issuing the daily bulletin on the number of positive cases and deaths.

● People are freely moving and mingling without taking precautions on assumption they were not affected by the pandemic. Many who are already affected by the virus but did not get test results yet as positive are carelessly moving around.



Health minister, Etala Rajendar accompanied with the BC welfare minister, Gangula Kamalakara inaugurates the newly installed Oxygen generator machine at the premises of government main hospital in Karimnagar on Friday.

99% virus present in air: Etala

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, APRIL 23

In the present situation, any person who is suffering either from cold or cough or mild fever, if tested will be tested positive to Coronavirus, as 99.9 per cent of the virus is present in the air. People should go for testing and must undergo treatment if it results positive without neglecting it, suggested the health minister, Etala Rajendar here on Friday.

speaking to the media-persons in a press meet after inaugurating the Oxygen generator machine and RT-PCR lab established at the government main hospital along with the BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakara at the hospital premises, Rajendar said that all necessary steps are taken for providing better medical treatment for the Covid-19 patients at government main hospital present in the district headquarters.

An Oxygen tank with capacity of 20 K.L. Liquid was established at the government main hospital. By filling this oxygen tank once, can be used for seven days without any problems to the patients who are undergoing treatment in the hospital. An oxygen generator machine was also established to overcome the problem of oxygen deficiency in future which can generate about 6 lakh litres of oxygen per day, he informed.

A RT-PCR lab is also established at the hospital premises in which around 400 tests can be done in a day. Around 1,000 corona tests can be done if one automatic machine is attached to the newly established RT-PCR machine, he added.

Rajendar stressed that there is a need to increase the percentage of RT-PCR testing saying that the testing with rapid kits sometimes are not giving accurate results even though the persons are being infected with the Coronavirus.

There is a scope of conducting RT-PCR tests free of cost to the people of Karimnagar district without depending on the private labs.

Apart from that there is adequate quantities of Oxygen, Remdesivir injections, ventilators and beds were present in the government main for

BJP SEEKS CORONAVIRUS TREATMENT IN AAROgyASRI

Nizamabad: BJP senior leader and Bodhan Assembly constituency in-charge Medapati Prakash Reddy said that the state government should concentrate on the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. He said that Nizamabad district, especially in Bodhan, which

● MINISTER SAID there is adequate quantities of Oxygen, Remdesivir injections, ventilators and beds were present in the government main for rendering services for the Covid-19 patients

rendering services for the Covid-19 patients, he said.

With the initiation taken by the Chief Minister, K. Chandrasekhar Rao and IT Minister, K.T. Rama Rao to overcome the shortage of Oxygen in future by hiring two special Army fighter planes four tankers with a capacity of 80 tonnes of oxygen were being imported.

As some complaints are received about the shortage of oxygen by the some private hospitals, necessary steps are being taken for providing them sufficient quantities of oxygen along with injections required, he assured.

Pointing out about increase in the number of cases in Jagtial district, minister Etala Rajendar said that the positive cases are increasing day-by-day in the neighbouring state Maharashtra.

As some bus services will be running from Maharashtra to Jagtial district, more number of positive cases are registered in Jagtial too. People should follow self preventive methods for preventing the second wave of Coronavirus and must support the government which is striving hard for the well being of people, he appealed.

Leaders intensify campaign as few days left for GWMC polls

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, APRIL 23

The campaign for the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) elections began on Friday.

With just five days left until the deadline for the campaign to end, parties are strategically chalking out their plans.

The city is abuzz with leaders from all parties who arrived to take part in the campaign.

The TRS party is focussing on its development and welfare activities as part of the campaign. Some of the senior leaders are scheduled to visit the city in the next two days.

Minister Errabelli Dayakar Rao and Satyavathi Rathod are inspecting the campaign.

They are asking people not to believe in the BJP and the Congress, which have got no credibility. It was the TRS that got significant development to Warangal city.

Meanwhile, the Congress party is gearing up to expose the failures of the ruling TRS party. Senior leaders like MLC Jeevan Reddy, MLA D. Sridhar Babu are going to campaign for their party candidates.

The BJP, which is on song after giving jolts to the TRS in Dubbaka and GHMC elections is looking to repeat the feat again.

The election in charge Jitender Reddy has been camping in the city and is overseeing the party activities. Their leaders Mruthyunjanam and Banda Karthika Reddy are taking part in the campaigning. State president Bandi Sanjay is also going to campaign in the city soon.

For a total of 66 divisions, TRS and BJP are contesting all the seats, while Congress is contesting 65 seats, CPI, CPM 16, TDP 13 other parties 39 and independents 238 seats. A total of 506 candidates stood in the final ring.

Among those who withdrew the nominations were 111 from the BJP, 68 from the Congress, 299 from the TRS, two from the TDP, two from the Left and nine from other parties, while 109 were independents.

● THE BJP, which is on song after giving jolts to the TRS in Dubbaka and GHMC elections is looking to repeat the feat again.



Minister Satyavathi Rathod interacts with an elderly woman as part of the campaign at Moglicheria, on Friday.

Errabelli: Choose TRS for development

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, APRIL 23

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, there is no chance for the candidates to go for the door-to-door campaign, said Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao but appealed to the public to elect the TRS to power once again in GWMC elections.

Addressing media at Hanamkonda on Friday, Errabelli reminded that the TRS government has stood by the citizens during the coronavirus pandemic and during the catastrophic floods.

"The central government has done nothing for the people of Warangal. We are taking up development activities in a way that no state government has done in the past. BJP and Congress are spreading bogus propaganda through social media. People should not believe false propaganda. We must have faith in Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao and Minister of Municipal Administration and Urban Development of Telangana, k.t. Rama Rao who kept their word and brought good progress to the city," he stated.

The minister urged the citizens not to consider the BJP candidates and the party leadership. He criticised the central government is discriminating against the state of Telangana.

Party erstwhile Warangal district in-charge Gyadhari Bala Mallu, MLC Pochampally Srinivas Reddy, GHMC former mayor Bonthu Rammohan, former corporator Dasyam Vijay Bhaskar were present among others.



Errabelli Dayakar Rao

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Gang held for black marketing remdesivir vials

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, APRIL 23

The taskforce police officials nabbed the gang of four who were selling the Remdesivir injections for high price keeping in view of its demand for Covid-19 patients here in Karimnagar district on Friday.

According to the police the accused four who were identified as Dasari Suresh, resident of Kisan nagar, Balagani Satyanarayana, resident of Mukarampura colony and Kothakonda Venkata Sailu resident of Katta Rampur of Karimnagar city along with Bommakanti Suresh, resident of Warangal district formed a gang and started looting innocent people who are suffering from Covid-19 by selling Remdesivir injections for high price.

The price of the injection in the market was ₹5,000 but sensing the demand of the injection in the market, the gang of four started selling it for ₹20,000 to ₹25,000 to

Covid-19 patients.

Receiving the information by the confidential sources, the Commissioner of Police, V.B. Kamalasan Reddy ordered the task force police officials to investigate and nab the persons indulged in illegal business.

The task force police officials B. Mallaiiah, K. Srujan Reddy, Karunakar, Narasiah and Karimnagar three town inspector, Vignan Rao along with others laid a trap and nabbed the gang of four in Kisan nagar and seized 18 Remdesivir injections, along with ₹40,000 from their possession.

Meanwhile, the top cop, Kamalasan Reddy said that necessary steps are taken for preventing such kind of incidents by deploying special teams who are trying to loot the innocent people who are suffering from Covid-19. Stringent actions would be taken as per law against the persons who try to sell the Remdesivir injections for a high price to Covid-19 patients, he warned

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SHORT TAKES

**‘UK VARIANT
LIKELY BEHIND
SURGE IN DELHI’**

New Delhi, April 23: The current wave of the Coronavirus pandemic in Delhi could have been fuelled by the UK variant as its prevalence in genomes sequenced nearly doubled from the second to the last week of March, Sujeet Singh, director of the National Centre for Disease Control, said on Friday.

Speaking at a webinar, ‘Genome Sequencing of SARS-CoV-19’, Singh said the UK variant of Coronavirus is also dominant in Punjab.

In Delhi, there are primarily two types of variants — B.1.617 and the UK strain — found in the genome sequenced samples, the NCDC director said.

The B.1.617 variant of Coronavirus is also known as the double mutant strain.

The UK variant was found in 28 per cent of samples in the second week of March.

In the last week of the month, 50 per cent of samples had this variant, Singh said.

“If we try to co-relate, the surge we are observing in Delhi, it directly co-relates to the type of variant which we are observing,” he said.

**MAMATA: CENTRE
DIVERTING OXYGEN
FROM BENGAL**

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, APRIL 23**

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday accused the Centre of diverting tonnes of oxygen from the state to others, ruled by the BJP, like Uttar Pradesh after she skipped Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s meeting with other states’ CMs on Covid-19.

At Durgapur in Burdwan West the Trinamul Congress supremo alleged, “Oxygen and medicines are unavailable here in the market. The oxygen, which was being supplied by SAIL to our state, is now being diverted to UP. Thus, the chain in Bengal is taken away to create scarcity of oxygen here. We have fixed the total oxygen, which is consumed at the industrial units, for its use in medical purpose. That means we have taken over the industrial oxygen for health purpose.”

She said, “As a result, we were able to arrange 5000 cylinders yesterday. Altogether we have 20,000 cylinders in stock now. I have also spoken to another for providing us the oxygen supply because the central government wants to kill Bengal every possible way. Where would I get my share of oxygen from since SAIL has been directed to supply it to UP? I also need to look into it. How can one state’s share be given to another? If there is a need, no discrimination should be made. I also have no objection in that case.”

The Chief Minister’s grievance assumes significance as the state government stated, “Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Department, Govt. of India recently on 21st April, 2021 allotted 200 MT of oxygen from different plants located in West Bengal to outside the state. As per the current patient load and the rising trend of the infections, it is expected that the consumption level in West Bengal will radically rise to roughly 450 MT per day in the next couple of weeks.”

Delhi: 25 Ganga Ram hosp. patients die as need for oxygen gets frantic

More than 500 patients, including 150 on high flow oxygen support admitted in the hosp

New Delhi, April 23: Twenty-five of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital’s “sickest” Covid-19 patients died in 24 hours and the lives of 60 more hung in precarious balance, officials said on Friday, as the scramble for oxygen got increasingly frantic in hospitals across the national capital.

Sources said low pressure oxygen could be the likely cause of the deaths in Ganga Ram, one of the city’s biggest and most high-profile hospitals where healthcare staff was reduced to manually ventilating patients in its ICU and emergency department.

The hospital announced the deaths shortly after 8.00 am.

After the unprecedented crisis of the morning, an oxygen tanker did reach Ganga Ram in Central Delhi at 9.20 am but it was enough to last up to about five hours depending on consumption, an official at Ganga Ram said.

“It is wrong to say the deaths occurred due to oxygen shortage. We provided oxygen to patients manually when the pressure dipped in the ICU,” SGRH chairman Dr D.S. Rana said.

More than 500 Coronavirus patients, including around 150 on high flow oxygen support, are admitted in his hospital.

“Ventilators and BIPAP machines are not working effectively. Lives of another 60 ‘sickest’ patients are at risk. Major crisis likely,” a senior official at the hospital said.

The oxygen emergency was mirrored at the Max Hospitals as well.

Though no deaths were reported, Max Healthcare sent out an SOS on Twitter at 7.43 am, saying that Max Smart and Max Hospital Saket had less than an hour of oxygen left for about 700 patients admitted.

Indian Spinal Injuries Centre in Vasant Kunj also posted on Twitter at 4.20 pm that it was left with only one hour of oxygen and asked for help at the earliest.

A senior official of the Batra Hospital said the oxygen situation at their facility is extremely poor. Sources at the Holy Family hospital also said that they had received emergency oxygen supply from the Delhi government but the “stock can last for six hours”.

Meanwhile, Dwarka-located Aakash Healthcare managed to refill their cylinders through small vendors across the city.

St Stephen’s hospital in Tis Hazari also said they had received a oxygen tanker in the morning.

Faced with a staff shortage and resource crunch, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences also discontinued contact tracing of exposed healthcare workers and quarantine of asymptomatic contacts.

Only symptomatic healthcare workers (HCWs) will be tested and only those testing positive will be isolated and managed as per the clinical condition. — PTI



Mass cremation of Covid-19 victims at Old Seemapuri Crematorium as Coronavirus cases surge across the country, in New Delhi on Friday. — PTI

Maha: 14 Covid patients dead in hospital ICU fire

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 23**

At least 14 Covid patients died in a major fire at a Covid centre at Virar in Palghar district in the wee hours of Friday. The fire broke out at around 3am in the ICU on the second floor of the four-storeyed Vijay Vallabh Hospital. There were 17 Covid patients in the ICU. The surviving patients under critical care have been moved to nearby hospitals in Mumbai.

Maharashtra home minister Dilip Walse Patil ordered a thorough probe by the Maharashtra Director General of police (DGP). The Maharashtra government also announced ₹5 lakh compensation to the legal heirs of the deceased. The government will also provide ₹1 lakh to persons

who have serious injuries.

According to the sources, the cause of fire seems to be a short circuit in an air conditioning unit of the hospital.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray expressed grief over the incident. He directed the administration to make arrangements for the treatments of those people who were taking the treatments at Vijay Vallabh Hospital.

“The cause of the fire should be investigated properly. The administration has been instructed to see whether the appropriate fire safety measures were taken in the hospital and conduct a proper inquiry in it,” Thackeray said.

Surendra Singh Raj of Satyamev Jayate, an NGO based in Vasai and Virar, alleged that most of hospitals including this hospi-

tal in Vasai and Virar did not have fire safety equipment, fire alarm and smoke detectors.

Relatives of the victims reached the hospital soon after they got to know of the incident and demanded that stringent action be taken against those responsible for the tragedy.

TV visuals showed the smoke-filled ICU in a disarray after the blaze, with the ceiling falling off in some places, beds and other furniture strewn around and kin of the deceased wailing outside the hospital.

In his tweet in Marathi, the state home minister said, “A fire broke out in the intensive care unit of Vijay Vallabh Hospital in Virar, killing 13 patients. The incident is very unfortunate and painful. A heartfelt tribute to the victims of the accident!”

DCGI nod for hepatitis drug for virus

● **THE COMPANY** has received restricted emergency use approval from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for the use of ‘Virafin’, PegIFN in treating moderate Covid-19 infection in adults, Zydus Cadila said in a regulatory filing.

Covid-19.

The company has received restricted emergency use approval from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for the use of ‘Virafin’, PegIFN in treating moderate Covid-19 infection in adults, Zydus Cadila said

in a regulatory filing. PegIFN has very well-established safety with multiple doses in chronic Hepatitis B and C patients for many years.

A single dose subcutaneous regimen of the antiviral Virafin will make the treatment more

convenient for the patients, the filing said.

When administered early on during Covid, Virafin will help patients recover faster and avoid much of the complications.

It will be available on the prescription of a medical specialist for use in a hospital/institutional setup, Zydus Cadila said.

“The fact that we are able to offer a therapy which significantly reduces the viral load

when given early on can help in better disease management. It comes at a much-needed time for patients and we will continue to provide them access to critical therapies in this battle against Covid-19,” Cadila Healthcare MD Sharvil Patel said.

Shares of Cadila Healthcare, the listed entity of the Zydus Group, closed at ₹571.20 per scrip on BSE, up 3.43 per cent from its previous close.

— PTI

RESCUE | OPS

IAF has swung into action to airlift oxygen containers, medicines

AFMS to import oxygen generation plants

**PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 23**

Amid reports of shortage of oxygen in the hospitals during the second wave of Covid-19 across the country, Armed Forces Medical Services has decided to import oxygen generation plants and containers from Germany to cater to the shortage.

Some 23 mobile oxygen generation plants are being airlifted from Germany. These will be deployed in military hospitals catering to the Covid patients. These oxygen generating plants are expected to reach within a week.

Each plant has a capacity to produce 40 litres of oxygen per minute and 2,400 litres an hour. At this rate it can cater to 20-25 patients round the clock. The advantage of these plants is that they are easily portable.

Earlier this week, Defence

minister Rajnath Singh had directed the Armed Forces and other stakeholders to go ahead with procurement of critical medical requirements under emergency powers of procurement. As per the orders issued on Friday, Director General Medical Services (Army/Navy/Air Force) has been sanctioned emergency procurement powers of ₹5 crore, Maj Gen rank medical officers ₹3 crore and Brigadier rank medical officers ₹2 crore.

This is a pro-active measure taken by defence ministry to enable AFMS to provide medical services to the personnel of the Armed Forces as well as aid the civil administration. Armed forces hospitals are also seeing a rush due to the second wave of Covid-19.

In Delhi, Indian Army’s Base Hospital Delhi Cantt has been converted into an exclusive Covid facility for

● **IN A significant decision** defence ministry is giving extension to Short Service Commissioned Doctors in AFMS till December 31, 2021 to tide over current surge in medical services.

● **IT IS to be noted that IAF** is only transporting empty oxygen tankers to filling stations in other states to save time on one way.

Indian Armed Forces and veterans. Its capacity is being increased from 250 to 1,000 beds. All OPDs has been shifted and function at Army Hospital Research and Referral.

Also, in a significant decision defence ministry is giving extension to Short Service Commissioned Doctors in AFMS till December 31, 2021 to tide over current surge in medical services. This will augment strength of AFMS by

238 more doctors.

Indian Air Force (IAF) has also swung into action by carrying out sorties from various parts of the country to airlift oxygen containers, cylinders, essential medicines, equipment required for setting up and sustaining Covid hospitals and facilities in the fight against fresh surge in Covid-19 cases.

The IAF Transport aircraft and helicopters have been pressed into service.

These include transport aircraft C-17, C-130J, IL-76, An-32 and Avro. Chinook and Mi-17 helicopters are on standby. Tasks undertaken include airlift of doctors and nursing staff from Kochi, Mumbai, Vizag and Bangalore for various hospitals at Delhi.

The C-17 and IL-76 aircraft of IAF have started airlifting big empty oxygen tankers from their place of use to the filling stations across the country to speed

up the distribution of much needed oxygen. It is to be noted that Air Force is only transporting empty oxygen tankers to filling stations in other states to save time on one way and they come back through road or railways. This is because its not safe to fly tankers filled with liquid oxygen.

In addition to this, the C-17 and IL-76 have transported large quantity of load comprising bio safety cabinets and autoclave machines for setting up of an additional Covid test facility at Leh. The IAF transport and helicopter assets are on standby to be deployed at short notice.

Last year, in the initial days of COVID-19 outbreak, the IAF ran several sorties to deliver medicines, medical and other essential supplies required to combat the pandemic as well as brought back stranded Indian nationals from abroad.

**RABINDRA NATH
CHOUHDURY | DC
BHOPAL, APRIL 23**

Five Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment in the intensive care unit (ICU) of a private hospital in Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh died reportedly due to lack of oxygen, triggering a public outcry. The incident took place in a private Covid hospital at Ukhari in Jabalpur city on the intervening night of Thursday-Friday.

50 Covid-19 patients were admitted in the ICU of the hospital when the incident took place. According to the police, some relatives of the patients admitted to the Covid hospital rushed to the medical facility after learning about alleged disruption in oxygen supply in the ICU ward. They staged noisy protests at the hospital when they found that five

patients died due to reported lack of oxygen.

Police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, a senior district police officer told this newspaper unwilling to be quoted.

“We arranged oxygen-filled cylinders to supply oxygen to the patients admitted in the ICU, following instructions by Jabalpur district superintendent of police Sidharth Bahuguna”, the police officer said.

The measure saved the lives of other patients, he added. Meanwhile, Jabalpur district collector Kar-maveer Sharma ordered a probe into the incident. He constituted a 4-member team to probe the incident. The five deceased patients were Pramila Tiwari, Gautam Tiwari, Anand Sharma, Gautami Roy and Devendra Kuraria.

**NOT STOPPING HCs
FROM HEARING
COVID CASES: SC**

**PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 23**

Peeved over its criticism on taking suo motu cognizance of the worsening Covid situation and gaps in its management, the Supreme Court on Friday said that it did not stop the High Courts from hearing Covid related cases or thought of transferring them to itself.

Apparently displeased over its criticism, by a section of senior lawyers, based on the “perception”, that top court after taking suo motu cognizance of the prevailing “health emergency” will transfer to itself all the Covid related matters being heard by the HCs, a bench comprising Chief Justice Sharad A. Bobde, Justice L. Nageswara Rao and Justice S. Ravindra Bhat said, “You have imputed motives to us without reading the order.”

The hearing was adjourned to April 23, 2021, as Centre needed time to file its response to notice on the suo motu proceedings that was issued yesterday (April 22, 2021).

The court accepted senior lawyer Harish Salve’s request seeking to recuse from being amicus curiae to assist the court in the matter.

The court had on Thursday (April 22) appointed Salve as amicus curiae in the matter. The court had said that on Friday it will hear Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Salve only.

Pointing to Supreme Court Bar Association, President, Vikas Singh, Justice Rao said, “You have read the order. Is there any intention to transfer the case? Even before reading the order, there was criticism about something which was not there in order. This is how the institution is being destroyed.”

**KERALA: CPM
CALLS FOR STIR
ON JAB POLICY**

**GILVESTER
ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
APRIL 23**

The ruling CPM in Kerala has decided to organise protest against Centre’s new vaccine policy even as the state on Friday yet again recorded biggest single day spike with 28,477 cases. The total number of active cases in the state has gone up to 1.60 lakh.

At a press conference here, CPM acting secretary A. Vijayaraghavan said that his party has decided to hold demonstrations across the state on April 28. As part of the protest party workers will stand outside their homes holding placards against Centre’s vaccine policy which places huge financial burden on the states besides giving a free hand to the companies to charge at will.

At the prescribed rate of ₹400 per vaccine, the state would need a whopping ₹1,300 crore to provide free vaccine to the designated population. He said the new vaccine policy was a declaration of war against the people of the country. The CPM has appealed to party workers, sympathisers and fellow travellers to contribute liberally towards the Chief Minister’s Disaster Relief Fund (CMDRF).

Kerala records biggest single day rise

Meanwhile, 1,30,617 samples were tested across the state on Friday and the test positivity rate was recorded as 27.78 percent. The state reported 27 deaths taking the death toll due to Covid-19 to 5,055.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said restrictions amounting to lockdown would be enforced on Saturday and Sundays. All government, private and commercial establishments will remain closed on April 24 and 25. However, essential services will function as usual.

IN BRIEF

Navalny ends hunger strike

Moscow: Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny said on Friday that he was ending a 24-day hunger strike he launched to demand medical treatment behind bars, after allies said his life was in danger. The announcement came after Navalny's personal doctors said on Thursday that he had received treatment at a civilian hospital and urged him to put a stop to his protest. "Taking into account the progress and all the circumstances, I am beginning to end my hunger strike," Navalny said on Instagram.

130 migrants die in shipwreck

Cairo: More than 100 European-bound migrants are feared dead in a shipwreck off Libya, independent rescue groups said, in the latest loss of life as attempts to cross the Mediterranean increase during the warmer months. Humanitarian organisations have accused the Libyan coast guard and European authorities of failing to meet their responsibilities to save lives. A Libyan coast guard official said that they searched for the boat but could not find it with their limited resources.

Over 120 hurt in Jerusalem clash

Jerusalem: Over 100 Palestinians and 20 Israeli police were wounded in overnight clashes in annexed east Jerusalem, medics and police said on Friday, as tensions mount over a police ban on gatherings and videos of attacks on youths. The violence broke out outside one of the entrances to the walled Old City where far-right Jews had completed a march, during which participants harassed Palestinians and chanted "death to Arabs". There have been nightly disturbances in the area since the start of Ramadan on April 13 with Palestinians complaining that police were blocking access to the promenade around the walls, a popular gathering place for Palestinians after the end of the daytime Ramadan fast.

4 killed, 23 hurt in Dhaka fire

Dhaka: At least four people, including a woman, were killed and 23 others injured after a fire broke out at a chemical warehouse here in the Bangladeshi capital early on Friday, according to media reports. The fire started at the ground floor of the building in Old Dhaka's Armanitola area after 3 am, Mahfuz Riben, an official at the Fire Service and Civil Defence department, told the *Dhaka Tribune*. He said the ground floor stored a number of inflammable substances. The fire was brought under control by 6 am, as 20 fire tenders were rushed to the scene. Officials are yet to identify all the deceased, though it is said the building's security guard is among the dead, the newspaper reported.

MEXICAN PREZ PUSHES FOR AFFORESTATION

Kopoma (Mexico), April 23: Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has made a strong push for his oft-questioned tree-planting programme, trying to get the United States on board to fund a massive expansion of the programme into Central America as a way to stem migration.

López Obrador pitched his Planting Life programme, which aims to plant 1 billion fruit and timber trees, to US President Joe Biden at Thursday's climate change summit.

López Obrador claims the programme can help prevent farmers from leaving their land and migrating to the United States, though he also proposed that the US grant six-month work visas, and eventually citizenship, to those who participate in the programme. But environmentalists question whether planting big swaths of commercial species sometimes on land that held native forests is a good idea and opinions are mixed in Mexico on whether the programme is really working, or whether it can offset Mexico's other policy of encouraging the use of fossil fuels.

You, President Biden, can finance the Planting Life program in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, López Obrador said during Thursday's videoconference session of the summit.

Single vaccine dose can cut Covid rate 65%, says study

UK study says 1 jab of two-dose vaccine protects vulnerable, healthy people

London, April 23: A single dose of either the Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, currently being administered in the UK, cut the rate of coronavirus infections by around 65 per cent, according to a new UK study on Friday.

A combination of two studies by the University of Oxford and the Office of National Statistics (ONS), which are yet to be published, also found that a single jab of the two-dose vaccines protected older and more vulnerable people almost as well as younger and healthier individuals. The findings indicate a promising effect on hospitalisations and deaths from Covid-19 infections after vaccinations. But researchers caution that vaccinated people could still be re-infected and trigger an asymptomatic spread of the deadly virus, making the need for social distancing and face masks still crucial.

The researchers analysed Covid-19 test results from more than 350,000 people in the UK between December 2020 and April 2021 and found that 21 days after a first jab — the time it takes the immune system to mount a decent response — new Covid-19 infections dropped.

"Odds of new SARS-CoV-2 infection were reduced 65 per cent in those =21 days since first vaccination with no second dose versus unvaccinated individuals without evidence of prior infection," the study noted. "In those vaccinated, the largest reduction in odds was seen post second dose (70-77 per cent). There was no evidence that these benefits varied between Oxford/AstraZeneca and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines," it added.

The researchers, in the large community surveillance study, conclude that vaccination with a single dose of Oxford/AstraZeneca or Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, or two doses of Pfizer/BioNTech, significantly reduced new SARS-CoV-2 [Covid-19] infections.

The second study, in nearly 46,000 adults who had been vaccinated with one dose, found strong antibody responses — a sign that the vaccines are stimulating the body's defence system to protect against the virus — in all age groups. These antibody responses were "broadly sustained out to 10 weeks afterwards", the researchers said. "We don't yet know exactly how much of an antibody response, and for how long, is needed to protect people against getting Covid-19 in the long term — but over the next year, information from the survey should help us to answer these questions," said Professor Sarah Walker, chief investigator on the studies, from Oxford University.

Both studies are based on data from the Covid-19 Infection Survey, a partnership between the University of Oxford, the ONS and the government's Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC). The results will come as a boost for the UK's vaccination programme. — PTI



European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen (second right) speaks to German scientist, CMO and co-founder of BioNTech Ozlem Tureci (right), Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla (left), and Belgium's Prime Minister Alexander De Croo (second left), during an official visit to the Pfizer pharmaceutical company in Puurs, Belgium on Friday. — AFP

US defends limiting export of raw material for vaccine

Washington, April 23: Defending US' restrictions on the export of key raw materials for the manufacture of Covid-19 vaccine that threatens to slow India's vaccination drive, a senior State Department official has said the Biden administration's first obligation is to take care of the requirements of the American people.

When asked when the Biden administration would decide on India's request to lift a ban on the export of vaccine raw materials, State Department spokesperson Ned Price said:

"...the United States first and foremost is engaged in an ambitious and effective and, so far, successful effort to vaccinate the American people."

"That campaign is well underway, and we're doing that for a couple of reasons. Number one, we have a special responsibility to the American people. Number two, the American people, this country has been hit harder than any other country around the world more than 550,000 deaths, tens of millions of infections in this country alone," he said on Thursday.

It is not only in the US interest to see Americans vaccinated; but it is in the interests of the rest of the world to see Americans vaccinated, he said.

"The point the Secretary (of State Antony Blinken) has made repeatedly is that as long as the virus is spreading anywhere, it is a threat to people everywhere. So as long as the virus is spreading uncontrolled in this country, it can mutate and it can travel beyond our borders. That, in turn, poses a threat well beyond the US," Price said in responses to questions. — PTI

SINGAPORE

PASS HOLDERS, INDIAN VISITORS NOT ALLOWED

Singapore, April 23: All long-term pass holders and short-term visitors who have travelled to India within the last 14 days will not be allowed to enter or transit through Singapore from April 24, as the city state was on "heightened alert" against Covid-19, according to a media report.

The decision will also impact people who have prior approval to enter Singapore, said Education Minister Lawrence Wong, co-chair of the multi-ministerial task force handling the pandemic, said on Thursday.

In addition, people who have recently travelled to India and have not completed their 14-day stay-home notice (SHN) by 11.59pm on Thursday night will have to complete their additional seven-day SHN at a dedicated facility rather than their places of residence. This group will undergo three polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests for the virus. — PTI

UK begins Covid 'red list' travel ban

London, April 23: The red list Covid-19 travel restrictions came in force for India on Friday, which bans entry for travellers from the country and requires British and Irish nationals and long-term UK residents returning home to undergo a compulsory 10-day hotel quarantine.

The ban comes in as a new variant of the deadly virus, landed at Heathrow Airport in London from Delhi on Thursday evening. Earlier, Heathrow had confirmed that it turned down requests for at least eight additional flights that were seeking landing rights ahead of Friday's 4am cut-off to avoid long queues and crowds building up at the airport.

Families and students who were able to make it back in time must now self-isolate at their own homes or student accommodation registered on passenger locator forms and take follow up coronavirus tests for the National Health Service (NHS) to continue tracking their results. — PTI

UNITED KINGDOM

CANADA

ALL FLIGHTS FROM INDIA BANNED FOR FULL 30 DAYS

Toronto, April 23: Canada has said it would ban all flights from India and Pakistan for 30 days due to the growing wave of Covid cases in that region.

Transport Minister Omar Alghabra said the ban would start late Thursday, speaking hours after India reported a global record of more than 314,000 new infections in the previous 24 hours. — PTI

UNITED STATES AMERICANS ASKED TO NOT TRAVEL TO INDIA, 4 NATIONS

Washington, April 23: The US has advised its citizens to avoid travelling to India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Maldives due to the sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in the region.

In a series of travel advisories on Thursday, the authorities also urged Americans to reconsider travel to China and Nepal. — PTI

JAPAN

THIRD COVID-19 EMERGENCY IN TOKYO, OSAKA

Tokyo, April 23: Japan declared a third state of emergency for Tokyo and three western prefectures on Friday amid skepticism it will be enough to curb a rapid coronavirus resurgence ahead of the Olympics in July.

Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced the emergency for Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Hyogo from April 25 through May 11. Japan's third state of emergency since the pandemic began comes only a month after an earlier emergency ended in the Tokyo area. — PTI

Minority groups laud US report for tagging India

India is Country of Particular Concern, groups advise US

Washington, April 23: Several Indian-American Muslim, Sikh and Christian groups have applauded the US Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) for its latest report wherein it has recommended India be designated as a "country of particular concern (CPC)" for the alleged deterioration of religious freedom in the country.

In separate statements, these groups urged the US State Department to accept the recommendations of the USCIRF, a Congress-constituted quasi-judicial body. Its annual report on international religious freedom and recommendations are non-binding on the US government.

"Designating India as one of the world's worst violators of religious freedoms, while unfortunate, is expected and justified," said Rasheed Ahmed, executive director of Indian-American Muslim Council. "We hope the US Department of State will accept the USCIRF's recommendations and designate India as a CPC this year," he said.

The USCIRF, in its report, has said, "Designate India as a

● **INDIA HAS** in the past said the US body on international religious freedom has chosen to be guided only by its biases on a matter on which it has no locus standi.

'country of particular concern,' or CPC, for engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations, as defined by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)."

India has in the past said the US body on international religious freedom has chosen to be guided only by its biases on a matter on which it has no locus standi. The Federation of Indian-American Christian Organisations applauded the designation of India as a CPC by the USCIRF. "FIACONA wholeheartedly agrees with USCIRF in their decision to continue the designation of India as a CPC for the year 2021," a statement said. In a joint statement, three US-based Sikh organisations thanked the USCIRF for analysis of status of religious minorities in India. — PTI

Russian troops pull back from Ukraine

Moscow, April 23: Russian troops began pulling back to their permanent bases on Friday after a massive buildup that caused Ukrainian and Western concerns.

On Thursday, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu declared the sweeping maneuvers in Crimea and wide swaths of western Russia over, and ordered the military to pull the troops that took part in them back to their permanent bases by May 1. At the same time, he ordered their heavy weapons kept in western Russia for another massive military exercise called Zapad (West) 2021 later this year.

The weapons were to be stored at the Pogonovo firing range in the southwestern Voronezh region, 160 kilometers (100 miles) east of the border with Ukraine. The concentration of Russian troops amid increasing violations of a cease-fire in the conflict in eastern Ukraine raised concerns in the West, which urged the Kremlin to pull its forces back.

The US and NATO have said the buildup was the largest since 2014, when Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and threw its support behind separatists in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland of Donbas. Moscow has rejected Ukrainian and Western concerns about the troop buildup, arguing that it's free to deploy its forces anywhere on Russian territory. But the Kremlin also sternly warned Ukrainian authorities against trying to use force to retake control of the rebel east, saying it could intervene to protect civilians there. — AP

Brexit fishing water tension flares up

Paris, April 23: The French government called on Friday for a quick implementation of a post-Brexit accord on mutual access to fishing waters, after French fishermen blocked trucks trying to bring in catches from Britain overnight.

"We're acting within the spirit of European solidarity and cooperation with the UK, but the urgency demands an acceleration of our collective efforts," Europe Minister Clement Beaune and Maritime Minister Annick Girardin said in a statement.

More than a hundred fishermen launched the blockade late Thursday at Boulogne-sur-Mer, France's busiest fishing hub, to protest a "sham" deal on access in place since Britain left the European Union on January 1.

Despite a provisional trade accord, they say UK authorities have granted licences to only 22 of the 120 French boats seeking permission to fish between six and 12 nautical miles from the British coast. — AFP

SPACE | VOYAGE

Four astronauts to reach International Space Station after 23-hour ride in Dragon capsule

SpaceX launches 3rd crew with recycled rocket

Cape Canaveral (US), April 23: SpaceX launched four astronauts into orbit on Friday using a recycled rocket and capsule, the third crew flight in less than a year for Elon Musk's rapidly expanding company. The astronauts from the US, Japan and France should reach the International Space Station early Saturday morning, following a 23-hour ride in the same Dragon capsule used by SpaceX's debut crew last May. They'll spend six months at the orbiting lab.

It was the first time SpaceX reused a capsule and rocket to launch astro-

nauts for NASA, after years of proving the capability on station supply runs. The rocket was used last November on the company's second astronaut flight. Embracing the trend, spacecraft commander Shane Kimbrough and his crew weeks ago wrote their initials in the rocket's soot, hoping to start a tradition.

"If you have rapid and complete reusability, then that is the gateway to the heavens. That's what we're trying to get done, and the support of NASA makes a huge difference," Musk said after the launch.

Just a week ago, NASA awarded SpaceX a nearly

USD 3 billion contract to provide the lunar lander that will deliver astronauts to the surface of the moon — Musk's Starship, intended to be fully reusable to attain his ultimate prize of carrying astronauts to Mars and building a city there.

Flying in a recycled capsule on Friday provided a bit of déjà vu for NASA astronaut Megan McArthur. She launched in the same seat in the same capsule as her husband, Bob Behnken, did during SpaceX's first crew flight. This time, it was Behnken and their 7-year-old son waving goodbye. McArthur blew kisses

and offered virtual hugs. Also flying SpaceX on Friday: Japan's Akihiko Hoshide and France's Thomas Pesquet, the first European to launch in a commercial crew capsule.

It was a stunning scene: The launch plume glowed against the dark sky, reflecting the sunlight at high altitude. Despite the early hour, spectators lined surrounding roads to watch the Falcon take flight an hour before sunrise. Liftoff was delayed a day to take advantage of better weather along the East Coast in case of a launch abort and emergency splashdown. — AP



(From Left), European Space Agency astronaut Thomas Pesquet, NASA astronauts Megan McArthur and Shane Kimbrough, and Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency astronaut Akihiko Hoshide, wearing SpaceX spacesuits, as they prepare to depart the Neil A. Armstrong Operations and Checkout Building to board the SpaceX Crew Dragon spacecraft at NASA's Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on Friday. — NASA

DECCAN Chronicle

24 APRIL 2021

No time to lose, ramp up vaccine production now

The Supreme Court's reference to the various high courts hearing matters related to the supply of drugs and other medical essentials as "creating some confusion" and "diversion of resources" is a bit perplexing but its direction to the Union government to place before it a "national plan" on the way it proposes to face the challenge is welcome. How the government will be taking on the virus given the way it has been spreading the length and breadth of the county, choking and extinguishing lives and disrupting and decimating livelihoods is a question most right-thinking people in the country are asking now. The news of people dying for want of oxygen in a country which is priding itself as the pharma hub of the world is unacceptable; and police in a state obstructing trucks lifting oxygen cylinders for hospitals in another state signals the poor coordination at the national level in the face of a crisis that was long waiting to happen.

As of now, the facts on the ground are disturbing — we are facing a shortage of all the stuff that is needed to save lives — critical drugs, oxygen, hospital beds, intensive care units, ventilators and vaccine. India, which had reported the second largest number of cases in September-October last year, showed a remarkable improvement in the following months with the daily numbers coming to a few thousands. The numbers started spiralling only in March this year, giving the government time to plan for a situation should it go out of control.

Almost four months have passed since the Drugs Controller General of India approved two vaccines — Covishield and Covaxin — but the production has not increased by one dose even now

From the looks of it, the government has faltered on every count, except making fancy noises. It launched a vaccination programme, calling it the world's largest. It was true, because we were to vaccinate about 100 crore people. But none asked the question nor the government bothered to answer as to where the vaccine will come from to inoculate all these people. Almost four months have passed since the Drugs Controller General of India approved two vaccines — Covishield manufactured by Serum Institute of India and Covaxin, by the Bharat Biotech International for emergency use — but the production has not increased by one dose even now. It was only a couple of days ago that the company was given ₹3,000 crores which it would use to expand production which will take roughly three months. The same is the case with the other manufacturer, who was granted ₹1,500 crores.

It is in this background that we should view the government's announcement of opening up vaccination for all those who are aged above 18. This is a welcome step but the government must also ensure that we have enough vaccine to administer to the newly eligible group of people. The government must, as the Supreme Court suggested, draw up a time-bound plan to ramp up production of vaccine, drugs and oxygen and distribute them. It has this week asked two public sector companies to manufacture Covaxin; it must follow up on this decision, use the compulsory licensing route, if necessary, and rope in other manufacturers so that we have the drugs, vaccines and other essentials to save lives. There is no time to waste.

Resetting the green agenda

A silver lining has been spotted amid the gathering clouds of global warming. Inspired by a champion in Joe Biden's United States rejoining the fight against climate change, Japan, Canada, Britain and EU, have promised to cut emissions by half before the end of the 2020s. China and Russia kept aside their differences with the US to pledge cooperation in cutting back on coal and petroleum emissions and India pointed to its agreement with the US to help with the effort at reining in the carbon footprint. Biden's emphasis on the "moment of peril" representing an economic opportunity seemed to have struck a chord.

The US resolve to aim at a 52% cut below 2005 levels is extremely ambitious and is certain to face big political hurdles in the form of the Republicans who deny the science behind climate change

The US resolve to aim at a 52 per cent cut below 2005 levels is extremely ambitious and is certain to face big political hurdles in the form of the Republicans who deny the science behind climate change and are likely to turn the clock back if they were to return to power in 2024. There will be a steep economic cost in committing to the cuts which envisage converting all vehicles to electric, using natural gas in coal-fired power plants and afforestation, besides developing cutting edge technologies in carbon capture. The industrialised nations have a historic responsibility to set things right and they seem more prepared to face it now.

Handling the ground realities may be tougher even as the US, historically the largest emitter, and China, currently the biggest polluter, get down to the task that may require enormous funding and new paradigms in energy use from solar and wind resources. In per person terms, India may be expending only one seventh of an American's energy use but it has a role to play in balancing its economic needs. The Coronavirus pandemic may have enforced cuts but those are bound to lift as the world economy reboots. The only metric science advocates to save the planet is zero emissions and it is moot whether man can achieve that when he is so enamoured of consumption.

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Subhani



The God business is good business all across India

Mohan Guruswamy

There has been a palpable rise in religiosity all across the country, evidenced by the visible accretion of places of worship and with it an aggressive assertion of identity either by appearance, statues, processions and loud calls to worship and music. This should worry us. The US National Intelligence Council's Global Trends Report finds a co-relationship between religiosity and poverty. It found an inverse relationship in countries where the percentage of people who prayed daily was high and low per capita GDP. Clearly, if you are too obsessed by damnation, you are condemned to live it here and now!

This rise in religiosity is across the religious spectrum. Following the increasing employment of Muslim youth in the Middle East and the flow of oil money into India, we saw a surge in the number of mosques. The mosques had their effect on Muslim attitudes. Christians were well placed during the British era and churches got prime locations. The flow of missionary money still continues, and more houses of God are manifestations of this. True, no great churches have been built but there is a profusion of small churches all over the country. Both these religions are institutionally well organised and regulated. But the Hindu response to this has been pretty *laissez-faire* with unregulated expansion.

I was recently in the rural areas of Telangana and noticed that even small villages now have two or three temples, when very clearly one could do. This is not just because of the wide choices of gods available to Hindus; it owes more to the fragmentation of Hindu society into myriad castes, *gotras*, *jatis* and clans. Many of them are side by side and it seems

that they are actually competing with each other. I have been noticing how the growth of temples and their embellishment are a response to each other. In this respect, they are not very different from sari, jewellery and sweetmeat shops.

There is also another very basic, more worldly, reason for this profusion of temples. We are increasingly seeing a profusion of extra-constitutional civic organisations that informally sanction or condone economic activity in villages, like we have been seeing with resident welfare associations in urban areas, where incomes are derived from "licensing" parking agents, fruit vendors and petty services. The village committees too have discovered such income streams, quite a few of them patently illegal like sand mining, unlicensed liquor vending, etc.

Religion is now, not just increasingly a part of our politics, but also, and even more so, of our economics. Tourism contributes as much as 9.6 per cent of our GDP, with domestic tourism accounting for 88 per cent of it. In 2019 the number of foreign tourists who came to India was around 90 million. By contrast, domestic tourism totalled over 1,400 million visits, clearly suggesting that its implied economics are far bigger than the foreign business. It also suggests that very many of our people make several trips for tourism every year. While the concentration of the Centre's tourism promotion efforts focuses on the Delhi-Agra-Jaipur "Golden Triangle", the highest number of foreign tourist arrivals (20.1 per cent) are in Tamil Nadu. Delhi draws half that.

The southern states see the most foreign and domestic tourist traffic because of the number of important religious places like Tirupati and Madurai. The location of Tirupati

Under the CPI(M) government, Kerala temple boards actually advertise the magical powers of their stone idols. After all, what else can be expected from a philosophy that derives inspiration from mummified corpses in Moscow's Red Square?

within it makes Andhra Pradesh India's biggest domestic tourist destination. Religious tourism is now very big business. What does this suggest? Must we be worried?

A Pew Global Attitudes survey shows that more than 25 per cent of Indians reported having become more religious over the past 45 years. The trend is valid across religions and in keeping with other attitudinal surveys. Between 2007 and 2015, the share of respondents in India who perceived religion to be very important increased by 11 per cent to 80 per cent now. A NSSO report shows that average expenditure on religious trips has more than doubled during this period. Clearly, this is a rapidly expanding business sector and also, given the trends, the sky is the limit (no pun intended).

While the economic activity and employment it generates is a cause for happiness all around, we must also ponder about the other ramifications of this growing religiosity. The growth of blind faith, superstition and aggressive religionising (my two-bit coinage) presents a clear and present danger to India evolving as a modernised society which values reason and tempers collective behaviour. The building of temples is a profitable business. That's why unscrupulous entrepreneurs and social scoundrels build more shrines, increasingly usurping public spaces. And we know from experience that once the gods and religious figures get installed in a place, they cannot be dislodged. A good share of our traffic bottlenecks are due to them.

Sant Kabirdas posed this

telling question in a simple and beautiful verse: *Pathar puje hari mile, to main puji pahar/ tante te chakki bhali, pis khayee sansar?* Sadly, the truth now is that a stone idol (now increasingly often made of POP and plastic, sometimes from China) offers a better rate of return (RoR) than a *chakki*, that calls for enterprise rather than irrational faith. Thus, with religiosity and religionising big business now, it is increasingly common to see governments promoting "religious tourism".

Actually, there is increasingly an unstated and subtle competition now implying that my idol is better than yours. The Venkateshwara temple at Tirumalai is India's biggest money-spinner. This Vaishnavite shrine attracts 40 million devotees each year. Telangana has now embarked on promoting the Yadagirigutta temple near Hyderabad to become a religious tourism draw. This is also a Vaishnavite temple, but devoted to a different avatar of Vishnu, and manifestations of that avatar — Jwala Narasimha, Gandabheranda Narasimha and Yogananda Narasimha. Under the CPI(M) government, Kerala temple boards actually advertise the magical powers of their stone idols. Communism was supposed to make us rational and believe God was a figment of mankind's fervid imagination. After all, what else can be expected from a philosophy that derives inspiration from mummified corpses in Moscow's Red Square and Beijing's Tiananmen?

Jawaharlal Nehru, our first PM and foremost founding father of the new India, then contemplated the new India to be guided by reason and infused with the scientific temper. Instead, we are now increasingly a people driven by dogma and blind faith. Religion and blind faith are our biggest fault-lines and the cause of much social friction and breakdown of orderly public behaviour and order.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

OXYGEN SUPPLY

In the near term, we may not have enough oxygen supply as the cases rise exponentially (*City hospitals stare at oxygen shortage, DC, April 23*). There is not even enough supply to meet the daily requirement of medical oxygen.

Sashi Vardhan Reddy
Hyderabad

It is a pity that doctors are crying on behalf of patients over the lack of oxygen. Leaders at the Centre have woken up only after the courts made them realise their duty to think of dying patients and set aside poll rallies. Courts have to remind EC to restrict rallies.

Uday Shankar
Hyderabad

SHAH'S POLL CRY

It is unfortunate and shameful that when our healthcare is collapsing due to the second wave of Covid-19, our home minister Amit Shah is rallying in West Bengal claiming majority. It seems as if he wants only electoral victories instead of fighting Covid.

Malik Khan
Hyderabad

SAFETY FIRST

When a submarine rescue vessel (*MV Swift Rescue*) was available, was it not necessary to have it on standby to undertake rescue operation immediately upon any eventuality (*Race to find Indonesia sub, DC, April 23*). Rescue operations should have been rehearsed even before the Naval exercises began or before according the permission to dive and perform torpedo exercises. This was after all a peacetime affair. The delay could have been avoided if safety was accorded the first priority in life.

K. Pasupathi
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Manned Soyuz-10 to develop space station launched

MOSCOW, April. 23 Three Soviet cosmonauts blasted into orbit today aboard Soyuz-10 and began manoeuvring to develop the world's first permanent space platform. All indications pointed toward a link up attempt with the 'salute' space station, launched on Monday, and possibly more cosmonauts in orbit this week-end aboard Soyuz-10. The presence of two veterans of previous Sovuz missions among the crew strengthened the belief that this might prove to be an important mission.

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



"Two could be counted coincidence And three a play of chance Four is stretching it too far Five has definitely crossed the bar By six we resort to causal sense — the dancers must define the dance."

— From *Pate Pay Pair* by Bachchoo

Transgenders' rights must be respected; they need empathy

Richard Dawkins is our world's best-known atheist. In the West, where he lives, publishes and pronounces, this is not a crime. I am sure the religious believe that he will get what's coming to him when he dies. But not on earth.

It wasn't always thus. One story goes that the playwright Christopher Marlowe was on the verge of being arrested and executed for his atheistic remarks but contrived to disappear and reinvent himself as the author of Shakespeare's plays. (That's my story, anyway, in my novel called *Black Swan*, which... *How many times have I told you not to advertise your trashy books here?* —Ed)

In other societies in our diverse world, a proselytising atheist would probably have his or her head chopped off. In the West, there are no punish-

ments threatened for saying that God doesn't exist, that virgins don't give birth, that God doesn't dictate books, that the earth goes around the sun, that vaanar armies of the Indian epic were probably *adivasis* (*sure of that last one?* — Ed) — and other pronouncements from which the taboo has been removed. But even in these societies new heresies are born.

This observation, gentle reader, has been occasioned by the fact that Prof. Dawkins has been stripped of the "Humanist of the Year" award he was given in 1996 by the American Humanist Association. They withdrew it because Prof. Dawkins had tweeted messages denying that people could choose their gender.

Prof D is an evolutionary biologist and knows that every human being is born with either XX chromosomes, contained in each of more than thirty trillion cells in their bodies, which make them grow as females, or XY chromosomes, which determine that they are male. That's biology. It can't be changed, not by hormone treatment or by surgery to chop off penises and testicles and devise artificial vaginas or by the surgical removal of breasts.

Obviously, if one ignores biology and asserts that people can choose their gender by saying so, then men who assert that they are women and vice versa have to be accepted as such. But assertion has never been the criterion for truth.

Prof. Dawkins recognises that unarmful assertion has to be respected. "Is trans woman a woman? Purely semantic! If you define gender by chromosomes, then, no! If by self-identification, yes. I call her 'she' out of courtesy."

Reacting to the news that his award had been withdrawn, Prof. Dawkins said he'd erase it from his CV but couldn't find it as he had no record or recollection of receiving it.

The continuing debate about the recognition of people who assert that they have transitioned to the opposite gender has had several feminists objecting to trans-women entering women's toilets and changing facilities, being sent to women's prisons and participating in women's sporting events. The trans lobby has denounced these feminists as reactionary bigots. Joining or informing the debate was the case of Keira Bell,

who sued the Tavistock Clinic for encouraging her as a teenager to undergo hormone blocker therapy, claiming that she was much too young as a pre-teenaged girl to take an informed decision about transitioning to being a male. Other similar cases have been launched by parents who claim that their children have been misled by institutions which facilitate "gender transformation".

In the debate, advocates of transgendering point out that some males, estimated at one in 500 or one in a thousand, have an extra X chromosome. In most males with an extra X, there seem to be no symptomatic effects, though in some there is a decreased creation of testosterone — which doesn't according to most medical science amount to any "trans" state of being. A male is a male for all that.

One of the pernicious fallacies I have heard in India is that our population of eunuchs, known as "*hijras*", are transgender. A learned medical practitioner tells me that *hijras* are born males whose testicles are trapped in infancy in their bone structure and therefore don't develop. This makes their bodies produce male and female hormones

and they manifest secondary sexual features of both genders — but are bodily male with penises. The reason we don't find *hijras* in, say, Europe, is because infants receive medical attention from nurses and doctors and the obstruction to the testicles' descent and growth is detected and easily dealt with.

As Prof. Dawkins recognises, people who are trans should be afforded the courtesy of being recognised as such out of fundamental decency. That there should be no socio-political discrimination against such people goes without saying.

I don't think someone like Michael Jackson actually imagined that he was born in the wrong-coloured body. Nevertheless, he underwent all sorts of treatment to change his features, to lighten his skin and to make his hair Caucasian rather than Afro. His efforts could be seen as insulting to black features and identity but there were no voiced objections.

Evolution has determined that we don't live inside but *are* our bodies. That some don't want to be their bodies has in this day and age to be tolerated if not respected.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	47,878.45	-0.42
Nifty 50	14,341.40	-0.45
S&P 500*	4,184.37	1.19
Dollar (₹)	75.02	-0.06
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.13	0.07
Euro (₹)	90.46	-0.24
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,273*24	0.05
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.76	0.55
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.035	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.574	0.018

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Reliance buys UK country club Stoke Park

Reliance Industries Ltd has bought Britain's iconic country club and luxury golf resort, Stoke Park, which featured in James Bond movies, for 57 million pounds (about Rs 592 crore). The acquisition adds to Reliance's current stake in Oberoi hotels and hotel/managed residences in Mumbai that it is developing. Over the past four years, Reliance has announced \$3.3 billion in acquisitions.



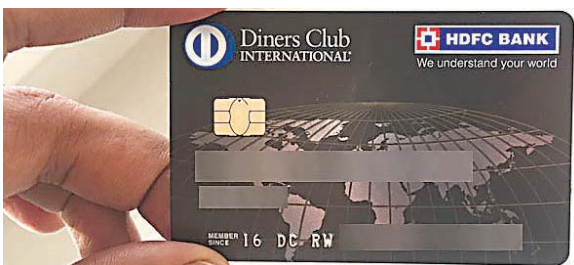
Breach of RBI's data storage norms Amex, Diners barred from adding clients

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, APRIL 23

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday imposed restrictions on American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International Ltd from on-boarding new domestic customers onto their card networks over non-compliance with the central bank's norms on storage of payment system data. The ban will come into effect from May 1. The ban, however, will not impact existing customers, the central bank said in a statement.

American Express Banking Corp and Diners Club International Ltd are payment system operators authorised to operate card networks in the country under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

Imposing the restrictions on American Express and Diners Club, the RBI said, "These entities have been found non-compliant with the directions on Storage



of Payment System Data." In April 2018, all payment system providers were directed to ensure that within a period of six months the entire data (full end-to-end transaction details / information collected / carried / processed as part of the message / payment instruction) relating to payment systems operated by them is stored in a system only in India. They were also required to report compliance to the RBI and submit a board-approved system audit report (SAR) conducted by a CERT-In empanelled auditor within the time-lines specified. Again, in June 2019, the

RBI said all data related to payment transactions shall be stored in systems located only in India," the RBI said, adding, "The data should be deleted from the systems abroad and brought back to India not later than one business day or 24 hours from the payment processing, whichever is earlier." The RBI had also clarified that the data stored in India can be accessed or fetched when required for handling disputes or so.

Cadila gets nod to use hepatitis drug for Covid

New Delhi, April 23: Zydus Cadila on Friday said it has received restricted emergency use approval from the drug regulator for using Pegylated Interferon alpha-2b (Peg-IFN) in treating moderate Covid-19 infection in adults.

The drug firm had sought the DCGI's approval for the hepatitis drug's additional indication for treating Covid-19. The company has now received restricted emergency use approval from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for the use of 'Virafin', PegIFN in treating moderate Covid-19 infection in adults, Zydus Cadila said in a filing.

PegIFN has very well-established safety with multiple doses in chronic Hepatitis B and C patients.

A single dose subcutaneous regimen of the antiviral Virafin will make the treatment more convenient for the patients, the filing said.

When administered early on during Covid, Virafin will help patients recover faster. It will be available as a prescription drug for use in a hospital/institutional setup, Cadila said. — PTI

Market ends in red for the third week

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, APRIL 23

The market registered third successive week of decline as Covid-19 cases continued to rise.

During the holiday-truncated week, the Sensex slumped 953.58 points, or 1.95 per cent, while the Nifty-50 tanked 276.50 points, or 1.89 per cent.

The big fall in the Sensex on Monday by 882 points was not challenged by the bulls effectively though the market closed in the green on Thursday, gaining over 375 points.

Nifty-50 and Sensex ended 65 and 202 points lower on Friday, closing at 14,341 and 47,878, respectively. But the broader markets ended in the green, with Nifty Mid-Cap 100 and Nifty Small-cap 100 rising 0.3 per cent and 0.4 per cent, respectively.

On Friday, foreign portfolio investors were net sellers of equities worth Rs 1,360.76 crore but the domestic institutions were net buyers by Rs 1,985.59 crore, as per the provisional data.

"A deadly wave of coronavirus infections raises concerns over business recovery," said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities.

Reports of a possible increase in capital gains tax in the US took a toll on the global equities, which also impacted the Indian market just before the weekend close as traders didn't want to carry risks, with Mondays, of late, witnessing bear attacks.

The earnings season has not boosted market sentiments, as it did in the pre-



vious quarter, since big IT companies and banks have reported mixed financial performance so far and the market is more focused on the likely fall-out of full blown pan-India andemic.

HCL Technologies' March 2021 quarter operating performance, with a 6 per cent decline in consolidated net profit, missed expectations due to salary hike and the special one-time bonus, according to analysts. The company on Friday proposed an interim dividend of Rs 10 per share to mark the \$10 billion annual revenue milestone.

Joseph Thomas, head of research, Emkay Wealth Management, said, "The markets continued to remain extremely subdued with losses during the course of the whole week, across sectors and segments. The main reason for the downtrend is the rising cases of the virulent pandemic. While the fundamentals support a robust economy, it is too early to assess the potential damages."

"But the probability of the resurgence of the pandemic impacting growth and therefore earnings, is quite high for the first two quarters of this year," Thomas said.

Honda to go all-electrical by 2040, put \$46 bn in R&D

SHIHO TAKEZAWA APRIL 23

Honda Motor Company set what it called a challenging target for all of its sales to be electric vehicles by 2040 as it tries to keep up with the global EV race and revive profits under the new leadership of Toshihiro Mibe.

The Japanese company also said it will invest about 5 trillion yen (\$46 billion) in research and development over the next six years, "regardless of fluctuations in our sales revenue."

Automakers around the globe are rushing into the EV sector as the industry shifts to electrification and self-driving cars. Among them, Jaguar Land Rover has vowed to go fully electric by 2025, and Volvo by 2030.

Honda's new goals include EVs accounting for 40 per cent of sales in North America and China by 2030 and 80 per cent by 2035. It has a 20 per cent goal for Japan by 2030 and 80 per cent by 2035. Japan's target is different because it is a huge consumer of hybrids, Mibe said. The carmaker wants to achieve an operating profit margin of 7 per cent even as it shifts to EVs, he said.

Toyota Motor Corp. has been able to assuage investors' concerns on EVs with the introduction of its "bZ4X." — Bloomberg

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Virus emergency in Tokyo and Osaka

Tokyo: Only three months before the postponed Olympics are set to open, Tokyo and Japan's second largest metropolitan area of Osaka have been placed under emergency orders aimed at stemming surging cases of the Coronavirus. The measures, which take place during Japan's "golden week" holiday period, are meant to limit travel and keep people out of public places. They are to end on May 11, just ahead of a widely reported visit to Hiroshima by International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach. Bach said this week that the visit, reported for May 17-18, is still in the "planning phase." — AP

Laxmikant extends his stay at Hyd FC

Hyderabad: Indian Super League side Hyderabad FC handed a one-year extension to experienced goalkeeper Laxmikant Kattimani, the club announced on Friday. The Goa-born custodian has inked a fresh deal till the end of the 2021-22 season. "I have now spent two years with the club and I am really happy here. I know the club and the people involved pretty well and it was an easy decision for me to extend my time with Hyderabad FC," Kattimani was quoted asaying in a media release. Laxmikant has been with Hyderabad FC since its inception. — PTI

Nadal rallies past Cameron, in semis

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal brushed aside Cameron Norrie 6-1, 6-4 to ease into the semifinals of the Barcelona Open on Friday and moved closer to a record-extending 12th title at the event. After Nadal breezed through the first set, Britain's Norrie won back a break in the second. Nadal, however, took the advantage right back and closed it out when he converted on a second match point by smashing a forehand just inside the line. Nadal will face Pablo Carreno or Diego Schwartzman on Saturday for a spot in the final. Nadal needed three sets to get past Kei Nishikori and Ilya Ivashka in the first two rounds. — AP

Magical Messi on the double Leo's brace fires Barcelona to victory over Getafe, Atletico beat Huesca

Madrid, April 23: Lionel Messi gave up the chance for a hat-trick on Thursday as Barcelona held off a late fightback from Getafe to win 5-2 and stay in the race at the top of La Liga.

Messi scored twice and could have had a third in injury-time at Camp Nou but deferred a penalty to Antoine Griezmann, who completed what was in the end a comfortable victory.

After beating Athletic Bilbao to lift the Copa del Rey last weekend, Barca are now in the hunt for the double, sitting five points behind Atletico Madrid but still with a game in hand.

Atletico had earlier brushed aside Huesca 2-0 to register back-to-back victories for the first time since January and with Real Madrid also seeing off Cadiz on Wednesday, there is no margin for error now in a thrilling battle for the title.

None of Spain's leading trio appear to have been affected by an incredible few days off the pitch, which saw Real Madrid, Atletico and Barcelona all sign up for the hugely controversial European Super League on Sunday.



Barcelona's Lionel Messi (right) duels for the ball with Getafe's Damian Suarez during their Spanish league match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Thursday. — AP

Atletico withdrew from the breakaway competition on Wednesday but Barca and Real Madrid remain part of a project that would transform the fabric of European football.

Getafe were wearing t-shirts in protest against the European Super League, even as they gave Barcelona a guard of honour to mark the Catalans' cup success. Messi now has 33 goals in all competi-

tions and 25 in the league, one more than the total scored by the whole Getafe team. Getafe are not safe yet, four points the gap above the bottom three. Messi got to work in the eighth minute, slid

through by a piercing pass by Sergio Busquets and sending a shot into the far top corner, despite a touch by Getafe goalkeeper David Soria.

Yet Getafe were level four minutes later as Angel met Marc Cucurella's cross and the ball cannoned off the unsuspecting Clement Lenglet and flew in.

Another own-goal restored Barca's lead with Sofian Chakla failing to spot Soria coming out before passing the ball beyond the goalkeeper and into his own net.

The game looked secure when Messi made it three. Lenglet's looping header gave him the chance to volley left-footed against the far post but the ball arrowed back to the striker, who finished from the angle with his right.

Getafe teed up a nervy last 20 minutes when Ronald Araujo trod on the ankle of Enes Unal, who scored the penalty to give the visitors hope. But Barcelona pulled away with two late goals, Araujo heading in a corner from Messi, who then passed up the chance to score his third by giving Griezmann his first. — AFP

ARCHERS ATANU, DEEPIKA MARCH INTO SEMIFINALS

Guatemala City, April 23: Country's top archery couple Atanu Das and Deepika Kumari battled heavy winds to storm into their respective semifinals of the recurve section as India continued to make giant strides in the World Cup Stage 1 here.

Returning to the World Cup after almost two years, Das and Deepika, who got married last year, also paired up to advance to the bronze playoff in the recurve mixed event on Thursday night to keep India in the hunt for five medals.

Deepika displayed some incredible shooting to down German archer Michelle Kroppen in straight sets. — PTI

SNAP SHOTS

Sachin lands eighth gold for India

Indian boxer Sachin (56kg) on Friday added an unprecedented eighth gold to the country's historic medal haul at the youth world championships in Kielce, Poland, a day after all seven women swept the top honours in an astonishing performance.

Sachin rallied to defeat Kazakhstan's Yerbolat Sabyr 4-1 in a gritty performance by the end of which his confident opponent was left with a bloodied face and exhausted body.

The Indian was off to a spirited start and was definitely impressive with his counter-attacks but the Kazakh clinched the opening round 3-2.

Sachin intensified his attacks after the break with his right straights fetching him the points. He drew level by getting a split verdict in his favour in the second round. The final round belonged to the relentless Sachin as Sabyr ran out of steam. India thus ended their campaign with 11 medals — eight gold and three bronze medals to claim the top spot in overall standings. This was an improvement on two gold, two silver and six bronze medals claimed at the event's 2018 edition. Earlier, Gitika (48kg), Babyrojisana Chanu (51kg), Poonam (57kg), Vinka (60kg), Arundhati Choudhary (69kg), Thokchom Sanamachu Chanu (75kg) and Alfiya Pathan (+81kg) ensured a perfect finish to the women's campaign. — PTI



Krish Tyagi and Apurva Vemuri pose with their trophies after receiving them from cricketer Mohammed Asaduddin (right) at the SMTA in Hyderabad.

Krish and Apurva champs at SMTA

Krish Ajay Tyagi and Apurva Vemuri emerged winners in the boys and girls sections respectively at the AITA Super Series tennis tournament for Under-16 years held at Sania Mirza Tennis Academy in Hyderabad.

Krish had it easy as he beat Shivaraj Chandan in straight sets at 6-0, 6-3 in the final while Apurva dropped the first set before coming back to defeat Abhaya Vemuri 4-6, 6-2, 6-4.

THE RESULTS

Boys final: Krish Ajay Tyagi bt Shivaraj Chandan 6-0, 6-3. Semifinals: Krish Tyagi bt Debasis Sahoo 7-6 (5), 1-6, 6-4; Chandan Shivaraj bt Bharat Phulwaria 6-1, 6-3. Quarterfinals: Debasis Sahoo bt N. R. Darwin Marx 6-1, 7-6 (0); Krish Tyagi bt Venkat Rishi Battlani 6-2, 6-2; Chandan Shivaraj bt Anoop Keshavamurti 3-6, 6-0, 6-2; Bharat Phulwaria bt Vatsal Manikantan 6-2, 6-4. Girls final: Apurva Vemuri bt Abhaya Vemuri 4-6, 6-2, 6-4. Semifinals: Abhaya Vemuri bt Manogna Madasu 6-2, 6-3; Apurva Vemuri bt Saumya Ronde 5-7, 6-2, 6-3. Quarterfinals: Abhaya Vemuri bt Avani Chitale 6-0, 6-1; Manogna Madasu bt Aaditi Bhat 6-2, 6-3; Saumya Ronde bt Malishka Kurumu 6-4, 6-1; Apurva Vemuri bt Raja Sarvagnya Kilaru 6-2, 6-2.



● CHENNAI SUPER KINGS ● DELHI CAPITALS ● KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS ● MUMBAI INDIANS ● PUNJAB KINGS ● RAJASTHAN ROYALS ● ROYAL CHALLENGERS BANGALORE ● SUNRISERS HYDERABAD

DECCAN CHRONICLE, KARIMNAGAR, SATURDAY, 24 APRIL 2021

pg 8

ORANGE		
Shikhar Dhawan, DC	231	
KL Rahul, PBKS	221	
Rohit Sharma, MI	201	
PURPLE		
Harshal Patel, RCB	12	
Rahul Chahar, MI	9	
Deepak Chahar, CSK	8	

Off the field



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola poses with an RCB jersey. — Instagram

Guardiola wants to learn cricket rules

Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola on Friday said that it may be time for him to learn the rules of cricket after being sent a Royal Challengers Bangalore jersey by their captain Virat Kohli. “It’s time to finally learn cricket’s rules. Thanks to my friend @virat.kohli for the shirt. Now is your turn to use your Man City shirt,” said Guardiola in an Instagram post along with a video of him holding up the jersey.

RCB have got off to a flying start in the IPL, having won their first four matches.

Morris not worth the money: KP

Following a bidding war, Chris Morris was eventually snapped up by Rajasthan Royals for ₹16.25 crore, becoming the costliest ever cricketer in IPL history, but former England cricketer Kevin Pietersen has said that the South African went for way too much money.

“This is going to sound harsh, but he went for a lot more money than I would have ever paid for, to be completely honest. I just don’t think that he’s worth that kind of number. I think there’s pressure on him. He’s not a first choice for the South African side. So, I think we’re expecting too much. There’s too much talk about him,” Pietersen said.

Archer will not play IPL, confirms ECB

The England and Wales Cricket Board on Friday announced that star fast bowler Jofra Archer will not play in the ongoing 14th Indian Premier League, compounding his franchise Rajasthan Royals’ misery. The 26-year-old Archer returned to bowling this week with higher intensity, and the ECB and Sussex medical teams will continue to monitor his progress.

“Archer will now step up his training regime starting next week and will be in full training with Sussex. It is expected that he will return to cricket in the next fortnight if he can continue to bowl and prepare pain-free,” the ECB said in a statement.

“The ECB will confirm which matches he is expected to play in due course.”

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KINGSIZE WIN

Rahul, Gayle guide Punjab to a 9-wicket victory over Mumbai

Chennai, April 23: Punjab Kings humbled defending champions Mumbai Indians by nine wickets in their IPL match here on Friday. Chasing a modest target of 132, Punjab Kings completed the task with 14 balls to spare.

Punjab Kings captain KL Rahul scored an unbeaten 60 and veteran Chris Gayle remained not out on 43 for the victors.

Earlier, MI skipper Rohit Sharma scored his first half-century of the season but still his team could only manage 131 for 6.

Rohit said it was not a bad wicket to bat on. “You can see how Kings won with nine wickets in hand. If you get 150-160 you’re always in the game and that is something we’ve failed in the last two games, we need to look at that.”

“We can look at it either way — their bowlers bowled very well in that powerplay. Ishan was trying to hit but couldn’t get it, even myself. We were trying but the wicket was easy. In the last four games we really batted well in the powerplay but today we failed to do so,” added Rohit.

Rohit scored 63 off 52 balls while Suryakumar Yadav contributed 33 off 27 balls on a sluggish Chepauk surface.

The duo added 79 for the third wicket while Kieron Pollard chipped in with an unbeaten 16 off 12 balls towards the end.

For Punjab Kings, Deepak Hooda was economical with 1 for 15 in 3 overs, while Mohammed Shami and Ravi Bishnoi had the joint best figures of 2 for 21.

Punjab Kings produced a discipline bowling performance to restrict Mumbai Indians to 131 for six despite a fine half-century by Rohit Sharma in the IPL here on Friday.

Mumbai struggled to 21 for one in the first six overs, the lowest power-play score this season after being put into bat.

A 79-run stand between Rohit (63 off 52) and



Punjab Kings skipper KL Rahul en route to his unbeaten fifty against Mumbai Indians in an IPL game on Friday.

Suryakumar Yadav (33 off 27) steadied the ship for the five-time champions but they could not find the final flourish, managing only 34 runs in the last five overs for the loss of four wickets.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi, playing his first game of the season, was the standout bowler for Punjab Kings with two wickets for 21 runs in four overs.

Lead pacer Mohammad Shami (2/21 in four overs) was also impressive. As has been the case so far at Chepauk, batsmen found it extremely difficult to get going early in the innings on a slow surface.

Quinton de Kock perished as early as the second over after he mistimed one off spinner Deepak Hooda to be caught at mid-on.

Ishan Kishan (6 off 17) came ahead of Suryakumar Yadav at number three but the southpaw struggled once again before being caught behind in Bishnoi’s first over, making it 26 for two

in seven overs.

Rohit, at the other end, managed to keep the scoreboard ticking. Left-arm spinner Fabian Allen bowled a high full toss to Rohit in the 10th over and he duly dispatched it over the cow corner for a six to release some pressure.

After Suryakumar joined Rohit in the middle, batting suddenly started looking much easier. A well-set Rohit started playing the ball late and was good with finding the gaps. Suryakumar, at the other end, got into the

SCORECARD

Mumbai Indians: Quinton de Kock c Henriques b Deepak Hooda 3, Rohit Sharma c Allen b Mohammed Shami 63, Ishan Kishan c Rahul b Ravi Bishnoi 6, Suryakumar Yadav c Gayle b Ravi Bishnoi 33, Kieron Pollard (not out) 16, Hardik Pandya c Hooda b Arshdeep Singh 1, Krunal Pandya c Pooran b Mohammed Shami 3, Jayant Yadav (not out) 0. Extras (b 4, w 2) 6. Total (for six wickets in 20 overs) 131. FoW: 1-7, 2-26, 3-105, 4-112, 5-122, 6-130. **Bowling:** Moises Henriques 3-0-12-0, Deepak Hooda 3-0-15-1, Mohammed Shami 4-0-21-2, Ravi Bishnoi 4-0-21-2, Fabian Allen 3-0-30-0, Arshdeep Singh 3-0-28-1.

Punjab Kings: KL Rahul (not out) 60, Mayank Agarwal c Suryakumar Yadav b Rahul Chahar 25, Chris Gayle (not out) 43. Extras (nb 1, w 3) 4. Total (for one wicket in 17.4 overs) 132. FoW: 1-53. **Bowling:** Trent Boult 2.4-0-30-0, Krunal Pandya 3-0-31-0, Jasprit Bumrah 3-0-21-0, Rahul Chahar 4-0-19-1, Jayant Yadav 4-0-20-0, Kieron Pollard 1-0-11-0.

groove with a four and six off left-arm pacer Arshdeep. Their partnership ended after Suryakumar failed to execute a reverse sweep to be caught at short third man off Bishnoi’s bowling, leaving Mumbai at 105 for three with 23 balls left in the innings.

Some much-needed lusty blows were expected from the likes of Hardik Pandya and Kieron Pollard in the death overs but Punjab were able to keep them quiet.

— Agencies

NATARAJAN OUT OF IPL, TO HAVE KNEE SURGERY

Chennai, April 23: Sunrisers Hyderabad pacer T Natarajan has been ruled out of the ongoing IPL due to a knee injury for which he will have to undergo a surgery. The 30-year-old Natarajan had played only two out of the four games for Sunrisers Hyderabad this season. He originally sustained this injury during the tour of Australia earlier this year.

“I am sad to miss the remaining games (this IPL). Since I played well last season and went on to play for India, my expectations were high. Unfortunately, I have to undergo knee surgery and will miss this season,” the yorker specialist said in a video posted by Sunrisers Hyderabad on their official twitter handle. He, however, did not specify when the surgery will take place.

“I have no words to say right now. I wish Sunrisers to go out and win every game this season. Best wishes,” added the bowler.

It is understood that he never fully recovered from the injury caused by the heavy workload he endured on the tour of Australia. “He went for rehabilitation at the NCA but it is now evident that even when he was declared fit to make a return against England, he was not 100 per cent match ready. Now he could be out for a longer period as he had rushed his comeback without doing proper rehab,” a source said.

— PTI

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
RCB	4	4	0	0	8	+1.009
CSK	4	3	1	0	6	+1.142
DC	4	3	1	0	6	+0.426
MI	5	2	3	0	4	-0.032
PBKS	5	2	3	0	4	-0.428
SRH	4	1	3	0	2	-0.228
KKR	4	1	3	0	2	-0.700
RR	4	1	3	0	2	-1.011

Padikkal is one for future: Virat

Mumbai, April 23: Devdutt Padikkal is a “great talent” and “one for the future”, feels RCB captain Virat Kohli, who is happy that the stylish left-hander has put to rest all debates with regards to his strike-rate after his maiden IPL hundred against Rajasthan Royals here on Thursday.

Padikkal smashed an unbeaten 101 off 52 balls in an opening stand of 181 with his skipper as RCB won the game by 10 wickets.

“It was an outstanding innings. He (Devdutt) batted really well for his first season last time as well. There was a bit of a talk about accelerating after 40-50, this was the best way to put it to rest,” Kohli said.

“He is a great talent, great one to look forward in the future. I had the best seat in the house,” Kohli couldn’t stop praising the 20-year-old Bangalorean.

Kohli enjoyed playing a passive role as the skipper wanted his young teammate to get a hundred.

“Tonight, my role was different and I wanted to hang in there. In the end I picked my spots, the pitch was good. We spoke about it (the 100), he (Devdutt) said finish it off. He said (there could be) many more to come, I told him ‘you tell me that after you get the first one.’”

Kohli now wants Padikkal to build on this knock. “I want him to build from here and really help the team. He deserved to get the hundred today, flawless innings.”

He also praised the bowling attack for restricting Royals to 177 for nine on a placid deck.

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— VIRAT KOHLI
RCB skipper

“We don’t have many stand-out names in bowlers, but we have effective bowlers. Guys who can do it day in day out. Four out of four times we’ve been the stand-out team in the death overs. We actually restricted 30-35 runs. Dev’s innings was outstanding, but for me the bowling which was aggressive, optimistic was key.”

Padikkal was waiting for his turn

Young Padikkal said that all he wanted to do after recovering from COVID-19 was to wait for his turn.

“To be honest it’s been special, all I could do was wait my turn. When I had Covid all I wanted was to come here and play, and when I missed the first one (game), it really hurt me,” Padikkal said.

He said he didn’t think about the hundred as he was okay had skipper Kohli scored the winning runs before he completed his three-figure mark.

“The ball was coming on really well, and when we get into a partnership like that it gets easier. No real tension when the hundred came, I told Virat to go for it. At the end of the day even if I didn’t get a hundred it wouldn’t have mattered to me if the team won.”

— PTI



RCB's Devdutt Padikkal celebrates his century against Rajasthan Royals.

AXAR RECOVERS FROM COVID-19, JOINS DELHI

Chennai, April 23: All-rounder Axar Patel has rejoined the Delhi Capitals squad after recovering from COVID-19 and said that getting to meet his teammates after a 20-day quarantine comes a close second to his Test debut as the “best moment” of his life.

The 27-year-old had initially checked into the Capitals’ team hotel on March 28 in Mumbai with a negative test report but he returned positive for the dreaded infection on April 3 and was transferred to the BCCI’s designated medical facility with mild symptoms.

“It has been really great to come out of quarantine after 20 days and meet my teammates. This is the best moment in my life after my Test debut,” Axar was quoted as saying in a media release from DC.

The left-arm spinner added that watching his IPL side win most of its matches kept him motivated.

“I was alone in my room for 20 days and I didn’t have anything to do. I was watching the matches and one good thing was that our team won most of the matches, so I got even more motivated to re-join the side,” he added.

Earlier, the Delhi Capitals posted a video of Axar meeting his teammates in the camp. “Smiles and hugs all around as Babu returned to the DC camp,” the franchise posted.

“Aadmi dekh ke hi toh mujhe maza aa raha hai (I’m getting joy just by seeing people),” Patel said in the video.

— PTI