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Fire breaks out onboard INS Vikramaditya

MUMBAI: A minor fire broke out onboard the Indian Navy aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya on Saturday, an official said here. The duty staff observed smoke emanating from the part of ship having accommodation for the sailors. The ship's personnel on duty acted immediately to fight the blaze and there are no reports of any casualties in the incident. "All personnel onboard have been accounted for and no major damage has been reported. An inquiry into the incident is being ordered," said the official. Further details of the incident which happened in the harbour, are awaited. (IANS)

TN announces total lockdown from Monday

CHENNAI: With Tamil Nadu witnessing a sharp increase in Covid-19 cases, the government on Saturday announced clamping a two-week "total lockdown" across the State to curb the spread of the pandemic, starting May 10. Chief Minister M K Stalin said in a statement the lockdown was being enforced due to "unavoidable reasons" and pointed out that the decision was taken based on inputs received at a review meeting he had with district collectors on Friday, besides consultations with medical experts. The recommendations made by the Union Home and Health ministries had also been factored in. "The total lockdown will be enforced from 4 am on May 10 to 4 am on May 24 to further intensify the efforts to curb the spread of the disease," he said.

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A day in the life of a doc in testing times

KUNAL PATIL
MUMBAI

THE mask digs deep furrows into his face, the shield fogs up his glasses and the PPE suit weighs him down in the humidity. The hours run into one another, uncomfortable and difficult at various levels, but it's all in a day's work for Dr Amol Pawar. As the second wave of the pandemic ravages, large parts of India, it's about sweat and tears - quite literally - for millions of healthcare workers at the frontline of the war against



A resident doctor, wearing PPE kit, does a check-up of a new born baby in an isolation ward at the Nowrosjee Wadia Maternity Hospital, in Mumbai, Wednesday

Covid-19. They have walked the tightrope between looking after patients and trying

to dodge infection for more than a year. And it isn't ending anytime soon.

Continued on Page 4

DRDO in defence against Covid attack

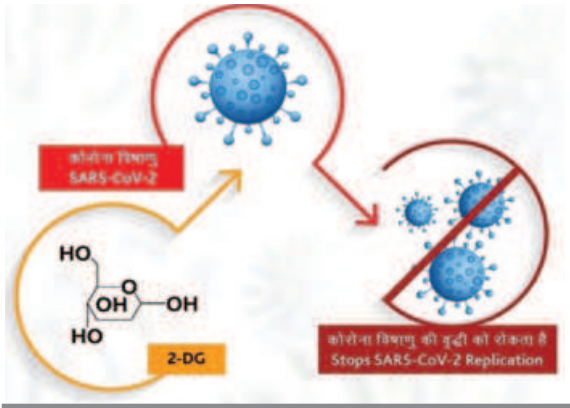
- DCGI approves anti-Covid drug 2-DG
- Jointly developed by INMAS, Dr Reddy's
- 2-DG gives faster symptomatic cure
- Provides relief from oxygen therapy

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) has approved an anti-Covid-19 therapeutic application of the drug 2-deoxy-D-Glucose (2-DG) developed by the In-

stitute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) lab, in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad.

The drug has been cleared for emergency use at a time when the ongoing second Covid-19 wave, in which, a large number of patients are facing severe oxygen dependency and hospitalisa-



tion. The drug is expected to save precious lives due to the mechanism of operation of the drug in infected cells. This also reduces hospital stay of Covid-19 patients. A Defence ministry statement on Saturday said the clinical trial results of the 2-DG have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence. A higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion in Covid patients. The drug will be of immense benefit to the people suffering from Covid-19. Sharing the development on his Twitter handle, Union Min-

ister of State for Home Affairs G Kishan Reddy expressed happiness, saying that pursuing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for preparedness against the pandemic, DRDO took the initiative in developing an anti-Covid therapeutic application of 2-DG. The ministry said that in April 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic, INMAS-DRDO scientists conducted laboratory experiments with the help of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad and found that this molecule works effectively against the SARS-CoV-2 virus and inhibits the viral growth. **Continued on Page 4**

Innerers for Winners

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Need 2.6 cr vax doses, got just 40 lakh: CM

NEW DELHI

CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said the number of Covid-19 vaccination centres will be increased three times in Delhi and demanded that the Centre supply of around 2.6 crore vaccine doses for inoculation of all people in the national capital in the next three months.

Currently, vaccination is going on at 100 centres in Delhi. The number of centres will be increased to 250-300 by the Delhi government, he said in an online briefing. In order to vaccinate all people in Delhi, over three crore doses will be required, out of which around 40 lakh have already been received, he said.

The chief minister urged the Centre to provide it 85 lakh doses per month so that all the Delhiites could be vaccinated in the next three months. He said that due to good arrangements in Delhi, people from NCR towns like Noida, Ghaziabad were also reaching here to get the vaccines. So, Delhi will require a little more than three crore doses, he said. He said that Delhi currently has vaccine doses to vaccinate people for next 5-6 days and urged the Centre to provide adequate doses. He said



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal virtually addresses the media on COVID-19 situation in the national capital, in New Delhi on Saturday

Delhi is currently administering one lakh vaccine doses per day and it could increase this number to three lakh.

The chief minister said Delhi's population is two crores, and close to one crore fall in the 18-44 age group. Fifty lakh are below 18, and 50 lakh people are above 45 years of age. "Roughly 1.5 crore people are above 18 years of age. We need three crore vaccine doses to vaccinate these 1.5 crore people, but we've received just 40 lakh doses. As a result, we need 2 crore 60 lakh additional vaccines," he said.

Delhi has been vaccinating more than one lakh people everyday. This includes around 50,000 people in age group of 18-44 years and 50,000 aged 45 years and above, he said.

Positive Covid test report not must for admission

NEW DELHI

IN a significant directive to States and Union Territories, the Union Health Ministry on Saturday said a positive Covid-19 test report is not mandatory for admission to a health facility.

In its revised national policy for admission of Covid patients to various dedicated health facilities, both public and private, the Union Health Ministry said no patient will be refused services on any account, including oxygen and essential drugs, even if the he or she belongs to a different city. "In a significant directive to States, the Union

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has revised the national policy for admission of Covid patients to various categories of Covid facilities.

"This patient-centric measure aims to ensure prompt, effective and comprehensive treatment of patients suffering from Covid-19," the ministry said. "Hospitals under the central government, state governments and UT administration, including private hospitals managing Covid patients, shall ensure that requirement of a positive test for Covid-19 virus is not mandatory for admission to a Covid health facility.

Accept privacy policy or lose functions: WhatsApp

NEW DELHI: Facing criticism over its upcoming privacy policy, WhatsApp has said that its users will not immediately lose their accounts or face curtailed functionalities on the platform on May 15, but they will have to eventually go through limited functions if they fail to accept the new norms in the due course of time.

The Facebook-owned messaging platform with more than two billion users, with over 400 million users in India, warned that failing to accept the new policy would result in users losing some functionalities after "persistent reminders".

"After giving everyone time to review, we're continuing to remind those who haven't had the chance to do so to review and accept. After a period of several weeks, the reminder people receive will eventually become persistent," WhatsApp said in an FAQ update.

Continued on Page 4

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Agriculture Minister demands apology from ex-Congress MLA

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy refuted the allegations against him made by former Congress MLA Sampath Kumar.

In an open letter to the TPCC president and MP N U-tam Kumar Reddy here on Saturday, he said it was unfortunate that he remained quiet when the former Congress MLA was making baseless allegations against him.

The Minister demanded an unconditional apology from Sampath Kumar, failing, he would take legal recourse against him, he warned.

Dismissing the allegations leveled by the Congress MLA that he had amassed 200 acres, Niranjan Reddy said



that he had disclosed the details of all his assets and liabilities of him and his wife in his election affidavit of 2018.

The Minister said that he has 30 acres on his name and 10 acres more on his wife's name, and there is a mango orchid grown in it for the past 15

years. That apart, his daughter who is a medical doctor had constructed a hospital to extend free medical services to the people in the Pangal raising funds from his wife's sources and taking a loan from the SBI, Panagal, he added. An additional 2.5 acres of land has been acquired two years ago to start a Gaushala. Also, with the 10 acres of his land in Chunduruvilla, all his land assets were below 50 acres as against 200 acres being alleged by the Congress MLA, he said.

Niranjan Reddy said that the allegations that he owns lands in Wanaparthi and Peberu towns were totally baseless.

"Being a practicing lawyer from 1984, I had appeared representing my client S Ajay

Kumar, who had interests in those lands. However, after becoming proactive in separate Telangana movement after 2001, he had given up the brief and did not appear before the courts in the matters related to those lands," he said. Further, he is in no way related to the orders, judgments given by the tribunals and courts after he had given up representing his client, he said.

Niranjan Reddy reminded that different tribunals and courts have to give verdicts against their clients in the orders delivered in the years 2005 and 2013 when Congress was in power. Does it mean the judgments delivered by the RDPs were influenced by the then Congress regime, he asked.

TSRTC employees urge to start Covid treatment in RTC Tarnaka hospital

Union leaders demands the government to provide reimbursement to the employees who have undergone treatment in the private hospital and also provide Rs 50 lakh as compensation to the employees who died

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

INFORMING that 50 RTC employees were dead during the second wave and about 1,800 employees getting treated in various hospitals, the TSRTC unions wrote a letter to Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao urging him to start Covid-19 ward in RTC Tarnaka hospital. They stated that they have decided to stage a protest on May 11.

The TSRTC unions including Employees Union, Staff Workers Federation, Bahujana Karmika Union, Bahujana Workers Union, RTC Udyogula Sangham leaders collectively wrote a letter to the Chief Minister. The union

leaders wanted the government to start Covid-19 treatment with 100 beds in Tarnaka hospital of the Corporation. They said that even after repeated requests to convert the RTC hospital into a Covid-19 hospital, there is no response from the management. The employees are not in a position to pay the hefty medical bills of the private hospital, said EU leader Raji Reddy.

The union leaders demanded the government to provide reimbursement to the employees, who have undergone treatment in private hospital and also to provide Rs 50 lakh as compensation to the families of deceased employees. They wanted the gov-

ernment to direct the management to provide 21 days of special casual leave to the employees, who are affected with Covid-19. They wanted the management to provide sanitizers, masks and face shields to the RTC drivers and conductors, making available corona kits along with oximeters in all the dispensaries of the corporation. Treating the RTC employees as front line warriors and providing vaccines to them, providing isolation facilities at training college in Hakimpet and also issuing orders to maintain 50 per cent occupancy in RTC buses.

Meanwhile, the unions have given a call for protest with black badges in the depots on May 11.

Collective resolve crucial to contain corona: Guv Soundararajan

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

GOVERNOR Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Saturday emphasised the need to promote public education and ensure their Covid-appropriate behaviour to contain the spread of the pandemic. "Besides ensuring strict adherence to the preventive norms by the people for which we need to have collective resolve, we must also intensify our service activities to reach out to the needy," she added.

The Governor was virtually interacting with the functionaries of Indian Red Cross Society Telangana State and district units on World Red Cross Day. She appreciated the activities of IRCS State branch in promoting blood donations, ensuring regular blood transfusion to Thalassemia patients and other service activities during natural calamities and during other times of emergencies.

Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan also called for the enrolment of more volunteers in Red Cross, Youth Red Cross and Junior Red Cross to prepare the torchbearers of the future service.

While conveying her greetings to the Red Cross volun-

teers on the occasion, the Governor paid rich tributes to Red Cross founder and first Noble Peace Prize winner Henry Dunant, whose birth anniversary is celebrated as the World Red Cross Day every year on May 8.

Referring to the World Red Cross Day-2021 theme, "Together we are Unstoppable," she highlighted the need to be united and called for the collective resolve and collective effort to end the pandemic. The Red Cross State and district units' functionaries thanked the Governor for her unique initiatives and for mentoring and guiding them in their service activities from time to time in her capacity as the President of the IRCS State unit.

The Governor took part in the virtual interaction programme from Raj Niwas, Puducherry, where she is holding an additional charge as the Lt. Governor.

Secretary to Governor K Surendra Mohan coordinated the virtual interaction from the Raj Bhavan, here, and presented the summary of activities taken up by the different units of the IRCS in the State.

Senior functionaries of the IRCS and the officers of the Raj Bhavan too have joined the virtual interaction.



Kavitha inaugurates Covid isolation centre at Calvary Temple



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

MLC Kalkavuntla Kavitha on Saturday inaugurated 300 bedded Covid-19 isolation centre at Calvary Temple founded by Brother Satish, who decided to open their premises for the treatment of Covid-19 patients, who belonged to the underprivileged background.

The Calvary Temple Covid-19 isolation centre has been developed in association with Ankura Hospital and Theresa Hospital. This 300-bedded facility consists of 50 oxygen beds and 250 normal beds

with a staff of over 100 to look after the patients. The facility has been opened for the underprivileged section of the society and offers free treatment, medicine and food.

The facility would start taking in patients from Monday. Kavitha congratulated and thanked Brother Satish (Founder Calvary Temple), Calvary Temple, Ankura Hospital and Theresa Hospital for their noble gesture and swift initiative to cater to the needs of ailing needy and poor people. Kavitha also urged the media and the people to be safe and be vigilant about the safety of others.

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

THE Institute of Public Enterprise (IPE), Hyderabad said that it will be conducting Online Personal Interviews (PI's) on Sunday (May 9) for admission (batch of 2021-23) into the PGDM programmes of Post Graduate Diploma in Management- General, PGDM-Banking, Insurance and Financial Service, PGDM-International Business, PGDM-

Marketing, PGDM-Human Resource Management, and Executive PGDM.

In the statement issued on Saturday, the IPE said that the institute offers a large number of excellent scholarships for deserving students, from many different backgrounds. There are separate scholarships based on a range of

IPE to hold virtual PIs today

criteria including merit/test performance, for students from SC/ST/OBC backgrounds, Economically Weaker Sections, religious minorities, and highly talented students in sports, arts, etc. There are also scholarships for students from the designated states such as the North Eastern

States. There is no limit on the number of scholarships, and they range in value from Rs 60,000 to Rs 2 lakh. In special cases, even higher scholarship values may be considered.

IPE also has an excellent placements track record with leading multinational and national companies hir-

ing from IPE every year. The highest starting salary offered for students graduating from IPE for 2020 was Rs 20 lakh, and the average salary was Rs 6 lakh.

Students with CAT / MAT / XAT / CMAT / ATMA / GMAT scores can visit www.ipeindia.org for online application. For further details, they can reach the IPE at 93919 32129 / 91547 09139, it said.

Addl Inspector, his wife killed in accident

HANS NEWS SERVICE
ABDULLAHPURMET

SULTAN Bazar police station Additional Inspector and his wife died on the spot after their car hits a parked lorry in the early hours of Saturday. According to details, Additional Inspector Laxman (39) and his wife Jhansi (34) were travelling from Suryapet to Hyderabad. At the time of incident, Laxman's wife Jhansi was driving the car and hit a parked lorry from behind on NH65 at Abdullahpurmet of Rangareddy district. The couple died on the spot after suffering severe injuries in the mishap. The couple's seven-year-old son, Kushalav has survived without any injuries. Police immediately reached the spot and shifted the



The car that hit a parked lorry on national highway 65 at Abdullahpurmet of Rangareddy district on Saturday morning

bodies to hospital for postmortem. Police have registered a case and took up investigation.

TRS minority leader distributes 100 Eid kits

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

HOME Minister Mahmood Ali had distributed 100 Eid Kits to about 100 families on Saturday, which were sponsored by TRS senior Minority leader MK Badruddin on Ramzan festival amidst corona pandemic.

Speaking on the occasion, Home Minister Mahmood Ali stated that the corona pandemic was affecting the livelihood of all sections of people. During this time, MK Badruddin donating the kits on humanitarian grounds will have a great impact on the society and encourages others to support the needy people during this tough time, he added. He appealed to everyone to pray for the end of coronavirus globally and to follow necessary precautions to defeat the virus.

O₂ tankers exempted from toll fee

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

IN order to provide uninterrupted passage for tankers and containers carrying Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) across national highways, the user fee for such vehicles at Toll Plazas has been exempted.

Keeping in view the current unprecedented demand of Medical Oxygen across the country due to Covid-19 Pandemic, containers carrying Liquid Medical Oxygen will be treated at par with other emergency vehicles such as ambulances for a period of two months or till further orders.

Although the toll plazas have nearly zero waiting time after implementation of FASTag, National Highways Authority of India is al-

ready providing priority passage to such vehicles for quick and seamless transportation of medical oxygen. Instructions have also been issued by NHA1 to all its officials and other stakeholders to assist the government and private efforts to fight the pandemic in helping them in pro-active manner. The outbreak of Covid-19 has created huge demand of Liquid Medical Oxygen across the country. During the ongoing crisis, the timely delivery of Liquid Medical Oxygen to hospitals and medical centers is of paramount importance to save lives of patients critically affected by Covid-19. Exemption of payment of user fee at the Toll Plazas will ensure faster movement of Medical Oxygen on national highways.

CS inspects Golconda Area Hospital

HANS NEWS SERVICE
RANGAREDDY

CHIEF Secretary Somesh Kumar along with senior officials of health department and GHMC has inspected Golconda Area Hospital here on Saturday. The CS observed second dose of Covid vaccination drive at the hospital and also inspected the wards and various facilities at the hospital. Later, he interacted with people, who came for the second vaccine dose.

On this occasion, CS Somesh Kumar said that the people, who have taken their first dose of vaccine and have completed four weeks in case of Covaxin and six weeks for Covishield can go to any government vaccination centre on May 10, 11 and 12 for their second dose. As per the direction of Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao, oxygen pipeline facility is being provided to all beds. Accordingly, within a week



Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar inspecting Golconda Area Hospital in Rangareddy on Saturday

100 Covid-19 beds with oxygen supply will be available, he added.

He also assured that adequate numbers of beds are available for maternity and other emergency purposes. A new floor is being added where 120 beds will be made available. These beds will be commissioned within a month, the work is commenced and under progress, he added.

Later the Chief Secretary directed the officials to plan additional human resources and other requirements in a time bound manner.

Health department secretary Rizvi, GHMC Commissioner Lokesh Kumar, Zonal Commissioner Pravinya, TSIIIC MD Narasimha Reddy, TSMIDC MD K Chandrasekhar Reddy and officials also present.



MLA Dr Methuku Anand inaugurating a grain procurement centre in the market yard at Dharur mandal on Saturday

MLA inaugurates grain procurement centre

VIKARABAD

MLA Dr Methuku Anand inaugurated a grain procurement centre in the market yard at Dharur mandal on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, MLA Anand said the Telangana government has been introducing several welfare schemes for farmers and will purchase every grain. He lauded Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao for thinking about the welfare of the farmers. He said the main aim of CM KCR is to identify the needs of the

farmers and to develop them without any difficulty. Farmers should take advantage of these paddy procurement centres set up to provide support price to them, the MLA added.

AMC Chairman Ramulu, PACS Chairman Satyanarayana Reddy, ZPTC Sujatha, MPP Vijaya Lakshmi, sarpanch Chandramouli, mandal party president Venugopal Reddy, sarpanches committee president Veeresh, general secretary Younus, Hanmanth Reddy, directors and officials were present on the occasion.

State authorities shall not interfere with the peaceful possession of Devaryamjal lands: HC

LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD

THE High Court Vacation Single Bench comprising Justice T Vinod Kumar on Saturday heard the Writ Petition moved by way of House Motion filed by Sada Satyanarayana Reddy and four others seeking to set aside the GO Rt 1014 Dated 03.05.2021 through which the State government constituted a committee comprising four IAS officers to conduct an enquiry into the disputed Devarayamjal lands to determine the ownership.

The petitioners, also sought directions to state as interim relief that the respondent officials

shall not interfere with the peaceful possession of their properties around 58 acres of land situated at Devaryamjal village, Shamirpet mandal, Medchal-Malkajigiri district, issue notices and hearing opportunity shall be given to the petitioner before conducting any enquiry by the committee constituted under the GO Rt 1014.

Advocate General Banda Shivananda Prasad has submitted that the State has issued GO Rt 1014 based on the complaints and constituted a committee to conduct an only preliminary enquiry against the disputed lands situated at Devarayamjal and to submit a report to the State.



Further, the State will take action based on that report adhering to the provisions of applicable laws/act and the committee will not carry out any demolitions and dispossessions. As most of the people are voluntarily coming forward for enquiry by the committee, if anybody including petitioners has objec-

tions, notices will be put on them and hearing opportunities will also be provided to them before the enquiry.

Justice T Vinod Kumar while considering the submissions made by the Advocate General Banda Shivananda Prasad, refused to suspend the GO Rt 1014 and directed that the committee constituted by the Principal Secretary, General Administration Department, Telangana to Cause a Notice to the Petitioners before the Court and also offer an opportunity of hearing to the parties to put forth their contention, and any other similar Persons, who object to the Enquiry Proceedings contemplated by the authorities to cause a Notice. The

Court directed that the authorities shall not interfere with the peaceful possession of their lands since it is claimed by the State that this enquiry is mooted only for the purpose of submitting a report to the Government. The Parties shall co-operate with the Committee during the Enquiry by furnishing relevant documents. The Court directed both State and Petitioners/other similarly placed persons to abide by the order dictated in the open court till the copy of the order is available.

For counter with regard to the GO Rt 1014/2021, the Court has issued notices to the State and Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy Temple, Devarayamjal.

India's daily domestic O₂ production increased to 9,400 MT

NEW DELHI

THE production of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) has been maximized to meet the present demand of Covid-19 patients and the domestic production currently exceeded 9,400 Metric Tonne per day, the government said on Saturday.

Giridhar Aramane, Secretary, Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways informed while presenting the current scenario of LMO production, allocation and supply during the 25th meeting of the high-level Group of Ministers (GoM) on Covid-19 through video-conference.

Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan chaired the meeting that was also virtually attended by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai, and Minister of State for Health Ashwini Kumar Choubey. Vinod K. Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog was present virtually.

At the outset, the Health Minister apprised other members of GOM about the steadily growing trajectory of daily recoveries and also observed that "180 districts have showed no fresh cases in the



last seven days, 18 districts in 14 days, 54 districts in 21 days and 32 districts were bereft of any fresh cases in the last 28 days."

The number of critical cases

thus far includes 4,88,861 patients who required ICU beds, 1,70,841 patients who required ventilator support and 9,02,291 patients who were given oxygen

support, the Minister added.

As on date, Vardhan said, 1.34 per cent of the active caseload is in ICU, 0.39 per cent of them are on ventilators and 3.70 per cent of them are on oxygen support.

Vardhan informed the GOM that, "the cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country has crossed 16.73 crore on Saturday which includes nearly 23 lakh doses given on Friday".

"A total of 17,49,57,770 doses have been delivered to the states, out of which 16,65,49,583 doses have been consumed and 84,08,187 doses are still available with the states," said the Minister, adding a total of 53,25,000 doses are on the pipeline and will be supplied to the states soon.

He requested the states to set aside 70 per cent of the vaccines received through GoI channel for administration of the second dose. On the tests being conducted in India, the Health Minister noted that the country has reached a testing capacity of 25,00,000 tests per day. He informed that a total of 30,60,18,044 tests have been conducted so far in India, which includes 18,08,344 tests in the last 24 hours. From just one lab at NIV Pune, the country is presently served by 2,514 labs.

(ANS)

CWC to meet on Monday to discuss assembly poll results

Indian National Congress



NEW DELHI

WITH the rout in the recent assembly elections in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and Puducherry, the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the highest decision making body of the grand old party, will meet on Monday to discuss the issue.

In a letter to all CWC members, Congress General Secretary (Organisations) K.C. Venugopal said, "A meeting of CWC will be held on May 10 at 11 a.m. via video conferencing."

The notice of the CWC meet-

ing comes a day after the Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) meeting was chaired by party chief Sonia Gandhi on Friday with all the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha MPs participating.

During the CPP meeting on Friday, Congress president Sonia Gandhi termed her party's performance in the state assembly elections "unfortunate, disappointing and unexpected".

In the recently concluded assembly elections, results of which were declared on May 2, the Congress could not register win in any state, and its only con-

solation was in Tamil Nadu where the party contested along with DMK as its partner, and managed to win 18 seats.

Addressing the party MPs on Friday during a virtual meeting, she said, "Most unfortunately, our own performance in all the states was very disappointing and if I may say, unexpectedly so. The CWC is meeting shortly to review the results but it goes without saying that we as a party collective must draw the appropriate lessons from this setback in a spirit of humility and honesty." (ANS)

21 die in Raj village after Covid victim's burial sans protocols



JAIPUR

AROUND 21 persons lost their lives at a village in Rajasthan's Sikar district allegedly after the burial of a Covid victim, whose body was brought from Gujarat, without following any Covid protocols.

The incident was reported recently from Kheerava village in Sikar, the Assembly constituency of Rajasthan Congress chief and state Education Minister Govind Singh Dotasara.

Officials said that the corpse was brought from Gujarat and around 21 people, who came in contact with the body, lost their lives in the days after the final rites were performed in the village.

According to the officials, the Covid victim's infected body was brought to the village on April 21 and over 100 people attended the funeral which was conducted without following the Covid guidelines.

The body was taken out of the plastic bag and many people had touched it during the burial, they

said.

However, Lakshmanaraj sub-divisional officer Kulraj Meena said that out of the 21 deaths, only 3-4 deaths occurred due to Covid-19.

"The other deaths have been reported from the older age group. We have collected samples of 147 members of families where deaths have been reported to check whether it is a case of community transmission," Meena told the media.

Meena and other officials visited the village after receiving the report along with a medical team which directed for immediate sanitisation of the village. Medicine kits were also distributed to cure the other infected people.

Sikar district collector Aviral Chaturvedi said that officials visited the village and made the people aware of the fact that all social gatherings, including for last rites, should follow the proper Covid protocols. Door-to-door survey was also conducted to know the actual situation, he said. (ANS)

Mamata accuses Election Commission of directly helping BJP

KOLKATA

SPEAKING on the first day of the Assembly after returning to power for the third time in a row, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday stroked a major controversy by accusing the Election Commission of India of directly helping the BJP during the recently-concluded Assembly polls in the state, in which the Trinamool Congress cruised to a landslide victory.

She also alleged that unable to accept the mandate of the people, the saffron brigade was inciting violence in the state.

"I can challenge that had the Election Commission not helped them (BJP) directly, they would not have won even 30 seats. In this election, rigging took place in some places under the watch of the poll panel.

There should be electoral reforms made immediately, else the democratic fabric of the country will be jeopardised," Banerjee said during her speech on the floor of the Assembly, where Biman Banerjee was elected the Speaker for the third straight terms. Warning stern ac-



tion against the BJP for 'inciting' violence in the state, the Chief Minister said, "For the last six months, they have not done anything but pushing the country to the brink of destruction. They had only one target and that was to capture Bengal and now they (BJP) cannot accept the mandate of the common man. So they are trying to incite violence in the state and are posting fake videos." The Chief Minister also directed the administration to take stern action against anyone trying to fan communal tension in the state.

"Do not compromise, take stern action against people talking on communal lines as per the law, be it me or anyone else," she said. Banerjee also attacked the Centre and said that in the last

six months, it did no work and only tried to capture Bengal and travelled to the state every day, thus pushing the country to the threshold of a health crisis.

"To set up a double-engine, they pushed India to the threshold of Covid-19 destruction. In the last six months, the Central government did no work, but came to Bengal everyday to capture it," she said, adding that the central forces are roaming around in the state without undergoing any RT-PCR tests, thus spreading the infection.

A host of Union ministers and chief ministers of BJP-ruled states, besides the party's top leadership, were seen canvassing in West Bengal in the run-up to the high-octane Assembly elections. Banerjee also reiterated the demand for universal vaccination, stating that it should have been the priority of the Centre, but instead the government is spending Rs 50,000 crore on the new Parliament building, PM's residence and statues, among other things. The opposition BJP legislators boycotted the House proceedings protesting against the killing of their party workers in the post-poll violence in the state. (ANS)

UP govt to hold funerals of Covid victims free of cost

LUCKNOW

WITH the bodies of deceased Covid-19 patients piling up in large numbers, the Uttar Pradesh government on Saturday passed an order according to which it would hold the funerals of all those persons who died of the virus without charging any money. This government order would be applicable within the Municipal Corporation limits.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced this deci-

sion after reviewing the matter with Team Nine about the exorbitant amount of money charged for a funeral following death due to Covid-19 in several districts.

Additional Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh has sent a letter to all the municipal corporations and civic bodies directing them to arrange free funerals of deceased Covid patients falling within the limits of the urban bodies.

The municipal corporations will bear the expenses of funerals

at all crematoriums, cemeteries and cremation grounds falling within the limits of the corporation.

It has been made mandatory to follow Covid-19 protocols while conducting such funerals.

The expenditure incurred on the funerals will be met by the urban bodies from their own resources or from the State Finance Commission.

A maximum amount of Rs 5,000 will be spent on each funeral. (ANS)

Arms cache recovered in J&K's Doda



JAMMU

AN arms cache was recovered in J&K's Doda district during a joint operation by the police and the army.

In a statement on Saturday army said a joint team of Indian Army, CRPF, SSB and JKP launched a search operation in area of Chakarandi village in Doda district.

During the joint search operation the security forces recovered a cache of 40 kg of high explosive, four electrical detonators, electrical wire,

power sources, six heavy duty cells, insulation tape, pressure cooker IED 5 ltrs, iron pipe IED 5 inch and 1.5 kg iron splinters.

"These caches have been created by the terrorists in these remote areas to be used for destabilising the security situation which is heading towards normalcy," army said.

The Indian Army and security forces in Doda have successfully recovered IEDs, explosives, arms and ammunition in recent months to thwart the nefarious designs of terrorists and their few supporters. (ANS)

Railways deliver 3,400 MT LMO



NEW DELHI

THE Indian Railways said on Saturday that it has delivered nearly 3,400 MT of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) in more than 220 tankers to various states across the country till now. A Railway Ministry spokesperson said that on Saturday, the highest ever single-day load of 718 MT LMO is on the run in different Oxygen Expresses trains. He also said that 41 tankers are on the run at the moment. The official said that 222 MT LMO is on the way for delivery to Uttar

Pradesh, while another train with 180 MT LMO is headed towards Haryana.

The spokesperson said that 54 Oxygen Express trains have completed their journey so far. It is the endeavour of the Railways to deliver as much LMO as possible in the shortest possible time to the requesting states, the official said. Till Saturday, 230 MT LMO has been offloaded in Maharashtra, 968 MT in Uttar Pradesh, 249 MT in Madhya Pradesh, 355 MT in Haryana, 123 MT in Telangana, 40 MT in Rajasthan and 1,427 MT in Delhi. (ANS)

CBSE's 'dost for life' app to counsel students from class 9 to 12

NEW DELHI

THE CBSE has launched a mobile app with the aim to solve the mental health problems of students from class 9 to 12 during the ongoing Covid pandemic.

With the help of the app, students and parents will be able to get answers to their questions on education, health and social topics. This mobile counselling app of the CBSE is named 'dost for life'.

According to the CBSE, the

app is to be used to improve students' psycho-social wellness. From Monday, this app will be fully available for students.

Free live counselling sessions will be conducted for the students through this app, the CBSE said. At least 83 volunteers have already joined for live counselling. Of these, 66 are in India and the rest 17 are in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Nepal, Oman, Kuwait, Japan and the USA. The counselling sessions will be held three

days a week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. and 1.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Materials related to education, society, emotion and behaviour will be made available in the app. The anxiety related to the examinations, Internet addiction disorder, depression and special learning disability will be removed through the help of this app.

The app contains many features, including counselling sessions, expert advice, guid-

ance on what to do after class XII, mental health tips, and an audio-video protocol related to Covid-19.

Apart from this, CBSE Board will give another chance to the students of class X to pass the exams.

Students of 10th will pass on the basis of internal assessment and half-yearly examination. Despite this, if a student fails, he/she will be given another chance to take compartmental examination.

(ANS)



NAVY TO OPERATE OXYGEN PLANTS IN AP HOSPITALS

- 4 teams will be deputed for oxygen audit in govt, teaching hospitals
- AP govt representative M T Krishna Babu holds talks with ENC and VSP chiefs on oxygen supply
- Principal Secretary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal says the govt has invited bids for purchase of liquid medical oxygen from foreign countries

AMARAVATI/VISAKHAPATNAM

EASTERN Naval Command will operate and maintain oxygen plants in all government and teaching hospitals across the state. The decision was taken at the meeting of AP government’s representative MT Krishna Babu with Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) of Eastern Naval Command and chief managing director of Vizag Steel Plant on supply, storage and maintenance of oxygen in the state here on Saturday.

The Navy will take the responsibility of fixing leakages in oxygen plants, condition of plants and precautions to be taken in the plants.

Four special teams were formed and each team has management responsibilities in three to four districts. Arrangements are made to airlift these teams to the required locations if necessary. These teams will fix problems in supply of oxygen and solve other problems.

Principal secretary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal, addressing



a press conference here on Saturday evening, said the ENC has also agreed to ferry 25 cryogenic tankers from abroad to the state.

“We have invited bids for purchase of liquid medical oxygen from foreign countries. As and when we find the sellers, the ENC will ship LMO to the state as well,” Singhal said.

The ENC has also agreed to make available 50 beds at its base hospital INS Kalinga for (civilian) Covid-19 patients.

Besides, it would create another temporary facility with 150 beds at Kancharapalem in Visakhapatnam for civilian patients, the Principal Secretary added.

The state government would provide doctors and other medical support staff at these facilities.

Singhal said the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, the corporate entity of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, has already readied a 200-bed facility for treating coronavirus-infected persons.

“RINL has agreed to create a facility of a total 1,000 beds in a

phased manner,” he added.

RINL has so far supplied 3,214 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen to AP and another 264 tonnes to Karnataka and Maharashtra.

Singhal said the Centre increased oxygen allocation to AP from 480 to 590 tonnes, “but even that is insufficient.”

The AP government requested the Centre that at least 1,000 tonnes of oxygen be supplied to the state, that too from nearby sources.

The principal secretary said they have requested the department of space to supply oxygen from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota to meet the medical requirements, if ISRO was not using it.

On availability of beds for Covid-19 patients, Singhal said of the total 7,065 ICU beds (in both government and private hospitals), 6,300 were currently occupied.

Of the 23,525 beds with oxygen supply facility, 21,950 were filled. Another 14,784 patients were lodged in Covid Care Centres, he said.

State logs 20,065 new cases, 96 fatalities

AMARAVATI

THE state reported 20,065 fresh cases of Covid-19, 19,272 recoveries and 96 deaths in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Saturday. Saturday’s toll was the highest after the 97 during the first wave on August 22 last year.

The latest health bulletin said the gross coronavirus positives touched 12,65,439 from 1.72 crore tests. The total recoveries increased to 10,69,432 and toll to 8,615. The state now has 1,87,392 active cases, it said. As many as 1,01,571 tests were conducted in 24 hours which resulted in a positivity rate of 19.75 per cent, according to principal secretary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal.

The bulletin said Visakhapatnam district registered the highest number of 2,525 fresh cases of Covid-19 in 24 hours, followed by East Godavari 2,370 and Chittoor 2,269. While nine other districts each reported new cases in the 1,000-1,800 range, Vizianagaram added only 650 in a day. West Godavari district had 14 fresh Covid-19 fatalities, Visakhapatnam 12, Anantapur and Guntur 10 each in a day. East Godavari and Vizianagaram reported nine fresh deaths each, Kurnool and SPS Nellore seven each, Chittoor six, Kadapa five, Krishna four and Srikakulam three in 24 hours.

COVID TREATMENT

Improper medication is leading to chaos: Expert

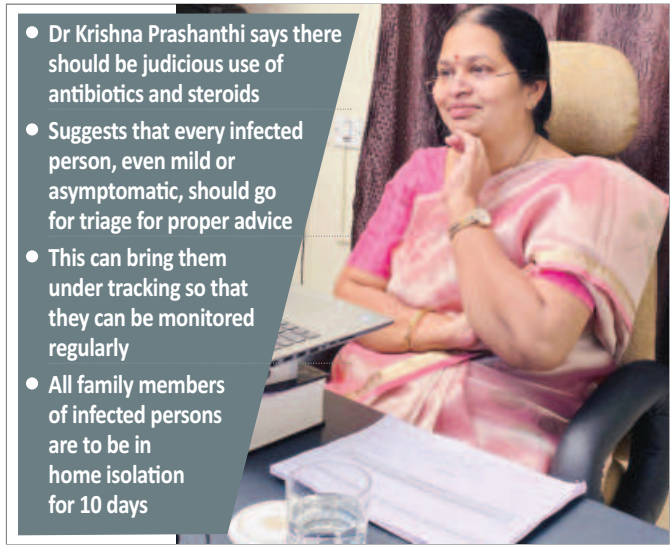
V PRADEEP KUMAR
TIRUPATI

PANIC situation and improper medication are complicating the Covid-19 management in several patients and leading to so much chaos, says senior consultant physician and vice-chairperson of Association of Physicians of India, AP state, Dr P Krishna Prasanthi. In an interview to The Hans India on the Covid-19 management, particularly for those under home isolation, she said that when they are having any symptoms, people are going for test and using medication on their own.

When people go for home isolation on their own, it would be difficult to track them in a proper way and extend timely medical care. This has been pushing many of them into critical situations and this is one reason for the increasing oxygen requirement. Using all the medicines at a time as they get the list of prescribed medicines for Covid-19 patients through WhatsApp is a cause for concern, she said.

All Covid-19 positive patients should invariably go for triage (where order of treatment is decided) and take proper advice to proceed further. This will automatically bring them under tracking through which their day to day health parameters can be monitored by qualified people who can advise them what medicines are to be used from time to time.

“There should be a judicious



- Dr Krishna Prasanthi says there should be judicious use of antibiotics and steroids
- Suggests that every infected person, even mild or asymptomatic, should go for triage for proper advice
- This can bring them under tracking so that they can be monitored regularly
- All family members of infected persons are to be in home isolation for 10 days

use of antibiotics. For instance, both Azithromycin and Doxycycline should not be used simultaneously. After completing the course of Azithromycin only other antibiotics are to be used. Steroids should not be taken during the first five days. Only if fever is not subsiding after 5th day, if CT scan shows a high CORADS score or if inflammatory markers are high in blood, selected steroid tablets are to be used and that too on doctors’ advice only,” she explained.

Further, people with BP, sugar, thyroid and any other comorbidities have to continue their regular medication. For everything, patients should get the advice of their family doctor or any other qualified doctors only. They have to monitor their saturation levels using pulse oximeter for every 4-5 hours,

BP levels and sugar levels using glucometer.

Apart from Covid positive patients, all their family members also should be under home isolation since the virus is found to be spreading through the air. Those who tested RT-PCR positive but are asymptomatic have to be under home isolation for 10 days from the first day of onset of clinical symptoms.

Dr Prasanthi also said that patients who are in home isolation should be admitted to hospital if they have any sudden difficulty in breathing, any chest discomfort or chest pain of sudden onset. She underlined that patients should not go for CT scan in mild illness and in early phases of infection. Repeated CT scans in a short period are not good for health. Doctors will advise when a patient should undergo a CT scan, she said.

TDP stages virtual protests across State

AMARAVATI

RESPONDING to a call by party chief N Chandrababu Naidu, TDP leaders and cadres took part in the ‘virtual at-home protests’ against the Jagan Mohan Reddy government’s ‘callous indifference’ to saving people from the Covid second wave.

From their homes and offices, the TDP leaders held placards and raised slogans demanding the AP government to administer vaccine and save lives, in accordance with the call given by Chandrababu Naidu.

TDP state president K Atchanaidu, former ministers Ch Ayyanna Patrudu, Nakka Anand Babu, K S Jawahar, senior leader K Kala Venkata Rao, Telugu Yu-vatha AP president Sriram Chinababu and scores of others participated in the online protests. They held online placards with the slogan ‘Give Vaccine and Save Lives’.

The TDP leaders advised the Chief Minister to stop political victimisation of the opposition leaders and start procuring adequate vaccine to rescue the people.

Accusing the Jagan regime of being anti-people, the TDP leaders said that the rulers were not ready to spend on the vaccination even half of the funds they had spent for giving their party colours to the government buildings.

The TDP leaders demanded that Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy to come out of his Tadepalli ‘palace’ and see for

- Party leaders and cadres hold placards, raise slogans against the Jagan govt’s ‘apathetic’ attitude in dealing with Covid crisis
- Demand procurement of adequate quantity of vaccines
- Ask CM to come out of his residence in Tadepalli and see first hand the plight of common people

himself first hand how the common people were facing a grave humanitarian crisis. The Chief Minister’s negligence towards vaccination was causing loss of many lives in the state. He should wake up from his sleep and focus on free vaccine to all so as to secure the future of the state. The YSRCP leaders would have to pay a heavy price if they would continue to ignore people in the fight against the Covid, they warned.

The TDP leaders strongly objected to the ministers still talking about the Chief Minister’s letters to the Central government for supply of vaccines.

The said that the Centre has given flexibility to the states to buy vaccines directly from the manufacturers. Most other states have placed orders and booked vaccines in advance but the greedy rulers of Andhra Pradesh did not take timely steps to save the lives of their people, they alleged.

Amaravati

TDP on Saturday termed the filing of a criminal case against former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu as a contempt of the Supreme Court which has ordered the Centre and the state governments recently not to harass the public in the name of objectionable Covid related comments.

Party national spokesman K Pattabhi Ram said that the director general of police would be answerable to the Supreme Court for violating its recent judgement which supported the people’s right to raise their problems

Case against Naidu ‘contempt’ of SC orders: TDP

- Party spokesperson Pattabhi Ram points to recent apex court fiat to Centre and States that people should not be harassed in the name of objectionable Covid-related comments
- Says CCMB has not issued any statement denying the origin of N440K strain of virus in Kurnool

relating to the epidemic without fear. The Chief Minister was not fulfilling his basic responsibility of reaching out to the suffering public and he was only concentrating on harassment

when Chandrababu Naidu was creating awareness.

Addressing a press conference here, the TDP leader dared the Jagan regime to register cases against

Prime Minister Narendra Modi for spreading panic in the nation by talking about new mutants likely to create havoc. Many foreign countries were blocking travellers from India and strictly enforcing 14-day quarantine considering the severity of infections in the country. Can the Prime Minister’s comments be blamed for this hostile scenario, he asked.

Pattabhi said the state government’s allegations against Naidu

were baseless considering the fact that it was true the CCMB scientists first found the N440K variant in the Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. Even after so much controversy, the CCMB has not issued any statement denying the origin of N440K in Kurnool. The national media and channels have also carried reports widely how the strain that originated in Kurnool was wreaking havoc on different parts of the country, he said.

Naidu booked over new virus strain claim

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

DISTRICT SP Dr Fakkeerappa Kagineelli said Kurnool I Town police registered a case against former chief minister and TDP national president N Chandrababu Naidu on charges of spreading false news that a new strain N440K exists in Kurnool.

Addressing the media here on Saturday on the issue, the SP said Chandrababu Naidu made a false propaganda that a new strain of N440K virus, which is said to be 10 to 15 times more dangerous than the previous variant exists in Kurnool district.

But the scientists of Central for Cellular and Micro Biology (CCMB) had clarified that for the samples of Telangana, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh states, the genome sequencing is B.1.36. The strain was prevalent in December 2020 and January, February

2021 and dropped down drastically in March, Dr Kagineelli said.

The SP the case against Chandrababu Naidu was registered on the basis of a complaint by a senior advocate Masipogu Subbaiah. A case under Sections 155, 505(1)(b) and National Disaster Management Act 2005 was registered.

The SP said a notice would be served to Naidu under Section 41 (a) CrPC. The investigation officer would go to Hyderabad on Sunday to serve the notice to Naidu, he said, adding that Naidu would be asked to attend the inquiry within a period of 7 days from the date of receipt of notice.

- Kurnool SP says a senior advocate lodged a complaint against the former CM
- Naidu will be served a notice today asking him to attend inquiry in 7 days

DRDO in defence against Covid attack

Continued from P1

Based on these results, the Drugs Controller General of India’s (DCGI) Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) permitted a Phase-II clinical trial of 2-DG in Covid-19 patients in May 2020.

The DRDO, along with its industry partner Dr Reddy’s started the clinical trials to test the safety and efficacy of the drug in Covid-19 patients.

In Phase-II trials (including dose-ranging) conducted from May to October 2020, the drug was found to be safe in Covid-19 patients and showed significant improvement in their recovery.

Phase II-a was conducted in six hospitals and Phase II-b (doses ranging) clinical trial was conducted at 11 hospitals all over the country.

Phase-II trials were conducted on 110 patients.

In terms of efficacy trends, the patients treated with 2-DG showed faster symptomatic cure than Standard of Care (SoC) on various end-points. A significantly favourable trend that two-and-half days difference was seen in terms of the median time to achieving normalisation of specific vital signs parameters when compared to SoC.

Based on these successful results, the DCGI further permitted the Phase-III clinical trials in November 2020. The Phase-III clinical trials were conducted on 220 patients between December 2020 and March 2021 at 27 Covid hospitals in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana,

Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The detailed data of the phase-III clinical trials was presented to the DCGI. In the 2-DG arm, a significantly higher proportion of patients improved symptomatically and became free from supplemental oxygen dependence (42 per cent vs 31 per cent) by Day-3 in comparison to SoC, indicating an early relief from oxygen therapy/dependence, it said.

A similar trend was observed in patients aged more than 65 years. On May 1, 2021, the DCGI granted permission for the Emergency Use of this drug as an adjunct therapy in moderate to severe Covid-19 patients. Being a generic molecule and analogue of glucose, it can be easily produced and made available in plenty in the country.

Accept privacy policy or lose functions: WhatsApp

Continued from P1

After persistent reminders, the users will encounter limited functionality on WhatsApp until they accept the updates.

This will not happen to all users at the same time.

“You won’t be able to access your chat list, but you can still answer incoming phone and

video calls. If you have notifications enabled, you can tap on them to read or respond to a message or call back a missed phone or video call,” WhatsApp warned.

After a few weeks of limited functionality, you won’t be able to receive incoming calls or notifications and WhatsApp will stop sending messages and calls to your phone. WhatsApp,

however, won’t delete your account if you don’t accept the update.

“No one will have their accounts deleted or lose functionality of WhatsApp on May 15 because of this update,” the company informed. For the last several weeks, WhatsApp has been displaying a notification to its users providing more information about the update.

A day in the life of a doc in testing times

Continued from P1

Hundreds of Covid patients have passed through the maternity hospital, which had to include a Covid ward last year in May when cases began rising.

“The first case came in mid-April but we transferred the

case to the Nair hospital nearby as there were no facilities in our hospital. On May 10, we started a Covid-19 ward. Since then, we’ve seen around 513 cases in this hospital,” Pawar told PTI.

Working at least eight hours a day, six days a week and on call 24X7, he wears his dis-

comfort lightly.

“The eight hours are really packed at the hospital... new admissions, discharges, rounds and monitoring medicines for patients, and now even the vaccination drive. We have to do all this while ensuring we don’t contract the virus,” he said.

When you are declared positive, don't turn negative

I was a victim of global pandemic of Covid and successfully overcome with the help of Doctor's advice, well-wishers and God's grace. I got fever on April 1 and was under the opinion that it was due to urinary infection. The cough started from April 3 onwards. I was tested Negative for Covid but the symptoms continued.

On 6th April, my paternal uncle, T Rajeswar Rao took initiative and approached Dr. Suneel Kumar, Alkapuri with my medical reports. The doctor advised self-isolation for 17days and immediately started treatment online. His prescribed medicines paused the intensity and I could see the improvement of my health day by day. The fever came to normal on April 14 and cough on



21st. I was totally normal on April 22 onwards.

Meanwhile, my father and his elder brother Sri T Sainath both homeopathy experts gave medicines for cough and lung infection which supported for my recovery.

My mother's prayers, my wife's dedicated services during my isolation period and my children's love and affection towards me gave enormous strength and boosted my energy. I strongly opine that without

the support and blessings of near and dear, one couldn't pass through the tough times. Will power is no doubt a saviour at all times, but a strong belief is always above than will power.

T Sri Kumar, Hyderabad

The Election Commission had a tough task to undertake



This doesn't mean that the EC is not at fault. Holding elections at the time of pandemic was an ill-timed decision. But if elections were not held, how could the people

decide whom they want to lead them in the fight against Covid-19 for the next five years.

The Madras High Court should not have used these 'harsh' words

as the Supreme Court of India said. High Courts should maintain the dignity of other institutions such as EC while commenting on them. The Madras High Court used the wrong words in identifying EC's mistake. The EC had issued Covid-19 guidelines for the elections but they were not followed by the political parties and their candidates. Instead of commenting about EC, the Madras High Court should have ordered to take strict actions against those candidates who contributed immensely in bringing Covid-19 back to India.

Kartikey Upadhyay, Vadodra

RBI initiatives and Covid 2.0

In order to tackle the crisis brought about by the surging second wave of the Covid pandemic, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) adopted some appropriate measures. However, it remains to be seen whether they will help guard small businesses and individual borrowers. Obviously, the Rs.50,000 liquidity window opened up to help the healthcare system shows its awareness of the gravity of present health crisis and its willingness to take positive action. Unfortunately, the central, state and local governments failed miserably to react promptly to the crisis and take practical measures to overcome it.

In fact, many small and medium enterprises are still struggling with the impact of the crisis. The new loan restructuring facility offered to small businesses that have loans up to Rs 25 crore will certainly help micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) overcome the present crisis. Banks have not been asked to offer moratorium. Instead of that, loan recasts have been allowed. Banks have been allowed to review the working capital needs of MSME borrowers. As many MSMEs supply to other businesses and governments, and since payments have not been made properly, they are in financial crisis. The RBI must be lauded for taking into consideration the lives and livelihoods of people in its response. In the Rs 50,000 crore facility opened up for health care sector a targeted policy response of RBI is visible. A "Covid loan book"

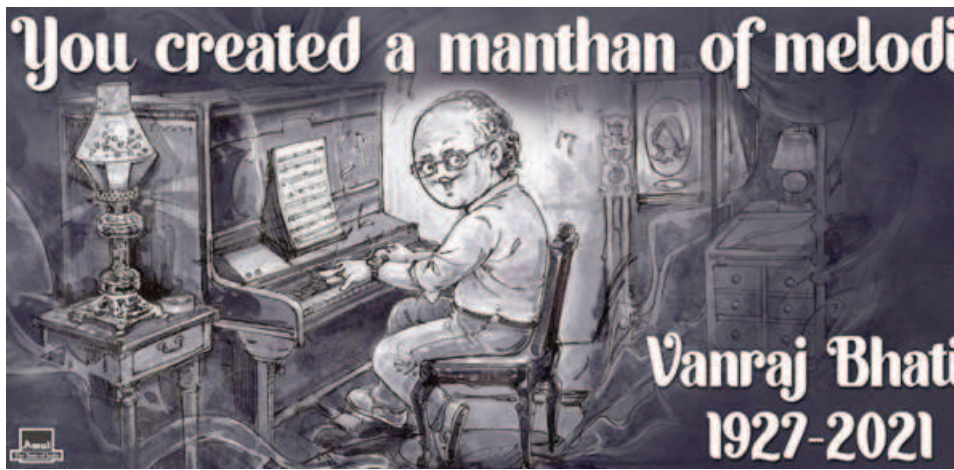
that aggregates all loans has been created. An additional low-cost liquidity of Rs 10,000 crore is being made available to small finance banks to give loans up to Rs 10 lakh per borrower. The RBI has also taken some measures to help state governments which face financial crisis brought about by the pandemic. The RBI has decided to ease some of the acute liquidity pressure on states.

True, the RBI has appropriately responded to the crisis precipitated by the second wave of Covid-19. It has targeted its response to address the weaker and more vulnerable sections of the economy. However, it must be understood that only making lending easier or loans cheaper or allowing borrowers more time to repay will not help overcome the crisis caused by the pandemic.

For example, only finance cannot help enhance health care and health infrastructure substantially in a short period of time. It is a fact that loans or the promise of loans will not be an answer to the financial difficulties faced by the poor, especially the poorer sections like the migrant labourers. However, from the timely response of the RBI to the present crisis brought about by the pandemic, the government can learn valuable lessons. Governments at different levels must wake up to the reality of the situation and take urgent measures to ease the hardships faced by people in the wake of the second wave of the pandemic.

Venu G.S. Kollam

Vanraj Bhatia will be missed



In legendary Music director Vanraj Bhatia's demise the Indian music world has lost a genius, a virtuoso who with his outstanding knowledge of music took Indian music to great heights. The most amazing fact about Vanraj Bhatia was that unlike other music composers who focussed only on one genre he gave his best in almost everything that needed music - be it the commercial films, the art movies or parallel cinemas, advertisement jingles, serials and what not. He gave a magical effect with his mesmerizing music skill. Vanraj carved a niche for himself with his distinct notes and soul stirring tunes in the seventies and the eighties in the art cinema circuit and Indian TV serials.

Bhatia composed music for movies including classics like 36 Chowringhee Lane, Jaane Bhi Do Yaaron, Manthan and Ankur in which music had it's own unique role to play. The song 'Mero Gaam Katha Parey' from Benegal's Manthan is an example of this music wizards outstanding skill in music. The song and the tune was also used in a brilliant ad for Amul later which was also composed by him.

He also composed the opening tunes for some of the most popular Doordarshan serials of yesteryears when serials were simply part of the Indian family's daily home guest. Some of the most popular television shows of the 1980's like Wagle Ki Duniya, Khandaan, Naqab,

Lifeline, Banegi Apni Baat and Tamas had music by this great composer. The legendary composer had won the National Film Award for Best Music for Govind Nihalani's Tamas in 1988. His superb music composition for Bharat Ek Khoj is truly a class apart and timeless.

He was also one of the pioneers of spiritual music with albums such as Bhagavad Gita and Anant. He had more than 7000 advertising jingles to his credit out of which the most loved ones composed for Liril, Dulux and Amul stay etched in Indian hearts. Vanraj bhatia's music, just like it's timeless beauty and classic enchantment will definitely remain immortal and unfading.

M Pradyut, Kannur

US and patent waiver

It's good that USA has agreed to waive the patent protection on Covid vaccine taking cue from UK, France and some other developed nations. India and South Africa had proposed the waiver and got support of many countries at WTO to ramp up vaccine production hassle free and in time to fight the pandemic globally. But majority of developed nations resisted such move. Now it's a good sign that they are changing their minds and coming out positively.

As no one is protected until everyone is protected in this pandemic, there must be equitable distribution of vaccine for all. Waiving patent rights would be, if materialised, a major step in right direction assuring technology transfer among countries. The next step must be setting up well coordinated mechanism for distribution to all.

G David Milton, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

D V G Sankararao, Nellimarla

ACT BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, MODI JI!



present taking way hundreds of lives by the day.

Such miserable failure on the part of the government not coming to the rescue of people is pathetic. Further even when the first and foremost duty of the government was to check super spreaders and cautioning them for not strictly abiding Covid norms and similarly not able to identify patients requiring hospitalisation, oxygen, beds, drugs besides any other critical care facilities for controlling spread of mutant at a fast pace is the reason for more getting affected.

There is no denying the fact that the road to meet the unprecedented challenge squarely lay on the doors of government which should have risen to the occasion with out-of-the-box solutions keeping in view the health infrastructure has limited resources but sadly been indifferent and denial mode did not try to put the best foot forward to save patients dying due to lack of health facilities even as situation

slipped from bad to worse.

As people would never forgive the government and political parties for the loss of many precious lives even as deaths keep piling daily, it is time government need to change its overall perception by implementing sustainable solutions to emerge out of the second wave while heeding to the warning of top health experts to smother the third wave by adopting aggressive containment strategy by stepping up testing and enhancing infrastructure by establishing more oxygen plants, ICU beds, ramp up vaccine manufacturing to limit morbidity and above all meaningful allocations to public health service to run the country's health system effectively.

All in all, in order to see a good and efficient health system, it is essential that such measures are put in place on top priority because this is not the last wave or pandemic the nation will face.

K R Srinivasan, Secunderabad

Covid 2.0, elections and muddle-headed Modi govt

West Bengal post and pre-poll violence is dominating the political space and federal relations are increasingly becoming strenuous and complicated. A ground is being prepared for sacking newly elected TMC government for its allegedly being in cahoots with the hooligans. A spate of murders and hounding of BJP workers have led to their exodus to neighbouring Assam to protect their lives. Mamata had refused to condemn the violence thus giving ammunition to the charges of 'state sponsored vendetta'.

There is no doubt that BJP had gone full steam to dislodge her on charges of misrule. Mamata too had gone overboard and is unleashing brute power against its political opponents and letting loose mafia to control businesses and trade. Recent spate of murders, beating kith and kin of BJP workers are all sheer acts of vendetta politics which needs to be condemned.

BJP's campaign remained largely confined to 'charges' and 'some baseless charges' and apart from it BJP played a civilised game. Its defeat was massive and masses have rejected their charges unequivocally. Mamata should have comforted herself from the ignominious defeat she handed over to their arch rival but even before she was anointed CM for third time, she let loose reign of terror.

The false narrative created by BJP, that they are winning big was boisterous and self-clapping on their own poor joke. BJP is under tremendous pressure to impose President's rule by invoking Article 356 to restore law and order. If it bites the bullet, things may go out of control and WB may be in for internal strife for a long, long time.

Election Commission which announced 8 phase elections in WB was either expecting large scale violence or pandering to TMC's charge of accommodating BJP leaders' schedule for more pointed campaigning and coverage. Chennai HC had taken a serious view of the decision to allow elections in five states

when the virus graph was flattening. BJP's calculations to wrest Bengal from Mamata proved to be their nemesis.

When the world was vaccinating more and more population and increasingly becoming immune to contracting virus, India is leading second wave with unprecedented numbers and deaths.

There are lessons here. When UK strain was showing fatal spread, India allowed flights from UK and Canada, which caused spread of virus on one hand and allowed Khalistani extremists to be part of farmers' protests which also caused mutant virus to break fresh grounds in India.

Thoughtless passivity in matters of extreme sensibilities have become norm with the Govt. They can learn from Australia and US who lost no time to suspend flights and Australia going a step forward announcing jail and hefty fines if someone tried to enter their country.

Government's mindless announcement to open vaccination above 18 years without arranging vaccines is another avoidable mistake. What was the hurry and phased vaccination drive was going smoothly. It could be felt of one more month at best. Rise of cases in southern states is a big cause of worry. Kerala which had shown early results to tame the virus has become new hotspot with 40k cases being reported on daily basis. TN, Karnataka, Telangana and AP too are reporting higher cases. One factor which can be counted are the elections.

Now central government have refused to intervene and impose lockdown and have left to states to do their own biddings. It's a right move. States are in better position to enforce discipline and monitor which they were demanding in the first place. Let central government procure vaccines and make available to inoculate every citizen in the next three months. Sooner they do this better are chances to check the spread of virus.

Ashok Goswami, Mumbai



DMK President M K Stalin's assumption of office as Chief Minister in the absence of M Karunanidhi and J Jayalithaa on the political stage marks the beginning of a new era in Tamil Nadu politics. M K Stalin takes up the reins of power amidst the Covid-19 pandemic to find his job more challenging and his responsibility greater. His government must

What will Stalin do in these challenging times?

step up efforts to contain Covid-19; it must be its first task. Science and empathy for people in difficult and distressed situations should guide its handling of the pandemic.

The change of government in Tamil Nadu is significant in terms of ideology and culture, apart from politics. The new government is unlikely to be pliable in the manner of the EPS government for the BJP to implement its agenda. On a lighter note, the DMK should be beholden to the AIADMK for making it easier for it to come to power by its alliance with the BJP. As the inheritor of the legacy of Periyar, Anna and Kalaigarnar, M.K.Stalin will continue to be in the vanguard of the ideological battle against Hindutva. As a leader representing the will of the people of Tamil Nadu and occupying the seat of

power, he will protect and preserve Tamil culture and identity, oppose Hindi imposition, NEET and discriminatory laws like CAA and prevent desecration of the statues of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and Periyar and painting of sage-poet Thiruvalluvar saffron and communal disturbances by right-wing groups.

The sanction of Rs. 4000 for each household as Covid relief, free medical treatment for Covid patients in private hospitals, reduction of Rs.3 for one litre of Aavin milk, free ride for women in government-run town buses and setting up of an exclusive department for redress of grievances in 100 days' time announced by M.K.Stalin on the day of his being sworn in CM come as clear indications that the government is determined to play its role as the main

provider of welfare.

We were disappointed that only two women were made Ministers. A mere 6% of berths for women who make up half of the total population does not help bridge gender inequality. The underrepresentation for women in the Cabinet must be rectified to achieve some semblance of gender balance.

M.K.Stalin holds power as an instrument for public service. It will be his endeavor to ensure that his administration is free from the taint of corruption. He has to provide a people-friendly, welfare and development-oriented and corruption-free government if he is to make the DMK people's natural choice in 2026 and carry out his plan of action for ten years.

G David Milton, Maruthancode, Tamil Nadu

WHY IS DELHI GOVT STRIPPED OF ITS REPRESENTATIVE POWER?

FATIMA HASAN

THE chaotic setback the country is facing due to the Corona pandemic is being exploited in different ways. The elected leaders in India are making the best use (or rather misuse) of it by passing the laws and amendments favourable to them. The Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was introduced and passed in Parliament amid protests during 22nd and 24th March 2021. The Amendment Bill got the President of India's assent on 28th March and the Act came into effect from 27th April 2021.

The rift between the Chief Minister and the Lieutenant Governor of the Union Territory of Delhi is likely to become more blatant since the amendment to give LG powers is passed and it has become an Act. In a way, it can be said that the move again asserts that Delhi is a Union Territory and it will remain so with more powers to the Lieutenant Governor and it will never become a full-fledged State.

This development will not reduce the face-off between the two administrators but rather it will add to it for years to come. As the famous line goes, "There cannot be two swords in one shield." The Chief Minister is the one who enjoys the mandate of the people and, on the other face of the coin, is the Lieutenant Governor who enjoys the mandate of the Union Gov-



ernment. This is more like imposing the President's rule under Article 356- wherein the Governor assumes all the powers. This will lead to dual administration and the ultimate sufferer will be the people. As it will give rise to law and order problems, there shall be power play between the two kings as to who is right in ruling and what decisions who can take.

A Union Territory is a small administrative unit that is ruled by the Union. The Union Territories are administered and controlled directly by the Government of India. The President of India is the executive head of the Union Territory. But Delhi, Puducherry and Jammu & Kashmir have an elected legislative assembly and an executive council of ministers with partially State-like functions. Jammu & Kashmir are new to this club but let us take the example of Puducherry which is often in clouds

of war between the Chief Minister and the Lieutenant Governor there.

The present amendment states "Government will mean Lieutenant Governor" and now all the files will have to be sent to the L-G for his scrutiny. The GNCTD Bill says: For Delhi, "Government" will mean L.G. This is against the Supreme Court's Constitution Bench judgement of 4th July 2018 which said that files will not be sent to L-G and the elected government will take all decisions and send a copy of the decision to L-G.

The federal head of Delhi was already the Lieutenant Governor and more powers to him render the elected government of no use. It means that the Lieutenant Governor will scrutinize and may deter any bill even before its introduction. There cannot be two powerful men ruling in one territory. It will be better if

one functions supremely and independently.

When we trace Delhi's chequered history, it is many times that there has been serious fight between the Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Minister. The Lieutenant Governors like Najeeb Jung and Satya Pal Malik had to be replaced after their running feuds with the Chief Minister. There are also instances wherein the administration failed to function effectively and democracy suffered.

In a way, it will be appropriate to take away the electoral power from Delhi and make it fully like any other Union Territory. Or otherwise, treat it like Puducherry and give the whole powers to the Chief Minister. So now, there is no other way to resolve the power tussle if the amendment giving powers to the Lieutenant Governor seems to be the only way out.

Delhi is the national capital territory and there can be no experiments there. The GNCTD Amendment Act has also underplayed the principles of federalism and it is on the verge of destroying the Constitutional institutions. Thus, the fair solution could be that there has to be clear demarcation of powers and each body should be allowed to function independently and impartially. From now on, there should be a rule that whenever there is a question involving people in a democracy, then there has to be a voice vote and it has to be put to referendum.



AMID COVID-19 SECOND WAVE

SC orders release of prisoners to decongest jails

NEW DELHI

TAKING note of the "unprecedented surge" in COVID-19 cases, the Supreme Court on Saturday moved to decongest prisons and ordered the immediate release of prisoners who were granted bail or parole last year. Observing that the decongestion of prisons housing around 4 lakh inmates across the country is a matter concerning "health and right to life of" prisoners and police personnel, a bench headed by Chief Justice N V Ramana said all those who were allowed to go out on bail in March last year by the high-powered committees of states and Union Territories (UTs) be granted the same relief without any reconsideration to avoid delay.

"Further we direct that, those inmates who were granted parole, pursuant to our earlier orders, should be again granted parole for a period of 90 days in order to tide over the pandemic," the bench, also having Justices L Nageswara Rao and Surya Kant, said in its order uploaded on the apex court's website on Saturday. There is a serious concern about the spread of COVID-19 in "overcrowded prisons where there is lack of proper sanitation, hygiene and medical facilities", the bench said, adding "there is a requirement for effective management of pandemic from within the prison walls so as to defeat this deadly virus." The top court took note of its March 23, 2020, order by which it had directed all states and UTs to constitute high-powered committee (HPC) to consider releasing on parole or interim bail prisoners and the under trials for offences entailing up to 7-year jail term to decongest prisons in the wake of coronavirus pandemic.

It had also directed states that the HPC shall consist of (i) Chairman of the State Legal Services Committee, (ii) the Principal Secretary (Home/Prison) by whatever designation is known as, (iii) Director General of Prison(s), to determine which class of prisoners can be released on parole or an interim bail for such period as may be thought appropriate. CJI Ramana, writing the order for the bench, said, "The rapid proliferation of the virus amongst the inmates of congested prisons is a matter of serious concern. "The HPCs...shall consider release of prisoners by adopting the guidelines (such as inter alia, SOP laid down by NALSA) followed by them last year, at the earliest.

Such of those States which have not constituted High Powered Committees last year are directed to do so immediately. Commissioner of Police Delhi shall also be a member of the High Powered Committee, Delhi," the order said. Referring to immediate concern of raging pandemic, the bench highlighted the importance of prisoners' decongestion and said "HPCs, in addition to considering fresh release, should forthwith release all the

inmates who had been released earlier pursuant to our order March 23, 2020, by imposing appropriate conditions. Such an exercise is mandated in order to save valuable time."

Referring to a judgement, the top court said as a measure and being the "sentinel on the qui vive of the fundamental rights" there was a need to strictly "control and limit the authorities" from arresting accused in contravention of guidelines laid down by this court in the Arnesh Kumar judgement. "All the State Governments instruct its police officers not to automatically arrest when a case under Section 498A IPC (Dowry harassment) is registered but to satisfy themselves about the necessity for arrest under the parameters laid down above flowing from Section 41 CrPC," the judgment had said.

The apex court said the direction prohibiting automatic arrest will not be restricted to dowry harassment cases only would be applicable to "cases where offence is punishable with imprisonment for a term which may be less than seven years or which may extend to seven years, whether with or without fine". The fight against pandemic is "greatly benefited" by transparent administration, it said and took note of the example of Delhi, where the prison occupancy is updated in websites. "Such measures are required to be considered by other States and should be adopted as good practice. Moreover, all the decisions of HPCs need to be published on respective State Legal Service Authorities/State Governments/High Courts websites in order to enable effective dissemination of information. It said overcrowding of prisons is a problem plaguing several countries including India and directed the jail authorities to provide proper medical care to those who do not want to come out of prisons.

"The authorities are directed to ensure that proper medical facilities are provided to all prisoners who are imprisoned. The spread of Covid-19 virus should be controlled in the prisons by regular testing being done of the prisoners but also the jail staff and immediate treatment should be made available to the inmates and the staff," it said. It is necessary to maintain levels of daily hygiene and sanitation required to be improved and suitable precautions shall be taken to prevent the transmission of the deadly virus amongst inmates, it said.

On Friday, the bench had termed the situation "very alarming" and had said that it would pass orders to ensure release of prisoners to decongest prisons in view of a surge in COVID-19 cases in the country. On March 16, 2020, the top court had taken suo motu cognisance of overcrowding of prisons across the country and said it is difficult for jail inmates to maintain social distancing to prevent the spread of coronavirus. (PTI)

Victimisation of social activists, dissidents in PoK

AMJAD AYUB MIRZA

AT a hurriedly called press conference in Nakyal on May 6 in Pakistani Occupied Jammu Kashmir (PoJK), Awami Workers Party leader Nissar Shah advocate criticised the local Assistant Commissioner, Omar Farooq, for launching what Shah called a vindictive FIR against Shamsher Ali Sher advocate of Samaj Badlo Tehreek (Change Society Movement) and a candidate in upcoming general elections.

This is not the first time that social justice activists in PoJK are faced with victimisation and it will most definitely not be the last. In the past, student activists of Jammu Kashmir National Students Federation (JKNSF) have faced arrests and torture at the hands of the occupation forces.

Shamsher Ali Sher hails from a respected family of professionals in Nakyal in Kotli district. He is campaigning for the construction of safety walls at blind corners along the Nakyal-Kotli road which is a main cause for frequent road accidents. On December 31, 2020, a Nakyal bound van carrying a family who were travelling back from Gujranwala in Punjab lost control and fell hundreds of feet down into a ravine instantly killing three women and a man.1

Another accident that took place on April 11, 2021, five members of the same family lost their lives. They were



travelling from Nakyal to Kotli city. "These loss of lives could have been averted provided there was a safety wall build at the dangerous parts and blind corners of the Nakyal-Kotli Road", says Sher. And now he himself fears for his life and rightly so.

In the past, Arif Shahid social activist from PoJK paid with his life for raising voice against social injustice. He was allegedly killed by an ISI hit-man outside his house in Rawalpindi on May 14, 2013. Arif Shahid campaign against the increase bar on political parties to participate in general elections unless they signed a document pledging allegiance to Pakistan.2

In 2011, a doctor and a human rights activist from PoJK was gunned down allegedly by the Pakistani secret

service the ISI.3 Most recently Afzal Sulehria, a high profile political and human rights activist and leader of Kashmir National Party, allegedly became yet another victim of the ISI. Sulehria was a towering figure in Muzaffarabad, the capital city of PoJK. He vigorously campaigned against the diversion of Rivers Kishan Ganga (Neelum) and River Jhelum, and in December 2020 had written a letter to the Pakistan army chief demanding all under construction hydropower projects to be brought to an instant halt and deals made between the government of Azad Kashmir and Chinese construction companies be made public. In February 2021, less than two months after he had written to the Army Chief, Sulehria died of a

mysterious heart attack. No autopsy was carried out.

It is not uncommon for human rights and political activists such as Shamsher Ali Sher advocate to face persecution after being involved in campaigns that attempt to address issues regarding public interest in PoJK. Those who have raised their voice against the colonial rule of Pakistan, since October 1947, when Pakistan attacked the state of Jammu and Kashmir and forcefully annexed western parts of Jammu province as well as Gilgit Agency, unfortunately share the same fate.

Human Rights Watch report sums up the ordeal we face in PoJK most convincingly as follows: "the Pakistani government in Islamabad, (read military establishment), the Pakistani army and the Pakistani intelligence services (Inter-Services Intelligence, ISI) control all aspects of political life in Azad Kashmir (PoJK)...Azad Kashmir is a land of strict curbs on political pluralism, freedom of expression, and freedom of association; a muzzled press; banned books; arbitrary arrest and detention and torture at the hands of the Pakistani military and the police. Singled out are Kashmiri nationalists who do not support the idea of Kashmir's accession to Pakistan."

(Dr Amjad Ayub Mirza is an author and a human rights activist from Mirpur in PoJK. He currently lives in exile in the UK.)

'BOOKS FROM INDIA ARE MY GIFT TO THE WORLD'

VISHNU MAKHJANI

IN 1998, Ray McLennan, who till then had been importing into the UK "all sorts of things" from India like musical instruments, saris, tilak, Tulsi malas and agarbatti, purchased Motilal Books, a small Oxford-based distributor focusing on academic bookshops and university libraries.

In 2014, he set up his own company, Rays Books of India Pvt Ltd, to broaden his accessibility. Between them, the two companies recorded a turnover of 1.7 million pounds in 2020, in spite of the Coronavirus pandemic, riding largely on online sales.

"I needed a new challenge, and having found it hard to get books from India, and the constant issues with payment, quality, reliability, and general information on what is in print, decided to improve all the logistics, providing a much needed service for all Indian publishers, from the biggest to the No.1 authors," McLennan, who is originally from New Zealand, told IANS in an interview from his base in St. Albans in Hertfordshire, north of London.

"My gifts from India to the world are printed books across the full spectrum of subjects, many unique to India and others international, but produced more cheaply in India than elsewhere. Religious and spiritual development titles are the most popular category of Indian publishing worldwide. But all academic subjects, fiction, wildlife and tourism, and of course cookery, are always selling," he added.

And how - 16,000 books were sold per month in 2020 and made for



9,000-plus titles sold during the year. "We have had an increase in turnover (in spite of the pandemic), but due to increased freight costs, a lower margin. Our greater sales are because online selling is king. Bookshops have been closed much of 2020," McLennan said.

His Indian associate, KPR Nair of Konark Publishers, was quite as-

tounded when he visited McLennan in St Albans in 2019.

"I could not believe my eyes when I saw the kind of stock of books held by him of Indian authors, from Chetan Bhagat to Shobha De to Ramachandra Guha to Shashi Tharoor. I was floored by his in-depth knowledge of our products and equally by his passion about Indian culture and our way of life, etc.

What was to be a brief meeting thus ended up in a four-hour-long passionate talk about books, history and culture and untold stories about Indian authors and our publishing industry.

"To sum it up, both of us did not get time even for the minimum civilities of a cup of coffee. We did not simply realize it; we were so caught up in our talk. We smelled, sipped, drank, but it

was all books and books," Nair told IANS.

Only in India, McLeenan said, "is the English publishing scene full of titles on an endless range of subjects, authors and publishers. As the world's largest distributor of this material outside of India we work with the worldwide book trade to list between 700-1,000 new titles a month, adding to a range of over 100,000 such titles available today. We have over 9,500 Indian published titles in stock with Amazon.co.uk, and 13,400 units in stock with Amazon.com in the USA".

"We have titles available from more than 750 Indian publishers we exclusively represent into the UK and the worldwide book trade, including Penguin Random House, HarperCollins India, Westland, Konark, Orient Blackswan, TERI, Juggernaut, Kitab Mahal and Jaico.

"We exhibit internationally every year at the London Book Fair (the 2020 edition was cancelled and the 2021 event will be held digitally) where we meet with publishers and customers. We attend the Delhi World Book Fair every year in February (the 2021 edition was virtual), which presents us an opportunity to meet contracted publishers and new publishers, see new titles, and plan future business with them all to maximise sales outside of India," McLennan said.

He visited India originally in 1975, has since visited the country every year, and since 2004, multiple times a year.

The establishment of Rays Books of India Pvt Ltd improved the procurement percentage of all books he had a

demand for and that dramatically improved sales. "We went from supplying only 55 per cent of titles ordered by me to 85- 90 per cent, and that, in turn, told the UK market that greater availability was now possible, which again increased orders," McLennan said.

"We are pushing new developments all the time. Adding new titles to our selection is a priority. We are currently adding over 500 new titles to the world's book trade records, every month, every year," he pointed out.

"We want to sell as many of each title as possible, and as a specialised wholesale distributor of Indian publishing, we estimate that around 75-80 per cent of all Indian publishing sold in the UK is sold by Motilal (UK) Books of India," he added.

Over time he built up the inventory of titles held in stock in the UK, "and that again increased the speed of supply to all types of trade customers, such as book chains, independents, libraries, schools and specialist niche markets.

"From 2006 we have been the only major supplier of all Indian publishing worldwide, and although we have had financial collapses, terrorism, changes of governments, ebooks, Brexit, and now Covid, our sales have continued to increase as we create more awareness of what has been published, its price and where to get it.

"Yes, Covid is giving us problems, but we will continue to supply demand which is mainly coming from the USA and the UK as can only be expected as the two biggest centres of English language publishing and selling," McLennan concluded.

MEIL to supply oxygen to TS, AP for free

The company plans to generate 35L litres of oxygen per day



HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

IN tune with the efforts of the governments in the Telugu States, Hyderabad-based infra major Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Ltd (MEIL) has initiated efforts to offer free supply of medical oxygen B type cylinders free of cost to hospitals to help them meet the increasing demand for the medical oxygen. In this context, MEIL has submitted its proposal to the Telangana government.

The company is planning to supply 500 to 600 oxygen cylinders per day with each cylinder having a capacity of 7,000 litres. The total quantum of supply of oxygen thus will be around 35 lakh litres and it has also received request to refill oxygen cylinders from Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (50 cylinders), Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital (200), Apollo Institute of Medical Sciences (100) and Hyderabad Care Hi-tech hospital (50).

MEIL with the technical support of DRDO, is planning to construct 30-40 oxygen generation plants. Each plant can generate 150-1,000 litres per minute based on the technology of on-board oxygen generation used in fighter planes. Director DRDO

MEIL PROPOSES

- to supply 500-600 oxygen cylinders to hospitals
- to build 40 oxygen generation plants in collaboration with DRDO
- to set up cryogenic oxygen generation plant at ITC Bhadrachalam
- to import cryogenic tanks from Spain

Col. BS Rawat has appointed Senior Scientist Raghavendra Rao to coordinate the initiative. The company is currently manufacturing a 30 metric tonne per day of cryogenic oxygen liquefaction plant and the same will be installed and commissioned at ITC Bhadrachalam by May 13. The cryogenic oxygen will then be converted into usable liquid oxygen for medical purposes at the MEIL facilities.

Company sources say if the State governments require more oxygen, then MEIL is ready to import two - three cryogenic oxygen tanks from Spain, which will help in the sourcing and movement of liquid oxygen, according to company sources.

COVID 2.0 BRINGS RURAL HEALTHCARE FOCUS TO FORE

Rural healthcare upgrade essential to protect lives, livelihoods as Covid spreading to villages

SUSHMA RAMACHANDRAN

THE second Covid wave is causing havoc throughout the country but there is one critical difference in its rapid spread this time. And this is that it is now infiltrating rural areas. The first wave had confined itself largely to bigger cities or the second tier towns. One of the marked characteristics of the spread last year had been the relatively low level of infections in rural areas. This ensured agriculture remained virtually unaffected and it was thus the only segment of the economy that recorded positive growth even in the lockdown period of March and April 2020.

Things have now changed. The virus has crept into the rural hinterland with a vengeance. It was first seen in a big way in Maharashtra where the new double mutant virus - B.1.617 strain - was discovered through genome sequencing. It is believed to have originated in either Amaravati, Akola or Thane. The reasons could have been either the holding of many weddings, panchayat polls or simply failure to follow Covid appropriate behavior during February and March. Rajasthan is also reporting as many as 40 per cent of new cases from rural areas. The reasons here are given as increased tourist footfalls during the first few months of the year as well as return of migrant workers from industrialised regions of Maharashtra and Gujarat. The sudden increase in numbers has overwhelmed the State's health infrastructure.

Similar reports are coming from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, though Chhattisgarh claims the virus is still largely in urban areas. The big culprit in UP is said to be panchayat elections which have become a super spreader event with hundreds of teachers reported to have come



The reason for this inadequacy is decades of neglect of the healthcare sector. The total allocation for health has been in the range of one to two per cent of GDP as against other countries which have spent much larger proportion of funds for building up this sector

down with the infection. Madhya Pradesh, on the other hand, has suffered due to its proximity to Maharashtra and the return of migrant workers from the State around Holi. One of the most economically backward States, Bihar is also in the midst of a crisis with rising cases and minimal health facilities in rural areas while courts are urging the State government to declare a lockdown.

Though it can be argued that the health infrastructure was not meant to meet the burden of a pandemic, the fact is it was not good enough even for normal requirements in rural areas. And now it is completely overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of those falling sick in the current Covid crisis. State after State is reporting news of a rising death graph.

It has to be recalled in this context that even urban areas like Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru have been overwhelmed by the steep rise of infections in the second wave. It apparently caught experts by surprise too as top doctors and epidemiologists expressed confidence during media inter-

views and discussions that a second wave was unlikely in this country. Along with this complacency, the complete elimination of Covid appropriate behavior throughout the country coupled with wrong political signalling in the form of election rallies and the Kumbh mela ended up in the creation of a perfect storm, as it were, in the form of a ferocious second wave.

Headlines are thus now being captured by the plight of those in cities like Delhi, but sadly lakhs of people in rural areas have been equally impacted by this phenom-

enon. What is worse is the rural population does not have access to the kind of health infrastructure that is available in urban areas. The reason for this inadequacy is decades of neglect of the healthcare sector. The total allocation for health has been in the range of one to two per cent of GDP as against other countries which have spent much larger proportion of funds for building up this sector. Healthcare experts and activists have been urging successive governments for years to raise the percentage of funds for this sector but to little avail. European countries spend 8.8 per cent of GDP on health while the US spends as much as 16 per cent. China spends around 5 per cent. The level of investment in this country has been abysmal and the glaring gaps in rural areas are now showing up.

The data on healthcare in rural areas is alarming. There are only 3.2 government hospital beds for 10,000 people in rural India. Several States have an even lower proportion of beds including UP, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Bihar. There is a short-

age of specialists in the community health centres in rural areas, which is estimated to be as high as 81 per cent. The healthcare system is a three tier one in such areas comprising sub centres, primary health centres and community health centres. Media reports so far are indicating that these are all unable to deal with the sudden influx of infections while the testing facilities are completely inadequate to meet the requirements of a pandemic.

The question is, how can the State governments meet the immediate challenge of the crisis. First, the system of healthcare providers needs to be strengthened right away. These include the para-medical staff who are given a pittance but have huge responsibilities of going from village to village and providing information about basic health and hygiene practices. In the enhanced outlay for health made in this year's central government budget, nothing was mentioned about the need to upgrade wages and working conditions of these rural health workers who have been the mainstay of the government health system for decades.

The second is to divert more funds for basic needs like beds, medicines and oxygen to rural areas instead of keeping the focus on high profile urban centres. And the third is to resort to mini-containment zones like in the cities rather than shutting down all economic activities in rural areas.

These are all suggestions that need to be implemented in the short run as the second Covid wave is now moving towards a peak, according to epidemiologists. It is time for action to protect the health of the people so that their livelihoods and the economy can be protected in the months going forward.

For a better world, toxic masculinity must go

Toxic masculinity, in fact, turns out to be violence against men themselves

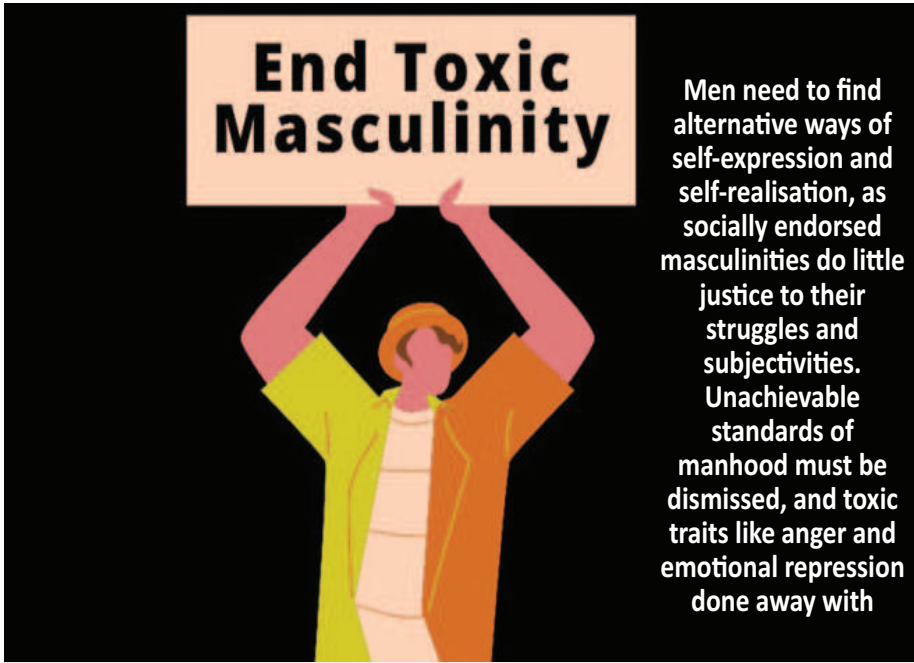


Viiveck Verma

MASCUINITY is plastered all across popular culture and our immediate contexts. From muscled up, hypermasculine film protagonists to the revered male head of the family, definitions of manliness are enacted across all contemporary spheres of life. Yet, there are raging debates about whether these fixed categories of manhood do any good to society and to individuals who endorse and perform them. This comes at a time when the mental health issues of men and rates of male suicidality are prominently displayed in statistics. What masculinity does to people and the structures we inhabit is thus, a worthy question to examine.

Sociologist Michael Kimmel, in *The Gendered Society*, pointedly remarks that virtually all the violence in the world today is committed by men. Yet, this observation is often overlooked in analyses of violence because of prominent definitions which often invoke biology to justify and rationalise male aggression. Biological evidence is, however, scarce and there are cultures in which men are not known to be violent or aggressive. Masculinity, then, has to be implicated as a social and cultural construction that makes men act in harmful ways. Toxic masculinity, a term that enjoys much currency in today's day and age is the issue at hand.

Toxic masculinity, in fact,



turns out to be violence against men themselves. The pressure to be the breadwinner of the family, to stay unemotional while going through difficult times, to conform to a bodily idea of male virility and to participate in regressive male cultures of misogyny, homophobia and aggression take a tremendous toll of men who are allowed very limited ambitions for self-fashioning. It is undeniably harmful to others as well, as in a masculine drive to assert dominance, men can commit acts which can compromise dignities of women, LGBTQ individuals and cisgendered, heterosexual men as well. Hypermasculine competitiveness and chauvinism can disrupt familial and social harmony and instigate spirals of suffering and violence.

The impact on men themselves is alarming. Male sexual assault is reported much lesser because of traditional ideas of shame associated with it. Similarly, men seldom discuss their vulnerabilities

even in intimate circles and keeping themselves in a constant state of repressing emotions can have detrimental impact. Male suicidality is an alarmingly real phenomenon, as are unaddressed mental health troubles of men. A report by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention showed how significantly more men died of opioid overdose than women from 1999 to 2018.

Men need to find alternative ways of self-expression and self-realization, as socially endorsed masculinities do little justice to their struggles and subjectivities. Unachievable standards of manhood must be dismissed, and toxic traits like anger and emotional repression done away with. In this regard, we cannot simply expect men and boys to act individually but we must alter the socio-cultural domain we inhabit with them. As Wall & Kristjansson note, the socialisation of masculine ideals starts at a young age and defines ideal

masculinity as related to toughness, stoicism, heterosexism, self-sufficient attitudes and lack of emotional sensitivity. Our participation in masculine cultures has to be replaced with an investment in countering hegemonic masculinities.

Gender is a social construct and accordingly, individuals should be allowed to fashion their own gendered identities based on their innate proclivities. We must go beyond the gender binary to let men look outside traditional categories of masculine and non-masculine and let them find their own definitions. This would include stopping chastising men for not working to be the breadwinner of the family, telling boys to not engage in 'feminine' acts and demanding men's primary attributes from men socially. There is a necessity to undo gender itself to counter toxic masculinity, which is a heavily gendered phenomenon.

The other simultaneous step in the right direction

would be to create environments of empathy and acceptance for boys and men. These have to function as spaces where men can unburden themselves from societal expectations, where they can be 'unmanly' without shame and express anxieties, doubts, fears and vulnerabilities. This has to be accompanied by structural and policy changes, such as greater resource allocation to creating facilities for men's well-being and programmes and campaigns decrying the ravages of traditional masculinity. Men have to be empowered through spaces of healing and opportunities for recreating themselves in nonviolent ways. Social change can go a long way in ensuring such heartening transformations.

On the whole, overcoming stereotypical straitjackets of gender and manhood is a social necessity. To quote Glenon Doyle, "Our children are too vast to fit themselves inside these rigid, mass-produced bottles. But they'll lose themselves trying." All individuals, including men suffer from the perpetuation of a violent, non-emancipating order that creates harmful masculinity and cuts boys and men to size, limiting the vast potentials of goodness they hold. With a reliance on feeling, accepting and expressing our organic humanity, we can allow our men to foster socially empowering self-definitions and build a harmonious society, where communion with each other will not be a distant dream. Toxic masculinity must go, if we owe our boys, men and ourselves a better world.

(The author is Founder, Upsurge Global, and Senior Advisor, Telangana State Innovation Council)

QUIZ NO.
172

HANS BIZ QUIZ

'Business History in month of May'

1. On 9 May 2018, One of the leading Chinese smartphone makers and the number-four smartphone vendor in the USA shut down global operations as the US imposed for seven years and sanctions levied as a punishment for illegal exports.
a) Alcatel OneTouch/TCL b) ZTE
c) Coolpad d) Tecno Mobile

2. Alfred D Chandler Jr, the American historian, died on May 9, 2007. He helped establish the field of business history. His most famous books included "Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the Industrial Revolution". Which of the below is not authored by him?
a) The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business
b) Scale and scope
c) Management: Past and Present: A Casebook on the History of American Business
d) Managing for Results

3. On May 9, 2017, Norway's second-largest supermarket chain, Coop Norway, launched reverse vending machines that give customers discount coupons for new products when they deposit old ones for recycling. Identify the product?
a) Printer Cartridge
b) Batteries
c) Clothes
d) Jute bags in exchange for plastic bags

4. Europe's top physics lab launched Linac 4 on May 9, 2017. Linac was billed as a critical step towards future experiments that could unlock the universe's greatest mysteries. Which is the lab?
a) Super Proton Synchrotron
b) Brookhaven National Laboratory
c) The European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)
d) Globe of Science and Innovation

5. On 9 May 2010, Israeli-Arab leaders boycotted a thousand companies that produce Jewish settlement-made products, following Palestinian Authorities' call for a similar ban by West Bank Arabs. Which Union's top court has ruled that countries of the Union must identify products made in Israeli settlements on their labels?
a) Union of South American Nations
b) North Atlantic Treaty Organization
c) European Union
d) League of Arab States

6. The United States' first Naval ship, one of six frigates authorized by Congress on 27 March 1794, was launched on 10 May 1797. Which famous naval architect designed the frigate?
a) Joshua Humphreys and Capt. Thomas Truxton
b) BF Isherwood and John Willis Griffiths
c) David Watson Taylor and William Francis Gibbs
d) Donald McKay and William Henry Webb

7. Presidents George W Bush and Vladimir Putin signed the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) on May 24, 2002 in Moscow. In 2011, which treaty replaced SORT?
a) Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM)
b) Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT 1)
c) Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1)
d) New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

8. Karl Marx, a German philosopher, economist, and revolutionary socialist, was born on May 5, 1818. Which of the following were not authored by Marx?
a) The State and Revolution, The April Theses, Marxism and the National Question
b) The Communist Manifesto, Marx's Concept of Man
c) Das Kapital, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte
d) The poverty of philosophy, The German Ideology

9. Which of the below statements is correct concerning events that took place related to May Day?
a) On 1 May 1886, labour unions in the USA went on strike with a demand of 8 hours shift per workday
b) On May 4, 1886, a Bomb blast in Haymarket Square, Chicago, fuelled and stimulated the workers to strike
c) In 1889, International Socialist Conference declared May 1 as the International Workers Day
d) All of the above

10. Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of premier educational institutions in India, died on May 27, 1964. Identify the place where the first IIT of India was established in May 1950 as the Eastern Higher Technical Institute until it was permanently shifted to Kharagpur?
a) Esplanade East, Calcutta
b) Jamshehpur
c) Mesra, Ranchi
d) Haldia, East Medinipur

The Hans Biz Quiz has been compiled by **Sunil Dhavala**, CEO, The Third Umpire Media. He had held senior management roles at Bertelsmann, NGC, Fox Broadcasting, Star TV and others. He is an alumnus of Indian Institute of Foreign Trade

KEY

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UEFA agrees to reintegrate nine 'Super League' clubs

LAUSANNE

THE European football governing body (UEFA) has begun the process of reintegration of nine of the 12 clubs which were involved in the now defunct 'Super League' project.

UEFA convened an emergency meeting of its executive committee late on Friday which took into consideration the spirit and the content of the Club Commitment Declaration and decided to approve various actions, measures and commitments made by the clubs.

"A formal confirmation of the commitments and the manner of the clubs' reintegration and participation in UEFA Club Competitions has been agreed between and signed by UEFA and those nine clubs. The approved reintegration measures are full and final," said UEFA in a statement.

UEFA said that the nine clubs had "acknowledge and accept" that the Super League project was a mistake and had apologised to fans, national associations, national leagues, fellow European clubs and UEFA.

In an eight-point charter, UEFA said that the clubs will now "unreservedly acknowledge and accept the binding nature of the UEFA statutes and will remain committed to any UEFA club competitions each season for which that club qualifies on sporting merit". UEFA said that the clubs had agreed to "have substantial fines imposed if they seek to play in unauthorised competitions (100m Euros) or if they breach any other commitment they have entered into in the Club Commitment Declaration (50m Euros)".

UEFA president, Aleksander Ceferin said, "These clubs recognised their mistakes quickly and have taken action to demonstrate their contrition and future commitment to European football. The same cannot be said for the clubs that remain involved in the so-called 'Super League' and UEFA will deal with those clubs subsequently."

The nine clubs are, Arsenal, AC Milan, Chelsea, Atlético Madrid, Internazionale Milano, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur. (IANS)

Barca, Madrid, Juve cling to Super League, denounce UEFA

MADRID

THE three remaining European Super League rebels stepped up their criticism of UEFA on Saturday, with Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus denouncing intolerable threats for their refusal to back down on the prospect of a breakaway competition.

The other nine clubs who formed the ill-fated Super League three weeks ago accepted a settlement on Friday to be fined by UEFA and stay within the open Champions League structure.

"We regret to see that our friends and founding partners of the Super League project have now found themselves in such inconsistent and contradictory position when signing a number of commitments to UEFA yesterday," Barcelona, Madrid and Juventus said in a joint statement.

"We have the duty to act in a responsible manner and persevere in the pursuit of adequate solutions, despite the unacceptable and ongoing pressures and threats received from UEFA."

The trio risks being banned from the Champions League as UEFA pursues a disciplinary process against them for not disavowing the Super League and being reintegrated into the existing system.

"The founding clubs have suffered, and continue to suffer, unacceptable third-party pres-



sures, threats, and offenses to abandon the project and therefore desist from their right and duty to provide solutions to the football ecosystem via concrete proposals and constructive dialogue," Barcelona, Madrid and Juventus said.

"This is intolerable under the rule of law," The Super League project imploded after the English clubs — Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester United, Manchester City and Tottenham — backed out inside 48 hours last

month after a backlash from the fans and British government.

The Premier League clubs along with Atletico Madrid, AC Milan and Inter Milan have officially signed up to a settlement with UEFA to participate only in the existing open European competitions and accepted giving up 5% of revenue for one season playing in Europe.

"We are fully aware of the diversity of reactions to the Super League initiative and, consequently, of the need to reflect on

the reasons for some of them," the remaining Super League clubs said.

"We are ready to reconsider the proposed approach, as necessary. However, we would be highly irresponsible if, being aware of the needs and systemic crisis in the football sector, which led us to announce the Super League, we abandoned such mission to provide effective and sustainable answers to the existential questions that threaten the football industry." (AP)



Osaka, Billie Jean King get Laureus World Sports Awards

MONACO

WORLD No. 2 tennis player Naomi Osaka has been named 'Sportswoman of the Year' at the Laureus World Sports Awards for her achievements on and off the court, while tennis legend Billie Jean King was awarded the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' by the Laureus Academy.

This is Osaka's second recognition at the Laureus Sports Awards. She won the 'Breakthrough of the Year' award in 2019 after a season that saw her win her first WTA title at the BNP Paribas Open and begin her ascent to the top of the game with her first US Open title that fall.

Osaka was also nominated for 'Sportswoman of the Year' in 2020 after a season in which she captured her first Australian Open title and become the first Japanese player to ascend to World No.1.

"I've watched so many of my role models win this (Sportswoman) award, so it definitely means a lot now to be holding it," Osaka said on Friday. "I am so happy to receive it. It really means a lot to me."

Coming out of a season interrupted by the sport's shutdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Osaka emerged as the dominant force on hard courts. The 24-year-old marched through the US summer season, making the Western & Southern Open final before capturing the US Open, her third major title.

She continued her form in 2021, winning back-to-back Slams for the second time in her career after capturing her fourth major, at the Australian Open in February.

Osaka's impact was not limited between the tramlines. During the Western & Southern Open, the Japanese joined in the athlete-led protests regarding racial injustice in America, a decision that led to a one-day stoppage in play. At the US Open, in an effort to raise awareness about racial justice, Osaka wore seven masks with seven names of black victims of racial violence.

Tennis legend Martina Navratilova presented Billie Jean King with her 'Lifetime Achievement Award', in recognition of her excellence on the tennis court as well as her life's work in pursuit of gender and racial equality. (IANS)

India's Greco Roman wrestlers bite dust at World Oly Qualifiers

SOFIA (BULGARIA)

PUTTING up an abject show, India's Greco Roman wrestlers drew a blank at the World Olympic Qualifiers as none of them could earn a Tokyo Games quota, here on Saturday.

India's brightest chance was with Gurpreet Singh but he was ousted after losing his 77kg pre-quarterfinal in just 48 seconds to 2020 European champion Rafiq Huseynov from Azerbaijan.

The quick Huseynov pulled off a quick four-point move to stun Gurpreet. Before Gurpreet could regroup, the Azerbaijani effected another four-pointer to end the bout in the first period itself. Gurpreet, who had won a bronze medal at last month's Asian Qualifiers, had got a walkover from Tajikistan's Daler Rez Zade in his opening bout.

All Greco Roman wrestlers cut a sorry figure as none of them could win a bout. While Sachin Rana forfeited his opening bout to bow out of the 60kg competition, Ashu (67kg) squandered 'Par Terre' position advantage to lose 3-8 against Aliaksandr Liavonchuk of Belarus.

Sunil Kumar missed chances aplenty against Russia's Davit Chakvatadze in the 87kg pre-quarterfinal. He was up 1-0 but did not take advantage of the 'Par Terre' as he let the Russian get out of the defensive position.

Chakvatadze was tired towards the ends but the Indian could not take advantage of even that. Deepanshu was pinned by Spain's Jesus Gasca Fresnada when he was trailing 3-7 in his 97kg pre-quarterfinal.

Only the two finalists were given Tokyo Olympics quota in this competition. Overall, India will field its biggest ever contingent of eight wrestlers at the Tokyo Games -- four men's free style wrestlers and as many women wrestlers.

In the last edition in 2016, India had fielded seven wrestlers -- two men's free style, two Greco Roman and three women wrestlers. Men's free style wrestler Sumit Malik (125kg) and Seema Bisla (50kg, women) earned quotas from this event in Sofia.

Before this event, Ravi Dahiya (57kg), Bajrang Punia (65kg), Deepak Punia (86kg) and Vinesh Phogat (women's 53kg) had qualified through the 2019 World Championship in Nur Sultan, Kazakhstan. Young guns Anshu Malik (57kg) and Sonam Malik (62kg) had also qualified through the Asian Qualifier in Almaty, last month. (PTI)

1980 Olympic hockey gold medallist Ravindra Pal succumbs to Covid

LUCKNOW

FORMER hockey centre-half Ravindra Pal Singh, a member of India's gold medal-winning team of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games, passed away early on Saturday morning here. He was 62. Singh, a bachelor who lived with his elder sister in a joint family, had recovered from Covid-19. He had a breathing problem, and 'felt depressed', and had anxiety. He was shifted to an oxygen bed in a ward after having recovered from Covid, though he continued to have the breathing problem. After his condition deteriorated on Friday, he was taken to the Intensive Care Unit and put on a ventilator. He passed away early on Saturday.

"We changed a few hospitals for him, as in the other private hospitals even the doctors were careless and they didn't provide him proper care. Finally, we admitted him to Vivekananda Polyclinic, which we trusted," said a member of Singh's family.

Besides playing in the 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Singh appeared in several top international tournaments, including the Champions Trophy in

Karachi (1980 and 1983), the Silver Jubilee 10-Nation Cup (Hong Kong, 1983), World Cup (Mumbai, 1982), Asia Cup (Karachi, 1982), the 1981 India-Pakistan Test series, and the Malaysian Quadrangular series in 1980.



Singh began his international career in 1979. He was picked in the Junior Indian team for the World Cup. Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju condoled Singh's death.

"I'm deeply saddened to learn that Shri Ravinder Pal Singh ji has lost the battle to Covid-19. With his passing away, India loses a golden member of the hockey team that won gold in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. His contribution to Indian sports will always be remembered," he tweeted.

Hockey India also mourned the untimely demise of Singh. "Hockey India extends its deepest condolences to Ravinder Pal Singh's family. Ravinder made an immense contribution to Indian hockey and his achievements will always be remembered. May Ravinder's family and friends have the strength to pass through this difficult time," HI president Gyanendro Ningombam said. (IANS/PTI)



LONDON

THE all-English Champions League final could be played at home after Turkey was added to England's "red list" of countries where all but essential travel is banned due to severe coronavirus outbreaks.

Chelsea and Manchester City are due to meet on May 29 in Istanbul and UEFA was hoping to allow around 10,000 fans into the biggest club game of the European football season. But the British government on Friday warned supporters not to travel to Turkey after imposing the new travel restrictions, and said the English Football Association was in talks with Champions League organiser UEFA about staging the game in Britain, instead.

The most logical English venue to move the game to is Wembley with the London stadium staging eight games of the European Championship across June and July, so it has UEFA's required logistics and broadcasting infrastructure already in place.

Wembley was also already due to stage the 2024 Champions League final so it could be moved up three years. While Villa Park in the central England city of Birmingham has been floated as an option,

it is an older stadium that would require significant infrastructure being installed to reach UEFA requirements. "We are very open to hosting the final but it is ultimately a decision for UEFA," British Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said. "The UK has already got a successful track record of football matches with spectators, so we are well placed to do it."

"Given there are two English clubs in that final, we look forward to what they have to say." Turkey is in the second week of a three-week national lockdown and government figures show coronavirus cases are declining but 20,107 new infections were announced on Friday and 278 deaths.

The vaccine rollout in Britain meant the country recorded 2,490 cases on Friday and 15 deaths. People from England should visit only red-list countries "in the most extreme of circumstances," Shapps said. Anyone returning from them must stay in hotels for 10 days at their own expense, with meals delivered to their door.

Players would also be required to enter quarantine, unless exemptions were granted, which would impact their preparations for the European Championship, which opens on June 11 and is being staged across 10 countries. (PTI)



England could host final due to new Turkey travel curbs

Indian team to leave for UK on June 2, players will have families for company

NEW DELHI

INDIAN cricketers will complete an eight-day hard quarantine period in Mumbai before leaving on June 2 for a marathon tour of United Kingdom, where they will play six Test matches including the marquee World Test Championship final against New Zealand.

The BCCI is still carrying out negotiations regarding the duration of 10 days of soft quarantine (training allowed) for players after reaching the UK where they will be based for three and half months.

"Indian team will have eight days of hard quarantine (confined to hotel rooms) in India with mandatory negative RT-PCR reports on second, fourth and seventh day required to board the flight," a senior BCCI official told PTI on Saturday.

"Since we have a bubble to bubble transfer, it needs to be seen if the duration of the 10-day quarantine can be reduced a bit. However players during soft quarantine can go for training. In any case, Hotel Hilton where the teams will be put up in Southampton, is a part of the Ageas Bowl property," the source added.

In case it's a 10-day quarantine, the Indians will be allowed to move around the city from June 13 while the WTC final against New Zealand



will start on June 18. It is also learnt that looking at the length of the tour, players' families will accompany them. However it is still not clear whether the WAGS and children will join from the start of the tour or come after the WTC final when there is a substantial gap of more than a month before the start of the Test series on August 4.

The BCCI is also confident that all the players will get their first dose of vaccine before embarking on their journey to the UK. However it will be difficult for Prasidh Krishna, who has tested positive after coming in contact with Varun Chakravarty, to get vaccinated before leaving for UK.

"You have a gap between the time you test negative for COVID-19 and get your vaccination. So even if

Prasidh tests negative by May 18th or 20th, he would need a four week gap before he gets his first dose," the source said. If all Indian players get Covishield vaccine in India, it will be easier to get the second jabs in the UK as it's the Oxford vaccine.

BCCI president Sourav Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah are expected to be present in Southampton for the WTC final.

"Both president and secretary are supposed to be present during the World Test Championship final as of now," the source added. One could expect them having some discussions with ECB brass with regards to the option of hosting the remaining 31 games of IPL in the United Kingdom apart from various ICC policy decisions. (PTI)

Rani, teammates recover, to resume training soon

BENGALURU

THE Indian women's hockey team skipper Rani Rampal would be looking forward to resuming training at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) centre here after she and six of her team-mates completely recovered from Covid-19.

Rani, along with experienced goalkeeper Savita Punia, Navjot Kaur, Sharmila Devi, Rajani, Navneet Kaur and Sushila, had tested positive for the virus following their return to the national camp on April 24 after a 10-day break.

Two support staff -- video analyst Amrutaprakash and scientific advisor Wayne Lombard -- had also tested positive, although all of them were asymptomatic.

"Thank you everyone for the love and men-



tal support through messages/calls during the last two weeks. Me and my teammates and support staff are fully recovered from the Covid now," Rani said on Twitter.

"Feeling blessed to have you all as members from our hockey fraternity/friends/fans. Special thanks to Hockey India, SAI for taking good care," said Rani, who spent 14 days in quarantine with all other infected team-mates at the Bengaluru centre.

She urged the people of the country to take extreme precaution and extend every possible help to those in need.

"Extremely sad to know that so many people are losing their loved ones, my prayers for them. Please help as much as you can in any way for your near and dear ones. Let's fight this pandemic together. Stay safe, wear mask and follow all Covid19 guidelines strictly," she said. (IANS)

Neymar signs new PSG deal, commits until 2025

PARIS: Neymar has committed his future to Paris Saint-Germain by extending his contract until 2025. The Brazil forward joined the Ligue 1 champions from Barcelona on a five-year deal at a world-record cost of 222 million euros in August 2017. Neymar had been linked with a return to Barca, but the 29-year-old has now firmly committed to PSG, who announced his new deal on Saturday, reports DPA. L'Equipe reported that the former Santos star's new terms will see him earn 30 million euros per season in the French capital. Neymar said: "I'm very happy, very happy to be extending my contract with Paris until 2025. The truth is that I'm very happy to be staying here for four more years, to be a part of the club's project, to try and win titles, to try and achieve our biggest dream which is the Champions League."