

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

ANANTAPUR | SUNDAY | 25 APRIL 2021

WEATHER



Max: 40.0°C
Min: 18°C
RH: 43%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min temp. 40/18 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Shuddha Trayodasi till 4.08 pm
Star: Hasta till 1.52 am (Monday)
Varjyam: 11.53 am to 1.19 pm
Durmuhurtam: 4.50 pm to 5.41 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Ramzan 12,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.08 am
Zohar: 12.05 pm
Asar: 4.11 pm
Maghrib: 5.47 pm
Isha: 7.02 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 06.08 AM
SUNSET TODAY 06.33 PM
MOONSET 02.56 AM
MOONRISE 02.18 PM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6:19 PM (TODAY)
SEHRI: 4:16 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT



Now, every day is my day!

SHORT TAKES

TN 'lockdown' from April 26

Chennai: Cinemas, places of worship, malls, bars and salons must be shut effective April 26, the Tamil Nadu government announced on Saturday reintroducing more curbs following surging COVID-19 cases. People from abroad and other states shall be allowed entry to Tamil Nadu only if they have registered in the portal <http://eregister.tnega.org> and information on registration should be produced to authorities on arrival. Those from neighbouring union territory of

WORLD | 5

Merkel defends tough Covid curbs



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SPORTS | 8

Sachin to donate his plasma



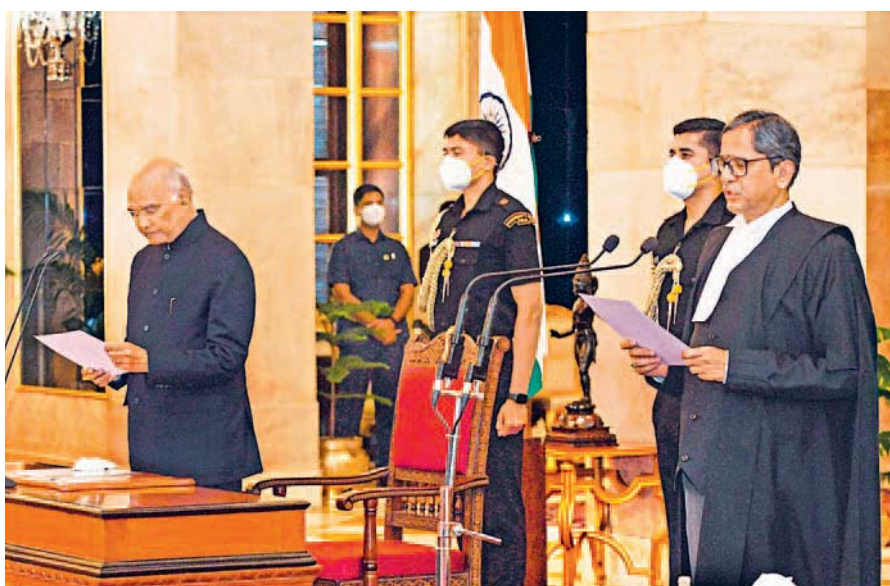
TABLOID

Lost year: Up to adults to mentor their kids



Vol. 22 No. 244 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

Justice Ramana sworn in as India's 48th CJI



President Ram Nath Kovind administers the oath of office to Justice Nuthalapati Venkata Ramana, after he was appointed as the 48th Chief Justice of India (CJI) at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on Saturday. ■ **Report on Page 4**

Covid hospitals yet to get NOC from fire department

DC CORRESPONDENTS
VISAKHAPATNAM/
VIJAYAWADA/TIRUPATI,
APRIL 24

Many private hospitals notified as Covid treatment facilities in the state have not obtained their Fire (No Objection Certificate) NOC till date. Officials, while notifying private hospitals, had insisted that they adhere to safety norms and obtain NOC from the fire safety department.

In January last, the government launched a special drive and issued notices to hundreds of hospitals after fire erupted at a health care centre in Bhandara in Maharashtra in which 10 infants were killed.

In Visakhapatnam, 40 private and corporate hospitals were notified as Covid treatment facilities and those that were located in Health City at Arilova were declared as fire safety compliant.

Ten hospitals outside the Health City have not obtained the NOC.

"Six hospitals got NoC during the last two days and four are yet to comply with the fire safety

norms," said regional fire officer with GVMC, Niranjan Reddy.

He said unlike in normal times, the authorities would not hesitate to close down the hospitals. "Merely having safety equipment is not enough. The hospitals should conduct mock drills, which they have not done despite repeated advisories."

Reports from Vijayawada said 26 private hospitals have been notified as Covid hospitals and four of these have applied for NoC.

However, the requests were held up as they did not adhere to all the norms.

Tirupati reports said three out of the eight hospitals notified there as Covid treatment facilities are not having the Fire NoC. The fire department refused to issue NoC to RUSH hospital, Lotus hospital and ESI hospital.

The Purnas Remedy hospital, DBR hospital, Sankalpa hospital, Narayanadri hospital and Amara hospital have obtained fire NOC, said Kiran Kumara Reddy, assistant district fire officer in Tirupati.

STATE REGISTERS 11,698 FRESH COVID CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

AP has registered 11,698 fresh Covid cases and 37 deaths in the last 24 hours.

Health officials said that out of 50,972 samples tested, 11,698 have been found infected with Covid-19. Of total 1,59,31,722 samples tested so far, 10,20,926 persons were infected. Among them, 9,31,839 have recovered while 81,471 are active with the virus and undergoing treatment.

All districts crossed the 200 cases. Srikakulam topped with 1,641 cases, followed by 1,581 in Guntur, 1,306 in Chittoor, 1,066 in Anantapur, 947 in Visakhapatnam, 909 in East Godavari, 902 in Nellore, 820 in Kurnool, 631 in Krishna, 592 in Vizianagaram, 549 in Kadapa, 462 in Prakasam and 292 in West Godavari.

■ **Page 3: Chittoor found to be worst affected**

20 critically ill die due to lack of oxygen in Delhi

Delhi grappling with shortage of oxygen as Covid rises

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Twenty people died at Delhi's Jaipur Golden Hospital as medical oxygen supply was not replenished on Saturday, exposing the danger to critically ill Covid patients admitted in the national capital.

The hospital in south-west Delhi's Rohini locality had feared the worst and predicted a disaster could repeat itself a day after 25 patients died at the Ganga Ram Hospital.

"Next impending oxygen crisis in Jaipur Golden Hospital. Over 200 lives at stake if liquid medical oxygen is not supplied by 9 pm tonight," the hospital had tweeted at 7.15 pm.

Medical Director D.K. Baluja said, "Oxygen pressure has dipped as we are running out of stock."

The hospital officials added that over 80 per cent of the 200 patients in the hospital were on oxygen support and 35 were in the ICU.

At the Ganga Ram Hospital, authorities struggled to avoid a repeat of the earlier day's tragedy. The hospital requires a minimum of 11,000 cubic metres of oxygen daily but was left with just 200 cubic metres when a tanker with 1.5 tonnes of oxygen arrived at 11.35 am, officials said.

"Now it is at 0.7 tonnes,

Delhi HC warns oxygen blockers will be hanged

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

The Delhi High Court said on Saturday that if any official at the Central, state or local administration was obstructing in the picking up or supply of oxygen, then it would "hang" that person. The observation by a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli came during the hearing of a plea by Maharaaja Agra-sen Hospital over shortage of oxygen for seriously ill Covid patients.

The court told the Delhi government to give it one instance of who was obstructing the oxygen supply and said "we will hang that man". "We will not spare anyone," the bench added. It told the

Delhi government to inform the Centre also about such officials of the local administration so that it could take action against them. The HC also asked the Centre when the 480 metric ton-ne (MT) of oxygen per day allocated for Delhi would see the light of the day.

"You (Centre) had assured us (on April 21) that 480 MT per day will reach Delhi. Tell us when will it come? The 480 MT per day is still to see the light of the day," the court said.

The Court directed the Centre and Delhi to coordinate between themselves for arranging the cryogenic tankers to ensure that hospitals in the national capital are given the complete allocat-

ed quantity of 480 MTs of oxygen.

The High Court asked the Delhi government to set up its own oxygen plant and said that a smooth and fully allocated supply of oxygen to Delhi can resolve many problems. The court on Saturday also pulled up the Delhi government for not providing proper suggestions to the Centre regarding supply of oxygen from nearby plants in place of its allocated oxygen supply from plants in West Bengal and Odisha. It also asked the Delhi government to make arrangements for tankers.

The bench also asked the Centre on Saturday about the arrangements being made to deal with the rise in Covid cases.

midnight due to scarcity of supplies. 'This can't go on for long, the staff is getting exhausted,' he said.

"Hospital has and is approaching all authorities and nodal officers but no help is coming. Hundreds of calls made, nobody picking the calls," he added.

In a pincer effect, the

shortage of oxygen and the explosion in the number of cases in Delhi together stretched healthcare infrastructure to its limits, leaving hospitals big and small struggling and coming up with band aid solutions — limited supplies to see them through for the next few hours before placing another SOS call.

AP targets vax for 1.5 cr youth

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

The Andhra Pradesh government aims to administer Covid-19 vaccine free of cost to nearly 1.5 crore youths aged above 18 years from May 1. State health authorities are getting some 1,400 vaccination centres ready for the purpose.

From the start of the vaccination in the state on

January 16, some nine lakh persons have been given the jabs so far. These included frontline warriors including health care staff and those above 45 years, the original target being 11 lakh persons.

"A good number of people aged above 45 years, out of a total of nearly 80 lakh, have been vaccinated so far while vaccination of both the first and second dose is going on for

the remaining targeted beneficiaries," officials said. Though the state has big plans for administering the jabs to those between 18 and 45 years, the coverage will be based on the quantum of vaccine doses that are available to the state.

The state has set a record by administering 6.2 lakh doses of the jab in a day, thanks to the presence of a strong health infrastruc-

ture backed by the commitment of the health care personnel to fight the menace.

"The health department is planning to administer nearly five lakh doses per day subject to availability of doses in order to vaccinate all the targeted beneficiaries in an expeditious manner," officials said.

■ **Page 2: Only limited RT-PCR tests could be done**

STATE | AHEAD 15 won last year

AP bags 17 national panchayat awards

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Saturday presented National Panchayat Raj Awards 2021 to panchayats, mandals and districts of the state on the occasion of National Panchayat Raj Day.

Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the National Panchayat Awards ceremony through video conference with chief ministers of various states. With the switch of a button, the Prime Minister deposited cash incentives in accounts of panchayats, mandals and districts that had won the awards throughout the country.

Modi also launched distribution of e-property cards in 5,000 villages of seven states. Speaking on the occasion, the PM pointed out that village panchayats had dealt well during the Covid-19 situation last year. They should continue to do this year too with the same spirit.

Andhra Pradesh won 17 awards in 2021 as against the 15 awards last year. AP received state-level second award in e-pan-



Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

chayat category, two awards at district level, four awards at mandal and 10 awards at panchayat level.

A cash incentive of ₹50,000 is given at the district level, ₹25,000 at mandal level and ₹8,000-10,000 at the level of villages depending on their population. The Chief Minister presented the state-wide second award for Andhra Pradesh in e Panchayat category to panchayat raj minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy and panchayat raj commissioner Girija Shankar. District-level awards (Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Sashaktikaran Puraskar) went to Guntur district ZP CEO D. Chaitanya and Krishna district ZP CEO Surya Prakash Rao.

■ **Page 2: Vijayawada Rural in winning MPDOs list**

IN BRIEF

LOKESH DEMANDS
CANCELLATION OF
SSC, INTER EXAMSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

Telugu Desam national general-secretary Nara Lokesh lashed out at the Jagan Mohan Reddy government for 'not cancelling or postponing' Class 10 and Intermediate exams, in accordance with the appeals made by thousands of students and parents in view of rising Covid-19 cases, on Saturday.

Addressing a press conference here, Lokesh expressed his fears about examinations turning into Covid-19 super spreaders. He said that after he wrote a letter to CM Jagan Mohan Reddy, the latter seems to have taken a "more stubborn attitude, with total disregard for the safety of students."

Lokesh asked why had the government failed to understand that preventive measures would be very difficult to implement in examination centres. Stating that not even six students can be accommodated in a room if six feet distance has to be maintained, he added that there was a lack of infrastructure to meet this demand. "The government promised to give face masks to each family but had failed to fulfil the same," he said.

Lokesh also demanded an explanation from the CM as to why his government turned indifferent to the 48-hour deadline issued by the TD regarding cancellation of exams.

He stated that even the CBSE and ICSE boards have cancelled their exams.

SURESH TO TD, JS:
DON'T CREATE PANIC
AMONG STUDENTSDC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 24

Education minister Adimulapu Suresh lashed out at MLC Nara Lokesh and Jana Sena chief Pawan Kalyan for creating panic among students and their parents.

Reacting to the ongoing issues and demands to cancel Class 10 exams by Opposition leaders, Suresh said, "We already discussed and obtained opinions from parents regarding conduct of Class 10 exams. The final decision on whether to conduct the exams, or cancel them, will be announced soon after analysing the situation. In fact, our top priorities are both - health of students and their academic future."

"Instead of giving appropriate advice to the government during the peak of Covid-19 pandemic, the TD and Jana Sena are throwing mud at the state government," said Suresh while addressing the media after the convocation ceremony at JNTU-A. He further said that the quality and standard of education in the state sets a role model for the country but the TD leaders were "unable to digest facts."

Suresh added that the total number of exam papers were reduced to seven, and asked the leaders of Opposition parties to stop their political tricks to defame the government.

The minister also unveiled the statue of Sri Krishnadevarayulu, Vijayanagar emperor, on Sri Krishnadevaraya University premises on the occasion of their convocation.

AYYANNA OBJECTS
TO THE MANNER OF
DHULIPALLA ARRESTDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

Former minister and Telugu Desam politburo member Ch. Ayyanna Patrudu on Saturday strongly objected to the manner in which their party former MLA Dhulipalla Narendra Kumar was arrested as if he was a terrorist trying to escape from the law of the land.

He asked the government to explain whether it was wrong on the part of Narendra to bring the Sangam Dairy under the Companies Act. He recalled that even the Visakh Dairy was also brought under this Act but the Jagan Mohan Reddy regime has not initiated similar action against them.

Addressing a press conference here, Ayyanna termed it as a sadistic step on the part of the YSRC government to harass and arrest a leader who had the record of getting elected as an MLA for five consecutive terms previously.

He said the ACB and the CID officials should discharge their duties in an impartial manner without succumbing to the pressure from the ruling party leaders.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, minister Peddireddy Ramchandra Reddy, panchayat raj commissioner Girija Sankar with National awardees MPDOs and CEOs on the occasion of National Panchayat Raj day at the CM's camp office on Saturday.

VIJAYAWADA
RURAL IN WINNING
MPDOs LIST

from page 1

The mandal-level awards went to MPDOs of Sodem in Chittoor district, Kakinada Rural in East Godavari district, Vijayawada Rural in Krishna district and Penugonda in Anantapur district.

Panchayats that got the award from the CM are Varkuru in Kurnool district, Pedalabudu in Visakhapatnam district, Gullapalli in Guntur district, Thada Kandriga, Thallapalem, Parthavellanti and Pennabarthi in Nellore district and G. Rangampeta in East Godavari district.

Minister Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy, principal secretary (Revenue) V. Usha Rani, panchayat raj commissioner Girija Shankar, land records commissioner Siddharth Jain, officers of various districts, mandal-level officers and sarpanches were present on the occasion.

KAKINADA RURAL,
G. RAGAMPETA GET
NATIONAL AWARDSDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, APRIL 24

East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy received two national awards through virtual mode on Saturday.

Kakinada Rural mandal of East Godavari was selected for Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Panchayat Sa Shakti Karan Puraskar-2021 for the appraisal year 2019-20 and G. Ragampeta panchayat in Peddapuram mandal was selected for Grama Panchayat Development Plan-2021 for the appraisal year 2019-20. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke about the nation through a virtual based online system.

APPP SEEKS FUNDS
FOR DEVELOPMENT
OF VILLAGESDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Parishad sought the government's help to develop village panchayats in all aspects. APPP conducted national panchayat raj day on Saturday and paid floral tributes to Gandhi during a programme at Guntur.

APPP chairman Jasti Veeranjanyulu said that Corona is putting huge impact on villages, disturbing lives of peoples and stated that newly-elected sarpanches are taking necessary measures for the containment of pandemic Covid-19 by cooperating with the government.

Veeranjanyulu said that the panchayat raj is the oldest system of governance within the local government. The word is a confluence of two words - "Panch" which means "five" and "Ayat" means assembly and "Raj" means the rule.

Quoting that India lives in villages, they sought the government to provide required funds for the villages towards all-round development in all aspects to strengthen the panchayat raj system.

Date-expired drugs given
to Covid-affected patients

Patients allege fresh stocks are being sold in market at high price

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL APRIL 24

The Kurnool Government General Hospital has, for the past one month, been administering remdesivir injections whose shelf-life had expired - by a few weeks, though.

About 520 patients are undergoing treatment in the Corona wards specially kept outside of the general medicine wards. The second wave of Covid is so severe that the district reported an average of 1,000 positive cases every day for the past nearly a week.

Covid patients undergoing treatment at the GGH are worried as to whether the remdesivir doses given to them as a life-saving drug would cause more harm to them than good. An attendant of a patient undergoing treatment in the Male medical ward-1 found that the remdesivir injection given to his rela-

● A professor at Kurnool Medical College said it is not yet known if remdesivir is safe and effective for the treatment of Covid-19. The distribution of remdesivir has been authorised only for the treatment of hospitalised patients with severe Covid19 symptoms.

● He said doctors can administer only what is supplied to them.

tive was having an expiry date of 13/3/2021.

The KGGH continues to administer the expired remdesivir doses to Corona-virus patients as they have a stock of 3,000 vials, said hospital superintendent in-charge Dr Bhagawan.

Another story doing the rounds is that date-expired drug is given to KGGH patients while the fresh stocks are being sold in the market at high price.

Dr G. Narendranath Reddy, an ophthalmologist, is the hospital superintendent and he is down with Coronavirus infection.

Kurnool Government

General Hospital has been administering remdesivir injections for the past one month and their shelf-life has expired. About 520 patients are undergoing treatment in the Covid wards.

A professor at Kurnool Medical College said it is not yet known if remdesivir is safe and effective for the treatment of Covid-19. The distribution of remdesivir has been authorised only for the treatment of hospitalised patients with severe Covid19 symptoms. He said doctors can administer only what is supplied to them.

The hospital superintendent was under intense pressure to fulfil the

demands of political leaders including MLAs and MPs. Everyone has a cut in the hue hospital supplies pie. It is a well-oiled mechanism and district collector is chairman of the hospital development committee (HDC). There is corruption at all levels in all medicines/equipment purchases/supplies and quality is often overlooked, said a doctor.

The in-charge superintendent said the remdesivir drug was supplied by Mylan Laboratories of Hyderabad. "We have received a letter from Mylan Laboratories that their drug's shelf-life was extended by the Drugs Controller General Dr. GV Somani on March 15 this year by six months to 12 months. Whether the said letter was genuine or not we cannot certify, but we are administering the remdesivir of 100mg vial (lyophilized)," the health official said.

Virtual learning turns innovative: Gov

DC CORRESPONDENTS
VIJAYAWADA/ANANTAPUR,
APRIL 24

The Covid-19 pandemic caused universal shift to virtual learning, which proved to be innovative for teachers, students, and to all stakeholders, said Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan while taking part in the 11th convocation of JNTU-Anantapur virtually, on Saturday.

The Governor lauded the university for its share in contributing to the development of Andhra Pradesh in the field of technological education, adding that the university was taking steps to implement the National Education Policy, with multi-disciplinary nature of education, globalisation, and with collaborations.

Congratulating those students who received medals for best academic performance, the Governor called upon them to play a pivotal role in building our nation, and appreciated the university for successfully conducting all exams online and as per schedule, despite the challenges due to Covid-19.

The Governor appreciated Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for initiating a series of measures to improve the quality of education in all universities across the state. AICTE chairman Prof. Anil Sahasra Bude appreciated the educational reforms being introduced in AP.

Minister for education Adimulapu Suresh stated that the state government



Minister for education Adimulapu Suresh presents award to a student during the 11th convocation of JNTU-A on Saturday.

had been implementing several welfare schemes for the benefit of students, and also for those pursuing higher education.

"JNTU-A was one among five universities selected by the state government to transform into a multi-disciplinary education and research university," he added.

He stated that the state government planned on recruiting teaching staff in all universities across the state soon, and that an amount of ₹671.45 crore was deposited directly in the accounts of mothers of

10,88,439 students in the state under the fee reimbursement scheme.

Suresh stated that the state government had been implementing several welfare schemes for the benefit of students and also for students pursuing higher education. He added that JNTU-A was one among five universities selected by the state government to transform into a multidisciplinary education and research university.

Former JNTU vice-chancellor and former UPSC chairman Y. Venkatarami

Reddy was awarded an honorary doctorate by the university.

Later, the Governor virtually took part in the 19th convocation of Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur. Praising the university for its excellent track record in teaching, research, and extra-curricular activities, he also appreciated the appreciation received by the university from Niti Aayog for setting up the prestigious 'Atal Incubation Centre' to cater to the state's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Essential, emergency
services exempted
from night curfewDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

The AP government on Saturday issued detailed guidelines on implementation of night curfew from Saturday, detailing the essential and emergency services exempted from the curfew.

Issuing G. O. 161, chief secretary Aditya Nath Das made it clear that wearing of masks will be compulsory and everybody must follow Covid appropriate protocols in public places.

Any violation will result in prosecution under Sections 51 to 60 of Disaster Management Act 2005 and Section 188 of IPC as well as other applicable laws. District magistrates and collectors, district superintendents and commissioners of police will enforce these regulations in the state with immediate effect, the chief secretary underlined.

As per night curfew orders, all offices, firms, shops, establishments and restaurants shall close by 10 pm and reopen after 5 am.

Hospitals, diagnostic labs, pharmacies and those dealing with supply of essential services, su-

ch as print and electronic media, telecommunications, Internet services, broadcasting and cable services, IT and IT-enabled services will be exempted from the curfew.

Petrol pumps, LPG, CNG, petroleum and gas outlets, power generation, transmission and distribution, water supply and sanitation departments are also exempted from night curfew, as are cold storage and warehousing services, private security services, production units or services, which require continuous process, and food delivery services.

Further exempted from curfew will be all medical personnel, such as doctors, nursing staff, paramedics and providers of other hospital services, on production of valid identity card; pregnant women and patients for purpose of receiving medical care, and persons coming from or going to airports, railway stations, bus stands holding valid tickets.

All inter-state and intra-state movement of essential and non-essential goods will be permitted. No separate permissions will be required for movement of essential or non-essential goods.



Bandar Road wears a deserted look as the night curfew imposed to control the Covid-19 cases in Vijayawada on Saturday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

MINISTER TO OFFICIALS: HAND OVER
BODIES TO KIN WITHOUT DELAYDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

Deputy chief minister and minister for health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas directed the health authorities to hand over the dead bodies of people infected with Coronavirus, to their family members without any delay.

The minister enquired about keeping 81 dead bodies in the mortuary having the capacity to store only 50 at government hospital with its medical superintendent Dr Siva Sankar and RMO Dr Hanumantha Rao over phone on Saturday. They informed him that 135 persons died in the last two days and of them, 80

bodies were handed over to their family members.

Reacting on long delay in cremation of dead bodies at Krishnalanka electric crematorium, the Dy CM directed the officials to arrange another crematorium at Ajithsingh Nagar. He also asked the officials to arrange two freezers having the capacity to keep six dead bodies.

The minister asked both the Krishna district medical and health officer Dr Suhasini and government hospital medical superintendent Dr Siva Sankar to work in coordination with regard to handing over dead bodies of people infected with Covid-19 to avoid prolonged delay.

PEOPLE ADVISED NOT TO PANIC SEEING
MORE DEAD BODIES AT CREMATORIADC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 24

Covid-19 state nodal officer Dr Arja Srikanth advised people against panicking over news of more number of dead bodies being burnt in crematoria, assuming them all to be Coronavirus-infected persons.

Srikanth said he had visited Gunadala and Krishnalanka crematoria in the city.

Gunadala crematorium had eight to nine dead bodies of people. But they had died of natural causes on the same day and their bodies brought for cremation. He pointed out that it takes nearly four hours for a dead body to turn into ashes.

With regard to Krishnalanka electric crematorium, the Covid nodal officer said it is cremating eight to 10 bodies due to natural deaths and a few bodies of those who have died due to Covid-19.

He said it takes nearly one-and-half-hours for a body to burn in the electric crematorium.

Srikanth asked people not to be carried away by visuals or reports of more number of bodies being cremated.

He turned critical about a section of media for giving widespread publicity claiming all dead bodies belong to people infected with Covid-19. He advised such media to desist from spreading misinformation.

DOUBLE | STANDARDS No Covid-19 negative certificate needed for people entering Seema from Karnataka

Bengaluru contributing to rising cases in Seema

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, APRIL 24

Lack of restrictions and preventive measures at border check posts along the Karnataka border have led to a substantial increase in the number of cases reported in Rayalaseema region.

While passengers entering into borders of Bengaluru are required to carry a Covid-19 negative

certificate, no such measures are there when it comes to people entering Rayalaseema from neighbouring Karnataka.

A 25-year-old youth working as a software engineer in Bengaluru tested positive a few days ago after returning home in Anantapur. The youth had to be treated at a private hospital for more than a week.

Saturday saw 1,066 positive cases being reported

in Anantapur district, 215 from Hindupur town, which is closer to Bengaluru city. 549 cases have been witnessed in Kadapa, 1,306 in Chittoor and 820 in Kurnool district. Four deaths have been reported in Anantapur district.

Serious cases are invariably referred to Bengaluru due to lack of proper medical services in Anantapur district and other parts of Rayalaseema region.

Sources said at least four persons hailing from the district have died owing to Coronavirus in Bengaluru hospitals in the past two days. A 35-year-old youth from Madakasira town died at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Friday.

Sources said Bangalore corporation authorities were not handing over dead bodies but conducting cremations or burials in Bengaluru itself.

With night curfew and restrictions in Bengaluru city and other district headquarters

in Karnataka, a large number of migrant labourer have been returning to their native villages in Rayalaseema.

Farm labourers from Anantapur and parts of Kurnool and Chittoor districts depend on Bengaluru for employment during summer seasons. All of them have

returned home following rise in Covid cases in Bengaluru city.

Hundreds of buses, taxis and trains operate from AP and TS to Bengaluru and vice versa every day. "There are no restrictions on them. Only state government can take a decision on imposing minimum preventive measures at border check posts," a senior official from Anantapur said.

IN BRIEF

Isolation patients to be shifted

Kurnool: Kurnool district administration identified that the spread of Covid in the district was largely due to patients who are under home quarantine. These patients were freely moving around in places of public gatherings and are transmitting the virus. The District Medical and Health Officer Dr Rama Giddayya said patients in home isolation who have no facilities at home to take care of themselves are to be shifted to the Covid quarantine centre. If anyone resists, revenue staff was asked to take police force and compulsorily shift them, said district collector G Veera Pandian.

Oxygen plant reopened

Vijayawada: A closed oxygen manufacturing plant was reopened in Guntur to fulfil the growing needs of Corona patients. Guntur district collector Vivek Yadav has taken special care to reopen the medical oxygen production plant for medical needs in the district. Souvenir Oxygen Industries in Guntur Autonagar has been closed for a year. At present, the demand for medical oxygen for Coronavirus treatment is high and on the instructions of district collector, the district industries general manager A.V. Patel discussed with the Souvenir Oxygen Industries and immediately sanctioned the necessary permits to restart the industry.

Traders close shops by 6 pm

Kakinada: The Kakinada traders will close their shutters by 6 pm from April 26 to May 8 due to Covid-19 pandemic. The Godavari Chamber of Commerce appealed to the traders of Kakinada to open their shops by 9 am and should close by 6 pm in the interests of the traders and also the people. Rajahmundry Chamber of Commerce also has taken a decision to close the shops by 6 pm from Saturday. The Chamber honorary secretary Madhula Muralikrishna said that the chamber held a meeting with all association representatives and took a decision that the shops should work from 9 am to 6 pm and Sundays should not open. He said that traders and the employees of their shops should reach their homes and they should not be in the shops.

APPCB ISSUES CLOSURE ORDER TO ZUARI CEMENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 24

The Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) has ordered the closure of the Zuari Cements factory in Krishnanagar in Yerraguntla mandal of Kadapa district. The Pollution Control Board has issued orders for the closure of the industry so that the industry management do not take action as per the regulations to control pollution.

K. Javeed Basha, Environmental Engineer, Regional Pollution Control Office, Kadapa, issued the orders following directives from the Pollution Control Board office in Vijayawada. The Pollution Control Board has directed the APSDCL Superintendent Engineer (Operations) to suspend power supply to the Zuari cement industry.

SRIRAMA ON HANUMATHA VAHANAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 24

On the fourth day of the ongoing annual Sri Kodandaramaswamy Brahmothsavam at Vontimitta, the utsava idols of Sri Sita, Lakshmana sameta Sri Ramachandra rode on Hanumantha vahana in ekantham due to Covid-19 guidelines on Saturday night.

Puranic legends herald the glory of Hanuman, who was taught tenets of Dasa Bhakti by none other than Sri Rama which in turn was passed by Hanumanta to his followers. Sri Kodandaramaswamy shined in Navneeta Krishna alankaram on Saturday morning vahana seva.

Srikakulam continues to lead in Covid cases

1,641 cases in a single day, 8,516 patients in home isolation

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRIKAKULAM, APRIL 24

The district is leading in the Covid-19 cases in the state as 1,641 cases were reported on Saturday. During the last four days the figure has been hovering between 1,200 and 1,500.

Reports said that 6,158 samples were collected during the last 24 hours and of them 1,641 tested positive.

The health officials said 8,516 patients are in home isolation, 975 in Covid-19 Care centres and 875 in various hospitals. The total active cases stood at 10,366 on Saturday. Around 522 were discharged during the last 24 hours.

Chittoor follows Srikakulam with 1,306 cases and Anantapur 1,066. A senior official said that the district has around 2,000 beds in both government and private sector and as on date only half of them were filled. However, the speed at

Chittoor found to be worst affected

FROM PAGE 1

Chittoor district has been found to be the worst affected, registering cumulative 12,171 Covid-19 cases, followed by 10,366 in Srikakulam, 8,574 in East Godavari, 7,620 in Guntur, 7,206 in Kurnool, 6,711 in Nellore, 6,502 in Visakhapatnam, 6,259 in Krishna, 5,057 in Anantapur, 4,443 in Prakasam, 3,226 in Vizianagaram, 2,094 in Kadapa and 1,242 in West

which the cases are being reported, the administration needs to increase the present strength by another 2,000 beds. The officials were worried that more and more younger persons were being admitted into ICU wards.

Curbs have been

Godavari.

East Godavari and Nellore reported six deaths each during the last 24 hours, followed by four each in Anantapur and Chittoor, three each in Srikakulam and West Godavari, two each in Guntur, Krishna, Kurnool and Vizianagaram, and one in Prakasam district. With this, the death toll in AP has risen to 7,616.

AP health authorities have discharged 4,421 Covid-infected.

imposed and police strictly implement the rule of mask and the traders have voluntarily agreed to shut down shops after 6 pm.

Reports said that guest workers were pouring in from different seriously affected states causing the rapid spread of the virus.

ONLY LIMITED RT-PCR TESTS COULD BE DONE

FROM PAGE 1

On the other hand, with more number of people turning up to undergo Covid-19 test and the state government deciding to conduct only RT-PCR test, only a limited number of tests could be done in some districts. Health officials in the districts admit they are having huge backlogs of swab samples for the test and hence not taking fresh swab samples. The state government plans to address the issue by resuming TrueNat tests from April 26 and conducting Rapid Antigen tests also, besides the ongoing RT-PCR tests.

State Covid-19 nodal officer Dr Arja Srikanth said, "There are nearly 1.5 crore youths aged between 18 and 45 to get the jab."

₹8 lakh liquor shop amount embezzled by staff in Duvvur

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 24

Three employees of a liquor shop in Duvvur mandal Kanagudur village in Kadapa district were booked under a case for allegedly misappropriating ₹8 lakh. The staff, who showed in the records that there was stock in the liquor store, squandered the money that came from selling them.

One of the staff working in the liquor store sold liquor worth ₹4 lakh and another two ₹2 lakh each and used the money for personal purposes. The matter came to light during an inspection by Excise and Vigilance Department officials. Excise Superintendent of Proddatur Mantri Ravikumar Reddy told *Deccan Chronicle* that the department had registered a case against them

following a preliminary inquiry by the inspector. It has been revealed that the employees responsible for this have been suspended and further action will be taken as per the orders of the superiors after receiving the full report on this. The Duvvur Police Sub Inspector Sriyala Kulayappa speaking to *DC* said that they have registered a case as per the complaint.

Covid-19 cases on the rise every day in Kadapa

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, APRIL 24

Covid-19 cases in the district are increasing day by day. According to the health bulletin issued by the district medical health department on Saturday, 549 cases have been registered in the past 24 hours, the highest number of reported cases in the district after the onset of the second wave.

The highest numbers of cases were reported from Kadapa, Proddatur, Rajampet, Rayachoti, Pulivendula and Badvel areas.

According to the health bulletin on Saturday, 4,865 people were tested and 549 reported positive.

At present, 588 people are being treated at Kadapa Rims and Proddatur Covid-19 hospitals. In addition, 1,506 people are in home isolation. About 200 people recovered and were discharged after Corona treatment.

However, there are still allegations that many people are wandering around taking self-medication without even mentioning the Covid-19 symptoms. Doctors say the Covid-19 outbreak is exacerbated by them. It is recommended to undergo a test even if there is any minor symptom.

There are no containment zones anywhere unlike last year. Positive victims are roaming wherever they are. The virus is spreading from one person to another. Some do not even show any symptoms. With that they are wandering outside. Most people do not wear masks. Sanitisers are not widely used anywhere. Physical distance is not observed at all. Crowds gather at tea shops and soft drink centers without masks. Not more than 50 people were allowed to attend weddings and functions last year. Hundreds of people are attending now that there are no such regulations. Political meetings and inaugurations are going on as usual. It is felt that it will be difficult to prevent the spread of Covid-19 unless the government steps in and imposes restrictions.

Collector Chevuru Harikiran has decided to increase the number of Covid-19 beds in the Government General Hospital (RIMS) in Kadapa from 300 to 700. General surgeries performed in Rims have been shifted to an adjacent dental college. Covid-19 prevalence was 25 per cent across the state, while in Kadapa district it was only 7 per cent.

● The highest numbers of cases were reported from Kadapa, Proddatur, Rajampet, Rayachoti, Pulivendula and Badvel areas.

● According to the health bulletin on Saturday, 4,865 people were tested and 549 reported positive.

● At present, 588 people are being treated at Rims and Proddatur

However, he said that all necessary steps were being taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19 and to provide proper medical services to the patients. The city of Tirupati is close to R a j a m p e t , Railwaykuduru and Rayachoti constituencies, so a letter has been written to the district collector asking him to allocate 200 beds for patients from Kadapa district at the ESI hospital in Tirupati. To this extent the collector there also responded positively. The collector also suggested that people should follow the use of masks, sanitisers and physical distance as part of their normal daily activities. He said to stay away from functions, parties and meetings. The collector appealed to the public not to come out of the house unless absolutely necessary. It is suggested that a Covid-19 test be performed without self-medication for fever or cold. He told the people to go to the hospital and get proper treatment if the diagnosis is covid positive. He warned that negligence was useless under any circumstances.

The collector on Saturday called on private hospitals in the district to come forward to provide Covid medical services. He said the district administration was taking tough measures to control the Covid-19 in the wake of increasing number of cases in the district. He said there was still a need for hospitals in the district to provide medical services. The collector also asked the managements of private hospitals to come forward to contribute to the efforts of the district administration to make the district as Covid-free. Managements of interested private hospitals should apply to the collector and within two days of receipt of applications, the relevant hospitals will look into the infrastructure and facilities required for medical services and will immediately grant clearances to all eligible hospitals he said.

SPIKE IN COVID CASES IN BHIMILI

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM,
APRIL 24

Minister for tourism Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao on Saturday visited his constituency Bhimili on Saturday and alerted the officials on the steep hike in the Covid-19 positive cases in some areas of the constituency.

He told the officials that the cases were high in Bhimili and Madhura zones and three mandals in the constituency. He asked the officials to disinfect the localities where people have tested positive.

He asked the volunteers of the ward and village secretariats to visit every home and get tested the people who have been suffering from fevers. He insisted zonal commissioners that the premises of the Covid-19 test centres must be clean.

Teams formed to check hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, APRIL 24

Joint collector-development N. Prabhakar Reddy directed the officials to form teams and conduct surprise checks in the hospitals to examine issues related to additional charges from the Covid-19 patients and other irregularities.

During a review with the officials on Saturday, he instructed them to initiate action suo moto without waiting for his orders.

The joint collector told the Aarogyasri coordinator, Dr Chandrasekhar, tahsildars and deputy tahsildars to arrange teams and take the responsibility of resolving the problems of the patients on the spot.

He called upon the patients to record their

complaints through 104 for instant action. Stressing that the Covid-approved hospitals have to collect charges from the patients as per GOs 77 and 78, he said collecting any additional charges would be viewed seriously.

He maintained that the Aarogyasri attached hospitals have to provide treatment at free of cost.

The others should obtain permission from the Trust if they want to maintain beds for walk-in patients apart from those eligible under the Aarogyasri scheme. The charges for patients other than Aarogyasri should be as per the rates fixed by the Government. The joint collector said the hospitals have to display the charges on the notice board.

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03. Down Loading Starting Date	: 24-04-2021 @ 11.00 PM
04. Down Loading Ending Date	: 10-05-2021 @ 3.00 PM
05. Last date of Bid submission	: 10-05-2021 @ 3.30 PM
06. Date of Opening of Tender	: 10-05-2021 @ 4.00 PM

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Justice Ramana had ensured end of internet ban in Kashmir

PARMOD KUMAR | DC with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Justice Nuthalapati Venkata Ramana on Saturday was sworn as Chief Justice of India. He was administered the oath of office by President Ram Nath Kovind. He is the 48th Chief Justice of India with a term of a little over one year and four months until August 26, 2022.

The swearing in ceremony of Justice Ramana, amongst others dignitaries, was attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vice-president M. Venkaiah Naidu, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad and his predecessor Sharad A. Bobde.

Justice Bobde had his last working day in the top court on April 23. Justice Ramana was elevated as a judge of the top court on February 17, 2014.

Born in an agricultural family on August 27, 1957, in Ponnavaram village, Krishna District, Justice Ramana did his B.Sc., B.L and was enrolled as an advocate on February 10, 1983.

Justice Ramana began his career as a journalist of a leading Telugu newspaper for a short while before turning to legal practice in 1983.

During his student days, he was known as an activist, involved in the issues concerning farmers and industrial workers.

Justice Ramana was appointed

● He was also a part of a five-judge constitution bench of the top court that had in a landmark verdict in 2016 ordered restoration of the Congress government in Arunachal Pradesh. The bench had said the “clock should be turned back” as it quashed all decisions of the governor that precipitated its fall in January, holding them “violative” of the Constitution.

as a permanent Judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court on June 27, 2000. He functioned as Acting Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh High Court from March 10, 2013 to May 20, 2013.

He was appointed as the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court on September 2, 2013.

The new chief justice of India, has authored path-breaking verdicts as a Supreme Court judge and one of them led to the end of internet ban in Jammu and Kashmir, and another brought the apex court under the ambit of transparency law.

He will demit office on August 26 next year and have to deal with key task of ensuring smooth functioning of apex court amid resurgence of the coronavirus pandemic. The judgement penned by Justice Ramana in the Anuradha Bhasin case related to internet ban in Jammu and Kashmir following the abroga-

tion of Article 370 provisions has been hailed by many as one of the progressive verdicts.

It held that freedom of speech and conducting business on the internet are protected under the Constitution and had directed the Jammu and Kashmir administration to immediately review curb orders.

The bench had directed the authorities in the Union territory to immediately review all orders suspending internet services and said orders not in accordance with the law must be revoked.

A five-judge constitution bench headed by Justice Ramana had in March last year declined to refer to a larger seven-judge bench a batch of pleas challenging the constitutional validity of the Centre’s decision to abrogate provisions of Article 370.

He was part of a five-judge constitution bench that had held in November 2019 that the office of the CJI was a public authority under the Right to Information Act.

In the November 2019 verdict, the top court had also said “judicial independence has to be kept in mind” while disclosing information in “public interest”.

He was also a part of a five-judge constitution bench of the top court that had in a landmark verdict in 2016 ordered restoration of the Congress government in Arunachal Pradesh.

ARMY RESCUES 2 KIDNAPPED ONGC STAFFERS

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APR. 24

The Indian Army and Nagaland police with the support of some local villagers on Friday night rescued two employees of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), who were kidnapped earlier this week from Sivasagar, in Mon district of Nagaland. The operations are still on to trace the third abductee, Retul Saikia.

The rescued employees were identified as Alakesh Saikia and Mohini Mohan Gogoi. The police also recovered one AK 47 from the location, the ONGC employees were rescued.

Informing that security forces had launched joint coordinated operations since April 21, the day suspected Ulfa-I rebels had kidnapped three employees of ONGC from a rig site at Lakwa oil field in Assam’s Sivasagar district, security sources said that security forces have also sealed the international border with Myanmar.

Meanwhile, a total of 14 linkmen, who aided the United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent (Ulfa-I) in kidnapping the three ONGC employees, were apprehended by Assam police. The Assam police also said that it has received specific information that the banned Ulfa (Independent) was involved in the kidnapping of three ONGC employees from

MAOISTS KILL ABDUCTED JAWAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, APR 24

A jawan who was abducted by Maoists three days ago in Chhattisgarh’s south Bastar district of Bijapur was brutally killed by the ultras, police said on Saturday.

Body of Murali Tati, who was a sub-inspector in district reserve group (DRG), an exclusive tribal counterinsurgency wing of Chhattisgarh police, was found on the outskirts of the village of Peddepara in Bijpur district early on Saturday morning, Bastar police said.

The slain jawan was abducted by Maoists near Palsumpara under Gangalur police station on April 21. Maoists’ west Bastar division owned responsibility for his killing. The jawan’s widow had earlier appealed to the Maoists to release.

Covid-19: New rules for pvt hosps in Kerala

GILVESTER ASSARY I DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 24

With many states witnessing a surge in deaths of Covid-19 patients due to shortage of oxygen, ventilators and critical care facilities, the Kerala government has initiated measures to prevent such a horrific situation in the state.

The state reported 26,685 new cases on Saturday taking the total number of active cases to 1,98,576. Besides, 25 deaths were also reported in Saturday taking the death toll to 5,080.

During the last 24 hours 1,31,155 samples were tested and the test positivity rate was 20.35.

In the wake of the huge spike in cases reported in the state over the past one week, the government apart from utilising the public health care infrastructure to the fullest, has decided to involve

the private hospitals in an organised manner for providing critical care to the Covid-19 patients.

Chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday convened a meeting of representatives of the private hospitals. The meeting decided to mandatorily set aside 25 per cent of beds mandatorily for Covid-19 patients.

The chief minister also directed the private hospitals to not to levy high charges for Covid-19 treatment. He assured the private hospitals that the pending dues connected with Covid care under Karunya scheme would be cleared in two weeks.

The private hospital managements have urged the chief minister not to impose uniform treatment rates for Covid related complications. They pointed out that the rates are based on the facilities provided in each hospital including speciality care.

Maha to float global tender for Remdesivir

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 24

To meet a growing demand for coronavirus vaccines and remdesivir injections in the state, the Maharashtra Government has decided to float a global tender for the procurement of these drugs used in the treatment of Covid-19.

Maharashtra, which is the worst coronavirus-affected state in the country, is facing an acute shortage of vaccines and remdesivir drugs. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar announced that the State Government will purchase these drugs from foreign companies.

“We have decided to float a global tender for remdesivir. For this, a five-member committee will be appointed and it will be headed by state chief secretary Sitaram Kunte,” he said in Pune.

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has

directed the chief secretary to issue a global tender. It will decide on which vaccines should be purchased, Mr Pawar added.

CM Thackeray has also discussed the details of the vaccine with CEO of Serum Institute of India (SII) Adar Poonawala. The SII has agreed to provide vaccines to the state as per its production capacity. But we have to also keep other options open, he said.

The deputy CM claimed that the Centre has halved the supply of medical oxygen to Maharashtra.

“We were getting 250 metric tonnes of oxygen, but it has been reduced to 125 MT,” he added.

Maharashtra on Saturday recorded 67,160 new Covid cases taking its caseload to 42,28,836.

The state also registered 676 deaths due to the infection, taking the toll to 63928. The state now has 694480 active Covid cases.

MADHYA PRADESH CONG MLA DIES OF COVID-19

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, APR 24

Tribal Congress MLA from Alirajpur district in Madhya Pradesh Kalawati Bhuria died of Covid-19 in a private hospital in Indore early on Saturday morning, family sources said on Saturday.

She is the first sitting MLA in MP who succumbed to the virus. She was admitted to the Shalby Hospital in Indore 14 days ago after she tested positive.

Her condition deteriorated fast two days ago and the end came early on Saturday morning, her family sources said.

“Her lungs were 70 per cent infected. She was on ventilator”, hospital’s medical superintendent Vivek Joshi said.

The 47-year-old leader who had shunned marriage to devote her time for social service was emerging as a key tribal leader of Congress in Madhya Pradesh, particularly among her tribe of Bhil in western belt of the state.

The niece of former Union minister and Congress MLA Kantilal Bhuria, Kalawati was elected as Jhabua district zilla panchayat president four times before being elected as MLA from Jobat constituency in Alirajpur district in 2018 polls.

“She was a very popular leader in the tribal region in the state. Her death is an irreparable loss to Congress”, former minister and MP PCC vice-president Raja Pateria said.

Former chief minister and veteran Congress leader Kamal Nath expressed shock and grief over the untimely death of the party legislator. “The news of the sad demise of Jobat MLA Kalawati Bhuria is very disturbing and shocking. She was an active, gutsy, strong-willed and friendly legislator”, Mr Nath tweeted.

Meanwhile, two Indian Forest Service (IFS) officers of MP cadre died of Covid-19 on Friday.

The two deceased forest officers are Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Force Ashish Verma and Sendhwa divisional forest officer S S Meheta.

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Covid patients getting free oxygen, by a Sikh organisation at Indirapuram Gurdwara in Ghaziabad on Saturday.

- PTI

Centre says Delhi got more oxygen than they asked for

On ground, people continue to beg for oxygen beds in hospitals

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

The harrowing times for Covid-19 patients and their families continues despite several high level meetings by the Centre for the last couple days as hospitals in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat continued sending SOS messages for Oxygen to the Centre and state governments and patients died due to lack of O2.

While Delhi Chief Minister Mr Arvind Kejriwal wrote to all States requesting them to divert their spare Oxygen reserves to Delhi, Punjab CM Capt Amarinder Singh ordered shutdown of operations of some of the state’s industries to divert Oxygen for medical use as five patients died at a hospital in Amritsar due its shortage. On his part Union

Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said Delhi has been allotted more than the Oxygen quota they had asked for and UT government has to now rationalise the quota in a timely manner but on ground people continue to beg for Oxygen beds as Delhi hospitals kept pleading for Oxygen.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi held another round of meeting on measures to increase supply of Oxygen and related equipment. The government has announced to waive off basic customs duty and health cess on Oxygen and equipment related such as Oxygen concentrator and cylinders, ventilators and ventilator masks and all other devices that can be used for Oxygen generation.

Besides, Covid-19 related vaccines will also be exempted from

● IAF planes are bringing in cryogenic oxygen tanks from Singapore and transporting oxygen tanks in the country to reduce travel times. Railways Oxygen Express has delivered nearly 150 tonnes of Oxygen in the last 24 hours in Maharashtra and UP.

basic customs duty. Centre feels these measures will boost availability of these crucial items and make them cheaper. The exemption is for three months.

India on Saturday recorded 3,46,787 new cases and 2,624 deaths. At the same time, over 2.19 lakh recoveries have been registered in the last 24 hours and Case Fatality Rate has come down to 1.14%.

Eleven States/UTs have not reported any Covid deaths in the last

24 hours. Ten states - Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan - reported 74.15% of the new cases in the country. While Maharashtra reported the highest daily new cases at 63,818 and 676 deaths, there was some respite in Mumbai where major decline in fresh cases were noticed.

Mumbai reported 5,888 new cases and 71 deaths while 8549 people got cured.

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation released the third Sero survey data, in which 36.30% of residents of Mumbai were found to be positive. The survey was carried out on blood samples of 10,197 people.

During the meeting, Prime Minister emphasised the immediate

need to augment the supply of medical grade oxygen as well as equipment required for patient care both at home and in hospitals.

It was suggested that import of equipment related to providing Oxygen to patients needs to be expedited.

This will boost availability of these items and make them cheaper.

Senior officials in the Centre said the Government is taking a lot of measures to improve supply of Oxygen and medical supplies.

IAF planes are bringing in cryogenic oxygen tanks from Singapore and transporting oxygen tanks in the country to reduce travel times. Railways Oxygen Express has delivered nearly 150 tonnes of Oxygen in the last 24 hours in Maharashtra and UP and more trains are on way.

CBI BOOKS FORMER MAHA HOME MINISTER

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 24

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Saturday conducted searches at former Maharashtra Home Minister

Anil Deshmukh’s premises in Mumbai and his hometown Nagpur after registering a case against him in connection with allegations of corruption levelled against him by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

However, the NCP has termed the agency’s action as a ‘political witch-hunt.’

“The preliminary enquiry (PE) prima facie revealed that a cognisable case is made out in the matter wherein former Maharashtra Home Minister, Anil Deshmukh and unknown others attempted to obtain undue advantage for improper and dishonest performance of his public duty,” said the CBI FIR.

The CBI has charged Mr Deshmukh under Section 7 of the amended Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), 2018, along with Section 120 B of the IPC. After registering the case, the CBI conducted a search operation at a number of locations including the premises of Mr Deshmukh in Mumbai, Nagpur and other places. A CBI team had arrived in Nagpur from Delhi on Friday night and carried out searches at Mr Deshmukh’s house.

Kejriwal writes to all CMs, seeks O2 supply for Delhi

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 24

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday wrote to Chief Ministers of all states requesting them for oxygen if they have any to spare.

Kejriwal said that he

would be grateful if the chief ministers could provide Delhi with any oxygen, along with tankers, from their state or any organization in their state. He asked for this request to be treated as an SOS.

He also wrote that due to the severe rise in Covid cases in the last

few days, many Delhi hospitals had run out of oxygen.

Kejriwal wrote that while the Central Government is helping Delhi in this regard, the intensity of the spread is so severe that the quantity is proving inadequate.

Kejriwal tweeted, “I am writing to all CMs requesting them to provide oxygen to Delhi if they have spare. Though Central govt. is also helping us, the severity of corona is such that all available resources are proving inadequate.”

In the letter, he wrote,

34-hour curfew begins in J&K as situation continues to be grim

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, APRIL 24

Entire Jammu and Kashmir was placed under a complete curfew for 34 hours from Saturday night in view of worsening Covid-19 situation.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, while taking to micro-blogging site Twitter announced, “Complete Corona curfew to be observed in the Union Territory from 8PM, 24th April (Saturday) till 6AM, April 26 (Monday). Essential and emergency services to be allowed. All

● J&K has witnessed an upward trajectory in Covid-19 cases over the past couple of weeks. The officials said that the UT on Saturday reported 2,030 fresh cases, taking the tally to 1,58,374.

market, commercial institutions will remain closed”. (sic)

J&K has witnessed an upward trajectory in Covid-19 cases over the past couple of weeks. The officials said that the UT on Saturday reported 2,030 fresh

cases, taking the tally to 1,58,374. Also, 15 more people died of the virus in the last 24 hours, they said. With these, the total fatality count has went up to 2,126.

The government had earlier this week extended night curfew in all twenty districts of the Union Territory besides announcing a slew of other tough measures including allowing only fifty per cent shops and other business establishments on alternate days to curb the spread of the virus.

However, Kashmir’s

senior most official Divisional Commissioner PK.Pole had said that the government has no plan to impose fresh lockdown in the Valley as the administration is following the mantra of *Jaan bhi, Jahaan bhi*.

Around the same time, the authorities in J&K and Ladakh had informed the Union government that the surge in the positive cases in the twin UTs is a result of inbound travellers as many of them have turned out to be the carriers of the asymptomatic transmission of virus.

IN BRIEF

Stop killings, Myanmar told

Jakarta, April 24: Indonesian President Joko Widodo has said that Southeast Asian leaders have demanded an immediate end to killings and the release of political detainees in Myanmar, in an emergency summit with its top general and coup leader in the Indonesian capital.

The leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations also told Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing in the talks Saturday in Jakarta that a dialogue between contending parties in Myanmar should immediately start, Widodo said, adding that the situation in the troubled Southeast Asian nation is unacceptable.

Zarif to visit Iraq, Qatar today

Tehran, April 24: Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif is to visit Iraq and Qatar on Sunday, his ministry announced, following reported talks brokered by Baghdad between Tehran and regional rival Riyadh.

The talks in the Iraqi capital earlier this month, which have not been confirmed by either capital, were held at the level of officials not ministers and aimed at restoring relations severed five years ago, an Iraqi official and a Western diplomat said in Baghdad. Tehran has neither confirmed nor denied the reports saying only that it has “always welcomed” dialogue with Saudi Arabia. Riyadh has flatly denied them.

PoC shot: 7 deputies on leave

Elizabeth City (US), April 24: Seven North Carolina deputies have been placed on leave in the aftermath of a PoC man being shot and killed by members of their department serving drug-related search and arrest warrants, authorities said Friday.

The disclosure comes as calls increase for the release of deputy body camera footage amid signs, including emergency scanner traffic, that Andrew Brown Jr was shot in the back and killed as he was trying to drive away.

Pasquotank County Sheriff's Office Maj. Aaron Wallio confirmed the number of deputies on leave due to the shooting in an email Friday.

New crew reaches ISS

Washington, April 24: A recycled SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying four astronauts docked with the International Space Station early Saturday, the third time Elon Musk's company has safely delivered humans to the orbital outpost. The spacecraft named Endeavour, piloting herself autonomously, locked on to a docking port at 5:08 am Eastern time (0908 GMT), some 260 miles (420 kilometers) above the south Indian Ocean.

Two hours after the process was completed, Endeavour's quartet posed for photos with the last crew of four sent by SpaceX, and three Russian cosmonauts — making the ISS unusually crowded with 11 people in total.

CHAUVIN TO BE SENTENCED ON JUNE 16

Minneapolis, April 24: Sacked US police officer Derek Chauvin will be sentenced on June 16 for the murder of African American George Floyd in a case that sparked nationwide anti-racism protests. The Hennepin County District Court in the Midwestern city of Minneapolis, where handcuffed Floyd died last May, said in its online schedule that the white ex-cop will be sentenced at 1:30 pm (1830 GMT).

The ex-officer — who knelt on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes — faces up to 40 years in prison after being found guilty of all charges Tuesday over the death of the unarmed man.

The crime was recorded by a bystander whose video shocked the world, triggering mass protests across the United States and beyond, while also prompting a national reckoning on racial injustice and police brutality.

Last year's killing of Floyd as he lay face down and handcuffed saying repeatedly “I can't breathe” has prompted some police reforms, but advocates, including President Joe Biden, say more is needed.

While the Chauvin trial progressed, Minneapolis was rocked by the police shooting of yet another African American.



New Zealand band Six60 perform at Eden Park in Auckland, on Saturday. Six60 is being billed as the biggest live act in the world since the Coronavirus pandemic struck after New Zealand stamped out the spread of the virus. — AP

Clot: US lifts J&J vax pause

Washington, April 24: US health officials lifted an 11-day pause on Covid-19 vaccinations using Johnson & Johnson's single-dose shot, after scientific advisers decided its benefits outweigh a rare risk of blood clot.

The government uncovered 15 vaccine recipients who developed a highly unusual kind of blood clot, out of nearly 8 million people given the J&J shot. All were women, most under age 50. Three died, and seven remain hospitalised.

But ultimately Friday, the Food and Drug Administration and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention decided that J&J's one-and-done vaccine is critical to fight the pandemic and that the small clot risk could be handled with warnings to help younger women decide if they should use that shot or an alternative.

Above all else, health and safety are at the forefront of our decisions, CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said. Our vaccine safety systems are working. We identified exceptionally rare events out of millions of doses” of the J&J shot and will continue to monitor them.

The US decision similar to how European regulators are rolling out J&J's shot comes after CDC advisers earlier Friday voted 10-4 to resume vaccinations but panelists made clear that they must come with warnings about the risk. The group debated but ultimately steered clear of outright age restrictions. This is an age group that is most at risk (of the clotting) that is getting vaccine predominately to save other peoples' lives and morbidity, not their own. And I think we have a responsibility to be certain that they know this,” said Dr. Sarah Long of Drexel University College of Medicine, who voted against the proposal because she felt it did not go far enough in warning women. The panel members all agreed the J&J vaccine “should be put back into circulation, chairman Dr. Jose Romero, Arkansas' health secretary, said. — AP

Merkel defends new law

Bwelin, April 24: Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday defended a fiercely opposed new law imposing tough Coronavirus restrictions across Germany, including night curfews and school closures.

With many of its neighbours lifting restrictions despite higher virus rates, Europe's biggest economy is bucking the trend with the new national law dubbed the “emergency bra-

ke”. Passed amid huge protests in Berlin this week, the law prescribes uniform national restrictions

GERMANY

and is designed to end a tug of war between the federal government and Germany's 16 states.

The law “is something new in our fight against the pandemic. And I'm convinced that we need it urgently,” Merkel said in her weekly video podcast.

“If we manage to significantly and quickly reduce infections, gradual opening-up will be possible in the near future,” she added. Tough measures will apply from Saturday in all regions with incidence rates of more than 100 new infections per 100,000 people over the last seven days. — AFP

regation in the Pyrenees. With big smiles on their pale faces, the 15 participants exited the Lombrives cave to a round of applause and basked in the light of day while wearing special glasses to protect their eyes after so long in the dark. “It's really warm!” said one.

For 40 days and 40 nights, the group lived in and explored the cave without a sense of time. There were

no clocks and no sunlight inside, where the temperature was 10 degrees Celsius (50 F) and the relative humidity stood at 100 per cent. The cave dwellers had no contact with the outside world, no updates on the pandemic or any communication with friends and family above ground.

Scientists at the Human Adaption Institute leading the 1.2 million-euro (\$1.5 million) “Deep Time” project say the experiment will help them better understand how people adapt to drastic changes in living conditions and environments, something much of the world can relate to because of Coronavirus pandemic. In partnership with labs in France and Switzerland, scientists monitored the 15-member group's sleep patterns, social interactions and behavioural reactions via

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ment on the New Zealand government website said. Earlier on Friday the Perth and Peel regions were sent into a three-day lockdown after Western Australia recorded its first community transmission of the virus in 12 months. A man in his 50s, who recently left hotel quarantine, flew into Melbourne from Perth on Wednesday and tested positive for the Coronavirus earlier Friday. — AFP

GERMANY

BERLIN RESTRICTS TRAVEL FROM ‘HIGH-RISK’ INDIA

Berlin, April 24: Germany will shut out all travellers arriving from India apart from its own citizens, Health Minister Jens Spahn said Saturday, as a new variant has made the South Asian country the latest Coronavirus hotspot. “We're very worried about the new mutation of the virus discovered in India. So as not to endanger our vaccination programme, India travel has to be significantly limited,” Spahn told the Funke newspaper group. — AFP

GERMANY

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KUWAIT

ALL COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS FROM INDIA SUSPENDED

Dubai, April 24: Kuwait on Saturday suspended all direct commercial flights from India due to the worsening Covid-19 situation in the country.

The move came after instructions from health authorities. Kuwait's directorate general of civil aviation said that it had suspended all direct commercial flights from India, effective April 24. Passengers arriving from India or via another country will be banned from entering unless they have spent 14 days out of India. — PTI

PAKISTAN

IMRAN EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH INDIA OVER CRISIS

Islamabad, April 24: Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday expressed solidarity with the people of India battling the deadly wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, saying we must fight this global challenge confronting humanity together.

In a tweet, Khan said: Our prayers for a speedy recovery go to all those suffering from the pandemic in our neighbourhood and the world. His tweet came after Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi expressed support to the people of India. — PTI

SPAIN

MALLORCA MAN INFECTS 22 WITH COVID, ARRESTED

Madrid, April 24: A Mallorca man who infected 22 people with Covid-19 has been arrested on suspicion of assault for going to work and the gym despite signs he had the virus, police said Saturday.

Police on the Spanish island began investigating at the end of Jan. after an outbreak in the town of Manacor, following reports an employee had “become infected but hidden his illness”, a statement said.

Days before the outbreak was detected, he began to show symptoms. — AFP

IRAN

TEHRAN BANS FLIGHTS FROM INDIA, PAKISTAN

Tehran, April 24: Iran's state-run IRNA news agency is reporting the country's civil aviation agency has banned all flights to and from India and Pakistan because of the dramatic surge in Coronavirus cases in the two nations.

IRNA says the decision was made by Iran's Health Ministry and it takes effect Saturday at midnight.

Mohammad Hassan Zibakhsh, spokesman for Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation noted there are no routine flights between Iran and India and flights are operated occasionally.

He said flights to and from 41 countries were prohibited in Iran, while those who want to fly to other countries listed as high risk are required to have a test in Iran. — AP

Lost submarine sank: Indonesia

Says vessel went down, cracked open April 21

Banyuwangi (Indonesia), April 24: Indonesia's navy on Saturday said items were found from a missing submarine, indicating the vessel with 53 crew members had sunk and cracked open, and that there was no hope of finding survivors.

Military chief Hadi Tjahjanto said the presence of an oil slick as well as the discovery of debris near the location of KRI Nanggala 402's last dive on Wednesday off the island of Bali were clear proof of the vessel had sunk.

Indonesia earlier considered the vessel to be only missing. Navy Chief Yudo Margono told a press conference in Bali. “If it's an explosion, it will be in pieces. The cracks happened gradually in some parts when it went down from 300 metres to 400 metres to 500 metres...If there was an explosion, it would be heard by the sonar.” The navy previously said it believes the submarine

● **THE NAVY** previously said it believes the submarine sank to a depth of 600-700 metres (2,000-2,300 feet), much deeper than its collapse depth of 200 metres (655 feet), at which point water pressure would be greater than the hull could withstand.

sank to a depth of 600-700 metres (2,000-2,300 feet), much deeper than its collapse depth of 200 metres (655 feet), at which point water pressure would be greater than the hull could withstand. The cause of the disappearance was still uncertain.

The navy had previously said an electrical failure could have left the submarine unable to execute emergency procedures to resurface. Margono said in the past two days, searches found parts of a torpedo straightener, a grease bottle believed to be used to oil the periscope, debris

from prayer rugs and a broken piece from a coolant pipe that was refitted on the submarine in South Korea in 2012. “With the authentic evidence we found believed to be from the submarine, we have now moved from the submiss' phase to sub sunk,” Margono said at the press conference, in which the items were displayed.

Margono said rescue teams from Indonesia and other countries will evaluate the findings. He said no bodies have been found so far. Officials previously said the submarine's oxygen supply would have run out early Saturday. An American reconnaissance plane, a P-8 Poseidon, landed Saturday and was set to join the search, along with 20 Indonesian ships, a sonar-equipped Australian warship and four Indonesian aircraft. Singaporean rescue ships were expected Saturday, while Malaysian rescue vessels were due Sunday. — AP

Israel, Gaza engage in exchange of fire

Jerusalem, April 24: Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired some three dozen rockets into Israel overnight Saturday, while the Israeli military struck back at targets operated by the ruling Hamas group. The exchange came as tensions in Jerusalem spilled over into the worst round of cross-border violence in months. The barrage of rocket fire came as hundreds of Palestinians clashed with Israeli police in east Jerusalem.

The clashes, in which at least four police and six protesters were injured, have become a nightly occurrence throughout the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and show no signs of stopping. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he held talks with top security officials about Gaza and Jerusalem. He said he instructed officials to be ready “for every scenario” in Gaza. In Jerusalem, he said Israel would guarantee “freedom of worship” for everyone, and he appealed for calm.

“We ask now for people to obey the law and I call for a calming of tempers on all sides.” The UN envoy to the region, Tor Wennesland, condemned the violence and said the United Nations was working with all sides to restore calm. “The provocative acts across Jerusalem must cease. The indiscriminate launching of rockets towards Israeli population centres violates international law and must stop immediately,” he said. “I reiterate my call upon all sides to exercise maximum restraint and avoid further escalation, particularly during the Holy month of Ramadan and this politically charged time for all.”

Meanwhile, Israeli chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi, is weighing “a series of steps for possible responses,” and preparations if the situation continued to escalate, the military said in a statement. He also postponed a trip to the United States that was scheduled for Sunday. The US also appealed for calm, while neighbouring Jordan, which serves as the custodian for Jerusalem's Muslim holy sites, condemned Israel's actions.

Jerusalem, home to holy sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, has long been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2014, similar tensions erupted into a 50-day war between Israel and Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group.

The Israeli military said a total of 36 rockets were fired into Israel throughout the night. It said six rockets were intercepted, while most of the others landed in open areas. There were no reports of injuries. — AP

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● **WITH THE** acknowledgement, Biden followed through on a campaign promise he made a year ago Saturday — the annual commemoration of Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day — to recognise that

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LANKAN EX-MINISTER, BROTHER ARRESTED OVER EASTER ATTACKS

Colombo, April 24: Sri Lankan Police on Saturday arrested a former minister and his brother for allegedly aiding and abetting the suicide bombers responsible for the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks in which 258 people, including 11 Indians, were killed. Rishad Bathiudeen, the leader of a minority Muslim party that is part of the main Opposition party, the SJB, and his brother Riyaj Bathiudeen were arrested from their respective residences.

“They have been arrested under the provisions of the prevention of terrorism Act based on direct, circumstantial and scientific evidence,” Ajith Rohana, the senior deputy inspector general, said.

In May last year, Riyaj was nabbed for making contacts with suicide bombers and given bail in Oct. Rishad, a former Minister of Industry and Commerce, was nabbed in Oct and given bail in Nov over misappropriation of state resources. — PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

25 APRIL 2021



Sucheta Dasgupta
Off the beaten track

Hope and sorrow in the time of C-virus

A ghost lives in my body and watches over the state of my heart. It does not take up space. It refuses food and drink, and speaks only when spoken to. I consult it when I need to identify my feelings. For my benefit, it keeps a record of them. For some reason, strange or otherwise, I alone was never an adept at that.

The only time the ghost speaks to me of its own accord is when I am tired. Whenever I expend myself beyond my lung capacity, it tells me: This is how it felt for him, too, when, for instance, he resumed breathing for your sake, twice coming out from under ventilation. And the cold finger of guilt grips my heart.

The first time I heard the ghost speak was when I was perspiring over the griddle a full year after Baba died.

Baba went under ventilation three Marches ago, in the late spring of 2018. The lone tree tucked away at the back of the interstate bus terminus was full of stars.

Baba did not die of the coronavirus. Following cardiac and kidney failure, he died of septic shock. Between the two illnesses, the pneumonia was the common factor.

Baba, a doctor, has missed out on the whole pandemic plus the vaccine conversations.

I have given up exercising for fitness. There is no one to perform for, vie against, show off. It puts me on a better footing than the children in my neighbourhood, fretting because they want to but cannot play. Less than a month ago, I saw a desi mother supervising their games in the park as I silently applauded her. To me, she was the pith of society, salt of the earth. That was then, though. This is now. In-between, the coronavirus has exploded and is now spreading furious and fast.



Less than a month ago, I saw a desi mother supervising their games in the park as I silently applauded her. To me, she was the pith of society, salt of the earth. That was then, though. This is now. In-between, the coronavirus has exploded and is now spreading furious and fast.

Despite its no-pussyfooting bravado and stupendous majority, the government did not declare a lockdown on Holi. The Kumbh continued uninterrupted. The virus, meanwhile, reached the interiors and the second wave has since surpassed the first one. The daily case count is over three lakhs. Experts say the peak is many weeks away. India is notorious for its non-existent chains of primary and secondary medical infrastructure. My husband held that these omissions on the part of the government — failing to declare a curfew, call off the Kumbh and so on — fell on its policy blindspot.

Well, one didn't. The decision to hold an eight-phase legislative assembly election, ongoing in the present, was deliberate. My home state, West Bengal, was chosen for this singular punishment.

Our leaders thus dropped the ball when our severely constrained health workers had almost won the match. The latter slogged away alone. Many did not return home in days. The hospitals were full of despair.

A young man asked a photographer to click the smoke coming out of his mother's pyre. She was there.

The high courts stepped in. They bore upon the Centre to direct uninterrupted transport of oxygen across state borders. India is the world's largest producer of industrial grade oxygen. But earlier, state governments had refused to come on the same page on this simplest of measures. Eventhough I am his eldest, I am not going to my hometown to perform Baba's annual rite. My younger sister will fill in for me. The coronavirus is a factor. But what made the decision for me is my awareness from the start that I have not been a good child. While he never needed me to, I did not help Baba take care of the family. No one took care of him, on the other hand. I spurned his wish for me to become a doctor. For the sake of my journalistic quest, I abandoned him.

My rishirin to Baba will be paid when I complete my memoir of our differences. Baba was a flawed man. But no one, including a never-genuine-ly exceptional me, had a mind like Baba's.

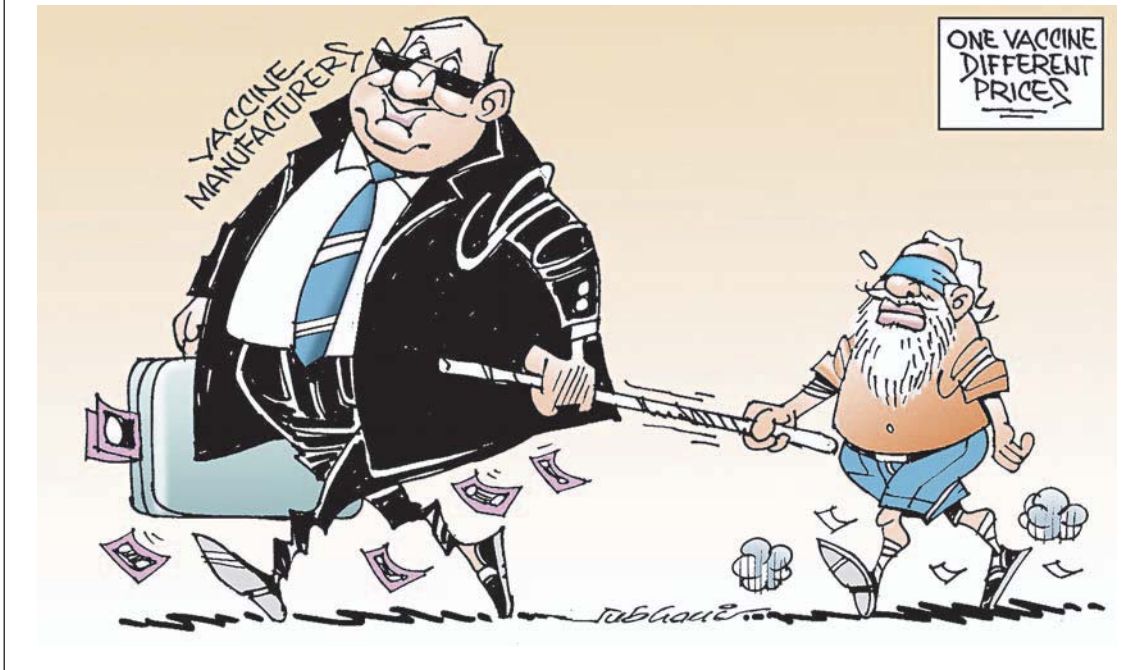
Periodically, the seed of my guilt bursts on my skin in angry hives. When I work very hard and accomplish a minuscule amount of good it goes away. I risk losing a bit of my memory of Baba whenever that occurs.

The young child I know in our condominium has started school. But school is online and she does not speak a word, and I worry that the lack of physical contact with classmates and peers will further rob her of that incentive. Whenever we meet, I am infected by her boundless energy. But she is more poised than I ever will be and never exposes her weak spots. Like her inability to articulate. Her absence of vocabulary.

I, too, had once chosen certainty over sharing, but I had been pushed to do that.

I dream of her growing up. To being from nothingness, darkness to light. Like Vak, daughter of Ambhrin, she will give a name to all existence, one by one, that will, in turn, give rise to noun, thought, knowledge and identity. That day, should I be around, she will probably look into my eyes with those great big ones of hers and there will be a reckoning. Or there will be not.

Subhani



An AWOL government



Manish Tewari
State of the Union

It is like a nightmarish deja-vu moment for me. Opening the debate on the demands for grants for the ministry of health and family welfare in the Lok Sabha on March 17, 2021, I, at the outset, stated: "Mr Speaker Sir, this discussion is taking place at a point in time when the world is being engulfed, if not overwhelmed, by the second wave of coronavirus infections." These words have unfortunately proven to be prophetic in the case of our nation.

The last two weeks have been a nightmare for India as the second wave of Covid-19 hit the nation in all its fury. Overflowing hospitals, oxygen scarcity, hoarded life-saving drugs being sold on the black market, diagnostic centres stretched to a breaking point and hospitals approaching the courts to maintain oxygen supplies. The worst is even cremation and burial grounds not being able to cope with inflow of dead bodies and death numbers literally being fudged. People are being cremated on makeshift platforms set up on public pavements — denied dignity even in death.

The imagery of the past fortnight could not have been more bizarre. On one hand, the Prime Minister and home minister were addressing frenzied supporters in West Bengal and, on the other hand, sick and even dying people were being turned back from hospitals for lack of space.

The government is AWOL— absent without leave. What is, however, even far more felonious if it turns out to be true is that the Indian-origin double mutant strain, B.1.167, that is responsible for the current

rent rampage, was first detected as way back on the 5th of October 2020. Since both earlier mutations, E84Q and L425R, were discovered in the virus' crucial spike protein, its devastation potential should have been sequenced on a war footing. Instead, it was consigned to the back burner and never taken seriously because Covid infection numbers had started declining.

How could we have missed the second wave of Covid-19 with all the empirical evidence of hundred years of history staring us straight in the face? Downright negligence, coupled with hubris, made the governments, both at the Centre and some in the states, let their guard down.

Surprisingly, when the Prime Minister addressed the nation on Tuesday night, he said lockdown should we used as a measure of the last resort. On March 23, 2020, when India was at 341 cases and only seven dead, he was the most enthusiastic champion of a national lockdown.

All through the whole of last year, ministers and spokespersons of the NDA/BJP alliance kept toutting it as the magic bullet that had saved millions of lives. *Jan Hai To Jahan Hai* (If there is life there would be paradise) — they sang in chorus. One year later, the Prime Minister and his band of not-so-merry men are singing an entirely different tune.

With a 32 lakh crore hole in the Union budget spread over two fiscals, 2020-21 and 2021-22, and no cushion to fall back upon, for the economy has been grossly mismanaged going back to the illogical demonetisation in November 2016, livelihoods are

With a 32 lakh crore hole in the Union budget spread over two fiscals, 2020-21 and 2021-22, and no cushion to fall back upon, for the economy has been grossly mismanaged, livelihoods are now being prioritised over lives

now being prioritised over lives. If the wheels of the economy do not keep ticking, the Union government stares at the spectre of bankruptcy.

It is, therefore, not trite that even in times of a raging pandemic, the allocations in the Union budget for health in the current fiscal are at best tardy. I had pointed this out during the Parliament debate.

In 2020-21, the ministry received an allocation of ₹67,112 crores. This is an increase of a measly 3.9 per cent over the revised estimates of 2019-20 — ₹64,609 crores. In 2019-20, the cumulative public health expenditure of all the states put together was a meagre ₹1,96,659 crores. The Union government's performance was even worse at ₹36,339 crores.

We all know India's health system is in shambles. Last year in these columns, I had argued that what we need is a new health deal for India. I had calculated that India requires an infrastructure investment of ₹6 lakh crores to rebuild its public health system bottom upwards. The human resource cost to staff it is separate.

Given this state of play, a second wave meant that it would be each to their own. One would be primarily responsible for saving one's own life and those of one's loved ones.

Had we not experienced the same a year back? The disadvantaged sections of our society — the millions of internal migrants who keep the wheels of our economy turning — were compelled to walk home as they were doused with

with chlorine water, cane-charged and made to suffer a million other ignominies by a callous state to prevent them from reaching their home and hearth. Once again as states announce lockdowns and curfews, you see the same stampede at bus stands and railway stations as people make a beeline back to their villages. The clock has turned a full cycle.

It, therefore, begs a question: Should people themselves not have come together to enforce Covid-appropriate behaviour during the lull when cases had come down? But given our intrinsic sense of fatalism — it is all in God's hands — we threw all caution to the winds. This, even when it is known that there is never a government when it is required the most.

Maybe, given the hand-to-mouth existence of the bulk of our people who need to migrate to urban agglomerations to keep their body and soul together, it is not even humanly possible to think beyond the next meal. They are thus destined to play the Russian roulette, for the choice is a really a binary between death by hunger or death by virus.

Will this situation ever change? Can we build a state-of-the-art education and healthcare system for our people? The answer is yes. However, it would first and foremost require population control. With 135 crore people and growing by the minute, it is just not possible for any system to provide even the basic level of amenities required for a decent living. A broad national consensus regarding the need to contain population needs to be created at the earliest. How many more tragedies would it take to understand this?

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

VACCINES

The nation is in the darkest days of the pandemic and still darker days are not ruled out (*No time to lose, ramp up vaccine production now, DC, April 24*). There has been an astronomical surge in Covid cases. The Centre and all states need to pool in resources to meet the demand without political bickerings. The ruling dispensation has to scale up production of vaccines immediately. Medical infrastructure has to be declared as the "thrust area" in the country as Coronavirus will be there for long.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

SECOND WAVE

Though various reports predicted a second wave of Coronavirus more virulent than the first, the Centre could not wake up from slumber. As a result the nation is facing shortage of vaccine and emergency drugs like remdesivir. It is heart-breaking to read 25 patients dying due to lack of medical oxygen. The Union government's lack of coordination to ensure oxygen supply is becoming so clear. Why is the vaccine not being provided for free when there is a budget provision of ₹35,000 crore for it?

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala
Tiruvuru, Krishna district

The second Covid-19 wave has not yet reached its peak. Experts says careless people and governments have led to the rise of a new "double mutant" variant of Coronavirus in samples collected from India. Pace of vaccination should rise as it is a sure shot solution and people should maintain simple preventive measures known to everyone. Refusal to take vaccine is not a good sign as the risk of dying from Covid is higher than when one is vaccinated.

Vani Venkatesh
Kurnool

MODI'S CALL

It is well-known that Indian business people are always ready to exploit any emergency and adept at "managing" their escape through political clout. While this is a fact, there is no point in asking states to act against hoarders. The Centre should first declare a national health emergency. Paramilitary and Armed forces should be deployed urgently to tide over the situation..

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Russia's 2-year lead over U.S.

HOUSTON, April. 24 American space officials today conceded that Russia would have atleast a two-year lead over the United States if its Soyuz-10 cosmonauts were preparing to man an orbiting space station. America's first prototype space station, basically a converted Apollo rocket called Skylab, is not due to be launched until 1973. It will house teams of three astronauts for an initial period of 28 days followed by two 560day missions.

Pradeep S. Mehta
and Prashant Tak

Haryana law a bad example: Populism won't create new jobs

Haryana is the latest addition to the growing phenomenon where Indian states are formulating laws and policies to reserve jobs for locals in the private sector. Other states that have undertaken such measures, though with negligible implementation, include Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Is it a race to the top or the bottom? It is certainly petty, immoral and may not achieve its objectives.

The Haryana government recently enacted the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act 2020, which requires private establishments that employ 10 or more workers to reserve 75 per cent of new jobs with a monthly salary of less than ₹50,000 for domiciles of Haryana.

It has resulted in a rift between the state government and the private sector, as evident from the backlash it has received from private entrepreneurs and industry bodies. Many private sector firms have threatened to move out.

This practice of regional protectionism has a ripple effect, that is likely to push other states to follow suit due to populist considerations, or a race to the bottom. It will end up restricting the freedom of workers to migrate and access better employment opportuni-

ties. It may also push employers to leave places where such laws are applicable. Most critically, it will lead to the erosion of national unity.

The perceived economic rationale of such laws — to generate jobs for locals and boost local industrial ecosystems — seems to get defeated.

To govern a commercial ecosystem, the state government is entitled and mandated to enact laws concerning land, labour, capital and energy.

These laws are meant to ensure smooth commercial activity. Each or both of the objectives forms the economic rationale towards formulation of a law. Additionally, under the new paradigm of stakeholder capitalism, the government, private sector, labour and civil society need to work in a compact over each other's actions for inclusive and mutually beneficial governance.

While enacting this law, the Haryana government failed to do adequate pre-legislative exercises to test its economic rationale. It also undermined its compact of cooperation with the private sector. The law restricts the opportunities of migrant workers and disrupts the industrial ecosystem of Haryana. It seems like an expression of the state government's insecurity towards unemployment and a classic example of ad hocism in law-

making, driven by populism.

There already exists a trust deficit between the government and private sector, as each has avoided accountability towards the other on various occasions. The private sector knowingly failed to adequately distribute its acquired wealth and institutionalise precarious jobs. The government has overregulated the private sector, leading to a high compliance burden. The world is debating stakeholder capitalism vs shareholder capitalism: to ensure that every enterprise works for society, not just its owners.

In both instances of state supervision of business, however, labour has borne the brunt of the adverse consequences. What is unfortunate is that self-interest, rather than mutual interest, drives the solution of modern economic problems.

There is nonalignment between the problem statement specified in the statement of objects and reasons of the Haryana law and its objectives.

The statement specifies the influx of migrants competing for low-paid jobs as the prime reason for the adverse impact on local infrastructure and housing, and proliferation of slums. It further attributes these factors to the rise of environmental and health issues, thus affecting the quality of life and livelihood.

It's true there is migrant influx for low-paid jobs in Haryana or the entire National Capital Region as it is in Mumbai or Kolkata. There can be two possible reasons. First, availability of abundant work opportunities under different industry segments; and second, lack of work in the states where the workers migrate from.

However, the primary reason for the burden on local infrastructure, housing and proliferation of slums is not the presence of migrants. It can be attributed to factors like lack of state capacity in undertaking welfare measures, non-availability of decent jobs in the private sector. Further, the quality of life and livelihood is affected for the same reasons.

Therefore, the solution to address this doesn't lie in reserving jobs for locals but in enhancing the investment on local infrastructure, welfare measures and strengthening skill development initiatives. The solution also demands ensuring decent work for low-paid workers in particular. Decent work implies that the primary needs of workers, including health, food, shelter and clothing, are fulfilled. It also places a worker in a position where monetary savings are ensured and there is an opportunity for skill enhancement.

Ensuring decent work is a goal in

itself and has an economic rationale of increased productivity and development of human beings. Working towards it requires the efficient performance of the compact between the government, labour and the private sector.

The state governments also need to realise such quota enabling measures are accompanied by newer compliances for enterprises. The proliferation of compliance responsibilities dilute the state's agenda of facilitating the "ease of doing business" and also reduces the governance deficit.

The policies enabling employment quotas for locals is driven by populism. It has far-reaching consequences which goes beyond the direct impact on labour, the government and the private sector. It adversely affects the investment prospects for a commercial ecosystem, urban mobility of workers and has an immense opportunity cost. Therefore, any state action towards enhancing employment must be anchored through an economic rationale. This will be clear when the compact between the government, labour and the private sector is evidently functional.

The writers work for CUTS International, a global public policy research and advocacy group

SHORT TAKES

HRW WELCOMES
RELEASE OF THAI
ACTIVISTS

Bangkok, April 24: A leading human rights group on Saturday welcomed the release on bail of two Thai activists charged with insulting the country's monarchy, but repeated its contention that the apparent use of pretrial detention to punish anyone who criticizes the royal institution is unjust.

Jatupat Pai Dao Din Boonpattarakas and Somyot Pruksasemsuk were released Friday evening from Bangkok Remand Center. They had been held on lese majeste charges of defaming the monarchy in connection with their involvement in a political rally last September. They have also been charged with sedition and several minor offenses.

Lese majeste carries a penalty of three to 15 years' imprisonment. The legal assistance group Thai Lawyers for Human Rights said the two men each posted 200,000 baht (\$6,400) bail and were released on the condition that they must not leave the country or be involved in any activities that could damage the monarchy's reputation.

Holding pro-democracy activists in detention prior to trial and conviction on charges of insulting the monarchy seems aimed to punish them, in total disregard of fair trial procedures and the right to the presumption of innocence, said Sunai Phasuk, a senior researcher for Human Rights Watch.

It sends a clear message that not only are demands by pro-democracy groups for monarchy reforms not tolerated, but they would result in harsh punishment.

Jatupat and Somyot are prominent figures in a pro-democracy movement that started last year and held street demonstrations with three core demands: The resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and his government, amending the constitution to make it more democratic and reforming the monarchy to make it more accountable.

Dispute over Russian pipeline tests Biden's Europe outreach

Pressure on Prez to act, stop Moscow getting leverage over US allies

Washington, April 24: Pressure is growing on President Joe Biden to take action to prevent the completion of a Russian gas pipeline to Europe that many fear will give the Kremlin significant leverage over US partners and allies.

Yet such action could provoke an enormous rift in trans-Atlantic relations, notably with Germany, at a time when Biden has made restoring good ties with Europe a priority.

As the Nord Stream 2 pipeline nears completion, U.S. lawmakers from both parties have stepped up demands on a reluctant White House to impose new sanctions on Russian and European companies to halt the project.

But prospects of that happening would seem slim: Germany continues to support the project as it steps up consumption of natural gas, and the pipeline is roughly 95% finished.

Biden has said he opposes the pipeline, which is owned by Russian state company Gazprom, with

Biden's Georgia rally next week to promote jobs

Washington, April 24: President Joe Biden is heading to Georgia next week to mark his first 100 days in office and promote his infrastructure and jobs plan with a drive-in rally in Atlanta.

The White House said the president and his wife, Jill Biden, will travel to the state on April 29, a day after he delivers his first address to a joint session of Congress. In his address, he's expected to tout the accomplishments of his first 100 days in office and lay out his agenda for

the rest of his term.

One of his next top priorities is a massive \$ 2.3 trillion infrastructure plan, which provides funds to update the nation's infrastructure, shift to green energy and expand caregiving options for older and disabled Americans.

It will mark Biden's second visit to the state since becoming president. His first visit was to promote his Covid-19 relief package, but those plans were derailed by a series of shootings at Atlanta-area spas that killed eight people,

including six Asian women. Biden instead spent his visit meeting with community leaders and state lawmakers from the Asian American and Pacific Islander community to discuss the events, which came amid an outbreak of anti-Asian violence nationwide during the coronavirus pandemic.

His second visit comes as Georgia's controversial new voting law has put the state's election system in the spotlight. Biden has called the law Jim Crow in the 21st century. — AP

dependence on Russian energy while US-Russian tensions are soaring over a number of issues, including Ukraine, election interference, cyber intrusions and the crackdown on opposition figure Alexei

Officer shoots man who had charged at him with knives

Nashville (US), April 24: A Tennessee police officer fatally shot a man who charged at the officer with knives during a traffic stop early Saturday, authorities said.

Metropolitan Nashville Police Department Officer Christopher Royer has been placed on administrative assignment after he shot the man on a Nashville road, department spokesman Don Aaron said at a news conference.

The man died at a hospital, Aaron said. He was not immediately identified.

Royer was on patrol in his police car when he ran a license plate for a white Mercedes sedan, but the plate was actually registered to a green 1998 Chevrolet, Aaron said.

After the officer stopped the Mercedes, the passenger ran out of the car holding a knife in each hand, Aaron said.

The passenger began running around and briefly entered the driver's side door of Royer's police car, police body camera footage released at the news conference showed.

The man then ran toward Royer, who retreated

about 25 yards from his police car, Aaron said. Royer could be heard on the video requesting backup, telling the passenger to drop the knives and saying, "I don't want to shoot you."

The man continued running at Royer, who fired three times, the video showed. The man fell onto the street.

Dude, what are you doing, man, come on, Royer said. I did not want to have to do that. Police Chief John Drake said five officers rendered aid to the man. Drake said Royer treated and and he asked the man to drop the knife several times in an attempt to de-escalate the situation.

He continued charging at him, and he was left with no choice, Drake said. Drake said officers regularly run licence tags to determine if vehicles are stolen. Nashville police are issued stun guns, Drake said, but Royer did not appear to attempt to use it, according to the video.

That's a lethal situation, Drake said, calling the passenger's behaviour bizarre.

— AP

Officials say carrier to help protect Afghan pullout

Washington, April 24: The Pentagon has decided to keep an aircraft carrier in the Middle East to help provide protection for American and coalition troops during their planned withdrawal from Afghanistan in coming weeks, United States defence officials said on Friday.

Also, two United States Air Force bombers will be

deployed to Afghanistan as part of the pre-pullout bolstering of security.

The moves back up Pentagon officials' public assurances that United States forces will be prepared to meet whatever resistance the Taliban might present during the withdrawal of more than 10,000 United States and coalition troops starting after May 1.

About 2,500 to 3,500 of those troops are American. I would advise the Taliban that we will be well-prepared to defend ourselves throughout the withdrawal process, Gen. Frank McKenzie, the head of United States Central Command, said Thursday at the Pentagon.

Prior to President Joe Biden's announcement last week that he would com-

plete the United States withdrawal by September 11, the Taliban had insisted that Washington stick to a February 2020 agreement the militants had reached with the Trump administration to complete the United States withdrawal by May 1.

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United States officials said after Biden's announcement that extra military personnel would likely be positioned in Afghanistan to facilitate the pullout of troops and

equipment, and the Pentagon typically beefs up its military presence as a precaution when executing a sizeable withdrawal.

When the United States pulled troops out of Somalia in January it kept an aircraft carrier in the region as a precaution.

Officials on Friday said the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, an aircraft carrier that is operating in

the Arabian Sea, will remain in the region.

Also, two United States bomber aircraft will be deployed to Afghanistan, along with hundreds of Army Rangers to provide security during the pullout, the officials said.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss moves that had not yet been announced.

— AP

GAMES

SHORT TAKES

Nadal surges into
Barcelona semis

Barcelona: Rafael Nadal stepped up his bid for a 12th Barcelona Open title with a 6-1, 6-4 victory over Cameron Norrie in the quarter-finals on Friday, while Stefanos Tsitsipas will play Jannik Sinner in the last four.

Nadal, who captured his first Barcelona title as an 18-year-old at the 2005 tournament, will face Diego Schwartzman or Pablo Carreno Busta in Saturday's semifinals. Tsitsipas swept aside Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3, 6-3, the Canadian who recently teamed up with Toni Nadal, the uncle and former coach of the 20-time Grand Slam winner. Tsitsipas extended his winning run to eight matches. — AFP

Barty battles past
Pliskova in QFs

Stuttgart, Germany: World number one Ashleigh Barty fought back to reach the semifinals of the WTA Stuttgart clay-court tournament with a 2-6, 6-1, 7-5 win over Karolina Pliskova on Friday. Barty faces fourth seed Elina Svitolina in Saturday's semifinal after the Ukrainian staged a remarkable comeback in her 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-2 win over Petra Kvitova. Second seed Simona Halep is yet to drop a set in Stuttgart as she reached the semifinals with a 6-1, 6-4 win over Ekaterina Alexandrova. In her semifinal, Halep will face either fifth seed Aryna Sabalenka or Anett Kontaveit. — AFP

Persepolis hammer
FC Goa in return leg

Margao: Starting with as many as eight fresh faces, FC Goa were thrashed 4-0 by Iranian champions Persepolis FC in their return-leg AFC Champions League Group E match here on Friday. Shahriar Moghanlou (24th minute), Mehadi Torabi (43rd), Issa Alkisar (47th) and Kamal Kamyabina (58th) scored for the winners in a completely one-sided match. The result saw Persepolis, with 12 points from four games, extending their 100 per cent win record while FC Goa suffered their second consecutive defeat after the 1-2 loss to Yahya Golmohammadi's side on Tuesday. — PTI

Toffees add to Gunners misery

Own goal from Arsenal goalkeeper gifts Everton first win in seven games

London, April 24: An own-goal from Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno handed Everton a 1-0 Premier League win on Friday as around 2,000 fans protested against Gunners' owner Stan Kroenke outside the Emirates Stadium.

With both sides chasing places in Europe next season, it was Carlo Ancelotti's side who came out on top with a first win in seven games.

German keeper Leno turned a Richarlison cross into his own goal in the 76th minute to give the Toffees victory.

Arsenal supporters had gathered outside the ground demanding Kroenke stand down after the club's attempt to join the doomed Super League project.

The result left Everton in eighth place, three points off the Champions League places after their first league win at Arsenal since 1996.

Arsenal are ninth, nine points off the top four.

"It was really important to stay attached to the top of the table," Ancelotti told the BBC.

"The performance was



Everton's Richarlison (left) vies for the ball with Granit Xhaka of Arsenal in an EPL match in London on Friday. — AFP

good. It's all good news tonight and this gives us confidence for the next games. Finally I can say we are back."

The game produced few

chances.

Everton's Gylfi Sigurdsson saw a 30-yard free-kick come back off the crossbar.

Arsenal were furious

when a second-half penalty, awarded for a foul by Richarlison on Dani Ceballos, was overturned by VAR for an offside in the build-up. — AFP

PAYET PROPELS
MARSEILLE TO
WIN AT REIMS

Paris, April 24: Dimitri Payet scored two goals and set up Arkadiusz Milik for another as Marseille came from behind to defeat Reims 3-1 away in Ligue 1 on Friday.

Reims took the lead when Nathanael Mbuku powered a header in at a corner, but Marseille levelled almost immediately as Payet swept in a pass from Pol Lirola.

Payet then delivered a fantastic low cross for Milik to tap in from close range in first-half stoppage time.

Marseille goalkeeper Steve Mandanda turned an effort from Senegal striker Boulaye Dia onto the post in the second half, while Reims were reduced to 10 men. Payet was denied a hat-trick by an excellent stop from Predrag Rajkovic, with Milik ruled offside as he poked in the rebound. — AFP

LEAGUE CUP | FINAL

Man City look to end title drought

London, April 24: Treble-chasing Manchester City face a Tottenham side desperate to end their trophy drought in the League Cup final as two members of the failed European Super League clash at Wembley on Sunday.

Just seven days after the bombshell revelation that City and Tottenham were among 12 clubs plotting the breakaway Super League, they will contest the first major silverware of the English season.

Alarmed by the furious public backlash against the Super League, City's owners were the first to

lose their nerve when they pulled out on Tuesday.

City's exit sparked a chain reaction that saw Spurs withdraw along with fellow Premier League teams Liverpool, Chelsea, Manchester United and Arsenal. But amid grovelling apologies from owners, supporters remain furious at the cynical betrayal and there have been calls for sanctions against the six Premier League teams.

Against that backdrop, it is ironic the League Cup will be the focus of attention for two of the Super League founders this weekend. — AFP

Super League fiasco gives clubs open goal to reset with UEFA

Geneva, April 24: Purged of most of its leaders in the Super League fiasco this week, the group representing European soccer clubs was given a chance to reinvent itself.

Now the European Club Association is free to push for reversing Champions League changes that favour the wealthiest and more powerful who threatened to tear apart soccer's traditional fabric.

The decisions UEFA made on Monday for a Champions League revamp in 2024 — of 36 teams each playing 10 games in a single standings — clearly favour the rebels.

Two wild cards for storied clubs is one gift that

● **The decisions UEFA made on Monday for a Champions League revamp in 2024 — of 36 teams each playing 10 games in a single standings — clearly favour the rebels.**

can be taken back now they no longer dominate a key UEFA committee.

Hours earlier around midnight on Sunday, the 246-member ECA lost 12 of the most influential — and most demanding — when they left to announce their own Super League.

The project quickly col-

lapsed amid a ferocious backlash from fans and domestic leagues, governments and Champions League organizer UEFA, handing the ECA a chance to restore trust.

"Over the past week, we have seen the worst but also the best of football," ECA chief executive Charlie Marshall said in a statement Friday.

"Ultimately, the best has triumphed."

The "worst" was done by clubs and people that were Marshall's bosses until the early hours of Monday. They led ECA through talks with UEFA to shape the Champions League's future while plotting a rival to usurp it. — AP

SNAP SHOTS

Hyderabad cricketer Ashwin no more

Former Hyderabad fast bowler Ashwin Yadav died after suffering a cardiac arrest in Hyderabad on Saturday. He was 33 and is survived by his wife and three sons.

Ashwin played 14 first class matches and took 34 wickets after making his Ranji Trophy debut in 2007 against Punjab in Mohali. His best figures were 6 for 52 against Delhi at the Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium in Hyderabad in the 2008-09 season. Ashwin's last Ranji Trophy match was against Mumbai in 2009.

He, however, continued to play for State Bank of Hyderabad and then SBI in the local league. Ashwin played for the Evergreen cricket club for many years before he joined SBH.

Indian team's fielding coach R. Sridhar condoled Ashwin's demise. "Devastated to hear the news of #AshwinYadav passing away. A Very jovial and fun loving guy, team man to the core, punched way above his skills as a fast bowler. I pray to God for strength to his family. #gonetooearly #OmShanti You will be missed," Sridhar said in a tweet.

Women archers storm into WC final

Recurve women's team of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari assured India of its first medal in the Archery World Cup Stage 1 after cruising into the final with a straight-set win over Spain in Guatemala City.

However, the men's team, which qualified as third seed, lost in the quarterfinals to their Spanish rivals 26-27 in a shoot-off after both teams were tied 4-4.

India are also in the medal hunt in three more events with newly-wed Atanu Das and Deepika advancing into the mixed pair bronze playoff. The duo will also vie for individual medals, having made the last-four in their respective sections.

In the women's semifinal, Spanish trio of Elia Canales, Ines De Velasco and Leyre Fernandez Infante were no match to the top seeded Indians, who drilled in consistent scores of 55, 56 and 55 to seal a 6-0 win and make their first World Cup final since Shanghai, 2016. — PTI

Zimbabwe beat Pakistan in T20

Harare, April 24: Zimbabwe beat Pakistan for the first time in a Twenty20 international Friday, with four-wicket Luke Jongwe the star of a shock 19-run triumph at Harare Sports Club.

A maiden victory in 16 attempts seemed unlikely when the tourists restricted the hosts to a meagre 118-9 with Tinashe Kamunhukamwe (34) the only batsman to impress.

But right-arm medium pacer Jongwe (4-18) wreaked havoc and Zimbabwe bowled out Pakistan for 99 in 19.5 overs.

It was the lowest total defended in a T20 international in Harare and victory for Zimbabwe levelled the three-match series at 1-1 ahead of the decider at the same venue on Sunday.

Pakistan arrived in Zimbabwe brimming with confidence after completing a double in South Africa, winning a one-day international series 2-1 and a T20 series 3-1. — AFP

Brief scores: Zimbabwe 118/9 in 20 overs (Tinashe Kamunhukamwe 34, Mohammad Hasnain 2/19) beat Pakistan 99 in 19.5 overs (Babar Azam 41, Luke Jongwe 4/18, Ryan Burl 2/21).

ORANGE

Shikhar Dhawan, DC

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KL Rahul, PBKS

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Rohit Sharma, MI

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PURPLE

Harshal Patel, RCB

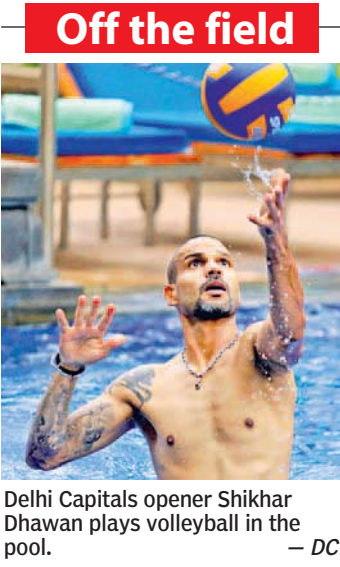
12

Rahul Chahar, MI

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Chris Morris, RR

9



Delhi Capitals opener Shikhar Dhawan plays volleyball in the pool. — DC

Sachin says he will donate his plasma

Former India captain Sachin Tendulkar on Saturday said he has recovered from COVID-19 and will donate plasma when he is eligible. Tendulkar, celebrating his 48th birthday on Saturday, tested positive for the virus on March 27 and had to be briefly hospitalised as a precautionary measure. “Last year, I had inaugurated a plasma donation centre and their message, if plasma is given at the right time, patients can recover faster. I personally, when permissible, will donate it and I have spoken to the doctors,” Sachin added.

Kumble all praise for leggie Bishnoi

Punjab Kings head coach Anil Kumble was all praise for the team’s 20-year-old spinner, Ravi Bishnoi, who flummoxed the Mumbai Indians batsmen and took two crucial scalps in the nine-wicket win against the defending champions on Friday. “I thought he was not the same bowler we had seen last year. I worked on his run-up and a few other things because he was drifting down the leg side even in practice games. That’s why he didn’t start the tournament earlier. But, I think, over the last week or so, his commitment, his focus is now sorted; he’s back. It’s wonderful to see him (bowl so well),” Kumble said.

Stokes criticises Chepauk track

England all-rounder Ben Stokes has criticised the slow track of Chennai’s Chepauk Stadium and hoped that teams competing in the IPL do not end up regularly scraping to low scores because of wickets that are “trash”. Stokes feels that for an enjoyable T20 contest, a score in the range of 160 to 170 is paramount. “Hope the wickets don’t get worse as the IPL gets deeper into the tournament..160/170 minimum not scraping to 130/140 cause the wickets are trash,” Stokes tweeted after Mumbai Indians pinstakingly reached 131 for 6 which was chased down by Punjab Kings. Till Friday, Chennai has hosted nine IPL games and only twice has the team batting first scored in excess of 170.

MORRIS BARRAGE

Chris bombards Knights with 4/23 as Royals win by 6 wickets

Mumbai, April 24: Chris Morris (4/23) was effective at the death yet again as Rajasthan Royals thrashed Kolkata Knight Riders by six wickets in an IPL game on Saturday. Royals pacers combined accuracy and guile to restrict Kolkata Knight Riders to 133 for nine. Chasing the modest total, Royals skipper Sanju Samson (42 not out) played a responsible knock. It was Royals’ second win of the season in five matches while KKR have managed to get just one win under their belt, thus far.

Royals pacers, who were smart with change of pace, stifled the KKR batsmen who could not find a way to deal with it after being put in to bat. KKR skipper Eoin Morgan said the batsmen let the team down. “We lacked a lot of intent throughout the whole innings. We were behind the eight ball right from the get-go. Possibly, we were 40 short which is a lot in a T20 game. The bowlers had too much to do. It’s a stark contrast to the last game. The wicket hasn’t been as good as it has been in the previous games and we couldn’t overcome the challenge. “It left us with a lot to do, which we couldn’t do. Ultimately, one guy needs to play free-flowing cricket. Two sides struggling to gain momentum in the tournament and we missed big two points,” added Morgan.

Morris, the most expensive player in the IPL auction history, proved his worth with a brilliant four-wicket haul. The other pacers, Jaydev Unadkat (1/25), Chetan Sakariya (1/31) and Mustafizur Rahman (1/22), were also impressive.

KKR were not able to find rhythm in their underwhelming innings. The highly rated Shubman Gill (11) disappeared yet again. He was dropped before his uncomfortable stay in the middle finally ended with a run out off a brilliant direct hit from Jos Buttler.



Chris Morris (left) of Rajasthan Royals celebrates taking a KKR wicket with team-mate Chetan Sakariya during their match in Mumbai on Saturday. — IPL

The Royals pacers were impressive with their variations and did not offer the batsmen any freebies in the powerplay as KKR laboured to 25 for one in six overs. It became 45 for two in the eighth over when Gill’s opening partner Nitish Rana (22) made room to cut a wide ball off

Sakariya but the extra bounce led to his downfall as he ended up edging it to the wicketkeeper. Skipper Eoin Morgan sent Sunil Narine ahead of himself to give the innings a much needed boost but it did not work with the West Indian departing after hitting one boundary, leaving KKR at 55 for three in 10

overs. KKR’s troubles worsened after Morgan got run out without facing a ball following a bad mix-up with Rahul Tripathi (36 off 26). Their most destructive batsman Andre Russell had to wait till the 16th over to get into the middle with the innings not going anywhere at 94 for five.

SCORECARD

Kolkata Knight Riders: Nitish Rana c Samson b Sakariya 22, Shubman Gill run out (Buttler) 11, Rahul Tripathi c Parag b Mustafizur Rahman 36, Sunil Narine c Jaiswal b Unadkat 6, Eoin Morgan run out (Morris) 0, Dinesh Karthik c Sakariya b Morris 25, Andre Russell c Miller b Morris 9, Pat Cummins c Parag b Morris 10, Shivam Mavi b Morris 5, Prasidh Krishna (not out) 0. **Extras (b 2, lb 1, nb 1, w 5) 9. Total (for nine wickets in 20 overs) 133.** **FoW:** 1-24, 2-45, 3-54, 4-61, 5-94, 6-117, 7-118, 8-133, 9-133. **Bowling:** Jaydev Unadkat 4-0-25-1, Chetan Sakariya 4-0-31-1, Mustafizur Rahman 4-0-22-1, Chris Morris 4-0-23-4, Rahul Tewatia 3-0-24-0, Shivam Dube 1-0-5-0. **Rajasthan Royals:** Jos Buttler lbw b Varun 5, Yashasvi Jaiswal c sub (KL Nagarkoti) b Shivam Mavi 22, Sanju Samson (not out) 42, Shivam Dube c Prasidh Krishna b Varun 22, Rahul Tewatia c sub (KL Nagarkoti) b Prasidh Krishna 5, David Miller (not out) 24. **Extras (lb 7, nb 1, w 6) 14. Total (for four wickets in 18.5 overs) 134.** **FoW:** 1-21, 2-40, 3-85, 4-100. **Bowling:** Shivam Mavi 4-0-19-1, Pat Cummins 3.5-0-36-0, Varun Chakravarthy 4-0-32-2, Sunil Narine 4-0-20-0, Prasidh Krishna 3-0-20-1.

POINTS TABLE						
Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
RCB	4	4	0	0	8	+1.009
CSK	4	3	1	0	6	+1.142
DC	4	3	1	0	6	+0.426
MI	5	2	3	0	4	-0.032
PBKS	5	2	3	0	4	-0.428
RR	5	2	3	0	4	-0.681
SRH	4	1	3	0	2	-0.228
KKR	5	1	4	0	2	-0.675

Capitals to lock horns with SRH

Chennai, April 24: Rishabh Pant’s brute power will be put to test against Rashid Khan’s bagful of tricks in an IPL encounter where Delhi Capitals will start as favourites against Sunrisers Hyderabad due to their better bowling resources. The much-criticised Chepauk track will host its 10th and final IPL game of the season in which both Pant and his opposite number David Warner would pray for a decent surface for their flamboyant bat-

ters. With only a couple of first innings total in excess of 170 across nine games here, the slow and gripping surface at the MA Chidambaram Stadium tests the skills of the batsmen in a different manner. Possibly, it’s the ability to muscle the ball that will come in handy on this track and hence the DC skipper’s role as a batsman will become all the more important. While Shikhar Dhawan is in good form and Prithvi Shaw in not so great touch after the first game, the willow-wielders, who depend on sheer timing compared to power may struggle.

In fact, Hyderabad, after playing all its four games in Chennai, has only now started to crack the code of a slow track, evident during the team’s comfortable victory over Punjab Kings after a hat-trick of defeats.

With Kane Williamson back in the mix, SunRisers seemed to have got a better balance in a set-up which is acutely short of quality India internationals. With T Natarajan’s death bowling unavailable for this season and Manish Pandey only able to manage a strike-rate of 112 odd,

Live on TV

Sunrisers Hyderabad vs Delhi Capitals from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

HEAD to HEAD

Matches	18
SRH	11
DC	7

FOR THE RECORD

- David Warner with 3,949 runs at an average of 51.28 in 91 innings needs 51 runs to become the first Sunrisers Hyderabad batsman to complete 4,000 runs in IPL.
- Shikhar Dhawan with 195 fours in 51 Innings needs five more fours to become the second Delhi Capitals batsman after Virender Sehwag (266 fours in 79 innings) to complete a double century of fours in IPL.

LAST YEAR’S MATCHES

- Sunrisers beat Delhi by 15 runs at Abu Dhabi.
- Sunrisers beat Delhi by 88 runs at Dubai
- Delhi beat Sunrisers by 17 runs at Abu Dhabi (Qualifier 2)

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER

bulk of the responsibility is on overseas recruits Warner, Jonny Bairstow, Williamson and Rashid. The wily Afghan has again been very consistent and his duel with Pant could be one of the most eagerly-awaited match-ups that can send the TRPs soaring. SRH’s weak link is certainly its bowling attack with none among Sandeep Sharma, Siddharth Kaul or all-rounder Vijay Shankar inspiring any sort of confidence whatsoever. So DC will have 12 overs out of 20 on which they can feast upon if one takes away the eight bowled by Rashid and Bhuvneshwar Kumar. — PTI

GAVASKAR SAYS BANGALORE CAN RELY ON MAXWELL

Mumbai, April 24: Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar has praised RCB’s new signing Glenn Maxwell for easing the pressure off Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers within the batting department. “It’s great that Maxwell has come good. It has taken the pressure off Virat Kohli and AB de Villiers. They know that they can rely on one more batsman to get the runs. Last time, there was Padikkal at the start of the innings who was getting the runs but this time, Maxwell has been batting extraordinarily,” Gavaskar said. “You could possibly say that now, RCB have another 360-degree player in Maxwell,” he added. — Agencies

HEAD to HEAD

Matches	26
CSK	16
RCB	9
No result	1

FOR THE RECORD

- Devdutt Padikkal’s century off 51 balls against Rajasthan Royals in the previous match was the fastest century by an uncapped player in IPL.
- Suresh Raina with 199 sixes in 192 innings needs just one more to become the seventh batsman to complete a double century of sixes in IPL.

LAST YEAR’S MATCHES

- RCB beat CSK by 37 runs at Dubai.
- CSK beat RCB by 8 wickets at Dubai.

STATS: S. PERVEZ QAISER



Allrounder Axar Patel’s return has bolstered Delhi Capitals line-up. — DC

AXAR’S RETURN LENDS PERFECT BALANCE: KAIF

Chennai, April 24: Delhi Capitals assistant coach Mohammad Kaif feels how his team plays star Sunrisers Hyderabad spinner Rashid Khan on a slow Chepauk surface will hold key in their IPL match here on Sunday. “The way we play Rashid Khan is going to be the key for us on this pitch,” said Kaif in a team release. Kaif added that batting on the pitch in Chennai has been difficult, but the experienced their batting line-up is certainly up for the challenge. “Shikhar has been batting really well and Smith batted well in the last game. Amit Mishra bowled beautifully in the last game, and we have Ravichandran Ashwin as well. Marcus Stoinis bowled well with the new ball in the last match and the way Rishabh has been leading the side, especially on a turning track, has been a great sign.” When asked about all-rounder Axar Patel’s return, Kaif said, “The balance of the Delhi Capitals squad is now perfect. He has been a key member of this franchise.” — PTI

Kohli vs MSD in Sunday matinee

Mumbai, April 24: It would be nothing short of a clash of the titans when Virat Kohli’s on-a-roll Royal Challengers Bangalore takes on Mahendra Singh Dhoni’s Chennai Super Kings in a top-of-the-table IPL showdown here on Sunday with two points and momentum at stake. RCB has won all its four matches so far and sits on top of the standings. CSK, on the other hand, has hit back after losing its opener to claim three straight wins for the second spot in the points table. RCB, boosted by a 10-wicket hammering of Rajasthan Royals, will be keen to continue its winning streak. However, the task is easier said than done as CSK is riding high with three good results of its own. Kohli and the highly-

rated Devdutt Padikkal toyed with the Rajasthan Royals bowling the other day and will look to lay a strong foundation again for RCB against a varied CSK bowling attack. RCB, which has more often not under-performed amid high expectations, has started well. And, Kohli will be aware of the importance of maintaining the intensity in a long league. The RCB batting appears to be top heavy and reliant on the performances of Kohli, South African maestro AB de Villiers and Australian maverick Glenn Maxwell. Padikkal’s good form also augurs well for the team. However, the RCB batting unit will front up to Deepak Chahar, who is known for his ability to strike early.

Live on TV

Chennai Super Kings vs Royal Challengers Bangalore from 3.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

It remains to be seen if the team has what it takes to bounce back in case there is loss of wickets early in the innings. The RCB bowling has done the job so far with Mohammed Siraj being impressive. However, they come up against a formidable CSK which bats deep and the importance of early wickets can’t be emphasised enough. Ruturaj Gaikwad emerged from three failures with an impressive knock against Kolkata Knight Riders and forms a strong opening partnership with Faf du Plessis.

A good start will help their cause and with an in-form Moeen Ali pencilled in at No.3 and Suresh Raina to follow, CSK has the firepower to strike late as well. Skipper Dhoni is yet to hit his straps but coach Stephen Fleming believes he would get better with every outing. While Chahar has been in the thick of things at the start, spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Moeen Ali have also struck crucial blows. Shardul Thakur has proved expensive at times but is a vital cog in the CSK bowling unit. Add to this the fact that the Wankhede stadium has seen mostly high-scoring games and the team that holds its nerves is likely to come up trumps on a track like this. — PTI