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HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 29 APRIL 2021

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WEATHER

Max: 38.4°C
Min: 25.8°C
RH: 23%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Rain likely in some parts.
Max/Min temp. 39/26°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava; Uttarayana
Tithi: Chaitra Bahula Tadiya till 10.12 pm
Star: Anuradha till 2.32 pm
Varsham: 7.35 pm to 9.01 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.07 am to 10.57 am; 3.10 pm to 4 pm
RahuKalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Ramzan 16,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.47 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 4.39 pm
Magrib: 6.41 pm

Isha: 7.51 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.35 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.50 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 9.10 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.37 AM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.41 PM (TODAY)
SEHRI: 4.25 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT



Advance rally... his astrologer assured him of his victory!

SHORT TAKES

CBI COURT ISSUES NOTICE TO CM JAGAN

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Central Bureau of Investigation court at Hyderabad on Wednesday issued notices to AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and CBI on a petition filed by Narsapur MP Kanumuri Raghurama Krishnam Raju, who sought that the court cancel the bail granted to the CM in a disproportionate assets case.

The MP accused Jagan of misusing his post of Chief Minister to influence witnesses in cases registered against him. He also complained that the CM is not attending the trial court, which is trying the cases against him.

Raghurama Krishnam contended that the Chief Minister's actions amount to violation of conditions imposed by the court while granting him bail.

The court later adjourned the case to May 7.

6.2 magnitude quake hits Assam

Guwahati: Seven back-to-back earthquakes jolted Assam and some other northeastern states on Wednesday morning, causing damage to buildings and forcing people to scamper out of their houses. The first of the shocks of 6.4 magnitude with its epicentre at 43 km west of Tezpur, the headquarters of Sonitpur district in Assam, was felt at 7.51 am.

Full report on Page 8

cmyk

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'THERE IS A CRISIS OF ICU BEDS AND VENTILATORS'

From Page 1

Q *Is it your stand that one can easily get a hospital ICU bed in Hyderabad today?*

No I concede that almost all beds in all hospitals are full. But the private sector and corporate hospitals are filled with patients from outside Telangana state. Outsiders with money have come in and taken up the beds. In government hospitals, too, beds are all "taken up". There is a crisis of ICU beds, ventilators and oxygen beds. We are addressing the situation. Very soon we will have a 350-bed facility up in Nacharam. It will be fully functional shortly.

Even in Nims, we would soon add 550 additional beds. Hyderabad, in short, is doing better than most other cities.

Q *How are we doing on vaccination?*

The vaccination drive is going on in a moderately satisfactory manner, but there are hiccups. The problem now is to get sufficient supply of vaccines. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao is personally leading the initiative and has instructed the chief secretary to be in touch with vaccine manufacturers. We have had meetings but these companies are yet to agree to our request for supply of one crore vaccine shots.

Q *Is it legal for a state to make direct demands from companies — are not all vaccines Central government assets to be distributed by them to states?*

The Centre has that monopoly in the vaccination of people above age 45, which is already under way. For the upcoming vaccine drive for those above age 18, states can directly negotiate and make purchases from companies. Alongside, the Centre also gives its share to states.

Q *You have said we have enough of oxygen stock in Hyderabad and for all our needs in Telangana. How much manufacturer-*



Q *CENTRE HAS that monopoly in the vaccination of people above age 45, which is already under way. For the upcoming vaccine drive for those above age 18, states can directly negotiate and make purchases from companies. Alongside, the Centre also gives its share to states.*

- ETALA RAJENDAR

ing capacity do we have here? Is it adequate?

We have a capacity to manufacture 120 tonnes. The rest we get from other states. In view of the pandemic scene, we will increase the capacity.

Q *When do you see the state going past the peak and Covid-19 tapering out or plateauing?*

I am positive when I see the improvement in worst-hit Maharashtra. The cases have been coming down there for the past few weeks. I feel confident that given the heightened awareness — and combined with it proper cooperation from people by way of following all the precautions — we will see Covid spread plateauing here too soon.

Q *Your party, by fighting and winning a separate*

Telangana state — as also its government — gave us the vision of a Bangaru Telangana. Yet, how come we have put in so much effort to build a new Secretariat and never thought of building a single new government hospital in Hyderabad? Our best hospitals, the ones we are going to today, have been built by the Nizam or the previous state governments.

- ETALA RAJENDAR

19 emergency last year. After the present phase of the pandemic, we will transform it into a world-class hospital.

Q *Deccan Chronicle has exposed the corrupt practices of the staff at Tims seeking bribes etc. The officials deny these, but we have proof and digital trails. Even the courts have intervened and said...*

We have ordered an investigation. But I doubt if the staff is doing anything wrong. Maybe they helped patients buy some stuff.

Q *You say there is no shortage of oxygen or remdesivir or any drug at Tims. If so, why would the staff take money to get such from outside? And today, we have news that some officials at Tims have threatened patients and their attendants for "daring to speak" to the media.*

Q *AIIMS is a Central government initiative. And, I reiterate, not a single new government hospital in Hyderabad — city we boasted would be the hub of global medical tourism — since Telangana state came into existence.*

The Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (Tims) is one such stellar initiative in Hyderabad. It may have come up by way of a response to the Covid-19 emergency last year. After the present phase of the pandemic, we will transform it into a world-class hospital.

Q *On a different note, we at DC highlighted the risk to lakhs of people*



because the State Election Commission declared and scheduled elections in the middle of the deadly pandemic. When the court directed the SEC to take a call on postponing the polls, given the health risk, the TRS government decided not to. This was despite the Opposition parties also seeking a moratorium. Did the government take the advice of the health ministry on such crucial matters?

I am not aware if SEC had asked my ministry about any such matter. In any case, compared to the elections across the country or even the Assembly bypolls, these are small-time local elections. No big leader like the CM or ministers will go and hold rallies or meetings. I am sure it won't be a problem.

Q *You are an outspoken leader. I ask you this as a common citizen. Has the system at large not let down the country? Can we citizens not question you that — this, not as a representative of Telangana state government or the TRS party but as a senior member of the political system — if you have not kept your promises? People say on social media that political parties can distribute black money and liquor during elections but cannot ensure oxygen, beds, medicine?*

The only motive was to give hope to the people, to make sure they do not panic. We will do it.

THE ONLY motive was to give hope to the people, to make sure they do not panic.

- ETALA RAJENDAR

As an individual, I will acknowledge that we in politics have let down the country and its people. The coordination among various governments and agencies has not been good. We did not see this was coming, we did not anticipate it. We were not prepared. The Indian healthcare infrastructure has been exposed as being below par. Politicians have not risen to provide the kind of leadership the people expected. Our craze for elections, rallies, campaigns showed we were callous about the people's health and lives. We put people in deep trouble as our health system was not equipped to face this situation. The trouble at hand exposes the reality. Covid-19 exposed our lack of quality and weak nature of the systems. We have clearly not respected people, their rights, and have betrayed their aspirations. But you must let me reiterate that Telangana state has done much better than the national average on all parameters. We responded better. But yes, we must rebuild the entire healthcare system and accord it the importance it deserves. Under Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao's leadership, we will.

Q *Hasn't Telangana state deliberately under-reported cases and deaths to project itself as being one-up to the national average?*

In the beginning, we had a protocol that deaths arising solely out of Covid-19 will be declared as Covid-19 deaths. In other words, deaths due to a mix of Covid-19 and other co-morbidities like a heart attack or diabetes will not be declared as a Covid-19 case. What is the need for us to hide or project our image during such an emergency? The only motive was to give hope to the people, to make sure they do not panic and see an end to the pandemic. We will do it.

Frontline staff safety ignored

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

limits due to the larger spread of Covid-19," said Narayana, a sanitation worker in Secunderabad.

He added, "The residents are not even separating the biomedical waste from other waste and we are often asked to collect these from their doorstep."

Laxman from LB Nagar said several colleagues have inadvertently come into contact with the deadly virus and a couple of them have lost their lives last week. "But, without doing anything to ensure the safety of frontline warriors, the state government and the GHMC have decided to embark on a special sanitation drive, keeping our lives at larger risk." "We appeal to the higher authorities to create a mechanism to collect the biomedical waste separately with dedicated staff who must be well-equipped with protective gear," he added.

Sanitation workers said that are living in constant fear of contracting the virus. "Biomedical material is dumped at every nook and corner of the city. The workers have been picking up the masks, PPE kits and other biomedical waste not only from the roadside and other public places but also from households. Many of us have already been hit by the pandemic even as we took the first dose of the vaccine," they said.

The workers complained that despite several pleas, the corporation authorities are neither chalkling out a safe mechanism nor providing the safety gear to them. "We are living in panic. Nowdays our volunteers are taking rest on chairs as they have to work round-the-clock." "As senior GHMC commissioner D.S. Lokesh Kumar and additional commissioner for health Badhavath Santhosh are apparently clueless about these issues and would not share information to the media. The result: the safety of over 18,000 sanitation workers is at serious risk."



Youth Welfare Telangana bury a body of Covid-19 victim in the state.

Noble farewell to Covid victims

ATHER MOIN DC HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Hindus, 15 Christians and two Sikhs.

Last week, the group received about 120 calls in a day for burial but they could only perform the last rites of 25 bodies. In March they handled 250 victims of coronavirus and in April the figure till Wednesday stands at 350.

The group leader, Syed Jalaluddin Zafar, aka Abu Wania, said that last year they had received a phone call from a sister of his friend informing that her father died due to Coronavirus and her brother had left the house leaving the body there. This call changed his life, he said. He discussed with members of the group and all of them decided to render their services for this noble cause.

Clad in full protective suits, rubber gloves and plastic face shields, they have till date performed the last rites of about 1,600 people of different faiths, including his team of nearly 60 volun-

teers, is bravely taking up the task of handling Covid bodies, defying the stigma associated with the pandemic.

He said, "faith is not a consideration for us. If the body is of a Muslim, salat ul Janaza (funeral prayer) is offered by our team members and if the body belongs to other faiths, we extend our support till putting the body on chita or graves while the graveyard management completes the religious rites."

Zafar revealed that, "When

SHORT TAKES

CYBERABAD COPS ARREST 9 DACOITS UNDER PD ACT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Cyberabad police on Wednesday invoked the Preventive Detention (PD) Act against nine dacoits involved in seven property offences.

Pradeep Kushwaha, Kuldeep, Madhav Singh, Dharmendra Singh, Nihal Singh, Shailendra Singh, Sanjay, Dharmendra Kumar and Satybhram Singh had in a span of seven months – July 2020 to January 2021 – committed seven property offences under the police station limits of Dindigul, R. C. Puram, Narsangi and Shankarpally under the Cyberabad Police Commissionerate.

The nine were arrested by Dindigul police while checking vehicles near Dindigul Toll Gate. They recovered from them a country-made tapancha, several rounds of ammunition, sticks, iron rod and wires, among others.

To prevent these professional offenders from continuing their criminal activities, Cyberabad police commissioner V. C. Sajjanar invoked the PD Act against them. They have all been lodged in Central Prison, Cherlapally.

TWO KILLED IN SEPARATE ACCIDENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Two persons, including a civil engineer, died accidentally in two separate cases registered under limits of Gachibowli and Neredmet police stations on Wednesday.

In the first case, Nagolu Sunil Reddy, a 24-year-old civil engineer, was supervising floor cutting work at an under-construction site of Indian Immunologicals Ltd. A tripole accidentally fell on him due to which he sustained severe injuries over his head.

He was rushed to a private hospital, where duty doctors declared him brought dead.

In the other case, a 27-year-old electrician Ankur Kumar Saini working with Airtel in Defence Colony, Neredmet, died after falling from height. He had climbed a ladder to do some work when he accidentally fell onto a live wire passing nearby. He received a severe electric shock and died on the spot.

Both the bodies have been shifted to different mortuaries for post mortem. Further investigations are underway.

24-YR-OLD GETS 20 YEAR JAIL FOR ABUSING MINOR

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

A 24-year-old person has been convicted for 20 years imprisonment by the special court dealing Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (PoCo) cases holding him guilty in sexual assault against a fourteen-year-old minor girl. In a span of eight months after the case has been registered judgement was pronounced.

On Wednesday Smt Suneetha Kunchala First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Special Court for PoCo cases Nampally announced the quantum of punishment after finding the accused guilty. He has also been fined ₹10,000 failing to pay which he will have to undergo another six months of imprisonment.

According to the prosecution, the accused Mohd. Yousuf works as a waiter in a Hotel and neighbour of the victim. Both live under Bhavani Nagar police station limits of Hyderabad Commissionerate.

In the month of September 2020 the accused during late night hours broke into the house and sexually assaulted the minor girl by closing her mouth. Further victim girl's mother woke up to the screams of the victim and tried to nab the accused. However he escaped from the spot.

The victim narrated her ordeal to her mother. Thereafter mother approached Bhavani Nagar police and lodged a complaint. The police booked a PoCo case and nabbed the accused and collected the evidence. Investigation revealed that the accused violated her. The victim in her statement confirmed the same. Judge for PoCo court Suneetha Kunchala after going through all the evidences, convicted the accused after holding them guilty for the offences punishable under the PoCo Act.

Fighting the virus



A Covid-19 positive patient arrives at the King Koti Hospital, in Hyderabad, along with an oxygen cylinder on Wednesday. — S. SURENDER REDDY

SCR to bring O2 for patients

Empty tankers to be filled with oxygen from Angul in Odisha

SANJAY SAMUEL
PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

The first Oxygen Express of South Central Railways (SCR) set off from Secunderabad on Wednesday with five empty oxygen tankers. The train will reach Angul in Odisha, where the empty tankers will be filled with liquid oxygen; and return immediately. This is the first Oxygen Express train for Telangana introduced on request of the state government.

Indian Railways have started operating Oxygen Express trains on a mission mode to meet urgent requirements of the life-saving gas in different parts of the country. Under the initiative, empty tankers set off from respective states to their earmarked destinations. They return immediately after the tankers are filled with liquid oxygen.

Indian Railways is operating these tankers on Roll-on - Roll-off mission mode through Green Corridors. These corri-



Empty tankers being loaded on to an Oxygen Express train on Wednesday.

● INDIAN RAILWAYS is operating these tankers on Roll-on - Roll-off mission mode through Green Corridors.

dors are so mapped that the special train continuously receives green signals to reach the filling and destination points,

thereby transporting in quick time life-saving oxygen for Coronavirus patients needing the gas for their survival. The green corridor takes into consideration various constraints like curves, road over bridges, platform canopies and overhead equipment along the route.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, SCR chief PRO Ch. Rakesh said, "Our officials are taking all necessary measures to accord utmost priority to transport oxygen with constant monitoring and continuous movement of the train without any disruption".

RACHAKONDA COPS LAUDED FOR COVID CONTROL

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Telangana Director General of Police (DGP) M. Mahender Reddy has appreciated Rachakonda Police Commissionerate for its efforts in Covid-19 management.

In his memo, the DGP underlined that it is essential to monitor health of police personnel besides taking preventive steps against Coronavirus. In this regard, he commended the Model Covid Control Room of Rachakonda police that connects on a regular basis with Covid-positive personnel through WhatsApp groups and Zoom calls for providing medical, psychological and emotional support to them.

The control room ensures that as an immediate relief, Coronavirus-affected police personnel are given a dry fruit kit, medicine kit and ₹5,000 in cash. In case an affected cop is admitted to hospital, his or her health is monitored regularly by the Station House Officer concerned.

"The aim of Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat to ensure zero mortality and 100 percent recovery of all Covid-positive personnel is yielding good results," a police official said.

● THE CONTROL room ensures that as an immediate relief, Covid-affected police personnel are given a dry fruit kit, medicine kit and ₹5,000 in cash.

Police nab 2 for selling remdesivir shot illegally

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Medipally police nabbed two persons in connection with black marketing of Remdesivir injections on Wednesday in Rachakonda Commissionerate.

Reportedly the accused sold one remdesivir injection for ₹30,000, which is eight times higher than the prescribed price of ₹3,500. With a surge in Coronavirus cases, Remdesivir injections are currently in high demand in the state.

The accused have been identified as Kuthadi Anjan Kumar and Katasala Bhaskar Rao.

"Following a tip-off that Remdesivir vials were

being sold at higher prices at Medilife Medical and General Stores, Annapurna colony in Boduppal, a team, led by Medipally sub-inspector P. Ravi Kumar raided the shop and nabbed the two," said Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat.

Anjan Kumar, who works as a medical representative disclosed that his job was to supply medicine to medical shops. Bhaskar Rao, who runs a

medical store, urged Kumar to arrange remdesivir injections for which Kumar demanded ₹28,000 for each vial.

When Kumar came to Rao's medical shop to hand over two doses, the police party nabbed them red-handed.

Investigations revealed that Kumar bought injections at ₹3,490(MRP) each from Koti and came to sell it for ₹28,000. Rao in turn sold it for ₹30,000.

Both the accused were sent to judicial custody and further investigation is underway. Rachakonda police has urged the public to inform them regarding black-marketing of Remdesivir injections on 94906-17111.

TELUGU ACTIVIST BAGS KARMAVEER CHAKRA AWARD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Telugu activist Raghavendar Askani was awarded the REX Karmaveer Chakra Award and e-REX Global Youth Fellowship (e-RKGYF 2020-2021), under the auspices of The Campus Connect, jointly instituted by iCONGO in partnership with the United Nations. The award recognized his ingenious works on youth empowerment, civic engagement, policy education, advocacy and liberal solutions.

● THE CONTROL room ensures that as an immediate relief, Covid-affected police personnel are given a dry fruit kit, medicine kit and ₹5,000 in cash.

COVID | CONTROL

HM urges people not to panic and store oxygen cylinders

Act on fear mongers, Ali orders cops

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Home minister Mohammad Ali on Wednesday convened a meeting with the higher officials of the police department and commissioners of the Tri-Commisionerate to take stock of Covid-19 situation in the state and under the commissionates' limits.

He directed senior police officers to be in the forefront in helping the needy during the crisis. He further requested them to take stringent action against persons creating

and circulating fake news regarding the situation.

He also urged the public not to panic and store oxygen cylinders and remdesivir injections which creates deficiency in the market and in turn led to higher prices. He assured that the state had ample supply of oxygen cylinders and remdesivir injections.

He further appealed to the public in general and Muslims in particular as it is Ramzan season, to follow Covid-19 norms and take the help of doctors if there are any Covid-19 symptoms like fever, cold and so on.

HC closes PILs on land regularisation

SC to decide the fate of BRS applicants

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Applicants of Building Regularisation Scheme (BRS), BPS-2015 in the GHMC and municipalities and the Land Regularisation Scheme (LRS)-2020 for unapproved plots or layouts have to wait for the decision of the Supreme Court and see if it allows or rejects the regularisation schemes introduced by state governments, including

● TILL THE SC takes a decision in the SLP, the Telangana government shall not take any coercive steps against all BRS applicants: CJ Hima

buildings that were constructed in violation of prevalent rules as the Supreme Court is seized of the matter.

Juvvadi Sagar Rao of Hyderabad filed a petition before the apex court alleging that respondent states – Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu – were allowing illegal layouts to be regularised in violation of law and encouraging corruption, illegality besides putting a burden on the existing users but not the private and government officers responsible for the illegal layouts.

Earlier, the Telangana High Court was pursuing the schemes introduced in the state. But, on Wednesday, the High Court closed all petitions, including five PILs seeking suspension of GO No. 131, dated August 31, 2020 (Regularisation of unapproved and illegal layout Rules 2020 for urban and rural areas) and GO No. 152, dated November 2, 2015 (Building Regularisation Scheme) through which the Telangana government decided to regularise all unapproved and illegal layouts spread across the state and also regularise

buildings that were constructed in violation of prevalent rules as the Supreme Court is seized of the matter.

As the matter was with the Supreme Court, the Telangana High Court

closed the petitions pending before it. A division bench of the High Court, headed by Chief Justice Hima Kohli, said, "It is deemed appropriate that till the Supreme Court takes a decision in the SLP, the Telangana government shall not take any coercive steps against all BRS applicants: CJ Hima

buildings that were constructed in violation of prevalent rules as the Supreme Court is seized of the matter.

Juvvadi Sagar Rao of Hyderabad filed a petition before the apex court alleging that respondent states – Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu – were allowing illegal layouts to be regularised in violation of law and encouraging corruption, illegality besides putting a burden on the existing users but not the private and government officers responsible for the illegal layouts.

Earlier, in 2016, the then Hyderabad High Court had directed GHMC to inspect the buildings based on BRS applications it had received for regularisation. It also directed the civic body to furnish a report with numbers of the percentage of violations and how many were eligible by being less than 10 per cent violations. It also had directed that buildings, which were in complete violation be demolished after issuing notices.

However, even after five years, GHMC has not complied with it.

WOMAN DIES BY SUICIDE, JUMPS OFF A BUILDING

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

approached the High Court seeking anticipatory bail in the event of arrest under the said FIR.

Hearing the petition, Justice Sri Devi posted the case for hearing by the First Vacation Bench, which will be on May 6. Till then, the Judge ordered that police shall not arrest the petitioners under the case registered under Crime Number 237 of Jubilee Hills Police station.

A First Information Report (FIR) has been registered against Narendra Chowdary, Hanumantha Rao and A. Suresh Reddy charging that they fraudulently registering a plot by impersonating a non-resident Indian.

Following registration of the FIR, the three

The FIR alleges that the petitioners sold for just ₹1.91 lakh a 1,500-square yard plot in Jubilee Hills, which would now cost ₹50 crore.

The case has been registered in name of the person, who allegedly impersonated the non-resident Indian.

Her son M. Karthik suspects that his mother might have ended her life out of depression.

Hussainsagar lake is not a listed wetland, NGT told

TSS SIDDHARTH DC
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Hussainsagar Lake is not a listed wetland. Such a significant statement comes from two officials – R. Sobha and Sunil Sharma – to the National Green Tribunal (NGT).

"The state government had earlier listed the Kapra lake in the city and Pakhal lake in Warangal as wetlands. But, within a few hours, the Kapra lake was removed from the list of wetlands. Why is there so much confusion?" asks B.V. Subba Rao, a noted environmentalist here.

For this, he blames the half-baked wetland guidelines released in 2017. "The status of wetlands has to be clarified by the central government. If they are vehemently saying that the wetland rules do not apply to either

lake, it goes to show that the rules are being misinterpreted. As per the rules, drinking water reservoirs and sources of irrigation cannot be listed as wetlands," he said.

While the Hussainsagar lake is stuck in this quagmire, the other two reservoirs – Osman Sagar and Hemayat Sagar – are considered drinking water sources. Hence, they cannot be considered wetlands.

"These are not cleared as a wetland, because the water use is different. However, the protection of these lakes becomes paramount as there are encroachments around them," said a senior official from the irrigation department.

● THESE ARE NOT CLEARED AS A WETLAND, BECAUSE THE WATER USE IS DIFFERENT. HOWEVER, THE PROTECTION OF THESE LAKES BECOMES PARAMOUNT AS THERE ARE ENCROACHMENTS AROUND THEM," SAID A SENIOR OFFICIAL FROM THE IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT.

● THE STATE GOVERNMENT HAS AMPLE SUPPLY OF O2 AND REMDESIVIR SHOTS.

Telangana state DGP M. Mahender Reddy, home department principal secretary Ravi Gupta, additional director general of police (law and order) Jitender, Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar, Cyberabad police commissioner V.C. Sajjanar, Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat and additional police commissioner (traffic) Anil Kumar participated in the meeting.

● MIN ASSURES STATE HAS AMPLE SUPPLY OF O2 AND REMDESIVIR SHOTS.

Home minister Mohammad Mahboob Ali with top police officers and principal secretary at a meeting to take stock of law and order in Covid-19 times.

Cong. pleads for safety of voters

Seeks oxygen, ambulance at poll booths

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Telangana Congress spokesperson G. Niranjan has on Wednesday written to Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra and State Election Commissioner C. Parthasarathy seeking stationing of ambulances with oxygen facilities at every polling centre in municipal polls on Friday and when counting votes on May 3. This would make healthcare accessible to voters and poll staff if there are any complications due to surging second wave of Coronavirus pandemic.

Niranjan said in light of Madras High Court's comments, Congress would seek tripling of counting tables and holding counting in bigger halls to avoid people sitting in a congested

manner. He pointed out that holding counting on just 14 tables will be extremely risky, as 41 candidates, along with their agents, could participate in the counting process. "Please take an immediate decision in this regard in larger interests of counting officials, counting agents and others involved in the counting process," he said.

The Congress leader asked the SEC to make seating arrangements of poll staff by ensuring Covid-19 protocols. The SEC should ensure availability of ambulances with oxygen facilities, along with doctors, at every polling station," he maintained.

Polling will be held in Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation, Khammam Municipal Corporation, apart from

municipalities of Atchampet, Siddipet, Nakrekal, Jadhcherla and Kothur. A total 11,26,221 voters are eligible to cast their votes in 248 wards of these urban local bodies.

In his tweet on polling arrangements, principal secretary (Municipal Administration) Arvind Kumar said election in these municipalities will be held from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday. He said polling staff will follow all Covid protocols involving face mask, face shield, gloves and sanitiser. Even ballot boxes will be sanitised.

Arvind Kumar requested voters to stand at six feet distance from each other in the queue. He asked voters to cast their votes early to avoid crowding.

Counting of votes will be taken up on May 3.

TS WAKF BOARD POSTPONES MEET FOR THIRD TIME

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Elections from divisions 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25 of Khammam Municipal Corporation (KMC) are turning out to be controversial with candidates of Opposition parties Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party complaining that there are many "bogus voters" in these divisions.

For example, there are around 900 votes in booth number 119 in 20th Division. Significantly, about 600 votes are from one house number 5-7-200, which is a hostel of Mamata Medical College.

BJP candidate Vijaya Reddy, who is contesting from the ward, says she tried to meet voters staying in the hostel. Security personnel, however, did not allow her inside saying it is a private area. She made an attempt to get them on phone and called some of them.

"I spoke to one Amulya, who is currently staying at Chilkur in Hyderabad. She is not even aware that she is a voter from the booth. Amulya had completed her studies two years back. She was surprised when I appealed to her for her vote," the BJP nominee stated.

Vijaya Reddy herself says her defeat is certain, as there are 3,000 such votes in the 20th Division. "Some persons whom I called over phone started laughing when I asked them for their votes. This is evidence enough that the ruling party has enrolled bogus voters from this division," she maintained.

The situation is same in the other five wards of Khammam. Municipal Corporation, Congress and BJP leaders say. On the other hand, Congress Legislative Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka accused transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar of using police to threaten Congress candidate of the 57th Division. He alleged that TRS government is using government machinery to somehow win KMC elections.

Continued putting off of the meeting has led to many crucial decisions not being taken.

● THIS IS the third time that the board meeting has been postponed after Minorities Welfare director Shah Nawaz Qasim has assumed charge as chief executive officer (CEO).

When Shah Nawaz had convened the first meeting, it had got postponed abruptly after a verbal clash between him and other members over rights and authorities of the CEO.

Continued putting off of the meeting has led to many crucial decisions not being taken.

● THIS IS the third time that the board meeting has been postponed after Minorities Welfare director Shah Nawaz Qasim has assumed charge as chief executive officer (CEO).

"I spoke to one Amulya, who is currently staying at Chilkur in Hyderabad. She is not

600 voters have same address

RAVINDRA SESU | DC
KHAMMAM, APRIL 28

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PEOPLE 'WASTE' TESTING KITS TO CHECK AUTHENTICITY

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, APRIL 28

The medical and health department officials say that some people are wasting Covid kits by getting tested at various centres to check the authenticity of their Covid test results. Some people trying at different testing centres has resulted in a shortage of Covid testing kits in the old Adilabad district.

Some people who are not happy with the results of their Covid tests are again getting tested at different Covid testing centres following the incidents of a person who got positive, the result is getting a negative at another Covid testing centre. Thus, many needy people are unable to get tested due to shortage of Covid kits.

PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby cautioned that my client M/s. Ocean Park Multi-tech Limited (formerly Ashraya Resorts Pvt Limited) represented by its Managing Director Dr.K.B.Chandramouli, having its Registered office at 13-6-445/A/2, Opp. Pillar No.86, Ring Road, after Mehdipatnam, Hyderabad is the absolute owner and possessor of land admeasuring Ac. 4-00 Gts in Sy.No.168, of Kokpet Village, Gandipet Mandal, Ranga Reddy District along with other lands, having purchased the same under registered sale deed from the owners of the property. It has come to the notice of my client that certain unauthorized persons are trying to meddle with the property and sell the same to third parties and execute documents in their favour by misrepresentation and fabrication of documents. As such general public is hereby cautioned not to deal with any person in respect of the above mentioned lands and if they chose to do so in spite of this notice, they will be doing so at their own risk and appropriate Civil & Criminal proceedings will be initiated against them and further will be liable liable for all costs and consequences.

PERI VENKATARAMANA,
PERI PRABHAKAR,
RASHEEDA TABASSUM, Advocates
Flat No.102, Narven's Yashno Sudhan
6-3-1089 & 1089/A, Gulmohar Avenue
Somajiguda, Hyderabad-500 082

Virus victims buried in sand beside river

PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, APRIL 28

Family members of some Covid deceased are burying bodies under the sand on the shores of River Godavari. They are doing so as they are finding it unaffordable to burn the dead, as costs of wood and labour for cremating bodies have gone up enormously.

Workers are also demanding huge money to burn the bodies. Their refrain is that they are risking their lives by burning Covid-affected bodies.

Incidentally, many of these labourers are in an inebriated condition while burning the bodies. Certain local people have expressed fears that virus-affected bodies buried under sand could surface in the coming rainy season in case the sand gets washed away. These bodies may end up polluting water bodies and drinking water sources.

In incidentally, municipalities are using water collected from River Godavari for supplying it to houses under Mission Bhagiratha. Such burials

have been witnessed in Mandamarai, Srirampur, Naspur and Mancherial town.

P. Mahesh of Mancherial town said one of his relatives, who died after contracting Covid-19, has been buried under the sand on the shore of River Godavari three days ago. He pointed out that there is a huge shortage of wood for burning bodies.

Workers are also demanding huge money to burn the bodies. Their refrain is that they are risking their lives by burning Covid-affected bodies.

Incidentally, many of these labourers are in an inebriated condition while burning the bodies.

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1ST DEATH ANNIVERSARY

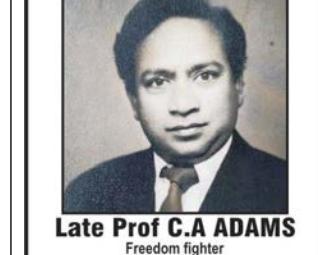


VAJANALA RAMAMOORTHY
Building Contractor, DOD: 29.04.2020
From Sunrise to Sunset every moment would have been more wonderful if you were with us. Your memory is stored in our Hearts & Minds

Inserted by: V. Shivananda Rao (Son)
V. Dayananda Rao (Daughter-in-Law), S. Srinivas Rao (Son)
Grandsons & Grand Daughters

"The memory of the righteous is blessed" Holy Bible

30TH ANNIVERSARY



Late Prof C.A. ADAMS
Freedom fighter
Late C.A.SAMARPAN (Eldest Son)
Prop. Deep Dayal Camera & Co
Dr. C.INDIRA SAMARPAN, Principal
Govt. Medical College, Nizamabad.
C.SREEVIKA SHEBA RANI (USA)
C. ABHINAV ADAMS

OBITUARY



ALHAJ SYED ZAINULABEDDIN
It is with deep sorrow and grief to inform that our Father expired on 26/04/2021 Monday early morning.
Namez-e-Janaza was at Daragh Hazrath Shiekh Daudash Rht., Agarhataram Potlapalli Village, Rajapu, Mandal, Mahabubnagar, before Asar Namaz.

Inserted by:
Syed Rivazuddin & Brothers
9948094189 / 9440123676

10TH DAY CEREMONY IN LOVING MEMORY



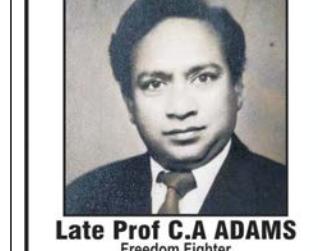
THUMMA JETENDER
D.O.B.: 19.04.2021
Though you left us suddenly your memories will remain forever.

From: Thumma Family
Near & Dear

(B/2122/D00111)

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" Holy Bible, 2 Timothy 4:7

30TH ANNIVERSARY



Late Prof C.A. ADAMS
Freedom Fighter
Executive Member, AICC (I)
Inserted by: KAMTAM ADARSHA (Eldest Daughter)
KAMTAM JOHN (Founder - Members
CSI, Telugu Congregation of New York (USA)

MISSING YOU



MOHD. MOINUDDIN (Advocate)
AGP-High Court (Revenue)
D.O.B.: 26-04-2021

"You will always be there in our Memories"
Inserted by: M/s Wasim Ahmed Khan
V. Srinivas Rao, Shaik Najeef
Mohd. Abdil Khadeer, Sunitha Kamtam,
Shivam Sultana, Zulfikar Khan,
Zulfikar, MMA Rahim, MMA Rahim
Shauk Ahmed, Mohammed Saleem, Raju
ADVOCATES & COLLEAGUES / STAFF
11-77/A, Chikalguda, Secunderabad

MISSING YOU



Late Prof C.A. ADAMS
GREAT CHRISTIAN LEADER
Inserted by:
MADHU HANNAH (Grand Daughter) USA
MADHU EMAANAH (Maid) USA
MADHU SINA (Grand Daughter) USA
KORE SABAENA ELIZABETH (Grand Daughter) USA
KORE MICKSON, KORE HAYLIN, KORE SABIA

SAD DEMISE



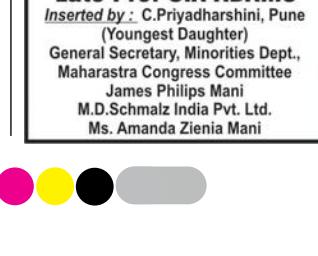
SHARADA BAI
D.O.D.: 27.04.2021

Left for Heavenly abode leaving Behind a treasure of memories for us to cherish forever

with profound grief: Family Members

Ph: 8897835009, 9700228865

30TH ANNIVERSARY



Inserted by: C.Priyadarshini, Pune
(Youngest Daughter)
General Secretary, Minorities Dept.,
Maharashtra Congress Committee
James Philips Mani
M.D.Schmalz India Pvt. Ltd.
Ms. Amanda Zienia Mani

OBITUARY



Mrs. Naomi (Norma) Mills
W/o Late Cyril Joseph Mills
DOB: 5-8-1928 DOD: 28-4-2021
Funeral was held on 28th April'21 at Mettuguda cemetery

Inserted by: Sylvia Mills, Dianne, Steffy, Son and lawns
and Grand Children. PH: 8978549858

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever - Psalms: 23:5

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints - Psalms 116:15

With profound grief and sorrow we inform the death of His saints - Psalms 116:15

BOLLEDDU CHITHARANJAN

Dy. Stn. Supdt. (Retd.) Secbad, SC Railway

H/o. Mrs. Mercy Chitharanjan

DOB: 31.12.1938

Called to Glory on 19.04.2021

Funeral service was held at Garrison's Cemetery, CSI,

Trichur.

We are deeply grieved to accept the bitter truth

that you are no more with us. Your presence will be missed every moment.

We thank all our dear ones who have

stood by us in our grief.

Grieving Wife, Daughters, Sons-in-law and Grandchildren.

Ph. No. 6309501599.

CA-3595

CA-3595

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IN BRIEF

AP FIRM ON HOLDING SSC, INTER EXAMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 28

The state government, asserting that SSC and Intermediate examinations were crucial for students, has decided to conduct them amidst strict corona protocol. AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said that SSC and Intermediate examination are important for students as their future depends on those certificates. He said that the decision to conduct examinations has been left to the state governments by the Centre. He explained that examinations are underway in some states following strict measures. He said that the criticism of opposition on conducting 10th and Inter examinations was uncalled for. He wanted to know if students will get admissions into premier institutions if they just have pass certificates, as only pass certificates will be issued by states that do not conduct Board exams. Education minister Adimulapu Suresh, meanwhile, announced that Inter exams would be conducted from May 5.

2 PERSONS CAN ACCOMPANY WINNER: SEC

From Page 1

"No victory procession after the counting of votes on May 3 shall be permissible. Not more than two persons shall be allowed to accompany the winning candidate or his/her authorised representative to receive the certificate of election from the returning officer," said an order issued by C. Partha Sarathi, commissioner, TSEC.

A total of 11,34,032 persons are eligible to exercise their franchise in these polls. As many as 1,539 polling booths will be staffed by 9,809 personnel.

The SEC has deployed additional police forces in 676 sensitive polling booths. The poll will be held through ballot papers. A total of 2,500 ballot boxes were supplied to the polling booths.

CONFUSION OVER STATE'S FREE VACCINES

From Page 1

It may be recalled that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao had recently announced that everyone in the state will be vaccinated for free. However, as things stand, there is some confusion if the free vaccination will be at the state run vaccination centres or all vaccination centres in Telangana, and if someone opts to get a shot at a private facility, would they be required to pay for the shot.

Currently, Covaxin maker Bharat Biotech said that it would sell each dose to the states at ₹600 and at ₹1,200 for private hospitals, while Covishield maker Serum Institute of India today said it would charge ₹300 per dose to states and ₹600 per dose to private vaccination facilities.

However, some clear directions on this are expected to come at a meeting expected to be chaired by the Chief Minister on Thursday where he will review the Covid-19 situation in the state. The night curfew imposed in Telangana comes to an end on April 30, and a decision on whether to extend it is also expected to be taken at the meeting.

Bandi: Virus deaths murder

Questions why KCR did not review situation after cases rose

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

Telangana BJP president Bandi Sanjay on Wednesday launched a blistering attack on the TRS government, accusing it of failure to check the spread of Coronavirus in the state. All Covid-related deaths in Telangana must be seen as 'murders' by the state government, he said.

Sanjay asked why Chief Minister Chandrashekhar Rao is not reviewing the situation in the state even as the 'positive' cases and deaths increased manifold in recent days. Why did the CM not take Covid vaccine and why did he not make an appeal to the people to undergo vaccination, the BJP leader asked at a press conference here.

He also questioned Rao over not including Covid-19 in the Arogyasri scheme and the non-implementation of Ayushman Bharat in the state.

Sanjay said people, especially from middle and low-income groups, are facing severe hardships and unable to afford costly Coronavirus treatment. The KCR government failed to help



Telangana BJP president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar addresses a press meet at the party's office in Nampally, Hyderabad on Wednesday along with other leaders.

— DECCAN CHRONICLE

them via Arogyasri and Ayushman Bharat, he said. "The CM is adopting a negligent attitude on Coronavirus right from the time of its outbreak last year. The government is suppressing the figures on Covid cases and deaths to give a false impression that the pandemic situation is under control. The Centre gives funds and supplies oxygen, ventilators etc to states based on the Coronavirus figures submitted by state governments."

He urged the CM to immediately implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Telangana.

Sanjay said he had campaigned in Warangal and Khammam municipal corporation polls besides in Siddipet municipality and the people's response was overwhelming. "The huge response indicated that the BJP will bag a majority of the seats in these polls. TRS is trying to win elections with money and liquor. The police should act tough against TRS leaders and prevent liquor and cash distribution," he said.

He urged the CM to immediately implement the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Telangana.

No takers for street food vending outlets



The GHMC's street vending food hub wears a deserted look with no vendors taking up the stalls due to Covid-19 after the lockdown since a year at Hitech City on Wednesday. — R. PAVAN

CHILLI CROP FLOODS MARKET IN KHAMMAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, APRIL 28

The agricultural market in Khammam witnessed flooding of chilli on Wednesday. Nearly 1.10 lakh bags of chilli arrived at the market.

The farmers from Khammam, Kothagudem, Mahabubabad and Suryapet districts in Telangana and Krishna district in AP took their produce to the market. The traders offered an initial price to Teja variety chilli at ₹14,300 per quintal.

They lifted 10 per cent produce at that price and gave only ₹12,000 to ₹13,500 to the remaining produce.

The farmers of these districts used to raise Teja variety in 90 per cent of their fields.

Apollo succeeds in using IVL on 75-yr-old patient

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

The first successful use of Intravascular Lithotripsy in India for treating a 75-year-old male with heavily calcified carotid artery lesions happened here on Wednesday.

The patient, with recurrent CVA (cerebrovascular accident) or strokes, was successfully treated by transcarotid arterial revascularisation (TCAR) using Intravascular Lithotripsy (IVL).

According to Dr. Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group: "The first reported use of IVL in India to treat calcified carotid artery lesions will

THE PATIENT with recurrent CVA (cerebrovascular accident) or strokes, was successfully treated by transcarotid arterial revascularisation (TCAR) using Intravascular Lithotripsy (IVL).

enable us to treat patients who cannot go for conventional procedures. It will decrease the risk of procedural complications, providing positive clinical outcomes with reduced risk of future adverse events. It is to the integrity of our doctors that they have continued to focus on treating and saving the lives of patients with NCDs even during the pandemic."

Dr P.C. Rath, senior consultant cardiologist

and Director, Cath Lab & Interventional Cardiology, Apollo Health City, said, "The patient presented with recurrent strokes. Upon evaluation, he was found to have a critical stenosis involving the right internal carotid artery. There was also significant calcification of the vessel and a 180 degree arc of deep wall calcium. This required urgent intervention to open up the vessel since carotid artery stenosis is responsible for 30 per cent of ischemic strokes. The usually, conventional treatment option of carotid endarterectomy, the surgical approach to remove plaque from the artery, was not opted for due to the patient's age."

After 60 days, the pandemic situation has hit blood donation camps. Political parties are conducting blood donation camps since Covid-19 vaccination is going to be administered to all above age 18 soon.

Adilabad MLA Jogi Ramanna said nearly 20-25 units of blood is required every day at Rajiv Gandhi

Institute of Medical Sciences but only 20 units of blood was in storage at the blood bank there a few days ago.

Jogi Ramanna appealed to the youths and members of voluntary organisations to ensure more of blood donations to enable the society face this critical time. TRS and BJP leaders conducted blood donation camps in Adilabad on Wednesday. BJP district president Payal Shankar and Adilabad municipal chairman Jogi Premender of the TRS took part in the blood donation camps at their respective party offices. On his birthday, Adilabad MP Soyam Bapura appealed to the youths to voluntarily donate blood. Samruddha Reddy, Bela mandal coordinator of the Red Cross Society, said there is a 90 per cent fall in blood donation in the old Adilabad district.

Doctors are not performing operations till attendants arranged the blood for operations and deliveries, he said. Bapura said he is receiving five to six calls every day for help in getting blood for the needy people in the Adilabad district.

People who got vaccinated can donate their blood only

COVID | IMPACT

Doctors at RIMS forced to postpone operations and deliveries

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, APRIL 28

The Covid-19 epidemic has resulted in a shortage of blood in government hospitals in old Adilabad district. The process of voluntary blood donation has hit by the Covid epidemic.

Blood is required urgently when people suffer from anaemia and in times of deliveries by pregnant women and when people injured in accidents etc undergo operations.

In these critical times, blood stocks have come down drastically at RIMS

here. As a consequence, doctors are postponing operations and even deliveries at RIMS. Only those who have recovered from Covid-19 positivity can give blood for the plasma treatment to Covid patients in Emergency wards.

The Red Cross Society and other NGOs used to conduct blood donation camps. Political parties are conducting blood donation camps since Covid-19 vaccination is going to be administered to all above age 18 soon.

Adilabad MLA Jogi Ramanna said nearly 20-25 units of blood is required every day at Rajiv Gandhi

THE PANDEMIC has affected blood donation camps.

TRS, BJP leaders conducted blood donation camps

after 60 days. The pandemic situation has hit blood donation camps. Political parties are conducting blood donation camps since Covid-19 vaccination is going to be administered to all above age 18 soon.

Adilabad MLA Jogi Ramanna said nearly 20-25 units of blood is required every day at Rajiv Gandhi

TS reclaims lands unused by industry

1,184 acres of land recovered from 18 firms

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, APRIL 28

The Telangana state government is acting tough against companies that fail to set up industries/units after allotment of government land.

The government had reclaimed 1,184 acres from 18 companies so far, mostly on the city outskirts.

Officials of the industries department and the Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation Ltd (TSIIC) sprung into action to review the status of lands that were allotted to industries following the directions of industries minister K.T. Rama Rao.

In a review meeting held in August 2020, Rama Rao had directed officials of the industries department and TSIIC not to spare companies which failed to utilise lands as such companies numbers had gone up to about 700.

Following his instructions, officials are serving show-cause notices on them, seeking explanation as to why they are not sticking to the time-frame promised to set up their units.

"As per norms, the companies should utilise allotted land within two years. But about 700 companies have flouted these norms. We have served showcase notices and sought explanation. If the reasons for delay were found to be genuine, we are extending the deadline. We are reclaiming lands of companies which are repeatedly violating the norms even after extending deadline multi-

LIST OF RECLAIMED LANDS BY TSIIC

● XL Telecom Ltd (Fab City SEZ)	10 acres
● KSK Surya Photovoltaic Ventures (Fab City SEZ)	25 acres
● MLR Motors (Automotive Park)	100 acres
● Smart Agro Food Park (Lakkampalli)	200 acres
● NV Distilleries (Daamarakunta)	132 acres
● Hinduja Foundries (Automotive Park)	60 acres
● Hinduja Foundries (Uppal)	6 acres
● Orient Craft Ltd (AEP Gundlapochampally)	19 acres
● Light Create (IP Pashamailaram)	80 acres
● Biowin (Karkapatla)	10 acres
● Taj GVK Hotels (Hardware Park, Mamidipally)	1 acre
● Lanza India (Biotech Park)	10 acres
● Gokaldas Images (IDA Nacharam)	8 acres
● Alexandria (Biotech Park)	13 acres
● Megasoft (Visualsoft) IT Park, Nanakramguda	8 acres
● Techforce (Hardware Park, Mamidipally)	2 acres

EARLIER RECLAIMED LANDS

● Indu Techzone (Hardware Park, Mamidipally)	250 acres
--	-----------

ple time without any valid reasons," said official sources.

The government is also trying to reclaim lands that are stuck in legal disputes.

"Some companies have obtained stay orders from the courts against resumption of lands. We are trying to vacate the stay orders by effectively presenting our arguments before the court. A legal team has been set up to deal with these cases," sources added.

After the state government passed TS-iPASS Act in 2015 to approve industries in online mode through self-certification

within three weeks, there is a great demand to set up industries in the state.

However, most of the companies are seeking lands on the city outskirts.

However, there is no adequate availability of government lands on the city outskirts as major land parcels were already allotted by previous governments besides several of the major land parcels being stuck in legal disputes.

With this, the state government had laid focus on reclaiming unutilised lands so as to make allotments to new industries.

AP TOLD TO AVOID DELAY IN COVID TEST RESULTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, APRIL 28

The AP High Court directed the state government to avoid delay in announcing Covid-19 test results stating that it may cause spread of the virus.

A Division Bench headed by Chief Justice A.K. Goswami and Justice C. Praveen Kumar instructed the state government here on Wednesday to initiate measures to expedite release of Covid test results without any delay and asked as to why 24 to 48 hours were being taken for declaring the results. The Chief Justice narrated his own experience by saying that after undergoing Covid test, he got a text message on his mobile phone stating that his sample was collected after several days.

However, government pleader C. Sumon informed the court that they were sending swab samples collected from the people to labs in the evening after day's collection for conducting tests and submitted that though it was taking nearly six hours for testing as transit of samples was taking more time.

The court directed the state government to make efforts to reduce transit time to enable the samples to reach the labs early.

Tender forms and other details can be obtained from Addl. Manager, CFP (P) on payment of Rs. 500/- in the form of DD/FR/BC drawn in favor of PAO, NFC. Contact number: 040-21718439, 040-21718406. Any further information in this regard can be obtained on website www.tsiprourement.telangana.gov.in.

DPR No.: 1760-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22, Date: 28.04.2021

Sd/- Chief General Manager, NFC, Mint Compound, Hyderabad.

गोपनीय राजकारण / GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT e-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

Engineer-In-Chief (RAB) State Roads & CRN: Nit/No.27/DCR/REIEE-1/AEE-1/2021 Dt:26.04.2021

1. On line tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for 4 (Four) Road works in Rural Circle under Non Plan out of which 2 Nos. of work in Rangareddy District (4' call each), 1 No. of work in Medchal - Malkajgiri District (2' call) and 1 No. of work in Vikarabad District. 2. Tenderers can download the tender schedules from 03/05/2021 to 10/05/2021 upto 4.00PM. The last date of receipt of tenders is on or before 10-05-2021 upto 4.00PM. Further details can be obtained at e-procurement market place i.e. <http://www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in>

DPR No.: 1760-PP/CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/202

DECCAN Chronicle

29 APRIL 2021

India must clear the air on Pak's 'feelers' claim

After an off-the-record interaction of Pakistan's Army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa with some 20 top journalists on April 23, scattered details of which emerged in an Indian publication on Wednesday, we should have to swallow mortification on two counts as Indians.

One, while Pakistan's military leadership chose to engage journalists in its country on topics ranging from the pandemic to India-Pakistan relations, and for a timespan stretching to four hours, in the past seven years this country's democratically elected Prime Minister has not shown journalists the courtesy of engaging them in an open exchange for even seven seconds. This mocks not just journalists, but all Indians; indeed, it mocks our democracy.

Two, Gen. Bajwa made assertions on bilateral ties as well as the Kashmir question. On an immediate basis these must be officially confirmed or denied or elaborated for clarity in a manner that best preserves the Indian position and understanding. A hesitation to do so would make New Delhi look ridiculous, not least in Kashmir.

The first of the Pakistan military leader's spectacular claims is that India sent

Pakistan "feelers" for talks in December 2020, which led up to the February 25 agreement between the two militaries (to seriously observe the 2003 ceasefire agreement). Gen. Bajwa played down the advertised intermediary role of the United Arab Emirates.

If the disclosure about "feelers" has merit, then it signifies a subtle change to the Narendra Modi government's long-held position that "terror and talks cannot go together". In international

hotspots, no substitute has been found for eventual discussions, whatever the form these may take, the impetuosity or assumed hauteur of individual leaders or governments notwithstanding.

On the Kashmir issue, Gen. Bajwa claims India had assured Pakistan (in secret talks) about the restoration of J&K's statehood and about not making "demographic changes". These were the important considerations for Islamabad on a resolution of the Kashmir issue, and not the reading down of Article 370 to which, he said, Pakistan never attached importance since it had not accepted the validity of that provision of the Indian Constitution.

In India's domestic context, this would seem to imply that — since retaining or ending the provision is no skin off Pakistan's nose — bringing on the avalanche of emasculating Article 370 — could have only had communal triumphalism as its purpose and may have nothing more than marginal significance in regional affairs and in India-Pakistan relations.

Was India persuaded by influential international friends to send "feelers", and if so then what were the circumstances and implications?

Gen. Bajwa said India's NSA Ajit Doval and ISI chief Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed met at least once in the UAE and intelligence chiefs of the two countries met in "neighbouring countries". Mr Doval's association in these confabulations without doubt indicates Prime Minister Narendra Modi's involvement.

There has been no contact since the February agreement, according to Gen. Bajwa. But he indicated, responding to questions, that Pakistan resiling from importing cotton and sugar from India due to PM Imran Khan's "political compulsions" can only be temporary. Trade between neighbours is important to peace, he said. He also said outsiders didn't understand how much the Pakistan Army had changed. That position is worth exploring.

Right to Covid accountability

While the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh is trying to make the state a fortress from where information about the inadequacies people face while trying to get treated for Covid-19 does not go out, the Allahabad high court has chosen to do otherwise. It has issued a series of directions on patient care in hospitals in seven major cities. In a state where people can be booked for tweeting in search of a hospital bed, the court has ordered that major government hospitals in the seven cities, including the capital, should have a health bulletin system twice a day apprising people of health updates of patients and to declare on the district portal the position of occupied and vacant beds in Covid wards and ICUs of all government hospitals and Covid-assigned private hospitals. It has also asked district judges in the seven districts to depite a senior judicial officer in each to ensure that its orders are implemented. The court also took note of the reports on the death of 135 teachers who were on duty conducting panchayat elections and issued notice to the state election commission to explain why action should not be taken against it for the failure to ensure compliance of the Covid-appropriate protocol.

It looks like the coronavirus has not only attacked human bodies but also exposed the moribund, archaic, self-serving and graceless governmental structures, which have the welfare of the people last on their agenda. A bit of planning would have saved citizens of India, a nation which prided itself as the pharmacy of the world till a couple of weeks ago, from gasping for breath in major cities and proper use of the law would have left the government with adequate stocks of life-saving drugs to treat the victims of the pandemic. Judicial interventions to make the rulers accountable are welcome but they can do only so much. It is for the people to do that job in a democracy.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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China's new weapon is 'political archaeology'



Claude Arpi

In February this year, the Communist Party of China (CPC) started a new campaign called "Party History Learning and Education"; it will continue in full swing through the year as the CPC celebrates its centenary in July.

Neican, a weekly brief on China published from Australia, observed: "The CPC's official historiography is a product of politics and serves a political agenda." There is no doubt about this, and India should closely watch the new campaign.

Neican's analysts said: "In the case of the current campaign, it aims to strengthen ideological cohesion, confidence, and a sense of historical destiny. In doing so, it will likely reinforce the legitimacy of Xi Jinping as the party's helmsman and his political project of national rejuvenation."

Like everything in China these days, the crusade originated in an "important" speech by President Xi Jinping, the new Great Helmsman. On February 20, at a gathering in Beijing, Mr Xi spoke of "the importance of learning the history of the CPC, so as to let the party better serve the people and lead the country to fully build a modern socialist country."

Xinhua commented that the CPC has achieved its first centenary goal "to complete building a moderately prosperous society in all respects", and now embarks on the second: "The learning of history will help ensure the whole party to remain true to its original aspiration."

Being purely an ideological move, archaeology plays a crucial role in the new scheme of "national rejuvenation". If Beijing is able to prove that China dominated large parts of Asia, let us say 3,000 or 4,000 years ago, the ideological foundation of the rejuvenation will be established.

Already in September last year, Mr Xi presided over a meeting of the party's politburo and dis-

cussed "the latest archaeological discoveries in China and their significance". The CPC general secretary showed a great interest in excavating the past; he spoke of "developing archaeology to better understand the long-standing and profound Chinese civilisation".

He said that he attached "great importance to archaeological research to deepen people's understanding of Chinese civilisation and profundity, thus providing strong support for promoting fine traditional culture and strengthening people's confidence in Chinese culture". You could ask: how does this concern India?

Unfortunately, it does, especially after China's new territorial claims in Ladakh as well as the older ones in Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh.

On April 14, the *China Daily* mentioned with fanfare an event highlighting "China's Top 10 New Archaeological Discoveries of Year 2020"; the annual awards function was dubbed the "Oscars of Chinese archaeology". The idea was to promote new archaeological findings among the masses, with a 21-expert judging panel selecting the 10 sites.

One of them is the Sangsang Lungmo graveyard site in Tsanda county of Ngari prefecture of Western Tibet. Tsanda, or Zanda, is located near the historical vestiges of Tholing, close to the Indian border, north of Uttarakhand. The findings date from the 4th century BC to 7th century AD and though it is not officially said, it belongs to the Kingdom of Zhangzhung, which spread across Western Tibet and Northern India. The site was presented as a key finding "of early-stage history of Tibet, showing frequent communication among the region with the area to the south of Himalayas as well as today's central China and Xinjiang".

India should be con-

cerned because "political archaeology" has always helped China to substantiate its territorial claims at a later date.

Zhangzhung was an ancient kingdom which spread in Western Tibet and Northern India; it pre-dates the culture of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet and is usually associated with the Bon faith. The inhabitants are often mentioned in ancient Tibetan texts as the original rulers of central and western Tibet. Only in the last two decades or so, have archaeologists started to excavate areas once ruled by the Zhangzhung kings.

Though very little is known about the extent of the kingdom, it is said to have had extensive contacts with its neighbours, particularly Northern India (and not China). While Beijing has now taken up a large number of excavation sites to demonstrate Zhangzhung's relations with the mainland, very little is done in India, where archaeology is still under the slumberous Archaeological Survey of India and the babus of the ministry of culture.

At the same time, China is moving ahead with the blessings of the People's Leader; for example in November 2017, *China Tibet Online* mentioned a group of 2,000-year-old sarcophagi tombs "recently discovered in Jomdo County, Chamdo, southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, in which the cultural features not only possess strong local characteristics, but also have very clear similarities with sarcophagi remains found in the Min Jiang River and Yarlung River basin in the west part of southwest China's Sichuan Province".

Quoting a Chinese archaeologist, the article further argues: "This discovery confirms that around 2,000 years ago, there had been frequent

communication and exchanges between the people living in the east part of Tibet and those in the plateau areas of western Sichuan."

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LETTERS

ATTENTION TIMS

My uncle got admitted in TIMS on April 24 as that was the only hospital with bed and oxygen. Once a patient is admitted, no one is allowed to see them. My cousins were visiting daily and providing food as someone said the food there was not good. As we were not getting updates on his health, on April 28, my kin got into a PPE kit and went in. To their shock, no one was attending on him and no oxygen was provided. After a lot of yelling, he was shifted to another room and we were told his chances of survival are low. Who will own up responsibility for this? I am worried about other patients there.

Amresh

Hyderabad

COVID-19 STIGMA

In these times, the most important aspect that needs to be addressed is Covid-19 stigma. Mental health issues are rising daily. Ambiguity about the virus and isolation is causing stress. Emergency psychological crisis interventions for people affected by the disease are significant and cannot be ignored.

Ravi Teja Kathuripalli

Hyderabad

Covid-19 has totally changed human behaviour. The relatives of Covid-19 victims are facing the biggest hurdles in disposing the bodies as bribing starts from mortuary, ambulances, cremation slot booking, high prices for firewood and other rituals.

P.R. Vittal Rao

Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Pak offer to fly Indian staff via Nepal rejected

NEW DELHI, April 28
India has refused Pakistan's latest proposal that the personnel of the former Indian Deputy High Commission in Dacca be repatriated to Kathmandu abroad a Nepalese airline.

The proposal was made by the Pakistan High Commissioner Mr. Sajid Haider. Commenting on this proposal, an official of the Indian Government asked why the Indian personnel from Dacca should be taken to a third country while Pakistani personnel from the Deputy High Commission in Calcutta would be taken directly to Pakistan.

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu

CVC ups ante, asks ministries to sort plaints within 3 months

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) has run into a wall of bureaucratic denial. The anti-corruption watchdog regularly reviews pending cases and even called for a probe into pending corruption cases, but little has resulted from its efforts. Earlier this year in January, the commission set a timeline to finalise pending cases. It directed all chief executives and vigilance officers in various government organisations to finalise pending cases from the period between January 2011 and December 2018 by end of May this year.

With just about a month left for the deadline, chief vigilance commissioner Sanjay Kothari has now upped the ante and advised Union ministries to sort out complaints against officers within three months of their receipt. Reminding

them of the May 31 deadline, Mr Kothari has now mandated that at the end of the third month from the date of receipt of the complaint and after deciding on a course of action, a copy of the complaint shall be made available to the concerned employee within 15 days. Once a decision is made to pursue the vigilance case, the concerned organisation shall send its inquiry report to the CVC or chief vigilance officer seeking first stage advice within three months of registration of a case.

KEY UT APPOINTMENT HANGS IN BALANCE
Away from the Covid din, there is a tussle going on between the Punjab government and the Centre over the naming of 2002 batch IAS officer Vijay Namdeo Rao Zade as the finance secretary of the Chandigarh Administration. Mr

Zade was nominated by the UT administration for the post, which is reserved for Punjab cadre officers and is the third most important post after the UT advisor and home secretary.

According to sources, the ministry of home affairs (MHA) has sought details about Mr Zade's professional profile and other information in a 17-point proforma. It wanted to know about Mr Zade's completion of service in the cadre, the reason for seeking deputation, vigilance status and details of annual property returns, etc.

Sources say that this is the first time the ministry has asked for such details and there is no convention for this. Despite their reservations, the Punjab government has responded by providing all the information that was sought about the official. There has been no action from the MHA since then. It

has to be remembered, sources say, that the recommendation of Mr Zade was forwarded to the Centre last year but there is no sign of any movement on the issue.

MAHARASHTRA POLITICAL RIVALRIES AFFECTING BABUS

The churning in police circles in Maharashtra continues unabated even after the unsavoury Param Bir Singh episode. And, not surprisingly, politics seems to drive most of what is going around these days between the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government and the Opposition BJP.

SHORT TAKES
SUSPECTED COVID PATIENT JUMPS OFF AIIMS BUILDING

RABINDRA NATH CHOURHURY | DC RAIPUR, APRIL 28

A suspected Covid-19 patient committed suicide by jumping off the second floor of the All Indian Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS), Raipur early on Wednesday morning. This was the third such incident in the AIIMS, Raipur in the last ten months, hospital authorities said.

"A 26-year-old man who was admitted in AIIMS, Raipur on April 26 after showing symptoms of Covid-19 jumped off the second floor of D-block of the hospital at 2.30 am. He was rushed to the emergency. He was declared dead by the doctors", Dr S.S. Sharma of AIIMS, Raipur told this news-paper.

According to him, the deceased's wife also attempted to commit suicide by jumping off the building. But, she was stopped by the hospital staff. The deceased, Dilip Kumar, hailed from Baloda Bazar in Chhattisgarh. He was admitted to AIIMS, Raipur, on Monday after developing a fever. However, his report of a Coronavirus test that was released after his death came negative, the doctor said.

Earlier, two elderly persons who were admitted to the AIIMS, Raipur after they tested positive for the virus committed suicide by jumping off the hospital building last year.

While one of them took the extreme step in August 2020, the other ended his life in November, 2020.

CHANDIGARH: NIGHT CURFEW EXTENDED BY THREE HOURS

Chandigarh, April 28: Amid rising Covid-19 cases, the Chandigarh administration on Wednesday announced extension of curfew period by three hours.

The decision was taken by Chandigarh administrator V.P. Singh Badnore during a Covid review meeting with officials here.

The night curfew will start from 6 pm till 5 am and the fresh curbs will come into force from Thursday till further orders, said an official statement. Presently, the curfew timings are from 9 pm till 5 am.

The administration also directed all shops, malls and multiplexes to be closed by 5 pm while home delivery of items will be allowed till 9 pm.

All non-essential activities will be banned during the night curfew hours, said the statement.

The Union Territory administration also directed all educational institutions, schools, colleges, coaching institutions, libraries, etc. to remain closed till May 15.

ODISHA RECORDS OVER 8K CASES IN 24 HOURS

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, APRIL 28

The Covid-19 situation in Odisha on Wednesday reached an alarming stage as the state reported its highest-ever spike of 8,386 cases.

The previous highest was recorded on April 24 when the state clocked 6,647 new cases.

Of the fresh 8,385 cases, Khurda district registered a mammoth 1,840 fresh cases, followed by Sundargarh (933) and Cuttack (496).

The state also recorded 10 death cases, taking the total number of fatalities to 2,017.

Of the 8,386 new cases, 4,781 cases were from quarantine while 3,605 were local contacts. On Tuesday also, the state had recorded 6,073 Covid-19 cases.

The high jump in the positivity case has come as a major cause of concern to the state government which a couple of days ago had claimed that the Odisha had entered the "plateau" stage and the Covid-19 cases would soon decline.

With Wednesday's figure, the cumulative caseload went up to 4,28,515 in the state.

As many as 4,089 patients have recovered during the period pushing the total recovery tally to 3,71,200. The active cases stand at 55,245 in the state.

Nabarangpur witnessed a daily spike of 388 cases and Bolangir saw 358 positive cases. Angul and Sambalpur districts posted 3,47,307 cases respectively. The districts which witnessed below 300 marks in the daily new cases are Mayurbhanj (289), Jajpur (270), Puri (259), Bargarh (257), Nuapada (233), Ganjam (209), Balasore (202).

KERALA TO PURCHASE 1 CR JABS FROM SII, BHARAT BIOTECH

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, APRIL 28

The Kerala government has decided to purchase 1 cr vaccine directly from the manufacturers during the next three months.

The decision was taken at the Cabinet meeting in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. While 70 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine would be purchased from Serum Institute of India, the remaining 30 lakh doses of Covaxin would be obtained from Bharat Biotech.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said the government had already decided to provide vaccine free of cost to all including those in the age group of 18-45 years.

He said 70 lakh vaccine doses would be purchased from Serum Institute of India for ₹2,94 cr at the rate of ₹400 per dose plus 5 per cent GST.

The government would purchase 30 lakh doses of Covaxin from Bharat Biotech at a cost of ₹189 cr at the rate of ₹600/dose including GST.

Vijayan said the price of vaccine would be subject to the outcome of cases regarding the pricing which are pending before the Supreme Court and various high courts. He said the entire purchase would be completed by July.

3,000 COVID-19 POSITIVE PEOPLE GO 'MISSING' IN B'LURU: MINISTER

Bengaluru, April 28: Amid surging Covid-19 cases, Karnataka revenue minister R. Ashoka claimed on Wednesday most infected people have switched off their phones and about 3,000 of them who have gone 'missing' from Bengaluru are spreading the disease.

Police have been asked to trace them, the minister told reporters.

"We are giving free medicines to the people, which can control 90 per cent of cases, but they have (Covid infected people) switched off their mobile phones. They reach the hospital in a critical stage to desperately look for the ICU beds. This is what is happening now," Ashoka said.

He said most of those infected with Covid have switched off their phones and are not letting people know about their whereabouts, which is making things difficult.

"I feel that at least 2,000 to 3,000 people in Bengaluru have switched off their phones and left their houses. We don't know where they have gone," the minister added.

Appealing to the infected people to keep their phones switched on, Ashoka said police have been asked to track them. — PTI

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 28

In yet another hospital fire incident in Maharashtra, four patients died in a fire that broke out in the wee hours of Wednesday at a private hospital in Thane district. The state government has ordered a probe into the incident.

According to a civic official, the fire broke out in the meter room of the Prime Critic Hospital at Kausa-Mumbra at 3.40 am. The fire took place due to a short circuit and it soon spread to the other areas of the premises. The first floor of the hospital was completely damaged in the fire.

Maha to give free vaccine for all, but will not start on May 1

Uddhav: Talks on with the SII, Bharat Biotech to procure maximum quantity

BHAGWAN PARAB & SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 28

Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday formally announced the free of cost vaccination for all people in the age group of 18 to 44 years in government hospitals.

However, there is still an ambiguity over when the inoculation drive for this age group in the state will start. It was clear that it will not start from May 1 due to the shortage of vaccines.

The state government has decided to vaccinate citizens in the age group of 18 to 44 free of cost. The schedule for the vaccination drive is being planned by the health department

and will be informed to all accordingly," said Thackeray after chairing a cabinet meeting.

"The state is faced with financial problems, but top priority has been given to the health of the citizens. Hence, a decision has been taken in the cabinet meeting to provide free vaccines to all from 18 to 44 age group," he said.

We are holding talks with the Serum Institute of India (SII) and Bharat Biotech to procure maximum quantity of vaccines for the state, Thackeray added.

However, state health minister Rajesh Tope has made it clear that the vaccination drive of the 18-44 age group cannot be launched from May 1 due to unavailability of ade-

quate doses.

"The vaccination will not start from May 1 as sufficient vaccines are not available immediately with us. People will have to keep patience and act sensibly. The state government plans to vaccinate the citizens in the next six months in a planned manner," he said.

People in the age group of 18 to 44 years will receive free vaccines at state-run centres, but citizens will have to pay for the jabs at private facilities for the state, Thackeray said.

The state will cover 5.71 crore citizens from this age group and it would cost ₹6,500 crore to the government.

A committee comprising health department repre-

sentatives and some senior ministers will be formed to do micro-planning about implementing the vaccination programme, Tope added.

Ever since the vaccination drive has started in the country, Maharashtra has maintained its top position in terms of inoculating people.

The state has already vaccinated more than 1.5 crore people above 45 years.

Meanwhile, a petition seeking the sale of Covid vaccines — Covaxin and Covishield at ₹150 per dose to all was filed in Bombay High Court on Wednesday.

The Public Interest Litigation (PIL) alleges that the pharma companies are engaged in an "organised loot" and that

the court's intervention is essential to protect public health.

A lawyer, Fayzan Khan and three law students together have filed the PIL saying the vaccine is presumed to be an essential commodity and hence its management and distribution cannot be left in the hands of private companies.

The PIL also questioned the propriety of the Central government in asking state governments to compete in the open market for vaccines.

According to the petitioners, both, the state as well as the Central government, have the constitutional obligation to protect the health of a citizen and there cannot be any discrimination.

84-HR STRICT LOCKDOWN IMPOSED IN 11 DISTS OF J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, APRIL 28

Eleven out of 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir are being brought under a 84-hour strict lockdown from 7 pm on Thursday as daily Covid-19 cases and deaths rise alarmingly in the Union Territory (UT).

Earlier on Wednesday, the management of Srinagar's Jama Masjid announced that all congregational prayers at the historic grand mosque have been suspended for the time being "for the safety of worshippers".

Srinagar's DC, Mohammad Ajiaz Asad, said that in view of the rising number of Covid-19 cases, the district administration has ordered a "complete lockdown" for 84 hours in Srinagar from Thursday evening.

He also tweeted, "There will be complete Lockdown in Srinagar district from 7:00 pm Thursday (April 29, 2021) to 7:00 am Monday (May 3, 2021). Exemptions apply to essential services. Detailed order shall follow".

The official sources said that similar restrictions will be enforced in ten more districts including Anantnag, Kulgam, Pulwama, Budgam, Ganderbal and Baramulla in Kashmir Valley and Jammu, Kathua, Reasi, and Udhampur in Jammu region as these too have witnessed an upward trajectory in both fresh cases of Covid-19 and deaths due to the virus over the past couple of weeks.

The authorities on Wednesday said that J&K reported 30 more Covid-19 deaths during the past 24 hours—the highest number of fatality count in a single day so far—taking the toll to 2,227. More than 200 fatalities were added this month alone, they said.

Also, 3,023 fresh positive cases were reported, the highest 951 from Srinagar district followed by 499 in Jammu district. With these fresh cases, the number of infections has gone to 1,69,077.

Meanwhile, Anjuman Aqaf Jama Masjid (AA) has in a statement said that police officials visited Srinagar's Grand Mosque earlier during the day on Wednesday and asked the management to suspend all congregational prayers there as Section 144 of the CrPC that prohibits public gatherings has come into effect in the district.

"In view of the rapid spread of Covid-19, although all SOPs were being strictly adhered to during prayers, the Anjuman has decided to suspend all congregational prayers at the mosque for the time being for the safety of namazis," the statement read.

The CEO of J&K Wakaf Board, Mufti Muhammad Fariduddin, has separately appealed the aima (those who leads Muslim worshippers in prayers) of all the mosques and shrines affiliated with it to permit only minimum numbers of worshippers and devotees for prayers in view of huge spike in Covid-19 cases.

Maha: 4 dead in hospital fire

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, APRIL 28

There were no Coronavirus patients in the hospital. The patients died while being shifted to other hospitals after the blaze and not due to burns. They may have inhaled smoke after the fire, he added.

Maharashtra minister and local NCP MLA Jitendra Awadh visited the spot. He said, "Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has been informed of the tragedy. The family of each deceased will be given a compensation of Rs. 5 lakh and those injured will get ₹1 lakh each."

According to a civic official, the fire broke out in the meter room of the Prime Critic Hospital at Kausa-Mumbra at 3.40 am. The fire took place due to a short circuit and it soon spread to the other areas of the premises. The first floor of the hospital was completely damaged in the fire.

A high-level enquiry committee has been constituted to find the cause of the fire.

FINAL | FAREWELL EFLF performs 5,040 cremations in an eco-friendly manner When dead get unknown companions

Nagpur, April 28: At a time when the fear of contracting Coronavirus infection is turning away people even from bidding a final farewell to their relatives, friends and neighbours, a few men in Nagpur do not hesitate in carrying the bier of the dead to crematoriums and performing their last rites as a social duty.

As the pandemic is raging in Nagpur like many other districts in Maharashtra and fatalities rising, people, in general, prefer to avoid attending funerals even in cases where the deceased are not Covid-19 victims.

However, small families are bearing the brunt of this fear psychosis as they struggle to gather people for cremating their near and dear ones.

In this scenario, Eco Friendly Living Foundation (EFLF) run by Vijay Limaye has come forward to help the people in distress in performing the last rites of their near and dear ones.

In this scenario, Eco Friendly Living Foundation (EFLF) run by Vijay Limaye has come forward to help the people in distress in performing the last rites of their near and dear ones.

● **THE ORGANISATION** promotes the cause of eco-friendly cremation under which briquettes made from the farm waste and agricultural residue are being used to cremate bodies, in place of wood logs.

Members of the EFLF bear the bier of the deceased person to the crematorium and also perform the last rites.

Vijay Limaye said the organisation promotes the cause of eco-friendly cremation in association with the Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) under which briquettes made from the farm waste and agricultural residue are being used to cremate bodies, in place of wood logs.

Limaye said the project is currently being run in six crematoriums in Nagpur.

Limaye said the EFLF performed 5,040 cremations in an eco-friendly manner between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021.

However, in the ongoing month, they have cremated 1,350 bodies so far. He said the cremated people included Covid-19 victims and others.

Limaye said members of his team carry the dead body from the house of the deceased to the crematorium on a bier.

He is getting several such calls as kin of the deceased are finding it tough to take the body for the last rites in the absence of people.

Limaye cited the case of a mother of a 19-year-old who recently lost her husband.

"Though the deceased man was not a Covid-19 patient, no one came forward to perform the last

rites. As the woman and her daughter were struggling to get help one of their relatives in Pune informed them about our work. Our members carried the body on the bier and performed the last rites," he recalled.

Similarly, a 62-year-old man struggled to find people to carry his 90-year-old mother to the crematorium. "I sent my team to his house after one of their relatives contacted me," Limaye said.

The EFLF had carried 8 to 9 biers in the last ten days, he added.

On Tuesday, Nagpur district reported 101 Covid-19 fatalities, taking the toll to 7,126, as per an official.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

BUDDING ACTRESS KILLS HER BROTHER

Hubballi, April 28: A promising Kannada actress and her live-in partner allegedly killed her brother and disposed of the body in a jungle here, for objecting to their relationship, police said.

The young actress was allegedly in a relationship with a small-time realtor, which her brother opposed, the Dharwad Superintendent of Police P Krishnakant said on Tuesday.

"Rakesh was a major hurdle to her love affair. Hence he was murdered and the body burnt," Krishnakant told reporters.

According to police, a charred and badly mutilated torso packed in a plastic bag was found dumped in the Devaragudihal forest area on April 12.

Subsequently, a case was registered and special teams were formed to nab the culprit.

The teams gathered lots of inputs and finally learnt that Rakesh Katve, a housekeeper in a bar, was missing.

Probe revealed that the victim's sister Shanaya Katve was in a relationship with Niyaz and has been living with him as a paying guest.

Further inquiry in the case led to the arrest of Shanaya Katve, Niyaz, his three friends who have been remanded in police custody.

HC STAYS FIR AGAINST INDIABULLS

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, APRIL 28

In a relief to Indiabulls Housing Finance Limited, the Bombay High Court has stayed the police investigation against them. The HC held that prima facie the complaint filed against the company appears to be "malafide and deficient".

The company has approached the HC challenging the order dated April 7 passed by Judicial Magistrate First Class, Wada, who issued directions for registration of FIR and for quashing of FIR dated April 13 registered in pursuance of the said order at Wade police station.

A division bench of Justices S.S. Shinde and Manish Pitale passed order on Tuesday granting interim relief to Indiabulls group companies and its flagship Indiabulls Housing Finance (IBHFL) and granted stay on an order passed by the judicial magistrate asking police to register an FIR against the company on a private complaint filed by one Ashutosh Kamble, a shareholder of IBHFL.

Kamble in his complaint has alleged that all the accused entered into a meticulously planned systematic criminal conspiracy with each other, with an object of causing wrongful gain to themselves and wrongful loss to innocent investors like him.

LAST PHASE OF WB ELECTIONS TODAY

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, APRIL 28

West Bengal enters the final phase of the Assembly Election, spread over 35 seats in four districts, on Thursday, reeling under a new record of daily spike in Covid-19 cases, fresh deaths and scarcity of vaccines as well as oxygen supply in the state.

On Wednesday evening the state health department informed that 17,207 persons fresh contracted the deadly virus which also claimed 77 more lives in the last 24 hours.

Most of these were however reported in Kolkata where seven hot seats: Chowringhee, Entally, Jorasanko, Maniktala, Shyampukur, Cossipore-Belgachia and Beliaghata, won by the ruling Trinamul Congress in the last two consecutive terms, will go to the eighth round of the polls.

Out of the fresh infections, 3,821 are alone from the city itself with 22 new deaths. Allegations of unavailability of vaccines and oxygen were common in many government-run hospitals in Kolkata and districts.

Among other seats going to the polls in the last round, 11 each are in Birbhum and Murshidabad while six are in Malda. Hours before the polling two BJP candidates-Sreerupa Mitra Chowdhury, contesting from English Bazar in Malda, and Priya Saha, who has been fielded at Saithia in Birbhum- have however been infected by Covid-19.



People look on at debris after a portion of few shops were damaged due to earthquake at Bhetapara in Guwahati, on Wednesday.

L-G in-charge of Delhi, MHA notifies Act

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

Three key subjects in Delhi - public order, police and land - were already with the Central government. But now no law passed by the Delhi Assembly - from the state list or concurrent list - shall come into force until the L-G gives his assent. "Any of the rules made in contravention of this proviso, before the commencement of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021, will be void," states the new Act.

The new Act makes Delhi's elected government virtually toothless and hands over sweeping powers to Lieutenant Governor Anil Baijal who now controls nearly 80 departments and can even stall a Bill enacted by the Assembly, officials said.

After the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Act, 2021, was notified on Tuesday night, the L-G is the one running the national capital, officials explained while assessing the import of the Act coming into effect.

The Act, passed by Parliament last month, came into force on April 27, Tuesday, the ministry of home affairs said in an order. Under the new law, "government" now means the L-G.

The Delhi government will have to take permission from the L-G before taking any action on subjects that had so far been under its control. These include anti-corruption, education, health, social welfare, tourism, central jail, excise, some colleges as well as hospitals and transport.

The L-G can also pass directions to officials directly without consulting the city government while elected representatives will have to take the L-G's consent for the implementation of any of its orders as well as transfers, officials explained.

Delhi is a Union Territory with a legislature like Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry but does not have powers similar to them.

6.4 earthquake rocks Assam, buildings develop cracks

Epicentre of the earthquake was in Sonitpur district's Dhekiajuli town

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, APRIL 28

A massive earthquake measuring 6.4 on Richter scale rocked Assam and other north-eastern states on Wednesday morning. The epicentre of the earthquake was in Sonitpur district's Dhekiajuli town, 140 km north of Guwahati. The National Center for Seismology said that tremors were felt in parts of the northeast as well as north Bengal.

Informing that there were reports of at least three casualties in earthquake-related incidents, state government sources said that many buildings in Guwahati and Tezpur, the district headquarters

of Sonitpur and epicentre of the tremor have developed cracks.

According to the National Centre of Seismology, the earthquake measuring 6.4 on the Richter Scale originated in Sonitpur district. The first earthquake was recorded at 7.51 am and according to the seismology centre, it was centred 43 km west of Tezpur in Assam.

There were six aftershocks following the first major earthquake, one at 7.58 am and another at 8.01 am. The six aftershocks of magnitude 3.2 to 4.7 were recorded over the next 2 hours 30 minutes in the vicinity of Sonitpur.

A road in Sonitpur that

● **THE FIRST** earthquake was recorded at 7.51 am and according to the seismology centre, it was centred 43 km west of Tezpur in Assam.

was the epicentre of the earthquake has developed a crack following the impact of the earthquake while several buildings and walls in the area have also suffered damages. Many visuals from the Dhekiajuli area reflected how water was gushing out of cracks developed in the farm land.

Prime Minister Minister

Narendra Modi said that he spoke with Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and promised help from the Centre. "Big earthquake hit Assam. I pray for the well-being of all and urge everyone to stay alert. Taking updates from all districts," Mr Sonowal tweeted.

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who tweeted minutes after the earthquake, also shared photos of broken walls inside a building and of a broken boundary wall, showing the impact of the earthquake.

The National Disaster Management Agency was assessing reports of destruction and casualties after the earthquake.

The State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and Assam police have also started visiting apartments and buildings to assess the damages caused due to tremor. A team of police and SDRF personnel which visited Laxmi Apartments to review the damage said, "We have seen three buildings that have developed cracks. There are more buildings and we are yet to assess as it will take some time."

"We can't ask people to leave their buildings. The structural engineer will have to assess the safety aspect of the buildings. Moreover, where will they go if they leave their houses? That also poses another problem," he added.

Over 3,000 fatalities push Covid toll to over 2 lakh

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
with agencies input
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi on Wednesday sanctioned the procurement of one lakh Portable Oxygen Concentrators from the PM Cares Fund as the government also intensified efforts to improve Liquid Medical Oxygen supply for Covid management.

As per officials, the PM has instructed that these Oxygen Concentrators should be procured at the earliest and provided in

States with high case burden.

In addition to the earlier sanctioned 713 Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) plants under PM Cares Fund, 500 new PSA Oxygen plants have been sanctioned. The PSA plants will augment the supply of Liquid Medical Oxygen at hospitals in district headquarters and Tier 2 cities. These 500 PSA plants will be established with transfer of the indigenous technology developed by DRDO and CSIR to the domestic manufacturers.

The active cases have risen to 29,78,709, comprising 16.55 per cent of the total infections.

India saw a record single-day rise of 3,60,960 coronavirus cases, which pushed the total tally to 1,79,97,267, while the death toll crossed two lakh following 3,293 fresh fatalities, according to Union health ministry data.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease is 14,18,17,371, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.12 per cent.

The active cases have risen to 29,78,709, comprising 16.55 per cent of the total infections.

SC tells UP govt to shift Kappan to Delhi hospital for better treatment

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, APRIL 28

The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected the Uttar Pradesh government's objections and directed the shifting of Delhi-based Malayalee journalist Siddique Kappan to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences or the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital or any other government hospital in New Delhi for treatment of multiple ailments, including diabetes and blood pressure.

Kappan was shifted to a Mathura hospital after he

had a fall in prison. At hospital he was exposed to Covid-19 and tested positive.

The court was informed that he has now tested negative.

After his recovery, he must be sent back to the Mathura jail, where he is under judicial custody since October 2020 accused under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 (UAPA).

He has been accused of allegedly fomenting communal unrest in Uttar Pradesh after a dalit girl's gangrape death by four

upper caste men in September. Kappan was arrested while he was going to Hathras to cover the gangrape and death of the dalit girl.

He has been accused of being a member of the Popular Front of India (PFI).

A bench of Chief Justice N.V. Ramana and Justices Surya Kant and A.S. Bopanna passed the order while hearing the habeas petition filed by the Kerala Union of Working Journalists seeking Kappan's release and a letter petition by Kappan's wife Railhanth that he was

chained to a cot in a hospital in Mathura where he was shifted after contracting Covid-19.

Disposing of the habeas corpus petition, the court gave liberty to Kappan to seek regular bail from the trial court as the UP police has already filed a chargesheet against him in a Mathura court early this month.

The court said it was only considering the issue of medical treatment for Kappan, who suffered a fall in jail and is suffering from co-morbidities like diabetes and blood pressure.

FIGHTING | COVID People are helping other by providing cooked meals for the ill or arranging an O2 cylinder

Indians reach out with helping hand as Covid-19 spirals

New Delhi, April 28: Even the darkest cloud, it is said, has a silver lining. And because most oft-quoted clichés are rooted in reality, myriad acts of kindness, be it home cooked meals for the ill or arranging an oxygen cylinder, are shining through India's gravest health emergency.

As India reports upwards of 3.5 lakh fresh Covid cases a day, people infected and isolated find that succour is close at hand sometimes neighbours and other times a faceless name on social media reaching out to help in any which way. Just so they can, without any motive in mind.

From people offering to run errands and home kitchens delivering meals to organisations and individuals stepping in to supply oxygen cylinders, oximeters and the like, the goodness runs like an

undercurrent through the tragic times.

And so, realising that entire families are in quarantine in many homes in her city and there is no one to cook nourishing meals for them, Chennai's Rama Parthasarathy opened up her kitchen on April 14, Tamil New Year Day. The 61-year-old dishes out healthy preparations, all vegetarian and sends the food through portals like Dunzo or Porter for a nominal fee.

The inspiration for Rama's Kitchen, she said, came when her son Aravindh's friend asked if she could provide food to the home quarantined as they are not in a position to cook at home.

The story is replicated in umpteen localities across the length and breadth of the country from Chennai to Chandigarh. Lists of home kitchens and their meal offerings, sometimes at a



Relatives of a person who died of Covid-19 react at the Sarai Kale Khan crematorium, amid rise in cases across the country in New Delhi on Wednesday.

tined families in their complexes are provided food.

Help comes in many shapes and sizes. Gopi's e-rickshaw in Lucknow is one of them. With cases rising in the Uttar Pradesh capital, the 45-year-old hasn't been getting much business but is busy helping those in Shivaji Nagar locality. He gets milk, newspapers and vegetables for those who can't move out from their homes, and often medicines and even X-Ray reports and the like.

Raja and Shakeel, who run a cycle shop in Lucknow, are also doing their bit, helping people in Sarojini Devi Dharamshala lane with their daily errands. Sometimes, they also go to the nearest post office and banks either to withdraw or deposit money or update the passbook of residents in their area. They have a kindred

spirit in Noida-based activist Kiran Verma who earlier this month posted on Twitter and Facebook that he owned a humble Maruti Suzuki Esteem in good condition and completely sanitised". "If any person, (willing to #DonateBlood or plasma) is finding it difficult to travel around NCR for blood donation. OR don't have access to good food, I promise to drop you safe (with a smiling face) at a blood bank or provide food at your doorstep," said the founder of blood donation initiative 'Simply Blood'.

"The motivation is simply that these are very difficult times and I just wanted to encourage more people to come forward and show that we all are together in this tough time," he said earlier this month.

Several people are working through their organisations.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

18 INJURED IN KNIFE ATTACK IN CHINA SCHOOL

Beijing, April 28: Sixteen children and two teachers were injured in a knife attack on a kindergarten school in China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on Wednesday, police said.

The suspect has been arrested and all the injured have been sent to hospital, state-run China Global Television Network (CGTN) reported. An investigation into the incident is underway, the report said.

Knife attacks mainly targeting kindergarten and middle schools and unarmed civilians in China are a common occurrence.

EIGHT PEOPLE DEAD IN LATVIAN BUILDING BLAZE

Helsinki (Finland), April 28: Eight people, some of them foreign nationals, died early on Wednesday in a fire at a building housing a hostel that was apparently operating illegally in the center of Riga, the Latvian capital.

Firefighters and rescuers from the Latvian State Fire and Rescue Service said they were alerted to the scene on the Merkela street in the heart of Riga about 5 am. The building's sixth floor and the roof were on fire, and rescuers found eight people dead.

They evacuated a further 24 from the premises, news agency *Baltic News Service* said. Latvian state TV broadcast footage of flames pouring out of the top of the building, multiple fire engines and a ladder extending to the top, from where two firefighters were aiming a hose at the blaze.

ARIZONA GOV. SIGNS ABORTION BAN FOR GENETIC ISSUES

Phoenix, April 28: Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey has signed a sweeping anti-abortion bill that bans the procedure if the woman is seeking it solely because a fetus has a genetic abnormality such as Down syndrome.

Doctors who perform an abortion solely because the child has a survivable genetic issue can face felony charges. The proposal also contains a raft of other provisions sought by abortion opponents. The measure passed the Republican-controlled Legislature on party-line votes over unanimous opposition from minority Democrats. The Republican governor is an abortion opponent who has never vetoed a piece of anti-abortion legislation.

UNITED NATION LAUNCHES CYPRUS TALKS

Geneva, April 28: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres held brief meetings with leaders of war-divided Cyprus in the Swiss city of Geneva in an effort to revive talks toward a settlement.

Guterres met with Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and Ersin Tatar, leader of the breakaway Turkish Cypriot republic in the north of the island, ahead of more detailed discussions planned for Wednesday.

The Mediterranean island was split along ethnic lines in 1974 when a coup aimed at union with Greece triggered a Turkish invasion. The three-day meetings in Geneva are aimed at gauging willingness to resume formal peace negotiations that have been stalled since 2017.

AMERICANS IN GHOSN CASE TO BE TRIED IN JUNE

Tokyo, April 28: The trial of two Americans accused of helping former Nissan Chairman Carlos Ghosn escape from Japan while out on bail will open on June 14, the Tokyo District Court said Wednesday.

Michael Taylor and his son Peter are accused of hiding Ghosn in a music box so he could flee to Lebanon in late 2019. The Taylors have been denied bail at the Tokyo Detention Centre and not available for comment.

Ghosn, arrested in 2018, was awaiting trial on financial misconduct allegations, including under-reporting his compensation and breach of trust in diverting Nissan Motor Co. money for personal gain, when he fled. He says he is innocent.

WHO finds 'Indian strain' of Coronavirus in 17 countries

Double Mutant found to have higher growth rate than other circulating variants

Geneva, April 28: The 'Indian strain' of the Coronavirus, also known as B.1.617 or a 'double mutant', has been found in at least 17 countries, the WHO has said, as the world grapples to contain the surge in the Covid-19 cases with 5.7 million infections detected last week, surpassing previous peaks.

The B.1.617 variant of SARS-CoV2 or the 'Indian strain', feared to be contributing to a surge in Coronavirus cases in India, has been designated as the Variants of Interest (VOI) by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the UN health agency said in its weekly epidemiological update on Tuesday.

"As of 27 April, over 1,200 sequences have been uploaded to GISAID and assigned to lineage B.1.617 (collectively) from at least 17 countries," it said, adding that most sequences were uploaded from India, the United Kingdom, USA and Singapore. GISAID is a global science initiative and primary source established in 2008 that provides open-access to genomic data of influenza viruses and the coronavirus responsible for the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants within Pango lineage B.1.617 were recently reported as a VOI from India and have recently been designated as VOIs by WHO," it said. The WHO said that studies have highlighted that the spread of the second wave has been much faster than the first in India. "Preliminary modelling by WHO based on sequences submitted to GISAID suggest that B.1.617 has a higher growth rate than other circulating variants in India, suggesting potential increased transmissibility, with other co-circulating variants also demonstrating increased transmissibility," the report by the global health body said.

"Other drivers may include challenges around the implementation and adherence to public health and social measures (PHSM), and social gatherings (including mass gatherings during cultural and religious celebrations, and elections). Further investigation is needed to understand the relative contribution of these factors," it said. In many cities in Maharashtra — the worst-hit state in India — the B.1.617 variant was found in more than 50 per cent of samples on which genome sequencing was conducted, Sujeet Singh, the Director of the National Centre for Disease Control, had said in a webinar on genome sequencing last week.

The B.1.617 variant comprises several sub-lineages, including B.1.617.1, B.1.617.2 and B.1.617.3, which slightly differ by their characteristic mutations, the WHO report said. Both B.1.617.1 and B.1.617.2 were first identified in India in December 2020, and have been detected at increasing prevalence concurrent to the major upsurge observed in the country. — PTI



Russian policemen guard in front of the WWII victory anniversary parade decorations at Red Square in central Moscow on Wednesday. Despite the outbreak of Covid-19, Russia will hold an annual military parade at Red Square on May 9. — AFP

BioNTech expects Europe to get herd immunity by Aug.

● SAHIN SAID data from people who have received the vaccine show that the immune response gets weaker over time, and a third shot will likely be required

August," Ugur Sahin, BioNTech's chief executive, told reporters. His company's vaccine makes up a large share of the doses administered in Europe and North America, where it is more commonly known as the Pfizer shot.

Sahin said data from

people who have received the vaccine show that the immune response gets weaker over time, and a third shot will likely be required. Studies show the efficacy of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine declines from 95 per cent to about 91 per cent after six months, he said. "Accordingly, we need a third shot to get the vaccine protection back up to almost 100 per cent again" Sahin said. Vaccine recipients currently receive a second dose three weeks after their first shot, although some countries have longer intervals.

— AP

BRAZIL

BRAZIL: SENATE INQUIRES INTO VIRUS CONTROL

Sao Paulo (Brazil), April 28: Brazil's Senate on Tuesday began an inquiry into the government's management of the Covid-19, a probe that analysts say could jeopardise the re-election of President Jair Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro has been one of the world's most prominent opponents of restrictions aimed at curbing the disease, whose effects he has often downplayed. He has encouraged use of medications that scientists say are worthless. Critics say his policies have contributed to the world's second-highest death toll from the Coronavirus. — AP

GERMANY

GERMAN SPY AGENCY TO MONITOR COVID-19 SCEPTICS

Berlin, April 28: Germany's domestic intelligence agency will monitor leading protesters against Covid restrictions, the interior ministry said Wednesday, over concerns they pose a threat to democracy and have ties to right-wing extremism.

The monitoring will focus on members of Germany's "Querdenker" (Lateral Thinkers) movement, which has emerged as the loudest voice against Covid curbs and an active promoter of conspiracy theories that deny basic facts about the pandemic.

Some protest organisers "have clearly demonstrated that their agenda goes beyond simply mobilising protests against the government's Corona measures", a ministry statement said. Their main aim appears to be to "permanently undermine trust in state institutions and their representatives", it added. — AFP

Colombo, April 28: Top officials of a Hindu temple in Sri Lanka have been arrested for holding a festival despite a ban on large gatherings amid a surge in Covid-19 cases, according to a media report.

A huge crowd attended the festival at the Sri Kamakshi Amman Kovil temple in Tamil-dominated Jaffna without maintaining social distance or wearing face masks, the Colombo Gazette newspaper reported.

Police said that the Chairman and Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the temple have been arrested for holding the event despite a ban. Last week, the government announced that tuition classes, parties and public gatherings have been banned until May 31st after Sri Lanka was placed on Alert Level 3 following the Sinhala and Tamil New Year. — PTI

The Navy said the Cyclone-class patrol ship USS Firebolt fired warning shots when vessels of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard came too close to a patrol in the Persian Gulf, the US Navy said on Wednesday. It was the first such shooting in nearly four years.

The Navy released black-and-white footage of the encounter on Monday night in international waters of the northern reaches of the Persian Gulf near Kuwait, Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. In it, lights can be seen in the distance and what appears to be a single gunshot can be heard, with a tracer round racing across the top of the water. Iran did not immediately acknowledge the incident.

The Navy said the Cyclone-class patrol ship USS Firebolt fired the warning shots after three fast-attack Guard vessels came within 68 yards (62 meters) of it and the US Coast Guard patrol boat USCSC Baranoff. "The US crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio and loud-hailer devices, but the (Guard) vessels continued their close range maneuvers," said Cmdr.

Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for the Mideast-based 5th Fleet. "The crew of Firebolt then fired warning shots, and the (Guard) vessels moved away to a safe distance."

Even smaller vessels can collide with each other at sea, risking the ships. — AP

India declines UN's offer for assistance

United Nations, April 28: India has declined assistance offered by the United Nations of its integrated supply chain for Covid-19 related material, saying the country has a "robust system" to deal with the required logistics, a spokesperson for UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said.

"One of the things we did is we offered the assistance of our integrated supply chain if it was required. We've been told at this point that it's not needed because India has a reasonably robust system to deal with this. But our offer stands, and we're willing to help in whatever way we can," Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the UN Chief, said in response to a question.

On whether any shipments of essential materials from UN agencies are expected to reach India amid the crisis, Haq said, "none have been sought so far, but like I said, we do

have people, including our people who deal with operational and logistical issues who are willing to help, if we're needed, and we're in touch with our counterparts in India to see whether that will be useful."

As India battles a crippling surge in Covid-19 infections and deaths, the United Nations has been in touch at various levels with authorities in India.

Haq said Chef de Cabinet to the United Nations Secretary-General Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti has been in touch with India's Permanent Representative to the UN T.S. Tirumurti over the Covid-19 situation in India and other officials in the system have also been in touch with officials both here in New York and on the ground.

Haq added that the UN is also making sure that its own staff in India are taken care of so that they don't place a burden on India's healthcare system. — PTI

SRI LANKA

HINDU TEMPLE STAFF FLOUT VIRUS RULES IN LANKA, ARRESTED

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Russia expels Slovakia, Baltic diplomats in quid pro quo

● MOSCOW'S ACTION continues the diplomatic warfare between Russia and several EU nations.

of Russian diplomats over the alleged involvement of Russian spies in a massive ammunition depot explosion in 2014.

Last week, Lithuania expelled two Russian diplomats from Slovakia, two from Lithuania, one from Estonia and Latvia each ordered one Russian Embassy worker out in solidarity with Prague. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, all former Soviet republics, broke away from the Soviet Union three decades ago and joined NATO and the European Union in 2004. They are

among the Kremlin's harshest critics.

Slovakia expelled three Russian diplomats last week in a sign of solidarity with the Czechs. Moscow responded on Wednesday by ordering three Slovak Embassy workers to leave in a week.

Earlier this month, Poland also expelled three Russian diplomats in a show of support for the United States, which ordered 10 Russian diplomats out as part of sanctions against Russia for interfering in the 2020 US presidential election and for involvement in the SolarWind hack of federal agencies. — AP

London, April 28: Self-driving vehicles could hit the road this year on motorways in Britain, the government said on Wednesday, under plans to permit motorists to temporarily take their hands off the wheel.

The Department for Transport (DfT) said in a statement that it will allow hands-free driving in cars equipped with lane-keeping technology, for use during slow motorway traffic.

Automated Lane Keeping System (ALKS) technology, which has been internationally adopted for the development of autonomous cars, limits speed to 37 miles (60 kilometres) per hour. Drivers will hand control over to the car, which then automatically monitors speed and keeps a safe distance from other vehicles, but can swiftly

resume control when required.

The technology could improve road safety by reducing human error that contributes to more than 85 percent of accidents, according to the DfT.

The "first type of self-driving vehicles could be on UK roads by the end of this year", the DfT said on Wednesday, adding this could "ease congestion, cut emissions and reduce human error".

Drivers will hand control over to the car, which then automatically monitors speed and keeps a safe distance from other vehicles, but can swiftly

resume control when required.

The technology could improve road safety by reducing human error that contributes to more than 85 percent of accidents, according to the DfT.

This is a major step for the safe use of self-driving vehicles in the UK, making future journeys greener, easier and more reliable," said Transport Minister Rachel Maclean. "But we must ensure that this exciting new tech is deployed safely, which is why we are consulting on what the rules to enable this should look like.

"In doing so, we can improve transport for all, securing the UK's place as

Lankan President meets Chinese defence minister

Colombo, April 28: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa on Wednesday said he had a "fruitful discussion" with Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe here and emphasised that the high-level visit will further strengthen bilateral ties.

Wei arrived here on a two-day visit for bilateral talks with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

"Had a fruitful discussion with #china defense minister General Wei Fenghe this morning. This visit will further strengthen the ties between two countries," the president tweeted along with photographs of their meeting.

The Sri Lankan president and the Chinese defence minister were donning face masks.

Wei was received at the Colombo international airport by Sri Lanka Army's Commander Gen. Shavendra Silva.

The Chinese defence minister will hold bilateral talks with President Gotabaya's brother and Prime Minister Mahinda.

Gen. Wei is the second high-ranking Chinese official to visit the island nation after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In October last year,

Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs of the ruling Communist Party of China Yang Jiechi visited Colombo.

The Chinese Defence Minister's visit assumes significance in the backdrop of a public diplomacy campaign launched by the Chinese embassy on the Chinese-built Port City in Colombo.

Last week, Sri Lanka's Supreme Court heard petitions on the constitutionality of the administrative body of the Port City built on reclaimed sea.

The Port City commission bill was challenged by the Opposition parties and civil society groups over its constitutionality. They want the bill to be subject to a referendum and a special two thirds mandate in Parliament.

— PTI

US fires warning shots in encounter with Iran military

● THE NAVY said the Cyclone-class patrol ship USS Firebolt fired the warning shots after three fast-attack Guard vessels came within 68 yards

SHORT TAKES

10 ARRESTED
AFTER 3 KILLED IN
DUBAI BRAWL

Dubai, April 28: Police in Dubai have arrested 10 suspects in a massive knife fight that killed three people, authorities said Wednesday, a relatively rare outburst of violence in the Gulf Arab sheikdom.

The police said the melee stemmed from a dispute over money, with 13 men armed with knives and wooden bats fighting over 5,000 dirhams (some USD 1,360). The brawl drew others in, killing three and seriously wounding more. Police did not identify the suspects beyond saying they were of Asian descent, or specify where the fight took place.

ONE COP KILLED,
5 OTHERS HURT IN
PAKISTAN BLAST

Quetta, April 28: A police officer was killed and five others injured when the vehicle in which they were travelling was hit by a roadside bomb in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province on Wednesday, police said.

The incident happens as Prime Minister Imran Khan is in Quetta, the provincial capital, on a day's official visit.

A senior police official said the explosives were planted on a motorcycle parked near a road in Qilla Abdullah area and when the police vehicle passed from there, the explosives were detonated.

"One police official has been killed and five others injured, including two police officers," he said.

Last week, five people were killed and a dozen injured when a bomb blast took place in the parking lot of the four-star Serena Hotel in Quetta. The banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) had claimed responsibility for the blast.

SEVEN KILLED IN
SUICIDE BOMBING
IN SOMALIA

Mogadishu, April 28: At least seven people were killed and more than 11 others wounded when a vehicle exploded outside a police headquarters in Somalia's capital, police and health officials said on Wednesday.

The al-Shabab extremist group claimed responsibility.

A police spokesman, Col. Abdiqani Mohamed Qalaf, said the suicide bomber tried to drive into the headquarters near the ex-control Afgoye road but was thwarted.

He could have killed more people if not stopped, Qalaf said. He said two soldiers and three passers-by were among the dead.

Dr Hashim Sultan at Medina hospital told The Associated Press they had received 13 wounded people and two of them died on arrival. Others had serious wounds from shrapnel.

Al-Shabab often targets high-profile areas of Mogadishu, and observers had warned that the al-Qaida-linked group might take advantage of Somalia's current political tensions to strike again.

NEW IMMIGRATION
LAW IN HONG KONG
WITH 'EXIT BAN'

Hong Kong, April 28: Hong Kong passed a new immigration law on Wednesday that includes powers to stop people entering or leaving the city, raising fears Chinese mainland-style "exit bans" could be deployed in the international business hub.

The legislation sailed through a legislature now devoid of opposition as Beijing seeks to quash dissent and make the semi-autonomous city more like the authoritarian mainland following huge and often violent democratic protests.

Activists, lawyers and some business figures have sounded the alarm over various provisions within the bill, including one that allows the city's immigration chief to bar people from boarding planes to and from the city.

No court order is required and there is no recourse to appeal.

The city's influential Bar Association (HKBA) warned the bill's wording gave "apparently unfettered power" to the immigration director.

Speaking after the bill was passed on Wednesday, labour activists and legal critics said the legislature had ignored concerns about the law's broad wording and said they feared exit bans could now be employed in Hong Kong.

Biden's speech to Cong
to focus on 'family plan'

President's ideas to cover issues uncovered due to Covid

100 days into office,
Harris runs strong

Washington, April 28: Marking his first 100 days in office, President Joe Biden will use his first joint address to Congress to pitch a USD 1.8 trillion investment in children, families and education that would fundamentally transform the role government plays in American life.

Biden will make his case on Wednesday night before a pared-down gathering of mask-wearing legislators due to Coronavirus restrictions and in a US Capitol still surrounded by black fencing after insurrectionists protesting his election occupied the very day he will stand.

In the nationally televised ritual of a president standing before Congress, Biden will lay out a sweeping proposal for universal preschool, two years of free community college,

— AP

TALKS IN Vienna aim

to get the United States to return to the agreement it abandoned under former president Donald Trump and lift sanctions, and to bring Iran back to full compliance with nuclear obligations it retreated from in response.

killed in a US air strike last year, hitting a nerve.

"In the Islamic republic the military field rules," Zarif said in the recording, quoted by the *New York Times*.

"I have sacrificed diplomacy for the military field rather than the field servicing diplomacy." Without directly referring to the leak, the Guards' commander Major General Hossein Salami on Wednesday praised Soleimani for having possessed the "art of bringing diplomacy to the service of the field".

"We can only lift sanctions through unity," the president said.

Zarif has been under fire since the audiotape emerged on Sunday, with comments he made about Qasem Soleimani, the commander of the Revolutionary Guards' foreign operations arm who was

retreated from in response.

Rouhani said the audio was leaked just as the Vienna talks were "at the height of their success, so that it creates discord inside" the Islamic republic.

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quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49,733.84
Nifty 50	14,864.50
S&P 500*	4,183.95 -0.07
Dollar (₹)	74.36 0.40
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.28 0.36
Euro (₹)	89.74 0.36
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,518▼505 1.08
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.80 2.08
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.053 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.629 0.007

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Bajaj Finserv Q4 profit jumps over four-fold

Bajaj Finserv reported a more than four-fold jump in its consolidated net profit to Rs 979 crore for Q4 against Rs 194 crore posted in the year-ago quarter, driven by its insurance business. The total consolidated income rose to Rs 15,387 crore from Rs 13,294 crore. The board recommended a dividend of 3 per share, or 60%, on the face value of Rs 5 per unit. FY21 PAT rose to Rs 4,470 crore from Rs 3,369 crore.

SBI board okays raising up to \$2 bn via bonds



State Bank of India said its central board has approved raising up to \$2 billion (around Rs 14,880 crore) through bonds this fiscal. The executive committee of its central board has approved long-term fund raising in single / multiple tranches up to \$2 billion, SBI said in a filing. The funds are to be raised through a public offer and / or private placement of senior unsecured notes in US dollar or any other convertible currency.

MassMutual aims to double headcount

US life insurer Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company (MassMutual) said will more than double its employee base to 1,000 and raise the physical space of its Global Capability Center (GCC) in Hyderabad despite the pandemic challenges. "We are currently a workforce of approximately 450 associates...we are targeting to reach more than 1,000 by the end of this year," Ravi Tangirala, head of GCC in India, said.

Hatsun Agro reports ₹57 crore net profit in Q4

Chennai-based dairy products maker Hatsun AgroProduct Ltd has clocked a net profit of Rs 57.13 crore for the March quarter against Rs 7.95 crore in the year-ago quarter. For the year ending March 31, 2021 profits grew to Rs 246.35 crore from Rs 112.27 crore. The total income for the quarter surged to Rs 1,570.37 crore from Rs 1,262.55 crore. The total income for FY21 stood at Rs 5,575.50 crore against Rs 5,316.98 crore.

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■ Info Edge to sell shares worth ₹750 cr Zomato files for ₹8,250-crore IPO

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, APRIL 28

Restaurant aggregator and food delivery company Zomato has filed draft red herring prospectus with the Securities and Exchange Board of India for a Rs 8,250-crore initial public offering.

Apart from food delivery options, Zomato provides information, menus and user-reviews of partner restaurants.

The IPO will have a fresh issue of shares worth Rs 7,500 crore and an offer for sale of shares worth Rs 750 crore from one of its existing investor, Info Edge, which holds over 18 per cent stake in Zomato.

Naukari.com promoter Info Edge shares climbed 1.52 per cent on the BSE to Rs 5,019.90 on Wednesday.

Ant Group and Uber also hold stake in Zomato.

Launched in Delhi 12 years ago, Zomato has grown from a home project to one of the largest food aggregators in the world. It is present in 24 countries and 10,000 plus cities globally.

Zomato was founded by Pankaj Chaddah and Deepinder Goyal in 2008, earlier it was called Foodiebay.

Zomato competes with another home grown food ordering and delivery platform Swiggy.

"Except for Info Edge, which holds 18.55 per cent of the equity share capital of our company as on the date of this DRHP on a fully diluted basis no shareholder controls 15 per cent or more of the voting rights in our company," the company said in the DRHP.

Info Edge on Tuesday said it will sell stake worth Rs 750 crore in the IPO. In



MARKET LOOKS BEYOND COVID CRISIS

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, APRIL 28

With the government getting into a fire fighting mode and medical supplies being brought in for the Covid-affected, the market's upward momentum sustained for the third consecutive day. The Sensex gained 789 points, or 1.61 per cent, and the Nifty-50 was up 211 points, or 1.44 per cent, on Wednesday.

"Despite the sharp surge in both daily cases/daily deaths in India, and extension of lockdown by Maharashtra till May 15, investors seem to be looking beyond the current scenario, building in optimism from the vaccination drive and the strong earnings season so far," said analysts.

Both Sensex and Nifty-50 have gained over 3.5 per cent in the last three sessions and investors' wealth has risen by Rs 6,39,437.31 crore.

FPIs and domestic institutions were net buyers of equities worth Rs 766.02 and Rs 436.02 crore.

Most sectors gained, with banks and financials leading the rally.

fully diluted basis, and Alipay and Antfin, which together hold 16.53 per cent of the equity share capital of our company as on the date of this DRHP on a fully diluted basis no shareholder controls 15 per cent or more of the voting rights in our company," the company said in the DRHP.

Info Edge on Tuesday said it will sell stake worth Rs 750 crore in the IPO. In

a regulatory filing, Info Edge said Zomato is proposing an IPO of its equity shares, comprising a fresh issue of equity shares by Zomato Ltd and an offer for sale by Info Edge (India) Ltd.

In February, Zomato had raised \$262 million (over Rs 1,800 crore) in funding from Tiger Global, Kora and others, valuing the online food-ordering platform at \$5.4 billion.

power distribution improvement project in rural Uttar Pradesh.

The ADB also signed a \$50.9 million financing agreement with ReNew Power to help finance its working capital needs amidst the pandemic. The bank committed a long-term loan of \$62.41 million to the Engie Group for construction and operation of a 200-megawatt solar power plant at Raghunath Solar Park in Gujarat.

Japan's Hiroshi Kajiyama, India's Piyush Goyal and Australia's Dan Tehan agreed in a video conference on Tuesday to instruct their officials to share best practices on supply chain resilience, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

tion for more than 800 million people, including families below the poverty line, women, senior citizens, people with disabilities, and low-wage earners among others.

The development bank is supporting the Delhi-Meerut regional rapid transit system with a \$500 million loan. The project, through ADB's technical assistance and knowledge advice, will support systematic land-use planning and promote vertical and dense development of urban buildings, along with municipal resource mobilisation, to create an efficient and clean urban environment.

It provided a \$100 million loan to India for a smart energy project that will convert overhead distribution lines to underground cables. A \$50-million programme to support public financial management reforms in West Bengal will strengthen procedures and operational efficiencies to enhance service delivery.

ADB invested \$75 million in OrbiMed Asia Partners, a private equity fund managed by OrbiMed Advisors, to enhance health-care capacity, innovation, and resilience in India.

The ADB committed \$300 million financing for



threshold applies to both single earners as well as married couples.

Capital gains

Biden would increase the capital gains rate to 39.6 per cent from 20 per cent for those earning \$1 million or more—0.3 per cent of taxpayers or roughly half a million households—equalizing that rate with the top marginal income tax rate. A 3.8 per cent Obamacare tax on investment would then be added on top, meaning the richest would pay a 43.4 per cent federal rate on realised investment returns. State taxes could put the combined tax bill north of 50 per cent.

The plan would also end a long-standing capital gains tax break on inheritances known as "step-up in basis," which allows heirs to use the market value of assets at the time of inheritance rather than the actual purchase price as the cost basis for capital gains.

Under the AIF scheme, implemented in 2020-21 for ten years, about Rs 1 lakh crore will be provided by banks and financial institutions as loans with interest subvention of 3 per cent per annum and credit guarantee coverage under CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises) for loans up

SPICEXPRESS AIRLIFTS 1,000 O2 CONCENTRATORS

Mumbai, April 28: SpiceJet's dedicated freighter arm SpiceXpress on Wednesday said it has airlifted 1,000 oxygen concentrators from Hong Kong to Delhi amidst a nationwide shortage of medical oxygen.

Ordered by SpiceHealth for emergency use and distribution across India, the oxygen concentrators will reach Delhi via Kolkata, SpiceJet said.

An oxygen concentrator takes oxygen from ambient air.

This is the second big consignment of oxygen concentrators ordered and delivered to SpiceHealth with more than 2,000 such concentrators getting transported in the last two weeks, SpiceJet said.

The company is looking at bringing about 20,000 oxygen concentrators in the coming days. —PTI

Samsung's Lee family to pay \$10.8 bn inheritance tax

JOYCE LEE &
HEEKYONG YANG
APRIL 28

The family of late Samsung Electronics Co Ltd chairman Lee Kun-hee said on Wednesday they will pay over 12 trillion won (\$10.8 billion) in inheritance tax for his estate and donate his vast private art collection to state curators.

Lee, who is credited with transforming Samsung into the world's largest smartphone and memory chip maker, died on October 25 with an estate local media valued at around 26 trillion won.

The inheritance tax bill—one of the largest in South Korea and globally—has been closely watched for its potential to dilute the family's controlling stake in Samsung.

The family said it planned to pay the bill over five years in six instalments, starting this



were revealed," said analyst Lee Sang-hun at HI Investment & Securities. Investors will instead need to wait for regulatory filings to discover changes in shareholding by Lee's son and Samsung Electronics' vice chairman Jay Y. Lee or other family members.

The family had been discussing using shares in affiliated companies as collateral for personal loans to pay part of the tax bill to avoid selling Samsung holdings.

Analysts have said the family is likely to use loans and dividends from both their own and Lee's shares to pay the tax.

Jay Y. Lee is the largest shareholder of Samsung C&T with a 17.33 per cent stake. The heir is currently halfway through a 30-month jail sentence. The presidential Blue House on Tuesday dismissed calls from business lobby groups for a pardon.

—Reuters

Maruti Suzuki advances maintenance shut down

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, APRIL 28

originally scheduled for June, to May 1-9.

Production in all factories will close for maintenance during this period.

As part of the car manufacturing process, Maruti Suzuki uses a small amount of oxygen in its factories while relatively much larger quantities are used by the manufacturers of components.

"In the current situation, we believe that all available oxygen should be used to save lives. Accordingly,

Suzuki has decided to advance its maintenance shutdown, originally scheduled for June, to 1st to 9th May. Production in all factories will close for maintenance during this period," the company said in a stock exchange filing.

Suzuki Motor Gujarat has also taken the same decision for its factory.

Meanwhile, Hyundai Motor, India's second largest car maker, also announced that it will help the hospitals setting up oxygen plants. The

South Korean automaker has announced that it will help the cause with a Rs 20-crore Covid-19 relief package through its philanthropic arm Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF). This amount will be used to improve medical infrastructure across some of the most affected states such as Maharashtra, Delhi, Haryana, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, SS Kim, MD & CEO at Hyundai Motor India, said, earlier this week.

HERO MOTO UNVEILS HARLEY-DAVIDSON PRICE RANGE

New Delhi, April 28: Hero MotoCorp on Wednesday unveiled the prices of the latest Harley-Davidson range in the country.

The bikes are tagged between Rs 10.11 lakh and Rs 34.99 lakh in India (ex-showroom).

The 2021 Iron 883 is priced at Rs 10.11 lakh, Forty-Eight at Rs 11.75 lakh, Softail Standard at Rs 15.25 lakh, Street Bob at Rs 15.99 lakh, Fat Bob at Rs 16.75 lakh, Pan America 1250 at Rs 16.9 lakh and Pan America 1250 Special at Rs 19.99 lakh.

Similarly, Fat Boy is tagged at Rs 20.9 lakh, Heritage Classic at Rs 21.49 lakh, Electra Glide Standard at Rs 24.99 lakh, Road King at Rs 26.99 lakh, Street Glide Special at Rs 31.99 lakh and Road Glide Special at Rs 34.99 lakh.

We are excited to open the bookings for the 2021 range of Harley-Davidson motorcycles in India. The line-up is now strengthened with the introduction of the Pan America Adventure Tourer," said Ravi Avalur, head-premium segment business unit, Hero MotoCorp, in a statement.

—PTI

Over 8,600 line up for agri infra loan

New Delhi, April 28: The Centre on Wednesday said it has so far received 8,665 applications seeking subsidised loan worth Rs 8,216 crore under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) scheme launched to augment post-harvest infrastructure in the country.

Under the AIF scheme,

maximum applications have been received from Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) followed by agri-entrepreneurs and individual farmers, it said.

These investments are for a wide range of projects which will unlock value for farmers. —PTI

\$1.5 trillion to come from taxing wealthiest Americans; welfare of families in focus

Biden's \$1.8 tn spending plan: Taxes double for millionaire households

LAURA DAVISON
APRIL 28

President Joe Biden's administration on Wednesday unveiled a \$1.8 trillion, 10-year plan to ramp up federal support for American families, with a major expansion in spending on child care, paid leave and education.

The "American Families Plan," which Biden will tout in a joint address to Congress Wednesday night, is funded in part by \$1.5 trillion of tax hikes on the wealthiest Americans. The proposals still face major changes in Congress, with Republicans set against higher taxes and Democrats hav-

ing their own priorities.

Ambitious as it is, Biden's programme omits some of his campaign trail items and lacks any move to address a cap on state and local tax deductions that Democrats from high-tax states want removed. Following are key elements to the plan:

Income taxes
Biden is calling to raise the top personal income tax rate to 39.6 per cent for those earning \$1 million or more—0.3 per cent of taxpayers or roughly half a million households—equalizing that rate with the top marginal income tax rate. A 3.8 per cent Obamacare tax on investment would then be added on top, meaning the richest would pay a 43.4 per cent federal rate on realised investment returns. State taxes could put the combined tax bill north of 50 per cent.

The plan would also end a long-standing capital gains tax break on inheritances known as "step-up in basis," which allows heirs to use the market value of assets at the time of inheritance

SHORT TAKES

Kohli stays fifth in T20 rankings

Dubai: India captain Virat Kohli and senior opener K. L. Rahul maintained their fifth and seventh places respectively in the latest ICC's ranking for T20 batsmen.

Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan made an entry into top-10. The 28-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman's unbeaten knocks of 82 and 91 in the first and third matches have helped him gain five slots to reach 10th position, overtaking the likes of England captain Eoin Morgan and India opener Rohit Sharma.

Rizwan is the second-highest ranked Pakistan batsman in the list, only behind captain Babar Azam, who is now in third place.

However India has no representation in the top-10 of either bowlers or all-rounder's list. In the list of Test batsmen, Kohli is again placed fifth while Rohit Sharma is tied seventh. — PTI

Women's tourney unlikely at IPL

New Delhi: The three-team Women's T20 challenge, which is held during the IPL, is unlikely to go ahead this year given the current restrictions imposed by countries on air travel with India due to the massive spike in COVID-19 cases here.

While the BCCI was planning a camp for the Indian women, the tournament has hit choppy waters as none of the Australian, English, South African or West Indies cricketers will be able to travel to India because of the unprecedented "health crisis".

"Getting Indian players quarantined is not an issue even now but no foreign player is keen to travel in the current climate. We can find a window later when things get better," a top BCCI source said on conditions of anonymity. — PTI

IOA vice-prez Gehlot no more

New Delhi: Indian Olympic Association vice-president Janardhan Singh Gehlot died in Jaipur on Wednesday after prolonged illness.

Gehlot, a former Rajasthan minister, was also the founder president of International Kabaddi Federation. He was in his 70s.

He was the head of the Amateur Kabaddi Federation of India for 28 years till 2013. He was also serving as the president of the Rajasthan Olympic Association at the time of his death.

Gehlot was elected as one of the nine IOA vice presidents in the 2017 elections.

"On behalf of IOA family, our heartfelt condolences to Gehlot family on the sad and untimely demise of IOA vice president and president of Rajasthan Olympic association Janardhan Singh Gehlot," IOA President Narinder Batra said. — PTI

Delhi loses Asian boxing to Dubai

New Delhi: The Asian Boxing Championship which was scheduled to be held here next month was on Wednesday moved to Dubai because of the deepening Covid-19 crisis in India but the national federation will remain a co-host along with its UAE counterpart.

The tournament was to be held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium from May 21 to 31 in the capital. "In the wake of international travel restrictions to India, the Boxing Federation of India, in consultation with Asian Boxing Confederation, has decided to conduct the upcoming 2021 edition of the ASBC Asian Elite Men and Women Boxing Championships in Dubai," the BFI said. — PTI

Live on TV

CRICKET
IPL: Mumbai Indians vs Rajasthan Royals from 3.30 pm; Delhi Capitals vs Kolkata Knight Riders from 7.30 pm on Star Sports 1, HD

FOOTBALL
Europa League: Semifinal First Leg — Manchester United vs Roma from 12.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 2; Villarreal vs Arsenal from 12.30 am (Friday) on Sony Ten 1

AFC Champions League:
Persepolis vs Al Rayyan from 8 pm; FC Goa vs Al Wahda from 10.30 pm on Star Sports 3

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CSK IS BIG BOTHER

Super Kings Anna-hilite Sunrisers to spring back to top of table



Faf du Plessis of Chennai Super Kings plays a shot during the IPL match against Sunrisers Hyderabad at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi on Wednesday. — IPL

KNIGHTS RUN INTO CRACK CAPITAL TEAM

Ahmedabad, April 28: Kolkata Knight Riders' floundering batting will be put to test once again as they look to build a winning momentum against a star-studded Delhi Capitals in their Indian Premier League match here on Thursday.

KKR's batting woes emanate right from the top with the highly talented Shubman Gill continuing his poor run — 89 runs from six outings.

While their bowling, especially the 'master-apprentice' spin duo of Sunil Narine and Varun Chakravarthy, have done an excellent job in restricting the oppositions, KKR's top-order batting has hurt them the most.

Thursday's clash will see a mini battle between the Caribbean duo of Andre Russell and Shimron Hetmyer, both explosive on the field, especially while wielding the willow.

KKR batting will be put to test against the likes of Ishant, Kagiso Rabada and young gun Avesh Khan, while the spin duo of Amit Mishra and Axar Patel will also look to make an impact. — PTI

SCORECARD

Sunrisers Hyderabad: David Warner c Ravindra Jadeja b Lungi Ngidi 57, Jonny Bairstow c Deepak Chahar b Sam Curran 7, Manish Pandey c Faf du Plessis b Lungi Ngidi 61, Kane Williamson not out 26, Kedar Jadhav not out 12. **Extras (LB-2, WD-6)** 8. **Total (for 3 wickets in 20 overs)** 171. **FOW:** 1-22, 2-128, 3-134.

Bowling: Deepak Chahar 3-0-21-0, Sam Curran 4-0-30-1, Shardul Thakur 4-0-44-0, Moeen Ali 2-0-16-0, Lungi Ngidi 4-0-35-2, Ravindra Jadeja 3-0-23-0.

Chennai Super Kings: Ruturaj Gaikwad b Rashid Khan 75, Faf du Plessis lbw b Rashid Khan 56, Moeen Ali c Kedar Jadhav b Rashid Khan 15, Ravindra Jadeja not out 7, Suresh Raina not out 17. **Extras (WD-3)** 3. **Total (for 3 wickets in 18.3 overs)** 173. **FOW:** 1-129, 2-148, 3-148.

Bowling: Sandeep Sharma 3.3-0-24-0, Khaleel Ahmed 4-0-36-0, Siddarth Kaul 4-0-32-0, Jagadeesha Suchith 3-0-45-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-36-3.



Nuwan Zoysa of Sri Lanka bowls during a practice session in Colombo in this file photo. — AP

Zoysa is banned for fixing games

Dubai, April 28: Former Sri Lanka seamer and coach Nuwan Zoysa was on Wednesday banned from all cricket for six years after being found guilty of trying to fix matches and failing to disclose corrupt approaches from a suspected Indian bookie.

The ban on Zoysa, a left-arm seamer, is backdated to October 31, 2018, when he was provisionally suspended.

"In his role as a national coach, he should have acted as a role model. Instead, he became involved with a corrupter and attempted to corrupt others," Alex Marshall, ICC General Manager, Integrity Unit said.

"Contriving to fix a game betrays the basis of sporting principles. It will not be tolerated in our sport."

The 42-year-old, who played 30 Tests and 95 ODIs for Sri Lanka, was originally charged in 2018 after his stint as bowling coach of Team Sri Lanka in a T10 tournament organised in the UAE in 2017.

In its full judgement, the ICC said Zoysa was introduced to the Indian suspect in Colombo in 2017 during his time as Sri Lanka A's bowling coach.

After a few interactions, the former bowler became aware that the man, referred to as Mr W in ICC documents, "was involved in fixing matches" and wanted to have Zoysa on board because, "as a coach he knew players and would

be able to get them to fix matches".

"At (Mr W)'s request, Mr Zoysa approached (Player A) late in 2017 and asked him whether he would be willing to give away 12-15 runs in an over while bowling, or to get out deliberately when batting, for which he could get good money," the judgement said.

"Mr Zoysa told (Player A) that he could get good money if he underperformed in this way. (Player A) immediately refused that approach and told Mr Zoysa that he wouldn't agree to do that," it added.

Zoysa is latest in a long line of Lankan cricketers who have been banned for corruption. — AFP

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Zoysa is latest in a long line of Lankan cricketers who have been banned for corruption. — AFP

Real, Chelsea locked in draw

Madrid, April 28: Karim Benzema came to Real Madrid's rescue again on Tuesday, his acrobatic volley earning them a 1-1 draw against an impressive Chelsea side in the first leg of the Champions League semi-final.

Christian Pulisic grabbed Chelsea a deserved away goal in a soaking wet contest at Valdebebas but they might regret not pulling away with the struggling Timo Werner again missing a golden chance.

It means Madrid will be satisfied too, after recovering from a chastening opening half an hour before Benzema's brilliance left the tie in the balance.

Eden Hazard was given 24 minutes off the bench against his former club but despite some twinkling touches, he was unable to add a late twist. "It's always good to play against friends," Hazard told BT Sport afterwards.

By the time the Belgian entered the contest, it was drifting, the early adrenaline lost, with both teams seemingly content to defer to the return leg at Stamford Bridge next Wednesday.

Benzema's goal was his 71st in the Champions League, making him the joint-fourth top scorer in the competition's history with Raul, behind only Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Robert Lewandowski.

When Real Madrid were suffering, and in the absence of the injured Sergio Ramos, Benzema was the one dragging his team back into this match, at times through sheer force of will.

With Werner clearly short of confidence, the Frenchman's precision at the other end could yet prove the difference.

"We should have won the first half. We should have scored at least one more," said Chelsea coach Thomas Tuchel.

"The result is fair. Our first half wasn't the best, their pressure caused us difficulties but we adapted and in the second half we were better," said Zinedine Zidane. — AFP

sands of fans demonstrated against Arsenal's owner Stan Kroenke, calling on the American billionaire to sell the club following his role in a collapsed European Super League.

Arsenal were one of 12 breakaway clubs seeking the reassurance of top level European football every season without facing the perils of having to qualify.

But Mikel Arteta's men are also just three games away from only the club's third ever European trophy and a much-needed ticket back into Thursday's semi-final first leg against Villarreal.

Sitting 10th in the Premier League, the Gunners are on course for their worst league finish since 1995.

It is easy to see why Kroenke sought the guaranteed income the Super League would provide.

For 19 seasons between 1998-99 and 2016-17, the Londoners never failed to qualify for the Champions League for the first time in five seasons.

All is not well at the Emirates on or off the field. Ahead of Friday's 1-0 defeat by Everton, thou-

tive year. That decline started prior to Emery's 18-month spell in charge between May 2018 and November 2019.

The Spaniard missed out on the top four by a point and got to the Europa League final in his only full season in charge, but was dismissed just four months into his second.

"It ended in unwanted circumstances. I want to win for myself and for Villarreal. (Two years ago) I was defending Arsenal's red colours in that final against Chelsea, now I feel that affinity for the yellow of Villarreal. I have that competitive instinct, that responsibility," Emery told uefa.com ahead of the tie. — AFP

Real Madrid's French defender Raphael Varane (left) challenges Chelsea's American midfielder Christian Pulisic during their Champions League semifinal first leg match at the Alfredo di Stefano stadium in Valdebebas, on the outskirts of Madrid, on Tuesday. The match ended 1-1. — AFP

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Teams	P	W	L	N/R	Points	Net RR
CSK	6	5	1	0	10	+1.475
RCB	6	5	1	0	10	+0.089
DC	6	4	2	0	8	+0.269
MI	5	2	3	0	4	-0.032
KKR	6	2	4	0	4	-0.305
PBKS	6	2	4	0	4	-0.608
RR	5	2	3	0	4	-0.681
SRH	6	1	5	0	2	-0.264

ORANGE CAP

Faf du Plessis, CSK	270
Shikhar Dhawan, DC	265

PURPLE CAP

Harshal Patel, RCB	17
Avesh Khan, DC	12

KL Rahul, PBKS	240
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Mumbai look to roll blues away

New Delhi, April 28: Defending champions Mumbai Indians will look to sort out their middle-order woes and bring their campaign back on track when they take on Rajasthan Royals in an IPL game here on Thursday.