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WINDOWS

Prez, PM greet nation on Eid

NEW DELHI: President Ram Nath Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi and his sister and party General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Friday greeted the nation on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

"Eid Mubarak to all fellow citizens! This festival is an occasion to strengthen the spirit of fraternity and rededicate ourselves to the service of humanity. Let us resolve to deal with Covid-19 by following the guidelines and to work for the well-being of the society and the country," the President tweeted.

The Prime Minister also took to Twitter and wrote, "Best wishes on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr."

Plea in SC to cancel class 12 exams

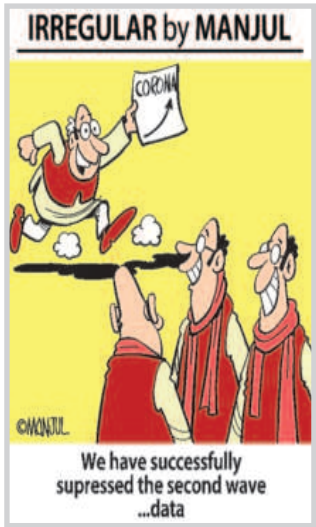
NEW DELHI: A plea has been filed before the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre to cancel the class 12 exams in view of surge in COVID-19 cases. The petition filed by an advocate said the results of Class 12 students be declared based on 'objective methodology' within a specified time frame. "Conducting Class 12 board examination is not possible because of surging cases. Even online or offline examinations not feasible because of an unprecedented pandemic. Delay in the declaration of Class 12 results will hamper students taking admission in foreign universities", the petition said.

Woman gang-raped

CHANDIGARH: A 23-year-old woman was gang-raped in Haryana's Palwal after one of the accused allegedly lured her to a secluded area in the district, police said on Friday.

In her complaint given to the Palwal police on May 12, the victim has named 20 to 22 people as accused who were involved in the incident. A police official said the woman's family, that belongs to Dehradun in Uttarakhand, were presently settled in Uttar Pradesh.

The woman has been living in Delhi's Badarpur area bordering Haryana for some time. SHO of Hassanpur police station in Palwal, Sub-Inspector Rajesh said over the phone. The SHO said the key accused, who has been arrested, had befriended her over a social networking site and promised to marry her. On May 3, she came to Hodal to meet him.



Police question Youth Cong leader over Covid aid

NEW DELHI

INDIAN Youth Congress (IYC) president Srinivas BV on Friday said the Delhi Police's Crime Branch questioned him about the assistance being provided by him to people during the COVID-19 pandemic. "Police called me today morning and came to my office around 11.45 am. They questioned how you are doing it," he said.

However, the Delhi Police said the questioning has been done following a Delhi High Court order.

The high court has directed the city police to conduct an inquiry into politicians involved in the distribution of Covid-19 medicines and other items, and take steps for lodging of FIR in case of offence, a senior police officer said.

In compliance with the directions of the high court, the inquiry is being conducted into several people, the officer said.

On May 4, the Delhi High Court had asked the police to examine the instances of politicians allegedly procuring and distributing Remdesivir, used in the



treatment of COVID-19 patients, in the national capital and take steps for lodging of FIR in case of offence. Senior Congress leader tweeted his support for Srinivas. "The one who saves is always bigger than the one who destroys," he wrote in Hindi. The Youth Congress leader later told NDTV that he was not scared of anything as he had done nothing illegal. "We will not stop our work, we are not scared," he said.

"We have not done anything wrong, if our smallest efforts can help save a life we will not stop or be scared of such

PILs," Srinivas added.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Friday slammed the government saying the rescuer is always greater than the one who kills. In a tweet in Hindi, Rahul Gandhi said, "The rescuer is always greater than the one who kills."

He used the hash tag, I stand with IYC. His remarks came after some Delhi Police officers arrived at the IYC office to enquire how it has been managing to provide medicines, oxygen cylinders and several other things required by Covid patients.

Virus spreading in rural areas: Modi

NEW DELHI

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the coronavirus pandemic is rapidly spreading in rural areas, as he urged citizens to take precautions, wear masks and maintain social distance to check spread disease that has claimed at least 2.6 lakh lives.

The government, he said, is working on "war footing" to control the second wave of infections and is setting up new hospitals and oxygen generating plants while augmenting supplies of medicines and vaccines. He asked states to crack down on black marketing of medicines and other essential items.

"I want to warn you about corona. This pandemic is spreading fast in rural villages. Every government is taking efforts to stop this. Awareness about this among rural people and cooperation of the panchayat institutes are equally important." "You have never disappointed the nation. We hope this time too, to protect



yourself and family from COVID, all necessary precautions are taken. Wearing mask properly and regularly is important," Modi said. Drug firm Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Friday said it has launched COVID vaccine Sputnik V in the Indian market with the first dose being administered in Hyderabad, as part of a limited pilot.

The company said the imported doses of the vaccine are presently priced at a maximum retail price of Rs 948, with 5 per cent GST per dose, amounting to Rs 995.4 per dose.

Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine has arrived in India and is likely to be available in the market by next week, Dr VK Paul, Member-Health of Niti Aayog said on Thursday. The first batch has arrived and more will be arriving from Russia.

"I'm happy to say that we're hopeful that it'll be available in the market next week. We're hopeful that the sale of the limited supply that has come from there (Russia), will begin next week," Dr VK Paul said at a press briefing.

Woman from 'Love you Zindagi' viral video dies

SALONI BHATIA
NEW DELHI

AFTER battling Covid-19 for around 10 days, a woman, who came to be known as the 'Love You Zindagi' girl on Twitter after a video of her swaying to the Bollywood hit while getting oxygen at a hospital went viral, has succumbed to the infection. The doctor treating her on Friday said the woman's family does not want her identity to be revealed.

On May 8, Dr Monika Langeh, a doctor at a hospital in Delhi, tweeted a video where the 30-year-old woman, while on non invasive ventilation (NIV), was listening and swaying to the Bollywood song -- Love You Zindagi which featured Shahrukh Khan and Alia Bhatt. "It was a stressful situation when she was admitted. There were no beds available at that time. We admitted her in the Covid emergency ward and were managing her. "She was given the best treatment possible. Remdesivir and plasma therapy was also given to her. But



her condition deteriorated and she did not respond well to the treatment," Langeh said.

She was on the ventilator for the last three days and passed away on Thursday night, Langeh said. What struck Langeh about the woman was her fighting spirit and her zest for life. "While I was on rounds in the COVID emergency ward, she was playing songs but with a great deal of trepidation. I asked her about her taste in music. "Swaying to the music she was listening, she said she liked Punjabi as well as romantic songs. I gave her the hotspot from my phone and she started listening to the

'Love you Zindagi' song and it was then that I made the video," Langeh said.

Langeh said she has seen many coronavirus patients, but this woman was different. "As soon as patients get to know that they have contracted the virus, they develop anxiety and we have to counsel them a lot. But she was different. She had a strong will power," the doctor recalled.

Aid to kids who lost parents: Kejri

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi government announced on Friday that it will bear the cost of raising and educating children who have lost their parents, and also provide financial help to families and senior citizens who have lost their earning members during the second wave of the Covid pandemic.

Addressing a digital Press conference, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said in the last few weeks, many children have lost their parents and several senior citizen have lost their children.

"We will provide financial assistance to such families, but such children and old people need love at this point in



time. They need empathy. It is my request to all the neighbours and the relatives of such families to take care of them. These families are facing great challenges," he said.

The Chief Minister also said that the number of people admitted to the hospi-

tals has also reduced by more than 3,000 in the past 10 days but warned the situation was still serious.

"Now there is no problem being faced to get beds in hospitals, yet one thing to be observed is that the ICU beds are still full. This means the number of serious patients has not declined much. Even now, the ICU beds in the hospitals of Delhi are almost full.

"If we do not take precautions, then the cases will increase again. There is no guarantee that they will remain low. Delhi may face problems again. And therefore by no means, can we let loose. The lockdown has to be adhered to strictly and should employ all the ways to ensure protection from coronavirus," he said.





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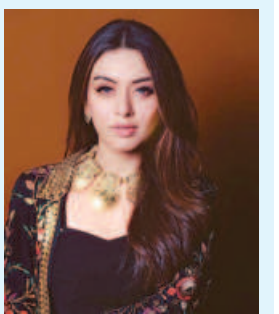
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Styling hacks for WFH

Even if you've mastered the art of turning on and off mute for group conference video calls or fine tuned your home office workstation for optimized productivity, surely there's still plenty of room for improvement when it comes to mastering the art of working remotely. More permanent work from home situations have forced many to adjust to a new way of working, including getting dressed for work when that doesn't involve going to an office, or even, leaving the house.

Many have been working remotely for four months, and returning to the office still seems far off for many who have been able to adequately and comfortably work from home. Here's 5 tips for working from home to consider for whatever your future of working from home might hold.

Get Ready for Work Mode

It's important to not lose sight of the act of "getting ready for work" Whether it's slipping on a pair of flat WFH shoes (despite not having to commute) or applying a little bit of makeup each morning, getting dressed will help you mentally switch over to work mode.

Even if you have no plans to leave the house that day, getting ready each morning will never leave you in a scramble for last-minute video calls or Zoom meetings.

Go Out of Your Comfort Zone

Despite the major trend of pajamas and loungewear in the beginning of the pandemic, this group of seasoned work-from-



homers unanimously advised to stay away from pajamas or sweatpants. avoiding working from an overly comfy surface like your bed or your couch. She notes, being "a little uncomfortable" will remind you that you're still technically at work. She favours wearing a pair of high waist jeans all day.

Strike a Style-Comfort Balance

Since working from home likely means working from whichever surface you might have readily available rather than a properly-equipped desk and an ergonomic chair, find comfort where you can. Finding a healthy balance between comfort and

style is key, as is opting for pieces like linen or silk pants, cotton button ups, fitted cardigans, and modern day house dresses to keep comfortable. The items "must be soft enough to withstand mid afternoon poor postures" and pass the stretchy enough test.

Establish a Uniform

You might not be around people every day, but a foundation of high-quality essentials you can always rely on and re-wear often is key. Having a uniform "lends structure to the day" especially for those of us who are used to an office or corporate environment. A go-to uniform of solid leggings,

a great white t-shirt, and a comfortable-yet-polished cardigan works well or tailored pants, a blazer, suede loafers and personal jewellery. Plus, wearing something that you won't get sick of will prevent you from being "tempted to binge-watch in yesterday's sweatpants or pajamas.

Look on the Brightside

Last but not least, coloured or striped tops are sure to make a statement when it comes to video calls, and they'll certainly make getting dressed at home a little bit more fun even if your calendar is meeting-free. Bright colours look better" and we couldn't agree more.

Divyanka Tripathi on being away from Vivek Dahiya for 'Khatron Ke Khiladi' shoot

Actress Divyanka Tripathi, who is currently shooting in Cape Town for the stunt-based reality show "Khatron Ke Khiladi 11" says that it was tough leaving her husband, actor Vivek Dahiya, at home.

The actress says this is the first time since they got married in July 2016 that they will be apart for so long.

"This is the first time after our marriage that I am leaving Vivek alone for so many days. We have got emotional many times. For the last week, we have been preparing ourselves for this day when I will leave for Cape Town. Leaving him and going makes me very sad," she shares.

The actress also adds that the family mem-



bers of all contestants have been reluctant to let them leave the country amidst the pandemic.

"During the pandemic, it's tough for family members to let us go. So, I think they are the biggest 'Khatron Ke Khiladi' for letting us go in this phase," she says. However, a part of her is also overjoyed at being given a chance to engage in something adventurous again.

She shares, "I am excited that I am going to do something that was pending for a long time. Before coming to Mumbai, I used to get a lot of chances to participate in adventurous activity. Since I came to Mumbai, I have just been working for the last 15 years. I have not touched this aspect of my personality for a while. It was a long-awaited opportunity," she says, adding, "I used to participate in a lot of camps when I was a kid. I used to stay outside home in 10-day or 50 day-camps, so I was in the habit of staying alone. After coming to Mumbai, This is the first time I am going alone." On the deadly second wave of Covid, Divyanka says, "It is a tough time for the industry, but it is not limited to our industry. In any profession, they are going through a tough time. In fact, we, actors are used to it."

"We are used to this pattern. When we are working, we do it rigorously and work for extended hours and schedules are erratic. But when we don't have work, like between shows, we work on ourselves and that's what we are doing. We are taking care of ourselves and our families. We are trying to stay safe because currently more than work, life is important. We are trying to be healthy mentally and keep doing activities at home or play game to distract ourselves and keep ourselves happy. During this time, mental health is important, and it is important to stay in touch with your loved ones at all times," she concludes.

NEWS ROUNDUP

Sanjana Sanghi helps Covid-impacted underprivileged children, families

Actress Sanjana Sanghi announced that she will help Covid-infected underprivileged children and their families. She has joined hands with "Save The Children" to support such families, residing in remote parts of India. The mission, named "Protect A Million", aims to reach one million affected underprivileged children and families across the nation.

"It is my honour to be joining hands with 'Save The Children', a century-old Global Child Rights Organisation in our mission to #ProtectAMillion. Together we will be providing Covid support in the form of oxygen, critical care, essential medicine, psycho-social support, and nutritional packages, to the most underserved and vulnerable communities which is children and their families in remote parts across 57 districts of India. Our aim is to reach One Million such children and families and we just can't do this without you," says Sanjana in an Instagram video.

She added, "Join me and save the children as we fight to

protect the future and fight for hope. Every single penny, I promise you will better the life or save the lives of those for whom the basics like a thermometer, oximeter, a mask or medicine, are a huge, huge privilege. Let's open our hearts up, like we already have, and Help each other and fight for the children of our country."

She captioned the post as: "#ProtectAMillion | Save The Children We need all your help in helping us be able to provide critical relief to the most disadvantaged COVID-impacted children & families in the most remote parts of India.

@savethechildren_india and I are on a mission #ToProtectAMillion such children & families and fight for them, as they fight for their lives. Your contribution, big or small will go the longest way in allowing us to make this uphill task a reality by allowing us to make the following reach them oxygen, critical care, essential medicines, testing support, nutritional packages, psychosocial support."



Chocolate chips day

Is there anything that makes everything better like chocolate? Obviously not, that's why the ultimate in chocolate portability was designed, the chocolate chip. Chocolate chips are not only easy to transport around, they're also completely versatile. Want to make any cookie better? Add chocolate chips. (Oatmeal, Macadamia, Peanut Butter? All cookies that are better with chocolate chips.) Chocolate Chip Day celebrates these amazing little culinary inventions, and all that they can do. Well, the first thing to do is remember that Chocolate Chip Day isn't just about cookies, it's about all the things you can include chocolate chips in! Pancakes, muffins, pudding, ice cream, granola bars, pies, these are just a few of the wonderful creations you can add them to. We'll be honest though, our favourite way to enjoy chocolate chips? By the handful out of the bag.



QUICK TIP



Be authentic

The clothing you wear is an extension of who you are. It should strengthen your image and be an expression of your true self, so don't force it. This means not wedging your feet into 5-inch stilettos that require an hour foot massage at the end of the work day if you're more comfortable in flats, or wearing the latest trends just because all of your friends are. Wear clothing that feels like YOU.

If you're unsure how you feel in something, take the authenticity test by asking yourself 3 simple questions: Does the outfit feel comfortable or will I be constantly adjusting it? Do I recognise myself in the mirror or am I trying to be someone I'm not? Does this clothing bring me joy and am I excited to wear it? If you answer yes to all 3, you're good to go! If not, look for another option.

Choose the right amount of SPF in your sunscreen

SPF known as Sun Protection Factor is an indicator of how effectively it can protect the skin from harmful of the sun rays. We need to buy a good sunscreen with a good amount of SPF. But we also need to keep in mind certain factors while choosing the right SPF.

Aseem Sood, managing director Proveda India shares how one has to be careful while choosing a right SPF for their skin.

- Go for broad-spectrum: Knowing the importance of SPF, better choose the cream which has broad-spectrum as it will create a shield around your skin from UVA rays as well, besides UVB rays. UVA rays cause premature ageing and skin cancer, on the other hand, exposure to UVB rays may lead to sunburn and skin cancer.
- Know the SPF level: There are various SPF levels but SPF 15, 30 and 50 are mostly talked about. Most of the time SPF 15 is recommended but we would suggest going for a higher one like SPF 30. Using this higher version ensures higher protection and for a longer time. Please note, even the dermatologist suggests to use SPF 15 OR 30. Make sure it is applied properly and at stated intervals.
- Sweat/Water-resistant: Before buying make sure the SPF cream is sweat or water-resistant, especially for those who are going to take a dip in a pool or a beach. Cream with water-resistant are sticky therefore you need to reapply it after every 2-3 hours.
- Check the ingredients: If you are allergic to certain ingredients then you must check the ingredient section for it. One of the most unsafe ingredients is oxy-

benzone, which upsets the hormonal balance and can cause an allergic reaction too. Try to pick up a sunscreen that contains natural or herbal components rather than loads of chemicals.

- Go with cream-based SPF: There are many kinds of SPF sunscreens available in the market, but we recommend the ones with a creamy base. Do not use sprays as they contain nano-particles that are likely to enter the bloodstream and may lead to various health issues.

- Expiry date: Last but not the least, always check the expiry date. The expired products not only lose their efficiency, but they also tend to damage the skin.



DELHI REPORTS BELOW 10K CASES FOR 1ST TIME SINCE APRIL 10

NEW DELHI

DELHI reported 8,500 new Covid infections in the last 24 hours, the first time in over a month when daily cases came below 10,000 as the positivity rate camr down to 12 per cent, on Friday.

On April 10, the city had reported 7,897 cases in a day.

While the positivity rate - the proportion of samples

tested that return positive for Covid -19 continued its sharp decline to 12 per cent, on Friday, the lowest in the single day since April 13.

Though daily positive cases in Delhi have decreased in the last few days, there are still many critical patients in hospitals.

"Delhi has around 3,000 beds vacant for Covid patients, however, ICU beds are still packed in most hospitals. A total of 1,200 new

ICU beds will be ready by one or two days," said Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday.

While addressing a digital press conference, Kejriwal said Delhi has seen some respite from Covid spread in the last few weeks due to determination of the citizens of the national capital.

"You (people) have followed Covid lockdown rules strictly and have shown that Delhi can still fight against

the spread of Covid-19. It is the need of the hour to fight against this pandemic. We still need to be more prepared to face more challenges to come," he said.

The Chief Minister said in the last few days many families have lost even more than one or two members, many children have lost their parents and many senior citizens too have lost their earning family members (son/daughter) due to

this Covid pandemic. He said, "Delhi government will take care of children who lost their parents and will provide financial support to all senior citizens who lost their loan (son/daughter) earner for livelihood in the national capital.

"The Government will help such families financially and I will request relatives of such families to boost their confidence," Kejriwal added.



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

Malerkotla declared 23rd district of Punjab

CHANDIGARH

PUNJAB Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Friday declared Malerkotla as the 23rd district of the state, while announcing a slew of projects for the development of the historic city.

He made these announcements during the state-level celebration of 'Eid-ul-Fitr' held virtually in view of the pandemic situation.

On the occasion, Amarinder Singh underscored India's secular character, which he said was manifested in the defeat of communal forces in the recent Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

Recalling the rich and glorious history of Malerkotla, the Chief Minister said its conversion into a district, which was a long-standing demand of the local people, would ease the hardships of such people and enable them to resolve their administrative problems more seamlessly.

Initially, the sub-divisions of Malerkotla and Ahmedgarh, as

well as the sub-tehsil of Amar-garh, would be included in the newly-created district. The process of bringing villages under the jurisdiction of Malerkotla district would begin later, after the conclusion of the census operations, he said.

The Chief Minister directed the Deputy Commissioner of Sangrur to find a suitable building to immediately start the functioning of the district administration office, adding that the Deputy Commissioner for the newly carved-out district would be appointed soon.

Announcing development projects for Malerkotla, the Chief Minister said a government medical college, in the name of Nawab Sher Mohammed Khan, would soon be set up at a cost of Rs 500 crore and the state had already allotted 25 acres of land on Raikot Road to enable the local boys and girls to pursue medical education.

The first installment of Rs 50 crore for this purpose had already been sanctioned, he added.



Covid curve flattening, claims UP Government

LUCKNOW

THE Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh has claimed that the state has managed to flatten the Covid curve and limit the transmission of the deadly virus.

"The Covid-19 situation in Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a significant improvement as the number of active cases has drastically been reduced by nearly 1.06 lakh in the last 12 days with a swift recovery of Covid patients even in home isolation," said an official statement issued by the state information department.

The statement further said that the number of active Covid cases in the state has now

dropped to nearly 2.04 lakh.

With the aggressive approach against Covid as part of the 'test, trace and treat' strategy, the state has conducted more than 43 million Covid tests, the statement added.

While the influx of Covid-19 cases has been declining for the past few days, the test-positivity rate has stayed below 10 per cent in Uttar Pradesh for the fourth consecutive day and came down to nearly 7 per cent on Thursday - a fall of nearly 10 percentage point from the high of 16.84 per cent on April 24.

The test positivity rate, which is the number of positive cases against the total tests done, reflects the infection rate and how

fast the virus is spreading.

About a fortnight ago, when the cases had shown a slight dip for a few days, the test-positivity rate had remained high as there was a corresponding drop in the number of tests.

This time, however, there has been no corresponding decline in testing, and as a result, the decline in new cases has led to a drop in the infection rate.

The number of fatalities, however, remains a matter of concern. In the past 24 hours, at least 281 Covid-related deaths were reported. While 35 patients died in Lucknow, 16 deaths have been reported in Kanpur Nagar and 15 in Meerut, according to the state Health Department's bulletin.

Gurugram: 340 home isolated patients receive O2 supply online



GURUGRAM

AS many as 340 Covid patients placed in home isolation have received liquid oxygen cylinders at their doorstep by applying on an online portal, said Gurugram district administration officials. The administration has launched a door-to-door delivery service of oxygen cylinders.

This initiative has brought huge relief to coronavirus patients. Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Yash Garg said in order to avail the service of refilling oxygen cylinders, the Covid-19 patient or their families will have to apply online on the portal -- <http://oxygenhry.in>.

"On acceptance of the application, information will be sent to the patient's mobile number

through an SMS. The applicant will also have to upload the photo of the oximeter for oxygen level or the doctor's prescription and the Aadhaar number while applying. In addition, it will be mandatory to write the age and address of the patient. An application can be made only once a day from a mobile number," Garg said.

The Gurugram District Magistrate has already fixed the rate of oxygen cylinders. Now a small cylinder (B-type) would cost Rs 80 and big cylinder (D-type) Rs 250. The delivery charge will be Rs 100.

An individual ordering the B-type small cylinder will have to pay Rs 180 (including the delivery charge) and anyone who gets the D-type big cylinder shipped will have to pay Rs 350.

MHA reinstates IPS officer Pankaj Chaudhary

JAIPUR

THE Union Home Ministry reinstated IPS officer Pankaj Chaudhary, whose dismissal was earlier revoked by Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT).

Speaking to IANS, Chaudhary confirmed that he has been reinstated and rejoined the Indian Police Service at 10.15 p.m. from May 12. A few officials visited our residence and completed the formalities, he informed.

The 2009-batch IPS officer was dismissed from service in February 2019 for "grave personal misconduct", for getting into a relationship with another woman without legally separating from his wife.

Chaudhary challenged his dismissal from service at CAT in Jodhpur which was transferred to the principal bench in Delhi.

The MHA order issued on May 12 said: "And whereas, the matter was examined further by the competent authority in light of the tribunal's order dated December 10, 2020, Hon'ble High Court of Delhi order dated March 19, 2021, Hon'ble



Supreme Court dated May 7, 2021 and after considering all the aspects related to the imposing of the penalty of 'dismissal from service' on Pankaj Choudhary and the observations/directions made by the Hon'ble tribunal in the case, the competent authority has come to the conclusion that Choudhary be reinstated in compliance of the orders of the tribunal."

"The competent authority decided that Pankaj Choudhary, IPS (RJ:2009) be reinstated in service with immediate effect. This will, however, be without prejudice to the disciplinary proceedings against him under the relevant rules for his acts of misconduct for which he was dismissed from service. It is ordered accordingly," it added.

3 undertrials killed in gang war inside Chitrakoot jail



CHITRAKOOT

THREE undertrials were killed in a gang war inside the high-security Chitrakoot jail on Friday. According to reports, an undertrial Anshul Dixit opened fire at another gangster Mukeem Kala who died on the spot. In the shootout, another criminal, Mirajuddin, also received gunshot injuries and died. Mirajuddin is said to be a close confidant of mafia don and Bahujan Samaj Party MLA Mukhtar Ansari. The police asked Dixit to surrender but he fired at the police who, then

opened fire in which Dixit was killed. Several rounds were fired inside the jail during the incident.

Dixit used a country-made weapon to kill Mukeem Kala.

Chitrakoot SP Ankit Mittal said that an inquiry would be set up to probe how the weapon reached inside the jail. He said all barracks were being searched.

This is the second time that a gangster has killed another gangster inside the jail.

Earlier, in July 2018, gangster Munna Bajrangi was shot dead inside the Baghat jail by another inmate Sunil Rath.

Probe ordered into riverside burial in Unnao

UNNAO

THE Unnao district administration has ordered a probe after some bodies were found buried along the Ganga riverbank in the district.

The district administration swung into action after locals spotted bodies buried on the Baksar ghat of the river and some photographs of the bodies went viral on social media.

Unnao District Magistrate, Ravindra Kumar, said late on Thursday, "After the matter came to the light, a sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) was sent to the spot for the probe. He will submit his report soon."

He said the Baksar ghat is on the border of districts including Rae Bareilly, Fatehpur and Unnao and people go there for the cremation of bodies.



"We will take appropriate action after seeing the situation. Directives have been issued that such situation does not arise again," he said.

SDM Daya Shankar Pathak, who visited the Baksar ghat of the river with the circle officer, said they did not find any dead

body out in the open.

The SDM said that he was not aware of the exact number of bodies buried on the riverbank.

People living near the riverbank said no dead body was being allowed to be buried and all the bodies being brought to the ghat were being cremated.

Man throws wife off 3rd floor balcony after dispute

MEERUT

A 35-YEAR-OLD woman died after being allegedly thrown off the balcony of a third floor building by her drug addict husband.

The incident took place in the Kalia Gardhi area under the Medical police station in the wee hours of Thursday.

The police said that Birendra Singh and Rajni were married for 12 years. Birendra, a driver,

was hooked to drugs and this, often, led to fights between the couple.

After one such showdown, Birendra allegedly pushed his wife off the third-floor balcony of their house and later fled the spot. SP, City Vineet Bhatnagar said that efforts are on to arrest the accused.

Police said Birendra had spent a few months in jail earlier on charges of domestic violence.

Vax drive for 18+ in Gurugram hit due to shortage

GURUGRAM

OWING to acute shortage of the Covid-19 vaccine the vaccination drive for people in the 18 plus age category was suspended on Friday as the district health department ran out of doses, officials said.

The health officials informed that vaccination campaign of the second dose for those above 45 will continue, but it is also likely to get affected if the district does not receive fresh stock from the state government by Friday night.

The 18-44 vaccinations started in Gurugram on May 1. Till May 12, over 43,992 people

in the age group have received their first shots. In this category, the targeted population for immunisation is more than 10 lakh.

"Both Covishield and Covaxin stocks for 18 plus age group are over in Gurugram. Therefore, no sessions have been planned for Friday. Only Covishield shots will be given to those aged 45 and above, waiting for their second shot.

"If the doses are not allocated soon, vaccination for 45 above will also be hampered," said Virender Yadav, chief medical officer (CMO) Gurugram.

Most session sites in the city



are at government facilities with only two private hospitals

-- Max and Fortis -- administering vaccines at present. On

Friday, these hospitals will be the ones that give vaccines to people in the 18-44 category.

"We have already demanded the state health department to provide the stock but cannot say how much and when we'll get this consignment," said Dr MP Singh, district immunisation officer.

According to Singh, there are about 8,000 doses left for the population above 45 years.

Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij on Thursday said that the state government will float a global tender for the Covid-19 vaccines to ensure free vaccination for those aged between 18 and 44 years.

A Scottish headache for Boris Johnson

THE Scots are back. They are back with a bigger margin now. That is no good news for either the British or the European Union whose politics are going to be rocked for more years now because of the pro-independence groups led by Nicola Sturgeon's Scottish National Party (SNP) which expanded their majority in the country's parliament, setting up a clash with the British government on whether Scots should be allowed a vote on leaving the 314-year-old union. Sturgeon's SNP secured the largest number of seats — nearly half the total — in the country's multi-party, European-style proportional electoral system after pitching independence as a way to accelerate Scotland's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

A referendum could also chart a path for Scotland back into the European

Union after Britain left the trade bloc at the start of the year, supporters said. The SNP fell one seat short of an outright majority, indicating the divisiveness of the independence debate in Scotland and handing British Prime Minister Boris Johnson an excuse to refuse a referendum. Only the U.K. government has the authority to sanction a vote. But the nationalists' ranks were bolstered by growing support for the Scottish Green Party, which also campaigned for independence, setting the stage for a protracted standoff. Together they have a majority of 72 seats in the 129-member legislature, an increase from the last vote five years ago.

Sturgeon, who is Scotland's first minister, or government leader, wasted little time laying out her plans to force a vote sometime in the next five years. In a series of interviews, she warned John-

son against using his legal powers to block a rerun of a previous 2014 referendum, which the nationalists lost. Once the immediate Covid-19 crisis has passed, Sturgeon said she and her allies in the Greens will legislate for a new referendum in the Scottish parliament, effectively daring their counterparts in the British parliament at Westminster to stop them. It is more like saying if Brexit is possible, then a new referendum should also be for the Scots.

In the 2014 referendum, Scots rejected independence by a decisive margin, 55 per cent to 45 per cent. That was supposed to resolve the issue for a generation but two years later came the Brexit vote, and that radically altered the landscape. History has strange ways of either repeating itself or throwing back surprises. This one is similar. While England voted to leave the Eu-

ropean Union, 62 per cent of Scottish voters wanted to stay.

With only about a tenth the population of England, Scotland was badly outnumbered and its preference was simply ignored. Resentments over that have helped revive the push for what is widely known as "indyref2." Then there is the dominating personality of Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Already widely disliked in Scotland, he did nothing to endear himself by steadfastly championing a headline version of Brexit, finally "getting it done," as he liked to say, when 2021 rolled in.

The resultant disruption to exporters, and particularly to Scotland's important fish and shellfish industries, which relied heavily on friction-free trade with the European Union, has further angered Scots. It must be admitted that Johnson is treating the Scots unequally and as second rate citizens. Scots should have been independent long ago. Well, tough times ahead for Johnson!



Kerala hit hard by drop in remittances: World Bank

ARUL LOUIS

KERALA has been hit hard by the drop in remittances from the Gulf countries from where about 1.2 million workers returned to the state due to the Covid-driven layoffs, according to the World Bank. Overall, though, the total remittances from Indian workers abroad was \$8.3 billion in 2020, a drop of only 0.2 per cent from the previous year, the Bank's Migration and Development Brief released on Wednesday revealed.

India's remittances from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) recorded a steep decline of 17 per cent, but it was offset by resilient flows from the US and other host countries, it said. India remains the world's top recipient of remittances in total value, a status it reached in 2008, according to the brief.

However, remittances to India are nowhere near the top when it comes to their share of the gross domestic product (GDP). Remittances make up a far more important share of the GDP for smaller countries like Tonga and Lebanon.

The exodus of foreign workers from the seven member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) last year hit Kerala hard, according to the brief. The Bank said that in "Kerala, an estimated 1.2 million migrant workers, out of more than 4 million who worked in the GCC countries and contributed 30 per cent of the state's income, returned in 2020 after the global pandemic left them jobless. Low-skilled workers were the hardest hit".

In that state the monthly remittances to families receiving them fell on average by \$267, the brief said. The brief listed the US as the largest source of remittances, followed by the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Russia.

For the South Asian region, remittances rose by about 5 per cent because of increased flows to Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, according to the brief. Like India, Nepal also experienced a small drop in remittances, it added.

For next year, the bank projected the remittances to the region to dip slightly to 3.5 per cent "due to a moderation of growth in high-income economies and a further expected drop in migration to the GCC countries". The main factor in the level of remittances holding up was family loyalties and the stimulus payments in some countries where the workers were located.

The author of the report, Dilip Ratha said: "The willingness to help family members was enabled by fiscal measures in almost all host countries that resulted in better-than-expected economic performance." A second enabling factor was that businesses in many host countries were better prepared for remote work and remote provision of services which also supported employment."



Scientists call for investigation into origins of Covid-19

MORE investigation is needed to determine the origin of the Covid-19 pandemic, say a team of 18 scientists from Universities in the US, Canada, the UK and Switzerland. "Theories of accidental release from a lab and zoonotic spillover both remain viable," they wrote in a letter published on Thursday in the journal Science.

"Knowing how Covid-19 emerged is critical for informing global strategies to mitigate the risk of future outbreaks," said the researchers led by Jesse Bloom, an evolutionary virologist at the University of Washington, US.

The Coronavirus disease, which was first documented on December 1, 2019 from Wuhan City in China, has since spread like wildfire throughout the globe. The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 160.8 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.34 million, so far.

The team of researchers lauded the efforts of scientists in understanding SARS-CoV-2 -- its transmission, pathogenesis, and mitigation by vaccines, therapeutics, and non-pharmaceutical interventions. Yet, even after 17 months, how the coronavirus pandemic exactly began still remains a mystery.

The researchers highlighted a joint China-World Health Organization (WHO) report into the origins of SARS-CoV-2, some results of which were released in November 2020. "WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus commented that the report's consideration of evidence supporting a laboratory accident was insufficient," they noted.

"As scientists with relevant expertise, we agree with the WHO director-general, the United States and 13 other countries, and the European Union that greater clarity about the origins of this pandemic is necessary and feasible to achieve," they said. They call for an investigation that is "transparent, objective, data-driven, inclusive of broad expertise, subject to independent oversight, and responsibly managed."

"In this time of unfortunate anti-Asian sentiment in some countries, we note that at the beginning of the pandemic, it was Chinese doctors, scientists, journalists, and citizens who shared with the world crucial information about the spread of the virus -- often at great personal cost. We should show the same determination in promoting a dispassionate science-based discourse on this difficult but important issue," they said. IANS

Adopt multi-pronged approach to tackle Covid 2.0



WHY the intensity of second wave could not be controlled? Who has failed, the people or the central and State governments? This is the issue that has raked up a massive debate. While the Centre has been saying, "Don't fall for opposition propaganda." It claimed that ever since the first wave hit the country, it had been able to provide 2463 Covid testing centres. Prior to that there was only one centre. In last one year, it has provided facilities for production of 0 to 7 crore Covishield and one crore Covaxin vaccines, both made in India, made India second largest producer of PPE kits, created manufacturing capacity of Remdesivir from 0 to 2.06 lakh vials a day, had set up 2048 hospitals for Covid treatment, to meet scarcity of oxygen created green corridor for smooth movement, roped in IAF for faster movement and so on. India is being ruled by Yashasvi PM, they claim.

The Opposition has its own argument against it and say that the PM became Yashasvi for different reasons. Well let's keep politics aside.

It would have been more appropriate if the Centre while listing out its claim of how it created the medical infrastructure had accepted that the political executive at Centre and in states erred in their judgement and ignored early warning of possible spike of cases. Here the media too needs to be blamed since the kind of publicity they had given to what the Centre had claimed regarding creating medical infrastructure, did not adequately highlight the impending threat and the failure of governments to take timely action.

The Centre and State governments went on to claim that they have created excellent medical infrastructure but the other side never got reflected. Well there is

a reason for the media to have blinked at the omissions and commissions. Truth is always bitter and the political executive whether it be at national level or state level have become too touchy and is not willing to take any criticism in a positive manner. The some have been won over most of the media is scared the way cases are booked against them. Hence the media feels adopt middle path and survive.

While ministers and officials reel out statistics as to how their government is number one in everything, the ground realities are scary. This is the situation across the country including the two Telugu states Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

Statistics reeled out by ministers and officials can be interesting to make a point during debate but cannot hide the reality. I remember, when I was in University my professor in Statistics used to say statistics is subjective, you can interpret as you like. (Of course he used different word which I cannot mention here).

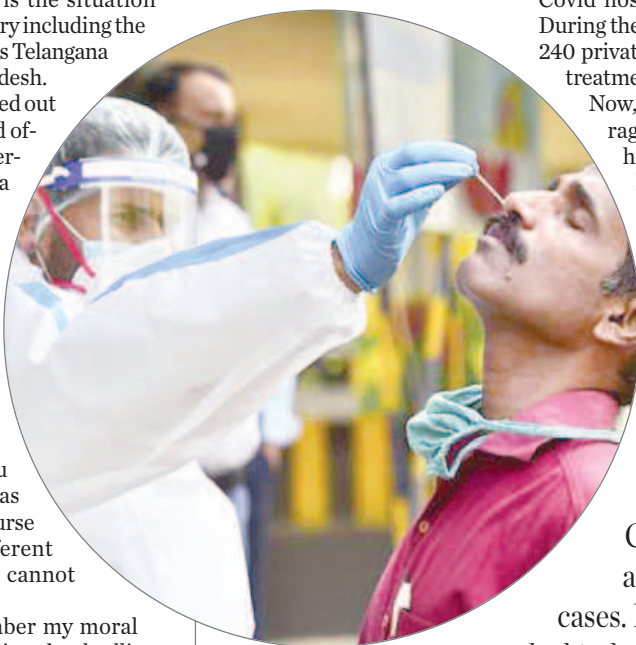
I also remember my moral science teacher in school telling students, "Never say you are number one because that closes the door for improvement and you will become headstrong". How true they were I now feel.

What matters is ground reality which governments don't want to accept though they know about it. It is so because they have failed in heeding to early warnings and gearing up to meet the challenge called second wave. The positive aspect now, at least in Telangana is that the government says they are now taking advance measures to see that third wave does not cause much damage. Let's pray and hope they will take some serious measures and succeed.

During the second wave, both Centre and states woke up after people started gasping for oxygen and Remdesivir injections which are still not easily available and

are being sold in black market at exorbitant prices.

The unilateral decisions by State governments has resulted in serious problems for the patients. For example, Telangana government has decided to ban entry of Covid patients coming from neighboring Andhra Pradesh. This despite the High Court objecting. Their reason was the medical hub of country cannot take any more pressure. Beds are full. Well the flip side of this decision was that TS government did not consult the AP government before imposing restric-



It would have been more appropriate if the Centre while listing out its claim of how it created the medical infrastructure had accepted that the political executive at Centre and in States erred in their judgement and ignored early warning of possible spike of cases. Here the media too needs to be blamed since the kind of publicity they had given to what the Centre had claimed regarding creating medical infrastructure, did not adequately highlight the impending threat and the failure of governments to take timely action

tions nor did AP government protest so far.

Only from Friday, politicians in Andhra Pradesh started talking that Hyderabad is a common capital till 2024 and hence TS police cannot stop people going to Hyderabad. It is surprising that suddenly they remembered that Hyderabad is common capital. Well here too there is an element of politics. Blame the previous government and former Chief Minister for showing undue haste to shift capital from Hyderabad to Amaravati. No doubt they are right but is it not a fact that it was the present government which had surrendered all buildings and

gave up the right of the state on common capital?

Instead of such statements, it would have been better if government to government talks were there to ease the situation. But that did not happen, and Telangana High Court had to cancel the circular issued by TS government banning entry of ambulances at check posts at TS borders.

Shortages in medical infrastructure is localised experts in Telangana say. There are 116 government hospitals across the State available to treat Covid 19 patients, as well as five dedicated Covid hospitals in Hyderabad. During the first wave, there were 240 private hospitals to provide treatment to positive patients.

Now, with the second wave raging, the government has permitted 1,938 hospitals, including those with up to 10 beds, to treat patients across the state. These additional private hos-

ing the health protocols.

They need to hammer into the minds of the people that they need to take care of themselves first by wearing masks and following social distancing, forget about politics for next six months and concentrate on safety of the people.

One should not forget that this time around, the virus has gotten stronger and become more infectious. This is the opinion of the doctors and medical experts. It is getting difficult to detect through RTR-PCR and requires HRTC to confirm the presence of Covid-19. On the administrative side, the government needs to ensure that its dashboard is not static and gives real time information about hospital beds and number of active cases, new cases and deaths. No point hiding the facts.

Public also need to take full blame. Their carelessness had led to new virus' mutations making it difficult to contain the spread of the second major wave of Covid-19 cases. Let's stop com-

paring with other States. If they are in worst condition let them be. Let's focus on our State and protect our people. Then there will no need for the government to pat its own back. People will praise the government to skies and will stand by it.

The pandemic has thrown up an opportunity for a multi-pronged approach for its containment and mitigation where involving the IT sector and other non-healthcare sector can play a vital role. The behaviour of the virus is directly proportional to the actions of people, the executive and the administration.

when he saw a huge crowd in his last election meeting.

S Natarajan, New Delhi

Should India intervene in Israel- Palestine war?

KUDOS to Hans India, for the in-depth analysis on the reasons for escalation of Israel - Palestine conflict, that is threatening to snowball in to another war and , disaster, whose consequences will be felt not only in middle East, but also in many countries of the world. (Politics behind tension in Gaza, 14 May). Besides politics, religion and land are also appear to be the key factors in this conflict.

May 10 is very significant to the pride Of Israel as a mighty nation , because on this day, they could decisively defeat the Arab Nations in 1967 and won back the holy city of Jerusalem. The right wing and orthodox Jews, permitted by Israeli government wanted to march in East Jerusalem to commemorate and celebrate the great victory in 1967 war, which gave the Jews their soul to the body that is Jerusalem. On the other hand, it is alleged that the Palestinians have congregated in large numbers in the Al-Aksa Mosque , ready to obstruct and disturb the victory march of orthodox Jews in the east Jerusalem. Hence the global powers like USA, Russia, England, China ,India should come together and broker peace between the two warring nations Israel and Palestine and maintain peace and tranquility in the holy city which is sine qua non to world peace.

P H Hema Sagar, Secunderabad

LETTERS

Improving human rights during Covid

THE suggestion of the Supreme Court about placing convicts under house arrest is worth considering. If one may add, the release of political prisoners on bail or parole too merits consideration. Political and civil rights activists are often incarcerated for speaking the truth to power or rebelling against the system or the government. Dissent is now a crime punishable with imprisonment!

It is a matter of immense significance in terms of human rights that the undertrials make up nearly 70 per cent of the total inmates in Indian prisons. Many of them do not have access to legal counsel or remedy. Pre-trial imprisonment in itself is punishment. As they say, process is the punishment in India. It is a logical premise that the undertrials could be convicted or acquitted. Eventually be it conviction or acquittal, they cannot be kept in a place where they run greater risk of catching the coronavirus. They must be spared 'capital punishment' by the virus!

It is common knowledge that many of India's prisons are congested and have more inmates than they can accommodate and as such they remain hotspots for the contagious Covid-19. Needless to say, conditions in prisons are conducive to the spread of the contagion. When prisons are

thehansreader@gmail.com

Second dose and senior citizens

WE, super senior citizens, infirm and hardly mobility-friendly, are the worst fated lot in the present COVID-19 scenario. While the first shot of Covaxin was injected on 18th March for both of us, the second keeps us alluding since then. For sometime, there were no stocks of the second shot. Soon after stocks arrived, we were told that the slots are reserved exclusively for the second dosers, and that the job is entrusted to Primary Health Centres as against private corporate hospitals earlier. Simultaneously we are advised not to venture out, thanks to the imposition of a lockdown after 10.00 a.m daily, due to the highly prevalent second wave. Online bookings show fully booked. It is simply awful to approach a Primary Health vaci-

'Hanging' or haranguing?

THE Union Minister Sadananda Gowda has reportedly asked: "whether people in the government should hang themselves for their failure to produce vaccines as was directed by the government". No Minister Sir, we the people don't want to hang ourselves for what you and your government. Who are we to make such demand. We only want you to hang your head in shame for what has happened. Not you, your leaders but also other leaders who they did during the elections by presiding over the crowd without wearing masks and maintaining distance. We want your leaders to hang their heads in shame when the new Assam Chief Minister went on claim that there is no Corona in Assam and he will not wear a mask irrespective of what PM or central government have to say when he was campaigning for the party. We only want you all to apologize and hang your head in shame as this would go a long way to defuse the anger among the people in distress. Of course, we are not even demanding PM to hang his head in shame and accept his mistake of feeling proud

Seshagiri Row Karry, Hyderabad

'State failed in tackling Covid'

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL/KARIMNAGAR

THE State government is playing with the lives of people, BJP State president and Karimnagar MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar said after inspecting the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital (MGMH) here on Friday.

"There isn't much difference between the Civil Hospital in Karimnagar and the MGMH in Warangal – both have nothing to offer as far as healthcare is concerned," he said. The death of a doctor and four lab technicians reflects the fact that the MGM staff is overburdened, he said, criticising the State government for its failure to fill the vacant posts. On the other hand, the state of Covid-19 wards is appalling, he said, referring to the unhygienic conditions in the MGMH. The government needs to give incentives to the frontline warriors for their services at a time coronavirus was wreaking havoc, he said.

Sanjay accused the State government of failing to utilise the 100 ventilators provided through the Prime Minister Cares Fund. Even though the MGMH was running short of PPE kits, Remdesivir injections, surgical masks and oxygen, the government was little bothered about it, BJP State chief said.

The State government was hiding the actual Covid-19 deaths and also concealing the number of patients, Sanjay alleged. The BJP is not pointing to the State government's failures just for the



BJP State president Bandi Sanjay (in PPE gear left) inspecting the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital (MGMH) in Warangal on Friday

sake of criticism but for the improvement in the healthcare of people, he said.

Earlier, Sanjay who wore PPE spoke to patients and medical officials in the Covid-19 ward. He enquired about the facilities and consoled them. He was accompanied by MGMH Superintendent Dr K Nagarjuna Reddy.

Sanjay on the day also visited Covid vaccination centre at Huzurabad government hospital and enquired about the services and facilities being provided to patients. Adding that doctors,

para-medical staff, police and sanitation workers were working tirelessly to save the lives of people, he demanded the State government to pay incentives to all these frontline workers.

BJP Karimnagar district president Gangadi Krishna Reddy, secretary Bingi Karnakar, spokesperson Masadi Muthyam Rao and others accompanied the BJP State chief.

Sanjay accused the State government of failing to utilise the 100 ventilators provided through the Prime Minister Cares Fund. Even though the MGMH was running short of PPE kits, Remdesivir injections, surgical masks and oxygen, the government was little bothered about it, BJP State chief said.



Due to surge in Covid cases, Muslims offering Eid prayers from the confines of their homes on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr in Karimnagar on Friday

Low-key Ramzan celebrations in district

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KARIMNAGAR

RAMZAN festival was celebrated with enthusiasm and religious fervour in a low-key manner by the Muslim community, in view of lockdown across the Telangana State.

Earlier, people used to hug each other to convey their wishes and shake hands on the occasion, but this year, people were found wearing face masks and maintaining the social distance while greeting each other. They were seen following the sug-

gestions and advice of the health officials to protect themselves from getting infected with coronavirus while celebrating the festival.

Following the orders issued by the TS government asking them not to conduct namaz holding large gathering in mosques under the Commissionerate limits in view of the spread of coronavirus, the people were seen celebrating the festival in a low-key manner.

The celebrations were held with people dressing in

new attire, but none visited the masjids. Muslim-dominated areas like Elugandula, Chintakunta, Boyawada, Subashnagar and Geetha Bhavan, Ramzan was celebrated in a subdued manner.

The Muslim religious leaders conveyed a special Ramzan message to the followers on various social media platforms and appealed the Muslims to live harmoniously and peacefully with people of other communities and take preventive measures to get rid of the deadly coronavirus.



Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar along with his wife lights a lamp at the Bhadrakali temple in Warangal on Friday

Bhadrakali Brahmotsavams off to a silent start

HANS NEWS SERVICE
WARANGAL

THE 10-day Bhadrakali Bhadreshwara Kalyana Brahmotsavam was off to a quiet start on Friday with the priests performing Ankurarpana.

"The otherwise elaborate annual Brahmotsavams at Bhadrakali temple, will be a low key affair this year with the Covid-19 situation turning precarious," chief priest Bhadrakali Seshu said. The priests will perform rituals as usual but it was decided not to allow the devotees for the Brahmotsavams, he added. He urged the devotees to chant – Bhadrakali Saranam

Mama – at their homes. However, the temple authorities allowed the Warangal West MLA and Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar on behalf of devotees for the Ankurarpana. The Chief Whip who volunteered to bear the expenses of the 10-day rituals donated Rs 51,000 to the temple. After attending rituals, Vinay Bhaskar said that the people would get rid of the dreaded coronavirus pandemic with the blessings of Goddess Bhadrakali. Endowments assistant commissioner and temple executive officer Ramala Sunitha said that the festivities would be carried amid strict Covid-19 protocol.

Covid-infected isolates on tree top

With no isolation centres in near vicinity and due to the fear of family members contracting the deadly virus, a youngster turns the tree top in front of his house into an isolation room

HANS NEWS SERVICE
NALGONDA

A B Tech student, who was tested positive for coronavirus, turned the tree top in front of his house into an isolation room. Ramavath Shiva from Nandikonda village of Adavidevulapally mandal in Nalgonda district was infected with the virus recently. Fearing the spread of virus to his family members, he converted the tree top on the premises of his home into an isolation room. Food and water is being provided to him by family members with the help of a rope. Meanwhile, the villagers alleged that corona-infected people were suffering hardships as no isolation centres have been set up in villages or at mandal centres. They urged the government to act fast and set up isolation centres in mandal to prevent the spread of virus.

Nava Bharat donates 500 PPE kits for civic workers

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KOTHAGUDEM

NAVA Bharat Ventures Limited Vice President Y Srinivas Murthy on Friday donated 500 PPE kits to the municipal staff of Palvoncha. The total kits were handed over to the Palvoncha Municipal commissioner CH Srikanth at a programme conducted by the company at Palvoncha.

Speaking on the occasion, Murthy explained the services of the company in the district. He said, the company donated one generator and gas cemetery machine for Vaikunta dhamam in Palvoncha. Sanitary inspector Palvoncha Vani and other staff participated in the programme.

Covid-19 well monitored: Rathod

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MAHABUBABAD

A district-level task force has been constituted to ensure treatment to people tested positive for the coronavirus, Tribal Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod said. The Minister who inspected the Area Hospital here on Friday tried to instil confidence among the patients, besides enquiring about the treatment facilities.

She said that the task force has been monitoring the coronavirus situation in villages by deploying 750 medical teams. The teams, which have been visiting all the households, were distributing medicine



Tribal Welfare Minister Satyavathi Rathod inspecting the Area Hospital in Mahabubabad on Friday

kits to the Covid-19 patients, she said. The government is constantly monitoring the

availability of Remdesivir injections, other medicines and oxygen in the hospitals to en-

sure proper treatment to people, she said. Efforts were on to clear the glitches in the online registration of Covid-19 vaccines, the Minister said.

She urged the people to make use of a four-hour window in the lockdown to fetch the essentials they need. It's high time that people realise the importance of wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing, she added.

Mahabubabad District Collector VP Gautham, Additional Collector Abhilasha Abhinav, hospital superintendent Dr Venkatramulu and district Covid-19 nodal officer Dr Sathish Rathod were among others present.

Massive 'fever' survey from today



Principal Secretary, health, Anil Kumar Singhal addressing the media at Mangalagiri on Friday

HANS NEWS SERVICE
MANGALAGIRI

THE state government is launching a massive household survey from Saturday throughout the state to trace the persons suffering from fever, said principal secretary of health department Anil Kumar Singhal.

Addressing newsmen at APICC office here on Friday, the principal secretary said the medical personnel would provide necessary medicine to the persons affected by fever during the survey.

Regarding the oxygen supply, he said that in addition to the oxygen allotted to the state by the Centre, 230 metric tonne oxygen would arrive in a couple of days.

Stating that the number of discharged pa-

tients is increasing in the state following the measures taken by the government, he said that it was good omen. He said that comparatively the death rate is very low in the state. "Only 96 deaths occurred in the state during the last 24 hours though 22,018 positive cases were registered," he said.

The principal secretary said that the gap between the admissions and discharge of patients has been steadily coming down. He expressed

- Principal Secretary of Health Dept Anil Kumar Singhal says medical personnel will visit every house and dispense necessary medicine to the people suffering from fever during the survey
- Reveals that in addition to the oxygen allotted to the State by the Centre, 230 MT oxygen will arrive in a couple of days
- States it is good omen that the number of discharged patients is increasing in the State following the steps taken by the govt

satisfaction over the continuing vaccination programme in the state. "There is no heavy rush at the vaccination due to the precautions taken," he pointed out. Instead of waiting for the delivery of vaccines by the Centre, the state government is purchasing and administering vaccine before the expiry of the second dose period.

New Covid cases zoom to 22,018, fatalities 96

AMARAVATI

ANDHRA Pradesh reported more than 20,000 fresh cases of coronavirus for the fourth consecutive day on Friday, while 19,177 patients had recovered and another 96 succumbed to the infection. The latest bulletin said 22,018 positive cases turned out from 89,087 tests in the 24 hours ending 9 am on Friday, taking the infection count to 13,88,803.

The number of active cases increased to 2,03,787 after a total of

11,75,843 recoveries and 9,173 deaths. The overall infection positivity rate climbed to 7.81 per cent after 1.77 crore tests while the case fatality rate remained stable at 0.66 per cent.

The recovery rate was 84.6 per cent and the active case ratio was about 15 per cent. East Godavari district reported the highest 3,432 fresh cases in 24 hours, followed by Chittoor 2,708, Anantapur 2,213 and Visakhapatnam 2,200. While Srikakulam reported the lowest 695 and Vizianagaram 899,

seven other districts added between 1,000 and 1,800 new cases each.

Nellore district crossed the one lakh total cases mark, the seventh in the state, as it added 1,733 fresh in a day. In 24 hours, Anantapur had 11 fresh Covid-19 fatalities, East Godavari, West Godavari and Visakhapatnam 10 each, Vizianagaram nine, Chittoor and Krishna eight each, Guntur and Nellore seven each, Kurnool and Srikakulam six each. Kadapa district reported four deaths.



Ambulance parked near Pullur toll plaza due to denial of entry into Telangana on Friday morning

HYDERABAD

IN a tragic turn of events, two patients from Andhra Pradesh died in the ambulance vehicles they were traveling in, as Telangana police did not permit vehicles without valid online permits to cross the interstate border at Kurnool. The development took place at the Panchalingala checkpoint on National Highway 44, on Friday.

The two persons who died on Friday, were identified as natives of Nandyal and Kurnool respectively. At least 40 ambu-

lances from Andhra Pradesh were forced to return back from the Pullur toll plaza since Thursday when they tried to cross the state border on the way to Hyderabad. A similar situation played out at the Ramapuram cross border post near Suryapet.

While Telangana police officials said that ambulances not carrying the required online permits, were barred from entering, kin of some of the patients said that even those with permits issued by the Andhra Pradesh police were forcibly turned back. With Covid cases on the rise

- The two who succumbed at Panchalingala checkpoint in Kurnool district are said to be from Nandyal and Kurnool
- Dozens of ambulances from AP were forced to return back from Pullur toll plaza

in AP, many critically ill patients are being taken to Hyderabad, which in turn is putting pressure on bed availability and medical care in the state capital. Telangana police have been directed to allow entry into the state only for patients who have the requisite e-permit, and confirmation from the hospital.

Since Sunday, the interstate border crossings at Pullur near Kurnool, and Ramapuram cross at Suryapet, have been witnessing poignant scenes of patients' kin pleading with Telangana police to allow their vehicles entry.

Caste panchayat asks woman to lick spit for second marriage

Members of the caste panchayat were to spit on banana leaves and the victim was to lick it as a punishment

PUNE

A ‘CASTE panchayat’ in Maharashtra’s Akola district, as a punishment of re-marrying after divorce, asked a 35-year-old woman to lick spit, an official said on Friday.

The woman was also asked to pay Rs 1 lakh her act.

Showing courage, the woman defied both the diktats and lodged a police complaint.

The shocking incident took place last month, but came to light when a case was registered against the unofficial village council, he said.

On a complaint of the victim, who stays in Jalgaon district, an FIR under sections 5 and

6 of the Maharashtra Protection of People from Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016, has been registered against ten members of the caste panchayat, the official said.

The FIR was registered at Jalgaon’s Chopda city police station, under whose jurisdiction the woman resides, and later the case was transferred for investigation to the Pinjar police station in Akola where the incident took place, he said.

According to the complaint, the incident took place on April 9 at Wadgaon village in Akola, where the caste panchayat was called to take a decision on the second marriage of the victim, he said.



The victim belongs to the ‘Nath Jogi’ community, whose caste panchayat did not accept her second marriage, the official said.

The victim got married for the second time in 2019 after taking divorce from her first husband in 2015, the official said.

Her first marriage took place in 2011, he said.

At the caste panchayat meeting, members discussed the woman’s second marriage and called her sister and other relatives, and delivered their “verdict” on the issue (the victim was not present at the meet), the official said.

According to the verdict, members of the caste panchayat were to spit on banana leaves and the victim was to lick it as a punishment, the official said.

Besides, the caste panchayat sought a payment of Rs 1 lakh from the victim, he said.

After fulfilling these demands by the panchayat, the victim was told she can “return” to her community, the official said, quoting from the complaint.

The decision of the caste panchayat was conveyed to the victim by her relatives.

Shocked by the decision, the victim approached the Chopda city police station and lodged the complaint against members of the panchayat, said Pravin Munde, Superintendent of Police, Jalgaon.

As the incident took place in Akola, the case has been transferred there for further investigation, he said.

WINDOWS

Five children, rescuer drowned

CHANDIGARH: Five children drowned in a pond in a village in Punjab’s Ludhiana on Friday, as well as a migrant who trying to save them, police said. The incident happened in Mangarh village, where the five children, aged between seven and 10 years, accidentally drowned to death. The 22-year-old migrant who jumped into the pond in a futile attempt to rescue them also lost his life. Expressing deep shock over the tragic incident, Chief Minister Amarinder Singh announced ex-gratia of Rs 50,000 to the families of each of the victims.



A Covid-19 patient undergoing treatments at a private hospital offers ‘Namaz’ on the occasion of Eid-al-Fitr, in Kanpur on Friday

One killed in grenade attack

GUWAHATI: At least one person was killed and three others injured in a grenade attack in eastern Assam’s Tinsukia district on Friday, police said. Police officials said that two motorcycle-borne miscreants threw the grenade in front of a hardware shop at Tingrai market in Digboi town. One Sanjib Sen, 25, was killed and three others sustained injuries in the blast. The injured were shifted to a hospital. Security forces led by senior officials have rushed to the market and have cordoned off the area and launched a search operation to nab the culprits.

Missing complaint against Modi, Ministers

02 shortage claims 13 lives in Goa, 75 dead in 4 days; black fungus claims 52 lives in Maha

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI/LUCKNOW

THE National Students Union of India (NSUI) has filed a ‘missing person’ report with the Delhi Police against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several of his Cabinet ministers, accusing them of running away amid the Covid-19 crisis. The move by the student wing of the Congress came just two days after a similar complaint was filed against Union minister Amit Shah over the ‘disappearance of the country’s Home Minister at the time of the pandemic’.

The latest missing person report was filed by NSUI General Secretary Nagesh Kariyappa against Modi, Union ministers Nirmala Sitharaman, Piyush Goyal, Smriti Irani, S. Jaishankar, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Dharmendra Pradhan, Narendra Singh Tomar, Prakash Javadekar, Harsh Vardhan and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat at the Parliament Street police station here. In his complaint, Kariyappa alleged that all these BJP leaders were last seen during the Assembly elections in West Bengal.

India on Friday reported 3,43,144 new Covid cases and 4,000 fatalities.

India’s total tally of Covid-19 cases now stands at 2,40,46,809 with 37,04,893 active cases and 2,62,317 deaths so far.

Thirteen more patients died at the Goa Medical College and Hospital in the early hours of Friday, a senior health department official said, taking to 75 the number of people who have succumbed at the government-run facility here in the last four days.

The Centre announced to supply nearly 192 lakh Covid-19 vaccines ‘free of cost to the states and the Union Territories (UTs) in the next fortnight from May 16 to 31.

The Ghazipur administration in UP has capped the price of firewood at Rs 650/quintal and the ‘dom raja’ (the people who cremate the bodies) will not take more than Rs 500 for cremating a body. “We’re setting up a control room at each crematorium where police personnel will be stationed,” the Ghazipur DM MP Singh said.

As many as 52 people have died due to Mucormycosis, a rare but dangerous fungal infection, in Maharashtra since the COVID-19 outbreak last year, a senior health department official said on Friday.

Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus, became a much talked about subject after some recovering and recovered coronavirus patients were found infected with the disease, whose symptoms include headache, fever, pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision.



A Covid-19 patient on oxygen support waits to be admitted at Patna Medical College and Hospital, during the second wave of coronavirus in Patna on Friday; (Left) A marriage procession, amid the second wave near Ghaziabad

India records 3.43L cases, 4K deaths in 24 hrs

Centre to supply 192L vax doses to States, UTs

Corona has a ‘right to live’

DEHRADUN: Former Uttarakhand chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said that coronavirus is a living organism which has a right to live. “Seen from a philosophical angle, coronavirus is also a living organism. It has the right to live like the rest of us. But we (humans) think ourselves to be the most intelligent and are out to eliminate it. So it is constantly mutating itself,” he told a private news channel in Dehradun.

However, he said man needs to outpace the virus to stay safe.

Rawat was trolled on social media for his unusual observation on coronavirus as it went viral at a time when the entire country is battling a strong second wave of COVID-19.

Manipur BJP chief passes away

IMPHAL: Manipur BJP president S Tikendra Singh died at a hospital in Imphal. The 69-year-old BJP leader was undergoing treatment for Covid-19. Singh had tested positive for the virus on April 27.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh while informing about the death tweeted, “I’m at a loss of word to learn that Prof S Tiken Singh, president BJP Manipur, has passed away just a while ago.

“We have lost a stalwart of BJP in Manipur who have dedicated his life for the service of people and the party. My deepest condolences to the bereaved family. May your soul rest in peace Oja.”

BJP President J P Nadda and Union minister Kiren Rijju have expressed profound grief over the death.

2 TN cops die after both shots of vax

CHENNAI: Assistant Commissioner of Police, Easwaran, 52, and Special Sub Inspector, Ravi, 57, lost their lives in the fight against Covid. While Easwaran was the ACP attached to the Pallavaram police station passed away on Thursday night, Ravi lost his life on Wednesday night. With the passing away of these two officers, the total number of policemen who have lost their lives since the second wave of Covid has risen to 12 in Chennai. Both the officers have taken the two doses of vaccine. Easwaran who joined the Tamil Nadu police in 1996 as Sub Inspector was promoted to the post of Assistant Commissioner and was attached with the Pallavaram police station.

Covid victim dies 24 hours after rape in Bhopal hospital

BHOPAL: A 43-year-old Covid victim was raped by a ward boy at Bhopal Memorial Hospital and Research Centre last month, following which she died the next day.

However, soon after the incident the accused was arrested.

Sources said that even after a month, the family members of the victim were not informed about the incident that has brought the police under the lens.

The woman was admitted to the facility after she had tested Covid positive. She was raped by the ward boy on April 6 following which her health deteriorated and she died the next day.

Sources said that accused Santosh entered into the woman’s ward at 4 am on April 6 and asked her to undergo a medical check up.

He first molested the Covid victim, took her to the bathroom in the name of the check up and raped her. After that her health worsened and she was then put on a ventilator but she died the next day.

The matter came light when the organisations fighting for the rights of Bhopal gas tragedy victims, flagged the “pathetic condition of Covid wards” in the hospital.

Former Chief Minister Kamal Nath tweeted, “Rape and molestation of the Covid victim who was hospitalised in Bhopal, is extremely shameful! It is very disgraceful that the victim had died and instead of taking action, the hospital management and the police kept the whole matter discreet.”

In another report, the premises of Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai’s residence at Shiggaavi in Haveri district has been turned into a Covid Care Centre (CCC) that can house 50 patients. Bommai, who also represents Shiggaavi Assembly constituency, has also appointed doctors and medical staff to take care of the patients, his office said.

Stating that 50 beds have been installed on the verandah of the house, sources at his office said the minister intends to have oxygen concentrators at the facility and thereby come to the rescue of patients with breathing issues.

Israel reports tunnel system destruction

TEL AVIV: The Israeli Army said on Friday that it sent 160 aircraft into the violence-hit Gaza Strip to destroy a network of tunnels operated by Hamas, the Islamist party that controls enclave, as confusion and chaos continued between the two sides.

Army spokesperson Jonathan Conricus said about 40 tanks participated in the 40-minute mission, reports dpa news agency.

Conricus said the tunnel system, named Metro, operated as a sort of “city under the city”.

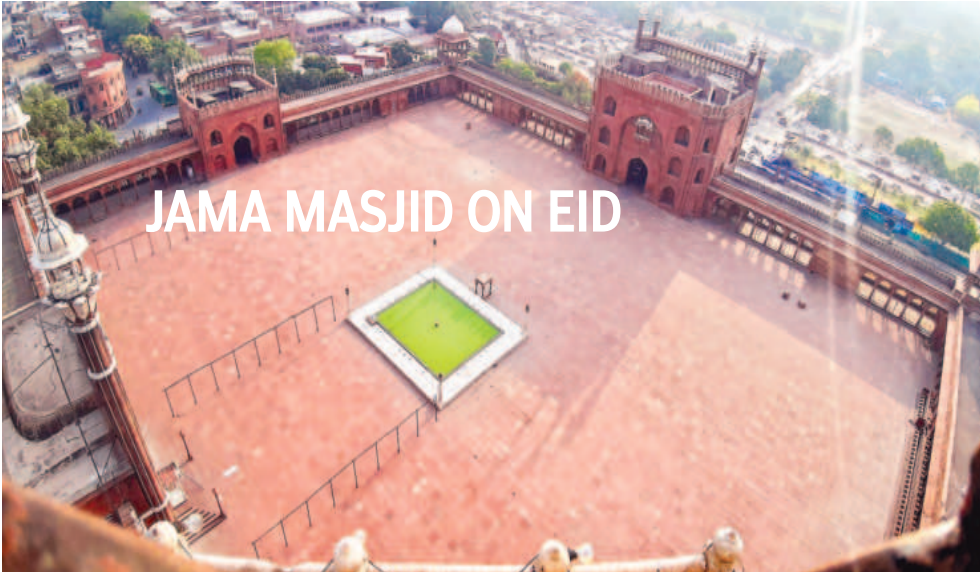
The extent of the damage to the system was unclear.

The tunnel network is vital in the

Gaza Strip for shifting goods and people in and out. Israel often targets the tunnels, which it says are used by Hamas to allow militants to access Israeli territory for attacks.

The two sides have entered another phase of aggression after growing tensions about access to holy sites in Jerusalem and efforts that possibly forced some Palestinian residents from their homes in East Jerusalem. Militants in the Gaza Strip have attacked Israel predominantly with rockets.

About 1,800 have been fired at Israeli territory since Monday, and some 430 of them went down inside the strip.



Jama Masjid wears a deserted look on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan in New Delhi on Friday

CBSE yet to take decision on Class 12 board exams

NEW DELHI: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) said on Friday that it has not taken any decision yet on class 12 board exams even as a section of students and parents have been demanding cancellation of exams in view of the pandemic.

“It is clarified that no such decision (cancellation of exams) has been taken regarding class 12 board examination, as being speculated. Any decision taken in this matter will be officially communicated to the public,” a senior CBSE official said.

The official was responding to a question about possibility of cancellation of class 12 board exams following demands by section of students and par-

ents who have expressed concern over the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

The board had on April 14 announced cancellation of class 10 exams and postponed class 12 exams in view of surge in COVID-19 cases. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The exams, which are usually conducted in February-March every year were scheduled to be held from May 4.

“The class 12 exams have been postponed and a review of the situation will be done after June 1. Students will be given at least a 15-day notice before the exams are conducted,” a board official had then said.

Court comes to the rescue of whistle-blower Army officer

MUMBAI

THE judiciary came to the rescue of an Army officer, Colonel Iven Singh, an officer in the Territorial Army who exposed alleged corruption in recruitment in the Army, but eventually landed himself in trouble. The Nagpur bench of the Bombay High Court quashed disciplinary proceedings against the officer.

In his complaint, the colonel claimed that physically unfit candidates were given favours in lieu of money, besides mentioning several other irregularities in the selection process. He wrote similar letters to the Central Bureau of Investigation and Central Vigilance Commission. He alleged that, despite the rule, no written examination was conducted for the recruitment of jawans.

Subsequently, Army authorities ordered a Court of Inquiry into the alleged irregularities on the basis of Colonel’s complaint. But, the inquiry was abruptly and prematurely closed without citing any proper reason. Instead, an inquiry was ordered against Col Singh, to investigate issues pertaining to misuse of authority, facilities manpower from 2014-18.

Eventually, Col Singh moved the Bombay High Court’s Nagpur bench against his illegal detention and only after the intervention of the court, he was released from custody after 24 days, and on May 8, a division bench comprising Justices Sunil B. Shukre and Avinash G. Gharote had set aside the order invoking Section 123 of Army Act, and subsequent show-cause notice issued to the Colonel.



In another report, the travails of a whistle blower -- an Air India official -- found some relief on Friday when prime accused in the Kerala gold smuggling case, Swapna Suresh, was arrested by the Crime Branch in a fabricated sexual harassment case against the official.

Swapna presently cooling her heels in a jail here in the gold smuggling case was produced in the court online by the Crime Branch police probing the case of Air India official L.S.Sibu.

The Chief Judicial magistrate court ordered her to the Crime Branch’s custody till May 22 in the fabricated sexual harassment case, in which she is alleged to have a role.

It all started when Sibu, a union leader of Air India -- working as Officer-Apron in the Ground Services Department, Trivandrum in 2014, --

brought to the attention of the CBI, the Central Vigilance Commission and the Prime Minister about financial irregularities at Trivandrum Airport. Sibu’s life took a turn for the worse, when he was transferred to Hyderabad effective April 2015. Incidentally it was after a few years of a legal battle the Kerala High Court directed Air India to reinstate him in July 2018, after which he has been posted at Hyderabad. The Kerala High Court in a separate order had directed the Crime Branch Police to conduct a detailed probe into the fabricated sexual harassment case against Sibu. The Crime Branch probe revealed that apart from the complaint of 17 female employees at Air India SATS, here, there were two other forged complaints against him, which was sent to the top officials of Air India.

TODAY'S QUOTE

There's no bubble in commodities

“Commodities were a disaster for a long time. Oil is down 50% from its all-time highs, silver is down 50% from its all-time high – there's no bubble in commodities. There may be a bubble forming in technology, but there's no bubble in commodities. They're still very, very depressed.”

– Jim Rogers, co-founder, Quantum Fund



NO BAN

Experts seek crypto regulation

Stressing that India needs smart and sensible crypto regulation, leading cryptocurrency players in the country on Friday urged the government against the ban and sought engagement to build consensus on crypto regulation. The government earlier indicated that it would take a 'calibrated approach' towards digital assets and formulating a Bill on cryptocurrencies.

India hopeful on TRIPS waiver proposal

India on Friday expressed hope for an early decision in the World Trade Organization (WTO) on a proposal of India and South Africa for a temporary waiver of certain intellectual property rights provisions in the TRIPS agreement to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. In October 2020, India and South Africa submitted a proposal suggesting a waiver for all WTO members on the implementation of certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement in relation to the prevention, containment or treatment of Covid-19. Commerce Secretary Anup Wadhawan said the proposal had received support from several countries.



DELHI SATURDAY 15 MAY 2021

BIZ BRIEFS

Vivo extends warranty

Vivo, a smartphone brand, announced the extension of product warranty to provide relief during the pandemic to its Indian consumers. The new policy will ensure extension of the replacement period and other offers by 30 days, calculated from the day when the service centre resumes business. This move will address concerns of all those people who can't visit a service centre to avail service due to lockdown and ensure the safety of all retailers and consumers. It has also announced a free-of-cost handset pick-and-drop service for customers depending upon the current situation of the State. "As a responsible corporate, vivo has remained steadfast in its commitment to support the government's efforts to fight the pandemic. Recently the company announced aid worth Rs 10 crore to extend support for Covid relief efforts," the company said.

Hinduja's CSR initiative

Hinduja Foundation in association with the Chopra Foundation, the John W Brick Mental Health Foundation, and CG Creatives, will be co-sponsoring a three-hour segment, Spotlight India, within the Never Alone Global Mental Health (Virtual) Summit on May 21. The segment will be curated by Satya Hinduja's Al-chemic Sonic Environment to create a multisensory deep listening experience designed to invoke states of reflection, receptivity, and exchange. Some of the star speakers at Spotlight India will include Sadhguru, and Abhay Deol to name a few. This virtual Summit will be streamed live on Facebook, YouTube, and other media platforms and participants can access free online tools to support their mental health and well-being through their platform.

Dr Reddy's lines up multiple drugs for Covid treatment

To start commercial shipments of 2-deoxy-D-glucose from mid-June; it developed the anti-Covid drug with DRDO

**HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD**

CITY-BASED drug major Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) lined up a series of preventive and curative treatment options, including vaccines and drugs, in the fight against Covid-19. Some of the major products include Sputnik V – a two-dose vaccine, Sputnik Light – single-dose vaccine, remdesivir, Avigan (Favipiravir) and 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG).

DRL is under different phases of conducting trials and production of these vaccines and drugs. According to its management, the trials of Sputnik V vaccine have demonstrated 91.6 per cent efficacy, consistent safety and immunogenicity results. In April, 2021 it received Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) for the vaccine and the first dose of the vaccine, imported from Russia, was administered on Friday.

DRL also received EUA for 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) as adjunct therapy for hospitalised moderate to severe Covid patients. "We developed it in collaboration with Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) laboratory. Higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion," said



M V Ramana, Executive Vice President and Head of the Branded Formulations at DRL. The company expects commercial shipments of 2-DG from the middle of June. It is working closely with six manufacturing partners in the country to fulfill regulatory requirements to ensure

smooth and timely supply. "We are also working on Molnupiravir, Baricitinib and several other Covid drugs for treatment ranging from mild to severe conditions," he said.

The company has launched remdesivir in India and ramped up its supplies to meet with the

higher demand due to surge in Covid cases. "We are selling Avigan (Favipiravir) in India as well as few other countries. We are conducting phase-3 trials in North America for outpatient setting with mild to moderate symptoms," he explained.

DRL will work closely with stakeholders in the government and private sector in India to ensure the widest possible reach of the Sputnik V vaccine as part of the national inoculation effort. This is a reaffirmation of the company's commitment to explore every avenue in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic in India, Ramana added.

Q4 net profit dips 29% to ₹557 cr

HYDERABAD

DR REDDY'S Laboratories on Friday reported 29 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 557 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2021. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 781 crore in January-March period of 2019-20. Net sales however rose to Rs 4,608 crore in the quarter under review as compared with Rs 4,336.1 crore in the fourth quarter of 2019-20, Dr Reddy's Laboratories said. For fis-

cal year 2020-21, the company posted a consolidated net profit of Rs 1,952 crore as against Rs 2,026 crore in 2019-20. Net sales increased to Rs 18,420 crore during the last fiscal year as compared with Rs 16,357 crore in 2019-20.

DRL Co-Chairman and MD, G V Prasad said: "In FY 21, we continued to grow across all our businesses, enhance productivity and strengthen our development pipeline. We are prioritising our efforts to launch Sputnik V vaccine

across India while working on the development and commercialization of several drugs for the treatment of mild to severe Covid-19 infections."

The drug maker said it has commenced a detailed investigation into an anonymous complaint which alleges that healthcare professionals in Ukraine and potentially in other countries were provided with improper payments by or on behalf of the company in violation of US anti-corruption laws.

SBI Hyd CGM promoted as Deputy MD

**HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD**

OM Prakash Mishra, Chief General Manager, SBI Hyderabad Circle, has been elevated to the post of Deputy Managing Director on Friday. A banker with over three decades of experience has headed the Hyderabad Circle of State Bank of India, since May



2019. Mishra joined the bank as a probationary officer in 1987 in Patna Circle. He has gained rich experience, in banking operations while working in various capacities. Mishra worked in Guwahati & Delhi Circle in his earlier assignments as General Manager. Also, Ajay Ku-

mar Singh, General Manager, SBI, Hyderabad Circle, has been elevated to the post of Chief General Manager. Singh joined the bank as a probationary officer in 1991 in Patna Circle and handled various operational assignments including previous assignments in Corporate Centre, Mumbai and North Eastern Circle, Guwahati.

Jio Phone offers free calling minutes

**HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD**

TELECOM major Reliance Jio has launched two special initiatives for its JioPhone users to help people stay connected during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis. The company will provide 300 minutes of free outgoing calls per month to JioPhone users who



have not managed to recharge during the pandemic. JioPhone users who have recharged will get a recharge plan of the same value for free. "In these unprecedented times of the Covid pandemic, we want to ensure that staying connected remains accessible and af-

fordable for all customers, especially the less-privileged sections of our society," the company said. Jio is working with Reliance Foundation to provide 300 free minutes of outgoing calls per month (10 minutes per day) for the entire period of the pandemic, to JioPhone users who have not been able to recharge due to the ongoing pandemic.

REAL CORNER

Demand for luxury homes slow since Apr

NEW DELHI

THE demand for luxury homes has slowed down during the last one-and-a-half months due to the second wave of Covid-19 but real estate developers and consultants are hopeful that sales will pick up once situation normalises as it happened last year.

Prices of luxury residential properties are likely to remain stable and may even rise slightly due to limited supply, they said. Amit Diwan, Managing Director and Country Head, Hines India, said: "All our residential projects have seen strong velocity and price performance during January-March 2021." Residential buyers want good-quality larger units from reputed developers, he said. "We expect that with a hybrid work model here to stay, these trends will continue. Going forward we remain optimistic that the uptick in demand will continue once the second wave settles down," Diwan said. Amit Goyal, CEO, India Sotheby's International Realty, said the demand for luxury and spacious homes went up significantly across the country post the first phase of COVID-19. Goyal said the January-March 2021 quarter at India Sotheby's International Realty, one of the leading brokerage firms in luxury segment, was the strongest both in demand and transaction closures.

SWAMIH Fund to benefit 1.16 lakh home buyers

NEW DELHI

FINANCE Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH) Fund will benefit 1.16 lakh home loan borrowers whose housing projects were stalled due to last mile funding issues.

Many real estate projects across the country were stalled due to fund crunch. To address this issue, the government, in November 2019, announced a Rs 25,000 crore-SWAMIH fund to help complete over 1,500 stalled housing projects comprising 4.58 lakh housing units. Recalling that 2019 was a very testing time for the real estate sector, the minister said the industry was cash-strapped and banks, because of the very inherent stress, would not lend money to them. So, Sitharaman said many of the projects that were near completion or two-thirds completed were stalled because of last mile funding, she said.

Departments of the government and SBICap despite Covid-19 worked relentlessly in getting the stalled projects completed and handing over possession to home loan borrowers, she said at a virtual event to mark handing over of keys to more than 600 home buyers of Rivali Park of Mumbai. This is the first



stalled project completed with funding by SWAMIH Fund, which is managed by SBICap Ventures Ltd.

The Department of Economic Affairs under the Ministry of Finance administers the scheme. "SWAMIH Fund I, under which 640 people are getting homes today, will benefit 1.16 lakh Indian families. All of them will get houses which got stuck because of so many different reasons and hinderances. All this is happening in the pandemic. What more happiness can be given to families which have been waiting for years to get their homes during this time of lockdown," she said.

As many as 72 projects with 44,115 dwelling units have got funding of Rs 6,995 crore under SWAMIH Fund I and 132 preliminary approvals have been given for 132 projects with 72,457 units with an investment

of Rs 11,581 crore. The total cost of these stalled projects stands at Rs 54,520 crore.

The finance minister said the Government of India had stepped in to provide funding to the stressed affordable and mid-income housing projects, thereby giving relief to the home buyers who had invested their hard-earned savings. The government believes that once these homes are constructed and completed, a large amount of capital locked up in these projects will be released, she said.

Besides, she said, it will provide employment to construction workers as well as impetus to the allied industries such as steel and cement. Further, it will improve portfolios of banks and NBFCs, and significantly improve the economic sentiment in the nation, she added.

TS girl designs low-cost housing solution for poor

**MOHAMMED SHAFEEQ
HYDERABAD**

COMING from a modest background and nurtured amid hardships, Perala Manasa Reddy a civil engineer from Telangana worked on the idea of micro-housing and came out with an affordable and all-weather model, which according to her suits best for Indian conditions and is also eco-friendly.

The 23-year-old, who did engineering from Lovely Professional University (LPU), has designed OPod or micro house built of sewerage pipes, a first of its kind model in India. Made-up of concrete sewerage pipe of 2,000 mm diameter, these houses measure between 116 square feet to 240 sq ft and cost around Rs 3.5 lakh to Rs 8 lakh.

One bed-room model is primarily designed for underprivileged but she has prepared 12 different designs including two and three-bedroom ones to cater to different sectors. These units come with bedroom, attached washroom, kitchen, hall, shelves, furniture including bed and chairs and are equipped with electricity, water, and drainage system along with a lounge area on top of the OPod.

Ideal for a family of three, these micro homes can easily be translocated.

Vijayawada realty mkt still in doldrums

**N SHARATH CHOWDARY
HYDERABAD**

AFTER the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led government announced the proposal to have three capitals of Andhra Pradesh, the real estate market came to a halt in and around Vijayawada, which is close to Legislative capital Amaravati. From the same time, the realty sector has been growing in Visakhapatnam and Kurnool.

Though the lockdown has impacted badly on construction activity, property deals picked up in almost all major cities and towns in the State, except Vijayawada. As per the data from AP Registration and Stamps Department, Vijayawada is the only city in the State with a sharp decline in real estate sales during August 2020 - February 2021. The period of review is in-between the first wave and second wave of the Covid-19. The number of registrations in Vijayawada and Vijayawada East together decreased 11.3 per cent to 1,03,424 in August 2020 - February 2021 from 1,16,625 in the same period previous year. During the same months, the property deals improved 15.5 per cent in Visakhapatnam.

The real estate experts anticipate Vijayawada market to recover soon from crash within two years post pandemic period. "At present, the property business is in bad shape here. Both commer-

cial and residential real estate sales dropped in Amaravati region. Mostly, need-based housing units are only being sold in the city limits," said G Hari Babu, President of AP Naredco.

He further says, "Vijayawada market has witnessed both ups and downs. Now, the city is at the bottom of the graph as people want to hold investments. However, it will again rise in 'V' shape."



Raja Srinivas, State President of CREDAI AP Chapter, said: "There has been a standstill in the realty deals of Amaravathi region. Neither rates have increased nor reduced, but in general there is a hiatus in the property transactions. Mega projects in this region have taken a setback, but first-time home buyers are coming forward to purchase ready to occupy flats." "All investors, who had planned to purchase plots in Amaravathi area are now buying residential flats in Vijayawada city region where erstwhile regular businesses used to take place. Once there is clarity regarding shifting the capital, there would be a spurt in sales from the genuine need based buyers, rather than speculation/investment buyers."

Reinstatement of Powar as coach

Raman Effect: David's selection panel, CAC's Lal, Naik under scanner

NEW DELHI

FORMER opener WV Raman's unceremonious ouster from the Indian women's team head coach's position has opened a can of worms with both the Madan Lal-headed Cricket Advisory Committee and Neetu David-led selection panel coming under the scanner of BCCI bigwigs.

Raman, who successfully coached the women's team to T20 World Cup final in Australia and is widely acknowledged as one of the best Indian coaches, was removed by Lal and Naik's CAC, which reinstated Ramesh Powar, who was removed from the same post in 2018. **Is Madan Lal's committee illegal as per Lodha norms?:** "Maddi paaji (that's how Madan Lal is addressed in Indian cricket fraternity) celebrated his 70th birthday on March 20, 2021. The BCCI, in its appeal to Supreme Court against some of the reforms, doesn't ask for roll-back of age-cap of 70 years. So how come Madan Lal was allowed to sit in CAC meeting?," a senior member asked. While the BCCI has no intention of using its veto to over-rule Lal and Naik, the board's top officials are unable to wrap their heads around as to what led to recommendation of Raman's removal.

Sulakshana Naik's role in CAC meetings:

Former India player Sulakshana is the younger sister of Mumbai Cricket Association secretary Sanjay Naik. She has so far attended three CAC meetings for various appointments. Someone who is abreast with how the eight interviews were conducted said that it felt as if Naik had made up her mind that Raman had to

be removed for just one bad series, despite knowing fully well that selection was not in his hands and it was done by her ex-teammate, Neetu David's panel.

"One surprising question that Raman was asked was how can he claim credit for women's team reaching T20 final as this is a team that was prepared by Ramesh Powar," the source said. The line of questioning, according to the official, was clear that the platform was set for Powar to be reinstated. "Even if we presume that Ramesh and Mithali Raj had problems back then and it wasn't good enough ground to remove Ramesh, does two wrongs make a right," he questioned.

"If you go by the argument Sulakshana gave during Raman's 45-minute presentation, by that logic, Ramesh is inheriting a team that Raman prepared," he countered.

The PTI has confirmed from multiple sources that Raman had red-flagged the kind of squad that David, Arati Vaidya, Renu Margrate, Mithu Mukherjee and V Kalpana picked for the South Africa series, for which teen batting sensation Shafali Verma was not picked for the ODIs and senior pacer Shikha Pandey was inexplicably dropped. While both David and Raman couldn't be contacted for corroboration, it is understood that the BCCI nowadays records all selection meetings. The just-removed coach didn't approve the changes. "Do you know what kind of

logic was given for dropping Shikha and Shafali? It is beyond comprehension," a peeved senior official said. The selectors said that Pandey was unfit because she hasn't worked hard on training during lockdown and was "overweight".

"But when they were asked to prove their point, they couldn't simply do it," the official alleged. In the case of Shafali, her fielding was questioned and put forth as the reason for her non-selection in the ODI team.

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

The selection of leg-spinner C Prathyusha and left arm seamer Monica Patel has also been questioned as they didn't look ready for the rigours of international cricket. Prathyusha gave 60 odd runs in 8 overs in one of the games. "How did Monica get selected over Shikha Pandey?" is a question that is being asked.

While the majority believe that the stylish southpaw of yesteryears has been hard done by, there are a few critics who feel that there were some loose ends from his side too.

"Some girls complained that he will at times switch himself off during training sessions. Also some girls felt under-appreciated. Someone like Rajeshwari Gayakwad was not even once praised despite she being the best bowler during the series," a member from the anti-Raman camp said.

Another allegation against Raman is that he unwittingly gave gloveswoman Nuzhat Parveen a debut cap without knowing that she has already played both ODIs and T20Is for India. "How come a coach forgot that one of his players have already played. To be fair to Neetu, was Raman also doing his homework." (PTI)



Ramesh Powar

Prima donna culture of Indian women's team needs to end: Raman's letter to Ganguly, Dravid

NEW DELHI

OUSTED Indian women's cricket team coach WV Raman has written to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, alleging that there is a "prima donna culture" in the national team and it needs to change. In the mail that has also been marked to National Cricket Academy head Rahul Dravid, Raman has also offered to present a roadmap for women's cricket in the country, if asked.

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

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

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

While Raman's letter didn't name anyone, it is understood that he has spoken extensively about the star culture that prevails in the team, which he said is probably doing more harm than good. While repeated calls to Raman went unanswered, a source in the know of things did admit that a mail to both Ganguly and Dravid has gone out. It is learnt that Raman has written about certain individuals who need to place the team above self.

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

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

"In case the president and secretary want to hear his opinion on allegations about his work ethic, he can explain." The letter has been copied to Dravid because Raman sincerely believes that he can contribute towards building a roadmap for Indian women's cricket.

"When it comes to building a coaching manual or a training program for cricketers, it is the NCA which takes charge. "So if Raman has any inputs with regards to training modules for upcoming women cricketers, the best person certainly is NCA head Rahul Dravid," the source said. (PTI)



ICC mulls expanding T20 World Cup to 20 teams

NEW DELHI

THE International Cricket Council (ICC) is reportedly considering expanding the T20 World Cup to 20 teams from its current number of 16.

While the 2021 tournament, which is currently scheduled to be held in India, will remain unchanged, the ICC is looking to add four more teams to the tournament from the 2024 edition, according to ESPNcricinfo.

Additionally, there is also speculation over the possibility of the ICC expanding the number of teams participating in the 50-over World Cup. The World Cup had been reduced to 10 teams from 14 in 2019 with the argument that broadcasters would prefer the lesser participation so as to reduce one-sided matches.

However, there is now talk of getting the number back to 14 teams.

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in October-November but there is uncertainty over India hosting the tournament due to the deadly second wave of Covid-19 ravaging the country.

The pandemic had led to the indefinite postponement of the Indian Premier League (IPL) last week. The United Arab Emirates has been kept as a standby venue for the tournament. (ANS)

Atletico's can clinch Spanish title with win if Madrid stumble

BARCELONA

WITH a little help from their hated local rivals, Atletico Madrid can clinch its first Spanish league title in seven years on Sunday.

Atletico leads defending champion Real Madrid by two points with two matches remaining and will win the title if it beats Osasuna at home and Madrid fails to win at Athletic Bilbao. Any other combination of results will send it to the final round, and possibly bring Barcelona back into the mix.

Atletico visits Valladolid and Madrid hosts Villarreal on the final weekend. Madrid holds the head-to-head tiebreaker if they finish even on points. Atletico protected its lead on Wednesday by beating Real Sociedad 2-1 with goals from forwards Yannick Carrasco and Angel Correa. Madrid kept pace on Thursday with a 4-1 victory at Granada.

"I didn't watch Atletico's game yesterday. Everyone is focused on their own thing," Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois said after beating Granada. "Atletico feel confident because they've won. We have to focus on what we do ourselves and win our games," Courtois said.

"There's another final coming up against Athletic this Sunday and after the game we'll look at the Atletico result." Before joining Madrid via a

stint at Chelsea, Courtois helped Atletico win its last league title in 2014. Since then, Barcelona and Madrid have returned to divvying up the titles between them.

Midfielder Koke Resurrección and defender José Giménez are the only holdouts from that championship team seven years ago. Koke made his 500th appearance for Atletico against So-

"The only thing that matters is the work I have put in all these years and have to keep going," Koke said about his milestone. "(But) I care about the team, not what I achieve individually, and I hope that we can have the perfect finish to the season by winning the league title."

The field to win the most tightly contested league in years was essentially reduced to two after both Barcelona and Sevilla failed to keep pace. Sevilla was always a long shot, but the team really fell out of touch after only one win in its last three games.

It is six points back, and Atletico holds the tiebreaker over Sevilla. But Barcelona had put itself right in the thick of things after going 19 matches without a loss, only for its defense to let it down over the past month.

The team has conceded seven goals in its last four games, including a loss and back-to-back draws. Barcelona's hugely disappointing 3-3 draw against Levante in a match it led both 2-0 and 3-2 on Tuesday left it four points behind Atletico. The team, which hosts Celta Vigo on Sunday, would need both Atletico and Madrid to fall apart to pull off a remarkable comeback.



Nadal takes revenge, crushes Zverev in Italy

ROME

EXACTLY one week on from his quarter-final loss to Alexander Zverev at the Madrid Open, Rafael Nadal took his revenge, defeating the German 6-3, 6-4 at the Italian Open on Friday.

Nadal will attempt to extend his unbeaten 11-0 semi-final record at the Foro Italico when he faces first-time ATP Masters 1000 semi-finalist Reilly Opelka on Saturday.

Opelka saved all four break points he faced to defeat Argentine qualifier Federico Delbonis 7-5, 7-6(2) on Grand Stand Arena.

Nadal, the nine-time champion, saved all eight break points he faced in the second set to win after two hours. The Spaniard's win ended a streak of three straight losses against the World No. 6 and improved his ATP head-to-head record against Zverev to 6-3.

"[I am] happy. I played a very solid match with not many mistakes, playing the way that I have to," Nadal said in his post-match interview. "[It is] an important victory for me against a great player."

Nadal is now just two wins away from equalling Novak Djokovic's record haul of 36 ATP Masters 1000 titles. The 34-year-old is also attempting to win 10 or more titles at a single event for the fourth time. Nadal already owns 13 Roland Garros crowns, 12 Barcelona trophies and 11 Monte-Carlo titles.

"(I will face) a big chance against a player who has almost an unreturnable serve. (Reilly) is playing well," Nadal said. "I need to be very focused with my serve and then try to be ready to accept [the situation] and be [engaged] on the return. That is what I am looking for."

In the first set, Nadal used his forehand to control the centre of the court and found consistent success behind his second-serve return. The 35-time Masters 1000 titlist raced into a 4-0 lead, but Zverev played with increased aggression from the baseline to reduce the gap.



BERLIN

ERLING Haaland and Jadon Sancho scored a brace each as Borussia Dortmund beat RB Leipzig 4-1 in the German Cup final for their fifth title in the event.

Sancho opened the scoring in the fifth and netted again on the stroke of half-time on Thursday, DPA reported.

Haaland got the second and a late fourth in his return from injury on a wet night behind closed doors in Berlin's Olympic Stadium.

Dortmund's young and talented team of coach Edin Terzic claimed their first Cup title since 2017 in their 10th final to somewhat salvage a season that saw them fail to challenge Bayern Munich for the Bundesliga title but at least close to a top four finish for a place in the next Champions League after some strong past weeks.

Leipzig and their Munich-bound coach Julian Nagelsmann failed to win a first title of any kind, with Leipzig having also lost the 2019 Cup final against Munich. Their 71st-minute goal from Dani Olmo was not enough on the night.

Borussia Dortmund players celebrate after winning the trophy in the German soccer cup (DFB Pokal) final match against RB Leipzig in Berlin, Germany late on Thursday. Dortmund won 4:1

They continued their poor record against Dortmund who have not lost against the eastern Germans in eight games and beat them 3-2 in the Bundesliga on Saturday.

"Unbelievable how we played today. We fought our way back over the past weeks. Compliments to the team," Dortmund captain Marco Reus told public broadcasters ARD.

"We are capable of special things when we need them. The first half was excellent, the second not so good, but we have the Cup." Leipzig forward Yussuf Poulsen said: "They scored three goals from three chances. We didn't defend good enough when it mattered. And they have quality players."

"You don't deserve to win when you trail 3-0. We had big chances but didn't manage to score."

Sancho scored a late winner on Saturday, and the England forward was on target again five minutes into Thursday's final when he curled into the right corner in an attack initiated by Reus who stole the ball from Kevin Kampl.

Leipzig lost the ball again in midfield in the 28th, Reus fed Haaland who kept possession against Dayot Upamecano who eventually fell, allowing Haaland the space to slot past Peter Gulacsi into the far left corner.

And it was 3-0 on the stroke of half-time when Sancho's tap-in off Reus stood after an initial offside call was nullified by the video assistant referee.

Leipzig had managed to fight from two down to a temporary 2-2 in Saturday's game, and they attacked with might again this time around after intermission, with substitutes Christopher Nkunku and Emil Forsberg hitting the top of the bar and left post, respectively.

Olmo eventually gave Leipzig hope by smashing into the top left corner from the edge of the area in the 71st but Haaland wrapped up matters in the 88th on the counter, with a little luck because his attempted left-footer hit his own right foot to go in. (ANS)