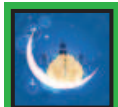


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WINDOWS



RAMZAN

TIMINGS

IFTAR (SAT)	06:37 PM
SAHER (SUN)	04:35 AM



WHO approves Moderna vaccine

GENEVA: The World Health Organisation has given the go-ahead for emergency use of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine. The mRNA vaccine from the US manufacturer joins vaccines from AstraZeneca, Pfizer-BioNTech and Johnson & Johnson in receiving the WHO's emergency use listing. Similar approvals for China's Sinopharm and Sino-vac vaccines are expected in the coming days and weeks, WHO has said. The greenlight for Moderna's vaccine, announced on Friday, took many months because of delays that WHO faced in getting data from the manufacturer.

Covid hits mango exports to Europe

MD AMEEN

VIJAYAWADA: The second wave of Covid is likely to hit Nuzvid Banginapalli variety mango exports to European countries as flight operations between India and some European countries have been suspended in view of sky rocketing Covid cases in the country. Banginapalli mango variety has very high demand in European countries. So far, 20 tonnes of mangoes were exported from Nuzvid this season. Normally, exports to Europe continue till the end of June. The Andhra Pradesh Agro Integrated Pack House Private Limited in Nuzvid is taking initiative to promote high quality mangoes to the US, Europe and the Gulf to help local farmers to get better prices compared to the local market. The State Government set up the Andhra Pradesh Agro Integrated Pack House Private Limited in Nuzvid in 2008 to improve the quality of the fruit and export to other States and countries. Mangoes are washed and cleaned in the Vapour Heat Treatment Plant in the Integrated pack house so that the mangoes will remain fresh for two weeks without losing their taste and quality. D Sanjeev, managing director of pack house, said Banginapalli variety mangoes have very good demand in European markets and the buyers pay high prices. Consumers in Vijayawada and Guntur generally don't spend more than Rs 30 for each mango.

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OXYGEN SHORTAGE

DOC, 11 COVID PATIENTS DIE IN BATRA HOSPITAL

NEW DELHI

IN a shocking incident highlighting oxygen scarcity in the national capital, 12 Covid-19 patients, including a senior doctor, died at a leading hospital here.

As Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal described the incident as painful, Batra Hospital Medical Director Dr SCL Gupta said one of the dead was the head of gastroenterology department Dr R K Imrani, who was under medical care for Covid-19. Gupta initially had put the toll at eight while the hospital authorities later updated it to 12.

"We had alerted authorities that we were running out of oxygen. Our desperate SOS did not get immediate response. When we received oxygen, eight patients were no more. Those people could have been rescued. This is not right," Gupta said. "This is happening in Delhi, the national capital and if it is happening here, you can imagine what is happening in other parts of the country," he said. **Continued on Page 4**



An ambulance arrives at Batra Hospital, a dedicated Covid facility, in New Delhi

HC pulls up Centre on oxygen supply

'Much water has gone above head', says court on Batra hospital deaths

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

THE Delhi High Court on Saturday directed the Centre to supply 490 metric tonnes of oxygen to Delhi during the day itself or face contempt action, taking note of 12 deaths at Batra Hospital in the city due to lack of oxygen supply. "Much water has gone above head. Now we mean business.

Enough is enough," a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli asserted while declining the Centre's request to defer the order till Monday or for half-an-hour. "Do you mean we will shut our eyes to people dying in Delhi?" the bench asked when the Centre's counsel said the oxygen crisis is before the Supreme Court also which will make its order public on Saturday.

Delhi likely to extend lockdown

PURNA SINGH
NEW DELHI

DELHI is likely to extend the Covid lockdown for another week, sources said on Saturday afternoon, adding that Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal could announce the decision on Sunday.

The national capital is under lockdown till 5 am on Monday, as the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) scrambles to contain a fresh wave of infections and a positivity rate that remains over 30 per cent.

"Coronavirus still continues to wreak havoc in the city. Public opinion is that lockdown should increase. So, the lockdown is being extended for one week," Kejriwal said last Sunday.

Continued on Page 4

18 killed in fire at Gujarat hospital

PM, CM express grief over loss of lives

SURAT: At least sixteen Covid-19 patients and two nurses were killed after a fire broke out at the ICU of The Welfare Hospital in Bharuch district on Saturday. Locals broke the glass windows and rescued the other patients. Sources said there were around 27 patients in the ICU ward at the time of the fire. They were shifted to nearby private hospitals.

Chief Minister Vijay Rupani appointed two senior bureaucrats — Additional Chief Secretary (labour and employment) Vipul Mittra and Commissioner (municipalities) Rajkumar Beniwal — to rush to Bharuch for an inquiry. Rupani said a judicial probe would also be initiated. An ex gratia aid of Rs 4 lakh would be given to each of the next of kin of the victims from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund, Rupani said, while expressing grief over the incident.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, expressed his condolences, saying, "Pained by the loss of lives due to a fire at a hospital in Bharuch. Condolences to the bereaved families."

Continued on Page 4

Inners for Winners



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Phase 3 vax drive in Delhi from tomorrow



Beneficiaries pose for picture while getting vaccinated against Covid-19, during Vaccination drive for age group from 18-45, at NMCM's Meenatai Thackeray Hospital in Nerul on Saturday

NEW DELHI

VACCINATION against coronavirus for people between 18 years and 44 years in the national capital will start on Monday, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said. The Delhi CM said that on Saturday the large-scale vaccination drive began in just one centre. He said they have received 4.5 lakh vaccine doses and have been distributed in all districts.

Kejriwal urged the people to come for vaccination after registration and appointment. "There is no walk-in for now. I request people to come only with registration and appointment"

jor issue of oxygen. SOS is coming from all hospitals. We have spoken in the court and written to the Centre that Delhi requires 976 tons of oxygen daily, but we have been allotted only 490 tons of oxygen. Yesterday we received only 312 tons. How will this work?"

"I request the decision-makers with folded hands to provide oxygen to Delhi. People are waiting outside of hospitals just because of the shortage of oxygen. We have prepared 5000 beds at Radha Soami Centre but only 150 functional as there is no oxygen. We prepared 1300 beds at Commonwealth Games and Yamuna Sports Complex. We have prepared 2500 beds in Burari. If we get oxygen, there will be 9000 oxygenated beds in Delhi within 24 hours," stated the Chief Minister.

US curbs on travel from India

Students, academics exempted



WASHINGTON

CERTAIN categories of students, academics, journalists and individuals have been exempted from the India travel ban announced by President Joe Biden, the US State Department said.

The exemptions were issued by Secretary of State Tony Blinken, hours after Joe Biden issued a proclamation restricting travel from India beginning May 4 because of the "extraordinarily high Covid-19 caseloads and multiple variants circulating in the country".

According to the US State Department, the travel ban exemption is in line with a similar exemption that the US has granted to some categories of travellers from Brazil, China, Iran and or South

Africa. In keeping with the Department of State's commitment to facilitate legitimate travel to the United States, Secretary Blinken decided today to apply the same set of National Interest Exceptions to India that he had previously applied to all other regional travel restrictions currently in effect as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the State Department said.

Students seeking to commence studies in the fall, academics, journalists and individuals who provide critical infrastructure support in countries affected by a geographic Covid-19 restriction may qualify for the exception, it said. This includes qualified applicants who have been present in India, Brazil, China, Iran, or South Africa, it added.

COMBATING CORONA

Dr FAUCI'S PRESCRIPTION

Biden's medical adviser suggests

TOTAL LOCKDOWN IN INDIA

NEW DELHI

TOP US epidemiologist Anthony Fauci has suggested a complete lockdown for a few weeks in India as an immediate step to contain the spread of Covid-19 as its deadly second wave shows no signs of ebbing.

Dr Fauci, in an interview, said another most important thing in the immediate is to get supplies of oxygen, medication, PPEs. He also said looking at the magnitude of the crisis, India should look at putting together a crisis group that would meet and start getting things organised.

Without naming any government, he said one of the things that should have been recognised that "victory was declared maybe too prematurely".

"Well, one of the things you really need to do, to the extent that you can, is shut down temporarily the country, I think is important. If



Literally, lock down so that you wind up having less spread. No one likes to lock down the country. Well, that's a problem when you do it for six months. But just a few weeks of lockdown could have a significant impact on the outbreak

— Dr Anthony Fauci, US Chief Medical Adviser

we want to time out and go back to what I said: there is the immediate, the intermediate, and the long range

(measures to contain the virus)."

"I think the most important thing in the immediate is to get oxygen, get supplies, get medication, get PPE, those kinds of things but also, one of the immediate things to do is to essentially call a shutdown of the country," said Dr Fauci, who is the Chief Medical Adviser to the Biden administration.

He said when China had a big explosion of coronavirus cases a year ago, they completely shut down.

Dr Fauci said it is not necessary to shut down for six months, but it can be a temporary one to put an end to the cycle of transmission. "So, one of the things to be considered is to temporarily shut down," he said.

"Literally, lock down so that you wind up having less spread. No one likes to lock down the country. Well, that's a problem when you do it for six months," he said. **Continued on Page 4**

Australia bans arrivals from India

SYDNEY

AUSTRALIAN residents and citizens who have been in India within 14 days of the date they plan to return home will be banned from entering Australia as of Monday and those who disobey will face fines and jail, government officials said.

The emergency determination, made late on Friday, is part of strict measures to stop travellers to Australia from the world's second most populous nation as it con-

Says offenders will face jail, fines



tends with a surge in Covid-19 cases and deaths. The decision was based on the proportion of overseas travellers in quarantine in

Australia, who have contracted the infection in India, according to Health Minister Greg Hunt.

"Failure to comply with

an emergency determination under the Biosecurity Act, 2015 may incur a civil penalty of 300 penalty units, five years' imprisonment or both," an official statement from the ministry said. "The CMO will consider the epidemiology in India and likely impacts on Australia's quarantine capacity and provide a further expert assessment of the public health risk to Australia to inform a proportionate response," it further read.

The restrictions come into effect from May 3 and

breaching the ban risks civil penalties and up to five years imprisonment, Health Minister Greg Hunt said in a statement.

"Our hearts go out to the people of India — and our Indian-Australian community. The friends and family of those in Australia are in extreme risk. Tragically, many are contracting Covid-19 and many, sadly, are dying every day," Hunt said. The Australian government will reconsider the restrictions on May 15, he said.

‘Axe on Eatala a ploy to cover up govt failure in containing Covid’

MLC Alugubelli Narsireddy demands probe into all land-grabbing cases in the State

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TELANGANA Legislative Council member Alugubelli Narsireddy condemned the sacking of Health Minister Eatala Rajender in the name of probing land-grabbing allegations against him. Narsireddy said that Eatala, being a Health Minister had done his best within the given constraints to deliver at a time when thousands of people thronging the Primary Health Centers (PHCs) for testing and vaccination were being turned away due to shortage of testing kits and vaccine doses.

“Beds in the government hospitals are full and private hospitals are turning people away from giving admissions if they fail to pay the sum demanded for the Covid treatment,” he said, adding transferring the Health department to Chief Minister who is not accessible even to the peoples’ representatives would create several hardships for people.

Narsireddy said it was not time for the Chief Minister to play politics in the name of taking action against one person and it would do no good to people during the troubled times.

Adding that CM’s action to order probe against Eatala was nothing but to evade responsibility and to cover up the State government failures in containing the spread of the deadly coronavirus in Telangana, he said the primary responsibility of the State government should be to question the laxity on the part of the Centre for failing in the preparedness and tackling the second wave of Covid and saving people of the State from it.

However, the Chief Minister’s action using the land-grabbing issue to serve his political interests does not benefit the people at a time when they were battling for their lives due to the fast-spreading Covid surge.

He demanded a probe by a sitting judge of the High Court against all the land grabbing cases in the State, saying, “I demanded for probe into the encroachments of government lands, Assigned lands, Kharaz lands, Endowments lands, Wakf lands, Church lands in Hyderabad and combined Ranga Reddy districts when the State government introduced revenue bill in the Legislative Council. But, to date, there is no response on the same,” he said.

The State government should order a probe into the land-grabbing complaints against all persons irrespective of their political and social affiliations, including Ministers, MLAs, MLCs, other peoples representatives, officials and politicians, he demanded.

Hospital pulled up for ‘fleecing’ Covid patients

HANS NEWS SERVICE
VIKARABAD

LOCAL MLA Methuku Anand made a surprise visit to the Mahaveer Hospital in Vikarabad district centre on Saturday and rapped the hospital authorities for charging high for Covid patients. After receiving a complaint from the public, the MLA visited the hospital and expressed his angst against the hospital management. Adding that the hospital staff has no awareness of the Government Order released recently which warns against fleecing Covid patients, the MLA immediately directed the District Collector and the District Medical and Health Officer to order an inquiry into the irregularities. He instructed the hospital management to provide a complete report regarding the treatment given to the Covid patients.

After interacting with the attendants and the family members of the Covid patients, the MLA asked them to take necessary precautions to remain safe from corona. Municipal chairperson Manjula, MP Chandrakala, town president Prabhakar Reddy, mandal president Kamal Reddy, Sarpanches Union president Purushottam Reddy, councillor Ananth Reddy and former ZPTC Muttahar Sharif accompanied the legislator. Later, the MLA distributed Ramzan gifts to Muslims at the Amedkar Bhavan. In the wake of the corona second wave, he urged the Muslims to celebrate the festival by following the Covid guidelines strictly.

EATALA’S AIDES STAGE RASTA ROKO



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

- Say the land-grabbing allegations against the TRS leader is a conspiracy to malign him
- Police evict the protestors with the traffic coming to standstill
- Eatala through Twitter urges his followers to show restraint and stay calm

THE supporters of Eatala Rajender staged a protest here on Saturday to show solidarity with him on a day when a probe began into land grabbing allegations against him. The Minister’s

supporters staged a sit-in on the highway at Shameerpet on the outskirts of Hyderabad condemning the allegations levelled against him.

Raising slogans in support of the Telangana Sloghtra Samithi (TRS) leader, they sat on the road causing traffic jam. They claimed that the alle-

gations of land grabbing against Eatala were false and were part of a conspiracy to malign him. As the protestors refused to end the road blockade, the police forcibly evicted them and shifted them to the nearest police station. Meanwhile, Eatala appealed to his supporters to stay calm. He took to Twitter to appeal to people, workers and leaders of his Huzurabad constituency to show restraint. He urged them not to come to Hyderabad in view of the Covid pandemic and face problems. His appeal came amid reports that several of his supporters from the constituency were heading to Hyderabad to show solidarity with him.

Police have stepped up security in the constituency, especially in Eatala’s native village Kamapur in view of possible protests by the Minister’s supporters.

Produce evidence, Talasani demands Sanjay

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

TAKING exception to the allegations of Bharatiya Janata Party State chief Bandi Sanjay Kumar against the Ministers of Telangana Rashtra Samithi, Animal Husbandry Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav on Saturday said that the BJP leaders should not talk irresponsibly and should produce evidence if they had any.

Addressing a press conference here at Telangana Bhavan along with Government Whip Balka Suman, MLC Sreenivas Reddy and others, Talasani

criticised the BJP leader for his remarks on the State government in handling the Covid crisis in the State.

Talasani said, “The entire world is watching what is happening in the country’s capital and what the media is talking about. Making baseless allegations against the Chief Minister shows a cheap mentality. You should have known the responsibilities if you were part of a government, but you have never been in the governance. Talk responsibly in the press conference,” said Talasani referring to Bandi Sanjay. The Minister asked the BJP leaders to show evidence on the alle-

gations of land encroachments against the Ministers.

Government Whip Balka Suman said that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao was taking up review of the situation every day. Even on Saturday, he had ordered the Chief Secretary to take up review three times a day. The BJP leaders should appreciate the efforts of the government. “Our Chief Minister had objected when there were adverse comments on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media. This is the difference between the TRS and the BJP leaders,” said Suman.

Why Eatala? Why not Malla Reddy, Muthireddy?

- Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao once again brings up the encroachment of lands belonging to Dalits in Keesara, and Gandhi Trust lands and Wakf lands
- Questions the swift action by KCR in sacking Eatala and leaving out Muthireddy and Malla Reddy out of his radar



HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

REACTING strongly to the sacking of Health Minister Eatala Rajender, the Congress party on Saturday asked why Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao did not order an inquiry into the allegations of land-grabbing against Minister CH Malla Reddy and MLA Muthireddy Yadagiri Reddy.

Senior Congress leader V Hanumantha Rao slammed the Chief Minister over the issue of encroachment of assigned lands by Eatala Rajender. Referring to the inquiry, Rao asked the Chief Minister as to why he ordered the inquiry so hastily and why he did not take a similar action when allegations were levelled against Min-

ister CH Malla Reddy and MLA Muthireddy Yadagiri Reddy. Hanumantha Rao asked the CM as to why the Minister did not respond on the issue of encroachment of lands belonging to Dalits in Keesara and the encroachment of Gandhi Trust lands and Wakf lands? He wondered if the open criticism of the Central government by Eatala two days ago was the main reason behind the swift reaction of KCR? He demanded the CM to order an inquiry into the land-grabbing by all political parties instead of targeting Eatala alone. Rao advised the CM to focus on curbing the spread of coronavirus in the State.

He said that the corona was spreading rapidly and the private hospitals were fleeing the patients.

Zoos, national parks closed from today

- All tiger reserves, zoos, national parks in TS and AP to stay off limits for visitors
- The decision was taken following NTCA and CZA advisories to the State authorities against the backdrop of increasing Covid infections in the country

HANS NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD

ZOO parks, national parks, tiger reserves, wildlife sanctuaries and other protected areas in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh will be off for the visitors. A decision to this effect has been taken by the Forest department authorities following two separate alerts received from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) on Saturday.

Following this, the Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad, Kakatiya Zoological Park, Warangal, Karwal and Amrabad Tiger Reserves in Telangana; Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam, Venkateswara Zoological Park, Tirupati, Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem part of the tiger reserve in Andhra



Pradesh; and, all the national parks and wildlife sanctuaries and protected in areas will be closed with effect from May 2.

The NTCA and CZA have said that given the rapid spread of coronavirus in the country, the State wildlife and zoo authorities have been asked to close all the zoo parks, national parks, tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries for visitors till further orders to control the spread of Covid pandemic.

The NTCA said that the advisory

has been issued because of the spread of the Covid-19 in the country and reports of the death of lions due to Covid-19. It felt that there are possibilities of spread of the virus amongst animals in national parks, sanctuaries and other protected areas. Also transmission of the virus from humans to animals and vice-versa.

Against this backdrop, the States have been advised to close the national parks and sanctuaries and other protected areas for tourists

immediately. The State authorities have been asked to take immediate preventive measures to stop the transmission and spread of the virus from humans to animals and vice-versa, in national parks, sanctuaries and other protected areas. Further, the State wildlife authorities were asked to reduce the human-wildlife interface.

The NTCA advisory said that there are reports of transmission from both symptomatic and asymptomatic carriers, human be-

ings, of the disease and the Covid-19 affected persons may or may not exhibit symptoms. Hence, the field functionaries must be Covid negative when they are deputed for duty and should follow the Covid-appropriate behaviour such as maintain social distancing, wearing of mask, proper screening, regular sanitisation etc.

That apart, steps should also be taken to restrict the movement of people to national parks, sanctuaries and protected areas. The Forest authorities were asked to constitute a task force, a rapid action force with field managers, veterinary doctors frontline staff to manage the situation as quickly as possible, and create a 24/7 reporting mechanism with a nodal officer for swift management of any cases noticed, besides setting up essential services for emergency treatment of animals and their release into their natural habitats as and when required.

The Forest authorities asked to enhance disease surveillance, mapping and monitoring system through coordinated efforts among various departments. They were also asked to maintain all other stipulations issued by the Union Health Ministry in the movement of villagers etc in and around the national parks, sanctuaries and other protected areas.

IT’S HIGH TIME TO DECLARE MEDICAL EMERGENCY!

LEGAL CIRCLES
DR HC UPADHYAY

THOUGH after bitter experience of Emergency clamped down by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the very word, Emergency has been abhorred by the people of India, still the fact is that this much-dreaded provision still remains intact in the Constitution of India. Besides, the Disaster Management Act, 2005 also enables the government to proclaim the Medical Emergency in any part of the country or all over the country.

Going by the people’s outcry for shortage of medicines, hospital beds and oxygen to cope up with the rapidly spreading Covid-19 pandemic in its new ‘Avatar’, the demand for doctors, nurses and para-medical workers is expected to multiply manifold in the near future. The incidence of positivity of Covid-19 among the people has been increasing day after day to an alarming numbers. Therefore, several high courts and the Supreme Court have flagged red signal to the State and Central governments and advised the Executive to spare no stone turned to fight the danger.

However, on the face of it, the governments alone cannot tackle the massive problem of Covid-19. Besides, the government machinery including the defence and para-military forces, the

public spirited volunteers from the civil population will have to be involved in the fight against the pandemic on a war-footing level.

Unfortunately, some fringe elements, including those nurturing Jihad, divisive, separatist and extremist dreams are too busy to encash this ‘opportunity’ to ensure that the country suffers the most. These elements not only engage in vicious propaganda through media and digital platforms, but also ‘celebrate’ the gloomy situation by spreading fake news and rumours, thereby adding fuel to the fire.

The idea behind such nefarious activities is, obviously to create panic in the society and ill-will towards the lawfully elected government of the day. The present blame-game between the so-called well-wishers of people is nothing but a clever ploy to win over the gullible people and make them believe that the popular governments are doing nothing to save their life. And to ensure this, these anti-national forces would go to any extent; from looting the medicines to their black marketing and scaring away the needy to approach hospitals.

True, there is a dearth of doctors, nurses and para-medical staff as on today and is likely to become acute in the days to come. That is why, considering the overall situation, it is high time that the Central government takes full-con-



trol of the situation in its hands. This is possible only by invoking the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 after consulting the States. The law gives the Union government sufficient powers to deal with the emergency situation notwithstanding whether some ‘adamant’ States extend their co-operation or not.

Last but not the least, to make the Medical Emergency successful, the governments should not hesitate to draw required talent from the vast civilian population. All other activities like trade, commerce and industry should be kept on the back burner dur-

ing Medical Emergency and good Samaritans should be encouraged to come forward to serve the nation in the critical times. Later, after the normalcy returns, such volunteers should be rewarded fabulously and their services should be recognised on par with the services of the defence and security forces.

Dispose of EP within six months: SC

In a bid to reduce delays in execution proceedings, the Apex court directed the executing courts to dispose of execution proceedings within six months from the date of filing and

added that this limitation could only be extended after noting reasons for the delay. The court also issued a slew of directions to facilitate timely disposal of EPs.

Awesome ‘online’ experience

While on one hand the Supreme Court of India has come out with a vision document to streamline the virtual hearings of the court cases throughout the country and invited comments, suggestions and opinions from the public, the prevailing State of affairs in the matter of online hearing through video conferencing has been, to say the least ‘dismal.’

The legal fraternity, particularly the practicing lawyers, seems to be divided on the ratio of efficacy of the online hearing cases. One side which believes that the problems of connectivity, distortion of communication and mismanagement are the incurable factors, the other side is still hopeful and thinks that these are only the teething troubles and would be over soon.

However, a lot more needs to be done in this direction. A dedicated satellite to cater to the needs of the legal fraternity and judiciary exclusively seems to be the first requirement to overcome the connectivity issue. Further, equipping the stakeholders namely, judges, court staff

and lawyers with the electronic gadgets having latest technology and the knowledge of their operation is also a must to ensure an uninterrupted working of the court proceedings. Above all, there has to be an attitudinal change among the users of the online facility because only the will, will find a way.

Your lordship, you too!!

In a science-shaking judgment, the Karnataka High Court has observed that a former judge of the same court allegedly attempted to get the Governor’s post by bribing an astrologer has lowered the prestige of judges and also degraded the image of the Governor’s post.

The said retired judge by her own admission had shelled a hefty sum of Rs 8.5 crore to an astrologer who had taken her for a ride by his glib talk promising the governorship.

Indeed, this incident should not be seen as an aberration of the system, but must be considered with due seriousness. The High Court would do better to institute an inquiry into her conduct before, during and after her judgeship of the said court and dig out her past activities, the people who became hand tools for her and so on to convince the public at large that the judiciary of the country does not tolerate such black sheep.

Evolve national consensus to tackle Covid: Sonia

NEW DELHI

CONGRESS Interim President Sonia Gandhi in a video statement on Saturday asked the Union Government to evolve a national consensus to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

In a five minute video message, she offered condolences to the departed souls and her good

wishes to the people. She urged the Union Government to evolve a political consensus on a policy to tackle the spread of the pandemic nationally.

She said that the time has come that the central and state governments wake up and discharge their duties. "The present situation has shaken the humanity, oxygen shortage, lack of

medicine and beds, the situation is like this in many states. The time has come that union and states should wake up and work together and fulfill your responsibility," Sonia said in the message.

"My first request to the central government would be to transfer Rs 6,000 to migrants, testing should be increased, free

vaccine is key to keep people safe," she added. Sonia Gandhi's message comes in the wake of the Covid surge which crossed 4 lakh cases on Saturday. India witnessed highest spike of 4,01,999 fresh cases of Covid-19 and 3,523 fatalities due to coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHF) said on

Saturday. It was the first time when India crossed four lakh figure of Covid cases in a day. For the last nine days, over three lakh Covid cases were being reported while over 3,000 casualties have been reported for the past four days. On Friday, India witnessed 3,498 deaths, second highest fatalities in a day. (IANS)



Visitors ride a roller coaster at Heide Park Resort in Soltau, Germany on Saturday. The Administrative Court of L'neburg has ruled that the amusement park may start operations with a hygiene concept. Admission is only possible for guests from the age of six with a negative Corona test.

UP teachers threaten to stall local bodies polls' counting

LUCKNOW

IN view of the surging cases of Covid-19 infections in Uttar Pradesh, the UP Teachers' Federation and workers' organisations have refused to be present during vote counting for the panchayat elections. The State Election Commissioner has been sent a letter as an ultimatum by the UP Teachers' Federation to postpone the counting of votes otherwise teachers and staff will boycott it. After this decision by the employees, there is trouble brewing over the counting of votes.

The teachers' federation alleged that from training to polling, the State Election Commission did not follow the requisite Covid-19 norms anywhere, which has made the situation more frightening. The federation has released a list claiming that nearly 706 teachers and staff engaged in election duty have lost their lives due to Covid-19 infection, with a large number of teachers still battling the disease.

There is no information about how many persons in the families of these Covid-hit teachers have been infected so the counting of votes to be held on May 2 should



be halted. According to the teachers' leaders, on April 12 the teachers' union had urged the State Election Commission to follow the requisite guidelines for protection against Covid-19 before the state local body elections, but no arrangements were made. Teachers and staff were sent on poll duty at the time of the pandemic without precautionary measures due to which a large number of teachers and staff were infected with the virus.

Harikishor Tiwari, President of State Employees' Joint Coun-

cil; Kamlesh Mishra, President of State Employees Federation, Indira Bhawan, Jawahar Bhawan Employees Federation and State Employees Federation President, Satish Kumar Pandey, Class IV Employees Federation Chairman, Ramraj Dubey, including leaders of several organisations, said after virtual interaction on Friday that Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc in the state. Expressing anger at the state government's "anti-teacher" approach, these teachers' bodies have decided to boycott vote

counting for the panchayat elections on May 2.

The leaders said that the entire election process in the state was going on contrary to the Covid-19 guidelines so more and more teachers got infected during election duty. A large number of teachers and staff have died. Thousands of teachers and staff have been infected with the virus who are undergoing treatment and are in self-quarantine at their homes. Despite Covid, assigning them duty for the vote counting is putting their lives in danger. The meeting was moderated by the Council's General Secretary, Shiv Baran Singh Yadav.

The Covid-19 protocols will be strictly followed during counting of votes at the district headquarters. On behalf of the State Election Commission, all District Magistrates have been instructed to strictly follow the 13-point guidelines for the counting of votes. Local bodies have been asked to take special care of hygiene and the Health Department must maintain medical arrangements. S.K. Singh, Special Officer, has issued guidelines on behalf of the State Election Commission. (IANS)

ISRO STAFF AT VARIOUS CENTRES AFFECTED BY COVID

VENKATACHARI JAGANNATHAN
CHENNAI

THE second wave of Covid-19 sweeping across the country has also affected the various space centres and not just the rocket launch centre in Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh, K.Sivan, Secretary, Department of Space said.

Sivan who is also the Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) told IANS: "Several employees in our various centres have been affected because of the coronavirus and not only the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota."

He said the centres have been asked to work with 50 per cent staff capacity and the remaining people to work from home.

"Only employees manning critical functional areas have been asked to attend office. The ISRO centres have been asked to follow the local government's norms," Sivan said.



In Bengaluru where the ISRO's headquarters and some centres are located only skeletal staff attend office.

An official in SDSC on the condition of anonymity told IANS that there are about 3,000 em-

ployees with their family members and daily about 30 people are tested positive for coronavirus.

"About 200 staff would have been infected with coronavirus. Only those who work in critical

areas attend to duty," the official said.

According to the official, one of the ISRO guest houses has been converted into a quarantine centre/Covid care centre so that some employees not having support infrastructure at their homes are admitted.

Many employees of SDSC had been allotted the poll duty when the bypoll for Tirupati Lok Sabha constituency held in April had been infected with Covid.

SDSC Director A. Rajarajan was not available for comments and the steps taken to mitigate the spread when contacted by IANS.

Meanwhile, Sivan said ISRO's centre in Mahendragiri in Tamil Nadu is producing oxygen and supplies to the state government. "Our production capacity is very small. The Kerala government too has asked us for oxygen supplies," Sivan said. (IANS)

Over 4.5L postal votes in Kerala may delay poll results

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

EVEN though counting of votes for the 140-member Kerala Assembly will begin at sharp 8 am on Sunday, the final results could well be delayed till early evening.

The reason for this is the huge number of postal ballots and compared to the 2016 assembly polls, there are over 4.54 lakh postal votes this time.

Incidentally this is 3.5 lakhs more than the 2016 polls.

This time for the first time and on account of Covid, people over 80 years of age were given the opportunity to use the postal ballot facility and as a result close to 2.97 lakhs used this method to exercise their franchise and the remaining postal votes are those of election officials. Moreover, time is still there for postal votes to be returned and can happen till 7 a.m Sunday morning.



Incidentally in the last year's Bihar assembly elections, even though there were 2.5 lakh postal votes, the results got de-

layed and came in the evening, so Kerala with almost double that number, the suspense could well be delayed. (IANS)

Poonawalla to begin vaccine production in UK: Report

NEW DELHI

IN a bid to meet its supply commitments, the Serum Institute of India's (SII) Chief Executive Officer Adar Poonawalla on Friday said that the company is planning to start vaccine production in the UK, the media reported.

While speaking to the Times, the CEO of Pune-based pharmaceutical company said that the company will make an official announcement in the upcoming days.

"The level of expectation and aggression is really unprecedented. It's overwhelming," Poonawalla told the publication. Recently, SII had borrowed money from banks instead of waiting for the government's aid to arrive to scale up the production of its Covishield vaccine.

The company assumed that the funding from the government will reach them very soon, probably by this week. Covishield has been developed by the Oxford University and AstraZeneca and manufactured by the SII.

Jailed ex-RJD MP Shahabuddin succumbs to Covid-19

NEW DELHI

DON-TURNED-POLITICIAN and former Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MP Mohammad Shahabuddin passed away at a hospital in Delhi where he was undergoing treatment for Covid-19, officials said on Saturday.

The 53-year-old was serving a life sentence in a 2004 double murder case. He was shifted to the Tihar jail in 2018. Sandeep Goyal, the Director General of Tihar jail, said in a statement, "Information has been received from the DDU (Deen Dayal Upadhyay) Hospital about the death of Mohammad Shahabuddin, an inmate of Delhi prison."

The official said that Shahabuddin was suffering from Covid-19 and was admitted to the DDU Hospital on April 20. Earlier on Wednesday, the Delhi High Court had directed the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government and the prison authorities to ensure proper medical supervision and care of Shahabuddin.

Justice Prathiba M. Singh had said that the doctor on duty for looking after Covid patients shall



monitor Shahabuddin's health condition and treatment.

A court in Bihar had awarded a 10-year sentence to Shahabuddin for his involvement in an Arms Act case. The former RJD Lok Sabha MP from Bihar's Siwan had then challenged the court's order and filed an appeal before the Supreme Court seeking appropriate orders.

Later, the Supreme Court had sought a detailed response from the Bihar government after hearing the petition filed by him challenging his conviction.

Shahabuddin's senior lawyer had told the apex court that his client has been in jail for the last 14 years in a murder case. (IANS)

Gambhir arranges 200 oxygen concentrators for people in Delhi

NEW DELHI

AMID the oxygen shortage in the national capital, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Lok Sabha MP from East Delhi Gautam Gambhir has arranged 200 oxygen concentrators to strengthen the fight against the deadly virus which has claimed so many lives across the country.

These concentrators will be made available to all those suffering from mild to moderate Covid infection and are in home isolation.

The oxygen concentrators will be provided to people residing anywhere in Delhi and can be collected from Gambhir's office at Jagriti Enclave in his constituency by providing a doctor's prescription, recent saturation level of the patient and Aadhar details. In addition to this, a post-dated cheque is also needed as security to prevent black marketing of the unit.

"We are not charging anything from people. The cheque can be collected upon returning the unit within seven to 10 days. People belonging to economically weaker sections can fur-



nish their EWS certificate instead of the cheque," said an aide of Gambhir.

Talking about the initiative, Gambhir said, "Right now the biggest concern for the people of Delhi is shortage of oxygen especially for those who are in the process of finding a bed in hospitals. People are running left, right and centre for oxygen cylinders. Refilling them is another tough task for the families of the patient. These concentrators will help those who are suffering from mild to moderate Covid and also those who are waiting for a bed in any hospital."

Gambhir alleged that the

Delhi government has abdicated its responsibility completely and is now just focusing on blame games.

"They don't even have something as basic as tankers to pick up oxygen from other states. They spent all the money for oxygen plants on ads. Other states are setting up oxygen war rooms but Arvind Kejriwal is busy blaming the Centre on TV and in the courts," he said.

Gambhir stated, "Delhi does not deserve this chaos and I will do whatever it takes, whatever is in my power to help the people in their fight against one of the toughest battles we have seen in recent times. We are in the process of arranging more concentrators and we will try to help as many as we can. Delhi has to stand together if we want a fighting chance against this deadly disease."

Earlier this week, the Delhi High Court had questioned how Gambhir is able to distribute medicines being used to treat Covid-19 and procure them in large quantities. Last week, Gambhir started distributing 'Fabflu' and 'oxygen cylinder' to patients. (IANS)

Customs foil red sanders smuggling to Taiwan

CHENNAI

CHENNAI Sea Customs officials foiled an attempt to smuggle red sanders valued about Rs 5 crore to Taiwan.

The Customs department said, on receipt of specific intelligence, officials intercepted an export container concealed with 6.4 t of red sanders valued Rs 5 crore and seized it.

The prohibited goods were camouflaged as pavement stone and declared for shipment to Taiwan, to escape from Customs examination check, the Customs said. (IANS)



All eyes on YSRCP nominee’s majority only

- The party expects more than 5 lakh margin despite high voltage campaign by TDP and BJP
- Over 11 lakh votes polled in the bypoll in which 28 candidates are in the fray
- Main fight is between YSRCP and TDP
- BJP, Congress and CPM candidates also contested the election



HANS NEWS SERVICE
TIRUPATI

AMID widespread expectations on ruling YSRCP’s big win in Tirupati Lok Sabha byelection, all eyes are on the majority by which its candidate Dr M Gurumoorthy is going to win the seat. The byelection was held on April 17, following the vacancy caused with the demise of sitting YSRCP MP B Durga Prasada Rao.

Out of 17,10,698 voters enrolled in the electoral rolls 11,02,068 votes were polled with an average of 64.42 per cent. Counting will be held for four Assembly segments in Nellore and for another three segments in Tirupati while the final result will be declared by the returning officer and Nellore collector K V N Chakradhar Babu.

In all, 28 candidates have contested the election from this reserved constituency. Of them, the main fight took place between YS-

RCP candidate M Gurumoorthy, TDP candidate Panabaka Lakshmi while BJP candidate K Ratna Prabha who is supported by its alliance partner Jana Sena, Congress candidate Dr Chinta Mohan and CPM candidate Nellore Yadagiri are also in the fray trying their luck.

From the beginning, YSRCP was said to have targeted a majority of 5 lakh votes for its candidate and put in all efforts to achieve this target. The party strongly believed that the welfare schemes of their government and the charisma of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy would fetch them a record majority.

TDP held a high voltage campaign exposing the failures of ruling YSRCP. Apart from senior leaders and MPs, the party national president N Chandrababu Naidu and national general secretary N Lokesh camped in the constituency for almost a week

and held separate roadshows and public meetings in all seven segments.

BJP also carried out a frontal attack on the YSRCP government by its senior leaders. Even the party national president JP Nadda campaigned at Naidupet while its alliance partner Pawan Kalyan participated in Tirupati. The party’s state co-incharge Sunil Deodhar even levelled a serious allegation against YSRCP candidate saying that he is a Christian and having no right to contest from SC reserved seat.

Congress state president S Sailaja Nath and working president N Tulasi Reddy campaigned in favour of party nominee Chinta Mohan. CPM and CPI leaders like K Rama Krishna, K Narayana, P Madhu and others participated in the campaign in support of Nellore Yadagiri.

Opposition parties levelled serious allegations of rigging by the YSRCP on the polling day. BJP and TDP candidates have even approached the High Court seeking repolling in Tirupati Assembly segment but the court gave a go ahead for the counting.

Against this backdrop, the ruling party leaders and workers are expecting that it will be a cakewalk for their candidate Gurumoorthy. They are expecting that he will win by a margin of 5 lakh plus votes easily. Though the exit polls also revealed the same predictions, the exact votes and vote share each candidate will be getting is to be seen on Sunday.

5 patients die in private hospital, oxygen shortage blamed

- The hospital in Kurnool city reported to have been admitting Covid patients without permission from the district administration
- District Collector says only 2 patients died, but not due to oxygen scarcity
- Insists that there is adequate stock of oxygen and beds in the district

HANS NEWS SERVICE
KURNOOL

THE death of five Covid-19 patients allegedly due to scarcity of medical oxygen at a private hospital in the city on Saturday sent shockwaves across the district. The tragedy took place at KS Care hospital, which authorities said, has no permission to treat Covid patients. However, district administration denied the oxygen shortage is the reason for the deaths.

Sources said five patients who were admitted to treat the Covid succumbed to the pandemic due to non-availability of oxygen. In no time the news spread like wildfire in the district. The other in-patients in the hospital being treated for Covid were gripped by panic after the news broke.

As the news went viral, district collector G Veera



District collector G Veera Pandiyan and Superintendent of Police Dr Fakkeerappa Kagineelli inspecting the oxygen stocks at KS Care hospital in Kurnool on Saturday

Pandiyan ordered the district medical and health officer (DMHO) Dr Rama Giddaiah, Aarogyasri district coordinator and a team of doctors to visit the hospital and probe the incident. The teams visited the hospital and submitted a report to the district collector.

Later, speaking to media persons, the collector said that only two patients had died in the incident. He said that the KS Care hospital was admitting the Covid patients without permission. The other patients were immediately shifted to Kurnool Government General Hospital. A criminal case has been registered against the

managing director of KS Care hospital and further action would be taken according to Disaster Management Act, he said.

He further said that only 28 hospitals, including three government hospitals in Adoni, Nandyal and Kurnool, have been designated as Covid care hospitals. “There is no scarcity of beds and oxygen at the notified Covid care hospitals. Around 2,900 beds are available at the notified hospitals where 1,625 Covid patients are being treated. Of the remaining 1,275 beds, 900 oxygen beds are available,” he explained.

The collector also insisted

that there was no scarcity of oxygen. On an average 25 metric tonnes of oxygen is being consumed every day. “But we have 40 metric tonnes of oxygen available. Stringent action will be taken if rumours are spread over scarcity of oxygen,” he warned.

Veera Pandian said a team has been constituted to enquire into the death of two patients adding that they might have died of other causes as oxygen stocks were available in the hospital. The collector, accompanied by the SP Dr Fakkeerappa Kagineelli visited the hospital and inspected the premises.



Lokesh calls for Covid assistance to workers

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

TDP national general secretary and MLC Nara Lokesh on Saturday demanded the Jagan Mohan Reddy government to come to the rescue of the workers as they were suffering financially in the second wave of Corona virus infections. Lokesh urged the government for extending Covid assistance in order to provide some relief to the families of the workers who were facing untold hardships. Work opportunities should be created for ensuring continuing livelihoods for the workers since they have worked hard in various projects.

In a statement here, Lokesh extended his May Day greetings and recalled how the International Workers Day always stood as a symbol of how exploitation, dictatorship and oppression would not be acceptable to the people.



Empty oxygen tankers being loaded onto Indian Air Force cargo plane at Vijayawada airport on Saturday

2 empty oxygen tankers airlifted to Odisha

HANS NEWS SERVICE
AMARAVATI

SPECIAL officer for Covid Care Centres M T Krishna Babu said that Andhra Pradesh is getting 170 metric tonnes of oxygen per day from RINL and total of around 250 MT daily from the plants available in the state.

Krishna Babu said balance oxygen supplies are from Bellary, Chennai and Angul in Odisha. Even though AP was allotted 100 MT from Odisha the state is not able to get full quantity as tankers take three-and-a-half days per

- An IAF cargo flight takes the tankers from Vijayawada airport
- The filled tankers will reach the State by road
- Covid Care Centres’ Spl officer Krishna Babu says AP was allotted 100 MT oxygen from Odisha

one way trip. In view of this, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy requested the Centre to send Air Force cargo flight to airlift oxygen tankers to Odisha. As per the re-

quest, one cargo flight landed at Vijayawada airport on Saturday. Krishna Babu said that they sent two oxygen tankers with a capacity of 45 MT on Saturday on a trial basis. He said green channel would be provided for the return journey of loaded oxygen tankers from Odisha. Oxygen tankers will be airlifted regularly from Sunday.

The special officer said 470 MT of oxygen was allotted to AP. The state government has been supplying oxygen to 20,000 patients both in state and private hospitals.

Delhi likely to extend lockdown

Continued from P1

This morning the city recorded over 27,000 new cases and 375 deaths in 24 hours - the 13th straight day with more than 20,000 cases per day. The city’s active caseload is now nearly one lakh - more than double the previous high of around 44,000 recorded in mid-November last year.

The frightening surge in Covid cases over the past weeks - exactly two months ago Delhi reported fewer than 200 new cases in 24 hours - has brought the city’s healthcare system to its knees. Hospitals are overflowing, doctors are traumatised, and medicines and oxygen are in short supply.

The centre, which allocates medical oxygen based on requirement and its own assessment, had allotted Delhi 490 metric tonnes per day against a request of 700 MT. The Delhi government told the Delhi High Court that it had received only 400 MT of that amount.

DR FAUCI’S PRESCRIPTION

Continued from P1

“But just for a few weeks of lockdown could have a significant impact on the dynamics of the outbreak,” he added.

Some states have imposed a lockdown. Last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said lockdown should be the “last resort” to deal with the raging pandemic and asked states to convince migrant workers to stay put at their places of work with a guarantee for their lives and livelihood.

Breaching all previous records, India on Saturday hit a record daily high with over 4 lakh new infections, while the active cases crossed the 32-lakh mark.

The second wave of the coronavirus has been devastating, infecting lakhs and killing thousands every day for the past few days. There have been cases where people have died due to lack of medical facilities, including oxygen. In many cases, fami-

lies have to arrange oxygen for their patients as they are not able to get admission in hospitals.

“I heard from some of the people in the street bringing their mothers and their fathers and their sisters and their brothers searching for oxygen. They seem to think there really was not any organisation, any central organisation,” Dr Fauci said.

Underlining that vaccination plays a crucial role in handling the coronavirus situation, Dr Fauci said if India, a country of 1.4 billion people, has fully vaccinated only two per cent of its total population, then it has a very long way to go.

“You’ve got to get supplies. You’ve got to make contractual arrangements with the various companies that are out there in the world. There are many companies that now have vaccines. I think you have to negotiate with them to try and get a commitment,” he said.

18 killed in fire at Gujarat hospital

Continued from P1

Since last year, the hospital on the Jambusar bypass is being used to treat Covid-19 patients of the district.

Fire department sources said there were around 27 Covid patients in the ICU, some on ventilators. The fire broke out at around 1 am on Saturday.

Fire department officials believed that a short circuit might have led to the blaze when the patients were sleeping. After noticing the fire, the hospital staff tried to rescue the patients who were on ventilators. The locals, after hearing about the incident, also rushed to the spot to help.

Fire tenders, too, reached immediately and controlled the blaze within half-an-hour.

The rescued patients were rushed to private hospitals in Vaghra and Jambusar among other areas.

Bharuch District Collector M D Modiya, Bharuch district superintendent of police Rajendrasinh Chudasma and political leaders also reached the spot after learning about the incident.

TMC, BJP confident of victory

Continued from P1

But who will get the magic figure of 147 in the house of 294 will be known only after the votes are counted on Sunday.

With regard to Nandigram, the TMC grabbed the seat from the Left in a 2009 bypoll, and then retained it in 2011 and 2016. The agitations against land acquisition in Nandigram and Hooghly’s Singur in 2007-2008 catapulted Banerjee to the pedestal of power in Bengal in 2011.

In the 2011 Assembly polls, when Banerjee came to power by ending 34 years of Left rule in Bengal, TMC’s Bibi secured a vote share of 61.21%, while the BJP’s Das got only 1.72% of the votes.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha polls, TMC candidate Adhikari defeated the BJP’s Badshah’s Alam by 63,066 votes in Tamuk (Nandigram falls under this Lok Sabha seat). While Adhikari’s vote share was 53.60%, Alam’s was just

6.40%. Two years later, in the 2016 Assembly elections, Adhikari emerged as a winner with a vote share of 67.20%. The BJP’s Das failed to make much of an impact and got just 10,713 votes (5.40% vote share).

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, when the BJP won 18 of the state’s 42 Lok Sabha seats, the TMC fielded Adhikari’s brother, Dibyendu Adhikari, against the BJP’s Siddhartha Naskar from Tamuk. Dibyendu won with a margin of 190,165 votes. The TMC got 50.08% of the votes, while the BJP got 36.44%.

Past performances and Banerjee’s entry into the fray have made the TMC confident. On the other hand, the BJP’s bet its Adhikari and his family’s significant influence in East Midnapore district and other districts. According to analysts, the BJP will hope to get a significant chunk of the Hindu votes in Nandigram, while the TMC will look at the 30% of Muslim votes.

Doc, 11 Covid patients die in Batra hospital

Continued from P1

Hospital authorities said they had run out of oxygen at 12:30 PM and the tanker came only at 1.35 PM despite repeated SOS before and after it ran out of oxygen. Kejriwal tweeted soon after Gupta went on record to talk about the incident, “this news is very painful. Their lives could have been saved by giving oxygen on time. Delhi should be given its quota of oxygen. Such deaths of our people should not happen. Delhi required 976 tonnes of oxygen and only 312 tonnes of oxygen was given on Friday. How does Delhi breathe?” Delhi government and city hospitals had been raising the issue of oxygen scarcity in the capital in the past couple of weeks. Earlier, there were reports that 25 people died due to lack of oxygen in Ganga Ram Hospital here though the officials there denied any such possibility.

SMOTHERING DISSENT IS A FAILURE OF DEMOCRACY

It is deplorable to see political leadership in our country resorting to coercive measures to control perceptions of people with an intention not only to hide its unpreparedness to the much anticipated Covid 19 second wave but also to obfuscate its inept and inefficient handling of the crisis which forced tens of thousands of people to pay heavy price with their lives and livelihoods where some unpalatable grim world records have been established by India. (SC warns against silencing people - THI, 1 May).

The timely warning of Supreme court that it would amount to contempt of court on the part of governments if cases are filed against people who seek help through Social media/Internet in the treatment of patients infected with Covid 19 is commendable and it upholds the constitutional right of people in a democracy to question the government.

A good government would always tender apologies to the people when its missteps make people to face distress and hardship of an unprecedented scale. Shockingly, we are now seeing a government which is intimidating distraught people to not express their grievances openly and to not complain about administrative lapses in providing medical care to the affected which is nothing



but an ugly manifestation of its hubris and arrogance.

The fact that the political leadership found itself sinking in a deluge of questions posed by some High Courts and the Supreme Court with regard to its failure to be ready with all medical essentials presents a poor picture of political ineptitude which is nothing but its failure to take opposition parties, people, scientists, experts into confidence to put all logistics and infrastructure in place to battle the imminent Covid 19 second wave.

Any country can't afford to go with misplaced priorities which leads to waste of tax payers' money. It is disgusting to see our

policymakers spending thousands of crores of rupees for erection of statues, construction of new parliament building (Central Vista project), places of worship even during the days where flailing economy is causing immense financial loss.

Appallingly, India has so far witnessed its top leader encouraging personality cult and concentration of all powers in PMO which paved the way for constitutional values, human rights and democratic norms being violated at a disturbing frequency. Verily, it is the ability, honesty, efficiency and talent of all bureaucrats, intellectuals, leaders and other

stakeholders who collectively contribute to the effective functioning of government machinery, autonomous institutions, constitutional watchdogs and independent judiciary which would raise the standards of governance.

For that to happen, the citizens should be mature enough in exercising their electoral choices and should be courageous enough to question and punish the elected political leaders for their misdeeds. This is the only way forward for strengthening democracy in India and to make it an economic giant in the world.

Narne Raveendra Babu, Hyderabad

PAST AND PRESENT

THE SCOURGE OF ABSENT-MINDEDNESS

DR VENUGOPALA RAO KAKI

HUMANS tend to be forgetful about things irrespective of age and gender. Though people in old age are usually found to be forgetful, people of all ages sometimes experience recurring forgetfulness. When forgetfulness persistently occurs in persons, such inveterate forgetfulness is described as absent-mindedness. While absent-mindedness in common people is regarded as a negative quality, it is not so in the case of geniuses. Absent-mindedness is mostly found in geniuses. Then, is absent-mindedness the characteristic feature of a genius? The answer is obviously "Yes".

Certain incidents that happened in the lives of geniuses confirm that absent-mindedness is a common trait in the personalities of these extraordinary intellectuals. Absent-mindedness is usually attributed to scientists, writers and professors who are regarded as geniuses. They are famous not only for their marvellous achievements in their chosen fields of intellectual and creative activities, but also for their absent-mindedness which they displayed evidently in their daily lives. Many incidents of absent-mindedness that happened in the lives of geniuses like the great scientist, Einstein, evoke smiles from us despite the fact that they are the distinctive, intellectual giants with astounding achievements in their chosen respective fields. There are a number of instances to show how absent-mindedness makes a genius a stuff of fun, striking a sense of wonder in ordinary folks.

For example, during my university days, on one Sunday



when I was taking my meal at a hotel, in a city of Andhra Pradesh, I saw a bespectacled, middle-aged gentle man with silver locks of hair seated beside me was gulping his food (rice), mixed with water instead of yogurt lying in a cup untouched before him on his dining table. While taking morsels of rice into his mouth, he was nodding his head queerly with his eyes half-shut as if he were immersed in a deep reverie. He looked quite eccentric in his appearance and behaviour as well.

Baffled and curious, I kept watching him. When the hotel-server who found the gentleman in such a strange situation reminded him of the mistake he had committed in his absent-mindedness, the gentle man looked at the server with no trace of surprise on his countenance and smiled enigmatically and mumbled so quietly "It's O.K. It makes no difference. Keep yogurt for yourself." Later, from the server, I came to know that he was a university Science

professor. On another occasion, we, the students of M A class, were amused to see our poetry professor in the class searching so frantically for his pen which was in his chest pocket. When one of our class-mates pointed it out, emerging out of his "brown study", he let out a guffaw at his absent-mindedness and then, he fished out his pen from his pocket to take attendance of the students

Such instances of absent-mindedness are numerous in the lives of geniuses which, instead of lowering their image, reveal their life-long, passionate dedication to their respective spheres of intellectual pursuits, and their minds, ever engrossed in intellectual reverie, get cut off completely from the mundane matters. However, every one who is absent-minded cannot be looked upon as a genius, simply because absent-mindedness is not the only yardstick to measure the genius of a person.

Night curfew is a futile exercise

The State Government of Telangana has extended night curfew for another week. Is night curfew enough for containing the Covid pandemic? This is the million dollar question haunting the minds of common public in particular.

The unabated increase in the positive cases every day, it is not enough only if night curfew is imposed. At night after 9 or 10 pm., more than 90 per cent of the people stay at home only and they hardly go out for the fear of corona. People working in the night shifts stay at their office only. Hence there is absolutely no doubt about the spread of coronavirus in the night.

One witnesses the scenes at wine shops, mutton shops etc., from 9 am onwards where people throw all the rules out of the window to purchase their favourite stuff. The permit rooms attached to the wine shops are the common scenes wherein people sit side by side and consume liquor without any fear. In RTC buses also, particularly during the peak hours in the morning and evenings, there will be no standing space even. The seven-seater autos and sharing



autos hitherto carrying only two or three passengers are now again plying with more than the permitted capacity. Under these circumstances the State government should ponder over at least clamping of week end curfews instead of night curfew and levy hefty fines on the spot to the offenders, to contain the spread of corona virus at least to some extent.

Anthony Fauci, Chief Medical Advisor to the Biden Administration and top epidemiologist, USA has rightly suggested complete lockdown for a few weeks in India as an immediate step to contain the spread of coronavirus as its deadly second wave shows no signs of receding.

S Ramesh, Hyderabad

Applaud this IAS officer, don't punish him

In a recent viral video where an IAS officer is seen stopping the wedding functions that were taking place in the curfew hours, some people are mocking at this behaviour. When Anil Kapoor did the same in the movie 'Nayak' people applauded him for his prompt decisions. But now when something like this is done in real life, people are unable to digest. The IAS officer was doing his job as those people were violating the Covid 19 night curfew rules. Many police officers ignore such things if they are given bribe or any recommendations or orders from top authorities. He too was made to apologize for such behavior, after BJP MLAs wrote for his suspension, which is not a good



example. Such actions done by police officers in support to the normal public must be encouraged rather than discouraging him. Such strict officials are hard to find these days. The officer rightly said that people are violating rules knowingly and anything that puts the general public at risk is not acceptable.

Mehar, Kazipet

Protect Covid patients from exploitation

At 600-plus Covid cases per day, the Indian Government took very seriously and immediately imposed lockdown across the country with a short notice of 12 hours last year. But this year, even after the daily cases crosses 3.5 lakh per day, the inaction of the Government towards implementation of lockdown and moreover conducting elections is rather shocking. This has paved the way to the hospitals especially the private, to act as per their wish and earn money and as such there's more cost to the vaccine, blackmarketing of Remdesivir medicine, high costs and more deaths in the private hospitals.

The Remdesivir medicine costs Rs 35k to Rs 40k as against its original cost of Rs 3500, but has no guarantee whether the medicine is genuine or not. Since the bottle after the usage is not being crushed, there's every chance of misuse and duplication. I request the Government and media to repeatedly announce to crush the injection bottles after using it.

T Sri Kumar, Hyderabad

Honour Narayan Dabhalkar

The second wave of Covid virus spread is taking the country by surprise. Many people really are helping those who are in distress. Some serve food, some transport the needy to the hospitals and some really help the dead to bury them. Some have donated money. Some feed street dwellers. Really, they are doing a noble deed to help those affected by the virus. Really most of the time these heroes go unnoticed and unsung. But a man by name Narayan Dabhalkar of Nagpur has done a noble deed. The 85-year-old man who was lying in a hospital bed for covid related disease vacated his COVID hospital bed, secured after much effort, for a critical 40-year-old patient whom he didn't know, after the hospital refused admission to the latter because there were no vacant beds. The kids of the young patient would be orphaned if he was not given quick medical attention was his assumption. He immediately had offered his bed.

Humanity is persisting among our people. It is in existence in our society. The 85 year old man died after sometime is reality. By his gesture he had won the hearts of many people of our nation. He had hit the headlines of the newspapers this week. He is a noble soul. Pray for his



soul rest in peace. We must take a cue from him and help the needy who are in distress at this hour of pandemic. I, for one, request the government to honour him posthumously by for his noble gesture so that it will be a lesson for others to help the needy who are in distress.

Sravana Ramachandran, Chennai

The migrant workers, most vulnerable lot during lockdown

RAJU VERNEKAR

As we are observing International Workers Day on May 1, the labour scenario appears grim with loss of jobs, closure of industrial units and the plight of migrant and informal workers remains vulnerable with many of them returning to their native places by available mode of transport due to financial hardship, that follows a lockdown.

During the lockdown last year, an estimated 200 migrant workers including their children reportedly died on their way back home. It was pathetic to watch women with babes in arms trudging their way in the scorching sun. Each day's economic productivity decides the wages of the migrant workers. Since they became economically unproductive during the lockdown, they do not receive any payment. With little or no savings at hand, a massive exodus of migrant workers took place last year.

After the crisis was highlighted the Union government organised special "shramik trains" and temporary ration supplies for migrant workers. However social protection continued to dodge them. This year too, the same scenario is being repeated with long queues of migrant workers outside railway stations in Mumbai, New Delhi and Gujarat, and other places.

The migrant workers comprise those handling menial jobs, construction workers and others. They are people employed by contractors for piecemeal work which neither guarantees a job continuation nor social security benefits. The migrants also include roadside hawkers. These migrants live in slums or live in the open without access to water and sanitation. They are subjected to exclusion and alienation in urban labour markets.

Although the Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, existed earlier, its provisions were largely overlooked by most states with no records of workers maintained. Now the provisions of this act have been subsumed into the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Act (OSHWCA), under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 passed in September last year. Earlier there was also the Unorganised Worker Social Security Act 2008 which made the registration of migrant workers compulsory for employers. But by and large, this act was also not implemented in letter and spirit.

New labour code

Chapter XI, Part II of the OSHWCA, pertains to migrant workers. But it is silent about the mi-



grants who move within state borders or intra-state migrants. Besides, there is no provision to make companies file annual reports with the labour departments on migrant workers employed and allowances paid to them. The act provides for a jail term of up to one year and a fine of Rs 1,000 for violating any contained provisions. It also says that the owner of the establishment employing migrant workers can be prosecuted for vi-

olations. Under the act, the labour inspector is the principal implementer, which gives him powers to conduct inspections and take testimonies of the workers at any time. It also provides for 2 years of jail for obstructing his work.

The OSHWCA covers any worker who has migrated to another state, including self-employed workers. It also calls for their registration on a portal that the Central government and the state

governments have been mandated to set up. However, the exact mechanism through which this will be done and how the responsibilities related to registration would be fixed is not clear.

The migrants

As per the Census 2011, there are over 45 crore migrants in the country. Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are the largest sources of interstate migrants, while Maharashtra

and Delhi are the largest receiver states. According to reports of the state labour bureaus, not more than 5 per cent of the migrant workers are enrolled with any state government agency with the only exception of Odisha, which has a helpline and facilities for children of migrant workers. Besides, the Goa government has become a first state to set up a dedicated cell to resolve the issues being faced by migrants labourers.

The gesture by States

Last year, some states including Maharashtra, Delhi, and Bihar had made arrangements for shelter homes for migrant workers and had provided them food and food grains. Now with the imposition of semi lock-down, following the second wave of COVID-19, the Maharashtra Government has asked developers to provide accommodation to their construction workers near the worksite and to ensure that their COVID-19 related tests are carried out. The government has also made a one-time payment of Rs 5000 to over 9 lakh construction workers under Direct Benefit Transfer says Maharashtra Labour Minister Hassan Mushrif, who has maintained that more benefits would flow in favour of the migrant workers, once the data is upgraded. There are nearly 13 lakh regis-

tered building construction workers in Maharashtra, for whom a sum of Rs 137.61 crore has been earmarked. The government has also been providing free meals- "Shiv Bhojan" to the migrant workers in and around Mumbai, to check the migrants from leaving the city and returning to their villages outside Maharashtra.

Now with the Centre's direction to states to maintain the data of migrant workers, it is expected that the process is uniformly implemented throughout India. This would automatically show the movement of workers and can ensure stipulated minimum wages to them.

If the Government department titled "Protector of Immigrants" (POI), is set up, it will safeguard the interest of migrant workers and will also be able to prevent illegal immigrants from entering the country through porous borders. There is no secret that a sizable number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, who include domestic help and unskilled workers, are working in many states in India. Such arrangement could be on the lines of "Protector of Emigrants" (POE) under which intending emigrants are given clearance, to protect and aid them during their stay abroad.

(The writer is a Mumbai-based senior journalist)

COVID RESURGENCE

CII chips in with medical kits, oxygen

HANS BUSINESS
HYDERABAD

CII has once again come forward to lend a helping hand to strengthen the fight against the pandemic by partnering with its member companies across the south.

“Many of the CII member companies in the healthcare, pharma, life sciences and medical equipment sectors have ramped up production of essential medical supplies like medical oxygen, ventilators, makeshift hospitals, ICU beds, remdesivir and other viral drugs which are of immediate requirement for hospitals and primary health centres across the southern region” said CK Ranganathan, Chairman, CII southern region.

As an immediate step, CII member companies have come forward in setting up around 500 mobile make shift hospitals as part of their CSR activities. Member companies in the IT sector are working with State governments in setting up BPO centres to provide real-time data on availability of beds in hospitals, oxygen cylinders and other critical items required for treatment of patients, he said.

Considering the shortage of remdesivir, CII members in the pharma sector have ramped up production of remdesivir antiviral drug on a war-footing. CII member companies have the production capacity of manufacturing 1 crore doses of Remdesivir in the coming months, said Ranganathan.

CII urges the State government to step up the vaccination drive by collaborating with industries in setting up vaccination camps in their factory premises. Through this initiative, CII expects to vaccinate over 3 lakh people comprising industrial workers and their family members and communities in the neighbourhood in the six southern States.

COVID TIMES

How telecom ‘warriors’ coming to rescue of all



L Anantharam

During the present pandemic of Covid-19, front line warriors like doctors/ para-medical staff, police personnel and sanitation staff are doing a commendable job. Their super human efforts are worth appreciating.

Similarly, the services of telecom personnel are also praiseworthy during this unprecedented situation. Because of their efforts, we are able to sustain such a prolonged lock down.

People are able to be ‘in touch’ with one another, in spite of the isolation due to lockdown, because of telecom networks. ‘Commute less and Communicate more’ has become very apt now. BSNL land line or FTTH (Fibre to the Home) voice facility is highly suitable for long duration conversation. People are having enough leisure time at home now to indulge in long talks with their near and dear ones, enquiring their wellbeing during these troubled times.

Through these networks and voice facility of mobile/FTTH networks, people are communicating, maintaining social distance, leading a normal life, mentally at least. As many migrant labourers have reverse migrated from urban to rural areas, traffic, especially voice one, might have increased in rural areas. The migrant labourers should be given FMNP (Full Mobile Number Portability facility) at their doorstep so that they can use their existing SIM without paying roaming charges at their native places.

Since BSNL is having better coverage in rural areas, they should proactively approach the reverse migrated labourers and issue new SIMs or do FMNP. They may also design tailor made package for these people. Data traffic has increased by 30 per cent during this lockdown. Online education, online meetings, online court proceedings, online banking, online payments, online shopping, online consultancy, online entertainment, and



Data traffic has increased by 30 per cent during this lockdown. Online education, online meetings, online court proceedings, online banking, online shopping, online consultancy, online entertainment, and so on, have become the order of the day

so on, have become the order of the day.

Because of work from home (WFH) scenario, traffic has shifted from offices to residences. TSPs(Telecom Service Providers) may have to reorient the antennas of the BTSs (Base Transmitting Stations) from office localities towards residential localities. Traffic handling capacity of BTS sectors towards residential localities may have to be augmented.

They have to provide adequate signal in hitherto uncovered areas so that customers there can do work from home without any hitch.

As companies have allowed their employees to work from home anywhere, some might have shifted to their native villages and adequate data signals are required there. Some companies have indicated that work from home has become a new normal and may continue even after this pandemic.

Quick provision of FTTH/mobile connection has to be ensured by telecom service providers (TSPs). Just on phone call, prospective customer should get a connection at his doorstep by submitting POI(Proof of Identity)/POA (Proof of Address)and photograph. TSPs have to provide in-built Wi-Fi facility along with FTTH connection which facilitates the customer to do his office work anywhere from home. VDI(Virtual Desktop Infrastructure) interface for the FTTH signal has to be ensured. The UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply) supplied along with FTTH connection should give ade-

quate backup to take care of power interruptions in rural areas.

TSPs have to quickly install BTSs to provide signal coverage. State/central governments should allow their buildings for installation of towers which can be shared by all operators. DOT (Department of Telecom) should insist the TSPs to share their infra so that customers are benefited. Intra

circle roaming should be encouraged by DOT. Local authorities should allow TSPs to install towers even during lock down/even in containment areas so that customers are not inconvenienced because of lack of adequate signal. Installation of tower should not be construed as a construction activity (which is not allowed during lock down) as it is not a permanent structure like a building.

Telecom staff are doing a great job silently by ensuring good availability of telecom networks. Local authorities should allow telecom personnel to restore the faulty BTSs on 24x7 basis even in containment zones. They should be allowed to attend the optical fibre faults by laying overhead cables.

Telecom infra has become centre platform for all the sectors during this pandemic.

These telecom warriors should also be given priority like front line warriors in administering the Covid-19 vaccine.

The author is retired Advisor, Department of Telecommunications (DoT) Government of India

QUIZ NO.
171

HANS BIZ QUIZ

The importance of May 2 in History

1. British Labour Party leader Tony Blair became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on 2 May 1997. Aged 43, Blair became the youngest person to hold the office since 1812. Who was the youngest person to become Prime Minister aged 42 in 1812?

- a) William Ewart Gladstone
b) William Grenville
c) Robert Jenkinson
d) Archibald Primrose

2. On 2 May 1998, the Ecofin Council decided that 11 Member States had met the criteria for adopting the single currency on 1 January 1999 and participation in the third stage of EMU. Which countries are not part of the eleven-member countries?

- a) Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Spain
b) Finland, France, Italy, Luxembourg
c) Germany, Ireland, Netherlands
d) Croatia, United Kingdom, Denmark

3. World Tuna Day is observed globally on 2nd May every year. The United Nations established this day to raise awareness about the importance of tuna fish. When was Tuna Day first observed for the first time?

- a) 2017
b) 2009
c) 2002
d) 1998

4. The Central Statistics Office (CSO), a governmental agency under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation responsible for coordinating statistical activities in India and evolving and maintaining statistical standards, was set up on 2 May 1951. Which are CSO's activities?

- a) National Income Accounting, Development of Statistics in the States and Union Territories
b) Annual Survey of Industries, Economic Censuses and Surveys
c) Compilation of Index of Industrial Production, Human Development Statistics, Gender Statistics
d) All of the above

5. Chandannagar is a city in the Hooghly district in the Indian state of West Bengal. On 2 May 1950, the Government of India took over the administration of Chander-

nagore from the French Republic. When did Chandannagar become a permanent French settlement?

- a) 1688
b) 1713
c) 1796
d) 1863

6. Bengali director Satyajit Ray, who brought Indian cinema to world recognition with the Apu Trilogy, was born in Kolkata. The Apu Trilogy comprises which films?

- a) Parash Pathar, Aranyer Din Ratri, Shakhha Proshakha
b) Pather Panchali, Aparajito, The World of Apu
c) Teen Kanya, Apur Sansar, Ganashatru
d) Mahanagar, Charulata, Hirak Rajar Deshe

7. American pediatrician Benjamin McLane Spock was born on 2 May 1903. Dr. Benjamin Spock wrote several influential works on child-rearing. Identify his book, which sold more than 50 million copies?

- a) The Common-Sense Book of Baby and Child Care
b) The first two years
c) A better world for our children
d) Decent and indecent

8. Manfred von Richthofen, also known as the “Red Baron,” Germany's top aviator and leading ace in World War I, was born on 2 May 1892 in Breslau, Germany. Where is Breslau situated now?

- a) Lithuania
b) Austria
c) Poland
d) Slovakia

9. On 2 May 1889, Menilek II of Ethiopia signed the Treaty of Wichale with this country, granting it territory in northern Ethiopia in exchange for money and weaponry. Identify the country?

- a) France
b) Belgium
c) Switzerland
d) Italy

10. The United States of America purchased a Territory from France on 2 May 1803 at a rate of fewer than three cents per acre for 2,144,520 square km. Identify the Territory?

- a) Florida
b) Louisiana
c) Virgin Islands
d) Oregon Country

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

KEY

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Startups flourishing in Telangana, thanks to govt resolve

The most remarkable feature of Telangana’s triumphant startup ecosystem is that it is fuelled by an empowering collaboration between the government and innovators



Viiveck Verma

EVER since the formation of the State in 2014, Telangana has taken monumental strides and has created a remarkable space for itself in national and international discourses. The State’s startup ecosystem, catalysed by a motivated and involved government, has mirrored the same glorious trajectory and sprung up exemplary developments, synergising all possible actors for commendable innovation and transformations. From the real estate to pharmaceuticals and from gender equity to information technology, Telangana has achieved significant milestones and looks at splendid futures to realize. A look at this exceptional success story only bolsters belief in the sturdiness of this innovation ecosystem and strengthens optimism for foreseeable accomplishments.

The most remarkable feature of Telangana’s triumphant startup ecosystem is that it is fuelled by an empowering collaboration between the government and innovators. The State government has deployed and is unveiling a host of applaudable policies, conducive for the sustenance and flourishing of startups and businesses. In February 2021, Telangana Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar launched the Telangana Social Startup Network (TSSN), which aims to set up 5,000 startups in the next five years, with particular focus on the promotion of social startups. In the same month, the government invited applications from State-based startups to avail incentives such as performance grant, patent expenditure reim-

bursement, SGST (State goods and services tax) reimbursement and recruitment assistance, among others. With a reliance on cooperation between stakeholders and extending monetary and institutional support to entrepreneurs, the Telangana government has led by example.

The State’s top-notch software sector acts as a prominent and significant growth driver. The tremendous rise of Hyderabad’s IT sector, aided by government support, has enabled it to house all noteworthy tech giants and provide limitless employment opportunities to countless people.

As noted publications report, in 2020, despite the pandemic, Telangana’s IT sector registered a superlative growth rate of 18 per cent year-on-year, while the national average stood at 8.09 per cent. In a similar vein, the State witnessed a growth rate of 7.8 per cent in the IT employment, while the national average stood at 4.59 per cent. All of this is again enabled by proactive government which incentivises the sector by giving refunds to companies for participation in exhibitions, reductions of stamp duty, transfer duty and registration fees, telephone and internet bills, besides providing subsidy and access to renewable energy. Information Technology offers us a foundation to tide over modern challenges and the State of Telangana is certainly harvesting the most it has to offer.

The real estate sector tells another tale of resilience in face of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the first quarter of 2021, as per JLL, Hyderabad led institutional investments in real estate in the country with an astounding 42 per cent share and capital flows of \$384 million or Rs 2,860 crores. Hyderabad has pioneered real estate innovation with the government introducing Telangana State Building Permission Approval and Self-Certification System



Telangana’s development story breaches the urban-rural divide as the startup promotion has penetrated the non-urban parts of the State as well. WE-Hub, for instance, provided support to women entrepreneurs in this regard, including setting up machinery for making gold ornaments by providing credit linkages to help women innovators from rural and tribal regions of the State

(TS-bPASS), creating and fostering an environment with ease of doing business. Single window clearances are on the way as the State finds more ways to consolidate and promote growth. With such emphasis on real estate, Telangana has offered greater opportunities for wealth and well-being to its people and generated ample employment opportunities. The pharmaceutical industry finds a robust ground in the State. As LiveMint reports, the government of Telangana, in 2019, visioned creating a \$100 billion industry in the sector over the decade and is establishing the Hyderabad Pharma City, the world’s largest pharmaceuticals industrial park, expected to employ 560,000 people and attract investment worth billions of dollars. Genome Valley 2.0, a medical devices park is also being developed.

The State currently boasts of having one of the largest life sciences sectors in Asia, accounting for 35-40 per cent of the national pharma production. The State, thus, is an adept

contributor to the medical progress of the country and the research and development it has enabled is a key asset to the national and the global economies.

Gender parity is another do-

main Telangana excels in. The State has had a record of being the home ground of vocal and inspiring women entrepreneurs. Ever since its early years, the State government had planned several measures to support women entrepreneurs.

This eventually led to the establishment of WE-Hub, the country’s only startup incubator for women. With the assistance of WE-Hub, several women-led startups such as Brunswick, launched by Sri-laxmi Ambati and Lesperanza launched by Lebuli Sarada, accomplished major successes. Ever since its inception in 2018, not only has WE-Hub engaged over 3,000 women entrepreneurs but tied up with national and international actors for major programmes. These efforts acknowledge the multifaceted nature of economic development and aim for social equity among genders.

Hyderabad is a prominent seat for quality education and research, hosting two central universities and six State universities and boasts of one of

the largest number of students seeking technical education in India. As noted by several publications, Hyderabad hosts centres for research in pharma, biotech and defence-related science and technology, such as Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) and the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology. Apart from these, the city houses the Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad as well as the Indian School of Business (ISB). The Research and Innovation Circle of Hyderabad (RICH), led by Ajit Rangekar brings together institutions, academia and industry along with venture capitalists, angel investors and incubators and provides funding to research and innovation projects and incubation, promotion and equipment support among other boosts to startups.

Telangana’s development story breaches the urban-rural divide as the startup promotion has penetrated the non-urban parts of the State as well. WE-Hub, for instance, provided support to women entrepreneurs in this regard, including setting up machinery for making gold ornaments by providing credit linkages to help women innovators from rural and tribal regions of the State. The Telangana State Innovation Cell (TSIC) launched the ‘Intinta Innovator’ programme to support rural innovation, which facilitated and supported grassroots innovators like Vishwaja Reddy from Karimnagar who started a company HiCode that makes napkin incinerators and napkin vending machines. Telangana has upped the ante in bridging disparities between urban and rural constituencies with potent innovation ushering in numerous livelihood opportunities.

T-Hub, Telangana government’s startup support system, as an innovation intermediary and business incubator has scaled remarkable heights and helped over 1,120 startups in

the State. It is also a model instance of government-academia-industry collaboration as it is partnership between the State government, the private sector and three academic centres— the International Institute of Information Technology, the Indian School of Business and the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research. On the whole, the space for mentoring and enabling startups is immense.

There are challenges the State stares at and achievements it anticipates. As Dr Ramachandra Reddy Yeluri, MD, Ven Life Sciences Private Ltd opines in an interview with a noted daily, “The government needs to incentivise capital markets to promote innovation, introduce policies to incubate high-potential startups, and promote academia-industry collaboration. Reducing the Indian manufacturing industry’s dependence on imports will be another crucial step in this regard.” Similarly, greater infrastructural development needs to be carried out in parts of the State other than Hyderabad to embolden the ecosystem Telangana seeks to create. While the startup world of Hyderabad has dealt with the Covid-19 crisis relatively well, the slowdowns and setbacks it has caused need to be overcome.

However, with the State government’s consistent commitment towards creating a resilient startup ecosystem, innovation is likely to continue. Such measures are often all-encompassing, cutting across gendered and urban-rural divides.

With comprehensive, wide-reaching programmes, Telangana is concocting the recipe for long term success and it is safe to envision a resplendent future for the State. The booms are eagerly awaited, and with Telangana’s track-record, they most certainly will arrive.

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



Under new captain Williamson, SRH face RR



NEW DELHI

SUNRISERS Hyderabad (SRH) will be pressing the reboot button to their Indian Premier League (IPL) campaign when they take on Rajasthan Royals (RR) under new captain Kane Williamson at the Arun Jaitley Stadium here on Sunday.

SRH announced the removal of Warner from captaincy on Saturday after the Australian couldn't inspire his team to impressive performances in the first six matches of the league. SRH also said that they will be changing the overseas combination for Sunday's game against Rajasthan Royals.

"The team management has also made the decision that they will be changing their overseas combination for tomorrow's match against Rajasthan Royals," added the SRH statement.

The franchise said that the decision to replace Warner wasn't been easy.

"This decision has not come lightly as the management respects the enormous impact David Warner has had for the franchise over a number of years. As we face the remainder of the season we are sure David will continue to help us strive for

IPL POINTS TABLE

Team	Played	Won	Lost	NetRR	Pts
1 CSK	6	5	1	+1.475	10
2 RCB	6	5	1	+0.089	10
3 DC	6	4	2	+0.269	8
4 MI	6	3	3	+0.071	6
5 KKR	6	2	4	-0.305	4
6 PBKS	6	2	4	-0.608	4
7 RR	6	2	4	-0.690	4
8 SRH	6	1	5	-0.264	2

success both on and off the field," said the statement.

Australian opener Warner had led SRH to the play-offs last season. However, this year they have failed to conjure up wins. Their middle-order batting has let them down. The Hyderabad franchise lies at the bottom of the points table having scored just one win. Their biggest problem has been their middle-order batting which has failed to put up big scores and has slipped up during easy chases.

Williamson himself missed the first few matches of the season but ever since he has come back into the side, he has batted well. His half-century against Delhi Capitals took the match into the power-play.

SRH have also been criticised for not fielding a balanced side and it will be interesting to see how Williamson picks his playing eleven on Sunday afternoon. Warner's comments during the tournament earlier suggested that he didn't have full authority in picking the playing eleven.

Thankfully for SRH, they will be facing RR who themselves are struggling to keep up with the race. RR are just one spot above SRH and a loss on Sunday will push them back to the bottom of the points table.

The Royals have won two out of their six matches so far while the Sunrisers have one victory from six games. No wonder, RR is placed seventh while SRH occupied the bottom slot in the IPL table.

RR have a lot of issues to sort out, particularly in the absence of key foreign players like Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes. RR have only four overseas players with them after the departure of a number of them due to various reasons. They are still trying to get replacements.

Their batting depends heavily on Samson but the inconsistent captain has not fired since the 119 in the opening match with 42 being the highest after that. Opener Jos Buttler is yet to score a half century in six matches.

The middle-order is struggling with David Miller having scored just one half century in five games while Riyan Parag is out-of-form with 25 as his highest.

In the bowling department, million dollar recruit Chris Morris has been doing a great job with 11 wickets from six matches but he cannot single-handedly carry the team on his shoulders as his team-mates are struggling.

Rahul Tewatia is doing nothing with just one wicket from six matches. Senior pacer Jaydev Unadkat has four wickets to show in as many games while Bangladesh import Mustafizur Rahman has taken five from six matches. Young Chetan Sakariya has been Royals' find with seven wickets from six matches

SQUADS

SunRisers Hyderabad

Kane Williamson (captain), David Warner, Abhishek Sharma, Basil Thampi, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Jonny Bairstow (wicketkeeper), Manish Pandey, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, Sandeep Sharma, Shahbaz Nadeem, Shreevats Goswami, Siddharth Kaul, Khaleel Ahmed, Vijay Shankar, Wriddhiman Saha (wicketkeeper), Abdul Samad, Jason Roy, Jason Holder, Priyam Garg, Virat Singh, Kedar Jadhav, Muejeb ur Rehman, J Suchith.

Rajasthan Royals

Sanju Samson (captain), Jos Buttler (wicketkeeper), Riyan Parag, Shreyas Gopal, Rahul Tewatia, Mahipal Lomror, Kartik Tyagi, Jaydev Unadkat, Mayank Markande, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Anuj Rawat, David Miller, Manan Vohra, Robin Uthappa, Shivam Dube, Chris Morris, Mustafizur Rahman, Chetan Sakariya, KC Cariappa, Kuldeep Yadav, Akash Singh.

UAE standby venue for T20 World Cup: BCCI

NEW DELHI

THE United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been named as standby for the T20 World Cup in case the worsening Covid-19 situation does not improve in India, a top official of the Indian cricket board (BCCI) confirmed.

"It (hosting venue) would be the UAE. We're hoping again that it would be done by the BCCI. So, we'll take the tournament there, but it'll still be done by the BCCI," Dhiraj Malhotra, BCCI's general manager for game development, told BBC's Stumped podcast.

India are due to host the tournament in October-November but a second wave of Covid-19 has hit the country badly with well over 3.5 lakh new cases and 3,000-plus deaths daily over the last few days.

If the situation doesn't improve, it will be the first time India will be hosting an international tournament or a series outside the country.

The BCCI has hosted the Indian Premier League (IPL) abroad before -- in South Africa in 2009 and in the UAE in 2020. It also hosted part of the 2014 IPL edition in the UAE.

"I've just been named one of the tournament directors, so I'm doing everything we can to make sure it happens," said Malhotra.

Australia will host the T20 World Cup in 2022 which was postponed from last year due to the pandemic.

BFI wary of sending team for Dubai Asian meet

NEW DELHI

AS Coronavirus rages in India, there is a growing concern within the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) about sending Olympic Games qualified boxers to Dubai for the Asian Boxing Championship this month.

Nine boxers have achieved Olympic quota places for the Tokyo Games scheduled to be held in July-August. The Dubai competition starts on May 21. Of these quota winners, two -- Simranjit Kaur (women 60 kg) and Ashish Kumar (men's 75kg) -- recently tested positive for Covid-19 and are on the road to recovery. While the BFI has completely ruled out Simranjit's participation in the Dubai competition as she will complete 15-day quarantine a week before the continental event, Kumar could also be doubtful.

"Taking into account the safety of the boxers we shouldn't send the team as health is more important than competing in an Asian meet that is only of academic interest," a senior official of the BFI told IANS.

"Team coaches should not push the boxers. If any boxer tests positive for Covid-19 during the Asian Boxing Championships, it would mean skipping 15 to 20 days of training close to the Tokyo Olympics," he emphasised.

Gymnast Pranati Nayak to get Oly Games quota

NEW DELHI

GYMNAST Pranati Nayak, Asian bronze medallist in vault, will get the continental quota to compete in the Tokyo Olympic Games in July-August. Since the Asian Championships, scheduled in the last week of May in Tokyo, has been cancelled due to the Covid pandemic, the unused continental quotas will be reallocated to the eligible athletes from the Asian zone only.

As per the rules, Sri Lanka's Elpitiya Badalge Dona Milka Geh is the first reserve for the Asian quota while Pranati is the second reserve. Both will, however, compete in the Olympics, starting July 23.

The world body in gymnastics (FIG) will make an official announcement in this regard in June. "It's a big day in my



life. I never thought I would get a chance to compete in the Olympics as there was no competition in 2020. And this year too due to pandemic all the major competitions have been cancelled," Pranati told IANS of the development.

Since the quota place is allocated by name, it can't be changed. "Hopefully I will get official communication from the Asian or the world body soon," Pranati said.

This year, the Asian Gymnastics Championships, which was an Olympic qualification event, was cancelled due to the pandemic. The performance of the 2019 Asian Championships held in Mongolia was taken into account to reallocate the quotas.



BERLIN

RB Leipzig advanced into its second German Cup final after overpowering resilient Werder Bremen 2-1 in extra time on Friday thanks to Emil Forsberg's last-gasp winner. Neither side was able to score within 90 minutes, but at the start of extra time, Leipzig increased the pressure to seal a dramatic victory.

Leipzig made a bright start on the road as Alexander Sorloth's header on target forced Bremen goalkeeper Jiri Pavlenka into action with four minutes gone.

Bremen defended deep in their own territory and focused on fast breaks, but Joshua Sargent squandered a counterattack with only Leipzig custodian Peter Gulacsi to beat at the half-hour mark.

The hosts thought they had penalty in the closing stages of the first half, but after a VAR review the penalty was turned over. After the restart, Leipzig piled on the pressure, but Bremen's well-positioned defence neutralized every attack.

Leipzig had to wait until the hour mark before its next clear-cut opportunity, as Angelino rattled

the woodwork with a free-kick from the edge of the box.

Six minutes later, the visitors created their next opportunity, as Willi Orban headed Christopher Nkunku's cross into the box onto the bar. As the match progressed, both sides took more risks but neither could find the net within 90 minutes. Leipzig made a fairy-tale start into extra time as Hwang Hee-chan broke the deadlock in the 93rd minute after beating Pavlenka from eight meters.

Leipzig's joy was short-lived, as Leonardo Bittencourt danced through Leipzig's defence before finishing with a well-placed shot to restore parity in the 105th minute. Both sides seemed to have settled for the penalty shootout, but Hwang remained in the thick of things and teed up for Forsberg, who made no mistake to volley home in the dying seconds.

With the restart, Leipzig moved into the second German Cup final in the club's history, whereas Werder Bremen were knocked out in the semifinals for the third time.

Jayawickrama's six-wkt haul gives SL big lead

PALLEKELE: Left-arm spinner Praveen Jayawickrama's dream debut in which he picked six wickets for 92 runs helped Sri Lanka dismiss Bangladesh for 251 in their first innings of the second Test. Jayawickrama's returns, the best innings figures on Test debut for Sri Lanka, helped the home side secure a big lead. Sri Lanka had earlier extended their first innings total to 493/7 in the morning, before declaring their innings closed. Niroshan Dickwella's quickfire 77 not out helped Sri Lanka approach the 500-run mark. The home side were 17/2 at stumps with an overall lead of 242 runs. Brief scores: Sri Lanka 493/7 dec in 159.2 overs (L Thirimanne 140, D Karunaratne 118, O Fernando 81, N Dickwella 77; T Ahmed 4/127, T Islam 1/83, S Islam 1/91) & 17/2 in 7 overs (D Karunaratne 13 batting, Mathews 1 batting; T Islam 1/2, M Miraz 1/7) vs Bangladesh 252 all out in 83 overs (Tamim 92, Mominul 49, Mushfiqu 40; Jayawickrama 6/92, S Lakmal 2/30, R Mendis 2/86).

DC to take on resurgent Punjab Kings

AHMEDABAD

DELHI Capitals (DC) will take on resurgent Punjab Kings (PBKS) in an Indian Premier League (IPL) match here on Sunday. The Punjab franchise are coming off a big win over the strong Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) side, winning the match by 34 runs.

Their skipper K.L. Rahul, who has been among runs, will once again be crucial at the top. He will again have to play the role of an anchor and hope the youngsters in the team perform around him.

The big concern for PBKS will be the form of West Indian duo Nicholas Pooran and Chris Gayle.

SQUADS

Punjab Kings

KL Rahul (captain/wicketkeeper), Mayank Agarwal, Chris Gayle, Mandeep Singh, Prabhakar Singh, Nicholas Pooran (wicketkeeper), Sarfaraz Khan, Deepak Hooda, Murgan Ashwin, Ravi Bishnoi, Harpreet Brar, Mohammed Shami, Arshdeep Singh, Ishan Porel, Darshan Nalkande, Chris Jordan, Dawid Malan, Jhye Richardson, Shahrul Khan, Riley Meredith, Moises Henriques, Jalaj Saxena, Utkarsh Singh, Fabian Allen, Saurabh Kumar.

Delhi Capitals:

Rishabh Pant (captain/wicketkeeper), Shikhar Dhawan, Prithvi Shaw, Ajinkya Rahane, Steve Smith, Sam Billings, Shimron Hetmyer, Ishant Sharma, Kagiso Rabada, Anrich Nortje, Umesh Yadav, Tom Curran, Avesh Khan, Lalit Yadav, Pravin Dubey, Rupal Patel, Lukman Meriwala, M Siddharth, Marcus Stoinis, Axar Patel, Ravichandran Ashwin, Chris Woakes, Vishnu Vinod (wicketkeeper), Aditya Tare (wicketkeeper).

Match starts at 7.30pm

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