

Tamil Nadu CM inaugurates Naruvi Hospital in Vellore

Vellore
Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Edappadi K. Palaniswami inaugurated 'Naruvi Hospitals', a state-of-the-art multi-specialty hospital of global standards in Vellore on Friday evening, raising this fort-city's people-centric healthcare to a new level in the State.

Palaniswami unveiled the plaque of the new Rs.600 crore hospital in the heart of Vellore through video-conferencing from the Secretariat in Chennai. The 500-bed Hospital is a first of its kind in "innovative partnership", with technical collaboration with 'Henry Ford Health System', a leading healthcare provider in the U.S.

Even as the auspicious inauguration was watched live at the Hospital premises here, to the accompaniment of 'Nagaswaram' music, by its doctors and staff led by Naruvi Hospitals' managerial team, Dr. G. V. Sampath at the Secretariat in Chennai earlier greeted



the Chief Minister with a bouquet.

Dr. G.V. Sampath, in his opening remarks, also thanked Mr. K.C. Veeramani, for his continuous support and encouragement for this Hospital project from the beginning, besides complementing the Health Minister, Dr. C. Vijayabaskar for making Tamil Nadu the leading state in healthcare

in the country. The Chairman also had an endearing word for Dr. A.C. Shanmugam, a family friend and well-wisher. At the Hospital end, its Vice Chairperson, Anitha Sampath, thanked the Chief Minister and other dignitaries for making this dream project turn reality today. Palaniswami and others then watched a sleek

video presentation on the wide-ranging facilities at 'Naruvi Hospitals'. Dr. Paul Henry, noted Neurosurgeon and the Hospital's Executive Director, Dr. Aravindan Nair, Chief of Medical Services, Mr. P. Mani Maran, Chief Operating Officer and Mr. Nithin Sampath, General Manager, Operations and IT Services, were among those who took part in the function at the

Hospital's venue. The Super-Specialties being offered at 'Naruvi Hospitals' include a vital array of disciplines like Cardiology, Endocrinology, Medical Gastroenterology & Liver Diseases, Neonatal Intensive Care, Nephrology, Neurosurgery, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery to Urology.

The unique state-of-art medical facilities at 'Naruvi Hospitals' include:

- 3-Tesla Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scanners, which enable doctors to see images of internal organs and structures in great detail and from many angles.
- 128-Slice CT (Computerised Tomography) Scanner to provide clear, three-dimensional images.
- A dedicated Cardiac Cath Lab.
- Special department for Interventional Pulmonology, a key discipline that has emerged to cure Covid-19.
- 15 Modular Operation Theatres, all from 'HT Labor', Germany.
- 'Rosa Robot' for Epilepsy Surgery, a sophisticated equipment from France. This is the third such installation in India as on date.
- A 'Robotic Hybrid Cath Lab', first of its kind facility in South Asia, again from GE.
- Modular Endoscopic Suite.
- All ICU beds cabined (individual rooms).
- Mammography (for breast cancer detection in women).
- Dexa Scan (to check bone strength).
- Fully paperless and filmless hospital with digitized X-rays including Ultrasound Imaging.
- Pneumatic Tube System with 50 destinations to carry blood samples, medicines, etc. from one place to another without human intervention.
- Dedicated Pharmacy, Blood Bank and NABL (National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration of Laboratories) accredited Labs, including RT-PCR test (confirmatory test for Covid-19).

State Health Minister, Dr. C. Vijayabaskar, Commercial Taxes Minister, Mr. K.C. Veeramani, MGR University Chancellor and former MP, Dr. A.C. Shanmugam, and Chairman of 'Naruvi Hospitals', Dr. G.V. Sampath and Dr. A.C. Shanmugam were present

Myanmar junta shuts Twitter and Instagram to curb protests

Yangon
Military authorities in charge of Myanmar broadened a ban on social media following this week's coup and shut Twitter and Instagram, as residents in the biggest city again banged pots and plastic bottles to show their opposition to the army takeover.

In addition to Facebook and related apps, the military government on Friday ordered communications operators and internet service providers to cut access to Twitter and Instagram. The statement said that some people are trying to use both platforms to spread fake news.

Netblocks, which tracks social media disruptions and shutdowns, confirmed the loss

of Twitter service starting 10 PM. Instagram was already subject to restrictions.

Telenor, a Norway-based telecommunications company operating in Myanmar though a subsidiary, said it had complied with the order but also challenged "the necessity and proportionality of the directive." State media are heavily censored and Facebook in particular has become the main source of news and information in the country. It is also used to organize protests.

For the fourth night Friday, the cacophony of noise from windows and balconies rever-

berated through the commercial capital of Yangon, as resistance to the coup and arrests of activists and politi-



cians gathered steam.

Earlier Friday, nearly 300 members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party declared themselves as the sole legitimate representatives of the

people and asked for international recognition as the country's government.

They were supposed to take their seats Monday in a new session of Parliament following November elections when the military announced it was taking power for a year.

The military accused Suu Kyi and her party of failing to act on its complaints that the election was fraudulent, though the election commission said it had no found no evidence to support the claims.

In New York, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pledged Friday that the United Nations

will do everything it can to unite the international community and create conditions for the military coup in Myanmar to be reversed.

He told a news conference it is "absolutely essential" to carry out the Security Council's calls for a return to democracy, respect for the results of the November elections, and release of all people detained by the military, "which means the reversal of the coup that took place." Guterres said Christine Schraner Burgener, the UN special envoy for Myanmar, had a first contact with the military since the coup and expressed the UN's strong opposition to the takeover.

Virginia lawmakers pass marijuana legalisation bills

SARAH RANKIN AND DENISE LAVOIE

Richmond
Both chambers of the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation Friday that would legalise marijuana for adult recreational use, with retail sales starting several years down the road.

Work on the complicated legislation has been a priority for Democrats who control state government.

But the process is far from finished — there are substantial differences between the two chambers' bills that must be worked out before they can be sent to Governor Ralph Northam, who could also seek to make additional changes.

"I think that Virginia is on a path to an equitable legislation plan for marijuana. There have been a few bumps, but I'm hopeful that we'll have a polished bill we can agree upon in the next few weeks," said Sen. Adam Ebbin, one of the chief patrons of that chamber's bill. If the legislation is signed into law, Virginia would join 15 other states and the neighboring District of Co-

lumbia in legalizing small amounts of marijuana for adult recreational use, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The House passed its version of the legislation on a 55-42 vote. The Senate advanced its bill 23-15.

Both chambers' measures would legalize possession of an ounce of marijuana or less for those 21 and older, though that provision has



different start dates. Both bills would also start the process of expunging some previous misdemeanor marijuana-related offenses, starting July 1.

Both measures envision retail sales starting in 2024, overseen by a newly created regulatory entity. And both would use the biggest portion of the tax revenue from sales to fund pre-K for at-risk kids.

Among the differences between the two bills: the Senate version allows localities to opt out of allowing retail stores and it requires a second vote by lawmakers next year to finalize the legal framework.

PTI

Baghel slams nails, barricades at farmer protest sites, accuses govt of internationalising issue

BARUN JHA AND ASIM KAMAL

New Delhi
Slamming the Centre over the treatment of farmers protesting the new farm laws, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday likened the installing of multi-layered barricading and nails at protest sites to the old tactics of "dacoits" blocking routes of villages while caring out robberies, and accused the government of internationalising the farmers' issue.

The senior Congress leader also warned that if the government does not resolve the issue of farmers soon, the agitation will spread across the country.

In an interview to PTI, Baghel said the farmers were demanding that there should be a guarantee on the Minimum Support Price (MSP) which should be given to them.

"Why only Punjab, Haryana and Chhattisgarh, in the whole country, crops should be bought at MSP," he asserted.

He dismissed the suggestion that the Oppo-

sition could not forcefully raise the voice for the farmers on the three farm laws, saying former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi was the first one to raise the matter.

"When these laws were made, Rahul Gandhi was the first one to raise this issue, even in Parliament. He also carried out tractor rallies in Punjab and Haryana. He showed the way and then farmers proceeded on that path," Baghel said.

The farmers are carrying out a non-political movement which is a good thing, but Rahul Gandhi had taken the initiative, the Chhattisgarh chief minister added.

He asserted that the opposition strongly opposed the laws both inside and outside

Parliament, and to say that they did not raise their voice forcefully is absolutely wrong.

Asked about the multi-layered barricading and iron nails studded on roads at the protest sites on Delhi's border points, Baghel said that in the olden days "when dacoits used to carry out dacoities in villages, they used to cut off all the routes by installing nails and leave just one route open for their exit." "Now, the government is doing that," he added.

On the controversy over global celebrities such as singer Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg expressing support to the farmers' protests, Baghel questioned the government's approach of countering them by issuing an official statement.

"You (the government) are further encouraging this by reacting to it. They (the government) have internationalised it. If

you would not have reacted, it would not have been internationalised," the Chhattisgarh chief minister said.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the MEA had slammed the remarks made by pop singer Rihanna and other celebrities and activists on farmer protests, saying the facts on the issue must be ascertained before rushing to comment on it.

Pointing out that India also speaks on issues of other countries such as on the Capitol Hill violence in the US recently, Baghel took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Howdy Modi event, saying he was seen "campaigning" there.

He urged the government to take care of the economic needs of the farmers and fulfil its promises such as the implementation of the Swaminathan committee report and doubling farmers' income by 2022. "You had talked about implementing the Swaminathan committee report and doubling the farmers' income by 2022. Now we are into 2021, how far have we reached in doubling the farmers' income, the government needs to answer these questions," Baghel

said. If the government does not resolve the farmers' issue soon, the agitation will spread across the nation, he said.

To highlight the widespread opposition to the laws, he also pointed out that Rahul Gandhi had met President Ram Nath Kovind and handed over two crore signatures of farmers collected by the Congress against the farm laws.

Baghel alleged that the primary issue was "that this government does not have a vision".

From the time of India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru to Indira Gandhi, there was a paucity of foodgrains, but Indira Gandhi gave the slogan of green revolution to which the farmers of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh responded and supported the government, he said.

The farmers increased production to such levels that "we became atmanirbhar as far as foodgrains are concerned", Baghel said.

"Now the government does not have a place to keep all the foodgrains. You can't just keep

putting it in godowns as there is a limited capacity. They should have acted on time, I had proposed two years ago that states should be allowed to use the surplus foodgrains, be it 'Makka (maize) or Dhaan (paddy)', to produce ethanol," he said.

"But it is stuck. If you give this permission to states there will be less pressure on the Centre as well as states," Baghel argued.

Farmers are producing at the behest of the government, so who will ensure their welfare and why should they not get MSP, he asked.

Thousands of farmers have been protesting at Delhi's borders with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh demanding the rollback of the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act.

The protesting farmers have expressed apprehension that these laws would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the "mercy" of big corporations.

However, the government has maintained that the new laws will bring farmers better opportunities and usher in new technologies in agriculture. PTI

