

SHORT TAKES

HOSPITALS
PLACE ORDER
FOR VACCINES

From Page 1

Hospitals have already started placing their demand to the government for vaccines.

Dr D.V.S. Soma Raju, executive director at SLG Hospitals, said, “We are expecting doses from June 15 and we have created a separate area in the hospital for vaccination. There are not only corporates but also different communities who have approached the hospital for the vaccination process. We are looking at offices, industrial units, community centres and have a well-equipped dedicated team of experts to carry it out. We are geared up for large scale vaccination.”

Hospitals are also having a team of dedicated managers who are approaching their regular patients and their families.

This is being done to give them confidence and also deal with any misconception, misnomers and clear doubts about the Covid vaccines.

TEEN'S MURDER
LEADS TO POLITICAL
BLAME-GAMEDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 25

The murder of a 17-year-old in Hasakothur village of Kammarpally mandal acquired political colour as TRS party and BJP leaders blamed each other for the death.

Malavath Siddarth was beaten to death on May 20 following a love affair. Hasakothur village TRS president Kanaka Rajesh and four others were arrested for alleged involvement by Kammarpally police.

Meanwhile, opposition leaders alleged that minister V. Prashanth Reddy was trying to protect the main accused, Kanaka Rajesh, who was trying to project it as Covid death.

They also found fault with the accused who allegedly shared his photos from jail on social media groups. TRS leaders refuted the allegations and said that opposition leaders were intentionally defaming the minister.

Meanwhile, Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind, BJP district president B. Laxminarsaiah, Palle Ganga Reddy visited the victim's family on Tuesday.

They demand a full-fledged inquiry into the murder and stringent punishment for the guilty. Arvind gave ₹1 lakh to the bereaved family.

BSP state leader Muthyala Sunil Reddy also demanded inquiry into the murder.

Hasakothur villagers said that the deceased Siddarth never associated with any political party.

He allegedly fell in love with the daughter of Rajesh, they said.

Rajesh and his friends tried to warn Siddarth and thrashed him. The victim succumbed to the injuries, they said.

● **They also found fault with the accused who allegedly shared his photos from jail on social media groups. TRS leaders refuted the allegations and said that opposition leaders were intentionally defaming the minister.**

● **Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind, BJP district president B. Laxminarsaiah, Palle Ganga Reddy visited the victim's family on Tuesday. They demand a full-fledged inquiry into the murder and stringent punishment for the guilty.**

INCOGNITO | COP

DURGA PRASAD
SUNKU | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 25

While allegations of police behaving rudely with the public are on the rise in the process of implementing the lockdown, Rameshwar, Siddipet assistant commissioner of police (ACP), decided to check the charges, and experienced firsthand what was going on.

Rameshwar went incognito during the lockdown hours to see for himself how the police on the ground were behaving with the people. A video where he was being

checked by the police personnel, apparently unaware of his identity, is being circulated widely on social media.

Rameshwar travelled through 12 check-posts on a motorcycle in civil dress with a towel covering his face, from about 10.30 pm on Monday night during the curfew. He introduced himself as someone out to get medicines as he was feeling sick.

As a precaution he kept his identity and vehicle documents during the ride, which lasted about an hour. Asked about his adventure,

Demand for Covid-19
beds continues to rise

Oxygen, ICU beds vacant for only couple of hours

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 25

Lockdown has been in place for a fortnight now and the government has been claiming that Coronavirus cases are declining. But in stark contrast, demand for beds in multi-specialty hospitals remains high and cries for more beds resound the Covid centres by each passing day.

In an alarming development, oxygen and intensive care beds are vacant only for a couple of hours before other patients occupy them — be it at Asian Institute of Gastroenterology Hospital, Apollo Hospitals, KIMS Hospital, Care Hospital or Continental Hospital. Moreover, these hospitals are receiving 10-20 calls for beds every day, so as to shift severe and serious cases from different districts.

JUNIOR DOCS TO
BOYCOTT DUTIES
FROM TODAYDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 25

The Telangana Junior Doctors' Association (T-JUDA) has decided to sit on a protest and boycott services from Wednesday due to non-fulfilment of their demands raised earlier this month. The junior doctors at all medical colleges and teaching hospitals will boycott services including all non-Covid electives except emergencies and all Covid related electives except ICUs and critical care units from Wednesday.

The doctors said if their demands were not considered, they would further boycott non-Covid emergencies and Covid ICUs from May 28.

“The state government, in its latest order related to stipend hike, did not take into account all our demands. The stipend hike has been put into effect from January 2021, while our arrears are due since January 2020. Other three demands are not even answered. We have given the government enough time to address our demands and they failed,” said Dr V. Naveen, T-JUDA president.

“We will start a silent protest by wearing black bandages starting Wednesday, where all PGs, senior residents, interns and super-specialty residents will also join us, Dr Naveen said.

Meanwhile, the directorate of medical education, in its latest order, asked all principals and directors of teaching hospitals to ensure prompt monitoring of patient care services for Covid-19 and non-Covid patients in view of the protest, and to prepare a new duty roster and send a copy to the DME office.

The directorate informed that no leaves would be sanctioned to the faculty and they would have to monitor the attendance of junior doctors closely and send attendance particulars to the DME office every day before 12 noon.

● **DOCTORS SAY the time taken for recovery of patients under intensive care is ranging from 14 days to 40 days. Often, these patients are recovering and on discharge, dying at their homes within a week.**

● **EXPERTS SAY that decline in cases will be slow even though lockdown has been imposed.**

Dr Kodeti Rakesh, consultant pulmonologist at Star Hospitals, says, “Out-patient departments of big hospitals are seeing a decline in mild cases. But severe and serious cases requiring emergency attention continue to be high.”

A senior manager of a private hospital recount-

ed, “There was a call about a severe case from Rangareddy district involving a 74-year-old who required an oxygen bed, as his O₂ level was 88. But on arrival, his prognosis showed that he needed intensive care, as his other vitals had been compromised. They waited for two hours in the hospital lobby for an ICU bed. But while waiting, the patient died.”

Doctors say the time taken for recovery of patients under intensive care is ranging from 14 days to 40 days. Often, these patients are recovering and on discharge, dying at their homes within a week.

A senior doctor of a multi-specialty hospital, on condition of anonymity, confessed, “Our follow-up with relatives presents a grim picture of patients surviving post recovery. Many patients

are recovering in hospitals but succumbing at home. Hence, it is very difficult to say how severe and serious patients will fare during the next month. We are expecting many patients from districts, as there are many distress calls from Khammam, Siddipet, Warangal, Karimnagar and Mahbubnagar, where caseloads continue to be high.”

Experts say that decline in cases will be slow even though lockdown has been imposed. No sharp drop is expected in mild cases during the last week of May, with the disease manifesting only in the second week of June.

All top doctors are clear on one aspect. The only way to safety from Covid-19 virus is vaccination. Maximum people must be vaccinated as early as possible for the safety of all.

Covid death rate high in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 25

While the number of new Covid-19 cases has stayed below 4,000, the state is experiencing a high rate of death due to the disease which shows that patients in a critical condition are not recovering. A mean average of 20 deaths per day shows that 140 patients have died in a week.

On Tuesday, the government Covid-19 bulletin said there were 3,821 new cases and 23 deaths. The recovery rate was put at 92.52 per cent. Those who have not recovered continue to be in intensive care units and their recovery and post-Covid 19 progress remains a challenge.

Senior health officials said those on ventilator support for more than 14 days are not showing the rate of improvement required. The overall caseload in the state is 5,60,141, and the toll is 3,169.

The number of patients in home and institutional isolation has seen a sharp drop from 45,000 in the May 16-22 week to 38,706 on Tuesday. This is being taken as an indication of reduction in mild cases.

The government is ramping up testing and sources said the target is one lakh a day. It stood at

● **IT WENT UP in Khammam district from 123 cases on May 23 to which rose to 198 on May 24 and zoomed to 245 on May 25. The rise in the cases in the district is attributed to political activity. There are no micro containment zones set up in the district.**

81,203 tests on Tuesday.

Among the districts, the rising number of cases in Khammam and Surpayet is causing concern. It went up in Khammam district from 123 cases on May 23 to which rose to 198 on May 24 and zoomed to 245 on May 25. The rise in the cases in the district is attributed to political activity. There are no micro containment zones set up in the district.

Suryapet saw a sharp rise in cases to 214, from 130 cases on May 24 and 63 on May 23, 73 on May 22 and 51 on May 21.

Other districts have a large number of cases, with a slight variation in the daily numbers. The districts which have been constantly recording more than 100 new cases per day are Nalgonda with 187, Karimnagar 172, Peddapalli 147, Warangal Urban 146, Nagarkurnool 132, Mahbubnagar 128, Bhadradi Kothagudem and Mancherial 116 each, Jagtial 111, Sangareddy and Vikarabad 103 each, Wanaparthy 105 and Siddipet 104.

This drastic rise in the

districts is being attributed to the movement of people for economic activity. The highest micro containment zones are in Warangal rural at 19 and Siddipet at 10.

Health officials said that they are concentrating on districts which are constantly having high numbers but those showing sudden spurts will require strict monitoring.

The GHMC area comprising the city is seeing a very slow decline in the cases on a weekly basis. Against 594 cases on May 19, the city recorded 534 on May 21, 343 on May 23, 424 on May 24 which jumped to 537 on May 25. In the first week of the month, the city recording 700-plus cases.

On the city outskirts, Ranga Reddy and Medchal-Malkajigiri districts continue to register 200-plus cases every day. There are 226 cases new cases in Ranga Reddy district and 215 in Medchal Malkajigiri on Tuesday.

It remains to be seen how the 20-hour daily lockdown will impact new cases.

40 admitted with black
fungus at ENT hospitalDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 25

Forty patients with black fungus were admitted at the Government ENT Hospital and five discharged after surgical intervention and treatment on Tuesday. The hospital is increasing the bed strength by 50, given the heavy rush for treatment.

The hospital will now have 280 beds. The ENT Hospital has the capacity to increase bed strength in its different surgical wards as there are only

● **THE HOSPITAL will now have 280 beds. The ENT Hospital has the capacity to increase bed strength in its different surgical wards as there are only patients of black fungus presently.**

patients of black fungus presently in the hospital. Dr Ramesh Reddy, Director of Health and Medical Education, along with senior health officials visited the hospital on Tuesday to discuss increasing the number of beds, availability of medi-

cines and integration of Ayurveda and allopathy treatment. Doctors said that they are carrying out a maximum of 15 surgeries every day.

A team of ENT, eyes, kidney and cardiology specialists is monitor the patients most of whom have fungal invasion in eyes and require a good number of amphotericin-B injections.

Oral antifungal medicines post-discharge are also available and they are being given to the discharged patients for complete recovery.

1991 as a sub-inspector, told this newspaper: “I suspected that the police personnel behaved differently in the presence of senior officials. I wanted to check how they were behaving at other times. I went late at night because usually the patience of police personnel on duty may be weak.”

His experiment bore fruit. In one of the videos, a constable is heard speaking rudely with him. Rameshwar pretended to talk to the personal secretary of a minister. In return, the police seized his bike. Rameshwar appreciated

Narasimha Swamy Jayanti
observed in VemulawadaDC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY-25

The priests of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple present in Nampally performed the Divya Kalyanamahotsavam to the presiding deities of Narasimha Swamy and goddess Lakshmi Devi on the occasion of Narasimha Swamy Jayanti here in Rajanna Sircilla district on Tuesday.

Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple is an adjacent temple of the famous Sri Raja Rajeshwara Swamy Devasthanam situated in Vemulawada.

The priests performed Abhishekam, Nitya Homam, Sahasra Namarchana, Vedavinnapalu, Theertha-



The temple priests perform the Divya Kalayana mahotsavam at Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple in Nampally of Vemulawada on Tuesday.

prasada vitharana on the occasion following the Covid guidelines without allowing the devotees. The temple priests Ramanach-

ary, Vijay Simhachary performed the Kalaynam under the supervision of Alli Shankar and incharge Nuguri Narendar.

8 dead after boats capsize

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 25

Tragedy struck the agency tracts when eight persons, including children and women, all guest workers from Odisha, drowned after two country boats capsized in Sileru Reservoir along the Andhra-Odisha Border (AOB) on Monday night.

The incident took place when 35 members of migrant families were trying to sneak into the Odisha border at night, fearing lockdown clampdown. Ten persons managed to swim ashore, while eight others drowned in the river.

The police said that the 35 members of guest workers from Guntawada and Konduguda villages under Malkangiri district in Odisha reached Sileru

from Hyderabad as they lost their livelihoods due to the Covid-19 curfew. After crossing the Sileru check post in a vehicle, they reached Jonnalamamidi village on foot and decided to take a boat ride to reach their hometowns as they feared they may be stopped at the border by Odisha officials.

In the first trip, 17 people set off in two country boats and crossed over to Odisha. In the second trip, 18 persons set sail in the same country boats. When the first country boat capsized allegedly due to the overload or the boat hitting a pole underneath the water, the panic-stricken occupants jumped into the other boat to save their lives. But it too gave in and sank in the river.

Chintapalle ASP Vidya Sagar Naidu said that a

team of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force with the support of AP police and other departments launched a search and rescue operation to trace the missing eight persons. They recovered six bodies so far from the river and the search is on to trace the remaining two bodies.

The police said that seven among the eight victims were children and women. The bodies were shifted to a local hospital in Odisha for post mortem. A 13-month-old baby also died in the incident.

Meanwhile, AP minister for health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas asked the Visakhapatnam district authorities to take up rescue operations. He also asked them to ensure proper treatment to the people who managed to swim ashore.

GOVERNOR LAUDS
SUPPORT BY
INDIAN DIASPORADC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 25

Lauding the efforts of the Indian diaspora in the time of Covid-19, Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan on Tuesday appreciated their role in extending relief material to fight the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Respecting their roots and with great love for the motherland, many organisations and individuals supporting Indians all over the world are extending great help to the needy back home,” she said.

The Governor was handing over 300 oxygen concentrators, donated by the IT Serve Alliance, Dallas, Texas, the USA, to their representatives in Hyderabad at Raj Bhavan, here. The oxygen concentrators will be distributed to the needy staff and their family members working here.

Dr Soundararajan said that their timely response to provide a total of 500 oxygen concentrators and 20 ventilator beds to the people in India was truly appreciable and inspiring to many others.

She said that it was time that we all rise to the occasion to help the suffering mankind and help it overcome the pandemic through our collective efforts.

Etala wants to be focus
of anti-TRS forces

From Page 1

Political scuttlebutt has it that while Rajendar is enthused by the signal of hope coming from a party with a government at the Centre, which could give him some immunity against severe legal action initiated by an estranged TRS government, he is not too keen to join the BJP, at least not as yet.

“Rajendar” somehow wishes to emerge as a rallying focal point of anti-TRS forces in the state. His wish would be to become a consensus candidate of the entire Opposition, which when split, as witnessed during the MLC graduate and Nagarjunasagar Assembly bypolls, was no match for the mighty juggernaut of the ruling pink party,” said a political observer.

The BJP is in no mood for it. If Rajendar won't join the saffron party, which would give its cadre some morale boost and give it an opportunity to re-create the narrative it set for Dubbak and the GHMC that it is the only alternative to the TRS in Telangana, it has no need for him.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, Vivek Venkataswamy, more forthcoming than most other leaders, said, “We offered Etala Rajendar a welcome to join the BJP in the fight against Chief Minister

K Chandrashekar Rao's corruption and dynasty rule. We told him we could also fight the Huzarabad bypoll if it happened, but Etala requested that we instead support him by not having our party candidate if he fights as an Independent.”

However, the former health minister's efforts to meet the two most plenipotent leaders in the state BJP, minister of state for home affairs G Kishan Reddy and party state president Bandi Sanjay, have not fructified. Clearly, both of them would want to meet him after he agrees to join the BJP.

Kishan Reddy dismissed the entire news as “mere speculation”.

“I have not met Etala Rajendar. Rajendar called me and expressed a desire to meet me personally recently,” Kishan Reddy said, adding “If Rajendar wants to join the BJP and

● **HOWEVER, THE former health minister's efforts to meet the two most plenipotent leaders in the state BJP, minister of state for home affairs G Kishan Reddy and party state president Bandi Sanjay, have not fructified. Clearly, both of them would want to meet him after he agrees to join the BJP.**

wishes to discuss the modalities, we can consider.”

Top Congress leaders, some of whom the former minister had earlier met, said they “understood” his “compulsions” of having to finally opt for the BJP over their party, despite being still stronger in rural Telangana, for “politico-legal protection”.

“We cannot offer what the BJP can give him, which is a kind of legal immunity,” they said.

While most BJP leaders felt it would be parlous for Rajendar to resign as an MLA and push for a hard-scrabble bypoll at this point of time, arguing that if TRS makes it a prestige fight and puts all its resources, it would be nearly suicidal, a lone dissenting voice said, “There is a strong anti-KCR wave in Telangana, which has gotten further accentuated by the mishandling of the Covid crisis and underreporting of cases and deaths. The BJP can get back into the driver's seat by not only forcing this byelection but also looking at a few other MLAs who can be offered enough incentive to resign and have a slew of polls, either together or in quick succession.”

The contrarian thinking BJP leader added, “One discussion in our party is that Etala is willing to resign as an MLA and join the party if he is promised a Rajya Sabha seat.”

None from the Etala Rajendar camp, including Rajendar himself, could be contacted to respond to queries of *Deccan Chronicle* on the issue.

In any case, like the Dreyfus Affair, the la Rajendar affair is becoming centre-stage to state politics, and in its resolution lies a pointer to what 2023 holds.



Siddipet ACP Rameshwar in disguise speaks to cops on duty during lockdown.

ture, Rameshwar, who joined the police force in

OTHER STORIES



GURUDAKSHINA TRUST HEAD PASSES AWAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 25

Chairman of Gurudakshina Foundation and politician Chekuri Kasaiah (86), passed away on Tuesday while undergoing treatment for cancer.

Kasaiah is survived by two sons and he had talent in multi-linguistics. He was elected as MLA from Kothagudem as Congress contestants and elected as MLA in the same segment in 1978 from Janata Party.

Kasaiah, who started his career as a school teacher in Kothagudem, worked in the agricultural department. Kasaiah, is a native of Takkellapadu in Errupalem mandal was made zilla parishad chairman from Telugu Desam Party. He was elected as sarpanch of Kothagudem twice. He contested from Sujathanagar assembly segment from Congress and lost in the hands of Rajab Ali. He also worked in Telangana Praja Samithi.

GGH GOOF-UP LEADS TO EXCHANGE OF COVID BODIES

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 25

Two bodies of Covid-19 deceased were exchanged mistakenly at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Nizamabad on Tuesday.

Galamani of Shivajinagar town succumbed while undergoing treatment. Instead of Galamani, the hospital staff handed over the body of Gangamani to the Galamani family members. The family members conducted last rites on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the Gangamani family noticed the exchange. Both families played the negligent attitude of GGH staff. The hospital officials insisted that the bodies were handed over only after they were identified by family members.

FRAUDSTER ABSCONDING FOR 13 YEARS ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
Karimnagar, May 25

Karimnagar police have on Tuesday arrested in Bangalore a fraudster, who was absconding for past 13 years. He had cheated many persons and banks with fake "Kisan Vikas Patras".

Disclosing facts to media here, police commissioner V. B. Kamalasan Reddy disclosed that the accused Kundana Srinivas Rao, a native of Kamareddy in Nizamabad district, had cheated people of Rs. 1 crore.

A graduate in mechanical engineering, Srinivas Rao had worked as a lecturer in some private colleges in his home town until 2006 when he took to cheating using forged documents. His fraud came into the open and he was caught by Karimnagar Two Town police in 2007 and jailed.

However, Srinivas Rao did not mend his ways even after release from jail. He shifted from Kamareddy and moved to various places in Karimnagar, Warangal and Guntur districts cheating using his old modus operandi.

Police kept looking out for him but he managed to escape creating a fake identity, along with fake Aadhaar and Pan cards, in the name of Shankar Rao. He kept changing places realising that police were on for him. There were 40 non-bailable warrants pending against him, 23 of them in Karimnagar district alone.

Srinivas Rao, alias Shankar Rao, soon spent all his money and ran into debts. He moved to Tirupathi and spent time as a beggar at Tirumala. Tirupathi Devasthanam in Tirupathi. He then moved to Bangalore and started working as a watchman.

Commissioner Kamalasan said on a tip off about his whereabouts, a task force team from Karimnagar reached Bangalore and arrested him with the help of local police.

Pvt hosps looting Covid patients in Karimnagar

Many hosps are demanding deposit of ₹1-2L, before admitting patients

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 25

Though people with Coronavirus are facing a lot of hardships, many private hospitals in Karimnagar district are taking advantage of the situation by charging astronomical prices for every service they are providing.

Patients are getting admitted to private hospitals due to non-availability of beds or lack of facilities and hygiene in government hospitals. Having got admitted to private hospitals, many patients and their families are forced to sell their valuables and even properties or take loans from private money lenders at high rates of interest.

Even before admitting patients, many hospitals are demanding a deposit of ₹1-2 lakh. In addition,

● **MANY PRIVATE** hospitals are even charging ₹50,000 a day for a bed with oxygen.

● **IN ADDITION** hospitals are collecting ₹1,000 per day for supplying nutritious food. But what they are doing is ordering food from local hotels that cost ₹100 for full vegetarian meals for and ₹150 for non-vegetarian.

they are even charging ₹50,000 a day for bed with oxygen. Despite charging such enormous amounts, they are charging additional fee promising a balanced and nutritious diet for speedy recovery.

Private hospitals are collecting ₹1,000 per day for supplying nutritious food. But what they are doing is ordering food from local hotels that cost ₹100 for full vegetarian meals for and ₹150 for non-vegetarian.

These hospitals are not even giving bills for treatment and medicines, except to those who want

to claim from their insurance. In certain cases, if bills cross one lakh, they are giving bills only in some thousands, thereby cheating the government too.

There are also allegations of medical negligence in private hospitals. There are no specialists to take care of any emergencies. They are also not allowing family members inside to observe their health condition.

At a review meeting, BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakara ordered officials of medical depart-

ment to keep a check on private hospitals, which are looting innocent patients. He directed them to conduct sudden inspections to observe whether or not they are collecting charges as per guidelines of the government and take immediate action if rules are being violated.

But officials of vigilance wing or medical and health are refraining from conducting inspections for fear of contracting Coronavirus. This is letting private hospitals go scot free and continue looting poor Covid patients.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Commission has taken up a suo moto case and issued notice to the district collector and medical and health officer to submit a report on medical mafia in private hospitals before June 29.

ADDL COLLECTOR SUCCUMBS TO CORONAVIRUS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 25

Rajanna Sircilla district additional collector R. Anjaiah has succumbed to Coronavirus that he had contracted 10 days ago.

Soon after the 55-year-old got infected 10 days ago, his family members admitted him to a private hospital in Hyderabad, where he breathed his last breath on Tuesday.

A native of Nalgonda district, Anjaiah was the district revenue officer of Nizamabad before he came on promotion to Rajanna Sircilla district as additional collector.

Rajanna Sircilla collector D. Krishna Bhaskar expressed extreme shock over the demise of Anjaiah. Bhaskar said within a short period of time as additional collector, Anjaiah had established very good relations with officials of various departments and earned a good name for his services.

"We all expected he would return soon after winning his battle with the Covid-19," he observed, expressing his condolences to the bereaved family.

COLLECTOR PAYS SURPRISE VISIT TO KARIMNAGAR GOVT HOSPITAL

Karimnagar: Collector K. Shashanka on Tuesday made a surprise visit to District Government Hospital in Karimnagar and inspected the various wards. He ordered officials of health department to make necessary arrangements for treating patients suffering from black fungus.

Speaking on the occasion, Shashanka said the number of black fungus cases have been increased across the district. He asked doctors to identify such patients and provide necessary treatment,

instead of referring them to Hyderabad.

The collector asked hospital superintendent Dr. Ratnamala to submit a report on medicines and injections required for treatment of black fungus. He wanted sanitation facilities at the government hospital to be checked regularly and kept clean. Shashanka ordered municipal commissioner Valluri Kranthi to develop a park on the hospital premises to provide a pleasant atmosphere for patients and their attendants.



36 division corporator G. Jayasri distributes home-made food to the needy at Mankammathota in Karimnagar on Tuesday.

—DC

‘Chai wala’ a Good Samaritan

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, MAY 25

Shambulal Suthar, who runs a roadside make-shift hotel and is popularly known as 'Chai and Samosa Wala' in Uttoor town is extending financial help from his meagre earnings to the poor in the interior villages during the lockdown.

The 38-year-old Suthar migrated from Rajasthan some 15 years back and stays in Navodayanagar colony.

"I keep aside around Rs 20 -Rs 50 everyday to help poor people. This 'saving' is being spent as Covid relief so that the poorer sections can get some relief", he said and added that the money he saves from his daily earnings



Shambulal Suthar, extends financial help to poor families at Rajampet village in Uttoor mandal of Adilabad district on Monday.

are also used to extend financial help or distribution of essential commodities to the poor, dalits and adivasis in memory of his father.

Suthar distributed provisions and groceries in Dongachintha and Rajampet villages and Shanti Nagar and

Navodayanagar colonies in Uttoor during the first lockdown. On Monday, he gave Rs 500 financial assistance to 22 families in Rajampet village towards purchase of essential commodities or medicines. He is likely to reach out to more people in other villages.

Conmen dupe unemployed with fake job offers at RIMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 25

During these tough Coronavirus times, while some private hospitals are exploiting Covid-19 patients, middlemen and third-party outsourcing agencies are taking advantage of unemployed youth by promising them jobs at Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in Adilabad.

Incidentally, the state government has issued GO 924 for filling up various posts on contract and outsourcing basis at RIMS, Adilabad.

As per the GO, 52 posts are to be recruited on contract basis while 247 jobs will be outsourced. As per details, doctors for RIMS are to be recruited on contract basis, while all other posts will be filled by those recruited through third-party outsourcing agencies.

It is learnt these agencies are collecting huge amounts from interested candidates for getting them appointed with RIMS, Adilabad.

There are also reports that many political leaders are trying to accommodate their near and dear in the outsourced and contract jobs at by hook or crook. Some of them have even collected some advance from youth promising them jobs.

Under the circumstances, senior TRS leader B. Goverdhan Reddy appealed to authorities that they strictly follow the rule of reservations and roster points while selecting candidates for jobs in RIMS.

He submitted a memorandum to joint collector Natarajan in this regard on Tuesday.

Total vacancies available include 36 posts of

assistant professors on consolidated pay of ₹ 1.25 lakh, 144 staff nurse posts with ₹25,140 salary, six storekeeper posts, 11 posts of stenographers or typists, six record assistants, one perfusionist, four posts of CAS RMO, 12 CMO, 79 technicians and other paramedical staff.

The outsourcing agency that gets the tender will play a key role in recruitment of outsourcing posts. Generally, outsourcing agencies are backed by political leaders.

There are reports in Adilabad district that amounts ranging from ₹1.5 lakh to ₹5 lakh are being collected for each outsourced post, depending on the amount of salary.

It is a general practice that outsourced jobs are for the period of one year. But their services are generally extended.

Covax stock aplenty, but of no use in Indur, Kamareddy

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD/KAMAREDDY, MAY 25

Those who turned up in large numbers to get vaccinated against Covid-19 at government vaccination centres in Nizamabad, Armoor and Bodhan towns had to return home on Tuesday without taking a jab, thanks to the frequently changing guidelines for inoculation. Though there are sufficient stocks of vaccine available in government hospitals, people were disappointed as the changed norms prevented them from availing vaccines.

In Nizamabad district, Covishield has been supplied for vaccination for Covid-19. As many as 1,71,030 people were administered Covishield vaccination first dose. Only 12,580 persons got Covaxin in the district. In view of the resumed vaccination programme, people thronged the Government General Hospital and urban health centres in Nizamabad,

district hospital in Bodhan and community health centre at Armoor.

In view of changed guidelines, Covishield second shot was given to people, who had completed 84 days of the first dose. On the same lines, Covaxin second dose is given to people, who completed 42 days of the first dose. The district medical and health officials provided only 200 vials each to Nizamabad, Armoor and Bodhan hospitals.

People in large numbers visited government vaccination centres to get their second dose, but in vain. Ramakrishna Reddy of Gangasthan rushed to Chandrasekhara Colony urban health centre on Tuesday to get a second shot of vaccine, but the staff denied him the vaccine. He realised that he was eligible for the second dose only after 84 days of the first dose due to the changed guidelines.

Speaking to this newspaper, district medical and health officer Bala Narendra said the second shot of Covid-19 vaccine

was provided to eligible beneficiaries in the district. Based on online data of the first dose beneficiaries, the second shot was provided, he said. Gap between first and second doses increased to 84 days, he said. "We provided jabs as per availability of vaccines," he added.

In Kamareddy district, around 1.80 lakh people received the Covid-19 vaccine so far. The officials set a target of 2.33 lakh vaccination and achieved 77.25 percent target. Covishield was provided on a large scale to the beneficiaries. State officials sent vaccine doses on Monday and Tuesday for Kamareddy district.

When contacted, Kamareddy district medical and health officer Chandrasekhara said sufficient vaccines were available in the district. People are eligible for the second shot after 84 days of Covishield and 28 days of Covaxin first dose, he explained. He said there was no shortage of vaccines in Kamareddy district.

Trade unions call for ‘Black Day’ stir today

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 25

National council member of All India Kisan Sangh (AIKS), Ponaganti Kedari, on Tuesday appealed to various working unions to observe May 26 as 'Black Day' against the BJP-led Union Government and to demand suspension of all its laws that were detrimental to the interests of farmers and working class.

Even though farmers are on protest for the past six months against the new agriculture bills, the Centre has remained silent, he alleged.

If on the one hand it is neglecting the welfare of farmers, it is, on the other hand, going out of the way in its patronisation of cor-



HMS members release the posters of 'Black Day' to be observed on May 26 in Godavarikhani in Peddapalli district.

porate companies, which also stand to gain immensely from the new laws, he said.

Meanwhile, members of Hind Mazdoor Sangh (HMS) have exhorted all working unions to make a success of the May 26 'Black Day' protest.

After releasing a poster in Godavarikhani, state president of HMS, Riyaz

Ahmed and district president Thota Venu alleged that from the time it came to power on May 26, 2014, the Narendra Modi government has been adopting anti-worker policies and trying to suppress the working class.

The Centre is denying people, farmers and workers of their fundamental right, they said.

PRICE | DIFFERENCE

TSCOGF says selling produce outside TS is illegal, warns of action

TS oil palm growers' eye better returns in AP

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, MAY 25

The price difference of oil palm fresh fruit bunch in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has turned problematic for Telangana State Cooperative Oilseeds Growers Federation (TSCOGF), which operates two palm oil factories.

Meanwhile two private oil palm companies in Sitanagaram and Jangareddygudem in West Godavari district are offering Rs 20,000 per ton of fresh fruit bunches against ₹18,830 per tonne

● **FARMERS ARE** selling their FFB to AP private factories as a farmer can get ₹10,000 extra if he sells ten tonnes in the neighbouring state.

by Telangana state. With this, oil palm growers are keen on selling their produce to the private entities in Andhra Pradesh.

The modal (most common) retail prices of edible oil have increased by 50 per cent in the past one year as imports have fallen due to Covid-19. The Union government

proposed to reduce foreign exchange burden due to an increase in imports of edible oils by promoting oil palm in the country.

This has resulted in an unexpected demand for oil palm and the Telangana government is encouraging oil palm cultivation in the state. It has decided to raise the crop to at least one lakh acres in the coming three years. The private companies in AP are trying to capitalise on the advantage.

Farmers from Acuyathapuram, Naram-

varigudem, Mandalapalli and Mustibanda in Aswaroepet and Dammamet mandals are selling their FFB to AP private factories as a farmer can get ₹10,000 extra if he sells ten tonnes in the neighbouring state.

According to sources, the farmers have sold at least 400 tonnes of oil palm bunches to private factories in Andhra Pradesh where the farmers also get paid the day the produce is delivered. Meanwhile, TSCOGF officials swung into action and stopped vehicles carrying bunches

and proceeding to Sitanagaram and Jangareddygudem.

Oilseeds Federation deputy manager A. Balakrishna Reddy said, "The oil palm growers should not sell to outside factories according to the Telangana Oil Palm (Regulation of Production and Processing) Act-1993. The Federation fixed the price by taking the three-month average of oil recovery percent from the FFB. It is not only unfair but also illegal if farmers sell their produce outside their zone".

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SHORT TAKES

TN TEACHER HELD FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Chennai, May 25: A teacher of a well-known CBSE school here was arrested on Tuesday following a complaint, after allegations of sexual harassment of girl students surfaced against him in the social media, police said.

After the allegations became public, police officers of the crime against women and children wing conducted enquiries and a complaint was received against the 59-year old teacher, city police said.

Investigation revealed that the commerce-accountancy teacher had sexually harassed girls by sending lewd messages, a police release said.

Also, a girl student of the same school was sexually harassed a few years ago by the same teacher and the parents had already complained to school authorities against the teacher for sending obscene messages and videos to students through WhatsApp, the release added.

“The teacher was taken into custody for questioning and he was arrested. He was produced before a magistrate on Tuesday and remanded to judicial custody. He is lodged in Puzhal Central Prison. A case has been registered against him under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and also the Information Technology Act,” a police officer said. School authorities have also been questioned in the matter, he added.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights said it has taken a serious view of the matter and asked the state police to take strict action against the teacher.

MALAYALAM ACTOR HELD FOR WIFE’S SUICIDE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 25: Actor Unni Dev, son of popular Malayalam actor and late Rajan P. Dev, was arrested on Tuesday over the death of his wife Priyanka, police said here.

A physical education teacher in a local school, Priyanka was found hanging in the bedroom of her home at Vembayam near here on May 12, a day after she filed a police complaint of domestic violence against her actor-husband.

The *Aadu* actor was taken into custody from his home in Ernakulam district on Tuesday morning after ensuring that he has turned Covid negative.

A team of police personnel under Nedumangadu DYSP later brought Dev here as the case was registered in the capital district. “As he was Covid positive, we were waiting for him to recover from the disease. We went to his home and took him in an ambulance to the hospital concerned and ensured that he turned negative for the virus infection. A medical certificate was also collected in this regard,” a senior police officer said.

Besides the deceased, the 26-year-old woman’s family also lodged a complaint against Dev for alleged domestic violence and harassing her physically and mentally demanding more dowry.

JAISHANKAR SET TO MEET BLINKEN

New York, May 25: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar has expressed confidence that India will continue to shape the big debates of our times as he interacted with Permanent Representative Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti and other officials and diplomats from India to the United Nations.

Jaishankar arrived in New York on Sunday evening on his first visit to the US after India entered the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member in January this year and will meet UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

A productive strategy session with @ambtsirumurti and our UN team in New York @IndiaUNNewYork. Confident that India will continue to shape the big debates of our times, Jaishankar tweeted on Monday after his meeting with Tirumurti, Deputy Permanent Representative Ambassador K Nagaraj Naidu and diplomats from the Permanent Mission of India to the UN.

Grateful to EAM @DrSJaishankar for guidance in focussing our efforts in @UN and in Security Council for 2021-22, Tirumurti tweeted.

From New York, Jaishankar will travel to Washington where he is expected to meet US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.



Rough sea in the Bay of Bengal ahead of cyclone Yaas landfall at Digha in East Midnapore district on Tuesday. The Indian Army has deployed 17 integrated relief columns, comprising specialised personnel with necessary equipment and inflatable boats, in West Bengal as cyclone approaches the country’s eastern coast. — PTI

JHARKHAND ALSO SOUNDS ‘YAAS’ ALERT

Bhubaneswar Ranchi, May 25: West Bengal and Odisha have evacuated lakhs of people from vulnerable areas to safety as severe cyclonic storm ‘Yaas’ is nearing the coast and is expected to make landfall on Wednesday morning.

Neighbouring Jharkhand has also sounded an alert and is preparing for the cyclone’s impact.

The Odisha government said it has moved over 2 lakh people from vulnerable areas in coastal districts to safety. Special Relief Commissioner of Odisha, P.K. Jena, said that over 2.10 lakh people residing in kutcha houses in low-lying areas have been moved to cyclone shelters. The highest number of evacuees are from Balasore district (74,132), followed by Bhadrak (73,103).

Evacuation of people is also underway in Cuttack, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Khurda, Jagastinghpur, Jajpur, Dhenukanal, Gajapati, Ganjam, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Puri and Angul districts, he said.

Around 5,000 pregnant women expecting delivery by June 1 have been admitted to hospitals, a health official said.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has rushed Odisha’s Minister of State for Home, D.S. Mishra to Balasore to monitor the situation in the northern parts of the state. Jena said large-scale destruction is anticipated in the coastal region. — PTI

Tornado hits Bengal ahead of cyclone, leaves 2 dead

11 lakh people evacuated; Mamata says high tide remains a concern

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MAY 25

● **THE TORNADO** struck two districts Hooghly and North 24 Parganas, located on both sides of Hooghly, on Tuesday afternoon.

A day before very severe cyclone Yaas makes its landfall and strikes mainly two states in eastern parts of the country, a ‘tornado’ hit two districts of West Bengal leaving two persons dead due to electrocution and injured others while damaging several houses.

Meanwhile, chief minister Mamata Banerjee stationed herself at the state secretariat for two days to lead her government’s relief and rescue operations for the natural disaster with the Indian Army deploying 17 relief columns of soldiers in 10 districts. The tornado struck two districts Hooghly and North 24 Parganas, located on both sides of Hooghly, on Tuesday afternoon.

The two victims Swapan Das Baul (40) and Kamal Majhi (21) are from Pandua in Hooghly.

In the evening briefing the Chief Minister said, “A tornado is happening in some pockets as a prelude to the cyclone. It lasted for around a minute but damaged 40 houses partly in Halishahar and Bijpur. Four-five persons suffered minor injuries. The tornado hit Chinsurah in Hooghly also. The two persons who lost their lives at Pandua were electrocuted. Around 11 lakh people have been evacuated so far

to our relief centres of around 4,000 units at the block, panchayat and state level.” Earlier the Trinamul Congress supremo, who spent whole day and night at Nabanna during Cyclone Amphan’s strike on the state on May 20 last year, said, “All of us will stay at the state secretariat tonight and tomorrow to monitor the landfall which is likely to happen by 12 pm on Wednesday and act accordingly. Do not worry. We are guarding you.”

On her government’s measures, Ms Banerjee elaborated, “The rise in water level due to high tide is however our main concern because it may cause floods.” She informed that a workforce of nearly three lakh personnel drawing from all the state and central government agencies has been pressed into service.

“It includes around two lakh police and emergency services personnel like disaster management and 74,000 officers and staff. Cyclone Amphan taught us a big lesson from which we learnt a lot to make these decisions.” Eastern Command

spokesperson Wing Commander Mandeep Huda said, “The Indian Army is spearheading the Army Relief Effort in West Bengal for preparations for Yaas, which is scheduled to make landfall in the general area bordering West Bengal on May 26, on requisition and in close coordination with the state government of West Bengal.”

“A total of 17 Cyclone Relief Columns, comprising specialised army personnel with associated equipment and inflatable boats, have been deployed to the state. Columns have been positioned in Purulia, Jhargram, Birbhum, Burdwan, West Midnapur, Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia, North and South 24 Parganas. Nine Cyclone Relief columns have been kept standby at Kolkata, for redeployment as necessary in West Bengal, at short notice. These teams are equipped to undertake casualty evacuation of stranded/marooned civilians, road clearing, tree cutting operations, and distribution of relief material, as would be required by the local district administration,” he added.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar visited the state secretariat in a first ever move and met the Chief Minister before monitoring the government’s preparedness alongwith her from a ‘war-room.’

Rlys moves 680 tonnes of oxygen from Odisha, WB

New Delhi, May 25: Indian Railways moved 680 tonnes of oxygen from Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand in the last 12 hours in anticipation of cyclone Yaas which is likely to hit the region soon, the national transporter said on Tuesday.

Severe cyclonic storm Yaas is likely to make landfall near Dhamra Port in Odisha’s Bhadrak district early Wednesday morning, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Oxygen Expresses moved 680 tonnes of oxygen relief from Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand in the last 12 hours before the cyclone gets stronger. Eight Oxygen Expresses have moved from the region, a statement from the Railways said.

The country’s major liquid medical oxygen (LMO) generation plants are based in this region and are now proving to be the source of the life-saving gas for other states for supply to hospitals during

the Covid-19 pandemic. So far, the Railways has delivered more than 17,239 tonnes of LMO in more than 1,042 tankers to 14 states since it started operations last month.

Providing relief to oxygen starved states, so far, 263 Oxygen Express trains have completed their journey while two more loaded trains with more than 134 tonnes of LMO in eight tankers are currently on the run.

Amongst the southern states, delivery of LMO to Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana crossed 1,000 tonnes each via the Oxygen Express trains.

Oxygen relief by Oxygen Express trains reached out to 14 states - Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Assam.

Till the time of this release, 614 tonnes of oxygen has been offloaded in Maharashtra. — PTI

VILLAGERS IN ODISHA BANK ON FEATURE PHONES

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 25

As the Very Severe Cyclonic Storm ‘Yaas’ on Tuesday advanced towards the Odisha coast, the power distribution companies in coastal Odisha districts on Tuesday stopped supply in sensitive areas fearing collapse of electrical structures that may cause loss of human and animal lives. The snapping of the power came as a major concern for the people living in the coastal villages as many of them found their smart-phone batteries nearly exhausted.

What worried them most is that not many of them got any immediate alternative to charge their drained batteries.

“After a few hours, the cyclone will make landfall. However, the power utilities have disconnected supplies as a precautionary measure. Our smart-phones have nearly run of batteries. Now, we are completely dependent on our feature phones as batteries of these devices last long - at least for 3-4 days,” said Sudam Patra, a journalist based in Balasore.

During cyclone Amphan on May 20, 2020, Sudam and his journalist friends reported every angle of the event to their respective offices through the feature phones.

Kalyani Barik, a health worker, and her friends bought feature phones a couple of days ago so as to ensure that they remain accessible to people in distress during the cyclone and the aftermath to provide them seamless health-care services.

While diesel power generators have been banned for use by private houses as they would cause back current flow during restoration of electric lines post the cyclone, such machines were installed at cyclone shelters and important government and private establishments for emergency use.

The state government has provided satellite phones to senior officers, relief and rescue teams for uninterrupted communication with district headquarters and the state administration in Bhubaneswar.

Tower lights and searchlights have also been given to National Disaster Response Force, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force and other teams to carry out their activities.

● **THE STATE** government has provided satellite phones to senior officers, relief and rescue teams for uninterrupted communication with district headquarters and the state administration.

CISF’s Jaiswal is new CBI chief

New Delhi, May 25: CISF chief Subodh Kumar Jaiswal was on Tuesday appointed as the new CBI director for two years, according to a Personnel Ministry order.

Jaiswal is a 1985-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Maharashtra cadre. He has also served as Maharashtra’s director general of police in the past.

The Central Bureau of Investigation was working without a regular chief for over three months after Rishi Kumar Shukla completed his two-year tenure on February 3.

CBI Additional Director Praveen Sinha, a 1988-batch IPS officer of Gujarat cadre, was appointed the acting chief of the agency after Shukla completed his tenure. Jaiswal has been



Subodh Kumar Jaiswal

appointed as the director of CBI for a period of two years, the ministry order said.

A three-member selection committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Monday shortlisted Jaiswal’s name. Chief Justice of India N. V. Ramana and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury are the two members of the panel. — PTI

TOUGH | WORDS

SC told S-G to either withdraw the plea or it would pass order

Narada case: CBI withdraws plea in SC

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 25

After assailing the conduct of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banarjee for staging dharna outside the CBI office located at Nizam Palace in Kolkata and the presence of state law minister Moloy Ghatak in the special CBI court where four TMC leaders arrested in Narada sting tape case were produced, the investigating agency on Tuesday withdrew its petition that it had filed in the top court after Calcutta High Court had placed the arrested leaders under house arrest.

Allowing the request of the CBI to withdraw the petition, a vacation bench comprising Justice Vineet Saran and Justice B.R.Gavai gave the investigating agency and all other parties to raise all issues before the five-judge bench hearing the

plea for the grant of interim bail to four TMC leaders. The court in its order said that it has not expressed any view on the merit of the case and said that it was open to all the parties including CBI to raise their the contentions before the five-judge constitution bench of Calcutta High Court hearing the matter.

The CBI had on May 17 arrested two West Bengal Ministers Subrata Mukherjee and Firhad Hakim, Trinamul Congress MLA Madan Mitra and former Kolkata mayor Sovan Chatterje in connection with the Narada case.

The CBI withdrew the petition after the court told the Solicitor General to either withdraw it or they will pass an order on merit. All through the hearing that lasted nearly one hour, the court repeatedly asked as to what the investigating agency

● **THE COURT** in its order said that it has not expressed any view on the merit of the case and said that it was open to all the parties including CBI to raise their the contentions before the five-judge constitution bench of Calcutta High Court hearing the matter.

wanted from the court.

“We want to know, what you want from us”, Justice Saran asked Solicitor General in a poser as to what was the prayer of the CBI before the top court.

Sensing the mood of the court, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta urged the court to adjourn that matter and take it up on Friday (May 28).

After giving an opportunity to Solicitor General to consult his team, the court in the resumed hearing after dealing with the pass-over matter gave two options to him - either to

withdraw or court will pass order after considering the matter on merit.

The court said that after the matter is considered by a five-judge bench, they will have the benefit of the views of five learned judges of Calcutta High Court.

As the Solicitor General focused on dharna by Mamata Banerjee outside the CBI office and the presence of Law Minister at the Special CBI court during the course of his arguments spread over 45 minutes, Justice Saran told him that you have two set of people - one who are accused and the other who are not - and you can’t interfere with the liberty of accused people merely on the acts of others.

Telling the Solicitor General that CBI was a powerful entity and can proceed against the people by whose acts it is aggrieved.

“You can take action

against those who you feel subverted the law”, the court told Solicitor General further pointing out “We don’t want to mix the liberty of a citizen (arrested TMC leaders) with the acts of other persons (Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Law Minister).”

As the Solicitor General wanted the case to be transferred outside West Bengal, the court said that it did not want to demoralize the High court which is seized of the matter.

At the outset of the hearing senior counsel Vikas Singh appearing for West Bengal government raised a preliminary objection to the CBI’s plea against an interlocutory order of the High court. He said that the guidelines for the admission of matters during vacations clearly exclude any petition against interim orders of the High court.

SHORT TAKES

BAD DREAM STOPS GUIDE FROM CLIMBING EVEREST

Kathmandu, May 25: A record-holding Sherpa climber halted his attempt to scale Mount Everest for a 26th time because of a bad dream but plans to try again next year.

Kami Rita already reached the summit of the world's highest mountain for a record 25th time earlier this month but stopped his most recent climb more than halfway to the top. He was making (the 26th) attempt and had reached up to Camp Three "but the weather turned bad and I had a really bad dream," Rita said on return to Kathmandu on a helicopter from the mountain on Tuesday. "The gods were telling me not to go and because I really believe in God, I decided to return," he said but would not elaborate on the dream. Sherpas believe Everest to be a goddess and have a religious ceremony before stepping on the mountain to make their climbs.

TWO CHILDREN AMONG 18 KILLED IN PERU

Lima, May 25: Two children and 16 adults were shot dead in a remote coca-growing area of Peru, the armed forces said Monday, blaming the attack on members of the Shining Path guerrilla group.

The killings late Sunday risk inflaming tensions amid a polarized campaign for the presidency between leftist Pedro Castillo and his rival from the right, Keiko Fujimori.

The villagers were mowed down at San Miguel del Ene in a coca-growing valley where members of the Maoist Shining Path group operate, according to the joint command of the armed forces. The head of the police counter-terrorism unit, General Oscar Arriola, said the dead included 10 men, six women and two children.

The armed forces command blamed the attack on fighters led by guerrilla leader Victor Quispe Palomino, or Comrade Jose. A specialised terrorism unit has been tasked with investigating the killings.

GUAM CAN PURSUE \$160M DUMP CLEANUP LAWSUIT

Washington, May 25: The Supreme Court says the US territory of Guam can pursue a \$160 million lawsuit against the federal government over the cost of cleaning up a landfill on the island.

The justices on Monday unanimously overturned a lower court decision that had said Guam had waited too long to pursue the claim. The case before the justices involves a long-running dispute over the Ordot Dump on Guam. The lawsuit says the Navy built the dump during the 1940s and then deposited toxic military waste there before turning over control to Guam in 1950.

Guam operated the dump for decades. The US has said Guam "vastly expanded" it and "failed to provide even rudimentary environmental safeguards." In 2002, the government sued Guam over pollution from the dump. Guam ultimately agreed in 2004 to close the dump and take steps to stop pollution from the dump, among other things. In 2017, Guam sued the United States, arguing that it's responsible for some of the costs of the cleanup.

POPE PRAYS FOR ITALY CABLE CAR MISHAP SURVIVOR

Rome, May 25: Pope Francis offered prayers Tuesday for "little Eitan", the lone survivor of the cable car disaster in northern Italy that left 14 people dead when the cabin plunged to the ground after the lead cable snapped and the emergency brake failed to engage.

Francis sent a telegram to the local bishop offering his condolences to the families of the dead who, he said were "tragically lost while immersed in the marvels of creation".

Prosecutors have said they are investigating why the lead cable of the Stresa funicular snapped Sunday while it was bringing sightseers up to the Mottarone peak overlooking Lake Maggiore in Italy's Piedmont region. They have said the emergency brake on the supporting cable didn't engage, events that sent the cabin reeling back down the line until it pulled off, crashed to the ground and rolled over down the mountainside until it came to rest against some trees.

Five-year-old Eitan Biran, an Israeli citizen living in Italy, was the lone survivor and was hospitalized in Turin with several broken bones. Pope Francis offered particular thoughts for Eitan.

Mali's ex-coup leader dismisses Prez, PM

EU leaders condemn kidnapping of civilian leadership

Bamako, May 25: Mali's former coup leader Assimi Goita fired the president and prime minister of the transitional government Tuesday but promises to still hold new elections next year.

The move came a day after the two leaders were arrested by the military following their announcement of a cabinet reshuffle. Goita said the president and prime minister had acted without consulting him.

President Bah Ndaw and Prime Minister Mactar Ouane lead an interim government that was installed under the threat of regional sanctions following a putsch in August, and the detentions on Monday raised fears of a second coup.

Two senior officials, who declined to be named, said that soldiers had taken Ndaw and Ouane to the Kati military camp on the outskirts of the capital Bamako. Their detentions followed a sensitive government reshuffle earlier on Monday that was designed to respond to growing criticism of the interim government.

The military kept the strategic portfolios it controlled during the previous administration in the reshuffle. But two coup leaders — ex-defence minister Sadio Camara and ex-



In this file photo taken on September 22, 2020, Colonel Assimi Goita (C), President of CNSP (National Committee for the Salvation of People) addresses the press during the ceremony of the 60th anniversary of Mali's independence in Bamako, one day after announcing that the transitional presidency would be assigned to a retired colonel, Bah Ndaw, 70 years, ephemeral Minister of Defence in 2014. — AFP

security minister Colonel Modibo Kone — were replaced. Coup leaders and army officers have wielded significant influence over the government, casting doubts on a pledge to hold elections by early next year.

The reshuffle came at a time of growing political challenges in the capital Bamako and pressure to stick to the deadline for promised reforms.

Speculation of a coup swirled around Bamako late on Monday, but the city remained relatively calm. Briefly reached by phone before the line cut, Prime Minister Ouane said that soldiers "came to get him". EU leaders condemned what they called the "kidnapping" of Mali's civilian leadership, said council president Charles Michel. "What happened was grave and serious and

we are ready to consider necessary measures," he told reporters after a summit of the bloc's 27 leaders, describing events as "the kidnapping of the president and the prime minister". Earlier, a joint statement by the United Nations, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and the United States condemned the arrests. — AFP

Biden, Putin to meet June 16

Washington, May 25: President Joe Biden will hold a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin next month in Geneva, a face-to-face meeting between the two leaders that comes amid escalating tensions between the US and Russia in the first months of the Biden administration.

The White House confirmed details of the summit on Tuesday. The two leaders' meeting, set for June 16, is being tacked on to the end of Biden's first international trip as president next month when he visits Britain for a meeting of Group of Seven leaders and Brussels for the Nato summit.

"The leaders will discuss the full range of pressing issues, as we seek to restore predictability and stability to the US-Russia relationship," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement announcing the summit.

Biden first proposed a summit in a call with

Putin in April as his administration prepared to levy sanctions against Russian officials for the second time during the first three months of his presidency. White House officials said earlier this week that they were ironing out details for the summit. National security adviser Jake Sullivan discussed details of the meeting when he met with his Russian counterpart, Nikolay Patrushev. The Kremlin, in its own statement announcing the meeting, said that the presidents will discuss "the current state and prospects of the Russian-US relations, strategic stability issues and the acute problems on the international agenda, including interaction in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and settlement of regional conflicts." The White House has repeatedly said it is seeking a "stable and predictable" relationship with the Russians. — AP

HUMAN ERROR LED TO MALAYSIA TRAIN CRASH

Kuala Lumpur, May 25: A collision between two light rail trains in Kuala Lumpur that injured more than 200 people was caused by a train driver's negligence, according to a preliminary investigation, Malaysia's transport minister said Tuesday.

A fully automated metro train carrying 213 passengers collided Monday night with a vacant train that was being driven manually in a tunnel near the Petronas Towers, the world's tallest twin towers. It was the first major crash for the 23-year-old metro system. Pictures on social media after the collision showed bloodied passengers, some lying on the floors of carriages strewn with shattered glass.

"Preliminary investigations found that the accident was caused by the negligence and carelessness of the train driver ... who was driving in the wrong direction," said Transport Minister Wee Ka Siong. — AP

Lanka cargo fire: India sends help

Colombo, May 25: India has dispatched two Coast Guard vessels and an aircraft to help the Sri Lankan Navy douse the flames on a container ship that caught fire off the coast of Colombo last week, amid intensified efforts by the coastal command to extinguish the fiery wreckage.

The 25 crew members — of Philippine, Chinese, Indian and Russian nationality — on the ship have been rescued. Official sources said at least five Indians were among the crew rescued. The cargo vessel, 'X-PRESS PEARL', was

carrying a consignment of chemicals and raw materials for cosmetics from Hazira in Gujarat to Colombo Port. It caught fire 9.5 nautical miles from the coast here where it was anchored outside the port of Colombo on May 20.

The Indian High Commission in a tweet on Tuesday said, "Help on way! Responding promptly as ever to the request by Sri Lanka, India dispatches ICG Vaibhav, ICG Dornier and Tug Water Lilly for fighting the fire". A major operation was launched to

extinguish the flames of the ship.

A special team of the Sri Lankan Navy, Sri Lanka Ports Authority and Marine Environment Protection Authority reached the fire-hit container ship on May 21.

Officials said a loud explosion was heard on Tuesday morning, possibly the fire remains in the sub sections of the vessel where a load of nitric acid is stored.

The Navy, in a statement released on Tuesday, confirmed the forthcoming Indian assistance. The fire

Iran Prez vote okays 7 but bars Rouhani allies

Dubai, May 25: Iran named the hard-line cleric running its judiciary and six others Tuesday as approved candidates in its June 18 presidential election, barring prominent candidates allied to its current president amid tensions with the West over its tattered nuclear deal.

The announcement carried by state television puts judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, who is linked to mass executions in 1988, in the dominant position for the upcoming vote. He's the most-known candidate of the seven hopefuls, with opinion polling previously showing his anti-corruption campaign drew Iranian support.

He's also believed to be a favorite of Iran's 82-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But perhaps most notable was who Iran's Guardian Cou-

ncil barred from running. Chief among them was former parliament speaker Ali Larijani, a conservative who allied with Rouhani in recent year. Larijani had been positioning himself as a pragmatic candidate who would back Rouhani's signature 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. That accord is now in tatters as diplomats in Vienna try to negotiate a return of both Iran and the US to the agreement. Larijani seemingly signalled he wouldn't fight the decision.

"I have done my duty before God and the dear nation, and I am satisfied," Larijani wrote on Twitter. "Thank you to all those who expressed their gratitude and I hope you will participate in the elections for the promotion of an Islamic Iran."

Also barred was former

hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Rouhani's senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, a reformist. Ahmadinejad ignored a warning from Khamenei in 2017 and registered, only to be rejected then as well by the Guardian Council, a 12-member panel under Khamenei. During an earlier session of parliament Tuesday, lawmaker Ahmad Alirezaei described Ahmadinejad's home as being "under siege" by security forces since the day before.

He also warned that the decision would suppress turnout. Iran's theocracy since its 1979 Islamic Revolution has based its legitimacy in part on turnout in elections. State TV quoted Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei, the spokesman of the Guardian Council, as saying "only seven" had been approved. — AP

FLIGHTS AVOID BELARUS AIRSPACE, EU MULLS CURBS

Moscow, May 25: Belarus' isolation deepened Tuesday as commercial planes avoided its airspace, the European Union worked up new sanctions, and a senior UN official said he was concerned for the welfare of an opposition journalist arrested in Minsk after his plane was diverted there, apparently on the orders of the country's longtime strongman.

After his detention, Raman Pratasevich was seen in a brief video clip shown on Belarusian state television late Monday, speaking rapidly to say that he was confessing to some of the charges authorities have levelled against him. The spokesperson for the UN's human rights office, Rupert Colville, said Pratasevich's appearance was likely not voluntary and that he seemed to have bruising to his face, though it was difficult to tell from the footage. The 26-year-old journalist and activist was arrested Sunday after Belarusian flight controllers told the crew of a Ryanair jetliner he was aboard that there was a bomb threat against the flight and ordered it to land. A Belarusian MiG-29 fighter jet was scrambled to escort the plane in a brazen move by President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country with an iron fist for over a quarter-century. The diversion and arrest elicited widespread shock and fury, and EU leaders took unusually swift action in response at a summit Monday. — AP



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (C) talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, upon arrival at Tel Aviv Ben Gurion Airport, on Tuesday. — AP/PTI

Blinken: US will aid Gaza without helping Hamas

Jerusalem, May 25: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed Tuesday to rally international support to aid Gaza following a devastating war there while keeping any assistance out of the hands of its militant Hamas rulers, as he began a regional tour to shore up last week's cease-fire.

The 11-day war between Israel and Hamas killed more than 250 people, mostly Palestinians, and caused widespread destruction in the impoverished coastal territory. The truce that came into effect Friday has so far held, but it did not address any of the underlying issues in the conflict, something Blinken acknowledged after meeting Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We know that to prevent a return to violence, we have to use the space created to address a larger set of underlying issues and challenges. And that begins with tackling the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and starting to rebuild," he said. "The US will work to rally international support

US TO UPGRADE RELATIONS WITH PALESTINE

Jerusalem, May 25: Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced Tuesday that the US would reopen its Consulate General in Jerusalem — a move that restores ties with Palestinians that had been downgraded by the Trump administration. The consulate long served as an autonomous office in charge of diplomatic relations with the Palestinians. But former US President Donald Trump downgraded its operations and placed them under the authority of his ambassador to Israel when he moved the embassy to Jerusalem. — AP

around that effort while also making our own significant contributions. He added that the US would work with its partners to ensure that Hamas does not benefit from the reconstruction aid." — AP

US security aid to Pak still suspended

Washington/Islamabad, May 25: US President Joe Biden has continued his predecessor Donald Trump's policy on suspending security assistance to Pakistan and there is no clarity if the administration will change its stance in the future, the Pentagon has said.

Former US president Trump suspended all security assistance to Pakistan in January 2018, arguing that he was not satisfied with Islamabad's cooperation and role in the fight against terrorism.

"At this time, the US security assistance to Pakistan is still suspended. I will not get into speculating one way or another about if or whether that will change going forward," Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said at a news conference on Monday. He was responding to a question on if the new Biden administration has reviewed the policy of the previous Trump administration and if there are any changes in it or if this issue was on the table during talks with the Pakistani leadership. — PTI

Earlier in the day, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa to discuss shared regional interests and objectives, Kirby said. "During the call, the secretary reiterated his appreciation for Pakistan's support to the Afghanistan peace negotiations and expressed his desire to continue to build on the United States-Pakistan bilateral relationship," he said.

"I reiterated my appreciation for the US-Pakistan relationship and my desire to continue to work together to further regional security and stability," Austin said in a tweet. A day earlier, US National Security Advisor Jek Sullivan met his Pakistani counterpart Moeed Yusuf in Geneva. "Both sides discussed a range of bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest, and ways to advance practical cooperation. They agreed to continue with the conversation," spokesperson of the National Security Council Emily Horne said. — PTI

LIMITED | SUCCESS

Debate causes sharp divisions in a New Hampshire town

Push to review 2020 US ballots spreads

Atlanta, May 25: Six months after Donald Trump's loss, conspiracy theorists and Trump backers are continuing their push for repeated examinations of ballots and finding limited successes. A Georgia judge last week awarded a group the chance to review mail ballots in a large Georgia county that includes Atlanta.

Officials in a rural Michigan county have expressed interest in a review of their voting machines. A similar debate has caused

sharp divisions in a New Hampshire town. In some cases, the efforts have been inspired by an audit of the votes in Arizona's Maricopa County, an elaborate exercise engineered by the GOP-led state Senate. The efforts are unlikely to yield any new revelations about President Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election. The votes have been counted — and often recounted — and certified by local officials.

Still, the lingering debate and legal wrangling

have propelled suspicions and advanced debunked theories. And their sometimes misleading conclusions have been amplified by Trump, whose false allegations of election fraud sparked the push.

The profusion of audits alarms election experts, who note that the Arizona audit has set a troubling new precedent of third-party, partisan review of the ballots, long after elections are over.

"This is bad enough to see it happen once," said

Eddie Perez, an expert on voting systems at the OSET Institute, said of Arizona, but seeing it elsewhere in the country is "dangerous for democracy." The audits are serving a clear political purpose in firing up the Republican Party's base. At a rally outside Phoenix last week featuring GOP Reps. Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene, references to the Arizona audit drew much more enthusiastic applause than even immigration, normally the top hot-but-

ton issue on the right in the border state.

In a statement Monday night, Trump criticised Republican Party leaders for not doing more about "what went on" in November. He cited the ballot reviews underway and promised "more to follow". The Arizona audit has been cited as a template for the others, although each is distinct. In Arizona, the Republican-controlled state Senate subpoenaed more than 2 million ballots. — AP

DECCAN Chronicle

26 MAY 2021

Vaccines: Fix schedule, focus on procurement

Several state chief ministers are now a frustrated lot, what with their unsuccessful attempts to procure Covid-19 vaccines from the global market. Some of them have demanded that the Union government procure and distribute the doses to them. This is a demand the Centre must consider a top priority as the information from the field on vaccination is thoroughly disappointing.

It's a fact that India launched the world's largest vaccination programme in January but its pace has been on a downward slide as it has progressed. As of now, India has been able to fully vaccinate only around five crore people while it has administered at least a single dose to 19 crore people. Latest reports say that the average number of weekly administration of doses has fallen below one crore, almost a third of the figures one month ago when the drive was at its peak. Of this, almost half is being done by the state governments with the vaccines they procured from the market. However, several states, including Maharashtra and Delhi, have closed down their vaccination camps opened for

The stand of the foreign manufacturers exposes the specious argument advanced by the apparatchiks of the ruling dispensation that the government was following the demand raised by the states for decentralisation of vaccination

people aged between 18 and 44 years; several others have complained that the Centre's supply of vaccine for those aged 45 and above is dwindling and the entire vaccination programme is now on a crawl. The story, in short, is that the programme is gasping for breath at a time it has to pace at full throttle. This is an unfortunate mess the government has created, and the government alone can clean it up.

The first step towards this end is for the government to take charge of vaccine procurement instead of making the state governments scour the international market with their limited experience and resources. That is made necessary for another reason, too: several prominent vaccine manufacturers have made it clear to them that they have no plans to do business with state governments or private companies and will deal directly with national governments. This stand of the foreign manufacturers also exposes the specious argument advanced by the apparatchiks of the ruling dispensation that the government was following the demand raised by the states for decentralisation of vaccination. It cannot be that the Union government is completely unaware of such setbacks. One fails to understand why the Centre makes state governments waste precious time competing unsuccessfully with one another at a juncture when they must be engaged in fighting the virus on the ground.

The government must not only take over the procurement process but also announce a proper schedule with definite milestones in the number of vaccinations to be administered before the third wave hits the nation. The schedule must be convincing in that it must specify how and when the government plans to procure the vaccine, whether from within the country or abroad and how it plans to reach the last man.

It will be too risky for this nation to think that it can ward off a third wave of the pandemic with an ostrich-like attitude. It must act, instead.

Freedom of speech in peril

The ruling party BJP and the Union government seem bent upon escalating the "Toolkit" issue through its proxy, the Delhi Police, with its big-footed and ham-handed ways of investigation. But this is only a small part of a larger pattern of official India operations to regulate digital content and which aim at not only muzzling criticism but to erase it altogether from popular social media platforms.

An even bigger issue lies ahead as major social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are yet to comply with a May 25 deadline when government's new IT rules heralding a new digital ethics code, a three-tier supervisory system and a grievance redressal mechanism were to kick in. The very foundations of freedom of speech and expression are in peril as India tries to turn social media intermediaries, which post the contribution of individuals, into legally liable entities as "publishers" of content.

The police raids on Twitter offices in and around the capital New Delhi on Monday were clear attempts at intimidation and come in the wake of a clumsy attempt at counter propaganda by a prominent national spokesperson of the BJP, who had been adjudged to have manipulated media in making allegations against a person with avowed links to a major Opposition party.

Twitter may only have been responding to complaints from the Congress about certain tweets ascribed to persons with links to the party. Twitter has the technical capabilities to judge whether there was media manipulation in those tweets but the Delhi police put out a pedantic defence of its action on the grounds that the matter is under investigation and hence Twitter should not have been pro-active in judging the posts by BJP representatives.

As the BJP indulges in a blame game in these distracting sideshows while attempting image management, the country is being deprived of consolidated efforts against the second wave of the coronavirus. The perception is the battle against the pandemic is being progressively lost as evidenced in the shortage of medical oxygen, hospital beds and critical drugs even as mortality rates have risen though positivity rates are dipping.

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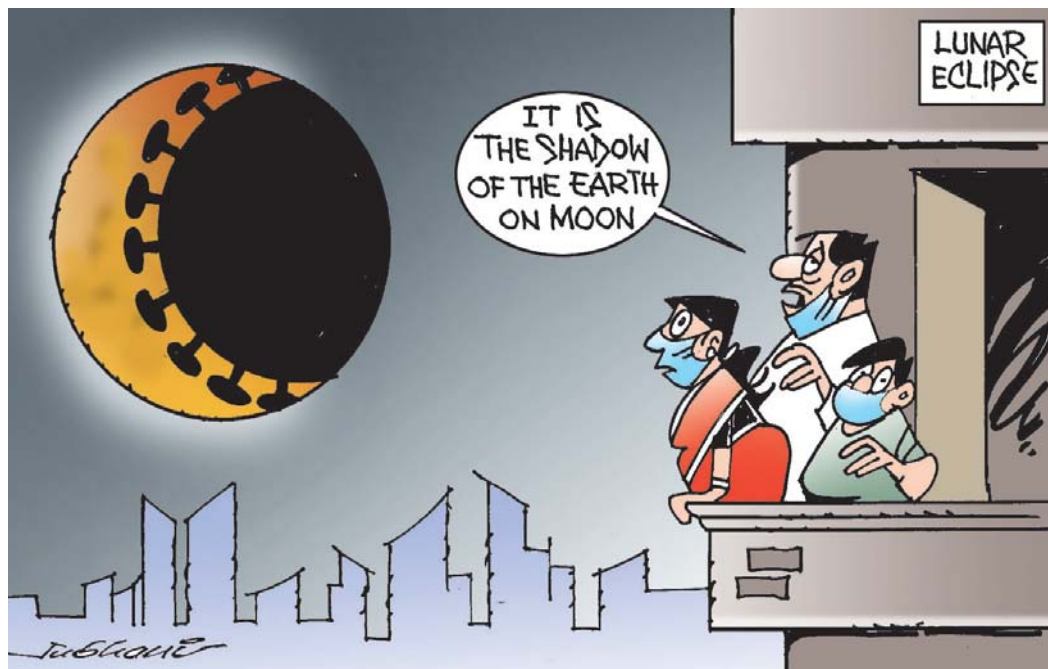
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Subhani



Hubris, narcissism and moment of 'hamartia'



Mohan Guruswamy

The Greeks had words for every personality frailty. In the present case three of these words are of relevance to us: (1) Hubris; (2) Hamartia; and (3) Narcissism. Hubris is described in the dictionary to simply mean "excessive pride or self-confidence; arrogance". Hamartia is usually an artifact in Greek drama as the inner quality that initiates a "movement of spirit" within the protagonist to commit actions which drive the plot towards its tragic end. Narcissism is the pursuit of gratification from vanity or egotistic admiration of one's idealised self-image and attributes. The term originated from Greek mythology, where a young man named Narcissus fell in love with his own image reflected in a pool of water. In the drama of Narendra Modi today, we see quite a bit of the hubris and overweening narcissism, both fatal flaws. The question before us now is whether this is the moment of hamartia which will drive the plot to its tragic end?

The sin of hubris has been a continuing theme that has captured the imagination of historians, philosophers and theologians alike. The Biblical saying "pride cometh before the fall" applies equally well to Ravan, the great king of the Rakshasas whose long years of penance secured him the favour of Brahma, who rendered him invulnerable to the gods and demons alike. We know what happened to him. We, the lesser Hindus, also know that it's not necessary to be a tyrant in order to attract the malefic attentions of the gods. Bali, the celebrated *daitya*, rose to such an eminence that

Indra and the other gods had to seek the intervention of Vishnu, who once again obliged the devas by consigning Bali to *patala*, or the nether-world.

On April 19, 1959, Cuba's Fidel Castro paid his first post-revolution visit to Washington and met then vice-president Richard M. Nixon for three and a half hours. Following this meeting Nixon appraised him thus: "The one fact we can be sure of is that he has those indefinable qualities that make him a leader of men. Whatever we may think of him, he is going to be a great factor in the development of Cuba and possibly in Latin American affairs generally." In October that year, President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorised a plan to overthrow Castro.

The plan called for the landing in Cuba of a force of Cuban émigré fighters armed and trained by the CIA. This force was then meant to storm its way inland, releasing in its wake a popular upsurge that would topple Castro, just like he did the dictator Fulgencio Batista. Fortunately for Castro, Bay of Pigs, the place chosen for the landing, suffered from two crucial disadvantages. The beach was close to Castro's favorite holiday home and hence had a Cuban military unit garrisoned on it. The shallow waters of the bay also concealed shoals that required the landing force to wade ashore from a great distance, making them sitting ducks. That is precisely what happened. As US warships watched helplessly, President John F. Kennedy realised that he was led up the path and the CIA's urgent pleas for US air strikes would strip whatever was left of the fig leaf of innocence donned by the

The PM then went on to push his luck a bit further by claiming that India, as the world's largest vaccine producer, would assume the charge of saving the world! He even announced that this was a turning point in India's economic history...

United States. He abandoned the landing force to its fate. The few who survived ended up in Cuban jails. When asked what went wrong, JFK's national security adviser McGeorge Bundy replied: "Hubris!"

In February 1961, Robert McNamara, a brilliant Harvard MBA and a former head of Ford Motor Company, took over as the US defence secretary. He took with him an equally brilliant team of systems analysts who were to transform the way the US fought its wars in the future. The systems analysts quantified everything. Every weapons system ordered was subject to a cost-benefit analysis. Even military results were quantified in terms of "area pacified" and "body count".

When Clark Clifford, who took over from McNamara as defence secretary, touted up all the "body count" figures of the war, he found it had exceeded all intelligence estimates of enemy combatants by over half! When he asked: "Why are we then still fighting?", President Lyndon Johnson knew that he too was led up the path. Some years ago I met Robert McNamara at a seminar on the Cuban missile crisis organised by Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. I asked him how he had got it so wrong. He replied with one word: "Hubris".

In 1987, Indian troops went into Sri Lanka at the invitation of the two warring parties to impose an agreement midwifed by

then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. When the LTTE reneged on it, the then Indian Army Chief, Gen. Krishnaswamy Sundarji, assured the government that he would be able to eliminate or disarm the LTTE in just a few weeks. We know what happened. It continues to be sad chapter in the Indian Army's history. It even cost Rajiv Gandhi his life. The question that baffles is how is it that the Indian Army ended up fighting a group that was fostered and supported by the Indian government? And what made the Indian Army think that it would be able to wipe out its onetime protégé in just weeks, if not days? Hubris?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on January 28 this year, virtually addressing the World Economic Forum's Davos Dialogue, had declared India as one of the countries that had successfully controlled the coronavirus. He said: "India took a proactive public participation approach and developed a Covid-specific health infrastructure and trained its resources to fight Covid." He went on to declare "mission accomplished", very much like President George W. Bush had declared atop an aircraft-carrier off the coast of Iraq. He then went on the push his luck a bit further by claiming that India, as the world's largest vaccine producer, would now assume the charge of saving the world! He even announced that this was a turning point in India's economic history and that India was once again poised for greatness.

Was this his moment of "hamartia"? Will this take us to the denouement or the final part of a play, film or narrative in which the strands of the plot are drawn together and matters are resolved and the theatre ends?

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

HELP THE POOR

The Telangana state government should seriously think about the helpless poor who find it difficult to make ends meet (*Lockdown to get extended, DC, May 25*). These are the people who survive on day-to-day earnings. Supply of food by NGOs will not be sufficient to all. Let the government at least supply them with medicines and essentials on a regular basis so that they do not feel the pangs even if the lockdown is extended for a week.

Fatima Zafar
Secunderabad

EXTEND LOCKDOWN

The TS government's probable plan to extend the lockdown up to June 7 is most welcome (*Lockdown likely to get extended, DC, May 25*). The only way to contain the spread of the virus is strict implementation of the lockdown. Hope people of the state cooperate.

C.K. Vinaya Chandra
Hyderabad

IMA'S DUAL POLICY

Countless corruption cases in many hospitals involving medical services and doctors were reported during the Covid-19 pandemic. But, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) has not taken any hard-core action against its own institutions. However, when yoga guru Baba Ramdev made comments on Allopathy, the IMA erupted strongly.

Prasanna Venkatapur
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

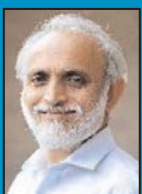
DECCAN Chronicle

69 die in pre-dawn tragedy

HYDERABAD, May 25. Death came in the most cruel way to 69 persons 34 of them children of Palem village, near Kothakota, 10 miles from Wanaparthi; in the early hours today.

Palem is 135 kms from Hyderabad. A truck, No. APQ 4045, driven by Silarmiah, and bound for Kurnool from Hyderabad, ploughed into an audience which was witnessing a Bhagavatham, at around 3 am today. Fifty-four persons were injured — ten of them seriously. The injured were rushed to Wanaparthi hospital and Mahboobnagar.

Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr



As the Covid-19 pandemic rises, it's crucial to get 'numbers' right

Looking at the Covid-19 infection numbers which rose steadily from 33,610 in April 2020 to 1,82,143 in May, 5,66,840 in June (these were also the months of a total national lockdown) to 16,38,870 in July, 36,21,245 in August and peaked at 62,25,763 in September, it is evident the increase was at an alarming rate. In the same period, deaths due to Covid-19 rose from 1,075 to 97,497. While the total infections figure remained high, there was a monthly decline in new infections afterwards. For example, total infections in September were 26,04,518, in October 19,11,356, in November 12,94,572, in December 8,34,983. The lowest monthly rise was in January 2021, compared to December 2020: 4,79,509. It declined further to 3,50,548 from February-end to March-end this year.

There was a spurt in the numbers between the end of March and the end of April: 66,13,641. It seems the gap between the first and second waves was too short. There was no room for declaring the Covid-19 ended either at the end of January or end of February as there was just a decline in numbers but the monthly figures remained substantial. They show Covid-19 was still raging. Again, the decrease in infections can't be attributed to the phased vaccination programme rolled out on January 16. The infection was moving along a trajectory of its own and the vaccination on its own. Somewhere the two trajectories should reach a point in future, either at the end of this year or sometime in 2022, or even later, when the infections must touch zero and the vaccinations should be at a permanent peak.

When the first wave receded in January-February this year, and the second wave surge became evident in April, the interpreters of Covid-19 numbers made the error of believing things were getting better. It's not just the issue of learning from the pattern seen in other countries that there was an imminent second wave. The first wave numbers didn't flatten enough for even a robust optimist to turn one's back on the pandemic. It's unnecessary to attack Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his team for getting the Covid numbers for January/February wrong. The false glimmer of hope created by the receding first wave was a natural

one. Caution would have dictated that the fall in number of infections, however encouraging, wasn't good enough to believe that the trouble had ended.

For long we have believed numbers are sure indicators, that they don't deceive. Most of the time and in most contexts the belief in numbers is justified. But this turns out to be a simplistic assumption when we are dealing with biological phenomenon. It's indeed a matter of debate whether viruses are biological creatures. Though population genetics brings mathematics and biology quite close, we have seen that mathematical models for the coronavirus, especially Covid-19, has been a non-starter.

The infection rates and the fatality rates can serve in inferring some kind of mathematical modelling, but it's unlikely to help in predicting the patterns of the spread of infection or the rate of fatality in a definitive sense. This poses problems for epidemiologists and for governments to manage an epidemic. So, the Covid-19 infection rates in India and in the world which the different dashboards are displaying are signs of how things happened

but the numbers on these dashboards can't be used to predict the future behaviour of Covid-19. The fluctuating graph doesn't point to either the end of the pandemic or its unrelenting course. The infection and fatality figures might just stop blipping on these dashboards. But this cannot be taken to mean that it's all over, or if it comes back against it will be easy to predict its patterns.

The weapons at our disposal to deal with a pandemic like Covid-19 are the vaccines and therapeutic drugs, which need to be modified constantly as mutations emerge in the virus. It's a constant battle, and of course it's not all chaos. There's a certain stability which allows doctors and researchers to work with vaccines and drugs. Even if you succeed in containing Covid-19 and some other similar coronaviruses, the dangers of other pandemics are not ruled out. And with every new menace, you must fight with whatever we have on hand, including drugs that worked earlier and may not work now, and vaccines which were successful may not do the job this time around.

This uncertainty is bad news for

political leaders as they are quite keen on defeating opponents and they love to celebrate victories. The Covid-19 pandemic is proving to be a party-pooper for them. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath are all hell-bent on defeating Covid-19, but their naivety in the matter is not amusing. The medical emergency gives them plenty of opportunity to prove their leadership skills like issuing orders, the one thing leaders enjoy the most. But dealing with a pandemic is a long-drawn affair. It's not just about issuing orders. All that one can succeed is either to contain and minimise its impact, and deal with reconstruction work to undo the destruction it has caused. There is no room for loud and vulgar war cries of victory. Meanwhile, the numbers will need to be tracked as meticulously as possible because they can help in a limited way to deal with the pandemic. But there will be no magical patterns and solutions in the numbers.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,637.53	-0.03
Nifty 50	15,208.50	0.07
S&P 500*	4,195.16	-0.05
Dollar (₹)	72.78	0.26
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.19	-0.04
Euro (₹)	89.19	0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,025▼102	0.21
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.62	0.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.972	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.579	-0.029

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Grain output to rise 2.66% to record 305.43 mt

Foodgrain production is estimated to rise 2.66 per cent to a new record of 305.43 million tonnes in the current crop year 2020-21 (July-June) from 297.5 mt last crop year, on better output of rice, wheat and pulses, the agriculture ministry said in its third advance estimates. Rice production is pegged at a record 121.46 mt against 118.87 mt last year. Wheat production is to increase to a record 108.75 mt from 107.86 million tonnes.

BB's US partner submits Covaxin Master File to FDA



Ocugen, Bharat Biotech's US partner for Covaxin, has submitted a "Master File" to the US FDA prior to seeking an emergency use authorisation in that country. The company is currently evaluating the clinical and regulatory path for Covaxin in the US, including obtaining Emergency Use Authorization from the US FDA, Ocugen said in a recent regulatory filing. Ocugen has submitted key information and data to date.

Clarios sells 10% stake in Amara Raja Batteries

Clarios ARBL Holding LP offloaded a 10 per cent stake in Amara Raja Batteries for a little over Rs 1,276.34 crore, through an open market transaction. The shares were sold at an average price of Rs 747.22. Clarios held a 24 percent stake in Amara Raja, as of March 2021. Morgan Stanley Asia, Integrated Core, and Ghisallo Master Fund LP picked up the shares. After the bulk deal, Amara Raja shares plunged 6.43 per cent.

Triumph drives in Bonneville Bobber at ₹11.75 L

British premium motorcycle brand Triumph Motorcycles has launched the updated version of Bonneville Bobber in India priced at Rs 11.75 lakh (ex-show-room). The 2021 Bonneville Bobber comes with enhanced engine performance, technology and equipment. "The Triumph Bobber has always had a demand among Indian customers and due to this we decided to bring the Bobber back after a gap of one year.



■ RBI may step in as rupee outdoes peers

Re makes strong comeback in May

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 25

After tumbling in April, the rupee has rebounded this month to become Asia's top-performing currency on positive global cues and fall in daily Covid cases with several states planning to ease restrictions in June, which would help revive economic activities.

The rupee has climbed 1.5 per cent against the dollar in May to beat all its regional peers as the country's daily infections declined rapidly after touching a record high. However, experts said they expect the central bank to step in to limit the rupee's gains, as a strong rupee hurts exporters at a time when the Covid pandemic has hit the economy hard.

The rupee on Tuesday appreciated 19 paise against the dollar to settle at 72.77, as the appetite for riskier assets improved after US Federal Reserve officials attempted to soothe concern over high inflation. Foreign banks may continue to sell the US dollar on account of foreign fund inflows for MSCI's rebalancing of domestic stocks, which is expected to fetch about \$1.35 billion by the end of this week.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic unit opened at 72.85 against the dollar and registered an intraday high of 72.75. It witnessed a low of 72.87. The



rupee finally closed at 72.77 against the American currency, registering a rise of 19 paise over its previous close. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.23 per cent to 89.632.

Abhishek Goenka, founder and chief executive officer at India Forex Advisors, said, "The rupee is slightly on a stronger note but we don't expect it to appreciate a lot as the central bank and the government will not be very comfortable with a strong rupee that hurts exports."

"The RBI has not been so active on the buy dollar side because there is enough liquidity in the system and it cannot infuse more liquidity in the system to buy dollars. Also, the RBI cannot do a sell-buy swap and push the dollar purchases forward since the forward premiums are already very high at 5.4 per cent," Goenka added: "Time

and again the communication by the US Fed that the inflation will be transitory and reassurance that they will not increase the interest rate soon has also weakened the dollar globally which is also impacting the dollar-rupee. The real effective exchange rate is close to 120 which is normally seen as upper band. On the downside, we don't expect the rupee to go below 72.5 and on the upside we don't expect it to go above 74.5-75 in the next three months.

The rupee also has the benefit of offering Asia's highest carry returns. The rupee had tumbled to the lowest in nine months in April as daily coronavirus infections surged above 3 lakh, triggering the unwinding of up to \$50 billion in carry trades, according to Bloomberg.

However on Tuesday, the daily count of Covid-19 cases in the country fell below the 2-lakh mark after about 40 days, according to the government data.

E-COM PLAYERS ONCE AGAIN IN HIRING MODE

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 25

With most of the key cities going into lockdown, e-commerce players are once again in a hiring mode.

In the past three months, over March-May 2021, Flipkart has hired 23,000 people across the country in various capacities.

"The growing demand for e-commerce services across the country as people continue to remain indoors to fight the virus has necessitated a ramp-up of our supply chain, creating thousands of employment opportunities. All new hires will be covered with our health-care and wellness initiatives," said Hemant Badri, senior vice-president, supply chain at Flipkart.

Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder and executive vice president, Teamlease Services, said, "Most of the e-commerce companies, especially e-grocers and those delivering essential products, have been hiring for the past couple of months. This is the sector which is still fully operational during the lockdown. They do need more people for delivering, packaging and managing warehouses with increased demand. More-over, when existing staff fall ill, they need people to get the job done."

Most of the hiring has been happening for last-mile delivery and warehouses.

Centre mulls stimulus package to aid growth

SIDDHARTHA SINGH MAY 25

India is preparing a stimulus package for sectors worst affected by a deadly coronavirus wave, aiming to support an economy struggling with a slew of localised lockdowns, people familiar with the matter said.

The finance ministry is working on proposals to bolster the tourism, aviation and hospitality industries, along with small and medium-sized companies, the people said, asking not to be identified as the deliberations are private. The discussions are at an early stage and no timeline for an announcement has been decided, they said. A finance ministry spokesman declined to comment.

The latest wave of Covid-19 infections has made

India the global hotspot for the pandemic and has decimated travel since the second wave picked up in March even though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has refused to implement a strict nationwide lockdown

The finance ministry is working on proposals to bolster the tourism, aviation and hospitality industries, along with SMEs

like last year's. With nearly 200,000 cases daily many local governments - including Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, India's most industrialised states - have imposed curbs against the spread of the virus.

That has prompted many economists to cut their forecasts for the financial year that began April 1, as rising unemployment and dwindling savings among consumers dim the chances for double-digit growth.

Flagging growth prospects put the onus on policy makers to support activity, especially once the virus caseload eases. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who said last month she's monitoring the economy in a "very detailed fashion," has held discussions with economists in recent days about a stimulus package, the people said.

In April, the finance ministry eased rules for capital expenditure by government departments to try to boost spending in the economy. — Bloomberg

BPCL may sell part stake in IGL, Petronet

AMMAR ZAIDI NEW DELHI, MAY 25

Privatisation-bound Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) may sell a part of its stake in Petronet LNG and Indraprastha Gas (IGL) to shed its promoter status to obviate the need for its new owner to make open offers for the two gas companies, sources said.

BPCL holds 12.5 per cent stake in Petronet, India's largest LNG importer, and a 22.5 per cent stake in city gas retailer IGL. It is a promoter of both the listed companies and holds board positions.

As per the legal position evaluated by the Depart-

ment of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), which is running the process for sale of government's entire 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL, the acquirer of BPCL will have to make an open offer to the minority shareholders of Petronet and IGL for acquiring 26 per cent shares, three sources said.

This is because BPCL is a promoter of the two companies and since there is a change in ownership of the promoter firm, an open offer is triggered under Sebi (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2011.

A way out could be for BPCL to sell a part of its

shareholding in the two firms and shed the promoter status, thereby, obviating the need for open offers, sources said.

BPCL, however, is not in favour of selling the stake, as giving up the promoter status and directorships will mean substantial value erosion for the company.

But the thinking in the government is that the open offers for Petronet and IGL may deter bidders who are mostly eyeing BPCL's oil refining assets and 22 per cent share of the fuel marketing business it commands, sources said.

BPCL spokesperson refused to comment.— PTI

Commodity surge threatens earnings

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 25

Rising commodity costs could affect India Inc's earnings profile and put an end to the benign interest rate regime from early next year.

"There will be adverse impact on auto, consumer goods, consumer durables margins. However, higher commodity price could also lead to earnings uptick in the metals, cement, oil & gas sectors. The IT sector would broadly remain insulated from commodity inflation."

"Earnings in the non-

commodity basket may be adversely impacted given the weak demand backdrop to widespread lockdowns," said a report by Motilal Oswal.

The rise in prices comes amid the Covid second wave that restricted economic activity. With uncertainty in the demand and environment, it would be challenging for companies to pass on the rising commodity costs.

"In a constrained demand environment, due to broad based lockdowns and macro uncertainty, corporates would be reluctant to pass on the higher

input prices to consumers and would first exercise other P&L levers to manage margins," the report said.

The construction sector is already feeling the pinch. The rise in prices of steel bars along with cement has added fuel to the construction budget crisis. Also the prices for plastics, man-made polymers and resins, used in everything from piping to insulation, have been rising rapidly over the past few months.

"The rise in raw material prices over the past few months is due to a combination of factors, includ-

ing unprecedented demand, multiple acts of force majeure, and the inevitable interruption of supply chains caused by the Covid-19 pandemic," said Jayesh Rathod, ED, The Guardians Real Estate Advisory.

"In the last three months the iron prices have increased by Rs 20,000 per tonne, which is almost a 50 per cent increase in the iron prices. Apart from this, copper and aluminium prices have also increased which has impacted the construction cost," said Ashok Mohamani, president, Naredco Maharashtra.

Jaypee Associates wants CoC to consider its offer

New Delhi, May 25: Jaiprakash Associates Ltd, the erstwhile promoter of bankrupt-Jaypee Infratech, has said its settlement proposal without any "haircuts" should be considered by the creditors' panel, which is set to take a call on two existing resolution plans for the company this week.

Currently, state-owned NBCC and Suraksha Group are in the race to acquire Jaypee Infratech

Ltd (JIL), which went into insolvency proceedings in August 2017.

In a letter to JIL's interim resolution professional (IRP) Anuj Jain, the chairman of Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) Manoj Gaur has urged him to consider JAL's settlement offer, which was submitted before the Supreme Court in 2019.

Asserting that JIL has more assets than liabilities, Gaur has also claimed

that lenders would not be entitled to exercise their rights on loan guarantors if the realty firm is sold at a "throw away price".

The committee of creditors (CoC) and homebuyers are scheduled to meet this week to discuss whether more time should be given to NBCC and Suraksha to submit their revised and final bids for JIL.

Urging that JAL's offer should be placed before the CoC, Gaur said the settle-

ment of total liability of Rs 9,783 crore to secured financial creditors is proposed to be done by way of upfront payment, land swap and long terms debentures with a total value of about Rs 12,500 crore.

For homebuyers, he said that JAL would deploy funds for home construction to the tune of Rs 1,650 crore, out of which Rs 400 crore would be upfront.

— PTI

RAISING | REVENUE

Tax could cover auto, paper, cement, power & petchem sectors

Indonesia may tax the rich, top polluters

GRACE SIHOMBING & ARYAS ADITYA MAY 25

Indonesia seeks to cast a wider net to tax more high-income individuals and top polluters in a bid to replenish its state coffers.

The finance ministry presented the proposals, which could be part of key reforms this year, to a parliamentary commission this week. The government needs to collect more revenue to sustain spending while keeping its vow to bring budget deficit back within the 3 per cent of GDP legal limit, from 6 per cent last year.

"The goal of this tax

reform is not just revenue collection but the sustainability of the state budget," said finance minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati. "The whole world is also accelerating its revenue collection in the midst of soaring budget deficits and debt ratios. This is a response that must be done with caution."

Here are the tax changes under study:

Carbon tax: Taxing carbon emissions will help Indonesia curb greenhouse gases while raising funds for green state investments and social welfare programs, Indrawati said. The government could use existing taxes such as excise,



motor vehicle and fuel taxes to enforce it, or it could create an entirely new levy through a carbon tax.

The tax could apply to emission sources like fossil fuels, motor vehicles and factories, as well as carbon-intensive activities such as those in the pulp and paper, cement, power generation and petrochemical industries.

Income tax: Indonesia

could add a new 35 per cent income tax bracket for individuals earning more than 5 billion rupiah (\$349,000) year. Taxpayers are currently grouped into four brackets, with rates ranging from 5-30 per cent. The country is poised to see the world's fastest growth in ultra-high net worth individuals in the next five years.

Digital tax: Indonesia is finalising the formula to tax digital companies and impose levies on electronic transactions. The government has issued a law stating that taxes could be imposed on companies with significant economic presence in the country, but it hasn't set out regula-

tions for the tariff or how it would impose and calculate it.

Tax amnesty: Indonesia could take another stab at a tax amnesty programme, following a 2016 programme that uncovered 4.813 trillion rupiah (\$336 billion) in undeclared assets. Taxpayers who have undisclosed assets as of the 2019 tax year might be able to settle their past obligations at current income tax rates without any sanctions. However, those who failed to disclose their assets during the first tax amnesty period in 2016 will have to pay income tax above the highest tax amnesty rate.

— Bloomberg



Bob Chapek

Disney introduced Disney+ Hotstar in India last year. That service, which features cricket matches and other local content, now accounts for 30 per cent of Disney+'s total subscriber count of 103.6 million globally. In April, meanwhile, Disney announced plans to close a number of its sports networks in Southeast Asia and Hong Kong.

Chapek said the closures going forward will depend on contracts the company has in individual markets.

Consumers are increasingly choosing to watch content online, and Disney wants to stay ahead of the trend, Chapek said.

"We don't want to be on the back end of that wave," he said. "We want to be on the front end of that wave." — Bloomberg

GOVT URGED TO SELL SUBSIDISED EDIBLE OIL THROUGH PDS

New Delhi, May 25: Trade body SEA has counselled the government to distribute edible oils at subsidised prices through the public distribution system (PDS), in a bid to give relief to the poor from the rising edible oil prices.

The Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) has also suggested the government to curb speculative trading of oilseeds and edible oils on the commodity bourses and insist on compulsory delivery contracts.

That apart, the Mumbai-based trade body said the Centre should freeze tariffs at lower levels, reduce agri-cess on imports and revisit customs duty reduction measures.

In a letter to food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey, SEA president Atul Chaturvedi said: "Last few months we have witnessed unprecedented price increase not only in edible oils but in practically all commodities across the world. Reasons for the unprecedented increase have been discussed umpteen times."

Chinese buying, stimulus money, la Nina weather problems in palm and soya producing areas, labour problems in Malaysia due to Covid-19, aggressive bio-diesel thrust in Indonesia and renewable fuel from soybean oil in the USA and Brazil, etc. are some of the major reasons, he said.

To tackle the price rise in the short-term, the SEA president said the government should "subsidise" edible oils by Rs 30-40 per kg through PDS. The port-based refineries have adequate spare capacity across the coastline of India for this purpose."

The central government distributes only foodgrains at subsidised rate of Rs 1-3 per kg via PDS to over 80 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act.

The SEA also recommended a freeze of tariff value on edible oils at lower levels. "Our back of envelope calculation says \$200 per tonne reduction in tariff value would give relief of around Rs 5,000 per tonne." — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Govt to open 143 Khelo India spots

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry has decided to set up 143 Khelo India centres across seven states with a total budget of ₹14.30 crore in its bid to nurture talent at the grassroots level. These centres will be set up in Maharashtra, Mizoram, Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Each centre will be entrusted with one sports discipline. The Khelo India centres have been launched by the Sports Ministry in partnership with state governments to ensure the availability of grassroots-level infrastructure across the country. "It is our endeavour to make India one among the top 10 countries in the 2028 Olympics. To fulfil this goal we need to identify and nurture a large number of talented sportspersons from an early age," Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a statement. — PTI

Pep is England's Manager of Year

London: Manchester City's Pep Guardiola has been named manager of the year by England's League Managers' Association, it was announced on Monday. Guardiola steered City to the Premier League title and League Cup this season and this Saturday the Spaniard's side will bid to be crowned kings of Europe for the first time when they face English rivals Chelsea in the Champions League final in Porto. Former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager Guardiola topped a poll where the other leading contenders were Leeds' Marcelo Bielsa, Norwich's Daniel Farke, Chelsea women's manager Emma Hayes, West Ham's David Moyes and Leicester's Brendan Rodgers. — AFP

Flick to replace Loew after Euro

Berlin: Outgoing Bayern Munich coach Hansi Flick will succeed his former boss Joachim Loew in the Germany dugout after Euro 2020, the German Football Association (DFB) announced on Tuesday. "It's all gone surprisingly quickly, but I am very happy to be Germany coach from the autumn," said Flick, 56, after signing a three-year contract to succeed Loew. "I am hugely excited, because I see the class of players, and especially young players, which we have in Germany." Flick, who was assistant coach to Loew when Germany won the 2014 World Cup, has long been the favourite to take over from Loew, who will leave the job after 15 years in charge later this year. — AFP

Honda ready for Mugello challenge

Italy: The MotoGP World Championship returns to the Autodromo Internazionale del Mugello for round six of the 2021 season, Marc Marquez and Pol Espargaro ready for their next challenges. With a wet and wild French GP behind them, the Repsol Honda Team have regrouped and are ready to do it all again at the Italian Grand Prix. Having been unable to race in Mugello in 2020 due to the global pandemic, 2021 marks a welcome return to the iconic Italian circuit. 2019 produced a thrilling battle with Marquez taking second by just 0.043s after an intense race with Danilo Petrucci and Andrea Dovizioso. Marquez arrives in Italy buoyed by his showing in France, leading the race and lapping faster than the leaders despite suffering a fall.

Bucks bash up Miami Heat

Los Angeles: The Milwaukee Bucks produced an exhibition of three-point shooting to crush the Miami Heat as the Denver Nuggets bounced back to level their NBA first round playoff series with victory over Portland on Monday. Bryn Forbes erupted for five threes in the first half and Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 31 points to give the Bucks a resounding 132-98 win over last year's NBA Finals runners-up. — AFP

IPL BACK TO GULF

League likely to start on Sept. 18 with 10 double-headers in 3 weeks

New Delhi, May 25: The postponed Indian Premier League will resume tentatively on September 18 or 19 in the UAE with as many as 10 double-headers expected to be played during a three-week window, a senior BCCI official said on Tuesday. The final might be held on October 9 or 10. The three-week window will be enough for the league to complete its remaining 31 games for the season, a win-win scenario for all the primary stakeholders including the BCCI, franchises and broadcasters. The IPL was postponed on May 4 after multiple Covid-19 cases inside its bio-bubble came to light.

"The BCCI has spoken to all the stakeholders and the likely start could be between September 18th to 20th. Since September 18 is a Saturday and 19 a Sunday, it is more likely that you would want to re-start it on a weekend date," the official said on conditions of anonymity. "Similarly, October 9th or 10th will be the final as it's a weekend. We are finalising the itinerary and there will be 10 double headers and seven evening matches along with four main games (two qualifiers, one eliminator and the final), which completes the list of 31 matches," the source added.

The Indian team's last Test match against England is set to finish on September 14 at Manchester and on the next day, the whole team (save Hanuma Vihari and Abhimanyu Easwaran) will be flown to UAE in a chartered flight for a "bubble to bubble" transfer.

"The Indian team and the English players who will be available will fly in the same charter flight from Manchester to Dubai. Similarly, the West Indies players will also fly in after completing the Caribbean Premier League engagements. There will be three-day quarantine for players arriving from Britain and



the Caribbean."

INDIA'S T20 SERIES VS S. AFRICA CANCELLED

The BCCI has decided to cancel India's T20 series against South Africa scheduled in September, which was a build-up to the side's World T20 preparations.

"The series can't be held and in any case there can't be any better preparation for the T20 World Cup than playing a high intensity tournament like IPL. Since the T20 World Cup will start within a week or 10 days after completion of the IPL, the SA series can only be held at a later date. "There is a chance that India might play extra games when they tour South Africa early next year," the source said.

The India home season also had a two Test series against New Zealand in November and the dates of which could be shifted depending upon when the T20 World Cup ends.

— PTI

England-bound squads in 8-day hard quarantine

Mumbai, May 25: India captain Virat Kohli, his white-ball deputy Rohit Sharma and head coach Ravi Shastri joined the England-bound squad's bio-bubble on Tuesday as it began its eight-day hard quarantine along with the women's team here.

The Indian women's team members also entered their eight-day hard quarantine at the Grand Hyatt in Mumbai located near the international airport.

The teams are expected to fly out on June 2 after all the playing and non-playing members return three negative RT-PCR results.

The men's team will first take on New Zealand in

● **The Indian women's team members also entered their eight-day hard quarantine at the Grand Hyatt hotel in Mumbai located near the international airport.**

the World Test Championship final against New Zealand from June 18 before a full series against England. The women are scheduled to take on the hosts in one Test, three ODIs and as many T20 Internationals starting June 16.

"Wriddhiman and Prasidh Krishna joined the bubble two days back

after recovering fully from Covid-19. Mumbai's like Virat, Rohit and coach Shastri have all now joined the bubble," a BCCI source confirmed.

It is learnt that approval for allowing the players' families is still awaited but the BCCI is hopeful that it would be done soon.

"We can't have our players being away from their families for three months and that too in a bubble. That's never great for mental health," the source said.

The negotiation on quarantine duration once the side reaches England is still on and the hard quarantine (confined to hotel rooms) could be shortened. — PTI

MOTHER-SON IN CENTURY STAND, TAKE TEAM HOME

London, May 25: Former England women's cricketer Arran Brindle said she was as "proud as punch" of her son after the pair shared a match-winning century stand in a club game.

Brindle made 134 international appearances for England from 1999-2014, with the 39-year-old scoring unbeaten hundreds in both Test and one-day international formats.

But on Sunday, a player shortage meant she found herself playing for Owmbly Trojans — a team she coaches — in the third division of the Lincoln and District League in central England.

They dismissed their opponents, Nettleham CC's Academy XI, for 141, with Harry Brindle, Arran's 12-year-old son, taking four wickets.

The mother and son duo then combined to chase down Nettleham's score, sharing an opening stand of 143 in 32.3 overs to secure a 10-wicket win. Harry scored an unbeaten 32 while his mother finished 94 not out.

— AFP

Sushil may lose WFI contract

New Delhi, May 25: Arrested in a murder case, double Olympic-medallist Sushil Kumar is set to be dropped from the Wrestling Federation of India's annual contracts list along with Pooja Dhanda on account of non-performance when the body holds a review meeting next month.

The meeting between the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) and sponsors Tata Motors was to be held in 2020 but was put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic.

A WFI source said the decision to drop Sushil is purely based on performance and has nothing to do with his arrest for his alleged involvement in the murder of a fellow wrestler, Sagar Dhankad, at the Chhatrasal stadium.

"It is clear that Sushil and Pooja have not done anything notable since they were offered contracts. They will not make the cut when the review meeting is held next month," a WFI source said.

The WFI had taken a leaf out of BCCI's book to offer central contracts to its players in 2019. About 150 wrestlers had got one-year contracts which are subject to review.

Sushil was promoted to ₹30 lakh Grade A contract after initially being placed in Grade B that gave the

● **Sushil Kumar was promoted to ₹30 lakh Grade 'A' contract after initially being placed in Grade 'B' that gave the wrestlers an annual remuneration of ₹20 lakh.**

wrestlers an annual remuneration of ₹20 lakh. Pooja was also placed in Grade A. Sushil could not win any medal in the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta and also bowed out of the 2019 World Championship with a close first-round defeat. He has not competed since then.

The 2018 World Championship bronze-medallist Pooja too has lost her place in the 57kg category. She did not compete in 2020 and her last medal-winning performance came in July 2019 when she won a silver at the Grand Prix of Spain.

When contacted, WFI Assistant Secretary Vinod Tomar did not confirm exclusion of the two wrestlers but hinted such a step cannot be ruled out either. "All decisions will be made at the meeting only. But one thing is sure that sponsors' money will not be distributed for nothing. We have to utilise the money wisely," Tomar said. — PTI

HOCKEY STADIUM NAMED AFTER BALBIR SINGH SR

Chandigarh, May 25: The Mohali International Hockey Stadium was on Tuesday officially renamed after the legendary Balbir Singh Sr on the occasion of his first death anniversary.

The renaming was officially announced at a tribute ceremony held here to remember the three-time Olympic gold medallist, who died at the age of 96 on May 25 last year.

One of the country's most accomplished athletes, the iconic centre-forward was the only Indian among 16 legends chosen by the International Olympic Committee across modern Olympic history during the 2012 London Games.

"The Mohali International Hockey Stadium has been dedicated to the memory of Padma Shri Balbir Singh Sr in a formal ceremony at the hockey stadium on Tuesday on the first death anniversary of the legendary sportsperson," Punjab Sports Minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi said.

Sodhi said from now on the stadium would be known as "Olympian Balbir Singh Senior International Hockey Stadium." — PTI

Thapa secures 5th successive medal

ASIAN BOXING

● **Shiva Thapa prevailed in a lop-sided clash to set up a showdown with defending champion and top seed Bakhodur Usmonov of Tajikistan.**

Dubai, May 25: Seasoned Indian boxer Shiva Thapa (64kg) secured his fifth successive medal at the Asian Championships by advancing to the semifinals after out-punching Kuwait's Nader Odah in the last-eight stage here on Tuesday.

Thapa prevailed 5-0 in a lop-sided clash to set up a showdown with defending champion and top seed Bakhodur Usmonov of Tajikistan. Usmonov out-classed John Paul Panuayan.

Thapa won a gold in the 2013 championships, bronze in 2015 and 2019 and silver in 2017. He is assured of at least a bronze in the ongoing edition, bettering his own position as the most successful Indian boxer in the tournament's history.

Thapa was in control from the word go and was hardly tested by his opponent, who also faced a standing eight count in the opening round. The Assamese boxer was particularly impressive with his left jabs.

However, Commonwealth

Games bronze-winner Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg) went down to Uzbekistan's reigning world champion Mirazizbek Mirzahallilov in a fiercely-fought quarterfinal.

The Indian boxer lost 1-4 after giving the top-seeded defending champion quite a fight.

Mirzahallilov, who is also the Asian Games champion, was caught off guard by Hussamuddin's powerful counter-attacks on more than one occasion.

However, the Uzbek's assured footwork and precisely-placed straights for a majority of the bout, helped him seal it in the end. — PTI

COVID-19 POSITIVE MILKHA SINGH CLINICALLY STABLE

Chandigarh, May 25: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is "clinically stable with decreasing oxygen requirement" as he fights Covid pneumonia, the hospital where he is being treated said on Tuesday.

Milkha was on Monday admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Fortis hospital in Mohali. The 91-year-old tested positive for the virus last Wednesday.

"Mr Milkha Singh is clinically stable with decreasing oxygen requirement," the hospital update read.

He was diagnosed with "Covid pneumonia" on Monday after his admission.

Earlier Milkha's golfer son Jeev had said that the decision to hospitalise him was a precautionary measure. Milkha is suspected to have contracted the infection from house helps who had tested positive for the virus. — PTI

Covid-recovered Seifert all praise for 'safe' IPL bubble

Auckland, May 25: New Zealand cricketer Tim Seifert's world stopped for a moment and heart sank when he tested positive for Covid-19 during the now suspended IPL but the wicket-keeper said he never felt vulnerable inside the tournament's bio-bubble.

Seifert, however, insisted that his Covid-19 ordeal will not deter him from travelling to India again for future assignments, including the T20 World Cup to be held later this year.

"I got pulled aside and told I'd tested positive and my heart sank straight away when everyone left. I was the only overseas player basically still left in India out of the whole tournament. That's when things got a little bit real," an emotional Seifert told the *New Zealand Herald*.

"The world stops a little bit, I just couldn't really think what was next and that's the scary part of it — you hear about things, and I thought that was



Tim Seifert

going to happen to me." Seifert was all praise for the IPL bubble though.

"Talking to some of the English boys that were over there before the IPL ... everything that they were saying was doing well. You only kind of heard good things, the structures, all the plans that have been put in place," Seifert added.

"That was a good point of view for a player to go over there, and to be honest the whole time while

I was over there (in India), the bubble felt good... Felt safe."

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home

— PTI

● **The US State Department advisory released on Monday urges citizens to avoid travel to Japan, where the borders are already closed to almost all foreigners.**

ing. He added that Japan had been told the decision was "not related" to the plans of the US Olympic delegation.

Tokyo 2020 chief Seiko Hashimoto said she "didn't think it would impact

the Games", adding the organisers would "do their best to prepare for the Olympics whose priority is safety and security".

The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee also said it remained confident that safety measures and frequent testing for athletes and staff "will allow for safe participation of Team USA athletes this summer".

A State Department spokesman said Washington understood "the careful considerations that the Japanese government and the International Olympic

citizen entry, and impediments to obtaining Covid test results within three calendar days".

The advisory comes with less than two months until the opening ceremony of the Tokyo Olympics, which were postponed last year as the pandemic took hold. Japan's government said the measure would not affect the Games.

"It is our understanding that there is no change to the US position to support Japan's effort to hold the Olympic and Paralympic Games," government spokesman Katsunobu Kato told a regular brief-

Tokyo, May 25: A new US travel warning for Japan over virus risks will not affect this summer's pandemic-postponed Olympic Games, the Japanese government and Tokyo 2020 organisers said Tuesday.

The US State Department advisory released on Monday urges citizens to avoid travel to Japan, where the borders are already closed to almost all foreigners.

It cites government health advice, as well as "secondary factors such as commercial flight availability, restrictions on US