





## Two jungle cats caught in RR farm

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Two jungle cats that raided a poultry farm and fed themselves on the chicken stock have been caught in Veluguralla Thanda in Kadthal mandal of Ranga Reddy district.

According to poultry farmer Kishan and village sarpanch Pandu Naik, the two regularly raided the poultry farm at night and stole chickens. They were caught — one on Saturday and the other on Sunday — in cages set up to trap them. Forest officials said the farmer and the sarpanch were aware of forest laws and sought assistance in trapping the animals.

The two cats are in good health and have been kept in observation at the Nehru Zoological Park. They will be released into the wild after the mandatory observation



The cats are under observation at Nehru Zoological Park, and would be released into the wild soon.

period is over.

Meanwhile, as a part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, a webinar was held on Malabar Pied Hornbill by the curator of Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad, at which a presentation was done by Pooja Powar, a wildlife biologist.

## SOME TOKENS ISSUED, BILLS NOT PAID

FROM PAGE 1

Incidentally, those departments have not cleared bills for works that were executed last month.

Tokens have been issued for some bills but payments have not been made.

Authorities state that bills to the overall tune of ₹19,000 crore are pending across departments. The break-up is: irrigation department ₹14,000 crore, R&B (₹1,200 crore), GHMC (₹1,000 crore), panchayat raj (₹900 crore) and ₹800 crore for works

related to Mission Bhagiratha, among others. Officials have made it clear that the bills will not be paid even this month.

With regard to the 12,751 gram panchayats, although cheques were issued in the second week of March, nearly ₹1,300 crore remain outstanding.

Though some funds were released for Palte Pragathi, cheques are not being honoured for various projects and works, including Prakruthi Vanalu, Vaikunta Damas and Haritha Haram.

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## STORY OF HOPE

# Five friends who help the needy in pandemic times

A group of five philanthropists is busy raising funds to help Covid-19 affected families after witnessing their predicament

AISHWARYA A.V.S.K | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Moved by the plight of several families which were devastated by the pandemic due to lack of resources to buy medicines and other necessary items, city-based Sanjay Reddy, along with his five close friends, started raising funds to help those who are in need. The group first raised ₹5,000 all by themselves and donated it to a person who was undergoing treatment for Covid-19.

“One of my friend’s friends and his wife passed away due to Covid-19. They are survived by two kids (one 8-year-old and the other 9-year-old) but now the kids don’t have any immediate family. That is when I thought I should start helping people who cannot afford medicines or hospital bills,” Sanjay said. “I then called my five close friends, who, like me, were willing to help people monetarily. We all collected ₹5,000. Our first help was to a woman named Bhaskaramma who was suffering from Covid-19 and had a huge amount of hospital bills to pay. Her husband and both her children had passed away. So, we took it upon ourselves to help her and we paid her hospital and pharmacy bills,” he added.

The initiative started by Sanjay has more than 50 volunteers working tirelessly. They have, till now, collected ₹7 lakh, apart from helping at least 25 families and four orphanages. Sanjay said that their help was not only to people



Sanjay Reddy providing succour to the Covid-hit families.

suffering from Covid-19 but anyone who was in need.

When asked if their charity works were only Hyderabad-centric, Sanjay said, “Initially, we wanted to help people in Hyderabad so that we could verify the patients and do the needful. But recently, we helped two families from Vijayawada and one family residing in a village on the Telangana state border after complete verification.”

Talking about the process of verification, Sanjay said the team collected medical reports, admission form of the patient, recent medical bills, outstanding bills, Aadhaar card and proof of relation of the person who contacted them to authenticate if the person was genuine or not.

“We also call up the hospital and verify if the patient’s admission number is in its records and if the patient admitted is genuinely in need of money,” he added.



Helping the needy: Shilpa Nainani with husband Alay Razvi.

Shilpa Nainani, a certified neuro-linguistic programming master practitioner and an anchor, and her husband Alay Razvi, an independent lawyer and founding partner of M/s Accord Juris LLP, joined the initiative recently.

Speaking about her journey and the reason behind contributing to this initiative, Shilpa said, “Sanjay’s friend Rajeev is my husband’s friend. When he told us about this initiative, we thought this could

be our chance to help needy people and joined Sanjay in his noble work.”

She added that she was extremely glad that the whole initiative was transparent — where did the money go, who were the families which needed the money, what was their condition etc.

“Apart from monetary help, we also take care of the groceries for people who need them. Once we got a request from a pizza delivery executive, who, along with his wife, was down with Covid-19. So, we provided groceries to them,” Shilpa added.

## Orange alert in 3 Kerala districts

FROM PAGE 1

The IMD has issued orange alerts — a warning indicating heavy to very heavy rain — on Sunday in three districts —

Ernakulam, Idukki and Malappuram. The catchment areas of many dams in the central Kerala districts have reported heavy rains, prompting the authorities to sound alert warnings before upping their shutters.

The Thrissur district administration said spillway shutters of the Peringalkuthu dam will be opened if the water level crosses the permitted limit of 419.41 metres. In a statement, the administration

has urged the people living on the banks of Chalakudy river to be cautious.

Shutters of Malankara dam in Idukki district will be opened on Sunday, as the water level has increased, the district administration said. The administration has directed those people living on the banks of Thodupuzha river, Muvattupuzha river and their tributaries to be cautious. In the coastal areas, high tidal waves continued to wreak havoc. Hundreds of families living in coastal areas and low lying areas of the state have been shifted to relief camps. Meanwhile, the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) headed

by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba met on Sunday, where the top bureaucrat of the country directed agencies to ensure “uninterrupted” functioning of the COVID hospitals in the states affected by the impending Cyclone Tauktae and secure “zero loss” of lives.

Several officers, chief secretaries of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the administrators of the Lakshadweep, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu took part in the meeting, a statement issued said. The NCMC met to review the preparedness of the Central and state agencies to deal with the

cyclonic storm that is expected to reach the Gujarat coast in the morning of May 18 with wind speeds ranging from 150-160 km per hour, accompanied by heavy rainfall and storm surge, it said. Reviewing the preparedness, Gauba stressed that all measures be taken to evacuate people in the areas affected by the cyclone so as to ensure zero loss of life and damage. “All steps are to be taken to avoid disruption of functioning of hospitals and Covid-19 centres and maintenance of regular supply of oxygen to patients,” the statement quoted him as saying. Necessary arrangements have been made in this context, it added.

## Fake news fuelling vaccine hesitancy

FROM PAGE 1

It’s the fear of testing positive which is apparently preventing the villagers from getting tested. Varma further claimed that besides fear, the lack of infrastructure in Buxar was another major reason for the lack of testing.

“Shortage of oxygen, hospital beds and vaccines” continue to hit Buxar, Varma said. In fact last year, a paper published on ‘Coronavirus Testing Hesitancy among the Masses in India’, by Priya Thappa and Kirtan Rana, had said clearly that “in spite of the clear instructions from the government that no loss of wages should be suffered by people undergoing quarantine, many people, especially the ones belonging to the economically weaker sections of society, still face the fear of losing their livelihood”. One of the other major factors contributing to hesitation could be the long waiting period between the sample collection and declaration of reports.

The paper further claimed that “apart from these spheres, the lesser discussed issue is the social stigma associated with it”.

In Jaipur, Deepak Khandelwal, a businessman, was facing a herculean task to get his workers tested. Even threats of “sacking” them have failed to work. “The workers are scared that if they go for tests, they would be forcibly quarantined in some centres and no one would come out alive.”

Khandelwal claimed the majority of his workers were in a “denial mode”.

Deepak Methi and Amit Singhal, members of an NGO Om Foundation, came up with similar stories of testing hesitancy among people. Singhal claimed that NGO workers had found that a “majority” of people in Gijhore, a small village in Uttar Pradesh, were “refusing to be tested”.

Methi felt “this was a major cause of concern, as the people refusing to get tested could be spread-

ing the virus all across”. Similar reports of testing hesitancy continue to emerge from tribal-dominated areas in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

In fact, the “fear” stalking villagers and even some urbanites which is driving them to refusing to be either vaccinated or tested was due to ignorance and the massive spread of fake news. Neelesh Misra of Gaon Connection, a media platform, wrote: “The massive wall of suspicion, rumours, fake news and fear were driving the hesitation or plain refusal to both vaccine and testing.”

For instance Chhavi Methi, a budding yoga instructor, who comes from an affluent background in Noida, felt that her “body has the ability to develop immunity on its own against the virus”. Chhavi is averse to the inoculation “at least for now” due to “serious side effects of the vaccine”.

Even though her husband and daughter have got themselves vaccinated, Chhavi spoke of the reports about people “dying even after vaccination”.

Rajit Mehta, MD and CEO of Antara, while talking about this particular apprehension that people “die even after being vaccinated”, wrote in an article “no single vaccine provides 100 per cent protection”. He noted: “The annual influenza vaccine offers only 40-60 per cent protection and the measles vaccine offers only 97 per cent protection.” He went on to add: “Similarly, no Covid-19 vaccine developed in India or outside offers 100 per cent protection.”

The ICMR in a recent report also said that “only 2-4 people in 10,000 were found to get infected after getting both doses”.

While the government and the medical fraternity put “ignorance” behind the testing and vaccine hesitancy in India, social activists and a majority of doctors felt a massive awareness drive needs to be launched to counter these obstacles.

## TELANGANA STATE IS ENSURING NO OXYGEN DEATHS TAKE PLACE: KTR

FROM PAGE 1

He said the state was ensuring continuous oxygen supply to avoid any deaths due to the oxygen supply crisis.

Led by Chief Minister K. Chandrababhai Rao, the state government was working with complete coordination with medical institutions, he

added. Rama Rao also thanked Indigo Airlines for transporting the concentrators and called on corporates to step up and contribute to the battle against Coronavirus.

Speaking on the occasion, Suresh Kumar said that 200 oxygen concentrators would help provide two metric tonnes of oxygen.

## ELEPHANTINE | WOES Wildlife vet from Maha designs chain, pain-free restraints for elephants

# Painless restraints for captive tuskers

BALU PULIPAKA | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

A simple device, designed using high-strength woven belts as restraints to limit the movement of captive elephants used in wildlife rescue operations in Maharashtra, has resulted in elimination of painful injuries on the legs of pachyderms caused by traditional steel chains used as restraints.

Industrial strength belts, capable of handling loads of more than 5 tonnes, are being used on the legs of elephants. These belts, connected to a shackle, are linked to steel chains that afford the animals some space to move. “Though the elephants we use are trained, as with all captive elephants, these ones which we use in operations to tranquillise wild animals including tigers, are tied to chains. But in the past, the chains were wrapped around the legs directly. It was quite common for the elephants to develop wounds because the chains would begin biting into their skins,” Dr Ravikant Khobragade, a wildlife veterinarian working in the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, told this newspaper.

There was once an incident of an elephant in “musth”, a state when it is high on testosterone and



began pulling the chain on its leg leading to a deep cut and nasty injury and the elephant also killed a mahout, he said. Captive elephants that are chained and frequently suffer from wounds from steel chains that bite into their legs, and the device Khobragade designed has made it safer for elephants. Khobragade, incidentally, is the wildlife

vet on call for any possible capture of tiger A2, a wandering big cat from Maharashtra that in November and December last killed two tribals, a young man and a girl, in Asifabad district of Telangana.

“The animals are no longer irritated by the steel chains on their legs. The mahouts too are happy,” he

said, about the new belt restraints being used for five elephants in Tadoba tiger reserve, and a few more in other tiger reserves in Maharashtra. Several states have captive elephants to help in rescue, or tranquillising of wild animals that might stray into human habitations, or need to be captured for other reasons.



1. A mahout splashes water at an elephant with a webbed belt restraint on its leg in Tadoba Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra.

2. A red coloured webbed belt, connected to a steel chain through a shackle, restricts the elephant’s movement in Tadoba tiger reserve in Maharashtra.

3. File photo of a male elephant’s leg that developed a deep wound after the animal repeatedly pulled at the steel chain restraint.



## IN BRIEF

WARANGAL'S  
MGM HOSPITAL  
GETS NEW CHIEFDC CORRESPONDENT  
WARANGAL, MAY 16

Dr Valapadasu Chandrasekhar has been appointed in-charge superintendent of MGM hospital here on Sunday. Director of Medical Education Dr Ramesh Reddy issued orders to this effect at midnight on Saturday.

Dr Nagarjuna Reddy, who was the incumbent in-charge superintendent, has been in office since August 5, 2020.

Dr Chandrasekhar previously worked as principal of the Kakatiya Medical College and head of general medicine there. He was in-charge of the Covid ward at the MGM Hospital.

The state government has taken the decision to give the responsibility of the MGM

PICNICKER  
FOUND DEAD  
AT GANDIPETDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

A 22-year-old who consumed alcohol before going to swim in Gandipet in Himayatnagar allegedly drowned as his friends were unable to find him. His body was recovered by the police later.

According to the Moinabad police, the deceased, Rajamahendravaram Charan, a car driver, had gone to Gandipet along with Vishnu and Kanimi Ramakrishna, both 17, Tungal Vijay Kumar, 19, Pichakuntla Pakeerappa, 26, and Ramesh, 25.

The gang had gone to the lake for a weekend swim and had consumed liquor, police said. While intoxicated, Charan and others entered the lake for some time. They then drank some more liquor and this time only Ramakrishna and Charan went in to swim again. After some time, police said, Ramakrishna returned from the lake and asked about Charan, who was nowhere to be found. After the gang searched for him in vain, they called the police and informed them.

Police reached the spot and began a search. Charan's body was found after about an hour or so. It has been shifted for the post-mortem examination to Osmania General Hospital. A case was booked and an investigation taken up.

FOCUS ON BP  
AWARENESS,  
MEASUREMENTDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

The Cardiological Society of India (CSI), Hyderabad chapter, is commemorating this year's World Hypertension Day on Monday by focussing on combating low awareness rates worldwide, especially in low to middle-income areas, and accurate blood pressure measurement methods.

"Lifestyle factors are among the biggest causes of hypertension. To keep blood pressure within a healthy range, people should focus on eating a well-balanced, low-salt diet, exercise and have good quality sleep", the Society has recommended.

To reduce cardiovascular diseases and stroke risks, no stones must be left unturned to fight the problem of hypertension, they added.

The recommended blood pressure for hypertensive people with diabetes or chronic kidney disease is 130/80 mm/Hg.

World Hypertension Day (May 17) is a day designated and initiated by the World Hypertension League, comprising 85 national hypertension societies and leagues.

High sugar levels add  
to Covid side-effects

Steroids, stress among reasons for worrisome aftershock

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Not just treating Covid-19 patients, but tackling the side effects in the aftermath too has become a major concern for the doctors, it seems. After recovery, Covid-19 patients are showing increased sugar levels due to use of steroids, psychological stress, sedentary lifestyle and compromised cell immunity. Black fungus, increased levels of cholesterol, heart problems and urinary tract infections are expected as the sugar levels rise.

Doctors have been taken off guard as they never expected these side-effects in patients. In the first wave, there were side-effects noted in terms of scarring of lungs and heart due to prolonged treatment and higher viral load.

But in the second wave, they find that the side-effects are similar to that of a patient suffering from uncontrolled diabetes. Post-Covid-19 side effects have unmasked the underlying diabetes and pre-diabetes disease existing in people.

Sugar levels are not checked in 80 per cent of the cases as the treatment is at home. It is not clear whether before and after the medication of steroids, there are fluctuating sugar levels. It is also not clear if the time gap between the steroids is followed by patients.

Dr Ch. Vasant Kumar, senior general physician at Apollo Hospitals, explained, "Due to the infectious nature of Covid-19, maximum treatment is at home and only those with identified diabetic disorder are checking random blood sugar at home. In majority of the cases, there have not been random levels taken as they are not thought to be vulnerable for pre-diabetes or diabetes. We are now seeing high incidences as those with a pre-existing condition but not diagnosed, borderline cases and uncontrolled diabetes but never diagnosed are suffering from

Patients queue up at ENT  
Hosp's black fungus wardDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

The Government ENT Hospital has started a special ward for treating patients with black fungus infection on Sunday. A 30-bed special ward has been set up and patients are already being seen in the out-patient department.

A senior doctor at the ENT Hospital, on condition of anonymity, says, "We can remove black fungus via surgery but the medicine required to completely eradicate it from the body 'liposomal amphotericin B' is out of stock. There are alternative drugs like 'posaconazole' and 'fluconazole' being used apart from antibiotics but the stock is limited."

Doctors say that surgical intervention can only help in treating black fungus to a certain extent. To completely remove the fungus from the body, medicine is required. Prescription of medicine depends on the

severe side-effects. This is bringing the diabetics pandemic to the fore."

Increased sugar levels are also due to psychological stress as living in isolation, staying in one room, concerns over income and social changes are affecting many patients. Stress hormones in the body rise and insulin levels fall down hampering functioning of the body. For this reason, there is tiredness, headaches, muscle pain and also lack of sleep, explained Dr S. Sangeetha, senior endocrinologist. It also leads to mood swings, demotivation and anger affecting mental health. These have an overall impact on the body making recovery a slow process.

Dr Shyam Kalavalapalli,

## ONE DIES OF BLACK FUNGUS IN TS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, MAY 16

Instances of black fungus infection are being reported from old Adilabad district. The first casualty was 58-year-old Dadarao, who died with the symptoms in Ichoda.

Gradually, more such

extent of invasion of black fungus.

According to sources, production of antifungal drugs is not a priority as it is not used much. And now the demand in the open market is as high as 3,000 vials. Doctors suspect that black marketing of these drugs is expected due to the surge.

The vial cost of 'amphotericin B' in the market for 50 mg is ranging from ₹500 to ₹4,000 per vial. Prices of alternatives like 'posaconazole' and 'fluconazole' range from ₹3,000 to

senior endocrinologist of Idea Clinics says, "In the second wave, we have observed that people who suffered from the infection also suffered from abdominal obesity, sedentary lifestyle and weight gain. There has been a change in lifestyle and most of them have been at home. They have not opted for testing and were neither advised as there was fear of contracting the virus. Neither are the people seeing their doctors face-to-face and it is mostly a video call that decides on the treatment. These factors account for this surge in side-effects."

Experts state that in India for one diagnosed case of diabetes, there is one undiagnosed or missed case. The prevalence of diabetes in India is 7.5 per cent of the popu-

cases are coming to light. Earlier, doctors treated such cases on the lines of the Covid-positive cases.

Sources said two Covid-19 patients were found to be suffering from the infection at the prestigious Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Adilabad.

₹10,000 per vial. Private hospitals have referred relatives of patients to ENT nodal centre for medicines and demand for the same is piling up.

Doctors at the ENT Hospital stated that they have to direct the queries to the Telangana State Medical Infrastructure Development Corporation as they have to procure the medicines.

The existing stock at the hospital is to be utilised for patients who are referred for treatment there, they said.

lation according to Indian Council of Medical Research. In urban areas, the incidence is 15 per cent and in rural areas it varies from 4.5 per cent to 10 per cent.

Experts say that due to the unidentified and undiagnosed nature of the disease those who have recovered from Covid-19 must check their blood sugar levels for a month. They can opt for random checking of blood sugar. Apart from that, they must opt for meditation, light exercise at home, check on their weight in terms of food intake, eat healthy foods and carry out breathing exercises so that their cell immunity improves. It is also very important for them to beat their psychological stress and ensure fitness of mental health.

TS REPORTS  
3,816 NEW  
COVID CASESDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Telangana on Sunday reported 3,816 new Covid-19 cases and 27 deaths. Besides, 5,892 patients have recovered from the disease, the health department said.

The toll now stands at 2,955, caseload at 5,28,823 and recoveries 4,74,899. The state tested 44,985 samples.

With 658 new cases, the GHMC area had the most cases followed by 326 in Ranga Reddy district, 293 in Medchal-Malkajigiri, 152 each in Karimnagar and Bhadrachalam-Kothagudem, 151 in Khammam, 143 in Sangareddy, 138 in Siddipet, and 135 in Vikarabad district.

As on Sunday, the state has 50,969 active Covid-19 cases. Of these, 22,517 people are in hospitals receiving treatment — 8,351 in ICUs, 14,323 on oxygen support and the rest — 5,778 — in general wards.

## POLICE EFFORT

Sajjanar tours area on foot, speaks of importance of curbs

## Lockdown tightened in Cyberabad

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Implementation of the lockdown has become stricter in the Cyberabad area of the city with as many as 5,000 cops deployed on the field. Cyberabad police commissioner V.C. Sajjanar himself supervised the shutdown on Saturday.

Sajjanar visited Suchitra, Alwal IG statue, Golnaka crossroads, Allwyn Colony, Dulapally

crossroad and other places and saw for himself the implementation of the lockdown. He advised field-level police personnel and officers about intricacies of implementing the lockdown, whether at checkpoints on roads or in various localities.

"I have advised people not to be careless during this second wave of the pandemic. Importantly, they must not ignore any symptoms but get themselves checked. For their

## GOOD NEWS CORNER

Month	Covishield (SII-AZ)	Covaxin (Bharat Biotech)	Sputnik V (DRIL-RDIF)	ZyCoV-D (Zydus Cadila)	Corbevax (Bio-E)	HGC09 (Gennova)	Covaxin Nasal (Bharat Biotech)	Janssen (Bio-E & J&J)	Covaxin (SII & Novavax)	Total (In crores)
May 2021	6.50	1.70	0.60	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.80
June 2021	6.50	2.50	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00
July 2021	7.00	7.50	2.58	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	17.08
Aug 2021	10.00	7.50	1.66	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	19.16
Sep 2021	11.50	7.70	2.42	1.00	7.50	2.00	0.00	5.00	5.00	42.12
Oct 2021	11.50	12.20	3.42	1.10	7.50	1.00	0.00	5.00	5.00	46.72
Nov 2021	11.50	12.20	7.02	1.30	7.50	1.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	56.02
Dec 2021	11.50	15.50	7.02	1.30	7.50	1.50	5.00	5.00	5.00	59.32
<b>Total (In Crores)</b>	<b>76.00</b>	<b>66.80</b>	<b>25.72</b>	<b>4.70</b>	<b>30.00</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>20.00</b>	<b>259.22</b>

The vaccine production schedule till the year-end, showing nearly 260 crore doses, that was posted by Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy on Sunday.

Kishan: 36cr vax doses by  
July, 260cr by DecemberDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

The Union government has sped up the vaccination production process and is fixing milestones monthly wise. The Union health ministry under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has worked closely with stakeholders to ramp up vaccine production to cater for domestic requirements.

As per a statement released by Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy, 35.9 crore vaccines will be supplied by July.

The minister also stated that India currently has nine Covid-19 vaccines and three are already being administered — Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V. Over the span of seven months nearly 260 crore doses will be produced for domestic

administration, thereby ensuring enough supplies for the largest vaccine drive in the world. Kishan Reddy said.

The other vaccines that will go into production are ZyCoV-D by Zydus Cadila, Corebevax of Biological Evax, HGC09 of Gennova, Covaxin Nasal of Bharat Biotech, Janssen of Biological Evax and Johnson and Johnson and Novavax by Serum Institute of India.



IT minister K.T. Rama Rao receives 200 oxygen concentrators from China that arrived at the Shamshabad airport, Hyderabad, on Sunday. Rama Rao heads the task force to acquire medicines and equipment to deal with Covid-19.

— DC

TS receives 5 O2 tankers,  
more to reach city todayDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Telangana state received its sixth 'Oxygen Express' with six tankers at Sanathnagar from Odisha.

About 120 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen were supplied to Telangana state and four tankers filled with 76.39 tonnes to AP from Kalinganagar in Odisha to overcome the oxygen supply crisis in the two states amid the second Covid wave.

The SCR said a seventh



Tankers filled with liquid medical oxygen arrive in Hyderabad from Angul, Odisha, on Sunday.

— DC

Oxygen Express has commenced its journey to Telangana state. The train is loaded with four tankers carrying 55.42 tonnes of LMO from Odisha and is likely to reach Hyderabad on

Monday. SCR general manager Gajanan Mallia said all necessary steps are being taken to ensure that the Oxygen Express trains reached the destinations fast.

TS given 70K vials  
of remdesivir inj.DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Telangana has been allocated an additional 70,000 vials of remdesivir, the injection which is in great demand for treating Covid-19 patients admitted to various hospitals in the state.

The latest allocation is for period beginning May 17 and ending May 23. With this, Telangana's share of remdesivir vials stands at 2,15,000 vials, according to a Press Information Bureau bulletin.

Incidentally, families of

Covid-19 patients have been running from pillar to post in search of remdesivir, which continues to be prescribed by many hospitals.

State health department has repeatedly said that administering remdesivir is only on an experimental basis; that too only under strict conditions. But there has been no let up in demand for the injection.

Telangana had been urging the centre at regular intervals to increase remdesivir allocations to the state on account of the demand.

MORE DOSES OF  
SPUTNIK V VAX  
LAND IN CITYDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

A second consignment of 60,000 doses of the Russia-made Sputnik V vaccine arrived in Hyderabad on Sunday on a special cargo flight. The consignment was received by Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), the city-based drug major which is marketing the vaccine in the country.

Sunday's consignment takes to 2.6 lakh doses of Sputnik V that have been received in India. DR did a soft launch of the vaccine on Friday.

Vax drive indefinitely put off,  
no Covaxin left for 2nd doseDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

The government has indefinitely postponed the Covid-19 vaccination drive, which was to resume on Monday.

Director of Health Services Dr G. Srinivasa Rao on Sunday, said the state did not have stocks of Covaxin, and did not receive fresh stocks from the Union health ministry for the second dose vaccination drive for those who are 45 years or older.

● **THE VACCINATION** drive had been postponed over the weekend as the new second dose schedule of Covishield, with a longer gap between doses, was being drawn up.

It may be recalled that the Centre had announced an increased gap between the first and second dose of Covishield, saying that the second dose of the vaccine should be taken only after 12

weeks and before the end of 16 weeks of the first dose.

With this being the case, along with severe Covaxin shortage, the state health department decided that it will indefinitely postpone the vaccination drive in the state.

The Director of Health Services said in his announcement that details on resumption of the drive will be announced later. There was also no vaccination in the state this Saturday and Sunday too.





## SHORT TAKES

THEFTS AT RIMS  
AMID COVID  
MISERIESDC CORRESPONDENT  
ADILABAD, MAY 16

Miscreants are on the prowl committing thefts by wearing face masks at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in these times of Covid-related miseries.

Several thefts have taken place in the late night hours at this premier health facility. Many victims are hesitant to report the matter to the police to avoid further hassles.

Miscreants are wandering in the wards, wearing masks and claiming themselves to be attendants to patients on treatment in various wards. A few days ago, an elderly man sleeping in the ward as attendant to his wife under treatment was robbed of his cell phone and cash. He was threatened by a youth holding a knife to him around midnight.

Family members of another Covid patient at the hospital alleged that someone tried to snatch away a gold chain from a woman patient. He ran away when the victim raised an alarm.

Security lapses are noticed for long at RIMS. Miscreants are frequently visiting the facility at night-time and creating nuisance. Taking advantage of the Covid situation, they are now wearing face masks and committing thefts and robberies. This makes identification difficult.

Women doctors, medicos, nurses and other female staff at the facility are feeling insecure as miscreants stray into the wards in the guise of attendants to patients. In one incident, some miscreants reportedly misbehaved with female doctors on duty when they were questioned as to why they were roaming around the wards at night.

The security guards at RIMS are to the minimum at night and police security is slack. It is suspected that some security guards might be helping the miscreants. No proper inspection is done in the wards at night and miscreants take advantage of this when patients are in deep sleep. Guards often take a nap at night.

NO SALE OF  
STEROIDS WITHOUT  
PRESCRIPTIONDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, MAY 16

Khammam district collector R.V. Karnan has warned chemists, druggists and pharmacists against sale of steroids, anticoagulants, antibiotics, blood thinners and anti-viral medicines as also scheduled drugs without prescription.

"Every chemist should follow the guidelines on dispensing of Covid-19 medicines during the pandemic situation. People treating themselves without consulting doctors should be discouraged. It would affect their health. Some people are buying medicines after reading misleading WhatsApp messages," he said.

At a virtual meeting with the chemists and druggists, the collector asked them to follow the Covid guidelines strictly. If chemists find that someone is selling life-support drugs for Covid-19 in the black market, they should inform the police on toll-free 1077 and 100.

Remdesivir and amphotericin-B drugs should be sold only to the patients undergoing treatment in hospitals. Doctors in private and government hospitals must write the names of the medicines clearly and avoid any ambiguity in it.

Pharmacists should explain to patients about the use of medicines. Action will be taken against pharmacists selling drugs at prices higher than the MRP, he said.

Drug inspectors should visit chemist shops and ensure there are no rule violations. "Pharmacists should check expiry date before selling medicines. They should be ready to deliver the medicines at the door-steps in case the patient cannot visit the store. Employees at pharmacies should wear identity cards and sanitizer should be available at the counter for customers.

Shop owners should use plastic body cover and avoid direct interaction with customers.

Collector Karnan said Covid care centres have been functional at eight places including the Sarada Institute of Technology, the YTC Centre, Maddulapalli, the SBCE college and the minority welfare residential college. The government has made available 1,100 remdesivir vials at 37 government hospitals in all the mandals of Khammam district, he said.

## Solidarity with Palestinians



Shiite Muslims burn Israeli and US flags during a demonstration to condemn Israel's use of force against Palestinians, in Hyderabad, on Sunday.

Rift in Congress over  
support to Rajendar

Leaders question as to why party must support land-grabbers

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

A rift is evident in the Telangana Congress leadership over the sympathy expressed by some senior party leaders towards ousted health minister Etala Rajendar.

Several leaders including TPCC president Uttam Kumar Reddy and some working presidents have expressed their moral support to Etala. But, the former Huzurabad candidate of the Congress, Padi Koushik Reddy, personally set against Rajendra, struck a different chord. He has opposed the recent meeting of the former minister had with CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka and feels this should have been avoided.

Uttam Kumar Reddy and other senior party

leaders have condemned TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's action of driving Rajendra out of the TS Cabinet. With Koushik Reddy taking a strong stand against Rajendra, Congressmen are obviously confused.

Koushik Reddy has the constituency-level politics uppermost in his mind, some Congress leaders admit, but they ask why the party should support Rajendra when serious allegations of land-grab are raised against the former minister and his family.

Some Congressmen feel Koushik Reddy is being over-sensitive about the issue. Ponnamm Prabhakar, former MP and TS Congress working president,

wrote a letter to the TPCC asking it to clarify

its stand on Rajendar, who remains as the TRS MLA. He also sent a similar letter to Manickam Tagore, AICC in-charge of TS affairs.

Rajendar has been meeting many leaders and activists to test the waters after his exit from the ministry. TRS Rajya Sabha member D. Srinivas had a meeting with Mallu Bhatti, former minister, and BJP leader Chandrashekar. TPCC working president Revanth Reddy, party MP Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, senior leaders V. Hanumantha Rao, spokesperson dr Dasoju Shrivani, Jeevan Reddy as well as Vijayashanti and D. Arvind, the son of D. Srinivas, from the BJP also came out in support of Rajendra.

Meanwhile, TRS leaders, MLAs and minis-

ters have stopped airing allegations against Rajendar. Recently, B. Vinod Kumar, vice-president of the TS Planning Commission, along with ministers Gangula Kamalakara and Koppula Eshwar criticised Rajendra. After this, they fell silent. But Huzurabad Congress in-charge Padi Koushik Reddy keeps firing shots at Rajendra.

Koushik Reddy made clear that he would not join TRS. It was rumoured that he would contest a by-election with TRS support. Koushik Reddy released a video two days back saying there was no truth in the speculation that he would find his way into the TRS. "My aim is to fly the Congress flag in the Huzurabad constituency," he claimed.

KCR must take blame for  
Covid situation: UttamDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

State Congress leader Uttam Kumar Reddy on Sunday concluded that the Covid-19 pandemic is spreading in Telanaga due to the "thoughtless and negligent" style of governance of Chief Minister Chandrashekar Rao.

Addressing the meeting of the TPCC core committee via video app, he said private hospitals are collecting lakhs from Covid-inflicted in the state whereas patients in the other states are getting treatment free of cost. "The government is not bothered about the people, medicines are not available, there is shortage for ventilators and hospital beds even to those who are ready to make payments. The middle class and the poor are in utter panic," Uttam said.

CLP leader Mallu

CLP LEADER  
Vikramarka says the Congress should infuse confidence in the people at a time they are frightened.

Bhatti Vikramarka, AICC secretaries Bose Raju, Srinivasan Krishnan, Sampath Kumar, MLAs and other leaders participated in the meeting.

Uttam alleged that the Chief Minister did not take steps to add Covid-19 to the Arogyasri scheme in the state. He also did not implement Ayushman Bharat that provided free treatment to Covid patients. Other states have been forcing private hospitals to provide free treatment to patients, he said.

The Congress leader said that the state government failed to protect the health of the people at this critical juncture. The Congress would wage a fight against the gov-

ernment's failures on the healthcare front.

He called upon Congressmen to take to relief work for the benefit of Covid patients. They were also urged to distribute masks, medicines and food on the 30th death anniversary of former PM Rajiv Gandhi on May 21. Relief works should be undertaken taken in every village on that day. Masks should be distributed free to at least 50 persons in each booth area as per instruction from the AICC.

CLP leader Vikramarka said the Congress should infuse confidence in the people at a time they are frightened. The core committee condoled the death of Rajya Sabha member Rajiv Satav from Gujarat due to Covid infection. Uttam said the death was a big loss to the party. The core committee observed two minutes' silence.

BJP: Ensure Covid-19 is  
covered by AarogyasriDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Sunday emailed a memorandum to Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan seeking her immediate intervention in ensuring Covid-19 treatment under Arogyasri.

He expressed concern that the state government had failed miserably in tackling the corona epidemic. He said villagers were facing severe financial problems and were unable to pay medical bills. They can get relief in going about the corona treatment if it is included in Aarogyasri, he explained. He pointed out that poor people

were selling whatever assets they had and were running into debts while raising money for treatment in private hospitals.

Sanjay Kumar demanded that free corona treatment must be provided under Aarogyasri, on the lines of the central scheme 'Ayushman Bharat'.

He alleged that the state government has been ignoring demands to include the Coronavirus infection in Aarogyasri and because of non-payment of Aarogyasri arrears, private hospitals were not treating the scheme's beneficiaries. He sought immediate settlement of such arrears to private hospitals.

Sanjay recalled that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had promised to implement Ayushman Bharat in Telangana but it is yet to take-off. He also pointed out that Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar had assured Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the December 30 video-conference that the state government would implement Ayushman Bharat.

The BJP leader said that not a single step has been taken since the time the Prime Minister asked for increasing the corona treatment limit under Aarogyasri from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh and implementation of Ayushman Bharat.

## 5 FLATS IN APARTMENT BLOCK BURGLED, ₹20L, 12 TOLAS GOLD STOLEN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Theft cases were reported at about five flats in a building in Kulsumpura late on Saturday night. Police said that about ₹20 lakh cash along with 12 tolas gold and other valuables

were reportedly stolen.

Police is yet to identify the person or gang behind the burglaries. A police statement said the building was seemingly targeted by professional burglars. Among the houses which were burgled were that of the building owner. The resi-

dents were away at that time. Tools were used to break open the main doors and the almirah, police said. Following complaints from the victims, the police booked a case and started a probe. The CC cameras in the vicinity are being checked for potential clues.

**SHRADDHANJALI**

**SHRI SHYAM KARAN SRIVASTAVA**  
Left for heavenly abode on Sunday, 9th May, 2021. May God give Moksha to his soul.  
10th DAY CEREMONY - 17th May 2021  
13th DAY CEREMONY - 20th May 2021  
INSERTED BY:  
SMT. PREMLATA SAXENA (Wife)  
CHILDREN & SRIVASTAVA KARAN BROTHERS, SISTERS & FAMILIES  
Ph.: (040) 27562863, 9849210185

**SHRADDHANJALI**  
12th DAY

**Late Shri R. JAGADISH REDDY**  
DOB: 23-09-1938 DOD: 06-05-2021  
We lost our beloved brother  
You will be missed  
Inserted by:  
R. Ramesh Reddy & Rajitha Reddy  
Rishi Advait Reddy & Family  
Dr. Abhidya & Dr. Sreekanth Reddy

**OBITUARY**

**Mr. Ramesh Mahindrakar**  
S/o. Vishwanath Rao Mahindrakar  
DOB:- 16-11-1953 DOD:-16-05-2021  
Wife: Sandhya Mahindrakar  
Sons: Shanti Kumar Mahindrakar  
Raj Kumar Mahindrakar  
Daughter: Sheetal Neemkar  
Son-in-law: Prashant Neemkar  
Karuna Neemkar And Neemkar's Family  
Ph. 9701216650 / 9908110347 / 9390665737

**SHRADDHANJALI**  
12th DAY

**Late Shri R. JAGADISH REDDY**  
DOB: 23-09-1938 DOD: 06-05-2021  
He will be amidst us eternally  
Inserted by:  
Smt. R. Vinodhini (Wife)  
Daughters & Son-in-laws  
Haritha & Srinivas  
Dr. Smitha & Dr. TPS Bhandari  
Shwetha & Deepak  
Ph: 9160232465

**11th DAY SHRADDHANJALI**

**MADDELA PRAVEEN KUMAR GOUD**  
15 June 1974 - 8 May 2021  
"Your memories will always remain in our hearts for ever"  
Geedi Prabhakar Goud, Madhavi  
Nithin Raj Goud, Meghavathi

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF**

**Late GANGIREDDY NARSINGH RAO MUDIRAJ**  
Inserted by:  
M/s. LAXMI ELECTRICALS  
M/s. LAXMI ELECTRICAL WORKS,  
Staff & FAMILY MEMBERS

**MEMORIAL SERVICE**  
The memory of the righteous is blessed.  
Proverbs 10:7

**Pastor MANI R. NADAVA**  
Founder & Director: Word of Hope Ministries  
S/o Late Koteshwar Rao Nadava  
DOB: 03-03-1970  
Entered in to Glory: 07-05-2021  
Zoom Meet on 17th May 2021 @ 7pm IST  
Zoom Id: 6612921907, Password: 12345  
Note: Due to Lockdown, the Meeting will be on Zoom  
Inserted by: Wife: Rani Nadava,  
Daughter & Son-in-law

**SAD DEMISE**

**PIROJA BATLIWALA HANSOTIA**  
(Passed away on 17-4-2021)  
Our Hearts still ached in sadness,  
And secret tears still flow,  
What it meant to lose you,  
No one will ever know.  
Deeply Mourned by:  
Ratan, Minochar, Avan,  
Nazneen, Veyraa & her beloved Tiger.

**SHRADDHANJALI**  
12th DAY

**Late Shri R. JAGADISH REDDY**  
DOB: 23-09-1938 DOD: 06-05-2021  
You will be dearly missed  
Inserted by:  
R. Mahesh Reddy (Brother & Family)  
R. Padmaja Reddy  
R. Ruthwan Reddy  
Ph: 9885513303

**14th DEATH ANNIVERSARY**

**MILINDA BERNADETTE JOHN** (Cookie)  
If loved ones you weep, let your cry be:  
A heartbroken surrender-  
'HEART OF JESUS - ALL FOR THEE'  
PARENTS : Bradley, Myrtle, Berton,  
Savina and Blyton

**BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE**  
I Have fought a good fight, I Have finished my course, I have kept the faith.  
(2 Timothy 4:7)

**MADUGULA JOSHUA HELEENA**  
Retd. Head Nurse, Gandhi Hospital  
DOB: 17-05-1951 DOD: 2-4-2021  
From: Husband, Daughters,  
Son-in-law & Grand Daughters

**Promoted to Glory**  
Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me will live, even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."  
- John 11:25-26

**Late. Mrs. P. MANORA**  
(Head Nurse, Nilofar Hospital)  
DOB: 04.08.1956 DOD: 17.05.2011  
"You have Passed away from this world but not from our hearts and thoughts"  
Inserted by: Husband : J.T. Gabriel & Family  
Ph: 9347322188 / 9849446523 / 9899670420

**11th DAY SHRADDHANJALI**

**MADDELA PRAVEEN KUMAR GOUD**  
15 June 1974 - 8 May 2021  
We miss you every moment in our life.  
Parents: Narsingh Rao Goud,  
Amaravathi & Family

**THANKS GIVING**  
He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. Psalm 147:3  
We Praise God always for His Goodness.

**Smt. Uchula Lilly Pushpa Kumari**  
Who was called to glory on 14.5.2021, we are organizing a Thanksgiving meeting on 18.5.2021, Tuesday, 10 A.M. at our Residence Rammagari, Hyderabad. Please pray and Participate.  
With Love:  
Daughter and Sons of Uchula Jai Prakash Hebron Church, Hyderabad.

**13th ANNIVERSARY**

**M.R. GORAKNATH**  
(Retd. Sr. Diesel Driver S.C. Rly)  
DOB: 22.5.1940 DOD: 17.05.2008  
"Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure, you are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure"  
V love you and miss you  
Inserted by:  
Wife, Daughters, Sons-in-law, And Grand Children  
Ph: 9963431424

**10th DEATH ANNIVERSARY**  
Precious is the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints  
Psalms 116:15

**Late. Mrs. P. MANORA**  
(Head Nurse, Nilofar Hospital)  
DOB: 04.08.1956 DOD: 17.05.2011  
"You have Passed away from this world but not from our hearts and thoughts"  
Inserted by: Husband : J.T. Gabriel & Family  
Ph: 9347322188 / 9849446523 / 9899670420

**SHRADDHANJALI**

**MANAV LINGA**  
D.O.B: 14th October 1977  
D.O.D: 12th May 2021  
"Gone from our sight, But never from our hearts"  
----- Inserted by -----  
DEBBAB RAMA RAO

**OBITUARY**

**PEREJI RATHNAM DAVID**  
(Retd. Head Nurse)  
W/o Late Pereji John David  
DOB: 17/07/1929 DOD: 16/05/2021  
Funeral will be held @ 11.00AM on 17th May 2021 at CSI Cemetery, Mettuguda, Secunderabad.  
Inserted by:  
Children, Grand Children, Great Grand Children & Family members  
RSPV 8008073300, 9959606396

**OBITUARY**

**POLAVARAM VANAMALI**  
Senior IAS officer, Retired Additional Chief Secretary, West Bengal  
DOB: 24.09.1946 DOD: 16.05.2021  
We are sad to inform that Shri. Polavaram Vanamali has passed away on 16.05.2021. His memories are with us forever  
Inserted by: Polavaram Kalyani & Family Members

**OBITUARY**

**RAHUL DESAI**  
S/o Dilip Desai  
DOB: 02.11.1982 - DOD: 16.05.2021  
Address: Jaya Lakshmi Tower, Musheerabad X Road, Flat No 407, Bolakpur, Secunderabad-80  
Inserted by: Dilip Desai: 9866331904  
Vijaya Desai: 9030911904 and Desai family

**11th Day Ceremony**

**Smt. POLNATHI VARALAKSHMI**  
DOB: 18-02-1932 DOD: 08-05-2021  
W/o Late P.S. Suryanarayana Rao (Vakil)  
11th DAY CEREMONY ON 18/05/2021  
Dearest Amma... With heartfelt, we deeply mourn for your Heavenly Abode but your memories remain with us forever!  
Your affectionate, simple, selfless nature has touched so many lives.  
In Profound Grief...  
Inserted by: Near & Dear  
Ph: 74162 31457 / 93475 24573

**1st ANNIVERSARY (17.05.2021)**

**A. NIRMALA**  
We miss you now and always will.  
Fondly remembered by  
A Anantham (Husband), Neeraj Kumar, Devangi, YASH, Sravan Kumar, Ramya AYAAN, Pavani, Shiva Deepak, VIRAT

**OBITUARY**

**A. Ramesh Rao**  
(21.04.1951 - 05.05.2021)  
An indomitable spirit, reservoir of knowledge, values and principles. An inspiration the wind beneath our wings. He has left behind a legacy to emulate for us and the future generations.  
Forever in our hearts and actions  
Wife and Family Members

**15th DAY CEREMONY**

**T. VASANTHI**  
W/o. Late Tamil Vanan  
Expired on 3rd May 2021  
Kammandam in 17.5.2021 at our residence at Old Gandhi Nagar, R.K.Puram  
Inserted By:  
Family Members  
Ph: 9440372766

**SHRADDHANJALI**

**Sri BALIRAM KHIYARAM RAWLYANI**  
We pay our most humble homage to the memory of our beloved Founder Director  
**Sind Co-op Urban Bank Ltd**  
Management and Staff  
Hyderabad and Secunderabad



## SHORT TAKES

ADRUShTA  
DEEPAK, WRITER,  
DIES OF COVIDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KAKINADA, MAY 16

Noted Telugu litterateur Adrushta Deepak, known more as a cine lyric writer, died of Covid-19 in a private hospital on Sunday. He is survived wife, a son and a daughter.

Hailing from Ravulapalem village, he resided at Machavaram and later settled down in Ramachandrapuram. Deepak was a post-graduate and worked as lecturer in a junior college at Draskharama. He wrote lyrics like Yuavataram Kadilindi for Asayala Pandiri movie and for other movies like Erra Mallelu, Navodayam and Netibharatam.

Deepak was winner of Best Teacher award and he played a key role in the Drasharama Kala Parishad as also the Mayura Nataka Kala Parishad. He wrote and published books like Kokilamma Padalu, Agni, Samara Sankham and Pranam.

Condolences poured in over the demise, many hailing him as a great litterateur, lyrics writer and artist. Mayura Nataka Kala Parishad founder secretary S.V. Appalachariar said the death was a big loss to the cultural organisation as also the Telugu literary field.

TANA LEADER  
LOSES BATTLE  
WITH COVIDDC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, MAY 16

N.R.C. Naidu (44), an NRI leader from PVG Pale near Rajampet in Kadapa district, lost his battle with Coronavirus in Washington DC. He was well-known to the Telugu people in the American capital. Satish Vemana, the former president of Telugu Association of North America (TANA), who also hails from Rajampet area, said Naidu was an active member of TANA and was always available to all. He was helping all activities of Telugu organisations, especially TANA, for over a decade. He also chaired the prestigious sponsorships committee under the guidance of Vemana at the 2019 DC Conference, connecting many donors to TANA.

Naidu, who was also politically active, worked in the NRI TDP cell. Vemana said he had lost a brother and beyond. TANA functionaries Komati Jayaram, Gangadhar Nadella, Jayasekhar Thalluri and many NRIs from Telugu states paid tributes to the departed soul.

DOCS SUSPENDED  
FOR NEGLIGENCE  
IN TREATMENTDC CORRESPONDENT  
ANANTAPUR, MAY 16

Two doctors including a Resident Medical Officer of Government Super Specialty Hospital were suspended and show cause notices were served on the Superintendent and two head nurses of the super-specialty hospital here, for their alleged negligence in providing timely treatment to APMIP district project director who died at hospital. The official was a special officer on Covid duty.

Collector Gandham Chandrudu reacted seriously as APMIP project director M. Subbarayudu could not get even a stretcher to reach the second floor of hospital. The reception staff was found to be negligent in responding quickly to save the official.

On Sunday, the collector, taking a serious note of lapses on the part of hospital staff, issued orders, suspending Resident Medical Officer Dr. Sridhar and help desk medical officer Dr. Sudhakar for their negligence even after they were informed about the critical condition of Subbarayudu.

The collector also expressed anger at the hospital authorities for not replacing oxygen flow meters. "It took more than 25 minutes to rush the patient to the ICU ward from the ambulance and the staff ignored to arrange oxygen flow metres for APMIP project director," he reportedly observed. He also issued show-cause notices to the Superintendent Dr. K. Vijaya Bhaskar and two head nurses Mahalakshmi and Rajeswari to reply within 24 hours on the delay in fixing oxygen flow meters at the super-specialty hospital. The hospital authorities were alerted in advance about the critical condition of Subbarayudu and asked to make necessary arrangements to provide emergency medical aid. They even failed to arrange a stretcher, it was pointed out.



With the city witnessing rains for the past few days, thick clouds form in sky over the Unani Hospital in Hyderabad on Sunday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Monsoon rains likely  
to hit state by June 10

Monsoon expected to be normal this year, says Skymet

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Propelled by the influence of Cyclone Tauktae, currently making its way over the Arabian Sea to the Gujarat coast, the southwest monsoon, is expected to ride slightly faster and is expected to arrive in the state in the second week of June.

Typically, the monsoon reaches the Indian mainland around June 1. This year, the Indian meteorological department (IMD) expects the landfall on the Kerala coast, a day earlier, on May 31.

While officials say that it is too early to predict when the monsoon will reach Telangana and

● SKYMET SAID the monsoon would be 'healthy normal' to the tune of 103 per cent (with an error margin of +/- five per cent) of the long period average (LPA) of 880.6mm for the four-month period from June to September.

cover the entire state, given the past data, it could be around June 10, which is normal. This, however, could be different by a few days, either early or late, depending on when the monsoon would make landfall, the officials said.

According to the private weather forecaster Skymet, the cyclone in the Arabian Sea will be

consequential for the advance of the monsoon stream over Indian waters. However, tropical storm Tauktae will vacate the Indian region by May 22, following which the westerly winds – blowing from west to east – and cross-equatorial flow will strengthen over the Arabian Sea.

Skymet said the monsoon would be 'healthy normal' to the tune of 103 per cent (with an error margin of +/- five per cent) of the long period average (LPA) of 880.6mm for the four-month period from June to September. This would make it the third consecutive year of normal or above-normal monsoon.

Now, it has released its monsoon onset date for 2021.

Skymet expects the onset to be around the normal date. Based on the data from 1961-2019, the normal date of onset over Indian mainland is June 1 with a standard deviation of one week.

This also will be assisted by the MJO (Madden Julian Oscillation) entering the Indian Ocean with moderate amplitude. Pre-monsoon showers will be intense and hefty over Kerala. Skymet predicts that this year the onset of south-west monsoon over Kerala is likely to be on May 30 with a model error of plus or minus two days.

RAIN LEAVES  
ROADS IN CITY  
WATER-LOGGEDDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

The state witnessed moderate rainfall in many parts, bringing down mercury levels on Sunday. As of 5.30 pm on Sunday, the highest rainfall was registered at the Dr MCRHRD Institute at Shaikpet followed by Balajinagar in Kukatpally and HMT Hills in Hydernagar. They had received 55.5 mm, 49.3 mm and 47.5 mm of rainfall, respectively.

The enforcement, vigilance and disaster management (EV&DM) teams of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) cleared water-logged streets in the city, in places like Tolichowki, Karwan, Langar House, Jubilee Hills, among other areas.

In a warning issued for the state till May 20, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) said, "Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are very likely to occur at isolated places in the districts of Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Nalgonda, Mahbubabad, Warangal (Rural and Urban), Jangaon, Siddipet, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy and Jogulamba Gadwal.

According to the Director, IMD, Hyderabad, Dr K. Nagarathna the cyclonic storm Tauktae is moving at a speed of 11 kilometres per hour (kmph), and therefore the state would have very less impact.

"But, since the outer bands of the storm extend up to parts of the state, we would witness light to moderate showers. These showers would come coupled with strong gales going up a speed of 30-40 kmph," she said.

According to the IMD's glossary, light rainfall means rainfall amount received in a day between 2.5 and 7.5 mm. Whereas moderate rain means rains amounting to anywhere between 7.6 mm and 35.5 mm.

YSRC rebel MP  
sent to Guntur  
jail after testsDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 16

The AP High Court on Sunday directed the CID to shift YSRC Congress rebel MP K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju to a private hospital (Ramesh Hospitals) for treatment following a CID special court order. The MP is currently lodged in the Guntur district jail.

The CID special court had directed the CID to shift the MP to Ramesh Hospitals for treatment after the completion of medical tests at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Guntur. He was shifted to the jail after completion of the tests that held amidst high security. Reports said a team of specialists at GGH conducted 15 to 18 tests on him.

The MP and his supporters expected to secure bail after submission of the medical report in the High Court by the CID, but the tests took a long time and, by evening, he was shifted to the district prison at Guntur.

Sources said the injuries on the feet of the MP were not due to police third degree action but due to an illness Raju is suffering from.

His lawyers objected to shifting the MP to the Advocate Adinarayana said that the court clearly ordered to shift MP to Ramesh Hospitals for treatment after completion of medical tests at GGH but the CID did not honour the orders and instead shifted him to the jail with an ulte-

rior motive.

The lawyers then informed the High Court about the issue of shifting Raju to the jail and skipping treatment at Ramesh Hospitals, thus violating the court orders. The High Court judges read the report submitted by the GGH medical committee on the health of the MP.

The report clearly stated there were no injuries on the body of the MP and added that he was in perfect health. The High Court then ordered the CID to implement the orders of CID court and shift him to Ramesh Hospitals for treatment.

Additional Advocate General (AAG) P. Sudhakar Reddy said that the High Court had issued orders at 6.40 pm on Saturday, rejecting examination by private doctors and the presence of CRPF security and family members during the tests.

He informed the court that he himself had arranged the GGH medical team. He said that the CID court ordered to send Raju to Ramesh Hospitals at 8.30 pm, which meant its orders came after the orders of High Court. He said that he took the issue to the notice of the CID court. The AAG informed the High Court that the CID court would amend the judgment once the High Court order copy was submitted. He stated that the CID court ordered to upload the judgment copy of the High Court online and said it would be done by the night.

Black fungus kills  
two in KurnoolDC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOL, MAY 16

Black fungus has claimed lives of two Coronavirus patients undergoing treatment at Kurnool Government General Hospital (KGGH) on Sunday. One is aged 35 years from Guntur and the other is a 66 years' old resident of Anantapur, hospital superintendent Dr. G. Narendranath Reddy said.

Explaining the condition of patients who died of black fungus, Dr Narendranath Reddy said their eyes had got swollen and they were in bad condition. He underlined that blood glucose levels in such patients must be monitored frequently and kept within

the range specified by protocols.

Dr C. Prabhakar Reddy, cardiothoracic surgeon, said black fungus is not a new disease. However, incidence of death due to the ailment is one in a million patients. On increased prevalence of black fungus among Covid-19 patients due to steroids, he maintained that use of steroids cannot be discontinued, as they benefit more than causing harm. Even after discharge, such patients have to continue mild steroids.

"But the problem is public not being educated enough about keeping their sugar levels under control," Dr Prabhakar Reddy remarked.

AP records highest  
spike of 24,171 casesDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 16

Andhra Pradesh registered an all-time record of single day Coronavirus infections on Sunday with 24,171 new cases. This is the highest daily number of cases since the spread of Covid-19 in the state on March 24 last year.

The state tested 94,550 samples in which 24,171 were found positive. With this, the total Corona cases has reached 14,35,491 in which 2,10,436 are active cases and the rest of 12,15,683 have been recovered. The total Covid-19 deaths are 9,372. As many as 21,101 patients have recovered in the past 24 hours.

The single day highest number of 3,356 new Corona cases was reported

in Anantapur district followed by Chittoor with 2,885, East Godavari 2,876, West Godavari 2,426, Visakhapatnam 2,041, Guntur 1,787, Kadapa 1,638, Prakasam 1,628, Nellore 1,593 and Srikakulam registered 1,509 new Covid-19 infections. Vizianagaram district reported 997 new infections, Kurnool 730 and Krishna 705.

As many as 101 deaths were reported on Sunday, of which 14 Covid deaths were reported in Anantapur district, followed by Visakhapatnam 11 and Chittoor 10 deaths. Nine new deaths each registered in East Godavari, Guntur and Krishna districts. Vizianagaram reported seven and Kurnool, Prakasam and Srikakulam reported six deaths each.

## COVID | CURBS

Govt mulls move as Covid caseload spurts unabated across AP

## AP likely to go under complete lockdown

MD ILYAS | DC  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 16

The chances of total lockdown are likely in AP with the surge in daily Covid-19 positive cases remaining above 20,000 and in view of more than 20% positivity rate in the second wave.

The state government had imposed a curfew for 18 hours per day from 12 noon to 6 am till May 18 towards containment of Covid-19, but the situation continues to worsen in the state.

The Group of Ministers would take up the issue of

the need for complete lockdown at a meeting on Monday. The Chief Minister will also conduct a review on the day to decide on the tightening of the curfew norms, either by reducing relaxation hours or imposing full lockdown to contain the surge of Covid-19.

According to sources, earlier the Coronavirus infections were found to be higher in urban areas, but currently, the Covid-19 is swiftly spreading to rural areas. It would be a daunting task for the government to contain the pandemic in rural areas

as the medical infrastructure is poor and inadequate. The sources said that the government is considering imposing a full lockdown, allowing only medical, health, essential commodities and emergency services. Curfew may begin at 9 am or 10 am, reducing the hours of relaxation.

As many as 24,171 new Coronavirus cases were registered on Sunday, which is all-time record since the outbreak of Covid-19 in AP 14 months ago. Around 20,000 to 22,000 new Corona infections are being registered

daily for the past few days, which has become a big worry for the government. The AP government imposed the curfew to control the spread of Coronavirus but the surge in cases is continuing every day, as huge crowds are mingling without following any Covid protocols such as wearing face masks or maintaining physical distance, during the relaxation window from 6 am to 12 noon.

The swift increase in Coronavirus cases is worryingly accompanied by a constant positivity rate of over 20 per cent. The apex

medical research body Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommends a lockdown is compulsory if the positivity rate exceeds 10 per cent. In 11 districts in AP, the average positivity rate remains above 20 per cent, with Visakhapatnam, East Godavari and Anantapur districts facing more alarming conditions.

Further, adding to government worries are reports of the ongoing house-to-house fever survey. Alarmingly, 39,000 people have been found to be suffering from fever so far during the survey.



Congress leader A. Revanth Reddy speaks to a Begumpet police officer who stopped him near the Hyderabad Public School on Sunday. — DC

Revanth: Stopped while  
going to distribute aidDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

TPCC working president and Lok Sabha member A. Revanth Reddy left stopped by Begumpet police near Hyderabad Public School on Sunday while proceeding to his Malkajgiri constituency for reportedly distributing food to the needy.

The MP had set out to distribute food packets to doctors, medical staff, Covid patients, their attendants and migrants waiting at railway stations as part of his Coronavirus relief work. He had distributed such relief on Saturday.

On Sunday, however, when Revanth Reddy left home, he was stopped by police near Hyderabad Public School. Begumpet police maintained they have instructions from top not to allow anyone to go outside during lockdown timings.

The MP protested that on one hand the state government has failed in providing food to needy

	<p>भारत सरकार / GOVERNMENT OF INDIA परमाणु ऊर्जा विभाग / DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY नाभिकीय ईंधन संयंत्र / NUCLEAR FUEL COMPLEX ईंजीनियरिंग डिवीजन - हैदराबाद - 500062 / ECIL POST-HYDERABAD-500062</p>	
<p><b>निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना / NOTICE INVITING TENDER</b></p>		
<p>On behalf of President of India General manager Maintenance of Zirconium Group (MZG), sealed item rate tenders are invited from experienced Contractors for the work "Mechanical Preventive Maintenance for EOT Cranes, Hoists &amp; Blowers." at NFC, Hyderabad. Estimated Cost: Rs.13.72 Lakhs Period of work: 12 months, dates of availability of tender document: 17-05-2021 to 31-05-2021. Last date and time of submission of bid: Up to 14.00 hrs on 07-06-2021. The detailed Tender Notice is available in the website www.nfc.gov.in.</p>		
<p>भारत के राष्ट्रपति की ओर से निजीकृत समूह (एनजेडीजी) के महाप्रबन्धक, रखरखाव द्वारा अनुमति केन्द्रों से एनएफसी हैदराबाद में "ईओटी क्रेन्स, होइस्ट्स एवं ब्लोअर्स के यांत्रिक निवारक रखरखाव" हेतु मोडरन मद दर निविदाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं। अनुमानित लागत : रु. 13.72 लाख। कार्य की अवधि : 12 महीने, निविदा प्रपत्र की उपलब्धता की तिथि : 17.05.2021 से 31.05.2021 तक, बिड जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि एवं समय : 07.06.2021 को 14.00 बजे तक। विस्तृत निविदा नोटिस वेबसाइट <a href="http://www.nfc.gov.in">www.nfc.gov.in</a> पर उपलब्ध है। निविदा सं० एनएफसी/एमजेडीजी/एनईसीएच/एमसी/ईओटी होइस्ट्स एवं ब्लोअर्स/2021/01 Tender No. NFC/MZG/MECH/AMC/EOT/HOISTS&amp;BLOWERS/2021/01 महाप्रबंधक, एनजेडीआर General Manager, M-Zr</p>		



DECCAN  
Chronicle  
17 MAY 2021

Covid-19 in India is more  
than a crisis of numbers

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exhortation to states to be transparent with the Covid-19 numbers — mainly about the number of people who test positive and those who fall victim to the virus — could not have come at a more opportune time than now as there have been reports of numbers being fudged by several states, including Gujarat and Delhi. Worse, the officials have still not yet completed counting the bodies of Covid victims floating in the river Ganga even as those bizarre images have created consternation among Indians living in India and abroad.

The world has lived with the virus for one-and-a-half years. Medical science and responsible administrations all over the world have come out of their initial confusion on the ways to deal with the micro-organism, and have developed fairly elaborate treatment protocols. There are also proper guidelines on ways to count a death as a Covid-related one. However, the reports coming from Gujarat inspire little confidence as the number of death certificates issued in the state far outnumber the recorded Covid deaths; it also bears little comparison with the number of total deaths in the previous years, giving room for suspicion that the government has discounted some. Such allegations are not limited to Gujarat; there are states which refuse to list a death under the Covid head once the patient tested negative and then succumbed to medical conditions triggered or exacerbated by the viral infection. Accurate data is critical to the proper analysis of the impact of the pandemic that would guide policymakers and scientists into taking proper decisions. Hence the Prime Minister is right in telling the states that they should be transparent with numbers "without pressure of high numbers showing

**The Prime Minister is right: we should have accurate numbers. Yes, we miss the numbers. But we miss a government more. And it shows.**

adversely on their efforts".

The bodies floating in the holy river points to a deeper malaise. Governmental apathy last year had lakhs of guest workers, women and children included, walking hundreds of kilometres to their homes after losing their livelihoods in the cities in the aftermath of the national lockdown. There was no government to help them out, and hundreds of Indians died on the road. The government, in fact, has no data on them. They presented this nation with images that generations will remember with a sense of shame and guilt.

A repeat of what Indian roads saw last year is happening on its rivers now. Villagers with infected lungs that disallowed them to breathe could not get oxygen, a hospital bed, a shot of life-saving drug and die helpless deaths. Their bodies are flung in the waters, as relatives have no wherewithal, financial and otherwise, to attend to the dead and accord them a decent farewell. The bodies of Indians float, or caught in the current, or stuck in the rocks or nibbled by crows and vultures. What we miss is the presence of a government, central and state, mandated to protect the right to life, guaranteed by the Constitution. All we need is a government that is willing to do a minimum job.

The Prime Minister is right: we should have accurate numbers. Yes, we miss the numbers. But we miss a government more. And it shows.

Bengal Gov. must follow norms

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's public observations in the context of post-poll violence in the state appear to be a bundle of contradictions. Last Friday, visiting Dhubri district in Assam, where according to him 175 people from his state fled to be safe from post-poll violence, Mr Dhankhar expressed "concern" that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had maintained "silence" on this issue and on the subject of post-poll violence as such. He noted at the same time, "I should not say much as the cases are under investigation."

Well, if the cases are being investigated, then the CM has clearly not been silent. So, where is the misdemeanour on her part that the governor darkly hints at? Without a shred of evidence, and when investigation is on, the governor seems to have done his best to give a communal touch to the violence. This is a matter of record and deserves to be discussed in the state legislature.

If the Governor's numerous observations were to be placed before a commission of inquiry, it might become amply clear that the burden of his song is that law and order does not exist in the state and that the constitutional machinery has broken down. If such is indeed his extraordinary reading, it is not clear what prevents him from reporting exactly this to the Centre, and recommending President's rule.

It is noteworthy that Mr Dhankhar, although a Constitutional head with severely circumscribed authority except the discretionary powers to appoint a CM, has been touring various parts of the state to study first-hand the post-poll violence situation. He has visited Cooch Behar and Nandigram. His most unusual Assam visit was also in the same context.

The state government frowned on these trips (when an inquiry is on). These did not deter him. For a Governor, to make repeated forays into the countryside is unconventional, to say the least. It is akin to the role that Opposition parties, journalists, and NGOs play. In a formal communication, the Chief Secretary has now urged Mr Dhankhar to desist from further trips since the state has just been placed under a lockdown to deal with Covid. It is to be seen if the Governor's wanderlust gets the better of constitutional propriety.

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Sanjaya Baru  
Sanjayovacha



The mango as a  
metaphor: The  
pluralism of our  
palate & politics

For the second year in a row Covid-19 has disrupted India's mango exports to the United States because the two governments have not been able to devise a solution to the problem of securing US government clearance of export consignments. India's mango exports to the US were the fruit of prolonged negotiations that finally came to fruition as part of the new strategic partnership inaugurated by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

In June 2007 I was presented with the opportunity of handing over the first basket of mangoes legally imported into the United States to then US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice at the annual meeting of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) in Washington D.C. I insisted that the USIBC include in the basket that I was to hand over to Ms Rice at least ten different varieties of mangoes, and not just the most popular export variety — Alphonso or Hapus.

While presenting the basket I said to Ms Rice that it represented India's national motto — unity in diversity. Every Indian regards the mango as the "king of fruits", I told her, but each In-

dian has his/her own favourite variety, and most of us can get very argumentative about which is the best variety.

The diversity in the subcontinent's preference for its favourite fruit is a metaphor for an India that is home to around 1,500 varieties of mangoes. While Maharashtra's Alphonso and Gujarat's Kesar dominate the export basket, other varieties like Andhra Pradesh's Banganapalli and Uttar Pradesh's Langra are also being increasingly marketed around the country and exported overseas.

But the immensely popular mango is not the only edible symbol of unity in diversity. Consider the case of the biryani. The social media has seen from time to time animated arguments about which is the best biryani among biryani aficionados and the authority of food columnists has often been summoned to pass judgement. Yet, between the biryani of Malabar, Bengal, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Chettinad and a dozen other places, it is difficult to select the best.

In the larger discussion on India's plurality and diversity, the culinary preferences of over a billion and a quarter people does not get the attention it deserves.

Just as most Indians who agree that democracy is the best form of governance would have sharp differences on which political party they would support in the interests of preserving that democracy, most of us would be united in our view that Indian food is the tastiest in the world, and yet argue about which part of India offers the most scrumptious cuisine. Unity in diversity is written into our social and cultural DNA.

Foreigners used to imagining that Indian food is tandoori chicken and mattar paneer or dosa and sambar are always surprised by the diversity of what Indian kitchens can conjure up. From imagining that there is something called Indian cuisine, they slowly get used to the idea that there may well be a north, east and south Indian cuisine. But when they discover that "Rayalaseema ruchulu" can be very different from "Telangana vantakalu", they give up looking for a common thread.

I have so far made a series of fairly obvious observations. Who would disagree with any of these statements? If we are a land of 1,500 mangoes, we are also the land of 15,000 gods and goddesses and 150,000 local deities. While

the Constitution recognises 22 official languages, close to 20,000 languages and dialects are spoken as the mother tongue across the subcontinent.

The miracle of Indian democracy and development is that despite this diversity the country has remained united and the roots of national unity now run deep into the soil of Mother India. Against this background, the desperate attempts by certain political elements to impose one religion, one language, one election on this diversity is an insult to the national imagination and an affront to our national personality. It is, therefore, not surprising that the resistance to the "Hindu-Hindi-Hindustan" project has most recently been asserted by a clutch of regional political parties in the non-Hindi-speaking states.

The electoral victory of the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal and the DMK in Tamil Nadu are only recent examples. They remind those who need reminding that diversity has never been India's weakness. Rather, it is its strength since it prevents the emergence of majoritarian authoritarianism.

If there is one lesson that the present political leadership in New Delhi

should re-learn, it is that India cannot be governed as if it was a land of homogeneity. Unity is rarely imposed on a nation from the outside. It is the product of shared values, interests, culture and experience.

No Indian has to be commanded to love the mango. That love is second nature to us. No Indian can be commanded to love just one variety of the mango. That assertion of independent thinking too is second nature to us.

There is much that political and religious leaders can learn from the preferences of the Indian palate. The national popularity of a dosa and a tandoori naan has not been imposed on us by any overbearing political philosophy of national unity. They have become popular across the length and breadth of the subcontinent because, like the majestic mango, we have all come to like their taste. We have our own favourite biryani and we love our own language, but we recognise that we belong to one nation.

*The writer is an economist, a best-selling author and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. His latest book is India's Power Elite: Class, Caste and a Cultural Revolution.*

Subhani



Israel's brutality in Gaza  
has dented heroic image



Mohan  
Guruswamy

The ongoing Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip is horrific in its ferocity and far exceeds any limits of justifiable and even acceptable retribution. There was once an image of the Israelis being a people of heroic dimensions and sterling character forged by the many tyrannies that the Jewish diaspora have suffered, including the industrial scale programme of extermination by Nazi Germany.

The founding of the State of Israel held out the promise of a new nation that, being tempered by their experiences and motivated by the high idealism of its founders, would give the world something to look up to. It was this idealism that inspired India to be among the first three nations to recognise Israel.

The first generations of Israeli leadership, drawn from the European Jewry known as the "Ashkenazim", were generally liberal and progressive. This was seen in early Israel when most agriculture was under cooperative farming organised around the kibbutz, which also entailed a communal (sharing) lifestyle.

The Histadrut, the labour union, which was the bedrock of the Labour Party and political movement led by Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, was also Israel's biggest employer and owned much of its transportation, dairy, construction and services sectors. Israel was intended as a progressive, socialist and democratic state. It has moved along quite a bit away from that now.

During the initial years of its existence, Israel heroically defied the odds and many writers like the late Leon Uris captured this new promised spirit of the Israeli people. His 600-page masterpiece *Exodus* created a sensation in 1957 and

propelled him to the highest literary fame. It was a detailed and heroic chronicle of European Jewry from the turn of the last century to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

*Exodus*, while being the epic story of a nation seeking a state, was also the touching love story of Ari Ben Canaan, an Israeli freedom fighter, and Kitty Fremont, an American nurse who joins Canaan's fight for a Jewish state.

In 1958, after it became one of the most popular novels of the century, *Exodus* was made into a film by Otto Preminger and featured Paul Newman as Canaan. It was probably the first time that Hollywood had portrayed a Jewish man in such heroic dimensions. The book and the movie contributed to the mythologising of the Israeli fighter as an indomitable and idealistic hero.

But it is not that Israel lacked such men those days. The founders of the Palmach, the elite strike force of the Haganah that was the forerunner of the Israeli Defence Forces, were men like Moshe Dayan, Haim Bar Lev, Ezer Weizmann, Yigael Yadin, Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Allon, who were all men of heroic proportions and each one could have been a prototype for Canaan.

But it was Yigal Allon who came closest of all to it. Allon, who died in 1980, began life as a Haganah field commander in 1936 when he was just 18 years old. In 1941 he was one of the founders of the Palmach, the Haganah's commando-style strike unit. In 1948 he was made a lieutenant-general and commanded Israeli forces in the south that "liberated" the Negev in what became to be known as the War of Independence. He retired from the IDF in 1950, at the ripe old age of 32.

In 1960, Allon went to Oxford's St. Anthony's

College to study international relations. He later entered public life and became deputy prime minister in 1967 and devoted himself to seeking a durable peace with the Palestinians.

The Haganah was founded in 1920 as the underground military organisation of the Jewish *Yishuv*, or community, and was then a loose organisation of various local defence groups. The Palmach was its first mobilised unit, gained battle experience in the Second World War as the Jewish Brigade under British command. The Palmach consisted of many first generation "Sabra", or Palestine-born Israelis, who were also fluent Arabic speakers, which gave it the ability remain concealed among the Arab population and to wage a lethal unconventional war on them.

The British learned as much from this experience. Captain Orde Wingate, who later led the famous Chindits Brigade in Burma, learned his art of fighting from the Palmach. Wingate was a charismatic dreamer who, though a Christian, had joined the Jewish movement and led the joint British-Haganah's Special Night Squad which fought in Ethiopia. Wingate's African experience found expression in Burma and its successes led all traditional armies to establish special warfare forces to give them similar deep strike capabilities.

The combination of unconventional warfare by the British SAS and US Special Forces and deep and precision air strikes by modern fighter and bomber aircraft in Afghanistan has now given

**The continued occupation of the West Bank since 1967 and the continued building of settlements in defiance of UN resolutions and in the face of world opinion are ugly and contemptuous manifestations of a narrow nationalism**

modern warfare a new dimension. Of the three battalions who formed the original Chindits Brigade, the 2/4 Gurkha Rifles is still with the Indian Army and carries the Chindits tag with great pride. Wingate was born in Nainital in 1901 and died in Manipur in 1944.

The Israeli Defence Forces' heroic sheen has now largely dissipated with its emergence as a mighty army with the latest weapons and America's unstinted support. It is now no longer David with a slingshot facing mighty Goliath. In the four major wars that it has fought, the IDF had worsted numerically superior Arab armies with ease. It is difficult to remain a heroic David against such adversaries for long.

The Palestinian intifada is now the heroic struggle of a people seeking to find their identity and their freedom. Just like Israel was before 1948.

The atrocities during the War of Independence can even be justified by the fact that there was a war declared on the Jewish State by all its Arab neighbours, Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and supported by the entire Arab world. The moth-eaten Israel mandated by the UN was not tenable in terms of security, and addition of territory to gain security could have even been justified.

But the continued occupation of the West Bank since 1967 and the continued building of settlements in defiance of UN resolutions and in the face of world opinion are ugly and contemptuous manifestations of a narrow nationalism.

Israel is no longer the valiant and beleaguered underdog, but increasingly seen as an increasingly arrogant oppressor seeking to crush another old nation under its jackboots. The sad truth about Israel is that Benjamin Netanyahu is fact and Ari Ben Canaan is fiction.

*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

MENTAL HEALTH

In the middle of chaos, where all of us are suffering, it's really important to invest some time on our mental health. First thing is to stay positive and stick to positive news. Secondly, workout and meditate on a regular basis. It helps improve a person's mental well-being. It is also essential to spend time with family. We must call our dearest friends and give them mental support. Instead of sticking to our rooms, we must try to get some sunlight and fresh air.

Aishwarya Gunupuru  
Hyderabad

LOCKDOWN

Despite strict lockdown in Telangana state, people are moving freely on roads. It surprises me that police are not as active like last year. The purpose of lockdown fails when it is not implemented in the true spirit. Hence, the onus rests on authorities to enforce strict lockdown. Citizens must also act as per directions of government to break the chain of Covid-19. The economy and people are going to be affected.

G. Thirupathiah  
Hyderabad

STOPPING AMBULANCE

Stopping ambulances with Covid-19 patients at the state borders is unfortunate (*Court: Do not stop Covid ambulances, DC, May 15*). Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao should recall his words "Let us divide ourselves like brothers but remain united as a family" during the separate state agitation. The issue can be settled amicably through discussions. Where there is will, there is way.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao  
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN  
Chronicle

Ceiling an urban  
property

LUDHIANA, May 16. Communications Minister H.N. Bahuguna today said that ceiling would be imposed "soon" on urban property and that the only question before the Government was whether it should be decided by the Union or the State Government.



## SHORT TAKES

## KEEP RATION SHOPS OPEN ON ALL DAYS: CENTRE

**New Delhi, May 16:** The Centre on Sunday asked the state governments to keep ration shops, also called fair price shops, open for a longer duration and on all days to ensure timely and safe distribution of both subsidised and free foodgrains to the poor.

An advisory in this regard has been issued by the Union Food Ministry following representations that during the current lockdown in some states/UTs, ration shops' timings have been curtailed due to which the intended beneficiaries might not be getting adequate time to lift their entitled foodgrains.

"In view of ongoing lockdown in some States/UTs, that may curtail the functioning hours of Fair Price Shop (FPS), an advisory has been issued on 15th May, 2021...to keep the FPSs open, preferably on all days of the month," the ministry said in a statement.

The Centre is distributing highly monthly subsidised foodgrains of 5 kg per person at ₹1-3 per kg via ration shops to over 80 crore poor under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Over and above this, additional 5kg of free grains are being distributed to the same beneficiaries under the PMGKAY (Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana) scheme for two months — May-June in order to minimise economic hardships being faced by the NFSA beneficiaries during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## ANTI-COVID DRUG 2-DG TO BE RELEASED TODAY

**New Delhi, May 16:** The first batch of anti-Covid drug 2-DG, developed by the DRDO, will be released on Monday by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, officials said.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DGCI) has approved the oral drug for emergency use as an adjunct therapy in moderate to severe coronavirus patients, the defence ministry said earlier this month.

The officials said the first batch of the drug will be released by the two ministers at an event at the headquarters of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) here.

The ministry, on May 8, said the clinical trials of the drug, 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG), showed that it helps in a faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces supplemental oxygen dependence.

The approval of the drug has come at a time when India is grappling with a record-breaking wave of the coronavirus pandemic that has stretched the country's healthcare infrastructure to its limit.

"In the ongoing second Covid-19 wave, a large number of patients are facing severe oxygen dependency and need hospitalisation. The drug is expected to save precious lives due to the mechanism of its operation in the infected cells. This also reduces the hospital stay of Covid-19 patients," the ministry had said.

## PURI JAGANATH TEMPLE CLOSED TILL JUNE 15

**Puri, May 16:** Keeping in view the surge of Covid-19 cases in Odisha and also in Puri, the authorities of the temple of Lord Jagannath in the pilgrim town on Sunday announced that the 12th century would remain out of bounds for the public till June 15. The famous temple is closed for the devotees since May 5 as a state-wide lockdown was imposed by the Odisha government.

The Shree Jagannatha Temple Administration made the decision to keep the temple closed for people till June 15 at a review meeting chaired by SJTA Chief Administrator Dr Krishan Kumar and attended by Puri Collector Samarth Verma. The administration of the temple in Puri is under the law department of the state government and the SJTA, which is responsible for management of the shrine, is headed by a senior IAS officer.

It was also decided at the meeting to review the standard operating procedure from time to time, keeping in view the evolving situation. Though members of the temple will not be allowed to enter the temple, all the age-old rituals of the deities continue with the help of servitors and the temple administration officials, Kumar said.



A deserted view of the Howrah Bridge during the first day of the ongoing Covid induced lockdown in Kolkata on Sunday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY



Health workers wearing PPE wait to admit a Covid-19 patient upon his arrival at a newly constructed 500 ICU beds Covid-19 care centre at Ramilla maidan opposite LNJP hospital in New Delhi, on Sunday. —PTI

## Centre issues new SoPs to fight Covid

Modi directs states to intensify the vaccination drive to cover the population as soon as possible

VINEETA PANDEY | DC

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

With daily cases of Covid-19 still very high, several states have extended lockdowns to check the spread of the second wave and high fatalities due to it. It is expected these lockdowns, which to some extent have helped in breaking the speed of the virus' spread in parts of the country, will now continue till the positivity rate comes down to around five per cent.

Delhi, Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday announced that they were extending the lockdown for another week, while Himachal Pradesh extended it till May 26 and Punjab till the end of the month. Many more are going the same way as the country on Sunday registered 3.11 lakh new Covid-19 cases and 4,077 deaths. Though the decline in cases may give some sense of relief to the Centre and state governments and the battered healthcare system, it is the rise in deaths that remains a major cause of worry as the fatalities are believed to be much more than reported or documented.

Dead bodies, possibly of Covid-19 patients, have been found floating in rivers and buried in the sands along the banks of rivers in several parts of northern India. The government has now asked local administration to prevent the dumping of bodies in rivers and banks.

With the spread of Covid infections now getting deeper into rural areas,



A nomad woman walks with her horse along the deserted Dal Lake during strict lockdown imposed in Jammu and Kashmir by Government administration to contain the surge in Covid-19 cases, in Srinagar, on Sunday. — PTI

The Centre has issued guidelines on the containment and management of infections in semi-urban, rural and tribal areas that have much fewer means to detect, contain and treat the deadly virus. The districts have been asked to set up a dedicated testing centre in each village to increase surveillance and testing, have Covid Care Centres in blocks and districts must have dedicated Covid hospitals. All mild patients have to be kept in home isolation with proper monitoring.

Since tribal communities are geographically and socio-economically relatively segregated and have poor access to health care, the SOP suggests strengthening community-based management through Gram Sabha and having Mobile Medical Units

(MMUs) that have medical officers, pharmacists, staff nurses and lab technicians. This team will also carry out Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT), take samples for RT-PCR, provide treatment for mild illness, and help establish referral linkage with district health care centres. It has been advised to utilise telemedicine and teleconsultation to bridge the geographical inaccessibility in tribal areas.

Patients, their contacts and suspected cases have to be closely monitored for oxygen levels and lung infection. The SOP prescribes home isolation for mild cases to be managed with paracetamol, and if needed other drugs like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as Naproxen or ibuprofen. In mild cases, if symptoms

persist beyond seven days (persistent high-grade fever/ worsening cough) low dose oral steroids — dexamethasone 6 mg/Methylprednisolone 32mg — can be used. For moderate cases, Tab Ivermectin or HCQ, inhalational Budesonide can be given. Anticoagulation shall also be provided.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday held a meeting with the chief ministers of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Puducherry to review the Covid situation. The states have been asked to intensify the vaccination drive to cover the population as soon as possible. The priority has to be given to 45-plus people who are going for their second dose.

In several parts of the

country nearly no vaccinations took place Sunday as vaccine stocks ran out. However, the vaccines are likely to be easily available in the coming week as the CoWIN app has been recalibrated to reflect the dose interval of Covishield vaccines from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks. However, the Centre said already booked online appointments for the second Covishield dose will remain valid and are not being cancelled by CoWIN, though beneficiaries are advised to reschedule appointments for the second dose in alignment with the enhanced duration between the two doses. The arrival of the second consignment of Russian vaccine Sputnik V is also expected to boost the availability of the vaccines.

## Cyclone: Vaccination drive on hold

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC

MUMBAI, MAY 16

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has cancelled Covid vaccination scheduled on Monday in view of the IMD alert regarding cyclone Tauktae. The BMC on Saturday night shifted 580 patients from jumbo Covid facilities to state and civic-run hospitals in Mumbai. The IMD has said there is likelihood of heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places in Mumbai on Monday. An orange alert has been issued for Mumbai and red alert for Raigad district in Maharashtra.

As per Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) warning the Cyclonic storm Tauktae is

likely to pass close to Mumbai city.

The Mumbai civic body has also informed that the revised schedule will be Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (May 18 to May 20). According to the IMD, cyclone Tauktae has intensified into a "very severe cyclonic storm" and is expected to reach the Gujarat coast in the evening hours of May 17 and cross it with wind gusts of up to 175 kmph (109 mph) between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district around the early Tuesday morning.

The BMC had already suspended the inoculation drive on May 15 and 16 to avoid troubles for people due to the heavy rain and windstorm ahead of cyclone Tauktae.

## UDDHAV URGES FAMILY PHYSICIANS TO JOIN STATE'S COVID-19 FIGHT

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC

MUMBAI, MAY 16

In a bid to make a fight against the Coronavirus pandemic more comprehensive, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has appealed to the family physicians in the state to lend a hand in treating the Covid-19 patients, who are under home isolation.

He has also requested the private doctors to extend their services in the Covid care centres in their vicinity.

"Nearly 70 to 75 per cent coronavirus patients are asymptomatic and undergo treatment by staying in

home isolation. It makes the role of family physicians very important as they can help in managing the treatment protocols of these patients more effectively," said Mr Thackeray on Sunday.

He was addressing an online medical conference on Covid treatment, which was attended by nearly 17,500 private medical practitioners across the state. The conference was a part of Maharashtra Government's Majha Doctor (My Doctor) initiative launched with an aim of involving family doctors in the state's fight against the Coronavirus.

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC

KOLKATA, MAY 16

In an unprecedented outburst, heavyweights Trinamul Congress MLA Madan Mitra raised his voice against the rampant sale of emergency requirements — from oxygen cylinders to Remdesivir to hospital beds — for Covid-19 patients in West Bengal at exorbitant black market rates.

Though the former state transport minister did not name the brains behind the illegal business of profiteering, his explosive claims are bound to cause an embarrassment to party supreme Mamata Banerjee as she is not only the chief minister but the state's health minister too. Mr Mitra's high-voltage allegations came days after he failed to get a berth in Ms Banerjee's third Cabinet despite his victory by a good margin over Raju Banerjee of the

BJP at Kamarhati, where he had lost to Manas Mukherjee of the CPI(M) in 2016.

On Facebook Live Saturday, the TMC MLA said: "On one hand oxygen, which saves life, and Remdesivir and steroids, which are life-saving drugs, are sold in the black market while on the other, beds are unavailable in the hospitals. I know such nursing homes, which I do not want to name, charging anything in between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 1.5 lakhs per bed."

He added: "In the name of treatment on a ventilator, a patient is shown getting the facility only when his family members come to visit him. As soon as they leave, the patient is shifted to the general ward. Even after brain death, it is said ECMO has been underway, the patient is on life support, ventilator, etc."

## Edamalakkudy, the first tribal panchayat where there is zero positive cases

## Kerala tribals face Covid by 'self lockdown'

**Idukki (Ker), May 16:** Confining himself to his forest hamlet isolating from the outside world seems to be a non-issue for Rajesh, a tribal youth living in Oonjampara, a settlement located over five kms away from Marayur here. If anyone asks if he is not missing his frequent trips to the nearby town these days, he has a clear but sure answer: "This isolation is for our well-being only...to keep this disease away. Isn't it?" This wisdom has helped a section of forest dwellers in this

hill district to keep Covid-19 at bay in their hamlets, at a time when the entire country is reeling under its second wave.

Long before the government clamped lockdown officially, they were confined to their fringe hamlets isolating themselves to ensure that no one among them got infected. They come out of the shelter of forests only rarely to collect essential articles, baby food and medicines.

They were also not hesitant to request the outsiders including police

● **HEALTH AND FOREST** department officials are constantly monitoring the situations and conducting periodic health checks in these settlements.

and health workers to ensure that they are not carriers of the virus while visiting them. Edamalakkudy, the first tribal panchayat of the state located about 30 kms away from the tourist town Munnar here, is the only panchayat in the southern state now where there is

zero positive case, thanks to the self isolation.

A habitation of Muthuvann community, around 3,000 people, belonging to over 750 families are living in more than 25 settlements in this village. Located inside the Munnar forest division, the remote hamlet, having no proper road or other connectivity, has now become a model for the entire world outside to emulate in their fight against the pandemic.

Besides Edamalakkudy, the inhabitants of Koodalkattukudy, a tribal

ward in Marayur panchayat, have also succeeded in keeping their settlements Covid free so far through self-isolation.

Located about five kms away from Marayur, there are over 1,300 tribals, belonging to 500 families of Muthuvann and Hill Pulaya community, living in 9 settlements in this panchayat ward. If 'oorukootam', the tribal council, of Edamalakkudy had decided to adopt self-isolation when the first wave of Covid-19 hit the country, the dwellers of

Koodalkattukudy isolated themselves from the outside world from the beginning of this April.

Health and Forest department officials are constantly monitoring the situations and conducting periodic health checks in these settlements. Twenty-five-year old Rajesh, belonging to Oonjampara settlement of Koodalkattukudy, said everyone, cutting across all age groups, are diligently obeying the directives of the tribal council to follow self-isolation. —PTI



## SHORT TAKES

CASES OF THEFT  
SEEN AT MUMBAI'S  
COVID FACILITIESSHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, MAY 16

Kin of an elderly covid patient on Sunday morning complained on her Twitter account that her father's mobile phone got stolen in the night when he was being shifted to general ward.

According to her tweet, phones of two other patients also got stolen. However, when contacted MIDC police station on phone the policeman was clueless about the same and said no complaint has been registered with them. “@mybmc @MumbaiPolice yesterday they shifted him in general ward and last night someone robbed his phone. We tried calling on his number, the number is still on that's why we went to MIDC police station Andheri East. (K East ward),” Ankita Pangerkar posted on her twitter handle.

Even though the MIDC police expressed ignorance, one of Pangerkar's tweets said they visited the police station. “@mybmc @MumbaiPolice yesterday they shifted him (Ankita's father) in general ward and last night someone robbed his phone. We tried calling on his number, the number is still on that's why we went to MIDC police station Andheri East. (K East ward),” she said.

Replying to another tweet she said her father was in BMC-run Seven Hills hospital and last night around 1.30am he realised his phone was missing.

GROOM DIES OF  
VIRUS FIVE DAYS  
AFTER WEDDING

**Kendrapara, May 16:** A 26-year-old man died due to Covid-19 days after his wedding in Odishas Kendrapara district, prompting the authorities to conduct coronavirus tests on the attendees of the marriage ceremony, as fears mount of it turning into a super spreader.

Sanjay Kumar Nayak, a native of Durgadevipada village, under the jurisdiction of Rajkanika police station, had got married on May 10.

Nayak, who had returned from Bengaluru for his marriage, developed flu-like symptoms and tested positive for Covid-19 on May 13.

Initially, he was in home isolation but after his condition worsened, he was admitted to a private hospital in Bhubaneswar, where he succumbed to the infection on May 15, medical officer of the Community Health Center (CHC) of Rajkanika, Bibek Rout, said.

A medical team rushed to Durgadevipada village on Sunday and collected samples of the family members of the deceased, including that of the bride.

Investigations are on to ascertain how many people attended the wedding and to trace their contacts.

“A special medical camp has been set up in the village to test other people for Covid-19 as we are apprehensive of the wedding function turning into a super spreader,” he added.

UP: 22-YEAR-OLD  
MAN RAPES  
MINOR GIRL

**Banda (UP), May 16:** A 22-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly raping a minor girl here, police said on Sunday.

Additional Superintendent of Police, Mahendra Pratap Singh Chauhan, said the four-year-old girl was raped by the man, her neighbour, on Saturday night.

He said the accused left the girl in an unconscious state and fled the spot, adding that the man was arrested on Sunday.

The girl was admitted to a government hospital in a serious condition but her condition has improved, he said.

In another incident, the police arrested three men for allegedly raping a 20-year-old woman in the state's Sonbhadra district, officials said.

The woman was raped when she had gone to a temple in Dhartidanh jungle here with her fiancé, they said.

Superintendent of Police, Sonbhadra, Amrendra Prasad Singh said the three men who had come to cut wood allegedly caught the woman took her to a deserted place and raped her.

The father of the girl lodged a complaint late on Saturday night after which a case was registered.



Police personnel lathi charge on farmers during their protest, after they try to breach the police barricading in Hisar on Sunday. — PTI

Police lob tear gas, use  
force on farmers in Hisar

Khattar inaugurates 500-bed Covid hospital amid stir

**Hisar, May 16:** Police here on Sunday lobbed tear gas shells and used force to disperse a group of farmers who tried to march towards the venue where Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had gone to inaugurate a Covid hospital. Many people were injured in the violent clash. Khattar inaugurated a 500-bed Covid hospital on a school premises and had left the venue just before the protest took a violent turn.

The farmers were stopped before they could reach the venue, police said. They allegedly jumped police barricades after which police used force and lobbed tear gas shells.

While farmers claimed that over 50 of them sustained injuries in what they alleged was a police lathicharge, an official spokesperson said over 20 policemen, including a DSP and five police-women, were also injured. Police claimed some farmers pelted them with

● **A POLICE spokesperson said the protesters broke metal barricade installed on a canal bridge and threw it into the canal. After this, the protesters attacked DSP Abhimanyu Lohan, the spokesperson said.**

stones when they tried to stop them. Five police vehicles were also damaged by the protesters, they said.

The incident took place when the farmers, who have been protesting against the Centre's new farm laws, started proceeding towards Hisar from the Ramayan toll plaza to stage a protest against Khattar, who was to inaugurate a 500-bed Covid hospital there. Police detained some agitators, including women. Police claimed they were marching towards the hospital to create obstructions in the chief minister's event. Haryana DGP Manoj Yadava said, “I appreciate the patience and bravery displayed

today by police personnel, in confronting the unruly mob and saving the newly inaugurated Sanjeevani Covid hospital at Hisar from damage.”

“Each of the injured police personnel will be given ₹5,000 for their diet and medical needs,” he said. Later in the evening, farmers leaders said they will not hold teshil and district-level protests on Monday in Haryana and UP after the police authorities agreed to release those detained.

“An agreement has been reached between farmers and police administration. The protest programme in Haryana and UP will not happen. All those detained are being released,” BKU leader Rakesh Tikait told reporters here. Farmers are protesting against the Centre's new farm laws since late November and have been opposing public functions of BJP-JJP leaders in the state. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmers' unions spearheading the stir against

the farm laws, earlier in the day condemned the “brutal assault” on the protesters.

A police spokesperson said the protesters broke metal barricade installed on a canal bridge and threw it into the canal. After this, the protesters attacked DSP Abhimanyu Lohan, the spokesperson said.

Thereafter, some protesters started entering the Chaudhary Devi Lal Sanjivani Hospital complex set up at Jindal Modern School. At this place, the miscreants also tried to run a tractor over policemen, leaving some of them injured, the spokesperson said. “The miscreants have also damaged five police vehicles,” he said. “Surprisingly, even after the conclusion of the hospital's inauguration programme, they tried to enter the premises where the treatment of coronavirus-infected has started today,” he said, adding many of them had intention to commit violence on a large scale. — PTI

DIGNITY OF THE  
DEAD SHOULD BE  
UPHELD: GEHLOT

**Jaipur, May 16:** Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot expressed anguish over the dead bodies found dumped in Ganga and Yamuna rivers, saying such reports were distressing and the dignity of the dead should be upheld.

Gehlot said the state government already took some necessary steps, includes free ambulances for coronavirus patients and arrangement of last rites of those who died due to Covid.

He said responsibility of performing last rites of those with dignity had been given to local bodies and the state government allotted a fund for this purpose.

Gehlot said district collectors had been given rights to acquire private ambulances to for giving free services.

● **GEHLOT SAID the state govt already took some necessary steps.**

SC to hear plea against  
NCB chief after 4 weeks

**New Delhi, May 16:** The Supreme Court would hear after four weeks a plea by a dentist who has challenged the Delhi High Court order dismissing his petition seeking directions to the Centre, Central Vigilance Commission and CBI to probe and launch prosecution on his complaint against Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) chief Rakesh Asthana.

The plea against the high court's order came up for hearing on May 13 before a bench of Justices U U Lalit and B R Gavai. “At the request of the counsel for the petitioner, the matter is adjourned for four weeks,” the bench said in its May 13 order. The high court had on

February 15 dismissed the plea filed by Chandigarh resident Dr Mohit Dhawan, who had sought directions to the Centre, CVC and CBI to investigate and launch criminal prosecution on his complaint against Asthana.

The high court had rejected the plea with a cost of ₹ 20,000 to be paid by the petitioner in favour of the Delhi High Court Legal Services Committee.

In his plea filed in the apex court, Dhawan has claimed that the high court had erred in not appreciating that CVC has failed in “dispensing its constitutional duty” cast upon it by its “disappointing act of total inaction by just sitting over” the crim-

inal complaint submitted by him against the senior IPS officer under the provision of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The plea alleged that the high court had not appreciated that both the CVC and CBI have failed to adjudicate upon the criminal complaints filed by the petitioner.

The dentist had earlier moved the apex court seeking directions to investigate and launch criminal prosecution against Asthana, who also heads the BSF, on the basis of his allegations. However, he had on February 8 withdrawn the plea from the apex court and said that he would approach the high court to pursue the remedy. —PTI

## Strawberry season



Farmers pack strawberries that were harvested inside their farm during the ongoing lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19, on the outskirts in Srinagar, on Sunday. Strawberry is the first fruit that grows after six months of harsh winter in Kashmir and is supplied to various parts of north India including Delhi. The farmers said there was good yield of strawberry but due to the closure of markets owing to the lockdown, they feared losses as they would not be able to transport the crop to outside Valley in view of the restrictions. — PTI

Anti-Israel stir:  
17 freed in J&KYUSUF JAMEEL | DC  
SRINAGAR, MAY 16

Kashmiri graffiti artist Mudasir Gul who was arrested by the police on Friday for painting the face of a sobbing woman wearing the Palestine flag as the headscarf and writing ‘We are Palestine’ on a steel platform next to an overhead water tank in Srinagar's Padshahi Bagh was released on Sunday.

The artist's arrest had drawn flak from various political parties and also evoked widespread anger on social media.

The officials said that 17 other Srinagar boys who were arrested by the police for participating in anti-Israel protests on Friday in violation of restrictions in force in the summer capital as part of the ‘corona curfew’ clamped in entire J&K in the last week of April to contain the surge of the deadly virus too have been handed over to their parents after “proper counselling”.

The police said, “During the counselling, family members of the boys were advised to take proper care of their wards and keep a watch upon their activities, actions and behaviour.”

The witnesses had said

that 32-year-old Gul drew the graffiti amid chanting of anti-Israel slogans by an impromptu crowd and subsequently some angry youth put several Palestine flags atop the platform crisscrossing a passageway. Local sources had said that it was a group of youth of Padshahi Bagh who “feeling disturbed and highly passionate over the mayhem caused by the Israeli forces in Gaza Strip” had persuaded Gul to draw the graffiti.

However, later in the evening, the police visited Gul's home and, his elder brother Badr-ul-Islami was quoted by kashmirwalla.com portal saying that they forced him to deface the graffiti by spreading patches of black paint over it and then took him along.

The police overnight also raided several homes in Padshahi Bagh and arrested several local youth who had reportedly participated in the anti-Israel protest. Gul on Sunday afternoon returned to a warm welcome in his locality after the release.

The J&K police early Saturday also detained a Muslim cleric Sarjan Barkati from southern Shopian district.

TIGRESS FOUND  
DEAD AT PANNA  
RESERVE IN MP

**Bhopal, May 16:** A radio-collared tigress was found dead in Madhya Pradesh's Panna Tiger Reserve, a senior forest official said on Sunday. This is the fourth tiger death reported from the state in 10 days.

The carcass of the tigress, identified as P-213 (32), was found on Saturday in Gahrighat range of the Panna Tiger Reserve, located over 350 km from Bhopal, the official said. The tigress was spotted with swelling in its left leg on May 12, he said, adding the feline was then tranquillised and later released after being provided medical treatment. On Saturday, forest officials reached the spot after getting information about the carcass. They did not find any illegal activity there, the official said.

The tigress seems to have died of natural causes, he said. After the autopsy, the carcass was disposed of as per guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), he added. Earlier, the decomposed carcass of a tiger was found in a buffer zone of the Bandhavgarh reserve in MP on Friday.

On May 8, a tiger was found dead in the state's Kanha Tiger Reserve. Besides, a dead sub-adult tiger (aged between 18 and 24 months) was found floating in a canal of an inter-state water project in Balaghat's Waraseoni tehsil on May 7, officials said.

Madhya Pradesh is home to a number of tiger reserves, including Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Pench, Satpura and Panna. The state had regained the top position in the 2018 census with a population of 526 tigers. — PTI

● **THE TIGRESS was spotted with swelling in its left leg on May 12, he said,**

## A STEP | FORWARD

First set of oxygen tankers have been dispatched to the beneficiaries  
ISRO to help fix snag affecting O2 production

**Chennai, May 16:** Vedanta Ltd owned Sterlite Copper plant has roped in experts from ISRO to help rectify the technical glitch developed in the cold box of its oxygen plant, leading to a suspension in production of the life-saving gas.

The company formally commenced production of medical oxygen on Thursday and the very next day, the facility in Tuticorin, about 600kms from here, suffered a jolt

in operations after developing a ‘technical snag’.

In a statement shared on the micro-blogging site on Sunday, Sterlite Copper said, “efforts to resume production at our oxygen plant are progressing”.

“Today, an expert team from the Indian Space Research Organisation arrived at the premises to support our ongoing efforts and collaborate with our technical team.”

The expert team has suggested some measures to

● **IN A STATEMENT shared on the micro-blogging site on Sunday, Sterlite Copper said, “efforts to resume production at our oxygen plant are progressing”.**

● **THE STERLITE copper smelter plant was accorded approval by the then AIADMK government on April 26 at an all-party meeting to produce medical oxygen at its facility for a period of four months at the facility in Tuticorin.**

fix the snag and resume production of oxygen.

“This has helped fast-track the repair process

for which we are thankful to the local administration, which was instrumental in facilitating this

cooperative effort to recommence our oxygen production,” Vedanta said. The facility, on May 13, began producing medical oxygen to meet the demand for the life-saving gas following a surge in Covid cases in the state. The first set of oxygen tankers have been dispatched to the beneficiaries.

The Sterlite copper smelter plant was accorded approval by the then AIADMK government on

April 26 at an all-party meeting to produce medical oxygen at its facility for a period of four months at the facility in Tuticorin.

The unit was sealed by the state government in May 2018, days after 13 agitators who were part of a protest against the company over environmental concerns, were killed in police firing during a violent anti-Sterlite stir in the southern district.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## VENEZUELA FLAYS 'KIDNAPPING' OF EIGHT SOLDIERS

Caracas, May 16: Venezuela on Saturday condemned what it said was the "kidnapping" of eight soldiers by armed groups operating on the Colombian border, where clashes have been ongoing for nearly two months. "During the fighting, eight professional soldiers were captured and on May 9 we received proof of life," Venezuelan Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said in a televised statement.

"We denounce before the international community... the appalling kidnapping of these soldiers," he said.

Venezuela's armed forces have engaged in clashes with Colombian armed groups along the border since March 21, displacing thousands of civilians who fled to Colombia.

Venezuela does not name the armed groups it blames for the unrest, apart from calling them "terrorists" or linking them to drug trafficking.

## EXTENSION OF CJ TENURE WRONG: ZIMBABWE COURT

Harare, May 16: Zimbabwe's High Court on Saturday ruled that President Emmerson Mnangagwa's controversial extension of tenure of the country's top judge is illegal.

Mnangagwa announced last week that he had extended Luke Malaba's term of office by five years, just hours before the Chief Justice was to due to retire, a move seen as aimed at consolidating the president's power. Three high court judges sat through Friday night as lawyers argued over the legality of the extension.

The court ruled on Saturday that "Malaba ceased being a judge and Chief Justice of Zimbabwe at 0000hrs on 15 May 2021." Malaba has been accused of favouring Mnangagwa's administration. He dismissed opposition leader Nelson Chamisa's presidential election petition following the 2018 vote.

Decrying the ruling as "baseless and meaningless", the government said the case was "a typical case of judicial overreach".

## TWO KIDS FOUND DEAD IN ARIZONA, MOM DETAINED

Tempe (Arizona), May 16: Two children were found dead Saturday morning in a suburban Phoenix apartment after a woman flagged down a police officer and said she was hearing voices telling her to kill her children, police said.

Officers went to her apartment and found a nine-year-old girl and a seven-year-old boy dead with "obvious signs of physical trauma," Tempe Police spokesman Sgt. Steven Carbajal said. The mother who flagged down a Tempe officer about 7 a.m. near a police station is Yui Inoue, 40, Carbajal said in a statement.

Inoue was arrested and charged with two counts of first-degree murder, he said. No other identities have been released. Police said they had been called to the same apartment earlier Saturday morning because of a domestic dispute involving a husband and wife. Carbajal said the couple was separated, and no one was arrested. The children were safe in bed at the time, and there was no apparent reason to call child welfare authorities.

## EASING AFRICA'S ECONOMIC WOES AT VIRTUAL MEET

Paris, May 16: French President Emmanuel Macron will on Tuesday host a virtual summit of European and African leaders to seek solutions to the financial crisis in Africa, where governments hope to boost development while managing massive debts.

The "summit on financing African economies" was planned last year after the International Monetary Fund calculated that African economies risk running into a total "financial gap" of \$290 billion by 2023.

Economic growth on the continent, which experienced its first recession last year, is expected to rebound to 3.4 percent this year and 4.0 percent in 2022. A moratorium on debt servicing, put in place in April 2020 by the G20 and Paris Club group of creditor nations, has given Africa a bit of breathing space, suspending the repayment of 5.7 billion euros (\$6.9 billion) by 50 countries.

The G20 also convinced China, by far the biggest bilateral lender on the continent, and private creditors to take part in future debt negotiations.

## Israel kills 42 as Bibi warns war will go on

Prime Minister says country wants to levy a heavy price on the militant Hamas rulers of Gaza City



People inspect the rubble of the Yazegi residential building that was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike, in Gaza City, on Sunday. — AP

## BIDEN TALKS TO ABBAS ON GAZA ESCALATION

Ramallah, May 16: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has spoken on the phone with President Joe Biden and urged the US to intervene in the conflict and "put an end to Israeli attacks on Palestinians".

The official Palestinian news agency *Wafa* says Abbas on Saturday updated Biden on the escalations across the Palestinian territories and said he was working to halt "the Israeli aggression against our people and to reach a ceasefire". The report says Abbas also told Biden that "security and stability will be achieved when the Israeli occupation ends," adding that Palestinians are ready and willing to work toward peace with international mediators.

Biden stressed the need to achieve calm and reduce violence in the Mideast, noting intensive American diplomatic efforts to that end. That's according to the *Wafa* statement.

Biden told Abbas on Saturday that Hamas must stop rocket attacks on Israel, the White House said.

Biden "stressed the need for Hamas to cease firing rockets into Israel," a statement said.

Biden also "underscored his strong commitment to a negotiated two-state solution as the best path to reach a just and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

— AFP

## Why were news offices destroyed, asks media

Gaza City, May 16: News organisations demanded an explanation Saturday for an Israeli airstrike that targeted and destroyed a Gaza City building housing the offices of *The Associated Press*, broadcaster *Al-Jazeera* and other media outlets.

AP journalists and other tenants were safely evacuated from the 12-storey al-Jalaa tower after the Israeli military warned of an imminent strike.

Three heavy missiles hit the building within the hour, disrupting coverage of the ongoing conflict between Gaza's Hamas

rulers and Israel.

At least 145 people in Gaza and eight in Israel have been killed since the fighting erupted on Monday night.

"The world will know less about what is happening in Gaza because of what happened today," AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt said.

He said the American news agency was seeking information from the Israeli government and engaging with the US State Department to learn more.

Mostefa Souag, acting director-general of *Al-Ja-*

*zeera Media Network*, called the strike a "war crime" and a "clear act" to stop journalists from reporting on the conflict. Kuwait state television also had office space in the now-collapsed Gaza City building.

"The targeting of news organisations is completely unacceptable, even during an armed conflict. It represents a gross violation of human rights and internationally agreed norms," Barbara Trionfi, the executive director of the International Press Institute, said.

— AP

## Israel faces highest ever rate of rocket attacks

Jerusalem, May 16: Israel has faced the highest ever rate of rocket attacks on its territory during its latest confrontation with the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas that controls Gaza, the army said Sunday.

Since Monday, armed groups in Gaza have fired about 3,000 rockets towards Israel, surpassing the pace during an escalation in 2019 and during the 2006 war with Lebanon's Hezbollah, said Major General Ori Gordin.

Gordin, commander of Israel's home front, presented a graphic to reporters with data of

rockets fired toward Israel in past years and now.

During an escalation in November 2019 between the army and the Islamic Jihad group, 570 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel over three days. And in the 2006 war with the Iran-backed Hezbollah, a total of 4,500 rockets were fired at Israel over 19 days, according to the data Gordin shared with reporters.

Asked if the pace since Monday was the highest ever rate of rocket attacks on Israeli territory, Gordin said: "Not only do I agree, this is what I present."

— AFP

**03** days: 570 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel during escalation between army and Islamic Jihad group in Nov. 2019.

**19** days: A total of 4,500 rockets fired at Israel during 2006 war with the Iran-backed Hezbollah.

## Protesters in US cities decry airstrikes

Los Angeles, May 16: Pro-Palestinian protesters took to the streets of Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia and other US cities to demand an end to Israeli airstrikes over the Gaza Strip.

Thousands of people shut down traffic on a major thoroughfare in west Los Angeles on Saturday as they marched two miles from outside the federal building to the Israeli consulate. The protesters

waved signs that said "free Palestine" and shouted "long live intifada," or uprising. In San Francisco, a raucous crowd banged drums and yelled "Palestine will be free" as they marched across the Mission district to Dolores Park. A similar scene played out in Boston as protesters walked a short distance from Copley Square to the Israeli Consulate for New England, blocking traffic.

Footage on social media shows protesters unfurl a banner in the colours of the Palestinian flag with the words "Free Palestine" while standing on top of the awning of the building where the consulate is located. In Washington, thousands of protesters streamed from the Washington Monument and to the National Archives.

In Philadelphia, demonstrators filled Rittenhouse Square to decry US suppo-

rt for Israel. At a protest in Pittsburgh, one speaker called on lawmakers to put restrictions on how Israel can spend aid from the United States.

The protests were stoked by five days of mayhem that left at least 145 Palestinians dead in Gaza and eight dead on the Israeli side. The violence, set off by Hamas firing a rocket into Israel on Monday, came after weeks of mounting tensions and

heavy-handed Israeli measures in contested Jerusalem. Israel stepped up its assault and slammed the Gaza Strip with airstrikes Saturday, in a dramatic escalation that included bombing the home of a senior Hamas leader, killing a family of 10 in a refugee camp and destroying a building that house the offices of *The Associated Press* and other media.

— AP



Antonio Guterres

## ISRAEL STRIKES ON GAZA 'DISTURB', 'DISMAY' UN CHIEF

United Nations, May 16: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "dismayed" by civilian casualties in Gaza and "deeply disturbed" by Israel's strike on a building containing international media outlets, a spokesman said.

Guterres spoke as Israel pummeled the Gaza Strip with air strikes, killing 10 members of an extended family and demolishing the 13-floor Gaza building housing Qatar-based *Al Jazeera* and the *Associated Press* news agency, with Palestinian militants firing back barrages of rockets. "The Secretary-General is dismayed by the increasing number of civilian casualties, including the death of 10 members of the same family."

— AFP

## ISLAMIC LEADERS HOLD EMERGENCY MEET ON GAZA

Beirut, May 16: The 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation held an emergency virtual meeting Sunday over the situation in Gaza calling for an end to Israel's military attacks on the Gaza Strip.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan urged the international community to work on ending Israel's military operations against Gaza and to allow aid to reach the coastal region. Speaking from Ramallah in the West Bank, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki blasted Israel calling it an "apartheid state" that is practicing "crimes and brutality against our people in Gaza."

He added that the latest round of violence that began on Monday has displaced 10,000 people.

— AP

## EGYPT SENDS AMBULANCES TO BRING WOUNDED

Cairo, May 16: Egypt opened its Rafah border crossing with Gaza Saturday to allow 10 ambulances to transport Palestinians seriously wounded in Israeli air strikes to Egyptian hospitals, medical officials said.

Egypt "exceptionally opened the Rafah crossing to allow 10 Egyptian ambulances into the Gaza Strip to transport wounded Palestinians... to be treated in Egypt," a medical official said.

An official at the Gaza border said the opening was "exceptional" because it is usually closed during public holidays including Eid al-Fitr.

The Egyptian public health authority said that the holiday was being suspended for some Egyptian doctors and nurses.

— AFP

## BIG CAT Animal owner maintains 2017 murder charge against him for fatal shooting was in self-defence

## Police: Missing Texas tiger has been found safe, healthy

Houston, May 16: A tiger that frightened residents after it was last seen briefly wandering around a Houston neighbourhood has been found after a nearly week-long search and appears to be unharmed, police announced Saturday evening.

In a short video tweeted by Houston police, Cmdr. Ron Borza can be seen sitting next to the tiger, petting the animal and saying it has been a long week searching for it. "But we got him, and he's healthy," Borza said as the wife of the man police allege is

the animal's owner sat next to him and fed the tiger with a baby bottle.

The tiger was being held at BARC, the city of Houston's animal shelter, but was expected to be taken Sunday morning to the Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch, an animal sanctuary in Murchison, Texas, located south-east of Dallas. Authorities had been searching for the tiger, a nine-month-old male named India, since it was spotted May 9 in a west Houston neighbourhood. At the time, it was nearly shot by an off-duty

deputy before being whisked away in a car by Victor Hugo Cuevas, whose police allege is the owner.

At a news conference later Saturday evening, Borza said that Cuevas' wife, Giordiana, turned over the tiger to police on Saturday after a friend of hers reached out to officials at BARC. "It is Victor's tiger. That's what I was told by (Giordiana Cuevas) ... She says they've had that animal for nine months," Borza said. He alleged that the tiger was passed around to different people but that Cuevas'

wife knew where the tiger was at all times this week as authorities searched for it. Police are still trying to determine where exactly the tiger was held this week and if any charges related to having the tiger will be filed.

Tigers are not allowed within Houston city limits under a city ordinance unless the handler, such as a zoo, is licensed to have exotic animals. But Cuevas' attorney, Michael W. Elliott, on Saturday night continued to insist his client doesn't own the tiger, saying, "I am not sure it

makes any difference who technically owns India as he does not have a birth certificate or title."

"Victor was not the primary owner of India nor did India stay with him the majority of the time," Elliott told *The Associated Press*. "Victor was however involved in the caretaking of India often. Victor loves India as anyone else would love a favorite pet ... He treated India with love and fantastic treatment in all respects." Cuevas was arrested Monday by Houston police and charged with evading arrest for

allegedly fleeing his home with the tiger after officers had responded to a call about a dangerous animal.

At the time of his arrest by Houston police, Cuevas was already out on bond for a murder charge in a 2017 fatal shooting in neighbouring Fort Bend County. Cuevas has maintained the shooting was self-defence, Elliott said. Cuevas was released on a separate bond for the evading arrest charge on Wednesday. But prosecutors in Fort Bend County then sought to have him held with no bond on the

murder charge.

After an all-day hearing on Friday, a judge revoked Cuevas' current \$125,000 bond on the murder charge and issued a new bond for \$300,000.

He remains jailed. During Friday's court hearing, Waller County Sheriff's Office Deputy Wes Manion, who lives in the Houston neighbourhood where the tiger was seen, testified he interacted with the animal for about 10 minutes to make sure it didn't go after someone else.

— AP



## SHORT TAKES

## SUDAN ARMY GIVES 2019 KILLINGS' PROBE RESULTS

**Khartoum, May 16:** Sudan's army said Saturday it had handed prosecutors the results of a probe into the 2019 killing of protesters in Khartoum, after hundreds rallied this week calling for justice.

Following months of demonstrations, thousands gathered in April 2019 outside the army headquarters in Khartoum, demanding longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir step down.

The iron-fisted ruler was ousted days later, but protesters kept up the sit-in for weeks, demanding the transfer of power from military to civilian rule. That June, armed men in military fatigues violently dispersed the camp in a days-long crackdown that left at least 128 people dead, according to medics linked to the protest movement.

The ruling generals at the time denied ordering the bloody dispersal and called for a probe into the incident.

## FOUR KILLED AS HEAVY RAINS, FLOOD HIT LANKA

**Colombo, May 16:** At least four persons have died and over 11,500 others affected due to heavy rains and floods prevailing in several parts of Sri Lanka for the last few days, according to a media report.

While two persons, including a 32-year-old man, died in flood in Aluthwatta area in Galle city, a 55-year-old man was buried alive after a mound of earth collapsed on his house in Kegalle district.

Another person was drowned in floodwaters in Wariyapola district, Colombo Page newspaper reported on Friday, quoting data from the Disaster Management Centre (DMC). According to DMC officials, 11,542 people belonging to 2,750 families in seven districts — Galle, Matara, Kurunegala, Kegalle, Gampaha, Colombo and Kalutara — have been affected due to the adverse weather conditions. Significant rainfall were received in many parts of the island nation and the Kalu, Kelani, Nilwala, Gin, Attanagalu Oya and Ma Oya rivers are overflowing.

## PROTEST AGAINST SAME-SEX UNIONS IN LITHUANIA

**Vilnius, May 16:** Thousands rallied in Lithuanian capital Vilnius on Saturday against draft legislation allowing civil unions for same-sex couples, a controversial move in the predominantly Catholic country.

Openly gay MP Tomas Vytautas Raskevicius is behind the drive for legal recognition for same-sex partners, which parliament is expected to consider next month.

Police said 10,000 people attended the event, dubbed the "family defence march", which took place despite a ban on public gatherings under anti-Covid rules and a surge in infections. Centrist President Gitanas Nausėda issued a statement in connection with the protest, insisting that any legal recognition of same-sex couples must be in line with the constitution which defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

A 2019 Eurobarometer survey found that 70 percent of Lithuanians opposed legal recognition of same-sex unions, signalling some of the strongest opposition to gay rights in the EU.

## CHILEANS VOTE FOR BODY TO REWRITE CONSTITUTION

**Santiago, May 16:** Chileans head to the polls Sunday in a second day of voting to elect 155 people who will rewrite the country's dictatorship-era constitution in a bid to address deep-seated social inequality that gave rise to deadly protests in 2019.

Some 14 million people are eligible to vote this weekend in what many consider to be Chile's most important election since its return to democracy 31 years ago.

More than three million people, or approximately 20.4 percent of the electorate, cast their ballot Saturday, according to the country's Electoral Service.

"I hope that we have a constitution that captures the soul of our nation," President Sebastián Piñera said after casting his ballot in the capital Santiago.

Sylvia Navarrete, a 35-year-old economist, was at a Santiago polling place with her young daughter in her arms. She said she had voted for a system that "works for everyone, allowing all voices to be heard" and ensuring "that rights and duties are really fair for all human beings."



People gather next to the Lachine Canal on a warm spring day in Montreal, Saturday, as the Covid-19 pandemic continues in Canada and around the world. — The Canadian Press via AP

## UK races to vaccinate, variant poses big risk

Next stage of lockdown-easing measures to take place today

**London, May 16:** British health workers, aided by the army, distributed Coronavirus tests door-to-door Saturday in two towns in northern England, seeking to contain a fast-spreading variant that threatens plans to lift all lockdown restrictions next month. Cases of a variant first identified in India have more than doubled in a week, defying a sharp nationwide downward trend in infections won by months of restrictions and a rapid vaccination campaign. Government scientific advisers say this variant is likely more transmissible than even the UK's dominant strain, though it's unclear by how much.

"If the virus is significantly more transmissible, we are likely to face some hard choices," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said at a news conference on Friday. "I have to level with you that this could be a serious disruption to our progress."

He said the next stage of lockdown-easing measures would take place as planned on Monday, but warned the variant might delay plans to lift all restrictions, including social distancing and face-covering rules, on June 21.

Johnson said soldiers would help carry out "surge testing" in Bolton and Blackburn in north-west England, where pop-up vaccination sites were also being set up to speed the inoculation drive.

The government's scientific advisory committee says there is no evidence so far that the variant causes more severe disease or that existing vaccines won't work against it. More than two-thirds of British adults have received a first dose of a Coronavirus vaccine, and 37% have had both doses.

The government is shortening the gap between doses. — AP

## Peru: Lack of cemetery space

**Lima, May 16:** After Joel Bautista died of a heart attack last month in Peru, his family tried unsuccessfully to find an available grave at four different cemeteries. After four days, they resorted to digging a hole in his garden.

The excavation in a poor neighborhood in the capital city of Lima was broadcast live on television, attracting the attention of authorities and prompting them to offer the family a space on the rocky slopes of a cemetery.

"If there is no solution, then there will be a space here," Yeni Bautista told *The Associated Press*, explaining the family's decision to dig at the foot of a tropical hibiscus tree after her brother's body began to decompose.

The same plight is shared by other families across Peru. After struggling to control the coronavirus pandemic for more than a year, the country now faces a parallel crisis: A lack of cemetery space.

## Pak eases transportation, commercial activity curbs

**Islamabad, May 16:** Pakistan on Sunday started easing Coronavirus restrictions on transportation and commercial activities, which were suspended for a week to curb the spread of the virus during Eid holidays.

The easing of restrictions came even as the country's Coronavirus positivity rose to 7.83 per cent on Sunday, a day after falling to more than two months low to about 5 per cent. All businesses and public transport were suspended from May 10-16 to stop mass movement during the Eid al-Fitr holidays to curb the spread of the virus. The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) decided to resume public transport from Sunday.

The restriction on transport was eased to help people come back from far off places to join their offices and other duties from Monday when businesses would also open. The lockdown worked well to contain the spread and pull down the curve as only 1,531 new cases were reported on Saturday, registering a positivity rate of 5.8 per cent which was the lowest since March 8.

But the cases rose to 2,379 in the last 24 hours, taking the national Covid-19 tally to 877,130. The death toll rose to 19,543, according to the Ministry of National Health Services. The government also started the registration of people aged 30 years and above for vaccination. — PTI

The problem affects everyone, not just relatives of Covid-19 victims, and some families have acted on their own, digging clandestine graves in areas surrounding some of Lima's 65 cemeteries.

The desperate lack of options comes as the country endures its deadliest period of the pandemic yet. More than 64,300 people who tested positive for Covid-19 have died in Peru, according to the Health Ministry, but that figure is almost certainly an undercount. A vital records agency estimates that the true figure is more than 174,900, counting those whose possible infection was not confirmed by a test. — AP

## FIGHTING VIRUS: BERLUSCONI LEAVES HOSPITAL

**Milan, May 16:** Former Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi was released from Milan's San Raffaele Hospital on Saturday, where he was treated for complications related to his earlier bout with Coronavirus.

Berlusconi, 84, recovered from Covid-19 last September but has been in and out of the hospital in recent weeks. He was most recently admitted last Monday. In April, he spent 24 days in the hospital under medical supervision. Berlusconi's hospitalisation was "prescribed by doctors for tests and treatment due to effects of the Coronavirus", Antonio Tajani, a senior member of Berlusconi's Forza Italia party, said on Facebook. Berlusconi will rest at his home in Arcore, near Milan, along with doing rehabilitation and treatments. — AP

## Israeli synagogue bleacher collapses, injures dozens

**Jerusalem, May 16:** Israeli medics say dozens of people have been injured in a bleacher collapse in a West Bank synagogue.

Television footage from the scene showed the building was incomplete, with exposed concrete and boards visible. Amateur footage showed the collapse occurring during prayers Sunday evening in Givat Zeev, just outside Jerusalem, at the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Shavuot.

The ultra-Orthodox syn-

agogue was packed with hundreds of people. The Magen David Adom rescue service said some 60 people were injured, including 10 in serious or critical condition. The Israeli military said in a statement that it dispatched medics and other search and rescue troops to assist at the scene.

Army helicopters were airlifting the injured. The mayor of Givat Zeev said the building was improvised and dangerous, and that the police ignored calls to take action. The

accident comes weeks after a stampede at a religious festival in northern Israel that killed 45 ultra-Orthodox Jews.

The stampede triggered renewed criticism over the broad autonomy granted to the country's politically powerful ultra-Orthodox minority. Last year, many ultra-Orthodox communities flouted Coronavirus safety restrictions, contributing to high outbreak rates in their communities and angering the broader secular public. — AP

## Fighting resumes in Afghanistan

**Kandahar, May 16:** Fighting between the Taliban and Afghan government forces resumed Sunday in the restive southern province of Helmand, officials said, ending a three-day ceasefire agreed by the warring sides to mark the Eid al-Fitr holiday.

There were clashes on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand, which has seen intense fighting since the United States began its final troop withdrawal from Afghanistan earlier this month, an Afghan military spokesman and a local official said.

"The fighting started early today and is still ongoing," Attaullah Afghan, head of the Helmand provincial council, said.

He said Taliban fighters attacked security checkpoints on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah and other districts. An Afghan army spokesman in the south confirmed fighting had resumed.

"They (Afghan forces) started the operation... do not put the blame on us," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said.

The three-day truce initiated by the Taliban and swiftly agreed to by the Afghan government had largely held during the Eid holidays that ended on Saturday.

The calm was broken on Friday by a blast at a mosque on the outskirts of the Afghan capital, which killed 12 people including the imam leading Friday prayers.

The Taliban denied it was behind the attack which has been claimed by the Islamic State group, according to the SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist groups.

## IS CLAIMS MOSQUE BLAST THAT KILLED 12 WORSHIPPERS

**Kabul, May 16:** The jihadist Islamic State claimed it carried out this week's attack on a mosque on the outskirts of the Afghan capital that left 12 worshippers dead, SITE Intelligence Group reported.

The explosion happened inside a mosque in Shakar Darah district of Kabul province during Friday prayers and shattered the relative calm of a three-day ceasefire agreed between the Taliban and the Afghan government. IS said its fighters had placed an explosive device inside the mosque and detonated it after worshippers arrived to offer prayers on the second day of the Eid al-Fitr holidays, the US monitor of jihadist groups said late Saturday.

The bombing killed the imam of the mosque, who was leading the prayers.

Friday was also the second day of a three-day ceasefire agreed by the Taliban and the government to mark Eid al-Fitr.

The ceasefire ended late on Saturday and so far no fighting between the two warring sides has been reported. — AFP

The truce was only the fourth agreed pause in fighting in the two-decades-long conflict.

Violence had previously surged in several provinces of Afghanistan — including former insurgent bastions Helmand and Kandahar. — AFP

## Anti-coup militia says five dead in Myanmar clashes

**Yangon, May 16:** At least five opposition rebels have been killed after days of clashes in Myanmar, an anti-junta militia said Sunday, as Britain and the United States condemned the military's violence against civilians.

The country has been in uproar since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a February 1 coup, triggering a massive uprising which authorities have sought to quell with lethal force. Some in the anti-junta movement have set up local militias armed with home-made weapons to protect their towns from security forces — which have killed at least 790 civilians according to a local monitoring group.

In the western state of

Chin, the town of Mindat has emerged as a hotspot for unrest, where some residents have formed the Chinland Defence Force (CDF). "We have at least five members killed and over 10 were wounded" this week, said a CDF spokesman, adding that five Mindat residents were also arrested by the military.

With mobile data blocked across the country, details about the fighting have been slow to come out, and on-the-ground verification is made harder as locals are fearful of retaliation.

The spokesman, who declined to be named, said that CDF fighters set fire to several army trucks, destroying them, and ambushed reinforcement

troops, while the military has attacked the town with artillery.

By Sunday, the CDF had retreated into the jungle, he said.

"We will not stay any more in the town... but we will come back to attack soon," he said. "We only have home-made guns. This was not enough." He added that residents remaining in Mindat — which has been under martial law since Thursday — were afraid to leave their homes for fear of being targeted by the military.

The US and UK embassies in Myanmar sounded the alarm Saturday on Mindat's unrest, calling for security forces to cease violence. — AFP

## NY mayoral race: Upsurge in crime

**New York, May 16:** New York, which has long prided itself on being one of the world's safest cities, is experiencing a surge in crime, with the topic becoming a central theme of a mayoral race set to be decided in June.

Crime was endemic in the Big Apple in the 1970s and 1980s when America's largest metropolis was gripped by a budgetary crisis, but it has been on a continuous downward trend since the mid-1990s.

The picture has deteriorated since last summer. What initially looked like a byproduct of the movement against police violence following George Floyd's murder and social dislocation. From knife attacks on the subway to a surge in shootings, including in Times Square last weekend, violence is "definitely up," says John Pfaff, a criminal law professor. — AFP

## BAN | TILL 2025 First Gay marches were held in 1970 after 1969 police raid

## No room for cops in NYC Pride parade

**New York, May 16:** Organisers of New York City's Pride events said Saturday they are banning police and other law enforcement from marching in their huge annual parade until at least 2025 and will also seek to keep on-duty officers a block away from the celebration of LGBTQ people and history.

In their statement, NYC Pride urged members of law enforcement to "acknowledge their harm and to

correct course moving forward".

"The sense of safety that law enforcement is meant to provide can instead be threatening, and at times dangerous, to those in our community who are most often targeted with excessive force and/or without reason," the group said.

It will also increase the event's security budget to boost the presence of community-based security and first responders while reducing the police department's presence.

Police will provide first response and security "only when absolutely necessary as mandated by city officials," the group said, adding it hoped to keep police officers at least one city block away from event perimeter areas where possible.

Word of the ban came out Friday when the Gay Officers' Action League said in a release it was dis-

heartened by the decision.

The group called the ban an "abrupt about-face" and said the decision "to placate some of the activists in our community is shameful."

The parade is scheduled for June after the Coronavirus prevented many Pride events worldwide last year, including in New York which instead hosted virtual performances in front of masked participants and honoured front-

line workers in the pandemic crisis.

The disruptions frustrated activists who had hoped to collectively mark the 50th anniversary of the first Gay Pride parades and marches in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco in 1970.

Those marches came a year after the 1969 uprising outside Manhattan's Stonewall Inn, a gay bar, in response to a police raid. — AP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,732.55	0.09
Nifty 50	14,677.80	-0.13
S&P 500*	4,173.85	0.19
Dollar (₹)	73.28	0.49
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.05	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,110.146	0.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.44	2.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.645	-0.023

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Cairn picks \$70b Indian assets in US for seizure

The United Kingdom-based oil major Cairn Energy has identified \$70 billion of Indian assets overseas for potential seizure to collect \$1.72 billion due from the government — a move if successful will put India in league with Pakistan and Venezuela which faced similar enforcement action over failure to pay arbitration awards. These assets are across several jurisdictions, sources said without giving further details.

Special drive to clear GST refunds by month end



The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has launched a special drive to clear all pending GST refunds by month-end. The 15-day GST refund drive is on the lines of an ongoing similar drive organised by the CBIC for refund of customs and duty drawback claims. The CBIC said there is a need to focus on timely disposal of all pending GST refund claims to provide immediate relief to business entities.

Airtel offers free pack to 5.5 cr low-income users

Bharti Airtel on Sunday announced offering a recharge pack of ₹49 for free to as many as 5.5 crore low income customers to help them stay connected during the pandemic. Additionally, customers buying the ₹79 recharge coupon will now get double the benefits, the company said. It said the scheme is worth ₹270 crore, covering credit of ₹49 mobile plan for 5.5 crore low income group customers.

Geojit Financial Q4 net profit nearly doubles

Reflecting the buoyancy in the markets, Geojit Financial Services has nearly doubled its net profit at ₹36.8 crore for the quarter to March, up 95 per cent from ₹18.8 crore a year ago, when the market was ravaged by the pandemic last year. The board of the company, which is leading distributor of mutual fund SIPs, has also decided to enter the International Finance Centre in Ahmedabad with an AIF.

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Data shows recovery in manufacturing Power use up despite Covid

**New Delhi, May 16:** Power consumption in the country grew by around 19 per cent in the first fortnight of May to 51.67 billion units (BU) over the same period last year, showing recovery in industrial and commercial demand of electricity, according to the power ministry data.

Power consumption in the first fortnight of May 2020 was 43.55 BU. The power consumption in the entire month of May last year was 102.08 BU.

During the first fortnight of May this year (from May 1 to 14), peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of 168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded growth of over 15 per cent over 146.54 GW (peak met) recorded in the same period in 2020 (on May 13, 2020).

The power consumption in April grew nearly 40 per cent to 118.08 BU. Power consumption in April 2020 had dropped to 84.55 BU from 110.11 BU in the same month in 2019, mainly because of fewer economic activities following the imposition of lockdown by the government in the last week of March 2020 to contain the spread of deadly Covid-19.

The power consumption also fell in May 2020 to 102.08 BU from 120.02 BU in May 2019.

Similarly, peak power demand met or the highest power supply in a day also slumped to 132.73 GW



in April last year from 176.81 GW in the same month in 2019, showing the impact of lockdown on economic activities.

The fewer economic activities also resulted in a fall of peak power demand in May 2020 to 166.22 GW from 182.53 GW in May 2019. Davinder Sandhu, advisor, Primus Partners said, “Energy is derived demand, and with onset of summer and the productive pre-monsoon cycle of the Indian economy, an uptick is always expected.”

Sandhu who is also a former Advisor at World Bank said, “Both energy demand and supply have risen by 25-40 per cent over March-May 2021, with thermal PLFs (plant load factor or capacity utilisation) rising to 75 per cent and more, after many quarters. This is aided by the opening of the economy in Q1 (January-March 2021), with rising economic output as well as sharp uptick in exports.”

The second wave of lockdowns will certainly impact economic activity, and in turn, energy demand. The larger than usual increase in part is attributed to lower base, and as well as to the pent up demand being executed now, he added.

After a gap of six months, power consumption had recorded a 4.6 per cent year-on-year growth in September 2020 and 11.6 per cent in October 2020.

In November 2020, the power consumption growth slowed to 3.12 per cent, mainly due to the early onset of winters. In December 2020, power consumption grew by 4.5 per cent while it was up 4.4 per cent in January 2021.

Power consumption in February this year recorded at 103.25 BU compared to 103.81 BU last year. But 2020 was a leap year. In March this year, the power consumption grew nearly 22 per cent to 120.63 BU compared to 98.95 BU in the same month of 2020.

— PTI

Hester in talks with Bharat Biotech to make Covaxin

**New Delhi, May 16:** Hester Biosciences on Sunday said it has tied up with the Gujarat government to explore production of Covid-19 vaccine through technology transfer from Bharat Biotech. The Ahmedabad-based firm said it has already initiated the discussions with Bharat Biotech in this regard.

“A triparty consortium has been formed with the government of Gujarat as the lead partner, to explore the prospects of manufacturing the Covid vaccine through technology from Bharat Biotech,” Hester Biosciences CEO and MD Rajiv Gandhi said in a statement.

The discussions are currently ongoing with Bharat Biotech towards reviewing the infrastructure at Hester; the technology adaption process and the regulatory compliances, he added.

Based on the outcome of the review, the next course of action will be determined, he noted.

Hester Biosciences is a



leading player in the animal healthcare segment. It is the second largest poultry vaccine manufacturer in the country.

Only three vaccines have so far been approved to be sold in India — Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V.

Sputnik V has been approved to be imported from Russia by Dr Reddy's, but is yet to be widely available in the country.

Last week the Delhi government urged the Centre to use its special

Markets to witness robust IPO line up in H2 of 2021

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD**  
MUMBAI, MAY 16

While the government's proposed privatisation drive has been hit by the Covid's second wave, a strong initial public offerings (IPOs) pipeline of privately owned companies is building up for the second half of calendar year 2021.

Several new names have filed draft red herring prospectus and some of them have already received market regulator Sebi's approval.

In the last few days some new names have filed DRHP like Go Airlines, Penna Cement Industries, Nuvoco Vistas Corp (Nirma Group's Cement Company), Supriya Lifescience, Krsnaa Diagnostics, Aptus Value Housing Finance,

In the last few days some new names have filed DRHP like Go Airlines, Penna Cement Industries, Nuvoco Vistas Corp, Supriya Lifescience, Krsnaa Diagnostics, Aptus Value Housing Finance, Devyani International and Windlas Biotech.

Devyani International and Windlas Biotech.

Zomato, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, Glenmark Life Sciences, Shriram Properties have also filed DRHP last month for their respective initial public offerings.

Sona BLW Precision Forgings' proposed Rs 6,000 crore IPO received Sebi nod last week. Another IPO by Shyam Metalics and Energy

worth ₹1,100 crore is awaited after getting Sebi approval.

In the first half of 2021 so far 19 IPOs have successfully listed on the bourses and only four of them are trading below their public issue price.

Among these, three government owned companies listed were Indian Railway Finance corporation, Powergrid Infrastructure Investment Trust and RailTel Corporation Of India.

Meanwhile, the much awaited IPO of Life Insurance Corporation of India is getting pushed back as the health crisis has also hit the bureaucracy badly with many key officials infected by the coronavirus, slowing decisions on privatisations, among other proposed reforms, said a report.

Hero MotoCorp to foray into electric two-wheeler market

**New Delhi, May 16:** The country's leading two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp is looking to launch an electric model next year and mark its entry into the segment, according to a senior company official.

Bullish on the electric vehicle (EV) vertical, the company is utilising its Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Stephanskirchen (Germany) based R&D set-ups to develop its own products.

Besides, it has tied up with Taiwan-based Gogoro Inc to bring the latter's battery swapping platform to India. The partners have also decided to collaborate on electric vehicle development to bring Hero-branded, powered by Gogoro network vehicles to market.

“We are trying to launch one of the EV products in fiscal year 2022, and you will see multiple actions, whether it is our own product or a swap product

or with Gogoro. All of those actions you will see in the next calendar year,” Hero MotoCorp CFO Niranjan Gupta said.

In order to tap the segment, the two-wheeler maker has already invested in Bengaluru-based EV startup Ather Energy, which already has introduced models in the market. He said the company's R&D centres have been working to develop products based on fixed charging system.

— PTI

Centre plans to amend depositors insurance law

**New Delhi, May 16:** In a bid to ensure timely support to depositors of stressed banks, the government may bring amendment to DICGC Act in the monsoon session with the objective to provide account holders easy and time-bound access to funds to the extent of the deposit insurance cover.

Last year, the government raised insurance cover on deposit five-folds to ₹5 lakh with a view to provide support to depositors of ailing lenders like Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank. Following the collapse of PMC Bank, Yes Bank and Lakshmi Vilas Bank too came under stress leading to restructuring by the regulator and the government.

The amendment to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act, 1961 is the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister and the Bill is almost ready, sources said.

It is expected that the Bill will be tabled in the upcoming monsoon session after being vetted by the Union Cabinet,

● The amendment to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act, 1961 is the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister and the Bill is almost ready, sources said.

● Once the Bill becomes the law, it will provide immediate relief to thousands of depositors who had their money parked in stressed lenders such as PMC Bank and other small cooperative banks.

sources added.

Once the Bill becomes the law, it will provide immediate relief to thousands of depositors who had their money parked in stressed lenders such as PMC Bank and other small cooperative banks.

As per the current provisions, the deposit insurance of up to ₹5 lakh comes into play when the licence of a bank is cancelled and liquidation process starts.

COVID CLAIMS RISE MANIFOLD FOR HEALTH INSURANCE COS

**SANGEETHA G**  
CHENNAI, MAY 16

Commensurate to the rise in Covid-19 cases, insurers are witnessing a surge in claims.

Compared to the September-October period, Covid-related claims have gone up by more than three times.

“When the country is witnessing three to four lakh Covid cases every day and all hospitals are running beyond their bed capacity, a significant percentage of patients are also making insurance claims. The insurance industry is seeing a significant surge in claims,” said Dr S Prakash, managing director of Star Health and Allied Insurance.

According to Sanjay Datta, Chief Underwriting, Claims and Reinsurance, ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company, the industry has seen a three-fold rise in Covid claims in April compared to September-October 2020. Though the industry-wide loss ratios for FY21 are not yet out, insurers expect that it would be much more than 100 per cent.

However, during the first half of last fiscal, the claims of non-Covid cases were considerably down due to the lockdown. But now, he said, claims related to elective procedures have once again tapered down.

“We are only receiving claims of emergency non-Covid cases,” said Prakash.

Centre plans to amend depositors insurance law

DICGC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, provides insurance cover on bank deposits.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget speech in February said the government had approved an increase in the Deposit Insurance cover from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh for bank customers last year.

It could not be presented in the Budget session due to curtailment of the last session following the spread of second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

It is to be noted that the enhanced deposit insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh is effective from February 4, 2020. The increase was done after a gap of 27 years as it was static since 1993. The cover is provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RBI. With increased insurance cover, the banks are paying a higher premium of 12 paise against 10 paise per Rs 100 deposited without any additional burden on account holders.

— PTI

CHANGING TIMES

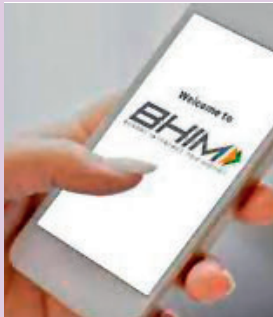
Ticket size of cash withdrawals at ATM rises

Covid wave spikes digital payments again

**New Delhi, May 16:** The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a behavioural change in usage of cash with people withdrawing larger amounts from ATMs but preferring to make digital modes to make payments, said experts.

The ferocity of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic has scared people, forcing them to withdraw larger amounts from the ATMs with a view to avoid frequent visits. The money thus withdrawn is mostly held for emergency use and often payments are being made through UPI and other digital modes.

Talking about the behavioural change in currency usage, Sarvatra Techno-



logies founder and MD Mandar Agashe said that in view of the lockdown and social distancing norms, people are not venturing out to banks and ATMs as frequently.

“The average ticket size of withdrawals at any given time has gone up by almost 20 per cent, as peo-

ple withdraw in larger quantities and prefer to hoard, pre-empting medical or any other form of emergencies, which ultimately is not consumed as much.

“The average ticket size of withdrawals which earlier ranged between 2,000-3,000 now has invariably gone up by 20 per cent to ₹3,000-4,000 across both rural and urban India,” Adashe said.

He further said UPI was taking care of small-ticket transactions with the average ticket size constant at Rs 1,000.

Owing to this behavioural shift, daily average transactions on IMPS have now gone up to Rs 9,000 which was earlier in the range of around Rs

6,000-7,000, he said.

“The second wave of the pandemic has had a significant impact on the handling and management of cash.

“This has in turn brought about substantial shift in behavioral patterns among the masses which will play out in favour of digital transactions in the long run,” he added.

Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) is an instant interbank electronic fund transfer service through mobile phones.

According to the RBI's latest data, the outstanding currency in circulation on May 7 was ₹2,939,997 crore, up from ₹2,858,640 crore on March 26.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Shankar bags high jump gold in US

**New Delhi:** Indian high jumper Tejaswin Shankar has claimed a gold medal at the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, USA. Representing Kanساس State University, Tejaswin cleared 2.28 metres on Saturday, making a facility record. It was also the season's finest performance for the Indian but a centimetre short of his personal best and the current national record of 2.29m which he created in 2018. University of Oklahoma's Vernon Turner (2.25m) and Texas Tech University's Jequan Hogan (2.11m) claimed the silver and bronze respectively. This was Tejaswin's second successive gold at the event. — PTI

## Covid-free Hussey off to Australia

**Chennai:** Having recovered from Covid-19, Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey left for Australia on Sunday via Doha, a top official of the IPL franchise said. Following an RT-PCR test, the former Australia batsman had returned negative for Covid-19 on Friday, paving the way for his departure in the early hours of Sunday. "Yes, Hussey has left for Australia via Doha by a commercial flight. He left in the early hours of Sunday," CSK CEO K. S. Viswanathan said. Hussey, who had first tested positive for Covid-19 during the now-suspended Indian Premier League, is expected to reach home on Monday. — PTI

## Bryant inducted into Hall of Fame

**New York:** Los Angeles Lakers icon Kobe Bryant was inducted posthumously into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame on Saturday part of a star-studded group that also included Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett. Bryant was inducted as part of the Class of 2020, almost 16 months after he and his 13-year-old daughter Gianna were killed in a helicopter crash along with seven others in southern California. Bryant's wife, Vanessa Bryant, took the podium Saturday to speak movingly about his love for basketball, his family, his teammates and his fans. "You did it. You are in the Hall of Fame now. You are a true champion, not just an MVP. You are an all-time great," Vanessa said. — AFP

## Countdown begins for Paralympics

**Tokyo:** As Japan struggles to slow infections ahead of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, officials in Japan held an event marking 100 days to go to the start of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. The event was held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building with strict corona counter-measures in place. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike in her opening remarks paid tribute to all the medical professionals fighting against Covid-19 and also thanked all the businesses in Tokyo that have been cooperating with the latest state of emergency requirements. Koike went on to point out that Tokyo will be the only city to have hosted the Paralympic Games twice and lauded the barrier free initiatives that have been implemented in the city thanks to the Paralympics. — AP

## Indian women likely to tour Oz

**New Delhi:** The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September. India, who have played only one series amid the Covid-19 pandemic, tour England next month to play their first Test in seven years besides three ODIs and as many T20s. Australia pacer Megan Schutt dropped a hint that India will be visiting in September though Cricket Australia is yet to announce the schedule. The tour is expected to comprise ODIs and T20 Internationals. "We have got a tour against India in mid-September," Schutt said. — PTI

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## TIM AND AGAIN

Paine says Kohli will always be remembered as world's best

**Melbourne, May 16:** Virat Kohli seems to have left an indelible mark on Australian Test captain Tim Paine, who says he will "always remember" the Indian skipper for being the world's best batsman, capable of also getting under the opposition's skin with his competitiveness.

Kohli and Paine have had a fiery rivalry which goes back to India's 2018-19 tour of Australia. Their on-field spats were an interesting sub-plot during the historic show-down in which India became the first Asian country to win a Test series Down Under. "For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world," Paine said on the 'Gilly and Goss' podcast.

"He (Kohli) is challenging to play against and he can get under your skin because he is so good and he is so competitive. But yeah, for me from where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago, He is certainly someone I will always remember," he added.

Interestingly, last year Paine had said that Kohli is "just another player" in the Indian team who "doesn't really bother me".

He had also stated that the Australian team "loves to hate" the superstar for his awe-inspiring abilities with the bat.

Paine, after the stunning loss in 2018-19, endured another debacle earlier this year when an injury-ravaged Indian team, which did not have Kohli after the opening Test, upstaged the Aussies in the Tests for a second successive tour.

He had recently caused a flutter by stating that his side was distracted by the Indian team's "nig-gling" during this year's series.



Virat Kohli and Tim Paine in this file photo.

## Sachin reveals he battled anxiety for 10 to 12 years

**New Delhi, May 16:** Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar on Sunday said he battled anxiety for a major part of his 24-year-old career before realising that his pre-game quirks were an important part of his preparation.

Talking about mental health, which has gained significance in the Covid times with players spending lot of time in bio-bubbles, Tendulkar said acceptability is the key.

"Over period of time I realised that besides preparing physically for a game, you have to prepare

yourself mentally also. In my mind the match started long before I entered the ground. The anxiety levels were very high," Tendulkar said in an interaction organised by Unacademy.

"I felt the anxiety for 10-12 years, had many sleepless nights before a game. Later on I started accepting that it was part of my preparation. Then I made peace with times I was not able to sleep in the night. I would start doing something to keep my mind comfortable."

That "something" included shadow batting,

watching TV and playing video games in the wee hours of the day. Even making his morning cup of tea helped him prepare for the game.

"Making tea, ironing my clothes also helped me prepare for the game. I would pack my bag the day before the game, my brother taught me all of it and it became a habit. I followed the same drill even in the last match I played for India," he said.

Tendulkar said a player is bound to go through ups and downs but it is important to accept when one is feeling low. — PTI

## VIRAT VS KANE DEBATE TURNS UNSAVOURY

**London, May 16:** Former England skipper Michael Vaughan on Sunday launched a sarcasm-laden counter at Salman Butt, wishing that the ex-Pakistan skipper had shown such "clarity" of thought while "fixing matches", like the one that was on display while trashing his Kane Williamson greater than Virat Kohli viewpoint.

Vaughan told New Zealand's host broadcaster *Spark Sport* that had Black Caps captain Kane Williamson been an "Indian, he'd be the greatest player in the world".

"But he's not because you're not allowed to say that Virat Kohli is not the greatest, because you'd get an absolute pelting on social media. So, you all say Virat is the best purely to get a few more clicks and likes, few more numbers following here."

"Kane Williamson, across formats, is equally the best. I think the way he plays, the calm demeanour, his humbleness, the fact that he is silent about what he does," Vaughan said.

Speaking on his YouTube channel, Butt, who was banned from cricket for 10 years for the spot-fixing scandal in 2010, which was later reduced to five years, slammed Vaughan for stirring up an unnecessary controversy by drawing comparisons between Kohli and Williamson. "Kohli is from a country that has a huge population. So, he will have a bigger fanbase. Moreover, no other batsman in the world has 70 international centuries. He has dominated the batting rankings for a long period because his performances have been outstanding. So, what is the need of this comparison," Butt said. — PTI

## OLYMPIC | PREPARATION

## Sindhu sings Sang's praises

**New Delhi, May 16:** The lack of competitions before the Olympics is a major concern for Indian shuttlers but not so much for P. V. Sindhu, who trusts her Korean coach Park Tae Sang to create match situations for her in training itself.

Owing to the raging Covid-19 pandemic, the Badminton World Federation has been forced to cancel the remaining three Olympic qualifiers in India, Malaysia and Singapore. These were to be the last set of events before the Tokyo Games in July-August.

Asked if cancellations will affect her preparations, Sindhu said: "Well, we were thinking that Singapore will be the last event before Olympics but now we don't have another option, so I am playing matches against different players and my coach Park is trying to create match situations for me in training."

"Different players have different styles like Tai Tzu (Ying) or Ratchanok (Intanon) have different styles of play but Park is there to guide me, to prepare me for it. Obviously, we will be playing each other after a few months and there will be something new in our games, so I will have to prepare for



P. V. Sindhu

that," she added.

Sindhu doesn't train with the rest of the Indian Olympic-bound team. She has been training at the Gachibowli indoor stadium in Telangana and does her fitness training at Suchitra academy.

The 25-year-old endorsed BWF's decision to cancel the events, saying while it is sad that competitions could not take place but but life is more important than sports.

"It is sad that the whole world has come to a standstill but before sports-persons, we are human beings and life comes first. If tournaments happen, we don't know if we will be safe, we might think we will be but we can't be sure because we don't know from where this virus will come," Sindhu said. — PTI

## BHAKER TO WRITE BA EXAMS WHILE SHOOTING IN CROATIA

**New Delhi, May 16:** Inside her hotel room in Croatian capital Zagreb, India's Olympic medal hope Manu Bhaker is juggling shooting-related activities and studies.

However, a day before the Tokyo-bound Indian shooting contingent hits the range for its first training session in Croatia, Bhaker's pistol will give way to a pen and the shooting gear to her study materials, as she logs in for her BA fourth semester exam.

A student of political science in the Delhi University's prestigious Lady Shri Ram College for Women, the champion shooter's exams start on May 18 while the European Championship in Osijek, in which the Indian team will compete as a guest invitee, begins two days later, from May 20.

The continental tournament and Bhaker's exams will run almost concurrently but she is relieved that the dates of her events are not clashing with the papers.

"I will manage both, as I have done in the past. At least I don't have competition on days I have my papers, so it's manageable," Bhaker said. — PTI

## Spurs continue last-four quest

**London, May 16:** Harry Kane scored his 22nd Premier League goal of the season as Tottenham Hotspur beat Wolves 2-0 on Sunday to maintain their hopes of a top-four finish.

England captain Kane fired Spurs ahead on the stroke of half-time before Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg doubled their lead in the 62nd minute.

Victory left Spurs in sixth place, five points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, with a maximum of six points available to them from their final two league games.

The top four in the Premier League are assured of a place in the 2021/22 Champions League.

Already crowned Premier League title-winners Manchester City and Chelsea will contest this season's Champions League final in Porto on May 29.

Earlier, Crystal Palace twice came from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-2, with Tyrick Mitchell's first goal for the club sealing victory six minutes from time.

Victory lifted south London club Palace to 13th.

— AFP

## JUVENTUS PIP INTER TO KEEP ALIVE CL BID

**Milan, May 16:** Juan Cuadrado scored twice, including a late penalty, as Juventus beat Inter Milan 3-2 to keep their Champions League hopes alive on Saturday in a game where three spot kicks were awarded and both teams finished a man down.

Juve moved up to fourth equal on points with third-placed AC Milan and two points ahead of Napoli who both play on Sunday.

The win ended the 20-match unbeaten run for Antonio Conte's Inter who had denied Juventus a 10th consecutive league title this season. "It was important for us to win so we can keep hoping," said coach Andrea Pirlo.

Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty after 24 minutes but turned in the rebound to bring his tally to a Serie A leading tally 29 goals this campaign.

— AFP

## FABULOUS WIN

Schmeichel hails Leicester's historic win

**London, May 16:** Kasper Schmeichel described leading Leicester to the club's first ever FA Cup as a dream come true after he played a huge role in beating Chelsea 1-0 on Saturday.

Youri Tielemans's stunning strike just after the hour mark separated the sides in front of the largest sports attendance in England since the coronavirus pandemic hit, with 22,000 fans at Wembley.

But Schmeichel had to rescue his side late on with brilliant saves from Ben Chilwell and Mason Mount. "I've dreamt about this since I was child," said Schmeichel, whose dad Peter Schmeichel won three FA Cups with Manchester United.

"We have talked about wanting to win trophies. The performance today, the grit and determination, I'm so proud of everybody, everybody contributed to get to the final. Everyone has played and been sensational," he added.

Even when Schmeichel was eventually beaten, Chilwell's late equaliser against his former club



Leicester goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel (right) and Wesley Morgan hold the trophy aloft after winning the FA Cup in London on Saturday. — AP

was ruled out for offside after a VAR review. "Thank you VAR! What an amazing technology," said Tielemans.

## SUPPORT FOR PALESTINE

Leicester players Hamza Choudhury and Wesley Fofana showed support for the Palestinians after winning the FA Cup final. English midfielder Choudhury and French

defender Fofana were seen holding a Palestinian flag. Choudhury had the flagged draped over his shoulders as he collected his winner's medal.

A social media post from Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny also showing his support for the Palestinian people has been hit by a backlash from Jewish fans.

— AFP

## Dravid as NCA head has excelled in making Indian cricket stronger



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

**F**ormer Australia captain Greg Chappell has credited Rahul Dravid for India's pre-eminent position in cricket in the past few years. Chappell says Dravid understood the Aussies system of excellence, picked his brains (and of others from

his country) and replicated it successfully as coach of the under-19 and India A teams and now as director of the National Cricket Academy.

The ICC Test rankings put out last week seem to support his contention. India are top of the pops at no.1, New Zealand no. 2

and England no. 3. Australia, vying with India for the top place not too long back, have slipped to no. 4.

Barring a few weeks here and there, India have been no. 1 in the Test rankings for almost five years, which is a remarkable achievement. It shows consistency of performance, the only yardstick for excellence. This is true for India not just in Tests, but also in the other formats.

Fundamentally, India's current strength is based on a regular supply of high quality players. This

was the case with the Australians almost since the time cricket went Down Under. The West Indies too, till three decades back. And therein lies a message.

The West Indies faded away after a decade or so after the Packer Series, but the Australians continued to be strong, and in fact got better. What this showed was that it is not enough to just have a legacy of outstanding talent, also effective systems and structures for sustaining excellence.

Which brings me to why

Indian cricket is flourishing currently.

Primarily, credit must go to the BCCI for spreading the footprint of cricket all over the country. The more youngsters play, the larger the talent pool, the greater the number of elite cricketers. The BCCI has ensured this. It has also put in place institutions like the National Cricket Academy that can make a big difference.

The NCA has been around for just over two decades. For the most period, it functioned as rehab centre-cum-sanatorium for

injured cricketers. While putting cricketers back on their feet is obviously a big part of the academy, the NCA can't be limited to just that.

This is where Dravid has been of great value. As head of NCA he has gone beyond his job profile of being just administrator. He's proactively pursued the agenda of making Indian cricket stronger.

In this, he's drawn not just on his understanding of the Australian system, as Chappell highlights, but has brought his vast experience as player, and coach

of under-19 and India A teams to set up a more dynamic agenda to enrich Indian cricket.

This includes spotting and mentoring talent, mitigating fear of competition in young players and a desire for success.

Dravid's success is not an exhaustive formula or curriculum. It provides a kind of template of intent and practices. For India to keep excelling at the highest level depends on how this is assimilated, absorbed, improved upon at every nodal point in the cricket system.