

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | SUNDAY | 9 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 36.9°C
Min: 26.8°C
RH: 44%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Rain very likely in evening. Max/Min temp. 38/27°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava; Uttaraayana

Tithi: Chaitra Bahula Trayodasi till 7.32 pm

Star: Revati till 5.29 pm

Variyam: Sesha Variyam till 5.55 am (early hours)

Durmuhurtam: 4.53 pm to 5.44 pm

Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm

HILARI CALENDAR

Ramzan 26,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.40 am

Zohar: 12.22 pm

Asar: 4.39 pm

Maghrib: 6.44 pm

Isha: 7.56 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.38 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.46 AM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.16 AM

MOONSET TODAY 4.46 PM

RAMZAN TIMINGS

IFTAR: 6.44 PM (TODAY)

SEHR: 4.18 AM (TOMORROW)

COUNTER POINT



2nd wave? I am more worried about my 2nd dose of vaccine!

SHORT TAKES

Total lockdown in Tamil Nadu

Chennai: With Tamil Nadu witnessing a sharp increase in Covid-19 cases, the government on Saturday announced clamping a two-week "total lockdown" across the state to curb the spread of the pandemic, starting May 10. Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said the lockdown was being enforced due to "unavoidable reasons".

■ Report on Page 4

229 taxmen died due to Covid-19

New Delhi: Minister of State for Finance Anurag Thakur on Saturday condoled the death of 229 taxmen due to Covid-19, saying the nation will always remain grateful to them. The minister said that as many as 110 officials of the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) and 119 officials of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) have lost their lives.

Fire on board INS Vikramaditya

Mumbai: There was a minor fire on board India's aircraft carrier *INS Vikramaditya* on Saturday morning, a Navy spokesperson said. The fire was doused and all personnel on board are safe, the spokesperson said. "The duty staff observed smoke emanating from the part of the warship having accommodation for sailors. The ship's duty personnel acted promptly to fight the fire."

Imports, exports without bonds

New Delhi: The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs allowed businesses to import and export goods without furnishing bonds to customs authorities until June-end, a move aimed at ensuring no delay or disruption in EXIM trade due to Covid-19. The CBIC said importers and exporters will have to furnish an undertaking in lieu of the bonds till June 30.



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Israel braces for Jerusalem riots



SPORTS | 8

Hamilton grabs 100th pole at Spanish GP

TABLOID

A salute to mom!



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Facelift for Hawa Mahal



Labourers carry out the restoration work on the historical Hawa Mahal in Jaipur on Saturday.

— PTI

Himanta believed to have backing of 40 Assam MLAs

MANOJ ANAND and YOJNA GUSAI
GUWAHATI/NEW DELHI, MAY 8

Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, a strong contender for the post of chief minister, announced on Saturday that the decision on who will lead the government in Assam would be taken at a BJP legislature party meeting slated to be held in Guwahati today.

On Saturday, the BJP top brass, including party president J.P. Nadda, Union home minister Amit Shah, general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santosh and party's state in-charge Bijayanta Panda held a series of meetings with incumbent chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and Mr Sarma, who had been summoned to Delhi by the party leadership.

After the BJP leadership

held separate and joint meetings with the two of them, Mr Sarma told the media. "The BJP legislature party meeting will be held tomorrow in Guwahati. Answers to all questions will come out of that meeting."

The state unit of the party is abuzz that around 40 MLAs, including alliance partners, are backing Mr Sarma, who was the first one to meet Mr Nadda. Later, the party top brass held a meeting with Mr Sonowal separately and then with both leaders. Later in the evening, Mr Shah and Mr Sonowal held another round of meeting with Mr Nadda at his residence.

While Mr Sonowal has a "clean image" and is given credit for "pro-incumbency" which helped the BJP to retain power in the state, Mr Sarma is considered an "influential

leader" and the BJP's "trouble shooter" in the North-East.

Both Mr Sonowal and Mr Sarma have considerable clout in the state organisation and their supporters had been lobbying for them.

It is significant that the party had not announced any chief ministerial candidate ahead of the March-April polls. The BJP had said that it would settle the issue after the elections were over. In 2016, the BJP had projected Mr Sonowal as its leader and won, forming its government in the Northeast.

For the 2021 election, however, the BJP, opted against a chief ministerial candidate but still recorded a comfortable win. The party won 60 seats in the 126-member Assembly, while alliance partners AGP won nine and UPPL six.

After 8 yrs, India, EU to resume trade talks

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

After a gap of eight years, India and the European Union (EU) on Saturday agreed to resume negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and a parallel investment protection agreement. Both sides also agreed on a Connectivity partnership "covering digital, energy, transport and people-to-people connectivity" that will also include "sustainable joint projects in third countries, most notably in the Africa, Central Asia and Indo-Pacific region".

These decisions were taken during a virtual summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the heads of state or government of all the 27-member states of the bloc

■ PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi welcomed the growing convergences between India and the EU on regional and global developments and briefed on developments in 'our own region'

with a focus on expanding overall cooperation in areas of trade, investment and connectivity.

The connectivity pact will also "promote fast and effective roll-out of 5G on the basis of global standards" and enhance cooperation through "submarine cables and satellite networks". In a veiled message to China, both sides also underlined their commitment to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific region and discussed action to combat climate change.

TRS eyes Etala partner MP Ranjith Reddy next

Party on lookout for ex-minister's loyalists, close associates

SRIRAM KARRI | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 8

After the political guillotine of reprisal fell on former health minister Etala Rajendar, who was removed from the Cabinet and a series of blitzkrieg investigations launched into his alleged land dealings, the political gaze within the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) has reportedly turned into a deep scrutiny of his closest aide, long-term business partner and Parliamentarian elected to the Lok Sabha from Chevella, Gaddam Ranjith Reddy.

Ranjith Reddy, originally a resident from Karimnagar, was elected from Ranga Reddy district's Chevella constituency representing the TRS, and was named by Rajendar, who has fallen from grace in the pink party, as his closest business aide to further his argument of innocence.



G. Ranjith Reddy

"I have been in the poultry and other agri-businesses in a bonafide way since over three decades in partnership with Ranjith Reddy. We have brought lands legitimately," Rajendar reiterated several times during his pressers in the last week.

Confirming the development within the party's higher echelons, a senior party leader, said, "The party, after taking stern action on Etala, has been keeping a keen eye on his

loyalists, and those considered close enough to him to join his bandwagon in future. While action against Putta Madhukar is at one end of this plan, keeping a close vigil on the activities of Ranjith and business nexus with Etala is at the other."

Madhukar, a TRS leader, who was arrested by Telangana police in Andhra Pradesh on Saturday, had "disappeared" last week, after social media accusations surfaced of payment of ₹2 crore for the broad daylight murder of the lawyer couple, Gattu Vaman Rao and P.V. Nagamani, in February. Madhukar's nephew Bittu Srinu was arrested along with others for the murders, and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao was forced to concede their party affiliation.

■ Page 2: Ranjith one of richest in fray for LS polli

ZP CHIEF HELD FOR HAND IN KILLING ADVOCATE COUPLE

PULI SHARATH KUMAR | DC
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 8

The Ramagundam Task Force cops arrested Peddapalli zilla parishad chairman Putta Madhukar at Bhimavaram in West Godavari district of AP on Saturday. Madhukar was on the run for the past few days following his involvement in the murder of a HC advocate couple, Gattu Vaman Rao and P.V. Nagamani, in February this year. The murder was linked to certain cases filed by the couple against alleged land encroachment by Madhukar.

■ Page 2: Arrest in midst of Etala's sacking

HC questions urgency to probe Devarayamjal row

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 8

The Telangana High Court on Saturday issued notices to the state government and Sri Seetha Ramachandra Swamy temple in Devarayamjal village of Shamirpet mandal, directing them to file their responses to petitions filed in the court with regard to certain parcels of land.

The petitioners had sought a stay on GO No. 1014, through which a committee of four IAS officers had been constituted to decide on the ownership of the lands admeasuring approximately 1,500 acres located in different survey numbers of Devarayamjal.

Justice T. Vinod Kumar, was dealing with a petition filed by Sada Satyanarayana and four of his family members, who

had around 58 acres of land in what is being called as 'temple lands', urging the court to restrain the authorities from entering their lands and not to evict them.

The court was not inclined to intervene in the appointment of a committee but questioned the government on its exuberance and urgency in constituting the committee and seeking its report within a few days, when

the state is caught in the Covid pandemic.

"What has made the government take such an urgent initiative in protecting temple lands at Devarayamjal and that too based on a newspaper report, when there are other prominent temples across the state, whose large acres of land are being encroached," the judge wanted to know.

Justice Vinod Kumar observed that there was no need for a committee to enquire into encroachment of endowments lands. He contended that the entire state machinery, including district collectors, registration officials, documents and sale deeds pertaining to the lands in question were at the government's disposal.

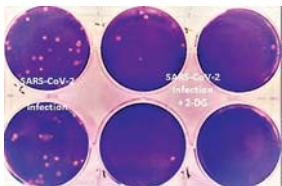
■ Page 2: Don't interfere with petitioners' lands: HC

DRDO's Covid drug gets DGCI nod

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, MAY 8

An oral drug developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has been approved by the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) for emergency use as an adjunct therapy in moderate to severe Covid-19 patients, the defence ministry said on Saturday.

Clinical trial results



The 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) which was found effective against Covid-19

have shown that this molecule helps in faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduces sup-

plemental oxygen dependence, it was stated.

The drug was developed by the Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS), a lab of the DRDO, in collaboration with Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL), Hyderabad, based on a chemical chain known as 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG).

According to the DRDO, higher proportion of patients treated with 2-DG showed RT-PCR negative conversion in Covid

patients. Being a generic molecule and analogue of glucose, it can be easily produced and made available in plenty in the country, the DRDO stated. It comes in powder form in a sachet, and is taken orally by dissolving it in water. It accumulates in the virus-infected cells and prevents virus growth by stopping viral synthesis and energy production.

■ Page 2: Lab experiments done with CCMB help

No need for +ve test for hosp. admission

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

The Union ministry of health and family welfare has revised the national policy for admission of Covid-19 patients to various categories of Covid facilities.

Under the new policy, a positive test report for Covid-19 virus is now not mandatory for admission to a Covid health facility and the government has directed that no patient will be refused services in any hospital on any count.

The directive to states and Union Territories comes following heavy criticism after serious patients were denied medical attention by hospitals owing to several reasons.

India on Saturday recorded over four lakh fresh cases and 4,187 deaths in the last 24 hours. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with the chief ministers of Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu on the Covid situation in their states.

BREATHING | EASY

12-member team of medical experts to fix allocation methodology SC's task force to streamline oxygen supply

New Delhi, May 8: The Supreme Court has constituted a 12-member National Task Force of top medical experts to formulate a methodology for allocation of oxygen to states and Union Territories for saving lives of Covid-19 patients and to facilitate a public health response to the pandemic.

A bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and M.R. Shah said that the Union Cabinet Secretary will be the convener of the National Task Force and may nominate an officer

not below the rank of additional secretary to deputate for him, when necessary.

It said in its order passed on May 6 uploaded on Saturday that the secretary of the Union ministry of health and family welfare will be ex-officio member of the task force. The bench said that other members will include Bhabatosh Biswas, former vice-chancellor, West Bengal University of Health Sciences, Kolkata; Devender Singh Rana, chairperson of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi; Devi Prasad Shetty,

chairperson and executive director, Narayana Healthcare, Bengaluru; Dr Gagandeep Kang, professor, Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu; and J.V. Peter, director, Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu.

The remaining five members are Dr Naresh Trehan, chairperson and MD, Medanta Hospital and Heart Institute, Gurugram; Rahul Pandit, director, critical care medicine and ICU, Fortis Hospital, Mulund (Mumbai) and Kalyan (Maharashtra); and Dr

Saumitra Rawat, chairman & head, department of surgical gastroenterology and liver transplant, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi; Shiv Kumar Sarin of Institute of Liver and Biliary Science (ILBS), Delhi; and Zarir F Udhwadia of Hinduja Hospital, Breach Candy Hospital Mumbai.

The top court said, "We expect that leading experts in India shall associate with the force as members and resource persons as it will facilitate a meeting of minds and the formulation of scientific strategies to

deal with an unprecedented human crisis."

"The establishment of this force will enable the decision makers to have inputs that go beyond finding ad hoc solutions to the present problems. The likely future course of the pandemic must be taken into contemplation at the present time," the bench said.

It added that this will ensure that projected future requirements can be scientifically mapped in the present and may be modulated in the light of experiences gained. — PTI

OTHER STORIES

DON'T INTERFERE WITH PETITIONERS' LANDS: HC

FROM PAGE 1

The committee could make effective use of these resources rather than going about an inquiry when the pandemic is rampant and is claiming the lives of people.

The court directed the authorities not to interfere with the peaceful possession of petitioners' lands since it was claimed by the government that this enquiry was mooted only for the purpose of submitting a report. It directed the issue of show-cause notices to the petitioners and offering an opportunity to the parties to put forth their contention.

Any person objecting to the proceedings contemplated by the authorities should also be issued a showcause notice, it ruled. The petitioners should be ready with all relevant documents to substantiate their claims, the court said.

Senior counsel Kondam Vivek Reddy, representing the petitioners informed that they are in possession of approximately 55 acres of land since 1943. Though the deputy commissioner, endowments, declared the petitioners as encroachers vide his proceedings dated 27-1-2004, such proceedings have been set aside by the High Court of undivided Andhra Pradesh, which also directed the endowments department to prove its title before the court. He said that this has not been done by the government, till date.

Advocate-General B.S. Prasad submitted that the committee was constituted to conduct a preliminary inquiry in order to get a clearer picture regarding boundary disputes pertaining to the lands. A survey will also be conducted, he pointed out.

In his reaction, Justice Vinod Kumar said, "When the dispute regarding ownership of the lands of the petitioners has been there for several years, how come suddenly the government felt that a probe was needed. Does it not create suspicion among people? In the name of urgency, the government cannot push everything behind and your claim of urgency is not reflected in the GO."

LAB EXPERIMENTS DONE WITH CCMB HELP

FROM PAGE 1

In April 2020, during the first wave of the pandemic, INMAS scientists conducted laboratory experiments with the help of Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad. They found that this molecule works effectively against SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19, and inhibits viral growth.

Based on these results, DCGI Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) permitted Phase-II clinical trial of 2-DG in Covid-19 patients in May 2020.

DRDO along with its industry partner DRL started the clinical trials to test the safety and efficacy of the drug in Covid-19 patients.

In Phase-II trials (including dose ranging) conducted during May to October 2020, the drug was found to be safe, and showed significant improvement in their recovery. Phase IIa was conducted in six hospitals and Phase IIb (dose ranging) clinical trial was conducted at 11 hospitals all over the country. Phase-II trial was conducted on 110 patients. In efficacy trends, the patients treated with 2-DG showed faster symptomatic cure than Standard of Care (SoC) on various endpoints. A significantly favourable trend (2.5 days difference) was seen in terms of the median time to achieving normalisation of specific vital signs parameters when compared to SOC.

Based on successful results, DCGI further permitted the Phase-III clinical trials in November 2020. This was conducted on 220 patients from December 2020 to March 2021 on a large number of patients at 27 Covid hospitals in Delhi, UP, West Bengal, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

The detailed data of Phase-III clinical trial was presented to DCGI. It was found that a significantly higher proportion of patients improved symptomatically and became free from supplemental oxygen dependence (42 per cent vs 31 per cent) by Day-3, indicating an early relief from oxygen therapy/dependence. A similar trend was observed in patients more than 65 years.

On May 1, DCGI granted permission for emergency use of this drug as an adjunct therapy in moderate to severe Covid patients.

STORIES OF HOPE

Seniors turn Good Samaritans

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 7

Age is just a number. Proving this, a group of senior citizens in Malkajgiri area is helping people of lesser Gods to get vaccinated while others of their ilk are trying to get help for themselves for inoculation.

When these people approached Asha, who runs a makeshift jowar roti counter, with an offer to get her vaccinated, she was not sure what all that meant. But, she, just as Bhagyamma, who works as a maid at some homes in the area, is among several underprivileged women who got vaccinated against the Coronavirus, thanks to the efforts of these senior citizens.

They have taken upon themselves the responsibility of getting the people without access to the vaccination process inoculated, by way of booking slots, and finding where they can get their vaccine shots. In the process, these good Samaritans are not only educating the less privileged about the vaccination process, but also about the disease. For those who do not have their own transport, this



Sai Priya, an interior designer, is also busy helping underprivileged people with dry groceries and transportation.

group of volunteers has also been providing transport to vaccination centres and back. They also provide dry rations to a few, since they began these activities this April.

The Good Samaritans take up the responsibility to wipe out Coronavirus when others are

debating on the potency and side effects of the vaccine.

Geeta Dendukuri, a senior citizen of Kundanbagh,

Begumpet, along with a few residents in the area, has taken up the task of helping maids in that locality and those who work in unorganised sectors.

"A thought occurred to me, how these people will be able to book online slots for vaccination. So, we wanted to help them out. We registered a few of them and made sure that they got the vaccine shot."

General secretary of a residential welfare committee at Malkajgiri, B T Srinivasan, said, "Some of us may be comfortably living in our apartments or houses but there are so many people out there who may not even know about Covid vaccine and whom to approach for getting vaccinated. As we are more privileged than them, we came forward to help them out."

He added, "Till now this helping group has been able to get close to 100 people vaccinated. However, for more than a week, the web site is not responding."

Srinivasan also requested the other citizens, to come forward and help such people around them to learn about Covid vaccination status and guide them to get vaccinated."

Sai Priya, an interior designer by profession, is also busy helping underprivileged people with dry groceries as well as arranging transportation for them to get the jab.

A life devoted to destitute

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 7

The second wave of Covid-19 has literally shaken the country, with the virus causing more deaths, more miseries and more melancholies. While only a few privileged lots enjoy the comforts they need in times of pandemic, the larger section of society, particularly the poor and the down-trodden, do not have any takers.

Overwhelmed by the plight of over 20,000 slum-dwellers at Rasoolpura in Begumpet, a local resident Nayeem Pasha has decided to do his mite by supplying them essentials and medicines to help them overcome the nemesis.

Pasha, who is the founder secretary of Kriya Sangh Society, started distributing these to those in need. Speaking to this newspaper, Pasha said, "We are going from house to house in the slum, and are supporting them by giving them the required material. We have distributed food grains, medicines and other materials they require. We began this drive roughly a month ago."

The Sangh has a team of volunteers who go around the slum and identify those people affected with Covid-19 or are in the high-risk group. For stocks of grains and medicines, they have tied up with other organisations, which assist in mobilising resources for distribution. "There are 70-80 volunteers going out every day to deliver food and medicines to those who require them. Our volunteers go out and supply medicines and arrange for telephonic consultation with medical practitioners, so that the people do not face a dearth of medical attention," he said. There are people who have chronic diseases, some of them are suffering from unknown diseases in the slum. Pasha said, "Many people living in the slum are daily-wage earners, some of whom have lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic. In a bid to help them sustain their lives, we are helping them out," he added.



Nayeem Pasha supplies essentials and medicine to the needy in Rasoolpura.

People nearby feared it was earthquake

FROM PAGE 1

On receipt of news, Porumamilla Police Inspector Mohan Reddy, Porumamilla and Kalasapadu SIs Maddileti and Mohan rushed to the spot and took up relief operations. The injured were shifted to a hospital in Porumamilla. The deceased were identified as Prasad (40) from Gangayapalli in Kalasapadu mandal, Korivi Prasad from Porumamilla, Abdul from Vemula, Laxmi Reddy (60) from Kottapalle village, Eswaraiah (45) from Bucheyyagaripalle, Gangi Reddy from Rangoripalle, Venkata Ramana (25), Balangulu (35) from E. Kottapalle, Subbareddy (45) from Gondipalle in Vemula mandal and Venkatesh (25) from Bakkannagaripalle in Vempalli mandal.

People in the surrounding feared an earthquake had caused a massive explosion. District SP Karur Karunapati Nagendra Kumar Anburajan reached the site and oversaw the relief operations. Police registered a case and took up an investigation. They are verifying if the mine owner had necessary permits for



Smoke billows from a blast at a limestone quarry while a consignment of gelatin sticks was being unloaded, at Kalasapadu Mandal in Kadapa district on Saturday. At least 10 workers died in the mishap.

ore extraction. The wreckage of the vehicle, which was completely destroyed in the blast, was also examined.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed shock over the death of labourers in the blast and ordered all medical care to the injured. He made enquiries about the possible reasons behind the accident.

He conveyed his condolences to the bereaved families. TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed grief over the tragic event. He wondered how the works were carried out at the mine when curfew was in force in the state.

He demanded thorough probe into the incident and measures to avoid recurrence of such mishaps.

INTERNATIONAL

NURSING DAY

Ladies with lamps... and hearts of angels

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 8

As Swaroopa Rani, head nurse at Niloufer Hospital, breathed her last fighting Covid-19 on Friday night, the total number of nurses who died of the pandemic in Telangana state has reached nine. Swaroopa was due for her retirement at the end of the month. These incidents throw light to the plight of millions of nurses worldwide who run the risk of succumbing to the killer virus, yet work with utmost dedication

to save lives of those hapless souls affected by the pandemic. May 12 is observed as International Nursing Day, and the week is observed as nursing week.

According to statistics, a total of 2,710 nurses have died of Covid-19 and 1.6 million nursing staff have been infested so far globally by the Coronavirus.

This newspaper interacted with a few nursing staff working in different hospitals. They expressed their feelings of being a nurse in medical field.



This is a profession where care and compassion come first. Nurses should upgrade their knowledge as technology is advancing. In the present situation where there is a shortage of medical staff, nurses are showing extraordinary courage and sincerity in handling the crisis.

— RAJESWARI MUPPIDI, Dean, Care Nursing College



This pandemic has highlighted the services of nursing staff. People know that despite difficult conditions, nurses work tirelessly. Those who are just out of nursing schools can join as staff, even before the results are out, due to the shortage.

— LAXMAN RUDEVATH, General secretary, TS Nursing Officer Association



I am not afraid of the Coronavirus. I feel more dedicated while treating Covid-19 patients. At this point in time, I feel like this is a great opportunity to serve humanity. At Nims, we nurses numbering around 500 share the feeling.

—D. ROSY, Staff nurse on contract, Nims



Ebola, swine flu, chikungunya, viral fevers, and now Covid-19. At Gandhi Hospital, we have seen so much, and we conquered all diseases. Covid-19 is a challenge; we will overcome it. We are like warriors. We dedicate our lives to save our patients.

— DHARANI PADITHEM, staff nurse, Gandhi Hospital



I love my profession as it is challenging. At the end of the day, we feel we have given back to society, when the patents hold our hands and say thanks while getting discharged. We feel on top of the world.

— VIJAYA UPARAM, Head nurse, Government Chest Hospital



There are so many challenges including shortage of staff, extra work hours and the rage of patients' attendants, but nothing can give us more happiness when we see the patients getting cured. With great satisfaction, we go to sleep.

— SAIDAMMA PAGILLA, Staff nurse, King Koti District Hospital



We take nursing as a choice. We stay awake the whole night while taking care of patients. Along with the patients, we also battle for their lives. We give them back to their families as a gift.

—MARINA NETTO, Assistant Nursing Superintendent, Apollo Hospitals, Secunderabad



We get attached with the patient. We see their suffering, we feel depressed if something wrong happens to them. Their relatives consider us their family members while getting treated. When they recover, we feel as happy as their families.

— PRASANNA PAIDIPOVA, Nurse, Haemato Oncology, ESI Hospital



When the patient recovers, the happiness that we get cannot be expressed. At the same time when the patient is declared dead, we are depressed. We get so much satisfaction at the end of the day if everything goes well.

—KANAKADURGA ERRA, Outsourcing nurse, Gandhi Hospital



I was always fascinated by nursing as a profession. Now, as the world knows the importance of nurses during the Covid-19 pandemic, we are getting wide recognition. Nurses play a vital role in the treatment of patients.

—UMAPIYA GUNIGANTI, MSc nurse at a private hospital

HM flags off vans with Ramzan gifts

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 8

Home minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali on Saturday flagged off vehicles carrying Ramzan gifts for distribution to poor during the upcoming festival. These gifts are being distributed under auspices of the Telangana Wakf Board.

Wakf chairman Mohammed Saleem said the board has allocated ₹21 lakh for distributing 2,500 gift packs to poor and needy in GHMC limits. Each packet consists of 10 kg rice, 5 kg wheat flour, 1 litre edible oil and 1 kg sugar.

Speaking on the occasion, the home minister said state government is making every effort to combat Covid-19. Health infrastructure is being improved and number of beds in government hospitals is being enhanced. Mahmood Ali said Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao himself is keeping vigil and monitoring the health delivery system.

The wakf chairman said they are planning to launch a funeral bath vehicle for people residing in flats, who are facing difficulties in giving funeral baths to dead bodies.

Arrest in midst of Etala's sacking

FROM PAGE 1

The arrest comes amid the sacking of minister Etala Rajendar from the Cabinet, following allegations of encroaching on government land.

The arrest was made after a case was lodged by Gattu Vaman Rao's father Gattu Kishan Rao, suspecting Madhukar's role in the murder case. Reportedly receiving information that the government issued orders to probe his role in the murders case from a senior police official in Hyderabad,

Madhukar disappeared on April 30, just when Rajendar began facing allegations of encroachment of assigned land parcels in Achampet and Hakimpet in Medak district.

The police suspect that Madhukar went through states like Maharashtra, Kerala and Chhattisgarh before landing up in Andhra Pradesh leaving his gunmen and hiring private vehicles. He changed four vehicles from the time he went missing and used a separate mobile phone, police said. After learn-

ing that Madhukar was near Rajahmahendravaram and Bhimavaram of the neighbouring state, the Task Force police of Ramagundam commissionate, rushed to West Godavari and nabbed Madhukar who was found in a lodge at Bhimavaram.

Meanwhile, for the past few days, there were reports on social media that ₹2 crore was given to a gang for killing the High Court advocate couple. It is said that the police found that the money was withdrawn from the bank account of

Madhukar before the murder, and handed over to the gang that murdered the couple.

Apart from that, the car used by one of the prime accused, Bittu Srinu, a nephew of Madhukar, belongs to Madhukar.

There are allegations that Madhukar, right from the time he was elected MLA from Manthani, had indulged in several illegal activities.

It was learnt that in the name of Putta Lingamma Charitable Trust, he had gathered

crores of rupees. All activities of the trust has been taken care of by his nephew Bittu Srinu.

There are also other allegations about Madhukar's role in the lock-up death of Sheelam Rangaiah in Manthani which created a sensation in the region.

The police has started investigation on why Madhukar went missing, why he withdrew ₹2 crore and where he spent that money and his role in the advocate couple murder case.



OTHER STORIES

WORLD RED CROSS DAY OBSERVED

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 8

World Red cross day and Thalassaemia day was observed marking the birth anniversary of Red Cross founder Henry Dunant at the Warangal Red Cross office, on Saturday. Chief conservator of forests, S.J. Asha lauded Dunant's services to humankind. She said taking his inspired path, the red cross has been at the forefront of fighting any disaster worldwide. "Volunteers who come forward with a sense of service are really appreciable. The youth must take the lead in volunteer services. There is a need to motivate the youth in a way that would foster a sense of service in them. Everyone needs to do their part as a responsibility to the community. We are currently waging a major war with the Coronavirus, not only for the financial loss but also the loss of life. The need for volunteers is high at this time," she said.



MICRO ARTIST PAYS BEFITTING TRIBUTE TO MOMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 8

A micro artist, G. Choleshwara Chary, a resident of Raghavapatnam village in Gollepalayam mandal in Jagtial district, has paid a special tribute to all the mothers by drawing an image of mother carrying a baby on milk in a cup on the eve of the International Mother's Day.

Chary said that he felt happy, drawing the image of a mother who nourishes her children with her milk. Mother's love is the same for every living being in the world. Everyone is indebted to the mother for her selfless love and sacrifices. He said that he was dedicating the artwork to his mother on the occasion of International Mother's Day.

People's representatives, friends and villagers appreciated Chary for his inspiring work and wished him a bright future.

Docs harried by calls from political leaders

Adding pressure seeking better care of their near, dear

PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, MAY 8

Already under severe strain with Covid-19 cases, doctors are facing pressure from political leaders who calling them frequently to enquire about the condition of patients know to them. The politicians are thus indirectly adding to anxiety among the medical staff both in government and private hospitals.

The family members or relatives of patients undergoing treatment for Covid-19 are putting pressure on the leaders they could access, to recommend good care of their kin and relatives, especially in government Covid isolation centres in Nirmal, Mancherla and Adilabad districts.

The leaders, too, feel duty-bound under these trying circumstances and try to do what they can – call up doctors and urge better care of the patients. It is learnt that many doctors are unable to concentrate on Covid patients whose condition was critical as they had to attend to those who were in better conditions and out of danger. They have to earnestly convince the political leaders that they would care for their dear and near and also keep the leaders abreast of their well-being.

Many doctors say that it is high time the political leaders desisted from disturbing them as they anyway were paying all attention and providing all care to all the patients to ensure their speedy recovery.

The leaders had better use their influence to rope in members of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) to render their services to Covid patients for at least once a week at government hospitals. Many doctors are wary of Covid cases in government as chances of infection are more there.

Due to shortage of hands, the existing medical staff at government hospitals are overburdened and thus pray for any relief from their duties. If the private doctors chip in, it would be a great relief, they said.

Changed guidelines hit Covid jab drive

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 8

Majority of people are facing difficulty to get the Covid-19 vaccine as the government has frequently been changing the guidelines. People in rural areas forced to wait for long time to get the vaccine and shell out their pockets to register their names at Mee Seva centres. Smart phones are not available with the people in rural areas and they are unable to register details at earliest on the Cowin portal.

In view of severity of second wave of Covid-19, people rushed to get the vaccination, but changed guidelines adversely affected the vaccination. Earlier, people above 45 years of age approached nearest primary health centres and urban health centres with Aadhar card photo copies to get the vaccination immediately. The process was easy for both people and the medical and health staff.

The Central government has introduced slot booking system through Cowin portal, which is turned difficulty for rural masses.

Due to illiteracy and the lack of smart phones availability, people forced to visit nearest town or mandal headquarter to register their details on Cowin portal at Mee Seva centres.

It will take two or three days to complete the registration process based on opening of shops and availability of network. Mee Seva centres charged ₹50 per Cowin registration and travelling expenses are extra. Those aged 45 and above, especially women require escort to reach towns and mandal headquarters in this pandemic situation.

As a result, there is no full response for Covid-19 vaccination in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts. For

● **THE CENTRAL** government has introduced slot booking system through Cowin portal, which is turned difficulty for rural masses. Due to illiteracy and the lack of smart phones availability, people forced to visit nearest town or mandal headquarter to register their details on Cowin portal at Mee Seva centres.

● **AS A RESULT**, there is no full response for Covid-19 vaccination in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts. For instance, vaccination target for Kamareddy district is 2,900 on Saturday, but only 1,723 persons (59 percent) got vaccinated. Initially, elder people with chronic diseases allowed for vaccination and later changed it for 45 years plus agegroup.

instance, vaccination target for Kamareddy district is 2,900 on Saturday, but only 1,723 persons (59 percent) got vaccinated. Initially, elder people with chronic diseases allowed for vaccination and later changed it for 45 plus years age.

Suddenly, halted first dose of vaccination and allowed second dose without slot booking. People are not ready to get the second dose all of sudden. It is high time to protect the people without any delay and hurdles of norms.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Kamareddy district medical and health officer Dr P. Chandrasekhar said that frequent changes in guidelines of vaccination is turned difficulty for field staff.

There is no shortage of vaccine, but people should come forward to get it, he said. "ANMs, Asha workers assisting the people in rural areas to get the vaccine at earliest", he added.

FIGHT COVID-19 WITH COURAGE, SAYS ERRABELLI

DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 8

Minister for Panchayat Raj, Errabelli Dayakar Rao urged people infected with Coronavirus to face it with courage and combat the virus without losing their composure.

Speaking to people affected with Covid and their family members through teleconference in Palakurthy, on Saturday, he urged family members, relatives and friends of those infected to take precautions and help them. The minister suggested everyone to adhere to social distancing as part of Covid control, wear masks, sanitise hands and never leave the house unless necessary.

However, he suggested that those with fever, headache, cough and tearing should immediately undergo a Covid test and seek treatment under the supervision of a doctor if tested positive.

Dayakar Rao said that the state government is constantly working to combat the Coronavirus epidemic in the state. He complained that despite the state government taking a number of measures to control Covid-19 and implementing it vigorously, the Central government is not providing assistance to the state as expected. However, the minister said that Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar said that frequent changes in guidelines of vaccination is turned difficulty for field staff.

He urged the officers and employees concerned along with ZPTCs, MPPs, MPTCs and sarpanches to call the Covid victims every day and resolve their issues.

He asked the public representatives to provide Covid-19 patients with medicines, food, vegetables, rice and other daily necessities.

Door-To-Door survey



Medical and health employees conduct door to door surveys to identify the people with Covid-19 symptoms in Karimnagar on Saturday.

MEDICAL STAFF INTENSIFIES DOOR-TO-DOOR COVID SURVEY

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 8

Medical and health department has intensified the house to house survey to identify the people suffering from Covid-19 symptoms and provide them medical kits in the old Adilabad district.

The paramedical staff are visiting houses and inquiring about the persons suffering from covid symptoms if any in their colonies.

This exercise is being done as part of controlling Covid-19 and preventing from spreading to others.

Even the top district officials are visiting the primary health centers and inquiring about the covid tests and distribution of Coronavirus medical kits.

BSNL SERVICES AT CUSTOMERS DOORSTEP

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 8

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), Nizamabad business area office has decided to provide new sim card, prepaid mobile recharge to the customers of Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts at their doorsteps in this Covid-19 pandemic situation. BSNL customers can avail the services by approach B. Sudhakar, JTO (franchise manager) on phone numbers 08462 230200, mobile number 9423993293, Vijay Rathod

JTO (franchise manager) on phone number 08462230200, mobile number 9490018345. BSNL customers can also do online recharge through BSNL portal by clicking the link <http://portal12.bsnl.in/myportal/quickrecharge.do> or through "My BSNL App," which can be downloaded through google play store for prepaid mobile recharge, postpaid bill payments and other BSNL services, said BSNL assistant general manager (sales and marketing) P. Seetharam on Saturday.

TSGLI EXTENDES DATE FOR POLICY PROPOSALS

Nizamabad: Telangana state government life insurance corporation extended the date for submission of proposal forms and obtain policies until October 31, for selected policy holders. Government employees and teachers who are in service and contributed the premium prior to their attaining age of 53 years and are continuing

contribution till date and who are below the maturity age of 58 years can submit the proposals. For the submission of proposals and obtain policies, policyholders can contact the assistant director, district insurance office, Amrampur road, Maruthinagar Nizamabad. After the last date, proposals and policies will not be accepted, according to a press release.

YOUTH ALLEGEDLY STABS GIRL, TRIES TO KILL SELF

Jagtial: A 24-year-old youth allegedly stabbed a girl for rejecting his love and slit his throat in a bid to commit suicide. The condition of both of them are said to be serious. The incident took place in Jagtial rural mandal in Jagtial district on Saturday. According to the police, the youth was identified as Raj Kumar, resident of Mannegudem village of

Medipally mandal, fell in love with the girl, who is a resident of Jagtialpur for the past few months. On a number of occasions, she rejected his proposals and said not to go after her in the name of love. On Saturday, when the girl was alone at home, Raj Kumar attacked the girl with a knife and later tried to commit suicide after coming out her house. Even after seeing Raj

Kumar lying in a pool of blood, no one responded and not tried to save the life of Raj Kumar. Surprisingly, the people in that locality did not even dial seek ambulance services to save both the girl and the man who were battling for their lives.

However, a Blue Colt patrol team who were passing by watched the incident and immediately shifted both to a nearby hospital.

Etala is a Reddy, deceiving people using BC card: Cong

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 8

Padi Koushik Reddy, the Congress Huzurabad Assembly segment in-charge, on Saturday alleged that former minister Etala Rajendar was deceiving people using the BC card, although he did not belong to the Backward Class community. Instead he was a Reddy, Koushik Reddy said.

In the records pertaining to the lands, which are worth hundreds of crores, the name of his son is Nithin Reddy, which makes it evident that the former minister's real name was Etala Reddy, he claimed showing the papers at a press conference in the party office here.

Koushik Reddy alleged that Rajendar said that he had not purchased any valuable lands either at Hitec City or Banjara Hills in Hyderabad. What about the 31.25 acres of land, which were purchased in the name of Nithin Reddy, and 36.39 acres of land in the name of his benami Sada Keshav Reddy in Ravalkole village, which is being promoted as Hitec City, the Congress leader asked.

At present the price of each acre of land in Ravalkole is around ₹3 crore. He purchased the land in 2019 and today it's valued at around ₹200 crore, he said and wondered from where the former minister had managed to raise that much

amount. "Are you getting golden eggs from the hatcheries you own? If that is true, then we all will purchase those hens and will try to get rid of poverty from Huzurabad constituency," he said.

The Congress leader recalled that Rajendar had said that his business turnover was nearly ₹3,000 crore. But he earned money illegally by using his political power and later invested that in his business to turn it white, he alleged.

"Why did you rush to Huzurabad constituency? Are your people not supporting you and why did you not resign from your MLA post? Are you afraid of what is going to happen to you", he asked.

Since he lost his self-respect within the party and to protect his properties and wealth, he is trying to use Huzurabad people once again, he alleged.

He betrayed BC, SC and ST communities by grabbing their lands. He did not even help the Mudiraj community, the Congress leader said.

He demanded the Chief Minister, K. Chandrasekhar Rao to order a CBI inquiry into the activities of Rajendar and how he had purchased valuable land in Ravalkole village investing more than Rs. 200 crore.

TPCC joint secretary T.Satyanarayana and DCC working president P. Satyanarayana Rao also spoke.

TRS LEADERS SHOCKED AFTER FOUNDER-MEMBER MEETS ETALA

Nizamabad: TRS founder-member and former Yellareddy MLA E. Ravinder Reddy met former minister Etala Rajendar in Hyderabad. This has shocked party leaders across the undivided Nizamabad district.

Ravinder Reddy is a three-time MLA from Yellareddy Assembly constituency and was sidelined after his defeat in the 2018 elections. Interestingly, Ravinder Reddy is a close associate of finance minister T. Harish Rao.

On his meeting with Rajendar, Ravinder Reddy said that they had fought together for Telangana statehood. The meeting was a cordial one, he clarified and that there was no political agenda. Ravinder Reddy joined TRS after its inception and was elected as MLA in 2004, 2009 and 2014 elections from Yellareddy Assembly constituency. Congress MLA J. Surender, who defeated him, has since joined TRS.

The ruling party is divided into two groups in the constituency as second rung leaders and cadre work separately with the two leaders. Reportedly the TRS high command did not respond as rumours flared up that Ravinder Reddy may join BJP.

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IN BRIEF

Man held on rape charge in U.P.

Shahjahanpur : Police here arrested a 45-year-old man in connection with the rape of a mentally-challenged woman. Tilhar police station SHO Harpal Singh Baliyan said on Friday, a 50-year-old mentally-challenged woman was sleeping in her hut when the accused from the same locality raped her. Citing contents of the complaint registered against the accused, the SHO said another person made a video of the rape. Police arrested the accused on Saturday while the woman was sent for a medical examination. The case was registered on the complaint of a resident of the same locality, police said.

TIGER FOUND DEAD IN CANAL IN MP'S BALAGHAT DIST.

Bhopal: A carcass of a tiger was found floating in a canal of an inter-state water project in Madhya Pradesh's Balaghat district, neighbouring Maharashtra, an official said on Saturday.

The carcass was found floating in a canal of Rajiv Sagar project at Khadagpur village of Balaghat district's Waraseoni tehsil on Friday, the official said.

Photographs of the stripes of the sub-adult big cat will be sent to forest officials in Maharashtra for identification, Madhya Pradesh additional principal chief conservator of forest (Wildlife) J. S. Chauhan said.

"We are going to send a picture of the stripes of the sub-adult (18 to 24 months) tiger to our Maharashtra counterparts to identify if he belonged to that state, as Nawegoan-Nagzaria Tiger Reserve in Bhandara and Gondia districts was not far from the spot," Chauhan said.

Officials will also study the stripes of the tiger to ascertain if he belonged to MP, as parts of the Kanha Tiger Reserve fall in Balaghat district, he added.

It is easy to identify tigers, as their stripes are recorded in cameras, which are installed to photograph them during tiger census in the state, the official said.

MP CM SLAMS SOREN FOR HIS REMARKS ON PM

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday condemned his Jharkhand counterpart Hemant Soren's recent remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said that he has lowered the dignity of the post he holds through his comments.

Soren, in a tweet on Thursday night following a telephonic conversation with Modi over the Covid-19 situation in Jharkhand, had taken a dig at the prime minister, saying that he only spoke "Mann ki Baat" and that it would have been better if he had discussed business.

Taking to Twitter, Chouhan said, "Hemant Soren ji has lowered the dignity of the chief minister's post by making comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. No chief minister has ever used such lowest level of language against the PM."

Chouhan said that Soren tweeted about his telephonic discussion with the PM not only for his political gains, but his language also lacked sobriety and dignity.

"I strongly condemn it," he said.

Sena blames Modi for virus crisis, lauds Nehru, Gandhi

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 8

Holding the Narendra Modi Government responsible for the prevailing Covid situation in the country, Maharashtra's ruling party Shiv Sena has said the country is running because of the institutions created by the Nehru-Gandhi family. It has also slammed the Union Government for continuing with the work of the Central Vista project amidst the pandemic.

"The corona crisis has badly affected India's economy. Despite this, the country has survived because of the system created in the past 70 years by previous prime min-

isters like Pandit Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Manmohan Singh," said the Uddhav Thackeray-led party in a hard-hitting editorial in the party mouthpiece 'Saamana' on Saturday. "Many poor countries are offering help to India to tackle Covid-19. Earlier, countries like Pakistan, Rwanda and Congo used to get help from others. But due to the wrong policies of today's rulers, India that prides itself as Aatmanirbhar (self-reliant) is going through that situation now," said the party.

According to the editorial, India has reported the highest number of Covid deaths in the last 10 days. Globally,

one out of the five active patients is in India. In the last ten days, 36,110 deaths have occurred. Every hour, there are 150 Covid deaths in the country. We have left the USA and Brazil behind in terms of deaths due to the virus. The world fears India now. Several countries have stopped their citizens from doing business with India, due to which the country's economy has been hit hard.

BJP MP Subramanian Swamy has demanded that Union minister Nitin Gadkari be given the charge of the health ministry and this is a proof that the current union health ministry has been a complete failure, it added.

Over 84L doses available with states, UTs: Govt

New Delhi, May 8: More than 84 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with states and union territories and over 53 lakh doses will be distributed to them in the next three days, the Centre said on Saturday.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare said that so far over 17.49 crore vaccine doses have been provided to states/UTs, out of which around 16.7 crore doses have been consumed.

"Of the vaccine doses provided, the total consumption, including wastages, is 16,65,49,583 doses (as per data available at 8 am on Saturday). More than 84 lakh Covid vaccine doses (84,08,187) are still available with states/UTs to be administered," the ministry said.

It said that states with a negative balance are showing more consumption (including wastage) than vaccine supplied as

they have "not reconciled the vaccine they have supplied to the armed forces". "Furthermore, more than 53 lakh (53,25,000) vaccine doses will be received in addition by states/UTs within the next three days," the ministry announced.

It said that Delhi received 40.22 lakh vaccine doses, out of which it consumed 36.09 lakh doses. The ministry said that the national capital still has a balance of 4.12 lakh doses available and within the next three days, it is likely to receive one lakh doses more. The projected population of Delhi was taken at 2.04 crore as on October 1, 2020. Out of the 53.25 lakh vaccine doses expected to be distributed among states and union territories in the next three days, Gujarat will get 8.98 lakh vaccine doses, which is the maximum number of doses any state or UT will receive. — PTI

Govt allows cash payment of `2L

New Delhi, May 8: The Income Tax Department has issued a notification allowing hospitals and nursing homes to accept cash payments of ₹2 lakh and more for the treatment of Covid-19 patients. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), which frames policy for the department, issued the notification on Friday.

It said hospitals, dispensaries, nursing homes, Covid care centres or similar other medical facilities providing Covid-19 treatment to patients are being "specified for the purpose of section 269ST of the Income Tax Act".

This section restricts any person from receiving an amount of ₹2 lakh or more in cash, from a

person in a day, in respect of a single transaction or in respect of transactions relating to one event or occasion from a person.

It was introduced by the Union government in 2017 as a measure to curb black money.

The notification said the latest provision is being made for a period between April 1-May 31 "on obtaining the PAN or Aadhaar of the patient and the payee and the relationship between the patient and the payee" by such hospitals or Covidcare centres.

Officials said the move was aimed to remove the hardship being faced by relatives and caregivers of Covid-19 patients who visit hospitals for treatment. — PTI

Oxygen production now 9,400 MT a day; Vardhan says 1.34% Covid cases in ICU, 0.39% on ventilators

New Delhi, May 8: While 1,70,841 Covid patients across the country are on ventilator, as many as 9,02,291 patients are on oxygen support, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Saturday.

In his virtual address at the 25th meeting of the Group of Ministers (GoM) to discuss the pandemic situation, the minister said that 1.34 percent of Covid caseload was in ICU, 0.39 percent of cases were on ventilators and 3.70 percent Covid patients were on oxygen support.

He said that across the country, the number of patients in ICU beds is 4,88,861 while 1,70,841 patients were on ventilators and 9,02,291 patients were on oxygen support. The meeting was attended by Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar, Minister of Civil Aviation Hardeep S. Puri, Minister of State for Ports,

Ahmedabad, May 8: Cases of Mucormycosis, a fungal infection, affecting some Covid-19 survivors are on the rise in Gujarat which has left many patients blind, doctors and officials claimed on Saturday. Mathur Savani, chairman of Surat-based Kiran Super multi-speciality hospital, said mucormycosis was detected in a patient who had recovered from Covid-19

Shipping and Waterways and Chemical and Fertilizers Mansukh Mandaviya and Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs Nityanand Rai. Ashwini Kumar Choubey,

disease around three weeks back.

"This number has gone up to around 50 now while 60 more such patients are awaiting treatment," Savani said.

The hospital, which is managed by a trust, has been receiving several patients diagnosed with Mucormycosis who are being referred from various areas in Surat and other parts of Gujarat, he said.

"As of now, 50 mucormycosis patients are getting treated at Kiran Hospital and 60 others are awaiting (treatment). They all came to our hospital in the last three weeks. All the patients who are suffering from mucormycosis had recovered from Covid-19 recently," said Savani. According to Savani, seven such patients have lost their eyesight so far. — PTI

Minister of State, Health and Family Welfare and Dr Vinod K Paul, Member (Health), NITI Aayog were present virtually.

Paul gave a detailed report on the work of the

Empowered Group-1 and highlighted the various efforts made towards ramping up hospital infrastructure for effective clinical management of hospitalised patients.

Giridhar Aramane, Secretary, Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways (Chair, EG-2) presented the current scenario of Liquid Medical Oxygen Production, Allocation and Supply. Aramane stated that the production of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) has been maximised to meet the present demand of Covid patients.

The domestic production has increased to more than 9400 MT/day, the health ministry quoted him, adding that he also enumerated steps to import LMO, the status of establishment of PSA oxygen plants through the support of PM CARES fund with the support of DRDO and CSIR, enhancement of tanker availability, the functioning of the web portal and mobile application for Real-Time Tracking of LMO Tankers. — PTI

TN announces 'total lockdown'

Chennai, May 8: With Tamil Nadu witnessing a sharp increase in the Covid-19 cases, the government on Saturday announced clamping a two-week "total lockdown" across the state to curb the spread of the pandemic, starting May 10.

Chief Minister M. K. Stalin said in a statement that the lockdown was being enforced due to "unavoidable reasons" and pointed out that the decision was taken based on inputs received at a review meeting he had with district collectors on Friday, besides consultations with medical experts.

The recommendations made by the Union Home and Health ministries had also been factored in.

"The total lockdown will be enforced from 4 am on May 10 to 4 am on May 24 to further intensify the efforts to curb the spread of the disease," he said.

Stalin announced relaxing existing restrictions on business hours for shops on Saturday and Sunday, when a full day-long lockdown is supposed to be in effect, allowing them to remain open till 9 pm to aid people since stricter curbs would kick in from May 10.

— PTI



People, not adhering to social distancing norms, visit a wholesale market during lockdown in Nagpur, on Saturday.

— PTI

Puri: No trees uprooted for Central Vista

New Delhi, May 8: Union minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday said that no jamun trees have been uprooted as part of the ongoing Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project stretching from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, and asserted that defining elements of built heritage like lamp posts will be restored.

The Union housing and urban affairs minister said that only a few trees will be transplanted as part of the project, claiming that the overall green cover will increase.

This comes a day after reports said that several jamun trees could be uprooted as part of the Central Vista Avenue redevelopment project.

"Do not believe in fake photos & canards about ongoing work at Central Vista Avenue. No Jamun trees have been removed. Only few trees will be transplanted in entire project. Overall green cover will increase. Defining elements of built heritage like lamp posts etc will be restored," Puri tweeted.

In another tweet, the minister said the new Central Vista Avenue will have more public space with refurbished lawns, paved walkways along Rajpath, improved landscape, clean canals, adequate public amenities, vending areas, public performance facilities, safe road crossings, non-disruptive facilities for public events etc.

The project will be ready in time to host the Republic Day parade in 2022, the 75th year of India's independence, he said.

● **THE UNION HOUSING** and urban affairs minister said that only a few trees will be transplanted as part of the project, claiming that the overall green cover will increase.

● **THE PROJECT** will be ready in time to host the Republic Day parade in 2022, the 75th year of India's independence, he said.

● **The government** has been facing criticism from the Opposition for executing the Central Vista redevelopment project amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

The project is being executed by Shapoorji Pallonji and Co Pvt Ltd.

The redevelopment of the Central Vista, the nation's power corridor, envisages a new Parliament building, a common central secretariat, revamping of the 3-km Rajpath from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate, new Prime Minister's residence and office, and a new Vice President Enclave.

The government has been facing criticism from the Opposition for executing the Central Vista redevelopment project amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

Attacking the government on Friday, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi termed the project a "criminal wastage" and asked the dispensation to focus on people's lives during the pandemic. —PTI

BJP suspends 6 leaders in MP for rebellion

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAY 8

The state BJP unit has issued show-cause notice to veteran leader and former minister Jayant Malaiya for indulging in anti-party activities and suspended the primary membership of his son Sidharth and five mandal presidents.

Mr Malaiya, a seven-time-MLA, regretted that he was being made a scapegoat for the party's defeat in the Damoh by-poll and held that the show-cause notice issued to him was a consequence of his ongoing rivalry with Union tourism min-

● **UNION MINISTER** Patel, who represented Damoh parliamentary constituency, had earlier attributed the party's loss in Damoh by-poll to "internal sabotage".

ister Pralhad Patel. "Why is the chief minister not being held accountable for the defeat of the party in Damoh by-poll since it was he who led the party campaign in the by-elections," he added.

The BJP leadership's move comes in the wake of the defeat of the party candidate, Rahul Singh

Lodhi, in the April 17 by-polls to Damoh Assembly constituency. Mr Lodhi has blamed Mr Malaiya and his family for his defeat in the by-elections.

"A show-cause notice has been served to Mr Malaiya seeking clarification to anti-party activities during the Damoh by-poll. The party also suspended primary membership of Sidharth Malaiya and five mandal presidents," BJP media in-charge Lokendra Parashar said.

Union minister Patel, who represented Damoh parliamentary constituency, had earlier attributed the party's loss in Damoh by-poll to "internal sabotage".

30 ambulances lie unused in Bihar, Yadav raises questions

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, MAY 8

Jan Adhikar Party (JAP) chief Pappu Yadav, on Saturday, raised the political pitch in Bihar by targeting BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy after a fleet of unused ambulances was found parked on the campus of the Amnour Community Centre in Saran district.

Mr Yadav demanded an explanation as to why around 30 ambulances with Rajiv Pratap Rudy's name, and reportedly purchased using MPLADS funds, were parked unused on the campus of the community centre.

"When the state is battling a huge crisis due to lack of medical resources, why are so many unused

ambulances with BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy's name parked here? There are more than 30 ambulances here and I have information that there were more than 100 ambulances parked here earlier, but were moved," the JAP chief said.

Mr Yadav also released a video on social media that showed him removing the cover from the ambulances and pointing at Mr Rudy's name and the word "MPLADS" mentioned on it. However, Mr Rudy, who represents the Saran Lok Sabha constituency, accused Mr Yadav of indulging in politics. He said that unused ambulances were parked due to the unavailability of drivers.

He also said that the dis-

trict magistrate of Saran was informed about the situation and advertisements were also put up for drivers, but nothing transpired.

"Pappu Yadav is trying to indulge in politics by raising baseless allegations. He doesn't know that out of the 80 ambulances, 56 are operational and serving the people. Pappu Yadav can take these ambulances, but he should promise that he will provide drivers and serve the people of Saran during this pandemic."

"I would urge Pappu Yadav to keep his politics for Madhepura because people of Saran know the truth and they will not get influenced by him," Mr Rudy said.

SHORT TAKES

TWO ARRESTED IN MALDIVES BOMB ATTACK

Mal, Maldives: Maldives police have arrested two people over an assassination attempt on former president Mohamed Nasheed who has been taken off life support, officials and relatives said on Saturday.

The Indian Ocean island has called in international help to investigate Thursday's bomb attack that left the democracy pioneer and climate activist needing 16 hours of surgery to remove shrapnel from his lungs, liver, chest, abdomen and limbs.

Police said two people had been arrested but did not give details.

They were looking for four suspects seen in the vicinity of the attack on Thursday night just as Nasheed was about to get in his car.

Australian Federal Police officers and two experts from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime were expected to join the investigation on Saturday.

LIBYAN MILITIAS TAKE OVER TRIPOLI GOV'T HEAD OFFICE

Cairo: In a show of force, armed militiamen briefly took over a hotel in the Libyan capital of Tripoli that serves as headquarters for the interim government, officials said on Saturday.

Friday's development came after the three-member presidential council earlier this week appointed a new chief of the intelligence agency, Libya's version of the CIA. The militias, which control Tripoli, were apparently unhappy with the choice of Hussein Khalifa as the new spy chief. Presidential council spokeswoman Najwa Wheba said no one was hurt in the takeover of Hotel Corinthia, in the heart of Tripoli.

The hotel was mostly empty on Friday, the Muslim weekend. After a while, the militias left the hotel, according to an official at the Interior Ministry who spoke on condition of anonymity under regulations. Khalifa and the militia leaders were not immediately available for comment on Saturday.

ROYAL SCANDAL: NEW ZULU KING'S CLAIM DISPUTED

Cape Town: A new Zulu king in South Africa was named amid scenes of chaos on Friday night as other members of the royal family questioned Prince Misuzulu Zulu's claim to the title and bodyguards suddenly whisked him away from the public announcement at a palace.

The controversy over the next king, a largely ceremonial role but one with great significance for South Africa and its 12 million Zulu people, has arisen after the death in March of King Goodwill Zwelithini, who had reigned since 1968. Zwelithini apparently named one of his six wives, Queen Mantfombi Shiyiwe Dlamini Zulu, as the "regent of the Zulu kingdom" in his will, but her death just over a week ago after holding the title for only a month has thrown the royal succession into turmoil. The commotion broke out at the reading of Queen Mantfombi's will and hours after a memorial service for her.

NASA'S NEW CHIEF HEDGES ON 2024 MOON LANDING

Cape Canaveral: NASA's new administrator is big on tackling climate and diversifying the agency's workforce, but hedging on whether the US can put astronauts on the moon by 2024. In his first interview since becoming NASA's top official this week, former Sen. Bill Nelson said on Friday that tracking climate change is a top issue. He also wants to diversify the space agency's workforce so it reflects America.

As for landing astronauts on the moon, Nelson said the goal remains 2024, a deadline set by the Trump administration. But he cautions space is hard and he needs more time to review the matter, especially with a contract protest over the lunar lander for astronauts.

"We all know that space is hard," he said, noting there are often delays developing new technologies. "But the goal is 2024." His underlying vision for NASA "to explore the heavens with humans and machines". Nelson said he did not seek the NASA administrator job and had recommended three women to lead the space agency.



Masked Palestinian followers of the Hamas movement near Beit Lahia in the Gaza Strip, prepare to fly incendiary balloons across the northern border toward Israel, on Saturday. — AFP

Israel braces for Jerusalem riots, over 160 injured

Jerusalem, May 8: More than 160 people were wounded after Israeli riot police clashed with Palestinians at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound late Friday, capping a week of violence in the Holy City and the occupied West Bank.

Stones, bottles and fireworks were hurled at officers who fired rubber bullets and stun grenades at the crowds at Islam's third-holiest site, also revered by Jews as the location of two biblical-era temples.

At least 163 Palestinians and six Israeli officers were reported wounded at Al-Aqsa and elsewhere in east Jerusalem, as the Palestinian Red Crescent said it had opened a field hospital because emergency rooms were full.

Police said officers had restored order because of the "rioting of thousands of worshippers" after evening prayers.

Tensions in Jerusalem have soared in recent weeks as Palestinians have protested against Israel's restrictions on access to parts of the Old City during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, and after authorities

ordered several Palestinian families to leave their homes to make way for Israeli settlers.

The United States called for "de-escalation" and said the threatened evictions could worsen the situation in east Jerusalem, as the United Nations warned the forced evictions could amount to "war crimes".

Friday's unrest came on Al-Quds (the Arabic name for Jerusalem) Day, an annual day of pro-Palestinian rallies held by Iran, the arch-enemy of Israel, which also saw many thousands march in majority-Muslim countries across the region and as far as Pakistan.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas said that he held the Israeli government "responsible" for the unrest and voiced "full support for our heroes in Aqsa".

International observers urged calm, with UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Tor Wennesland tweeted his concern, and urged all parties to "respect the status quo of holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City in the interest of peace & stability." — AFP

Boris Johnson welcomes wins in local elections

London, May 8: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson was enjoying an election bounce on Saturday as many of the local and by-election results went in favour of his ruling Conservative Party.

In what is seen as a result in support of the government's coronavirus vaccination programme as well as the handling of Brexit, the Opposition Labour Party faced a crushing by-election defeat in a traditional stronghold of Hartlepool in north-east England, which the party had held for many decades.

The Johnson-led Conservatives secured key victories over Labour as they took control of a number of councils in the West Midlands. The Tories have hailed it as a continuation of the crushing Labour defeats in the 2019 general election.

"What happened in 2019 was that people mandated us to get Brexit done and to begin the process of uniting and levelling up. I think what's happened now is they can see we did get Brexit done and to a

certain extent they can see we delivered on that," said Johnson, on a visit to Hartlepool to congratulate the new Conservative parliamentarian Jill Mortimer.

"I think what people want us to do now is get on with delivering on everything else. And so, number one is continuing the vaccine rollout - making sure we go from jabs, jabs, jabs to jobs, jobs, jobs. Make sure we have a strong economic recovery. But then get on with a massive project for this country - and it is a very ambitious thing," he said.

"Every government has tried it to some extent but I don't think any government has tried it as wholeheartedly as this government is trying. And that is uniting and levelling up," he added. The Hartlepool vote and this week's local elections, for which the results are continuing to be counted, were Labour leader Keir Starmer's first major electoral test after just over a year as Labour leader. The general picture has been dismal, focussing scrutiny on his performance over the last 12 months. — AP

EU seals deal for up to 1.8 bn extra BioNTech/Pfizer doses

27-nation bloc is on track to have 70% of adults vaccinated by late July

Porto Portugal, May 8: The EU has concluded a deal with BioNTech/Pfizer for up to 1.8 billion extra doses of their Covid-19 vaccine, European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said on Saturday.

"Happy to announce that the EU Commission has just approved a contract for guaranteed 900 million doses (+900 million options) with BioNTech/Pfizer for 2021-2023," she tweeted from an EU summit in Portugal.

"Other contracts and other vaccine technologies will follow," she promised.

The contract, on top of the 600 million BioNTech/Pfizer doses the commission has already secured, aims to supply the bloc — population 450 million — with enough jabs for booster shots, the EU said.

They could also expand vaccination to minors and for exports to lower-income countries outside the EU, it added.

Von der Leyen has said that the mRNA technology used by BioNTech/Pfizer and other vaccine-makers has proven safe and effective.

BioNTech of Germany and Pfizer of the United States have stepped up supply Europe with their jointly produced doses, and their vaccine is currently the main one being used in the EU.

Others in the EU vaccine portfolio include those from AstraZeneca — which delivered far below the quantities it had promised, and whose jab has been tarnished by a link to very rare blood clots — as well as from Moderna and Johnson & Johnson.

After a slow start, the EU's vaccination rollout has greatly picked up speed, with more than a quarter of its population having received at least one jab. The 27-nation bloc is on track to have 70 per cent of adults fully vaccinated by late July, and is already cautiously reopening ahead of its vital summer vacation period.

Von der Leyen has stood by the EU strategy of her Commission being responsible for negotiating vaccine contracts for all member countries, despite early criticism that rollout was too slow. Europe is now debating with the United States over whether lifting patents on Covid vaccines could boost supplies to poorer countries.

The EU has so far sent more than 200 million doses to non-EU countries, while the United States has dispatched just 2.7 million to Mexico in what it describes as a "loan".

The head of the World Health Organization, Ted-



Friends toast each other as they drink a beer on a terrace in Brussels, on Saturday, as the Belgium government eased the restrictions put in place to curb the spread of Covid-19. — AFP

EU invites 'concrete' US plan on lifting vax patents

Porto, Portugal, May 8: Europe on Saturday passed the ball back to Washington in a debate over Covid vaccine patents, pushing the US for a concrete proposal and a commitment to export much needed jabs.

European Council chief Charles Michel, attending an EU summit in Portugal, said the bloc was ready to discuss a US offer to suspend patent protection on vaccines — once the details are clear. "We are ready to engage

on this topic, as soon as a concrete proposal would be put on the table," Michel said, as EU leaders discussed the issue in Porto. Michel, who represents the EU's 27 national leaders, cautioned however that the bloc has doubts about the idea being a "magic bullet" in the short term. The quickest solution to ramp up the distribution of vaccines globally was exports, and the EU encouraged "all the partners to facilitate the export of doses," he said.

France has adopted a similarly sceptical approach — with President Emmanuel Macron saying Saturday that "patents are not the priority" — while Germany is openly hostile to the idea.

Influential voices have risen to back the push to waive patents, not least Pope Francis, who on Saturday criticised putting "the laws of the market or intellectual property above the laws of love and the health of humanity". — AFP

● THE CONTRACT, on top of the 600 million BioNTech/Pfizer doses the commission has already secured, aims to supply the bloc — population 450 million — with enough jabs for booster shots, the EU said.

Britain finalises post Covid travel system

London, May 8: The UK government has set out 12 so-called "green list" countries under its traffic light system where people from England will be able to travel quarantine-free when the country's next level of Covid-19 lockdown restrictions are lifted on May 17.

Non-essential travel will no longer be classed as illegal from May 17, but strict border control measures will be in place for those entering the UK in order to keep a check on Coronavirus variants.

India remains on the "red list" since last month amid a second wave surge in Coronavirus infections, which means all travel remains banned between India and the UK except for British residents and nationals who must self-isolate for 10 days in a designated quarantine hotel.

The Maldives, Nepal and Turkey have now been added to the "red list" of around 40 countries, amid concerns around new variants. — PTI

Blast near Afghan school kills 25

Kabul, May 8: A blast outside a school in the Afghan capital on Saturday killed at least 25 people and wounded another 52 including students, the interior ministry said.

Residents were out for shopping ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr next week that marks the end of Ramadan, the Muslim holy month of fasting, when the blast took place.

"Fifty-five wounded people have been taken to hospitals," interior ministry

spokesman Tariq Arian told reporters.

Arian's deputy Hamid Roshan said that an investigation had begun into what he said was a "terrorist attack", adding that casualties included students.

Health ministry spokesman Dastagir Nazari said several ambulances had been rushed to the site and were evacuating the wounded.

"People in the area are angry and have beaten a number of ambulance

workers," he told reporters.

The blast comes as the US military continues to pull out its last remaining 2,500 troops from the country, despite faltering peace efforts between the Taliban and Afghan government to end a decades-long war in Afghanistan.

The Dasht-e-Barchi neighbourhood is populated largely by the Shiite Hazaras and is often a target for Sunni Islamist militants.

In May last year a group

of gunmen attacked a hospital in the area in a brazen daylight raid that left 25 people killed, including 16 mothers of new-born babies.

No group claimed that attack, but Afghan President Ashraf Ghani blamed the Taliban and the Islamic State group.

On October 24, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a tuition centre in the same district killing 18 people including students in an attack that also went unclaimed. — AFP

NYC STILL STORES COVID BODIES IN REFRIGERATORS

New York, May 8: New York City is still using refrigerated trucks to store bodies of Coronavirus victims, more than a year after they were first set up as temporary morgues as deaths surged at the height of the pandemic.

The city's medical examiner's office said on Friday that 750 bodies are being kept in long-term storage in refrigerated trailers at a Brooklyn pier while family members sort out plans for their final resting places.

Dina Maniotis, a deputy commissioner with the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, told a city council committee on Wednesday that many of the bodies held at the 39th Street Pier could end up buried in the city's potter's field on Hart Island.

In April 2020, the city shortened the amount of time it would hold unclaimed remains to 14 days before burying them on Hart Island. At the time, officials said, they were exploring the option of interring unclaimed remains on the island temporarily. Mark Desire, a spokesperson for the medical examiner's office, said permanent burial on Hart Island is an option for the next-of-kin of COovid-19 victims whose bodies remain in refrigerated trucks. — AP

SAUDI-PAK SIGN PACT TO IMPROVE TIES

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, May 8: Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed agreements on Saturday to improve ties, after months of strained relations between the close allies over the disputed region of Kashmir.

Although the kingdom was the first foreign country Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan visited after his 2018 election, Riyadh appeared frustrated with Islamabad last year.

And while the wealthy nation has supported Pakistan with billions of dollars in aid and loans in recent years, observers say the kingdom is also keen not to upset India, a key business partner and importer of Saudi oil.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman and Khan, who arrived Friday for a three-day visit, held talks in which they stressed "the importance of expanding and intensifying the horizons of cooperation." Officials from both countries signed two agreements in the western city of Jeddah addressing the treatment of criminals, and crime. — AFP

SPACE | ALERT

Chances of debris landing on an inhabited zone are tiny, probably 1 in a million

Chinese rocket set to re-enter atmosphere

Beijing, May 8: A large segment of a Chinese rocket is expected to make an uncontrolled re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere on the weekend, but Beijing has downplayed fears and said there is a very low risk of any damage.

A Long March-5B rocket launched the first module of China's new space station into Earth's orbit on April 29. Its 18-tonne main segment is now in freefall and experts have said it is difficult to say precisely

where and when it will re-enter the atmosphere.

Re-entry is expected to be around 2300 GMT on Saturday, according to the Pentagon, with a window of nine hours either side.

Chinese authorities have said most of the rocket components would likely be destroyed on re-entry.

"The probability of causing harm... on the ground is extremely low," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters on Friday.

Although there has been

● CHINESE AUTHORITIES have said most of the rocket components would likely be destroyed on re-entry.

fevered speculation over exactly where the rocket — or parts of it — will land, there is a good chance any debris that does not burn up will just splash down into the ocean, given that the planet is 70 per cent water.

"We're hopeful that it will land in a place where

it won't harm anyone," said Pentagon spokesman Mike Howard.

Howard said the United States was tracking the rocket segment but "its exact entry point into the Earth's atmosphere cannot be pinpointed until within hours of its re-entry". Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin earlier said that the US military had no plans to shoot it down, and suggested that China had been negligent in letting it fall out of orbit.

"Given the size of the

object, there will necessarily be big pieces left over," said Florent Delfie, an astronomer at the Paris-PSL Observatory. The chances of debris landing on an inhabited zone are tiny, probably one in a million.

In 2020, debris from another Long March rocket fell on villages in the Ivory Coast, causing structural damage but no injuries or deaths. Jonathan McDowell, an astrophysicist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics,

said that although there was no need to worry "too much", the rocket's design needed a re-think to stop such a scenario happening again. "There is a real chance of damage to whatever it hits and the outside chance of a casualty," he said.

"Having a ton of metal shards flying into the Earth at hundreds of kilometres per hour is not good practice, and China should redesign the Long-March 5B missions to avoid this." — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

9 MAY 2021



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

Off the beaten track

The social media djinn: Excluding and unsocial

Social media — the use of online platforms, as substitutes for old style, high-touch, physical contact formats like newspapers and one-on-one meetings — is now near ubiquitous, boosted greatly by the pandemic.

The ebb and flow of advertising revenues best illustrates the media preferences of customers. Digital marketing accounted for more than half the \$530 billion global advertising spend in 2020, up from just under two per cent in 2000, growing faster than television ever did (*Financial Times*).

One driver for the dramatic switch in audience preferences could be that mainstream media — newspapers, radio and TV — tend to patronise the recipient, being top down and unidirectional. Social media, however, empowers the user by making them essential participants in media creation, in a manner, unmatched by the tamer mainstream options of writing letters to the editor or being in the audience of TV shows.

It is not very empowering to be a couch-potato, a passive recipient of TV or radio news and entertainment, with no room for “self-expression”, except to change channels, much like dissatisfied voters do quinquennially.

Social media, in contrast, encourages you to create content and share it publicly, to be listened to, read, seen and appreciated. You can do your stuff on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter or Koo — comedy, fashion, disseminate gyan, list your professional achievements, cook, sing, make music, teach and mentor like Khan, sir of Bihar, coach, share your art, your writings, your magic, comment on anything under the sun or support #Hashtagged global causes, followed by the expectant, anxious wait to get your efforts acknowledged and the rush of joy, when inundated by “likes”.

Nearly 4 billion out of the 7.7 billion global population is hooked onto the net and 54 per cent of the traffic is via mobile phones. This number can only grow. Only infants and the 900 million poor — who earn less than the World Bank’s PPP \$1.9 per person per day poverty line and whose numbers have increased during the pandemic, are likely to remain excluded.

Digital connectivity is the next “life-line”, after electricity, as digital interface becomes the norm, the opportunities for physical contact dwindle and digital lockers become the only safe storage for Aadhar, BPL cards, bank details, medical Insurance — proof of the new-age identities, necessary for accessing social services.

A story best illustrates the point. A nanny from three decades ago, recently turned up where we used to live. Her son was covid positive and needed medical assistance. She had a medical insurance cover. But the hospital wanted a deposit of ₹30,000 which she did not have. So, she went looking for help to her previous employers. We had moved long ago. But the new occupants were good enough to call and tell us. Another family, for whom she had worked, told us they helped her with some ready cash. But she had left no contact number. All we could do was to wait for her to call. But she never did. Maybe, with her son incapacitated, she lost her only digital connect with the world — her son’s pre-paid phone. When every minute mattered, her only option was to walk about begging for money, oblivious of all the available crowd-sourced initiatives for help and the many charities providing covid relief.

Compare the frustratingly, isolated life of this mother, a poor, senior citizen, with the socially replete life of those with 24x7 connectivity even as the pandemic rages — sharing updates on the next available oxygen bed or oxygen concentrator; videos on the benefits of prone breathing, learned discourses on covid dos and don’ts, venting frustration by fingering hate objects or dispensing gyan via webinars, catching up on the prospects for peace in Myanmar or the impact of Presidents Biden’s next public-spend splurge on the Indian stock market. The disconnect between the well-off and the poor is near complete.

And yet it is not just the poor who are left behind. Only half as many Indian women use the Internet as men. The gap is worse in the rural areas. Only 33 percent of Indian women use social media, versus 67 per cent of men. Women are 26 per cent less likely to access mobile Internet due to misogyny, harassment and revenge porn (ORF, May 2021).

Add to that, the use of social media for narrow political ends without regard for social harmony. The disproportionate market power digital commerce endows, on a few companies. The billions of tax dollars avoided by multinational e-commerce, whilst feeding off the commercial data generated by their customers, often without explicit permission and without compensation and we have a fishbowl of growing global inequity.

This was not where the Internet was headed, way back in 1974, when the first Internet Protocol Suite was written. Nor was a world splintered by digital privilege, the intention in 1997, when the first social media platform — Six degrees — launched. Back then, the idea was to shrink the world, lift people and institutions to their fullest potential. Like Alice, we stepped through the looking glass. It is time to look back.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

Subhani



The architecture of hubris



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

Fascism has a strange fascination with architecture. The moment the Nazis rode to power in 1933 Herr Hitler started unveiling his plans for building a new capital for his thousand-year Reich.

To be named Germania it envisaged the grand redevelopment of Berlin.

From the mid-1920s itself much before power ever loomed over the horizon Hitler fantasised about his blueprint for Germania. It finds a prominent mention in his book called the *Mein Kampf*. Hitler had even prepared the drafts of the grandiose monuments that he proposed to erect. In his mind’s eye Adolf Hitler in addition to being The Great Helmsman was also the immortal designer.

In the spring of 1936, Adolf Hitler commissioned his pet architect Albert Speer who later became his minister of armaments to execute his vision and construct “the” megapolis that would be the epicentre of his Reich.

Hitler was resolute that the centerpiece of his Nazi dystopia christened Welthauptstadt-World Capital Germania should be completed by 1950.

Speer had been the de-facto Nazi architectural director since 1934. He had created a distinct impression on Hitler with his exotic metamorphosis of classical architecture into mammoth but manifestly ascetic Nazi architecture that was designed both to intimidate and overwhelm.

This transfiguration was personified in one of Speer’s initial but key undertakings, the Nuremberg parade grounds laid out for the 1934 Nazi Party Congress. The impact of the classicist architecture of that stadium is intimately captured in an array of propaganda films curated by the Nazi information czar Joseph Goebbels.

It was designed to provide a backdrop to the stunning imagery of militarised discipline of Nazi cadres forming

a geometrical aligned corporeal congregation united in their allegiance to the Fuhrer. The political ontology portrayed by the overpowering impact of this architectonic setting is of Being-as-One. One people, One nation and One Reich, which Hitler emphasized in his oration in that arena. He preached both “complete unity” and asked for blind the obedience of the German nation. Isn’t it eerily similar to the one leader one nation election rhetoric that we hear these days with elections of course being dispensable even in the medium term?

Hitler’s visualisation was to transform Berlin into Welthauptstadt Germania — the greatest city of them all. However stripped of sophistry it was at best plagiarism on a malevolent scale. The only originality being cloning and super sizing of the landmark monuments that Europe had on offer then.

These monoliths were to be erected along a seven-kilometre (4.3 miles) Boulevard of Splendours to create an overarching persona of Nazi preeminence on citizens and travellers alike. At the south end of this avenue was to be located the Triumphal Arch six times more humongous than the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. At its north end the concourse was supposed to pan out into a parade ground containing a gigantic Palace for the Fuhrer, the Reich Chancellery, and a gargantuan Grand Hall. Mark the Palace for the Fuhrer.

Hitler perceived monumental architecture as a means of creating a beguiling sense of shock and awe. He was fervent in his conviction that colossal constructions were powerful weapons of projecting political supremacy. For him architecture was not simply the means of giving form to space. It was the virtuosity of creating power through prodigious spatial imagery.

The budget for this vanity project was an estimated 46 million Reich Marks about 50 billion US Dollars at today’s cost. Hitler dismissed all concerns with regard to the both timing and cost notwithstanding an on going war. For in his megalomaniac existence it was about perpetuating his legacy. The only way of leaving your indelible footprint on the sands of time was by erecting grandiose edifices.

Moreover the Nazi party was a pioneer in the use of propaganda both during its relentless quest and perpetuation of power. As the Reich minister of propaganda it was Joseph Goebbels’ conviction that “propaganda becomes ineffective the moment we are aware of it”. Inspired by this credo the Nazi Party consciously created a myth about opposing the status quo and presenting its Supreme leader as both, an outsider to the incestuous alchemy of the decadent elite and a radical messiah, ironically while being in bed with the very same set. Does it not contextualise the constant railing against Lutyens’ Delhi and the fabled Khan Market Gang?

The Nazis were not alone in this endeavour. The Fascist Dictator of Italy Benito Mussolini also launched an ambitious building drive. However, it was the creation of the Casa del Fascio (House of the Fascist Party) that most caught Italian fancy. Primarily it was the headquarters of the Fascist Party. Archetypes of this new building got constructed across the Italian peninsula. Stereotypically situated in the town centrum these structures were built to typically dwarf the church’s dominant role in Italian social life. They metaphysically underscored the eternal presence of Il Duce — as Mussolini was called. Antiquity was equally important weapon in the Fascist arsenal. Isolamento as it was known as, involved the valorisation and refurbishment of rhetorically momentous structures.

Monuments as state-ments, as manifestations of a civilisation and its values and accomplishments, is an impulse that began to fade with the invention of the

printing press. The mass market book, carrying the soul and complexity of a civilisation, became the representative artifact.

The ideas, concepts, aspirations of a people did not need large and expensive agglomerations of masonry to articulate and announce themselves. The written word, the book, cheap and universally available, could do it to perfection.

It is the reason the exemplary founding fathers of modern India did not first, in 1947, move to raze building and raise buildings to announce the dawn of a new freedom and a new covenant of equality and fraternity and justice for all Indians: they chose to sit down, almost three hundred of the very best of them, for almost three long years, to debate and dissect and carve the most important book of contemporary India, the Constitution.

Democrats create festivals of ideas, crusades of justice and equity, carnivals of creativity, in which all may participate, on some kind of equal footing. It is only autocrats and fascists, monarchs and megalomaniacs, who seek statues and monuments to awe their subjects, to bring them to their knees.

Modernity with all its commitment to freedoms and reason is sought to be subordinated by monumental architecture to the will of the fascist state. This is precisely what we are witnessing with the relentless and profoundly vulgar redevelopment of the central vista in New Delhi (in the middle of a crippling pandemic at an enormous financial cost).

All this bombast of masonry and unbridled arrogance, is one more eternal blunder by a government and a leader who have unleashed untold misery across the country for the last seven years with their terrible decisions. In the final count, in the story of our ancient civilisation, all the grandiloquence of the central vista project will not be worth a single page of the Indian Constitution.

The author is a lawyer, MP and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

COWIN ANTI-POOR

The Central government is insisting on pre-registration on the CoWIN app to obtain the Covid vaccine at notified centres.

Though the concept is good, there is no consideration for the poor and marginalised sections who do not have computers, smartphones or internet. The government must enable Mee Seva centres to accept requests from everyone for registration.

Dr Prasad Chitra
Secunderabad

THIRD WAVE

It is a worry that the third wave of Covid-19 is expected when the Modi government is clueless and is struggling to deal with the second wave (*Apex court asks Centre to prepare for 3rd wave, DC, May 7*). The Centre has clearly not taken the right direction to deal with the pandemic. It must accept its failure gracefully and involve all parties and save the health sector before it is too late.

K. Manasa Saanvi
Vanasthalipuram, Hyderabad

SECOND CHANCE

I feel the healthcare staff deserves a second chance (*TS to focus on 2nd Covid dose, DC, May 8*). When the vaccination was administered to frontliners, many of the healthcare staff did not take due to doubts. They need a second chance as their services are priceless.

S. Shoban
Hyderabad

CRUELTY TO DOG

I thank *DC* for giving prominence to the murder of a sleeping dog in Punjab (*John outraged at cruelty to dog, DC, May 8*). I hope it serves as a deterrent to those indulging in similar misadventures. Police punish such offenders, it will instill fear in anti-socials.

Raseel Ahluwalia
Hyderabad

TRS INFIGHTING

It is now clear that no one must oppose K.T. Rama Rao as the next CM. Otherwise, all those named earlier for encroachments will face the same treatment as Etala Rajendar. The future will tell us the two groups are clearly splitting and taking a stand.

Venkateswarlu Nerella
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Probe begins into rare gold coins

HYDERABAD, MAY 8.

The City Crime Branch officials probing Yelliah, the waddar (stone-cutter), who found 200 rare gold coins suspected him to have committed some robbery. They interrogated him. The waddar denied of any knowledge of crime and maintained that he had struck the gold in a field while digging the earth.

The City Crime Branch officials decided to verify and waddar’s story. Mr. Jaipal Rao, Assistant Commissioner of Police (Crimis II) with a team of Inspectors proceeded to the village late last night along with the waddar to the Vijaynagar empire at Mubarakpur village, about 35 miles from here in Vikarabad taluk, where he had found the gold coins of the 14th century A.D. belonging to the Vijayanagar empire.



Jay Bhattacharya

How the West can help India fight Covid war

Hospitals in Delhi are openly pleading for supplies of medical oxygen, a commodity so scarce that it is now being sold on the black market for almost ten times the normal cost. Makeshift crematoria are being set up around the city to cope with the surge in the number of deaths. Richer countries are asking why India, with 20 million Covid cases, is so reluctant to lock down again. It’s a good question. The answer lies in the disastrous effects of lockdown for so much of India’s population.

Closing any society has serious consequences, but the results were always going to be worse in the developing world. I have been watching the pandemic unfold in India from Stanford University, where I’m a professor of medicine. But for me, it is not just an abstract problem in a faraway country. I was born in Kolkata and still have many family members in India. Some have contracted Covid, while others have suffered from the terrible effects of lockdown.

As soon as the pandemic started, India followed the familiar litany of Covid lockdown policy: masks, a test-and-trace system, school closures and border closures. India was one of the

first emerging economies to announce a lockdown and adopted one of the world’s most stringent approaches.

Stay-at-home advice is easier to follow if you have a proper home. But in India’s slums, where millions live, quarantine is almost impossible — as is the concept of “working from home” or home-schooling.

Then there are migrant labourers, ten million of whom were living in India’s cities before the pandemic. Lockdown meant many of them immediately lost their jobs, livelihoods and homes. Millions started on the long journey back to their villages on foot, not knowing whether they would ever make it home.

Lockdown meant precipitating India’s largest human displacement since Partition in 1947. The forced resettlement of massive numbers of Bengalis, including my grandparents, is within the ancestral memory of my older family members, who recall the story with horror.

One way to understand the trajectory of cases in India is to see that the lockdowns at first protected the professional Zoom class from infection, while exposing the poor. But it was never a guarantee that more affluent popula-

tions would not end up affected by the disease as well. India’s experience is consistent with the track record of lockdowns around the world. Official Indian government estimates suggest that between 37,000 and 80,000 lives were saved by lockdown. Even if this is correct, the numbers are surpassed by the death and suffering lockdowns also caused.

What could have been done differently? A better strategy of vaccination, for a start. When the jab first became available in India, I argued for focused protection of the elderly population. There is a thousand-fold difference in the risk of mortality from Covid between the young and old, so protecting elderly Indians from infection would yield substantially lower Covid mortality and hospitalisation, as well as reduce pressure on healthcare systems.

So far, vaccines have been delivered to roughly 10 per cent of India’s population — which would have been more effective if jabs had been targeted at those most at risk. Instead, perhaps half these jabs have gone to those who had the virus and will therefore have natural immunity. Worse, nearly 60 per cent of these doses have gone to people under 60, leaving a vast number of the

older population vulnerable during the recent surge in cases. Rather than focus on those most at risk of dying, India has made the vaccine available to anyone over 18, which has diverted even more doses from the poor high-risk elderly to the more affluent low-risk young.

But before we in the West shake our heads at India’s misplaced priorities, we ought to ask: is Britain not also guilty? The UK’s vaccination success has now covered the at-risk groups who constitute 99 per cent of Covid deaths. The plan is to keep vaccinating the British population right the way down to teenagers and children. Why not donate these vaccines to India instead?

If Britain and America are sitting on millions of doses of vaccine that could save the lives of India’s elderly, what should we do? Share the vaccine? Or give it to those for whom it would make little or (in the case of those who have recovered from the disease) almost no difference? It is hard to find a moral justification for not doing more to help.

India makes lots of vaccines. Yet Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, has complained that India is not exporting enough of its supplies to Europe. Discussion should instead focus on how to save as many lives as

possible — and how it is more important to vaccinate older, high-risk Indians than young Americans and Europeans with minimal mortality risk. President Joe Biden is sending raw materials to help make AstraZeneca vaccines in India: no great hardship, as the Astra jab hasn’t yet been authorised in the United States.

I was one of the signatories of the Great Barrington Declaration, which advocated shielding those most at risk, and fewer restrictions for those at low risk. When vaccine programmes have followed this general principle and been targeted at those most in need, the results have been extraordinary. We should ask: why not apply this principle worldwide? When our own at-risk groups have been protected, might we then start to help countries still in mortal peril?

Britain and America both have proud records of helping friends in need. There can be no better example, right now, of a country needing aid than India.

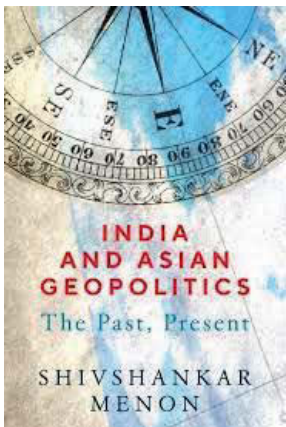
By arrangement with the *Spectator*

The writer is a professor of medicine at Stanford University

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

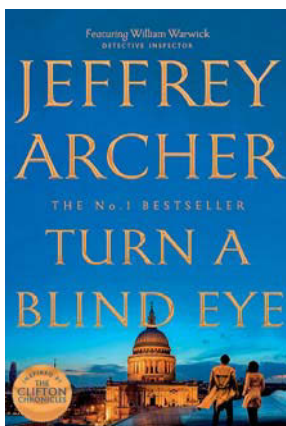
NON-FICTION

- INDIA AND ASIAN GEOPOLITICS: THE PAST, PRESENT**
Shiv Shankar Menon
Penguin, ₹699
- KARMA: A YOGI'S GUIDE TO CRAFTING YOUR DESTINY**
Sadhguru
Penguin, ₹299
- INDIA'S POWER ELITE**
Sanjaya Baru
Penguin, ₹699
- BORN A MUSLIM: SOME TRUTHS ABOUT ISLAM IN INDIA**
Ghazala Wahab
Aleph, ₹999
- GHALIB: A WILDERNESS AT MY DOORSTEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY**
Mehr Afshan Farooqi
Allen Lane, ₹799
- REPUBLIC OF HINDUTVA**
Badri Narayan
Penguin Viking, ₹499
- ALL ROADS LEAD NORTH — NEPAL'S TURN TO CHINA**
Amish Raj Mulmi
Context Westland, ₹799
- REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- THE MYSTERY OF THE PARSEE LAWYER**
Shrabani Basu
Bloomsbury, ₹699
- INDUS BASIN UNINTERRUPTED**
Uttam Kumar Sinha
Penguin Vintage, ₹799



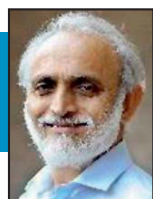
FICTION

- TURN A BLIND EYE**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- WHEREABOUTS**
Jhumpa Lahiri
Penguin, ₹499
- THE LAST QUEEN**
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
HarperCollins, ₹599
- SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499
- TAKEDOWN**
Brad Thor
Emily Bestler Books—Atria, ₹599
- THE BEGUM AND THE DASTAN**
Tarana Husain Khan
Tranquebar, ₹499
- KLARA AND THE SUN**
Kazuo Ishiguro
Faber & Faber, ₹699
- MURDER AT THE MUSHAIRA**
Raza Mir
Aleph, ₹799
- CLUB YOU TO DEATH**
Anuja Chauhan
Picador, ₹499
- A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton, ₹699



Bahrison, New Delhi

The exit of Delhi durbar, elite media's unmasking



Parsa Venkateshwar
Rao Jr
review

When academician-turned-journalist and former media advisor to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wrote without a twinge in his facial muscles about how Prime Minister Narendra Modi has effortlessly dislodged the power elite with its St Stephen's College-Oxbridge background, many mistook it for a dirge for the defeated lot with good manners and right accents. What was attractive about *India's Power Elite Class, Caste And A Cultural Revolution* (Penguin; 2021) was its anecdotal style with a gossip tinge to it. Baru places himself as an outsider/insider in Delhi's dress circle and with tongue-firmly-in-cheek pronounces the rather unlamented exit of Delhi's elite from the corridors of power. And to soothe the wracked nerves of this elite, he compared the Modi invasion to that of decade-long Mao's macabre bacchanalia Cultural Revolution with frenzied Red Guards chopping and stomping and destroying a whole generation of sensible middle rung communists. He was careful enough to point out that the fanatical Hindu vigilante were relatively less hysterical than the raging Red Guards in terms of intensity and range.

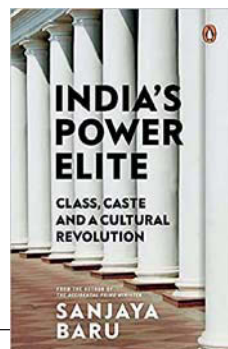
What attracted attention, obviously, was his taking note of the upheaval caused

by Mr Modi's arrival in Delhi as Prime Minister, dealt with much panache in the first two chapters of the book under the attention-grabbing headings of "Bombard The Headquarters" and "Modi's Metaphors". But Baru digs deeper and looks at the changes that have come about among the elites — there is not a single group calling the shots — across the country and in different spheres. And he follows the example of his acknowledged inspiration for the book, American outlier sociologist C. Wright Mills' 1956 classic *The Power Elite*.

That there have emerged new elites from time to time in Independent India is rather an unattractive if factual proposition. What Baru outlines as he goes along is the emergence of new elite groups in different spheres, in politics, in business, in agriculture, in bureaucracy and military. He describes the ascent of Mr Modi as the conquest of the backward castes of an upper caste-based Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This will remain a debatable thesis because the OBC revolution in RSS-BJP was carefully engineered and it was the reason behind the emergence of Mr Modi. Baru indirectly raises the moot question whether the success of Mr Modi in national politics is due to the fact that as an OBC representative he

wins the approval of the numerical OBC majority in the country. But it remains an untested proposition because this presumes that all the designated OBCs form a single class or that they have shared class interest in the same manner that it is assumed that Hindus form a monolith.

He also narrates the shift in power from the feudal lords, zamindars and landlords to that of the rich peasants, who are mostly from the backward classes, and the rich peasants became the new rural elite. The transmutation continues as the "rural landowning castes who have acquired political power are able to obtain urban land and become super-rich." And he draws the conclusion, "Every major urban conglomeration across the subcontinent is now fertile ground for the enrichment of the provincial rich." The story of the elites in Baru's telling is a complex process.



INDIA'S POWER ELITE: CLASS, CASTE AND A CULTURAL REVOLUTION

By SANJAYA BARU
Penguin Viking, ₹699

The more interesting aspect of Baru's analysis is that of business interests in the country and their connection to the political elite. He traces the founding of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) inspired by Mahatma Gandhi as evidence of the alignment of the national bourgeoisie with the political class. He points out the compulsion of the political class, which has to perform champion the cause of the poor, and it should appear to be distant from business magnates, and shows how Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Mr Modi take an anti-elitist stance.

He argues the case of the Bombay Club, comprising top industrialists, who prepared an economic manifesto of sorts in 1944, advocating a mixed economy with an assigned role for the state in developing economic assets which are later to be transferred to the private sector. And controversially Baru argues that the First and the Second Five Year Plans, and especially the Second, which is attributed to P.C. Mahalanobis, was really a reflection of the ideas of the Bombay Club.

The chapter on "Business and the State" shows once again the change or displacement of old elites with the new. He traces the new business players with close links to the top political leadership, from that of the Tata and Birlas of the 1950s and the 1960s to that of the Ambanis, Nandas and Hinduja of the 1980s. He implies that the much derided crony capitalism has been a part of modern India from the days before Independence.

Baru maintains the neutrality of a social scientist while describing the changes that had happened with the political and economic elites, but he offers for the first time an indirect moral critique of the elite groups when he writes about the policy intellectuals and public intellectuals, the media and the celebrity class. While pointing out that in the time of Nehru and Indira could become part of the power elite "because of their access to the PM", he cites the example of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's "first introduction to Nehru was made by Singh's Amritsar neighbour Mulk Raj Anand, a Cambridge scholar who became famous as a novelist..." he marks out the "corrupt" journalist category along with the "professional".

While dealing with the intellectual and celebrity class, he returns to the theme of how Mr Modi has bypassed the experts and the media, he seems to hold himself back from commenting on the consequences of doing away with intellectual inputs or a watchful media. It is indeed the right thing to do because there are enough number of people lamenting the anti-intellectual stance of the Prime Minister. Baru's book is a teaser where it seems to offer good gossip but it abandons the temptation and does out serious stuff in an easy-to-read style. It promises to be the 1991 bestseller, *You Will Not Eat Lunch Again In This Town* of Julia Phillips, the Hollywood outsider/insider, but settles into a sober social analysis tract.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

THE GRANDEUR AND MYRIAD HORRORS OF A BEGUM'S DASTAAN



Aditi Sriram
review

Books are defined, at their most basic, as stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end. But classics like the *Mahabharata* and *The Thousand and One Nights* are enjoyed for how frequently these three sections are interrupted. Structuring a book to consist of stories within stories allows author to escort the reader through some portions of the story, and later force the reader to plunge, unassisted, into a new section. The result is dizzying, but unforgettable. Characters blend into one another; time and space collapse, and dreamworlds feel real.

Readers like me delight in these narrative rabbit holes; we become Alice, eager to explore Wonderland with the book as our guide.

Tarana Husain Khan's *The Begum and the Dastan* is one such nested story about a Muslim family and the fate of its women, generation after generation. Feroza is forced to become Begum to

Nawab Shams Ali Khan in Sherpur (which appears to be a fictionalized version of Rampur in Uttar Pradesh), in the late 19th century. Ameera is her great granddaughter (p. 6), of school-going age in 2016, who is forced to stay home because her father cannot afford the fees.

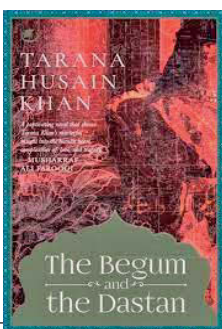
Restless Ameera implores her dadi to tell stories about Feroza Begum, whose own restlessness had ruined her life. What follows is a 250-odd page book about inheritance, religion, and the occult. A map is most definitely required.

Khan realises this. Her chapter headings are accompanied with a narrator's name and the year, and every few pages, footnotes identify various sources Khan has used to build her story: Urdu poetry, unpublished memoirs from the royal harem, the oral traditions of dastangoi, and photographs. As Ameera's grandmother warns, once: "There are stories, whispers and then there is the truth. My

story can draw from any of these or from all of these," (p. 31).

Indeed, Khan's novel does. Having acquainted her readers with Feroza Begum and Ameera, she introduces a third narrator, Kallan Mirza, who is a professional storyteller, or dastan. Appearing every few chapters, he recites scenes from the famous *Tilism-e-Hoshrub*, an Indo-Islamic fantasy epic/contemporaneous with Feroza's story. It is not a coincidence that the protagonist of this story is another royal woman, Princess Lalarukh, and the calamities written into her fate.

This braid of stories weaves between Feroza Begum, Ameera, and Princess Lalarukh. But the writing style becomes hectic at times. Sections begin with quotations from varied sources, including Urdu couplets which Khan has herself translated. Words are inconsistently in brackets or italics, creating unnecessary hierarchies between Urdu and English. Occasionally one narrator's direct address to another character clashes with the exposition that follows. Structurally, too,



THE BEGUM AND THE DASTAAN
By TARANA HUSAIN KHAN
Tranquebar, ₹499

Ameera's circumstances feel temporary compared to Feroza Begum's lifelong entrapment; the latter is better synchronised with Lalarukh's adventures. But Khan accomplishes much: a flavour of Nawabi daily life, Rohilla military culture, the Sunni-Shia tensions mixed in with colonial influence, and, ultimately, the women representing each of these categories. What these protagonists share is *Ujmmee*, hope in the face of fate, (p. 94), which propels each of their stories onto the next page, through a time portal, over an interruption, and finally, to the last page.

Such novels rely as much on author's mastery as on the reader's commitment, and Khan's attempt is deeply researched. But for a novel which can manipulate time and space, whose characters are consummate storytellers, it doesn't land as powerfully as one of its colleagues, *The Harkawati* by Rabih Alameddine published in 2009, which opens thus: 'Isten. Allow me to be your God. Let me take you on a journey beyond imagining. Let me tell you a story.'

Aditi Sriram teaches writing at Ashoka University and has authored *Beyond the Boulevards: A Short Biography of Pondicherry* (2019)

FAST FACT: Poet and critic Shankha Ghosh (1932-2021) is one of the latest Covid-19 victims from the world of letters. His *Babar Prarthana* (Bengali) won him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1977. He received the Padma Bhushan in 2011 and the Jnanpith Award in 2016. Seldom strident or flamboyant like the 'Hungry Poets', his poems are marked with a quality of proportion. They convey message, but are free of polemics.



Loneliness, aging and what it means to be a 'woman at midpoint'



Chloë Ashby
review

After falling in love with Italy as a young woman, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jhumpa Lahiri broke with English and began writing in Italian. Her new novel — a slim and bewitching tale of a woman at her midpoint — she wrote first in Italian and has since translated. The story is told in a series of vignettes, the lengthiest six or so pages. Each is titled with the setting — in

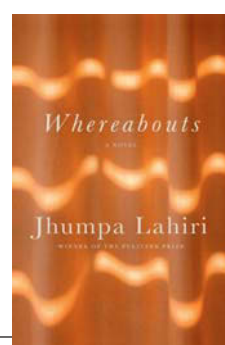
the office, at the register, on the street — and paints an exquisite picture of a single soul moving thoughtfully about her city.

"I don't share my life with anyone," says that soul early on. She lives alone in a spartan apartment, and with only herself to worry about she never fills the fridge. She teaches, though, as she reminds us: 'I'm here to earn a living, my heart's not in it'. Twice a week she

goes for a swim, and twice a month she gets her nails done — 'my one indulgence'. Slight variations in her routine include tasting various dishes at the local trattoria and always choosing a different seat at the theatre. Her 'daily meanderings' are broken up by small pleasures, from a simple sandwich to a fleeting embrace.

The novel is tinged with melancholy; death stalks each vignette. Pedestrians on a bridge look like "skittish ghosts advancing in a row, obedient souls passing from one realm to another". The narrator's office feels 'a bit sepulchral' while the pool is a "container of clear water lacking life". Her father, buried in a crypt at the heart of the city, died

when she was 15 and her mother is in precarious health — "she's nearing her end". Since turning 45, the narrator too has



WHEREABOUTS
By JHUMPA LAHIRI
Penguin, ₹499

become acquainted with odd afflictions and mysterious pains. In her own words, she is "a middle-aged woman, slightly on edge".

Also, on the edge. A modern-day flâneuse, she strolls through the city and scopes the crowd from which she remains separate. She's peripheral, privy to tender conversations and bitter fights, familiar with faces but not the people they belong to. Each of the carefully observed characters tells us something about her, from the friend who has everything she doesn't — "a husband, kids, constant plans, a country house" — to the kind philosopher whose watchful gaze seems to say: "Signora, I know you're having a hard

time." There's the married friend "for whom I represent... what, exactly? A road not taken, a hypothetical affair?" *Whereabouts* might be called a quiet book, but it isn't without bite: "I've had my share of married men."

Lahiri has spun a delicately layered story of a woman reflecting on her past, present and future. It lends itself to being read in a single sitting, during which time you'll feel your own life standing still, suspended. The author has a talent for capturing the everyday, a talent the narrator acknowledges when she and her friend's husband go their separate ways after a chance encounter: "Then we, too, become two shadows projected on to the wall: a rou-



Lahiri — THE SPECTATOR

tine spectacle, impossible to capture." Impossible for some, perhaps, but not for Jhumpa Lahiri.

By arrangement with the Spectator

Laugh and also ponder what patriarchy might do next



Kushalrani Gulab
review

When judging a book by its cover, ask these questions: Is the cover so attractive that you would consider buying the book whatever the story might be like? Or is the cover only worth the price of the book because of what lies beneath it?

I juggled these questions in my head before I started reading Aditi Patil's *Patriarchy and the Pangolin: A Field Guide to Indian Men and Other Species*. Because the fact is, I did buy this book for its cover — a painting by Sheela Roy that gives me little thrills of happiness whenever I look at it. But I also bought it in the hope that the story would be as charming as the cover.

Fortunately, I judged the cover correctly. *Patriarchy and the Pangolin* is a delightful account by a beleaguered conservation researcher of field trips in Gujarat to investigate the impact of the government's agro-forestry policy on farmers. As she gamely gets to work, she encounters more men with moustaches, bureaucrats and law-makers than actual wild creatures along the way.

The book has no plot of course. It's the diary of a field researcher, funny, eye-opening and cynical in turns, written in the style of a person who often laughs to stop herself from crying.

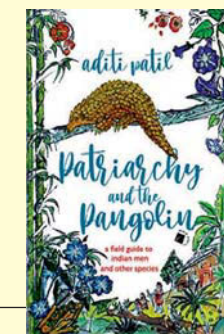
Patil is an idealist, a person who quit a well-paying information technology job to help save the world. But her ideas of the things that constitute field research and conservation are similar to the ideas of bureaucrats and men with moustaches only in the most superficial way. The bureaucrats just want to know that their policies work (please note: not 'if' the policies work). The mustachioed men cannot bring themselves to communicate with women and in any case have no intention of causing trouble for themselves, courtesy bureaucrats, law enforcers and law-makers, by discussing any sort of truth. In the face of all this resistance, Patil grits her teeth and gets on with her job, even fighting past her own occasional belief that her work will accomplish nothing.

Her observations, therefore, are often hilarious, especially on those occasions when she tries to escape reality by focusing on something completely unrelated to the issue at hand. This is her way of coping, she explains. "I've looked away from problems all my life," she says in the book. "Not facing them is a skill I've developed over the years and it has taken a lot of practice."

In spite of this self-deprecation, Patil has no choice but to face the problems and in presenting them in this book, she shoves them in our faces. What kind of lives do we lead, her book makes us ask, that we're so casual about destroying the very things that support our lives on this planet? What kind of lives do we expect to lead that we don't ensure our governments and their machinery actually work to conserve our only home?

Humour is a fabulous way to get harsh points across. Patil does this brilliantly. As for the cover that got me to buy the book, I'm tearing it off and framing it.

Kushalrani Gulab is a freelance editor and writer who dreams of 'being a sanyasi by the sea



PATRIARCHY AND THE PANGOLIN: A FIELD GUIDE TO INDIAN MEN AND OTHER SPECIES

By ADITI PATIL
Hachette India, ₹399

SHORT TAKES

Abid hits double ton for Pakistan

Harare: Pakistan took total control on the second day of the second Test against Zimbabwe on Saturday, outclassing the home side with both bat and ball to take a big step towards sealing a 2-0 series victory. Zimbabwe were 52 for four at the close in reply to Pakistan's 510 for eight declared, 458 runs behind.

Opening batsman Abid Ali made 215 not out and Nauman Ali slammed 97 before being stumped off a wide. The Zimbabwe innings got off to a bad start when 36-year-old debutant Tabish Khan struck in his first over before a run had been scored. Three more wickets fell before the close and Zimbabwe looked in desperate trouble. — **AFP**

Brief scores: Pakistan 510/8 decl. (Abid 215*, Nauman 97, Muzarabani 3-82) vs Zimbabwe 52/4 (Chakabva 28*, Sajid 1/0, Hasan 1/7).

Bopanna out of Madrid Open

Madrid: India's Rohan Bopanna and Denis Shapovalov of Canada fought hard before losing in three sets to German duo of Alexander Zverev and Tim Puetz in the men's doubles quarterfinals of the Madrid Open here. Bopanna and Shapovalov went down 6-4, 3-6, 10-5 against their German opponents to crash out of the ATP Masters 1000 tournament. The Indo-Canadian pair hit five aces against their opponent's three, but they committed more double faults, which hampered their prospects. Bopanna and Shapovalov had committed five double faults as against two by the German pair. Earlier in the tournament, the unseeded pair of Bopanna and Shapovalov had stunned top seeds Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah in straight sets. — **PTI**

9th straight title for biggie Bayern

Dortmund, Germany: Bayern Munich were confirmed as Bundesliga champions for the ninth straight season on Saturday after Borussia Dortmund beat second-placed RB Leipzig 3-2. Leipzig's defeat meant it can no longer overhaul Bayern, who held a seven-point lead — 71 to 64 — before hosting Borussia Monchengladbach in the late game. Two rounds remain after this weekend's games. England winger Jadon Sancho netted twice in Dortmund's home win, a result that meant Bayern became champions without kicking a ball before their home game. — **AFP**

Short-handed Jazz outshine Nuggets

Los Angeles: Bojan Bogdanovic torched Denver for a career-high 48 points as the Utah Jazz remained in top spot in the Western Conference with a 127-120 victory over the Nuggets on Friday night. The under-manned Jazz were without their dynamic guard duo of Donovan Mitchell and Mike Conley, but throughout their injury absences other Utah players have been stepping up and Friday it was Bogdanovic's turn. "I'm playing better. I'm shooting the ball better," Bogdanovic said. "So I'm getting in the right shape in the right moment right before the playoffs." Mitchell has missed the last 11 games with a right ankle sprain and Conley has missed six straight games with a hamstring injury. — **AFP**

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

English Premier League: Wolves vs Brighton from 4.30 pm; Aston Villa vs Manchester United from 6.35 pm; West Ham United vs Everton from 9 pm; Arsenal vs West Brom from 11.30 pm on Star Sports Select 1, 1HD

Italian League: Genoa vs Sassuolo from 4 pm; Parma vs Atalanta 6.30 pm; Roma vs Crotone from 9.30 pm; Juventus vs Milan from 12.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, 2HD

FORMULA ONE

Spanish GP: Main Race from 6.25 pm Star Sports Select 2, 2HD

Printed and Published from Karimnagar by K.Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Deccan Chronicle Press, H.No. 1-2/11/2/1, Cherlabhatur Road, Mugdumpur Village, Karimnagar - 505 186 Telangana State Regd. No. HSD-2/2K RNI Registration No. APENG/2001/04766 Ph: 912121 vs Crotona from 9.30 pm; Juventus vs Milan from 12.15 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, 2HD Grams: DECCAN CHRONICLE Editor: Kaushik Mitter

ENGLISH SUMMER

Pietersen pitches for postponed IPL to be held in England

London, May 8: Former England captain Kevin Pietersen wants the remaining matches of this year's postponed Indian Premier League to be shifted to the United Kingdom in September, instead of the UAE.

Pietersen feels moving the IPL to UK would be the best decision as there is a window in September just after England host India in a five-match Test series that concludes on September 14.

"I have seen people talking about the UAE as a possible destination to finish the IPL in September, but I actually think the IPL should move to the UK.

"There is a window in September after the England vs India Test series has finished. All the best Indian players would already be there, and all of the best English players would be available as well," Pietersen wrote in a column for *Betway*.

The 40-year-old right-hander, who also served as England captain for a brief period, said the weather in September would be ideal to host cricket matches in England.

"Mid-to-late September is the most beautiful time in the UK. They could use Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and the two London grounds. There is also a good chance that crowds will be allowed in the grounds, and there will be great atmospheres.

"The IPL has been to the UAE; it's been to South Africa, and I think England would now be the perfect place to house the remaining fixtures," Pietersen said.



Kevin Pietersen poses in Maldives. — *Twitter*

● **Pietersen made the statement after four English counties — Middlesex, Surrey, Warwickshire and Lancashire — have expressed interest in hosting the remaining 31 games of the IPL.**

Pietersen made the statement after four English counties — Middlesex, Surrey, Warwickshire and Lancashire — have expressed interest in hosting the remaining 31 games of the IPL. — **PTI**

HAMILTON TAKES 100TH POLE IN SPAIN

Barcelona, May 8: World champion Lewis Hamilton celebrated his 100th pole on Saturday after setting the fastest time in qualifying for the Spanish Grand Prix and declared "It's like my first!"

The Mercedes driver's latest milestone puts him 32 clear of Michael Schumacher in the all-time pole chart and leaves him in prime position to secure a record-extending 98th win in Sunday's race.

"I'll always remember that one," a beaming Hamilton said after reaching triple figures.

"I can't believe we are at 100 and it's down to the men and women back at the factory who are continuously raising the bar. The support I have, it's a dream to work with these guys. Who would have thought at the end of 2012 when we made the decision to partner, we'd be qualifying at 100. I feel humble and grateful — it's like my first!"

Alongside the Briton on the front row in Barcelona will be his Red Bull title rival Max Verstappen. Hamilton reached his century 14 years after securing his maiden pole in the Canadian GP in 2007, which he went on to win to take the first step on the road to becoming Formula One's most successful driver. — **AFP**

IOC says nothing can stop Games from going ahead

Sydney, May 8: International Olympic Committee vice-president John Coates was adamant Saturday that nothing could stop the Tokyo Olympics from going ahead, despite ongoing risks from Covid-19.

Asked if there was any scenario in which the Games, which are due to start in July, could be cancelled or postponed again at this late stage, he replied: "No, there's not."

"The prime minister of Japan said that to the president of the United States two or three weeks ago, he continues to say that to the IOC."

"We're working with him (Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga) on all of the safety measures. It's going ahead."

Suga held talks with US leader Joe Biden in April and stressed the Asian nation was doing everything possible to contain Covid-19 infections and hold a "safe and secure" Olympics.

But questions continue to be raised about the viability of the Games, given the ongoing pandemic and a virus state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of Japan being extended on Friday.

Coates, who heads the IOC's Coordination

Two KKR players test +ve

Bengaluru, May 8: Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Prasidh Krishna has tested positive for coronavirus and is in quarantine in his home town Bengaluru, a BCCI source said on Saturday.

Another KKR player New Zealand's wicket-keeper-batsman Tim Seifert has also tested positive and will not be on the charter flight back home with other players and support staff.

The 25-year-old Krishna, who was named in the

Indian squad for the England tour as a stand-by on Friday, is the fourth KKR player to have contracted the dreaded virus.

Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier are the other KKR players, who tested positive earlier.

According to the BCCI source, both Krishna and Warrier contracted the virus from Chakravarthy during one of the training sessions. He said Krishna is Chakravarthy's close friend.

"Prasidh like all India players left bubble on May 3 after getting two negative results. However on reaching Bengaluru he tested positive," the source said.

The BCCI is hoping that by the time the UK-bound players enter the bio-bubble in India on May 25, Krishna will test negative.

Seifert is also in isolation in Ahmedabad from where he will go to Chennai for treatment at a private hospital. — **PTI**

BIG 3 DEFEND SUPER LEAGUE, DENOUNCE UEFA

Rome, May 8: Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus on Saturday defended the aborted Super League project in the face of "threats" from UEFA.

The three clubs are the only ones from the original 12 yet to renounce the proposed competition that would guarantee its founding members involvement every season, instead of having to qualify.

The nine clubs who have dropped out — Tottenham, Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool, Atletico Madrid, Inter Milan and AC Milan — were on Friday given a financial penalty by UEFA for their involvement.

UEFA also said it would take "appropriate action" against the three clubs who still support the Super League project.

In response, Real, Barca and Juventus said in a joint statement "the founding clubs have suffered, and continue to suffer, unacceptable third-party pressures (and) threats. This is intolerable under the rule of law."

They said the Super League had been launched "with the aim of providing solutions to the current unsustainable situation in the football industry". — **AFP**

Hockey stalwarts succumb to Covid

New Delhi, May 8: Former India hockey player and coach M. K. Kaushik on Saturday died after battling Covid-19 for the past three weeks. He was 66 and survived by his son and wife.

Kaushik, a member of the 1980 Moscow Olympics gold-medal winning Indian team, had tested positive for Covid-19 on April 17 and was admitted to a nursing home in New Delhi.

"He was shifted to ventilator this morning but passed away just now," Kaushik's son Ehsan said.

Another former India hockey player and a member of the 1980 Moscow Olympics-winning side Ravinder Pal Singh also died on Saturday morning in Lucknow after battling Covid-19 for nearly two weeks. He was 60.

Kaushik had coached both the senior men and women's teams. Under his coaching, India men's team won a gold medal at the 1998 Asian Games in Bangkok.

Also, Indian women team had won bronze medal at the Doha Asian Games in 2006 under his coaching.

He was awarded the Arjuna Award in 1998, before being bestowed with

● **M. K. Kaushik and Ravinder Pal Singh, members of the 1980 Moscow Olympics gold-medal winning Indian hockey team, lost their battle to Covid on a sombre Saturday for sport.**

the Dronacharya award in 2002.

Singh was admitted at the Vivekananda Hospital on April 24 after contracting the deadly virus.

According to family sources, Singh had recovered from the virus and was shifted to non-Covid ward on Thursday after testing negative. But his condition suddenly deteriorated on Friday and he was put on a ventilator.

Singh, who also played at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, did not get married and is survived by a niece, Pragma Yadav.

Singh also played in the 1979 Junior World Cup and took voluntary retirement from State Bank of India after quitting hockey.

Born in Sitapur on September 6, 1960, Singh excelled as a centre-half from 1979 to 1984. — **PTI**

WOMEN HOCKEY PLAYERS RECOVER FROM COVID-19

New Delhi, May 8: Indian women's hockey captain Rani Rampal, her six team-mates and two support staff members have recovered from Covid-19 infection after spending two weeks in quarantine at the Sports Authority of India's (SAI) Centre in Bengaluru.

The six other India players are Savita Punia, Sharmila Devi, Rajani, Navjot Kaur, Navneet Kaur and Sushila while the two support staff are video analyst Amrutaprakash and scientific advisor Wayne Lombard.

All seven tested positive following the Indian women's hockey core group's return to the national camp in Bengaluru on April 24 after a 10-day break. All of them were asymptomatic.

"Thank you everyone for the love and mental support through messages/calls during the last two weeks. Me and my teammates and support staff are fully recovered from the Covid now," Rani said in a statement on her Twitter handle. — **PTI**

Croatia is safer to train for Moudgil

New Delhi, May 8: Olympic-bound rifle shooter Anjum Moudgil does not mind being away from home till the end of the Tokyo Games as she feels training in Croatia will be safer than in a coronavirus-ravaged India.

The Olympic-bound 15-member Indian team will depart for Zagreb on May 11 for a training-cum-competition tour in that country and from there it will directly fly to Tokyo for the Olympics, which opens on July 23.

"It is not all right for us to train here in India. I don't have a private training range for 50m rifle three positions. I have to either travel to Delhi or Pune which is not safe under this pandemic conditions," she said at a virtual press conference arranged by the Sports Authority of India.

"I think Croatia must be better than India currently (in terms of Covid-19 situation) and being with the team also gives you confidence. I don't see any problem from being away from home for three months."

She said the Indian team will undergo a seven-day quarantine after reaching Croatia. They will fly to



Anjum Moudgil

Tokyo on July 17.

"SAI has arranged a chartered flight for us and making a sort of bio-bubble also there in Croatia," said the 25-year-old from Chandigarh.

Moudgil was picked in the Indian team for the 50m rifle three positions and 10m air rifle mixed team but missed out on 10m air rifle in which she won a silver in the 2018 World Championships.

She said she has taken it in her stride. Moudgil won a gold in 50m rifle 3 positions in the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

"I respect the decision of NRAI. I still have two events in the Olympics. I am ready for the 50m 3 positions." — **PTI**

2021 IPL season is now subject to several imponderables



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

The most important office bearers of the BCCI — President Sourav Ganguly, secretary Jay Shah and treasurer Arun Dhimal — have shrugged off responsibility for the IPL fiasco by claiming that nobody could have known the intensity of the second wave of the Covid pandemic

that hit the country from the first week of April. I'm afraid, this does not wash.

While cricket administrators are not experts in virology and epidemics, the Corona virus tsunami was being widely discussed by experts from January onwards. Only it was obfuscated by a gloat-

ing government, and a cricket administration that preferred to toe the populist line rather assess the looming threat independently.

The previous IPL season played in the UAE had gone off without hitch. Since there were to be no spectators allowed at the ground even in India, the 'atmosphere' of IPL such as it was, was hardly going to be affected.

This was foolish disregard for the Corona threat, and the BCCI compounded the problem by shocking complacency, as was revealed from breaches in

the 'bubble' that came to light last week, forcing the tournament to be suspended indefinitely.

Infringements in the healthy safety protocol, if one goes by reports, includes teams based in being exposed to staff of a private club where the players had gone for practice, food being brought in from the outside, as well as two impostors — ostensibly working for bookies — who were arrested with fake accreditations for matches!

What happens to the truncated IPL 2021 season from here is subject to sev-

eral imponderables. The BCCI is looking at a 15-20-day window later in the year to complete the tournament, which may not be easy to find in a packed international calendar.

On the face of it, it is possible to squeeze in the completion of the IPL after the England tour finishes and the T20WC begins. But this means foregoing a confirmed tour by South Africa to India for white ball series in late September-early October.

Given the BCCI's clout, the Proteas can be cajoled to scrap this assignment with promise of a bigger

tour later. However, whether overseas players from other countries will be available for completion of the IPL is moot. Their countries may want them for preparatory camps for the T20 WC, rather than be fatigued. To resume the IPL post T20 WC may be even more unkind on the players, who may in any case have other international assignments.

However, the biggest challenge for the BCCI now is to show it has learnt from the present disaster and is capable of handling mega tournaments in times of Covid.

There is talk of a third wave hitting India in end-August or September. Everybody prays it doesn't, but nothing can be left to chance or propaganda. Preparations for the tournaments to be played at home or putting in place Plan Bs in case the situation is serious have to be done with commitment, diligence and based on domain expertise, not in an airy-fairy manner as was done this IPL season. Money lost because of the IPL being suspended will be easy for the BCCI to recover, not so the massive loss of credibility.