









## SHORT TAKES

## Odisha: Black fungus a notifiable disease

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha government has declared Black Fungus (Mucormycosis) a Notifiable Disease (ND) under Epidemic Act. A notice has been issued by the state health and family welfare department in this connection. "After careful consideration, the Odisha government includes mucormycosis (black fungus) as a notifiable disease under Section-2 of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897," a notification issue late on Thursday evening said. On Thursday, the Union health ministry had appealed to all states and Union Territories (UTs) to declare mucormycosis or black fungus as a notifiable disease. The ministry has also advised that all government and private health facilities as well as medical colleges should follow guidelines issued by it and the ICMR on screening, diagnosis and management of mucormycosis.

## 5 Himachal cops died of Covid-19

**Shimla:** Five Himachal Pradesh police personnel have died after contracting Covid so far, state director general of police (DGP) Sanjay Kundra said on Friday. Four of them succumbed to the virus during the first wave, while one police personnel died during the ongoing second wave, he said. The DGP told the media that 2,874 police personnel in the state have so far tested positive for the virus. Of them, 2,378 people have recovered while the remaining 496 are still under active case category. Two police personnel are being treated at hospitals. The DGP further stated that 90 per cent of police personnel in the state were administered both doses of vaccines. As many as 15,339 of the total 17,415 HP police personnel have got both the doses, he added. — PTI

## Four dead in MP from Black fungus

**Damoh/ Balaghat:** Four people from Damoh and Balaghat districts in Madhya Pradesh have died of Mucormycosis, a dangerous fungal infection seen in some Covid patients and those who had recovered, even as the state grapples with a shortage of injections for its treatment, officials said on Friday. Deepak Soni (39) and Nitin Jain (30), both from Damoh, died of the infection, also called black fungus, on Thursday, after recovering from COVID-19, while Sheshram Kuchalahi (38) and Chinu Lalwani (42), the other two deceased, hail from Balaghat, officials said. "Soni died in a hospital in Nagpur, Jain died in Damoh. Four other patients of Mucormycosis have been sent to Bhopal for treatment," Damoh ENT specialist Vishal Shukla said. — PTI

## ODISHA: DONGARIA KONDHS AGREE FOR COVID TESTS

**Rayagada:** The Dongoria Bondh tribals living in Niyamgiri hills in Odisha's Rayagada district have finally agreed to undergo Covid test. Initially, members of this tribal group who normally live on the hills of Niyamgiri stretching nearly 60 km, and come down the hills on a very few occasions to buy their essentials; were reluctant for swab tests due to their unique lifestyle in the lap of nature and inadequate exposure to modern medicines and healthcare systems. The development came following persistent efforts of five days by the Rayagada district administration to spread awareness about the Covid-19 pandemic among the Dongarias The Dongaria Kondhs belong to the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). "After persistent persuasion by the Rayagada district administration, the two testing camps were organised today in two panchayats of Kalyansingpur block and swab samples were collected from the tribal people. We were able to convince the Dongria Kondhs by engaging them in discussion with the support of local community leaders," said Rayagada sub-collector Pratap Chandra Pradhan. The sub-collector informed that Anganwadi workers would do regular thermal screening of the people suffering from cough, cold and fever in the area.

■ Bahuguna was undergoing treatment for Covid at AIIMS-Rishikesh since May 8

## Chipko stir icon Bahuguna dies

**Dehradun, May 21:** Renowned environmentalist Sunderlal Bahuguna, who pioneered the Chipko movement, died of Covid-19 at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh on Friday. He was 94.

He is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter. Bahuguna was cremated with full state honours at the Poorananand Ghat on the banks of the Ganga in Rishikesh.

Known for his pioneering role in the Chipko movement, during which activists hugged trees to save them from being felled, Bahuguna had been undergoing treatment for Covid-19 at AIIMS-Rishikesh since May 8.

Admitted to the hospital after testing positive for the infection, Bahuguna's condition had turned critical last night with his oxygen level dropping

drastically.

He was on CPAP therapy in the ICU of the premier hospital and breathed his last at 12.05 pm, AIIMS director Ravikant said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoled Bahuguna's death.

"Passing away of Shri Sunderlal Bahuguna Ji is a monumental loss for our nation. He manifested our centuries-old ethos of living in harmony with nature. His simplicity and spirit of compassion will never be forgotten. My thoughts are with his family and many admirers. Om Shanti," the prime minister tweeted.

Chief minister Tirath Singh Rawat described it as a big loss not just for Uttarakhand and India but for the entire world.

"It was he who made the Chipko movement a movement of the masses," Mr Rawat said.

The void created by his

## SUNDERLAL BAHUGUNA 1927-2021



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Bahuguna in the presence of his wife Vimla, daughter Madhu and other relatives.

Uttarakhand Assembly Speaker Prem Chand Agrawal and Rishikesh Mayor Anita Mamgai were also present.

Born on January 9, 1927 in Tehri district, Bahuguna is considered the pioneer of the Chipko movement of the 1970s which he had launched

along with dedicated environmental conservationists like Gaura Devi to save forests.

Started by Bahuguna at the foothills of the Himalayas in 1973 in Uttarakhand, then a part of Uttar Pradesh, the Chipko movement was a forest conservation movement in India. It later became a rallying point for many environmental movements all over the world.

Conferred with the Padma Vibhushan and many other honours for his pioneering work in the field of environment protection, Bahuguna also led protests against the construction of the Tehri dam.

He had observed an 84-day fast and got his head tonsured in protest against the project which displaced a huge population rendering them homeless.

— PTI

■ Kamal Nath threatens to make public honeytrap videos

## FIR on Cong MLA kicks off storm

**RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY**  
BHOPAL, MAY 21

A huge political row erupted here, on Friday, with Congress veteran and former chief minister Kamal Nath issuing a veiled threat to make the honey trap videos, involving some high profile people of Madhya Pradesh, public if the FIR filed against party MLA Umang Singh in connection with the suicide of his girlfriend was not withdrawn.

Ruling BJP here took strong exception to Mr

Nath's statement describing it an attempt to blackmail the state government to "submit to his dictates." The party also dared him to expose the honey trap videos that "are in his possession."

"Mr Nath's statement suggests that he was running his 15-month-old government that fell in March, 2020, by resorting to blackmailing tactics since he has claimed that the honey trap videos are in his possession," state higher education minister Vishvas Sarang said.

BJP leader Pankaj Chaturvedi said Mr Nath

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needed to clear the doubts as to if the original honey trap videos were submitted to the court by his government then since he has now claimed to have in his possession the original

videos.

Curiously, chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has maintained silence on the issue.

Nearly 4,000 sleazy videos and audios, sex chats, and photographs showing some high profile people including babus and politicians in compromising positions were recovered from laptops, pen drives, and other electronic gadgets seized from the accused involved in the honey trapping and blackmailing racket during raids in their houses here in 2019.

## Baghel provides incentive to farmers under welfare scheme

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
RAIPUR, MAY 21

Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Friday transferred ₹1500 crores directly to the bank accounts of 22 farmers in the state as input subsidy for the upcoming kharif season.

The money has been released to the farmers as first installment of Rajiv Gandhi Kissan Nyay Yojana, 2021.

The event coincided death anniversary of former Prime Minister later Rajiv Gandhi.

Under the scheme, a total of ₹5597 crore will be given to the farmers of the state in four installments as input subsidy, a spokesman of Chhattisgarh government said.

The chief minister also transferred ₹7.17 crore to 72,000 villagers, cattle rearers of the state as payment for the cow dung procured from them between March 15 and May 15 under the 'Godhan Nyay Yojana' scheme.

"The input subsidy given to the farmers will help in significant improvement of agriculture and farming in the state," Mr Baghel said.

Congress supremo Sonia Gandhi commended the scheme, saying, "Rajiv Gandhi Kissan Nyay Yojana is an appreciable steps towards welfare of farmers in the state". In a message sent on the occasion, she said, "Late Rajiv Gandhi had always envisioned the empowerment of farmers, labourers, poor and backward people".

— PTI



Thousands of Covid-19 patients arrive to receive ayurvedic medicine at Krishnapatnam in Nellore district on Friday.

— PTI

## AP to send ayurvedic 'Covid-19 drug' to ICMR to test efficacy

**Amaravati, May 21:** The Andhra Pradesh government on Friday decided to send the ayurvedic medicine, being touted as a miracle cure for Covid and distributed in SPS Nellore district, to the ICMR for a detailed study of its efficacy.

The government also decided to send a team of experts to Nellore for an on-the-spot study of the formulation, popularly known as the 'Krishnapatnam medicine'.

Chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy enquired about the Ayurvedic medicine, which has now become popular as the 'Krishnapatnam medicine', that is being promoted by his party district president and MLA K. Govardhan Reddy.

"We have decided to get it studied by the ICMR and other experts to determine its efficacy," deputy chief minister (Health) A.K.K. Srinivas said after the review meeting.

Doctor-turned-bureaucrat P.V. Ramesh, who previously worked as principal secretary (Health) and also Special chief secretary to chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, dubbed the so-called Krishnapatnam medicine "yet another recipe for disaster".

"Governments must stop such epidemics of superstition. Those preparing and promoting this Krishnapatnam concoction are punishable under the Pharmacy Act, 1948, and Drugs and Magic Remedies Act, 1954," Ramesh, who actively oversaw the AP governments Covid management last year, said.

From tens to hundreds and now thousands, people are flocking to Krishnapatnam village, even violating Covid-19 protocols, to take the medicine being offered by an ayurvedic practitioner B Anandaiah, who once worked as the village sarpanch and later a member of the mandal parishad.

— PTI

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— PTI

ed that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and other grand living Buddhas had to follow the procedure of "drawing lots from the golden urn" and that the selected candidate would be subject to approval by the central government of China, the document said.

The 14th Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 following a Chinese crackdown on

an uprising by the local population in Tibet. India granted him political asylum and the Tibetan government-in-exile has been based in Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh since then. The Dalai Lama is 85 years old now and the issue of his successor has gained prominence in the last couple of years due to his advanced age.

The Dalai Lama's succession issue was in the limelight, especially in the last few years after the US has stepped up campaign that the right relat-

ing to the reincarnation of Dalai Lama's successor should be within the exclusive authority of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people.

The Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020 (TPSA) passed by the US Congress makes it official United States policy that decisions regarding the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama are exclusively within the authority of the current Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhist leaders and the Tibetan people.

— PTI

## SC grants bail to rebel YSRC MP in sedition case

Says he may have neem mistreated

**PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 21

The Supreme Court, on Friday, granted bail to YSR Congress Lok Sabha member K. Raju in a sedition case as the court said that prima facie he was ill-treated while in police custody.

Holding that the high court "ought" to have considered the bail plea by Raju instead of sending him to the trial court, a bench comprising Justice Vineet Saran and Justice B.R. Gavai saddled Raju with a number of conditions including that he will not speak to both print and visual media on the issues that form the part of the case against him.

Noting that there was nothing in the case that required Raju's custodial interrogation as the crime investigation department of the state police has proceeded against him and filed an FIR after an inquiry and everything said by him (Raju) is a matter of record, the court directed him to co-operate with the investigation and be present before the investigating officer as and when required.

"We are of the opinion that charges (against Raju) are not such that custodial interrogation is required," said Justice Saran while pronouncing the order granting bail to Raju.

The court directed him to furnish a bail bond of ₹1 lakh and two sureties of like amount. At the outset of the hearing, the court read from the report of the



K. Raju

Secunderabad Army hospital which listed a number of ailments that Raju suffered, including fracture in the toe of his left leg and swelling.

Grabbing the opportunity, senior counsel Mukul Rohatgi told the court that the report by the Army hospital vindicated their assertion that Raju was tortured while in the police custody during interrogation and the fracture was a consequence to third degree methods used against him.

Describing the alleged torture of Raju in police custody as a "state sponsored terrorism," Mr Rohatgi, appearing for Raju, said that he (Raju) has been charged under Section 124A of the IPC so that he does not get bail. Meanwhile, senior counsel Dushyant Dave, appearing for Andhra Pradesh, took the court through the speeches of Raju in an attempt to demonstrate that he was creating disaffection and trying to incite people based on caste and religious grounds.

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE INVITING TENDER	
Name of work and its location	30-Elect-38-T-2020-21-E3 Provision of portable DG set for emergency power supply over Delhi division (Covid coaches)
Approx cost of the works	Rs. 54.48 lacs
Address of the office	Sr. Divl Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
Earnest Money	Rs. 00.00
Date & time of submission of tender	16.06.2021, 12.00 Hrs.
Opening of tender	16.06.2021, 12.00 Hrs.
Website & notice board	www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divl. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi.
1093/2021	
Serving Customers with a Smile	

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE	
Name of Work with its location	05/SrDEE/G/MB/2021:- Electrical General work for Sub Metering of Energy Use Application and setting up of 30 KWp solar power system at DRM Office.
Approximate Cost of the work(in ₹)	₹2,32,960.00 (Including GST)
Address of the office from where the tender form has been issued	Electrical Branch, Divisional Railway Manager's office, Northern Railway, Moradabad
Earnest Money to be deposited (in ₹)	The tenderer has to submit Bid Security Declaration certification mandatorily in place of Earnest money along with tender documents.
Completion period of the work	03 (Three) Months
Date & Time for submission of tender & opening of tender	Tender will be received upto 15.00 hrs. and opened at 15.00 hrs. on 15.06.2021
Website particulars & Address of office	Website www.ireps.gov.in Divisional Railway Manager's office, Northern Railway, Moradabad
Tender Notice No.: 05/2021 Dated : 21.05.2021	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	
1090/21	

HIMACHAL PRADESH STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD LTD.

(A State Govt. Undertaking)

## BEAS VALLEY POWER CORPORATION LIMITED

(A Subsidiary Company of H.P.S.E.B. Ltd.)

Registered Office : C-208, Main Road Sector -III, New Shimla

Corporate Office : Jhalwan, Joginder Nagar, Distt. Mandi

CIN No : U40101HP2003SGC025877, GSTIN : 02AABCH416P1ZL

Company Secretary: Mob No. 94596-84691 E-mail: cshpsbebl@gmail.com

O/o MD, BVPC, Jhalwan, Distt. Mandi, Joginder Nagar- 175015

Tel Number : 01908-224412 & 224516, Email id: mdvpcpl\_jnr@yahoo.com

### NOTICE INVITING BIDS (e-Tendering Mode only)

Online (through) rate bids (Two-part bid system) are invited by the undersigned for and on behalf of Managing Director, Beas Valley Power Corporation Ltd. (BVPC) for the below described work on the prescribed forms from the reputed companies having a sufficient experience and expertise to execute such works in the past. The tender documents shall be available on e-Tendering website: <https://www.htenders.gov.in> by 21 May, 2021.

Tender No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost	Earnest Money	Bid Money including GST
BVPC/MD/Unit Stage-I/ Penstock/ 2021-01	Dismantling of existing Surface Penstock fabricated from SAILMA550H Steel, Complete Detailed Design & Fabrication Drawings for its replacement, Supply of steel plates, Storage, Fabrication, Testing, Painting, Transportation to Project site, Erection and commissioning of Surface, Steel In-Liners, Cladding work of Penstock and its specials, complete in all respect including execution of allied civil works (Design/Construction Drawings) for Uhl- Stage-III- (100MW) HEP, Joginder Nagar, Distt- Mandi, Himachal Pradesh.	Rs. 55.5 Crore	Rs. 70.00 Lakh	Rs. 20,000.00

### Time for Completion= 23 Months

The bid document shall be available online and is to be submitted on the website <https://www.htenders.gov.in>. The bidders would be required to register in the website, which is free of cost. For submission of bids, the bidders are required to have digital signature certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized certifying authority (CA). Aspiring bidders, who have not obtained the user ID and password for participating in e-tendering in HPSEBL, may obtain the same from the website <https://www.htenders.gov.in>. DSC is mandatory to participate in e-tendering. Bidders already have valid DSC issued from authorized CAs can use the same in this tendering process as per following key dates:-

Date of Online publication	19.05.2021
Date of downloading of NIT	21.05.2021
Last date & time for submission of online NIT	21.06.2021 up to 14:00 hours
Date of opening of Techno-Commercial Bid	28.06.2021

Any further clarification, corrigendum, amendment, extension or addendum shall be notified on the above website only; no press notice for the same shall be issued. Bidders should regularly visit the website to keep themselves updated.

Managing Director, BVPC, Uhl Stage-III, (100 MW),

e-mail address: mdvpcpl\_jnr@yahoo.com Joginder Nagar, Distt. Mandi,

Energy Saved is Energy Generated Himchal Pradesh. Ph. No. 01908-224412



SHORT TAKES

PREP UP HEALTH CENTRES TO DEAL WITH YAAS: GOVT

**New Delhi:** The Centre has asked Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andaman and Nicobar Islands to ensure that health facilities are stocked with essential medicines and supplies to meet any exigencies in the wake of Cyclone Yaas which is expected to make a land-fall later this month.

According to the India Meteorological Department, a low pressure area is likely to form over north Andaman Sea and is likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by May 24, and expected to move northwards and reach near Odisha and West Bengal coasts around May 26. Apart from the impact of cyclone in Odisha and West Bengal, there may be wide-spread rains in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and districts of the east coast that may cause inland flooding, it has said. Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan wrote to the chief secretaries of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, saying public health challenge, already posed by the coronavirus pandemic, may be compounded due to direct impact of Covid and public health risks posed by water, vector and airborne diseases that may arise in the community or in displaced population living in camps or temporary shelter settings. — PTI

ARMY CHIEF REVIEWS BORDER ALONG ARUNACHAL

**New Delhi:** Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane reviewed India's operational readiness along the border with China in the Arunachal Pradesh sector during a two-day visit to the Northeastern region that began on Thursday. His visit to the region came amid the Indian Army's continued standoff with the Chinese military in some of the friction points in eastern Ladakh. Officials said Gen. Naravane arrived at Dimapur in Nagaland on Thursday to review the operational readiness along the Northern borders of Arunachal Pradesh and the security situation in the hinterland in the Northeastern region. "On arrival at the Corps headquarters in Dimapur, the Army Chief was briefed by Lt. Gen. Johnson Mathew, General Officer Commanding of Spear Corps and the division commanders on the prevailing situation and operational preparedness along the Northern borders," the Army said. It said the Chief of Army Staff complimented all ranks for maintaining excellent vigil and exhorted them to stay alert and keep watch on activities along the Line of Actual Control. On Friday, Gen Naravane reviewed the security situation in the hinterland of the Northeast and along the India-Myanmar borders and exhorted all the personnel to keep working with the same zeal and enthusiasm. — PTI

TEMPLE FOR 'CORONA DEVI' COMES UP IN TN

**Coimbatore:** As the severe second wave of Covid-19 sweeps across the country, not sparing this district too, a Coronadevi temple has come up on the outskirts of the city, thanks to a mutt, seeking divine intervention to put an end to the raging pandemic. This is in line with a "Plague Mariamman Temple", dedicated by the faithful to the deity Amman seeking her protection earlier when plague wreaked havoc about 150 years ago. The Kamatchipuri Adheenam has built a temple near Irugur on the outskirts and consecrated an idol, naming it as Goddess Corona Devi. The 1.5 foot tall black stone idol of was consecrated at the temple in the Mutt premises recently and daily prayers will be held seeking divine intervention to save the people from the deadly disease, for 48 days, sources in the Adheenam said. It was not for the first time such a temple has come up, as when plague spread across the district taking a heavy toll more than a century ago, an idol of Mariamman was installed and people started offering prayers. The place turned into a temple and came to be known as "Plague Mariamman Temple". — PTI

Uddhav takes dig at PM's aerial survey of Gujarat

SONU SHRIVASTAVA  
MUMBAI, MAY 21

Taking a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's aerial survey of cyclone-hit areas of Gujarat, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday said that he is inspecting cyclone affected areas on the ground. He also said that his visit was not merely for a photo opportunity. Hitting back at Mr Thackeray, the BJP said that the Maharashtra CM doesn't usually venture out of his home no matter how big a crisis is. Therefore, he needs to be congratulated for finally coming out of his home, state BJP president Chandrakant Patil said.

Mr Thackeray was on a one day tour of Konkan region to take stock of the damages in Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, with five talukas in the former district — particularly Rajapur and Ratnagiri talukas — having borne the brunt of the natural calamity that was intensely severe.

According to his itinerary, which is given by Chief Minister Office (CMO), he landed at Ratnagiri airport at 8.35 am. Later he travelled by a helicopter to Chhipi Airport in Sindhudurg. During his visit, Mr Thackeray promised a 360 degree SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of actual devastation caused by Cyclone Tauktae in the Konkan region of Maharashtra while assuring immediate and adequate recom-

Capt. of barge faces homicide charges

**Mumbai:** A day after the Mumbai police announced that it would carry out a probe into the deaths of personnel onboard barge P305 off Mumbai coast, the Yellow Gate police station on Friday registered an FIR for culpable homicide not amounting to murder against the captain of the ill fated barge. So far 51 dead bodies have been recovered and 24 people are still missing after the barge sank due to Cyclone Tauktae. Even as the FIR was registered against him, Captain Balwinder Singh is amongst the missing persons.

pense, for each person impacted adversely. "Let the 'punchanama' be completed first," Mr Thackeray said.

The CM also directed officials to submit a proposal of compensation for the cyclone affected areas after a thorough and professional assessment of damage was conducted to reveal specific figures and data in the wake of huge losses suffered in the two districts.

In his four-hour visit, he said, "The Prime Minister has been apprised about the huge loss caused by the cyclone. We have sought Central assistance. The Prime Minister is sensitive. We hope that like Gujarat, the central government will also help Maharashtra."

Scindia hails Rajiv as builder of modern India, deletes post later

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, MAY 21

Senior BJP leader and Rajya Sabha member Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday created a flutter when he said former Prime Minister late Rajiv Gandhi was maker of modern India while paying tribute to him on his death anniversary. "Former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi is builder of modern India. I pay my rich tribute to him on his death anniversary," he tweeted.

He however deleted the tweet later and replaced it with a fresh post that said 'I pay rich tribute to former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi on his death anniversary'.



Jyotiraditya Scindia

The first twitter post of Mr Scindia who joined BJP from Congress in March 2020, leading to the fall of 15-month-old Kamal Nath government, has however taken BJP people here by surprise.

However, Mr Scindia's followers here described it a 'faux pass' committed 'unwittingly'.

"One should not read between the lines into it", a close aide of Mr Scindia said.

BBC under fire

■ Continued from Page 1

these devastating findings." The BBC, founded in 1922, is Britain's publicly-funded but editorially independent national broadcaster. The rules governing its operations are set out in a royal charter that requires the corporation to be impartial, act in the public interest and be open, transparent and accountable. A mid-term review of the BBC's governance is scheduled to begin next year.

Even before the Dyson report, the BBC was under pressure from some members of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party, who complain that the broadcaster has a liberal bias.

Mr Johnson said he was concerned about the findings and hoped that the broadcaster would make sure "nothing like this ever happens again".

At the heart of the scandal were documents made to look like bank statements, falsely suggesting that members of Diana's inner circle were being paid to spy on her. Spencer alleged Bashir used the documents to gain his trust so he would introduce the journalist to Diana. He also alleged that Bashir made up stories about the royal family to strengthen Diana's belief there was a conspiracy against her.

When graphic designer Matt Wiessler, who had been commissioned by Bashir to create mocked-up documents, saw the program, he immediately made the connection. He brought his con-

cerns to BBC management, but he has long contended they made him a scapegoat. He said that there is a culture within the BBC that "the little people" don't need to be addressed. His business faltered after the BBC blacklisted him from assignments.

"Only under duress do we get some sort of apology and some sort of acknowledgement," he told the BBC.

Former Panorama producer Mark Killick, who was told to leave the program within 24 hours after he raised concerns, criticised the BBC for its inadequate response to both whistle-blowers and Diana's sons.

"Many people, both on the Princess Diana side of the line and in the BBC, had their reputations destroyed by a smear campaign authorised by BBC senior management, and many of them lost their jobs," he said. "I'm not quite sure that a generic apology in the form of a press statement by the BBC is anything like adequate."

The BBC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

London's police force, which in March ruled out a criminal investigation into allegations about the BBC interview, said Friday it would review the Dyson report "to ensure there is no significant new evidence".

In the interview, a major scoop for Bashir, Diana famously said that "there were three of us in this marriage" — referring to Prince Charles' relationship with Camilla Parker-Bowles. — AP

Cops gun down 13 Naxals in Maha

C-60 commando force carry out operation after intel input; seize arms, electronic items

SONU SHRIVASTAVA  
Mumbai, May 21

Around 13 Maoists were killed in a police encounter in a forest between Paydi-Kotmi in Gadchiroli district on Friday. The C-60 commandos had cracked down a Maoists camp near a village. A cache of arms and ammunition as well as some electronic items were recovered from the encounter site. The Maharashtra government has congratulated Gadchiroli police for this operation.

According to the Gadchiroli district super-

intendent of police's office, those killed include six men and seven women cadres.

Maharashtra home minister Dilip Walse-Patil has congratulated the Gadchiroli police on their act of bravery and grit. He also said that he would discuss the issue of increasing Naxalism on the Chhattisgarh border near Gadchiroli with the chief minister of Maharashtra.

The C-60 commando force has carried out the operation based on a specific intelligence input.

In a series of tweets, the official twitter handle of Maharashtra home minis-

ter office said, "Early this morning an encounter between C-60 commandos of #Police and #Naxalites broke out at Paydi-Kotmi forest in Etapalli, where the Naxalites had gathered for a meeting. C-60 squad were successfully able to gun down 13 Naxalites during this operation (sic)." Mr Walse-Patil said that

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▶ **ALL DECEASED** Naxals were identified and mostly belonged to the Kasansur dalam

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▶ **ALL DECEASED** Naxals were identified and mostly belonged to the Kasansur dalam

during this season, the collection of Tendu leaves is typically carried out in Gadchiroli area. The Naxalites collect large sums of ransom from this trade.

"The C-60 squad had received information about the meeting of the Naxalites in the forest, and accordingly the team launched a planned search operation (sic)," the home minister said.

C-60 team, which has been headed by the super-intendent of police Ankit Goyal, carried out this operation. During the operation, AK-47s, SLRs, carbines, 303, 12-bore

rifles, and explosives were confiscated.

The Gadchiroli police said that the operation continued between 6 am to 7.30 am. All deceased Naxals were identified and mostly belonged to the Kasansur dalam. The security forces are conducting a search operation as more Naxals could be hiding in the area.

Additional director-general of police (special operations) Sanjay Saxena, deputy inspector-general of Naxal range Sandip Patil and Gadchiroli super-intendent of police Ankit Goyal oversaw the operations.

IAF pilot killed as MiG-21 Bison crashes in Punjab

Jet was on training sortie from Rajasthan's Suratgarh

**Moga, May 21:** An IAF MiG-21 Bison aircraft crashed during heavy rain in a field in Punjab's Moga district, killing its pilot Squadron Leader Abhinav Choudhary, officials said. The aircraft was on a training sortie from Suratgarh in Rajasthan when it crashed in Langeana village on Thursday night, said Moga superintendent of police Gurdeep Singh.

The Indian Air Force has ordered a Court of Inquiry to ascertain the cause of the accident and said it condoles the tragic loss of its officer. "The aircraft crashed in a field and caught fire. It was raining heavily at the time," Singh said, adding that there was no other loss of life or damage to property.

The pilot's body was found about two kilometres from the crash site, barely 200 metres from a



Mangled remains of Indian Air Force MiG-21 fighter aircraft, which crashed late on Thursday night, killing the pilot, in Moga district on Friday.

— PTI

couple of big 'havelis'. Had the aircraft crashed over these houses, it could have caused heavy casualties, Singh said. He said the pilot appeared to have deployed a parachute in a bid to land safely. It seems he broke his neck upon impact on the ground, he added.

According to the information we got, the aircraft had taken off from

Suratgarh in Rajasthan for Jagraon near Ludhiana and was on the way back after a training sortie when it crashed, Singh said.

He added that IAF officials from Halwara and Bathinda with medical teams and ambulances had reached the crash site, about 12 km from Baghapurana town on the Mudki road.

— PTI

Ulfa chief frees abducted employee from Myanmar camp ONGC staffer may reach India today

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, MAY 21

Keeping his commitment to Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the outlawed Ulfa chief Paresh Baruah is reported to have despatched the abducted ONGC employee Ritul Saikia with a small group of Ulfa-I cadres from the camp in Myanmar to release him in India.

Disclosing that ONGC employee Saikia is expected to enter India sometime on Saturday, authoritative security sources told this newspaper that there have been speculation about his release but the abducted

▶ **THE ULFA-I** chief's announcement to release the abducted ONGC employee came soon after chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's appeal on Thursday and welcome to Ulfa-I's ceasefire because of the pandemic

ONGC employee is yet to be handed over by Ulfa-I to authorities in India.

Pointing out that Mr Saikia would be released or handed over to some "nominated" people in Mon district of Nagaland, security sources however claimed that Ulfa-I cadres have already started from their remote camps in

Myanmar with Mr Saikia towards the international border where he is expected to be released.

Refusing to divulge to whom ONGC employee would be handed over by Ulfa-I cadres, security sources said that they have already reached Nagaland.

The Ulfa-I chief's announcement to release the abducted ONGC employee came soon after Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's appeal on Thursday and welcome to Ulfa-I's unilateral ceasefire because of the pandemic.

Referring that he was appealing to Ulfa-I chief

as an Assamese not as chief minister because the wife of abducted ONGC employee and parents are suffering immensely and are in distress situation, Assam chief minister also welcomed the unilateral ceasefire. He on Thursday said, "We have seen a statement from Ulfa-I chief Paresh Baruah declaring unilateral ceasefire in view of the pandemic and as goodwill for the new government. We welcome any positive step, but a ceasefire will need ground rules for implementation (and) we look forward to a more solid indication from the outfit."

Mamata to fight poll...

■ Continued from Page 1

the BJP and became agriculture minister.

On Friday afternoon he submitted his resignation as the TMC MLA of Bhowanipore to Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee and vacated the seat for the bypoll where his party chief will be the candidate. Mr Chatterjee has, however, not resigned as a Cabinet minister. "I was elected from Ms Banerjee's Assembly constituency in such a situation where she needs to be elected within six months. It has to

be ensured she returns smoothly as a winning candidate.

Ms Banerjee's stay in power as CM is everything for us and our party as she is our supreme leader," Mr Chatterjee said.

He added: "In that context, I was approached from some quarters. After this, I decided to quit voluntarily as an MLA so that Ms Banerjee contests again and wins. She will decide my future later. I am an obedient soldier of the party. I never protested whenever and wherever I was fielded by my party.

Since I have not resigned as a minister, I will check the rules."

Speculation was rife earlier that the TMC supremo could either become a member of the Legislative Council or may stand from Khardah in North 24 Parganas where TMC candidate Kajal Sinha died of Covid-19 before his name was announced as the winner.

TMC sources indicated that Mr Chatterjee, who has a clean image, may be fielded as a party candidate in the Rajya Sabha polls later.

2 mantris under house arrest

■ Continued from Page 1

that they cannot step out of their residences nor can any government official meet them physically. These set of rules will also be applicable to the two other accused -- Madan Mitra, TMC MLA of Kamarhati, and former Kolkata mayor Sovan Chatterjee. While Mr Hakim returned home from Presidency Central Jail in the evening, the three others remain admitted to Woodburn Block of SSKM Hospital due to their ill-health.

The difference of opinion between the two judges of the division bench came to light

after the hearing began at the high court earlier in the day. While Justice Banerjee appeared to be in favour of interim bail for the arrested quartet on their plea to vacate the division bench's overnight stay on the special CBI court's bail for the accused, acting CJ BindaI did not agree with him while holding that the four must be kept under house arrest.

Later, a larger bench of five judges was constituted by the high court for hearing the case on May 24. It includes Justices Harish Tandon, Indra Prasanna Mukerji and Soumen Sen, besides the acting CJ

and Justice Banerjee. During the day, Mr Hakim's family had filed a caveat in the Supreme Court in the case so that the CBI can't have any legal advantage if it moves for a hearing against him.

Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee said: "I am very unhappy about the way the four were arrested because I was very much in office at that time. No one informed me of anything before their arrests. I was intimidated about it later as per legislative rules. I do not know what unknown reasons prompted the CBI to go to the governor for permission."

New 'doorstep' strategy

■ Continued from Page 1

The Centre said it is making efforts to ramp up supply and availability of

Amphotericin-B antifungal drug for the treatment of Black Fungus disease. Five additional manufacturers have been licensed to manufacture the drug within the country while production by existing five manufacturers is also being substantially ramped up.

The PM also hailed the initiative of micro containment zones and appreciated the home delivery of medicines. He requested health workers to make this campaign as comprehensive as possible in rural areas. He said bringing doctors, labs and e-marketing companies together to provide a tele-medicine facility named "Kashi Kavach" is also a very innovative initiative. "We have to fight a long battle," he added.

The overall fresh Covid-19 cases remained under 3 lakh for the fifth consecutive day as about 2.60 lakh new cases were detected in the last 24 hours. However, the death toll shot up to 4,209 after a brief decline. In Delhi, the cases came down to 3,009 for the first time since early April and positivity rate fell to 4.76 per cent. It was expected that Delhi may ease up the lockdown a bit after the positivity rate falls below 5 per cent but the city still has a high number of deaths — 252 on Friday.

Some states like Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka have decided to extend the lockdown.

Meanwhile, the first real-world data from Public Health England (PHE) has found that Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine Covishield is 85-90 per cent effective after two doses. The method used for the "Covid-19 Vaccine Surveillance Report" by PHE for analysing the approximate number of deaths and hospitalisations prevented by the vaccine programme was able to take into account the impact of both first and second doses for the first time due to more data now being available on that in the country. Previously, the real-world method only used the impact of the first dose of vaccination on hospitalisations and deaths. New analysis for the first time estimates that two doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine provide around 85 to 90 per cent protection against symptomatic disease, PHE said.

The UK government hailed the incredible impact the vaccination programme was having, as PHE estimates reveal that 13,000 deaths have now been prevented in people aged 60 years or older in England and 11,100 deaths in individuals aged 80 years and older, 1,600 in individuals aged 70 to 79 and 300 in individuals aged 60 to 69 years.



# THE ASIAN AGE

22 MAY 2021

## Israel's Gaza war ends, but will peace endure?

A ceasefire has brought to a halt the 11-day Gaza war. Only time will tell if this is a true harbinger of peace between Israel and the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank. The fear is this will be as short-lived as several peace initiatives brokered in the past proved. The ceasefire, pursued vigorously by Egypt on top of US President Joe Biden's increasingly stern advice to Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu, is the best thing to happen as it puts an immediate stop to the toll of lives. As many as 230 Palestinians, including 65 children and 35 women and 12 Israelis, including two children, have perished after lives of millions were torn asunder when thousands of rockets and GPS-guided missiles and bombs were raining on the region.

The question is, when will the next escalation come as victory is already being declared by the Hamas militants over a more powerful Jewish state even as Palestinians and Israelis cautiously welcome the cessation of hostilities? A cycle of violence followed by temporary truce has been the historical pattern and it will change only if Mr Biden becomes even less supportive of Israel, which is largely dependent on US funding and protection, besides an endless supply of precision-guided weapons. The US has said it will route humanitarian aid to rebuild Gaza only through the recognised Palestinian Authority, headed by Mahmoud Abbas in the West Bank and not the shadowy Hamas commanders.

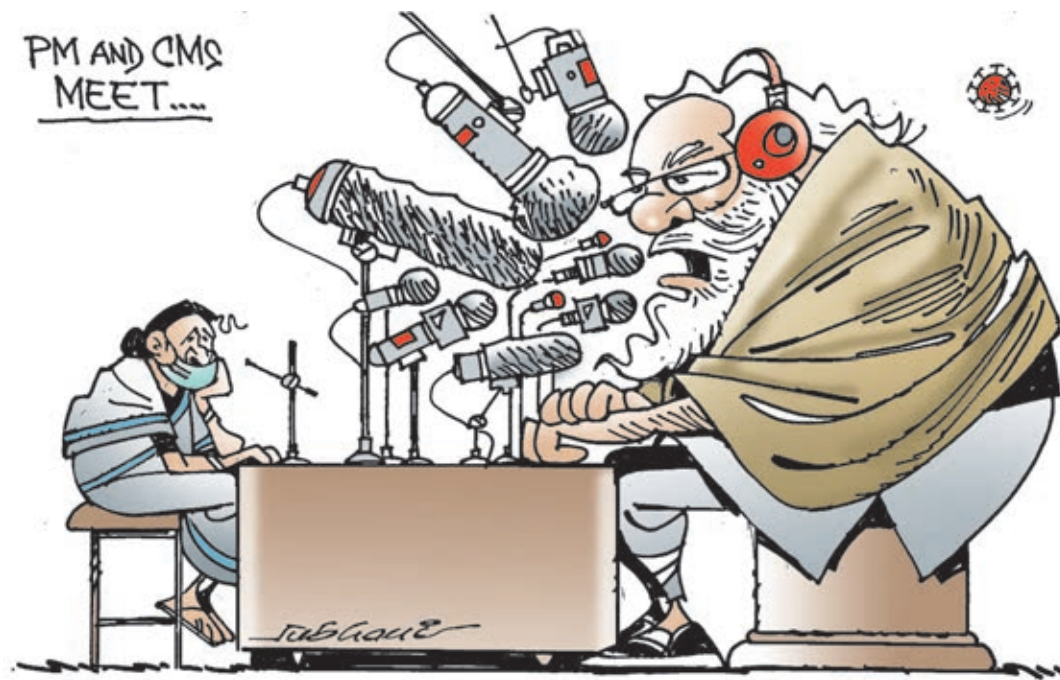
**What happens from here would be subject to how much the US is prepared to back any plan in which the state of Israel, whose right to existence is not in question anymore, may have to compromise in recognising a Palestinian homeland**

Not too much credence can be given to the Palestinian militants' claim that Mr Netanyahu has promised to halt further action at the Al Aqsa Mosque as well as planned evictions from Sheikh Jarrah in east Jerusalem. The two flash-points marked the run up to the most recent war though its direct cause may have been the invasive action of the firing of 4,000-plus rockets into Israel from Gaza. Whatever be the historical background to intractable confrontations, the fact remains that Hamas was the aggressor in raining fire though Israel reacted excessively in bombing Gaza in its hunt for militant targets, especially the network of tunnels, nicknamed "The Metro".

The ultimate solution lies in the two-State principle granting recognition to a homeland for the Palestinian people, millions of whom were displaced during the creation of Israel in 1948 and after the 1967 war. The timing may seem awkward right now when war wounds are still being tended but international diplomacy would have to get cracking for any progress to be made in initiating talks on the right of the Palestinians to a homeland in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It stands to reason that the economic blockade of Gaza must end in any fair solution and the return of the displaced to Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories must be considered though it is hugely complicated.

There is no pretending that the Hamas, voted to power in Gaza in 2006 over the moderate Fatah, are not an impediment to peace in their fanatical belief in "intifada". What happens from here would, however, be subject to how much the US is prepared to back any plan in which the state of Israel, whose right to existence is not in question anymore, may have to compromise in recognising a Palestinian homeland and if it seeks to live in peace.

Subhani



## The rise of anti-science as Covid-19 cases exploding



Patralekha Chatterjee

Dev 360

Death has a familiar face. Each one of us knows someone who has died of Covid-19 and someone whose life has been gutted. There is fear. There is uncertainty as we grapple with a ferocious second wave. India's coronavirus tally has crossed 25 million. More than 2,87,122 are dead.

But this has not led to a push for pro-science policies that prioritises evidence-based medicine in these troubled times. Quite the opposite, in fact.

In Meerut, a politician from the ruling BJP has been walking down the streets, blowing a conch shell, and performing a "havan" which he claims will stop the spread of the virus. Behind him, there are people and a bicycle cart with a heap of combustible material, and billowing clouds of smoke. Gopal Das Sharma, the politician, is not one who shirks the TV camera. Between blowing conch shells and rallying the faithful, he found time to tell one news channel: "We have mixed 'havan' material with cow dung cakes and ghee of *desi* cow, stems of the mango tree, camphor, etc. to stop the spread of the corona, purification of the environment, increase the oxygen level in the atmosphere and kill the dangerous virus from the atmosphere."

Pragya Singh Thakur, another BJP politician who represents Bhopal in Parliament, has been telling people to consume *gau mutra* (cow urine) of a *desi* (Indian) cow to fight lung infections, and plant trees like peepal and tulsi to prevent oxygen shortage.

These are only two of the most recent illustrations of anti-science. Who can forget the Coronil fiasco?

Many of us are tempted to view all this as fodder for mirth and merriment in these bleak times. But

it's no longer that funny.

Kishorechandra Wangkhem, a journalist from Imphal, Manipur, was recently booked under the stringent National Security Act for a comment on the social media. Wangkhem, media reports said, wrote "cow dung and cow urine did not work" in the wake of the death of a local BJP leader who succumbed to Covid-19.

India's scientific community has been worried about anti-science politics for some time now, but it's also important to recognise that statements which strike many of us as ludicrous and outright dangerous in the time of a pandemic resonate among a sizeable section of the Indian public.

These sentiments and views are not totally novel.

What is new is their growing social acceptability. That is, in part, linked to the kind of politics on the rise across the country. Earlier, what was not said so brazenly in public can be said now, with scant consequences.

What is happening in India is part of a global trend. Experts have noted that the rise of populism and the emergence of anti-science politics are occurring simultaneously in many places, raising questions about their possible connection.

Many analysts see this as a natural fallout of the populists' dislike for science because science is meant to be evidence-based, objective and demands proof of statements, and it clashes with populist politics which relies greatly on emotion and fears that resonate with a lot of people.

"Anti-science has emerged as a dominant and highly lethal force, and one that threatens global security, as much as do terrorism and nuclear proliferation," wrote Peter Hotez, in a recent *Scientific American* article. Hotez, a vaccine scien-

**These sentiments and views are not totally novel. What is new is their growing social acceptability.**

tist at the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, is the author of *Preventing the Next Pandemic: Vaccine Diplomacy in a Time of Anti-Science*. "We must mount a counteroffensive and build new infrastructure to combat anti-science, just as we have for these other more widely recognised and established threats," he said.

How exactly does one do that? Do scientists need to ask themselves if they can do a better job of communicating the need for rational thought in places where large numbers of people do not have a scientific temper nor a political leadership which encourages it?

Dr Soumyadeep Bhaumik, a medical doctor affiliated to George Institute for Global Health, India, who focuses on research evidence for informing policy, practice and public debate, stresses the need for redefining science communication.

"Not all scientists feel that scientists should engage in science communication, make time and effort to do so... They (scientists) need to promote rationalism and engage with their local communities. Globally, a big problem in science is obscure metrics which have no meaning, are easy-to-game and are used to evaluate scientists — number of research papers, number of citations, number of patents, etc. This needs to change. The current principal scientific adviser has started talking about science communication but hardcore investments are required."

A pandemic is a new, unfamiliar phenomenon for most people. "This means that people are scared automatically. A lot of people are ready to try new things and believe new things, which they probably ordinarily won't. A lot of opportunistic people use this -- to earn

money, to promote below-mediocre science as solutions. The government needs a very active communication plan which works to fight misinformation. The majority in India is still not on the Internet... and for the Government of India, posting things on the social media is not enough ...One needs to engage with communities," says Dr Bhaumik. Science communication, he says, should be done in regional languages for greater relevance.

Which brings one back to the question — what does one do if the political leadership itself chooses to overlook public statements which are blatantly anti-science? And how does one advocate for rational thought in a society where faith holds the trump card?

There is no short and easy answer. But one must continue to call out pseudo-science, and one must do that in a language and idiom that is accessible to most people in this country.

Perhaps India's successful fight against polio offers a lesson. It was not just the vaccine that did it. It was consistent communication with communities and engagement with a wide array of influencers. This included religious leaders.

During the battle against polio, vaccine resistance had varied from the overt to the covert in several districts. I remember several conversations with polio vaccine-refusers. Many were from marginalised communities who had never really had access to other basic services, such as clean water. They were wary of the vaccine and were easily manipulated into believing absurd conspiracy theories.

However, eventually, even the vaccine refusers became acceptors. The change came about through sustained efforts which mostly focused on communities. We need to remember that.

*The writer focuses on development issues in India and emerging economies. She can be reached at patralekha.chatterjee@gmail.com.*

### LETTERS

#### HEROIC SITTING

A bench of Justices S.J. Kathawalla and S.P. Tavade of the Bombay high court have reportedly sat for over 12 hours from 10.45 am to 11.15 pm on Wednesday to hear cases many of which demanded urgent attention. Unbelievable indeed. Their endurance for sitting over 12 hours is admirable. Eighty matters are said to have been heard. It goes to the credit of Justice Kathawalla that in May 2018, just a day before vacation, he had sat till 3.30 am after the working hours. Agreeably and admittedly, this cannot be possible for anyone to do daily. If all the judges sit for eight hours per day to hear the cases, the pendency of cases will vanish to a substantial extent.

**K.V. Seetharamaiah**  
Hassan, Karnataka

#### ADIEU, BAHUGUNA

**THE PASSING AWAY** of Sundarlal Bahuguna, India's noted environmentalist who ushered in the famous Chipko Movement, on Friday due to Covid-19 is shocking. To rouse the consciousness of the people and the government about the dire consequences of deforestation and how harmonic living can ensure a healthier tomorrow, he began foot marches along the hilly regions, stretching over thousands of kilometres. RIP.

**Sankar Paul**  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

#### SECOND SHOT

**INDIAN EVES ARE** all set to script history when they take on the Australian women's team in their maiden day-night Test from September 30 to October 3 at Perth, which hasn't hosted a pink ball Test yet. India last played a Test "Down Under" in 2006. The pink-ball Test between the two countries will be only the second such match to be held in the history of women's cricket. The only day/night women's game played between Australia and England in Sydney in November 2017 failed to produce a result.

**N.J. Ravi Chander**  
Bengaluru

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### THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY  
Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUBHAKAR  
THE ASIAN AGE office is located at:  
New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.  
Published and Printed on behalf of and for  
Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.  
London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.  
RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Farrukh Dhondy  
Cabbages & Kings



*"If the last shall be the first  
What happens to in-betweens?  
This is the sort of question I asked  
When I was in my teens,  
But now that I'm a man  
And put away childish thoughts  
And spend my time in wondering  
What happens if crosses are  
noughts?"*

— From **Kaaley Koo Aagey Dhuklo**  
by Bachchoo

In BoJo's UK, it's okay to hug now. But if cases spurt, fresh ban looms...

The world awaits, with bated breath, the results of the triumph of sense and science over nature. The PM of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, one BoJo, says he is "following the science" and attempting to restore the country in measured steps to something like normality. All manner of measures and the suspension of suspensions have been announced — six people from two different households can now meet indoors; barber shops or hairdressing saloons can reopen; so can gymnasiums.

Perhaps most popular with the public

at large is the reopening of the insides of pubs. Two weeks or so ago, you could, with social distancing, sit in the gardens of pubs or at tables on the pavements outside them, but from last week (hurrah!) you can drink at the bar.

As the first wave of the plague receded, chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak announced a scheme to induce people to eat out at restaurants by promising to pay half the bill or something. People did go to restaurants as a result and the hospitality industry got a boost — but so did the Covid plague. Triumph of ingenuity to the defeat of foresight. Take a bow Rishi, or maybe even take the knee, as proportionately more black people died as a result of the second wave.

But the UK government remained keen on currying favour, so to speak. They have now allowed the opening of restaurants and at last I can go to the Star of India or the Taj Mahal and enjoy a Bangladeshi version of Dhan Sakh! — er, maybe not!

And in the move towards being the cuddly, loveable government, BoJo has announced the crowning measure of opening up Britain. Yes folks, from

the middle of last week people are allowed to hug each other!

Gentle reader, this is not another instance of my warped humour — it's absolutely true. This great democracy has taken to legislating for when its citizens can hug each other.

It's not compulsory. One doesn't have to hug every person one passes in the street, but it now permits grandparents to embrace their grandchildren, etc.

My impression is that different cultures have distinct attitudes towards hugging. I've always thought that Russians and Indian politicians who regard themselves as equals went in for a brotherly hug. As soon as BoJo announced this advance in British freedoms, some commentators in the press protested that they were averse to hugging anyone as it was not acceptable in British culture. One writer even went on to say that where she came from in the north of England, if a gentleman unwittingly hugged her mother in greeting, her father would have assaulted the miscreant and perhaps killed him. A bit severe and perhaps not quite the truth — but then we

columnists have our *peyt ki puja* to consider.

All through the pandemic year, I have thought that the typical Indian greetings and ways of showing love or respect were the safest. So instead of knocking elbows I have resorted to a simple namaste with folded hands. I don't at my age do it myself, but I find the practice of touching an elder's feet and drawing energy from their aura or magnetic field or whatever, would stop you kissing them on both cheeks and inviting a leap of viral infection.

Hugging has, through history, been symbolic of sealing a deal. Traditional enemies come to an agreement and seal it with a hug. I can't be sure, but I think years ago I saw, on film, Richard Nixon hugging Deng Xiaoping — or perhaps it was Khrushchev and Nehru or someone.

Myself? I have always been wary of sealing a deal with an erstwhile enemy with a hug because very early in life the history books told me the story of the Maratha hero Shivaji hugging his enemy, the unwary Afzal Khan, and digging a metal *waag nukh* into his lung and ripping him apart.

And some part of me has, I must admit, been more inclined to *kissi* than to *koti*, but depending on the halitosis and the bulk and body odour of the opposite number, I am partial to an indulgence in both. One waits for the British government to lift the ban on kissing.

But enough confession. Every day BoJo's office issues warnings that the relaxation of restrictions and lockdown caveats will be constantly reviewed. There is more than a hint in these communications that, depending on the statistics of deaths and the spread of fresh infections, this may even result in a reversal of liberties. The "Indian variant" of Covid-19, as it's now universally known, has reportedly spread through 80 British "councils" (municipalities) and "the science" is still trying to determine whether the vaccines we have can stop it generating a third wave. This science tells us that it is more virulent and spreads faster than its uncles, the original, South African or Kent "variant".

The nation watches this space in trepidation. Will the pubs shut again? Will hugging be banned?



## SHORT TAKES

## TAIWAN 'GROSSLY INTERFERED' IN OUR AFFAIRS: HK

**Hong Kong:** Hong Kong's government on Friday said it has pulled all of its staff out of Taiwan and accused the island's government of having "grossly interfered" in the semi-autonomous Chinese city's internal affairs.

It said the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office will remain closed while it closely monitors developments and considers the way forward "in a holistic manner." Relations between the sides have deteriorated in recent years as Beijing tightens its control over Hong Kong and ratchets up diplomatic, military and economic pressure on Taiwan, a self-governing democracy China claims as its own territory, to be brought under its control by force if necessary.

The future of Taiwan's de facto consulate in Hong Kong, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, also appears bleak, with Hong Kong refusing to issue visas to several of its officials, reportedly because they refused to sign declarations endorsing Beijing's contention that Taiwan belongs to China.

## BOMB TARGETING ISLAMIST LEADER KILLS 6 IN PAK

**Quetta:** Six people were killed and several others were wounded on Friday when a powerful roadside bomb exploded near a vehicle carrying a local leader of an Islamist political party in Pakistan, police and a government spokesman said.

It was unclear who was behind the attack in Chaman, a town in the southwestern Baluchistan province.

Local police chief Abdul Bashir said the attack took place when Abdul Qadir, a local leader of a faction of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party, was on his way to attend a rally in support of the Palestinian people.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack and police said they were still investigating. Liaquat Shahwani, a spokesman for the provincial government in Baluchistan, tweeted a condemnation of the blast. It came as Pakistanis across the country were gathering for anti-Israel rallies.

## PAK BUYS DILIP, RAJ ANCESTRAL HOMES FOR RS 2.30 CR

**Peshawar:** Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial government has handed over ₹2.30 crore to Peshawar's Deputy Commissioner for purchasing the ancestral houses of legendary Bollywood actors Dilip Kumar and Raj Kapoor located in the heart of this city to convert them into museums.

The amount was released to the Deputy Commissioner by the Archaeology Department as final notices were issued to the owners of both the historic buildings for their procurement.

The DC Peshawar is in close contacts with the owners to find out an amicable settlement hampering the process of taking over custody of the buildings by the government authorities.

Director Archaeology KPK Abdus Samad said the government would take custody of both the houses shortly and would start work to restore the structures in its original shape.

## JAPANESE FREED FROM MYANMAR: INMATES ABUSED

**Tokyo:** A Japanese journalist who was freed from a Myanmar prison said on Friday that military and police interrogators repeatedly asked him about his friends, clients and made-up allegations.

Yuki Kitazumi, a freelance journalist and a former reporter for Japan's Nikkei business news, also said other inmates told him about abuses they suffered at the hands of authorities, including repeated beatings during nonstop, dayslong interrogations.

Kitazumi was detained at Yangon's notorious Insein prison for a month before his release and return to Japan last week. He was arrested by authorities while in the country covering the aftermath of the February's military coup and accused of offenses including violating the terms of his visa.

The ruling military junta said he was released as a gesture of friendship toward Japan.

## Israel, Hamas opt for truce after 11 days

Toll crosses 240 in deadly escalation before global pressure to end violence in volatile region

## Gazans return to assess damage amidst ceasefire

**Gaza City, Palestinian Territories, May 21:** Thousands of displaced Gazans started going back to their homes to check for damage and Israelis returned to normal life on Friday after a ceasefire appeared to take hold following 11 days of deadly fighting.

In Jerusalem, Israeli police cracked down on stone-throwing protesters, an *AFP* journalist and Israeli police said, two weeks after similar events led to the violent escalation between both sides.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel's bombing campaign of Palestinian armed groups in the Gaza Strip was an "exceptional success", after the enclave's Islamist rulers Hamas had claimed "victory".

In Gaza, thousands of Palestinians trickled out of the schools where they had taken shelter, a UN official said, while the civil defence said it was working with what little means it had to remove the rubble and rescue any survivors.

Nazmi Dahdouh, 70, said the Israeli military destroyed his home in Gaza City in an air strike on Monday.

"We don't have another home. I will live in a tent on top of the rubble of my home until it is rebuilt," the father of five said.

Raed al-Dahshan, deputy head of Gaza's civil defence, said authorities were "continuing to look for the missing under the debris".

Before dawn, Palestinians honked their horns and some fired shots in the air minutes after the truce started, while in the occupied West Bank, joyful crowds also took to the streets.

With no alerts sounding in Israel to warn of incoming Hamas rockets, calm reigned across much of the Jewish state with people heading to outdoor cafes in Tel Aviv.

The truce brokered by Egypt, that also included Gaza's second-most powerful armed group, Islamic Jihad, was agreed following mounting international pressure to stem the bloodshed. — *AFP*



Israeli security forces and Palestinian Muslim worshippers clash in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound, the third holiest site of Islam, on Friday. Fresh clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police broke out at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound today, in the latest unrest at the sensitive religious site police said. — *AFP*

● **CELEBRATORY DEMONSTRATIONS** took place in the Gaza Strip and West Bank as well, following the ceasefire. Fireworks, singing, and parades down the streets could be seen in uploaded videos on social media.

cy toward that end. I believe we have a genuine opportunity to make progress and I'm committed to working for it," Biden said on Thursday.

He said the US is committed to working with the United Nations to provide rapid humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza.

"We remain committed to working with the United Nations and other international stakeholders to provide rapid humanitarian assistance and to marshal international support for the people of Gaza and the Gazan reconstruction efforts," he said.

Biden told reporters that he spoke with Egyptian President Al-Sisi and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. "In my conversation with Netanyahu, I commended him for the decision to bring the current hostilities to a close in less than 11 days. I also emphasised what I've said throughout this conflict—the United States fully supports Israel's right to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks from Hamas and other Gaza-based terrorist groups that have taken the lives of innocent civilians in Israel," he said. — *AP*



Palestinian supporters of the Hamas movement celebrate after a ceasefire brokered by Egypt between Hamas and Israel, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on Friday. — *AFP*

## UN: Gaza has significant trauma, medical needs

**Geneva, May 21:** The World Health Organisation has tallied "significant trauma needs" in Palestinian areas, where at least 243 people have been killed during 11 days of fighting between Palestinians and Israelis.

WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris said a total of 8,538 people had been injured across Palestinian areas during the violence, and 30 health facilities in Gaza had been damaged — with one clinic fully destroyed and

another sustaining significant damage.

She said damage to infrastructure was impeding the access of ambulances.

The comments to a UN briefing in Geneva came as humanitarian aid workers assessed the fallout from the latest fighting between Hamas militant fighters and Israeli forces. Fabrizio Carboni, regional director for the Near and Middle East at the International Committee of the Red

Cross, estimated there were "several hundred" pieces of unexploded ordnance strewn about in Gaza and said medical supplies were a pressing need.

Matthias Schmale, Gaza director for UNRWA, the UN aid agency for Palestinian refugees, cited a "window" of several hours on Friday during which aid and supplies could be brought in through the Kerem Shalom crossing point into Gaza. — *AP*

## Germany to discuss Russian ties with US

**Berlin, May 21:** Chancellor Angela Merkel said Thursday that Germany will discuss "necessary common ground" with the US on relations with Russia after President Joe Biden opted not to punish the company overseeing a Russia-Germany pipeline project that Washington opposes.

The Nord Stream 2 pipeline has been an irritant in relations between the US and Germany for years. Washington, which has battled to block it, argues that the pipeline — now 95% complete — threatens European energy security, heightens Russia's influence and



Angela Merkel

poses risks to Ukraine and Poland in bypassing both countries.

On Wednesday, the Biden administration imposed sanctions on Russian companies and ships for their work on the pipeline, but Biden angered many

Democratic and Republican lawmakers by opting not to punish Nord Stream 2 AG, the company overseeing the project.

Waiving penalties regarding ally Germany was "in line with our commitment to strengthen our Transatlantic relationships as a matter of national security," U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

Merkel said on Thursday that "President Biden has now taken a step toward us in connection with the Nord Stream 2 conflict, where we have different views but where we will now talk further about

what the necessary common ground is in the relationship with Russia."

Speaking at an event organised by German broadcaster WDR in Berlin, she didn't elaborate on that common ground. Asked what Biden will get from Germany or Europe for waiving sanctions, Merkel replied: "Look, that's not how it works."

Merkel added that she and Biden will soon see each other at Group of Seven and NATO meetings. She noted that she and Armin Laschet, her party's candidate to succeed her after Germany's Sept. 26 election, advocate

sticking to pledges to raise Germany's defense spending. "We will have to speak about Russia and Ukraine policy, and of course about China policy," she said.

"But this isn't measured in millimeters and grams — partnerships are based on trying to react to the other's thought processes and positions in order to find good compromises." Nord Stream 2 is owned by Russian state company Gazprom, with investment from several European companies. Domestic critics in Germany — including Laschet's main opponent in the election. — *AP*

## NEW | TECH Sense of touch drastically improves functionality of prosthetics

## Mind control arm restores touch

**Washington, May 21:** Imagine being able to control a robotic arm from a distance, using only your mind. Now imagine being able to feel when its fingers grasp an object, as though it were your own hand.

US researchers published a study in the Journal Science on Thursday about the world's first brain-computer interface that allowed a volunteer with paralysis from the chest down to accomplish

this very feat.

The team say their work demonstrates that adding a sense of touch drastically improves the functionality of prosthetics for quadriplegics, compared to having them rely on visual cues alone. "I am the first human in the world to have implants in the sensory cortex that they can use to stimulate my brain directly," Nathan Copeland, 34, said.

"And then I feel as if a sensation is coming from

my actual hand."

In 2004, Copeland was in a car accident that left him with a serious spinal cord injury and without the use of his hands or his legs.

He volunteered to participate in scientific research, and six years ago underwent a major operation to have tiny electrodes implanted in his brain. Two sets of 88 electrodes the width of a strand of hair are arranged into "arrays" that resemble tiny hair-

brushes and penetrate deep into the brain's motor cortex, which directs movement.

Fewer than 30 people in the world have these kinds of implants, the study's co-lead author Rob Gaunt, an assistant professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at the University of Pittsburgh, said. What's unique about Copeland is an additional set of electrodes that are connected to his somatosensory cor-

tex, which receives and processes sensations.

"When we're grabbing objects, we use this sense of touch very naturally to improve our ability to control," explained Gaunt.

The team developed an interface that is "bi-directional" — meaning not only can it "read" instructions from the brain and send them to the artificial limb, it can also "write" sensations from the device and transmit them back. — *AFP*



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,540.48	1.97
Nifty 50	15,175.30	1.81
S&P 500*	4,156.10	-0.07
Dollar (₹)	72.83	0.38
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.53	0.28
Euro (₹)	89.06	0.03
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,995▲119	0.24
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.47	2.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.977	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.635	0.001

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

RBI fixes gold bond issue price at ₹4,842/gram

The issue price for the second tranche of the sovereign gold bond issue has been fixed at Rs 4,842 per gram, the Reserve Bank of India said. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22 - Series II or the second tranche will be open for subscription from May 24 to 28. Investors applying online and making payment through digital mode will get a discount of Rs 50 per gram. For them the price will be Rs 4,792 per gram.

US proposes 15% minimum tax on global corp. profit



The US Treasury Department said it supports a global minimum corporate tax rate of at least 15 per cent, below the 21 per cent minimum it has been seeking to impose on the foreign profits of US-based companies. The offer comes as the OECD and the G-20 economies seek an agreement on a minimum corporate tax rate, as countries compete with each other to cut tax rates and lure multinational companies.

Pawan Goenka, Bijapurkar to join Sun board

Sun Pharma has announced appointment of Pawan Goenka, former MD of Mahindra and Mahindra, and management consultant Rama Bijapurkar as additional independent directors with effect from May 21. Goenka retired as the MD and CEO of M&M on April 2. He is currently chairman of the board of governors of IIT Madras and IIT Bombay. Bijapurkar has a management consulting practice and works across sectors.

MSN Labs to sell posaconazole for black fungus

MSN Laboratories announced the launch of posaconazole in India under the brand name PosaOne as 100 mg delayed release tablets & 300 mg injections, respectively. Posaconazole is a triazole antifungal agent indicated for treating mucormycosis patients. MSN has developed the active pharmaceutical ingredient and the formulation of PosaOne in its in-house R&D and manufacturing units.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

■ Board okays dividend that exceeds Budget estimate

RBI to bolster govt coffers by ₹99K cr

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 21

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday approved paying Rs 99,122 crore as dividend to the central government for the accounting period of nine months ended March 31, 2021. The dividend is likely to alleviate some burden off the government's shoulder at a time when the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has hit government finances. The government is staring at an extra-ordinary fiscal deficit target of 6.8 per cent in 2021-22 (April-March), higher than the usual 3.5 per cent.

The central bank is mandated by the RBI Act 1934 to transfer surplus funds or balance profits to the government. The RBI earns its profits primarily from the interest it gets from the purchase and sale of government securities, the interest earned from lending to banks and an interest earned on bond holdings earned on open market principles.

The dividend is substantially higher than the budgeted surplus transfer of Rs 53,500 crore by the RBI and the nationalised banks for FY22 and Rs 57,130 crore by the RBI for FY21. The central bank recently switched to an April-March fiscal year from July-to-June previously, and the payment this time around is for a nine-month period. Since fiscal accounting is cash-based, the dividend transfer will be accounted in



Shaktikanta Das

Market sees dividend driving stimulus, Sensex gains 975 pts

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 21

The market recovered after two straight sessions of losses on Friday, gaining close to 2 per cent to register the best weekly gain since February on lower daily Covid cases and the RBI deciding to transfer Rs 99,122 crore surplus as dividend to Government of India, triggering hopes of fresh stimulus.

The Sensex gained 975 points, or 1.97 per cent to close at 50,540, largely due to heavy gains in banks and financials. The Fifty-50 closed at 15,175, up 269 points, or 1.81 per cent. The broader market

underperformed with gains of less than one per cent each for BSE Mid-cap (0.82 per cent) and Small-cap (0.65 per cent) indices.

Banks and financials gained the most during the week with the BSE Bankex gaining 7.34 per cent, followed by BSE Auto (5.15 per cent) compared to gains for the Sensex (3.71 per cent) and the Fifty-50 (3.39 per cent).

On Friday SBI's fourth quarter performance announcement lifted investors' sentiments towards bank and financial stocks. FPIs were net buyers of equities worth Rs 510.16 and domestic institutions, by Rs 649.10 crore.

FY22 for the Centre.

"While we await the detailed document to gauge the sources of higher RBI income and thus transfers, it needs to be seen if they used the

revaluation reserves in order to pay higher dividend. Nonetheless, this is definitely a relief for the government on revenue front whose finances would soon come under

pressure amid: (1) Fears of delayed execution of ambitious divestment target of Rs 1.75 lakh crore, (2) Higher possible doles payouts than budgeted on food, fertiliser subsidy and NREGA, and (3) Also possible fading of the positive upside surprises of fiscal tax buffers on account of modestly budgeted indirect taxes," said Madhavi Arora, lead economist at Emkay Global.

"Given the strengthened domestic assets and record foreign reserves that RBI holds, we feel that there might be another round of special dividend in case of additional requirement in future due to the uncertain environment," said Mohit Nigam, head of portfolio management services at Hem Securities, a domestic stock brokerage house.

The decision to transfer the surplus to the central government was taken at the meeting of the Central Board of Directors of RBI. The meeting was held through video conferencing. The RBI Board, according to the press release, also reviewed the current economic situation, global and domestic challenges and recent policy measures taken by the Reserve Bank to mitigate the adverse impact of the second wave of COVID-19 on the economy.

During the meeting, the board, headed by governor Shaktikanta Das, also "approved the Annual Report and accounts of the Reserve Bank for the transition period.

Internet Explorer to retire in June 2022

Washington, May 21: Microsoft has said that it is retiring its long-standing browser Internet Explorer on June 15 next year after serving the netizens for over 25 years.

The web browser was released with Windows 95, the tech giant said in a blog post on Wednesday.

The Internet Explorer 11 desktop application will be retired and go out of support on June 15, 2022, for certain versions of Windows 10. Sean Lyndersay, a Microsoft Edge programme manager said while commenting on the decision.

"The future of Internet Explorer on Windows 10 is in Microsoft Edge. Not only is Microsoft Edge a faster, more secure and more modern browsing experience than Internet Explorer, but it is also able to address a key concern: compatibility for older, legacy websites and applications.

"Microsoft Edge has Internet Explorer mode (IE mode) built in, so you can access those legacy Internet Explorer-based websites and applications straight from Microsoft Edge," Lyndersay said. Internet Explorer mode in Microsoft Edge will be supported till at least 2023, the blog post said.

On its debut in 1995, Internet Explorer became an instant hit. It killed off Netscape Navigator, and achieved a virtual monopoly in the early 2000s.

— PTI

SBI to create ₹10K cr Covid book for healthcare & pharma

FC BANKING BUREAU MUMBAI, MAY 21

The country's largest lender, State Bank of India (SBI), is planning to create a Covid-19 loan book of Rs 10,000 crore for the domestic healthcare and pharma sector. The country's leading vaccine makers Bharat Biotech, Biological E have already received creditlines from the lender.

"The Covid book that is expected to be created under the recent guidelines that have come from the RBI on May 5, we are quite upbeat on this particular sector. We will certainly support this sector. We have some plans and have come out with some schemes which we will be rolling out as of now. As of now we have observed that the pharma sector is of course cash rich...Rs 10,000 crore of Covid portfolio we want to create," said Dinesh Khara, chairman SBI while announcing the bank's Q4 earnings.

Given the widespread resurgence in Covid-19 infections across the country, the RBI this month announced an on-tap liquidity window of Rs 50,000 crore, with a tenor of up to three years, that can be provided by banks for lending support to entities such as hospitals, diagnostics, pharmacies, pharmaceutical companies or importers, medical oxygen manufacturers and suppliers and other operators involved in the critical healthcare supply chain. This has been done to ease the liquidity position and financial constraints being faced by these emergency healthcare service providers, consequent to the significantly higher load on these entities in the recent weeks.

Meanwhile, the lender registered a net profit of Rs 6,451 crore in Q4FY21 as compared to Rs 3,581 crore in Q4FY20, an increase of 80 per cent on lower provisions, stable asset quality and other income. Sequentially the net profit increased by 24.14 per cent. SBI continued to be resilient by containing asset quality within guidance. Total slippages and restructuring for FY21 was at Rs 46,416 crore, within the guidance of Rs 60,000 crore. The provision buffer stood at Rs 25,376 crore, including Covid related provision of Rs 6,346 crore. Gross NPA saw a decline of 45 basis points QoQ to 4.98 per cent from 5.44 per cent. Net interest income grew by 18.8 per cent YoY and declined 6 per cent QoQ.



Dinesh Khara

HC stays ONGC tender as GMR seeks gas for its plants

New Delhi, May 21: The Delhi High Court has put on hold state-run ONGC's notice inviting tender (NIT) and the consequent e-auction with regard to sale of natural gas from its block in the Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh.

A bench of Chief Justice D. N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said a prima facie case is made out in favour of the petitioners—two GMR group companies—and balance of convenience was also in their favour, as finalisation of the bidding would cause irreparable loss to them.

"We, therefore, stay the operation, implementation, execution and finalisation of the NIT dated April 12, 2021 as well as corrigendum to the NIT issued on April 27, 2021 and the consequent e-auction, till the next date of hearing," the bench said in its May 20 order.

With the observation the court listed on June 4 the pleas by GMR Vemagiri Power Generation Ltd and GMR Rajamundry Energy Ltd challenging the NIT and seeking a stay

GAS OUTPUT RISES 23% AS RIL-BP FIELDS START PRODUCTION

New Delhi, May 21: India's natural gas production jumped 22.7 per cent in April after Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner BP Plc ramped up output from their eastern offshore KG-D6 block, government data released on Friday showed.

India produced 2.65 billion cubic meters of natural gas in April, up from 2.16 bcm in the same month last year, as per the data released by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

While state-owned ONGC's production was

flat at 1.72 bcm, output from fields operated by the private sector and joint ventures tripled to 710.86 million standard cubic meters. The bulk of this came from 409.12 mmcm output from eastern offshore fields.

The data did not give individual field productions.

Reliance-BP, which in December last year started putting the second wave of gas discoveries in KG-D6 block to production, last month started output from the Satellite Cluster fields.

— PTI

The companies have sought a stay on any further allocation on the ground that the Centre and ONGC failed to deliver the gas allocation assured to them.

They have also told the court that pursuant to the Centre and ONGC's assurance they have made substantial investments to

the tune of Rs 1,000 crore.

The two companies had also contended that there was a stress faced by the power sector and the result of the e-auction would be that the natural gas will be supplied to the other sectors at a higher price.

They have also claimed that the auction was in complete variance with the statutory framework for allocation of coal for coal based power projects.

The two companies have also challenged a March 21, 2016 notification of the petroleum ministry that provides for forward auction—gas would be allocated to the highest bidder—and they have contended that this would be discriminatory to them.

The two companies had told the bench that if the auction was not stayed, they will be compelled to bid and participate in the e-auction for procuring allocation of the gas, which was to be allocated to them as per the assurances of the Centre and ONGC and therefore, irreparable loss and injury would be caused to them.

— PTI

UNDER WATCH

Firms now have to be mindful about how space is being used & when it is being used

Tech eyes to keep tabs when bankers return to work

ELIZABETH MARSHALL MAY 21

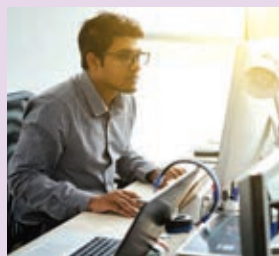
Reservation systems for seats. Algorithms that say whether a location is crowded or not. Cameras to show what's happening in real-time. Trackers that let others know you are there.

Technology that has swept the world for convenience, curiosity, and accountability is arriving at workstations of US bank employees, as they prepare to return to offices in coming months because of the pandemic easing, industry sources and outside vendors said.

Banks, including

JPMorgan Chase & Co, Goldman Sachs Group Inc, Citigroup, Deutsche Bank AG and HSBC Holdings PLC plan to have workers commute to buildings in New York and other US cities as soon as this month, after more than a year of largely work-from-home situations.

But not everyone can return at once: banks will have to extend practices like those used for small teams of traders during the pandemic. Shifting rotations of people will pass through giant buildings on different days, without clustering in the same areas on the same floors, to avoid spreading



Covid-19.

Some of the banks are implementing systems where employees will book "hot seats" on particular days and be monitored while they are sitting at them, sources said.

In some buildings, that could mean cameras that monitor a room's occupan-

cy level and even sensors that tell building management whether someone is sitting at a desk.

"That feels a little personal," one bank employee said about desk sensors.

The comment reflects a sentiment that some banks could face as they bring in tech that monitors employees more closely after an unprecedented period of working from afar: they are okay booking dinner reservations online, sharing locations with friends, live-streaming videos or wearing activity trackers for their own health, but not necessarily okay with having their employers knowing

when they are seated at a desk.

Employees will need to get over these hang-ups because the technology is necessary for safety and saves companies money, industry sources and consultants said.

"We have to be more mindful about how space is being used and when it is being used," said Neil Murray, CEO of corporate solutions at JLL, which manages offices for JPMorgan, Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs and others.

Staff returning to JPMorgan's Manhattan headquarters will soon have a new app that uses

algorithms and artificial intelligence to book seats.

It is part of an "optimum rotation" plan, Daniel Pinto, JPMorgan's co-president and chief operating officer said recently. That means getting the right people together on the right days for in-office collaboration.

HSBC and Deutsche also plan to launch reservation apps and online systems. While all three banks are still working out the details, apps like these can use card-swipes at security turnstiles to identify patterns and suggest when someone should book a desk to meet teammates.

— Reuters

SOUTH INDIAN BANK POSTS NET PROFIT

New Delhi, May 21: South Indian Bank (SIB) on Friday reported a net profit of Rs 6.79 crore in the fourth quarter. The private sector lender had posted a net loss of Rs 143.69 crore in the year-ago quarter. The bank had reported a net loss of Rs 91.62 crore in the third quarter. Its total income during January-March 2021 fell 10.4 per cent to Rs 2,098.25 crore as against Rs 2,341.88 crore in the year-ago period. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

Boxing coach  
Bhardwaj no more

**New Delhi:** India's first Dronacharya awardee coach in boxing, O. P. Bhardwaj, died on Friday after battling prolonged illness and age-related issues here. He was 82 and had tragically lost his wife Santosh to ill-health about 10 days ago. Bhardwaj was bestowed the highest national honour in coaching jointly with Bhalchandra Bhaskar Bhagwat (wrestling) and O. M. Nambiar (athletics), when it was introduced in 1985. Bhardwaj was India's national boxing coach from 1968 to 1989 and also served as a selector. Under his tutelage, Indian pugilists won medals at the Asian Games, the Commonwealth Games and the South Asian Games. Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh condoled his demise. — *PTI*

AFI medical chief  
loses Covid fight

**New Delhi:** The Athletics Federation of India's medical commission chairman Arun Kumar Mendiratta, who was set to travel with the Indian contingent for the Tokyo Olympics, died on Friday due to Covid-19 related complications at a hospital here. He was 60. The Athletics Federation of India condoled the death of Mendiratta, who was also part of the Asian Athletics Association for over 25 years. "He led AFI's relentless fight against age-fraud and doping. He was also the architect of our no-needles policy," AFI President Adille J. Sumariwalla Mendiratta was appointed as the chief medical officer by the Indian Olympic Association for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics. — *PTI*

Fielding coach  
wants fit players

**New Delhi:** India's women cricketers are not as athletic and strong as their foreign counterparts when it comes to running around the park and that is something fielding coach Abhay Sharma will work on extensively with them during the upcoming UK tour. Sharma, who has worked a lot with the men's India U-19 team, was with the national women's team for the first time during the home series against South Africa in March. "Overall development is needed as far as fielding is concerned. The game is changing, you have to be more athletic. Technically, work needs to be done. What I observed is that a lot of girls are struggling with their throwing techniques," Abhay said. The Indian team is scheduled to play a Test, three ODIs and as many T20s. — *PTI*

Ronaldo to lead  
Portugal in Euro

**Lisbon, Portugal:** Cristiano Ronaldo will lead a talented Portugal squad that will try to defend its European Championship title. Coach Fernando Santos on Thursday announced his list of 26 players for next month's tournament, when Ronaldo will be supported by the likes of Bruno Fernandes, Bernardo Silva, Diogo Jota and Joao Felix. Also included in the Euro 2020 squad was 22-year-old Sporting Lisbon forward Pedro Goncalves, who has never played for the national team. Goncalves was key this season in helping Sporting win its first Portuguese league title since 2002. Ronaldo will be playing in his fifth straight European Championship. — *AP*

U-17 women's WC  
in India next year

**New Delhi:** The U-17 women's World Cup will be held in India from October 11 to 30 next year, FIFA Council said on Thursday. India were earlier scheduled to host the 2020 U-17 World Cup but it was postponed to 2021 before being cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "The Council also approved dates for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup India 2022 (October 11-30, 2022), FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup Costa Rica 2022 (August 10-28, 2022), as well as a 14-team play-off for the FIFA Arab Cup 2021 (June 19-25, 2021)," the governing body said.

Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. And Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C-9, Sector - III, Noida - 201301.  
Editor - T. Venkatram Reddy,  
RNI Registration number 57290/94, Price in Nepal - Nep.Rs. 20.00 per copy.

## Make room for IPL

## BCCI wants ECB to advance Tests, open window for rich league

**London, May 21:** The BCCI has requested England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) to advance the five-Test series by a week from its current August 4 start to give them a better shot at completing the remaining 31 matches of the now-postponed Indian Premier League.

While no one from BCCI has officially confirmed the development, former England captain and renowned cricket writer Michael Atherton reported about the development in London's *The Times*.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India has enquired about the possibility of moving the final Test of the English summer in order to make room to complete the postponed Indian Premier League," the report said.

"Informal discussions have been had between the respective boards as cricket continues to grapple with a schedule ravaged by Covid," it added.

Indian team are looking at a potential gap of six weeks after the completion of World Test Championship final against New Zealand which is scheduled from June 18-22 in Southampton and start of the England series.

The five-Test series starts with first match at Nottingham (August 4-8), followed by Lord's (August 12-16), Leeds (August 25-29), Oval (September 2-6) and Manchester (September 10-14).

However, a potential start in the last week of July, with lesser gaps between the Tests would open the entire month of September in which BCCI can complete the IPL either in UK or more likely in the UAE. Atherton further wrote that ECB's own calendar as well as those hosting counties, which have already sold tickets would be in a fix with this request from the BCCI. — *PTI*



New Zealand star pacer Tim Southee in this file photo.

## Southee upbeat for WTC final

**Southampton, May 21:** Senior New Zealand pacer Tim Southee believes that the upcoming two-Test series against England would serve as "great preparation" for his team as it gears up for the marquee World Test Championship final against India here.

New Zealand are playing two Tests against England at the Lord's (Jun 2-6) and Birmingham (Jun 10-14). The WTC final final is scheduled from June 18.

Asked if the focus will be on the WTC final, Southee said: "Anytime you get to play a Test match for New Zealand,

Anytime you get to play a Test match for New Zealand, it's an amazing opportunity and I don't think you treat them as warm-ups. But great to have the two-match series leading to the World Test Championship final.

— **TIM SOUTHEE**  
New Zealand star pacer

it's an amazing opportunity and I don't think you treat them as warm-ups. Our focus is first and foremost on the two match series against England."

But the 32-year-old with 302 Test wickets didn't deny that it was indeed a great opportunity to gear up for the big battle against India.

"....but great to have

those matches leading to the final. So for us, it's great preparation for that final but we are looking at two-match series against a quality English side in their conditions," Southee said.

Southee also didn't feel that three Tests in three weeks will be much of a workload after a welcome break for many.

"It's exciting to play three Test matches in a short space of time," Southee said after his first training session at the Ageas Bowl following a three-day hard quarantine.

"It is something that the team doesn't get to do that often. We've come off a bit of a break, which has been nice, and (we have) been able to get some conditioning into our bodies..." Southee said.

He believes that they will be ready to cope with the rigours with some quality training sessions in the next two weeks.

— *PTI*

KANE KEEN TO  
MOVE OUT OF  
TOTTENHAM

**London, May 21:** Tottenham forward Harry Kane has hinted at a move to Manchester City as speculation mounts over his future, calling the champions' star midfielder Kevin De Bruyne a "striker's dream". Kane has reportedly told Spurs he wants to leave at the end of the season and the England captain has been linked with City, Manchester United and Chelsea.

Kane has now raised the prospect of a move to Pep Guardiola's title winners, naming City's De Bruyne as a perfect team-mate.

City are reported to be interested in signing Kane, but Spurs will not let him go without a fight, especially as he is under contract for the next three years. Kane is determined to stay in the Premier League and when asked by former Manchester United defender Gary Neville which player would help him score more goals he said: "De Bruyne for sure." — *AFP*

Medics charged in  
Maradona's death

**Buenos Aires, May 21:** Seven health professionals who tended to Diego Maradona in the days before his death have been charged with involuntary manslaughter.

Maradona, who led Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup, died of a heart attack November 25 at a rented residence outside Buenos Aires following brain surgery two weeks earlier. He was 60.

A medical board's report given to prosecutors this month concluded that Maradona was in agony for more than 12 hours, did not receive adequate treatment and could still be alive if he had been properly hospitalised.

Prosecutors on Wednesday charged neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque and psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, the two leaders of Maradona's medical team, and five other health professionals with involuntary manslaughter.

A doctor, a psychologist, two nurses and a nurse coordinator were the others.

The medical panel's report said the patient's signs of risk of life were ignored, adding that Maradona showed unequivocal signs of a prolonged agony period of at least 12 hours.

The care that Maradona received at the rented house, the report said, did not fulfill the minimum requirements for a patient with his medical history, and that he would have sur-



Diego Maradona

● **Prosecutors charged neurosurgeon Leopoldo Luque and psychiatrist Agustina Cosachov, the two leaders of Diego Maradona's medical team, and five other health professionals with involuntary manslaughter.**

vived with adequate hospitalization. Maradona had suffered a series of medical problems, some due to excesses of drugs and alcohol. He was reportedly near death in 2000 and 2004.

Julio Rivas, a lawyer for Luque, said earlier this month that medical forensics of the report were flawed and biased... with no scientific foundation. — *AP*

Rookie Cameron  
packs off Thiem

**Lyon, May 21:** World number four Dominic Thiem suffered a fresh setback in his Roland Garros build-up when he was knocked out of the Lyon ATP event in his opening match on Thursday.

Top seed Thiem, 27, lost to Britain's 49th-ranked Cameron Norrie 6-3, 6-2 in just over an hour.

Thiem, a two-time runner-up at Roland Garros, won just one match at the Italian Open last week, arriving in Rome on the back of a semi-final run at Madrid where he belatedly started his clay court season.

Norrie will face either French qualifier Arthur Rinderknech or Italian sixth seed Jannik Sinner for a place in the semifinals.

Greek second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, the champion at the Monte Carlo Masters, eased into the last eight against Tommy Paul of the United States 6-1, 6-4.

French number one Gael Monfils was knocked out by Japan's world number 60 Yoshihito Nishioka, 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/2).

Nishioka's reward is a clash with Tsitsipas on Friday.

Elsewhere in Italy, Coco Gauff advanced to the semifinals of the Emilia-Romagna Open after beating Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 6-3 on Thursday in a match between two American teenagers.

Gauff, who last week reached the Italian Open semifinals for her career-best result on clay, came from 3-0 down in the second set. Gauff will next

INJURED HALEP  
PULLS OUT OF  
FRENCH OPEN

**Bucharest (Romania), May 21:** Third-ranked Simona Halep withdrew from the French Open on Friday because of a calf injury.

The 29-year-old Romanian, who won the title at Roland Garros in 2018, tore a muscle in her left calf at the Italian Open and said it needs more time to heal. The French Open begins May 30.

"Withdrawing from a Grand Slam goes against all my instincts and aspirations as an athlete, but it is the right and only decision to make," Halep said.

Halep is a three-time finalist at the French Open. She beat Sloane Stephens in the 2018 final in Paris for her first major singles title.

"The thought of not being in Paris fills me with sadness, but I will focus my energy on recovery, staying positive and getting back on court as soon as it is safe to do so," she said.

Simona Halep is the defending champion at Wimbledon, winning the title in 2019. — *AP*

face Czech player Katerina Siniakova, who beat eighth-seeded Caroline Garcia 7-5, 6-1.

Former U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens also reached the semifinals by beating Sara Errani of Italy 6-3, 6-0. — *Agencies*

## Spanish title down to last game

**Barcelona, May 21:** Two of Spain's most modest stadiums are set to offer scenes of joy and sorrow on Saturday.

Atletico Madrid can ensure it clinches its first Spanish league title in seven years with a win at Valladolid, while Barcelona will visit the already relegated Eibar.

Atletico enters the final round of the competition with a two-point lead over defending champion Real Madrid. If Diego Simeone's side fails to win at Valladolid, Real Madrid can retain its title by beating Villarreal. Real Madrid holds the tiebreaker advantage with Atletico in case they finish level on points.

In a provincial city 190 kilometres (118 miles) north of Madrid, Valladolid needs a victory at its Jose Zorrilla Stadium to have a chance of avoiding relegation.

Elche and Huesca are also fighting with Valladolid to not go down, with two of the three clubs destined for the drop.

For Valladolid defender Kiki Olivas, his team's



Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone gestures in this file photo.

desperation could be what it needs to pull off the upset.

Olivas will be tasked with helping defend Luis Suarez, whose late goal last weekend secured a 2-1 comeback win over Osasuna that kept Atletico at the top of the standings and in control of its fate. Atletico will face the finale without its most-used center back, Stefan Savic, who will serve a one-game suspension for accumulation of

yellow cards. Jose Gimenez, who has been hit by injuries and a bout with Covid-19 this season, will likely take his place.

Besides needing Valladolid to at least draw with Atletico, Madrid must beat a Villarreal side that has played well all season but may be looking ahead to an even more important game.

Villarreal will face Manchester United in the Europa League final on Wednesday in Gdansk,

Poland, aiming to win the first major title in club history. If it beats the English powerhouse, it will also qualify for the Champions League.

Meanwhile, the Argentina star Lionel Messi has been given permission to skip the team's final game of the Spanish league season — at Eibar on Saturday — so he can have extra rest ahead of the Copa America. Messi didn't train on Friday. — *AP*

## Westbrook's wizardry halts Pacers

**Washington, May 21:** After one loss back when the Washington Wizards were struggling through a Coronavirus-disrupted, injury-depleted and defense-optional stretch of the season that put them 15 games below 0.500, Russell Westbrook gathered his teammates to speak his mind.

According to coach Scott Brooks, Westbrook delivered a "very passionate, very direct talk" that essentially amounted to: We will not miss the post-season.

Might have seemed far-fetched at the time. Turns out Westbrook was true to his word.

Westbrook nearly produced a triple-double Thursday night, Bradley

Beal scored 25 points and the Wizards reached the NBA playoffs as the Eastern Conference's No. 8 seed by overwhelming the Indiana Pacers 142-115 in the play-in round Thursday night.

Washington led by as many as 38 and now faces Joel Embiid and the No. 1 seed Philadelphia 76ers in the first round, marking quite a turnaround for Brooks' crew, which was 17-32 before going on a 17-6 run over the regular season's last six weeks.

A little more than a week after breaking Oscar Robertson's career record for most regular-season triple-doubles, Westbrook finished Thursday with 18 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists, and it was

Beal — second in the NBA in scoring two years in a row — whose 3-pointer opened up a 30-point lead at 98-68 with about four minutes left in the third quarter.

Domantas Sabonis had 19 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists before fouling out early in the fourth quarter for the Pacers, whose run of five consecutive playoff appearances ended in coach Nate Bjorkgren's first year in charge.

The Wizards lost the game at the Boston Celtics 118-100 on Tuesday and Westbrook was hardly himself.

He shot 6 for 18. He had only five assists, less than half of his league-leading average of 11.7. — *AP*



Daniel Gafford (left) of Washington Wizards blocks a shot by Indiana Pacers' Doug McDermott during their NBA game in Washington on Thursday. — *AP*

GRIEF-STRICKEN KABADDI  
PLAYER GETS ₹2 LAKH AID

**New Delhi, May 21:** The Sports Ministry has approved financial assistance of ₹2 lakh for double Asian Games gold-medallist woman kabaddi player V. Tejaswini Bai, who recently battled Covid-19 and lost her husband to the dreaded infection.

The assistance has been sanctioned under the new joint initiative with the Indian Olympic Association to support former athletes and coaches during the pandemic. The financial assistance has been sanctioned from the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund for sportspersons.

Tejaswini and her husband contracted Covid-19 on May 1. While she is on the path to recovery at home, her husband Naveen succumbed to the deadly virus on May 11.

"He was just 30 but he was panicking a lot after the death of his father. It was the fear and stress that took his life," Tejaswini said in a statement issued by the Sports Authority of India.

"I was not expecting this (financial assistance) but the Sports Ministry, SAI and IOA took very prompt action to take this decision of giving us the assistance. This is the first time that we have been given such support," she added. Karnataka's Tejaswini won the Arjuna Award in 2011. — *PTI*