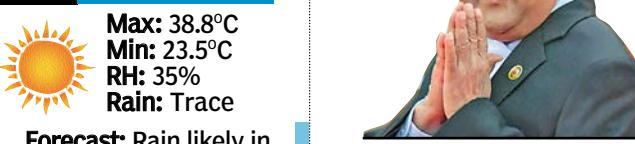


DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | 14 MAY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 38.8°C
Min: 23.5°C
RH: 35%
Rain: Trace

Forecast: Rain likely in evening. Max/Min temp. 39/27°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Tadiya

Star: Mrigasira full day
Varjyan: 12 noon to 1.48 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.22 am to 9.13 am; 12.38 pm to 1.29 pm

RahuKalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon

HIJRI CALENDAR

Shawwal 1,144 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.38 am

Zohar: 12.22 pm

Asar: 4.41 pm

Maghrib: 6.46 pm

Isha: 7.59 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.40 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.44 AM

MOONRISE TOMORROW 7.25 AM

MOONSET TODAY 8.56 PM

COUNTER POINT



It won't affect the common man... he is standing in the queue at vaccination centres!

SHORT TAKES

UPSC prelims put off to October 10

New Delhi: The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Thursday postponed the civil services preliminary examination, scheduled to be held in June, to October 10 in view of the alarming COVID situation. The commission conducts civil services examination annually in three stages — preliminary, main and interview — to select officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.

Centre denies SC 'bench avoidance'

New Delhi: The Centre on Thursday strongly refuted in the SC the claims of an NGO that government is engaged in "bench avoidance" in a matter related to widening of the ambitious Chardham highway project. The strategic 900-km Char Dham highway project aims to provide all-weather connectivity to four holy towns — Yamanotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath — in Uttarakhand. The claims that Centre is engaged in "bench avoidance" was raised by the NGO in the written submissions.

NHRC notice on corpses in Ganga

New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, after receiving complaints about several bodies found floating in the Ganga river in the two states. It (NHRC) has issued notices calling for action taken report.

■ Report on Page 7

Maha lockdown till June 1

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government on Thursday announced the extension of Covid induced restrictions till 7am on June 1. Any person coming from anywhere in the country will have to carry a negative RT-PCR report to enter in Maharashtra by any mode of transport. Maharashtra on Thursday reported 42,582 new positive cases.

■ Report on Page 7



Oli set to become Nepal's PM again

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

WORLD | 9

India remain No.1 in Test rankings

TABLOID

Female bashing is a reality

Bill Gates and Melinda Gates

Vol. 84 No. 133 Established 1938 | 20 PAGES | ₹6.00

Id Mubarak



A boy tries on a new skull cap for Id-ul-Fitr on the last day of the holy month of Ramzan, at Charminar on Thursday. ■ Report on Page 2

— S. SURENDRA REDDY

15 more Covid patients die at top Goa hospital

Panaji, May 13: Fifteen more Covid-19 patients died at the Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in the early hours of Thursday, the state government told the Bombay High Court, two days after 26 coronavirus patients had succumbed at the same facility here.

The Goa bench of the HC said state authorities told it some of the casualties may have taken place due to "logistical issues" related to connecting oxygen cylinders to the manifold (group of large gas cylinders) that resulted in interruption and drop in pressure in supply lines of

oxygen to patients.

The HC observed that despite its order on providing medical oxygen to Covid-19 patients at the GMCH, there were 15 deaths during the dark hours of 2 am and 6 am in the government-run facility on Thursday.

The bench was hearing a bunch of petitions on recent death of Covid-19 patients at the GMCH allegedly due to lack of medical oxygen.

The HC said the Centre should ensure that the allotted quota of medical oxygen is made available at the earliest to Goa, which is reporting a very

high test positivity rate.

The bench, consisting of Justices Nitin W. Sambre and M.S. Sonak, said despite their May 12 order, the court sadly recorded that even today (Thursday), it is reported that there were almost 40 Covid-19 related casualties in the GMCH."

Out of these, around 15 took place between the dark hours of 2 am and 6 am.

On Wednesday, the HC had said the availability of medical oxygen for Covid-19 patients at the GMCH was grim, and asked the state government to take corrective steps. — PTI

50 EMPLOYEES OF BHARAT BIOTECH TEST POSITIVE

Hyderabad, May 13: Bharat Biotech's Joint Managing Director Suchitra Ella's tweet saying 50 of their employees tested positive for Covid received bouquets and brickbats from netizens with some saying Covaxin was saving lives while a few questioned as to why the staff were not vaccinated.

Referring to comments by some political bosses over Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin supply issues, Ella on Wednesday tweeted "Quite disheartening to the teams to hear some states complaining about our intentions. 50 of our employees are off work due to covid, yet we continue to work under pandemic lockdowns 24x7 for U."

Reacting to her tweet, a user wrote: "How come your 50 employees down with Covid? We're not vaccinated? Also, why not hire more people on temporary basis?" Ella's tweet got 9,373 likes and was retweeted by 2,564 people (at 10.30 am on May 13). — PTI

No Tims for new Covid-19 patients

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 13

Faced with a staff shortage and plagued by repeated problems with pressures in oxygen supply lines, which together have been resulting in at least three to four deaths — which doctors describe as avoidable if the management of the hospital was up to scratch — the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (Tims) has effectively shut the door on Covid-19 patients.

A senior hospital official confirmed on Thursday that admissions to the hospital were stopped. "Except in cases of patients with severe symptoms who might need intensive care, no others will be allowed

137 ICU beds at Tims occupied, while 425 of its 843 oxygen beds were available, as were 207 ordinary beds out of 281.

It may be recalled that Tims lacks adequate staff, be it doctors, nurses, or patient care attendants, and that has been hampering services to patients, as reported by Deccan Chronicle on May 12 in the report '1 doc, 1 nurse, 1 patient care staff run Tims ICUs'. The hospital has also been facing repeated technical glitches in oxygen supply that has seen pressures drop for patients in ICUs on ventilators, that contributed to several of them losing their lives prematurely.

Incidentally, even as the admissions were stopped, the state health department's bed availability status website recorded at 4.30 pm on Thursday, show that as on 8 am, all

work in Israel. They believe that working conditions and pay packages are more satisfactory in Israel than in the Gulf countries. As a result, for the last 10 years, youths from the two Telugu states thronged Israel for jobs.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle from Israel on Thursday night, Telangana-Israel Association working president Bommakanti Maheshwar Goud said they are safe in Israel. Each household has a safety bunker and people rushed in when sirens are

blown by the Israeli authorities minutes before the rocket attacks, he said.

Maheshwar Goud said food and accommodation are available and they are doing their daily work as usual. "A rocket attack claimed the life of a Keralite nurse, Soumya, near our residence a day ago," he said.

Most Telugus there are working as caregivers. The Israel government takes utmost care for the safety and welfare of all citizens without any discrimination, he said.

WAR | CLOUDS

10,000 people from Telangana, AP live in Israel on work visas

Telugus in Israel tense, kin worried

NARENDER PULLOR | DC NIZAMABAD, MAY 13

Telugu people in Israel are in the grip of fear as clashes between Israel and Palestinians continued. Around 10,000 people from Telangana and Andhra Pradesh live in Israel.

Among these, around 1,000 people from undivided Nizamabad, Adilabad and Karimnagar districts are in Israel on work visas.

The family members of the affected Telugus in Israel are worried over the

constant contacting these migrants to know of their well-being. After Gulf countries, the majority of unemployed youths from north Telugu districts have shown an interest to



B. Maheshwar Goud

safety of their beloved ones during the war-like situation. The kin of Telugus working there get in touch with them over video calls and social media apps. For the last three days, they

WORLD | 9

SPORTS | 12

TABLOID

INDIA remain No.1 in Test rankings



WORLD | 9

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TASK FORCE TEAM ARRESTS 2 FOR SALE OF MARIJUANA; 1.5 KG CONFISCATED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

The Central Zone Task Force nabbed two persons for illegally procuring and transporting 1.5 kilos of marijuana at Patel Nagar on Thursday. Apart from the contraband, the officials also seized two smartphones and a bike from their possession. Police said the accused, B.

Anand Singh, 24, a catering worker from Mangalhat and Gopal Varma, 22, a private firm employee Bahadarpura. "They had procured marijuana at ₹8,000 per kilo and sold them at exorbitant rates. Accordingly, as they were waiting for a customer to show up, the task force team nabbed them," said DCP of Commissioner's Task Force, P. Radhakrishna Rao.

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People shop for Id-ul-Fitr on the last day of the Holy month of Ramzan before the lockdown at 10 am at Charminar on Thursday. Many felt that the lockdown time should have been extended on the eve of Id.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Id on Friday, a rare joy

ATHER MOIN | DC

HYDERABAD, MAY 13

With Id-ul-Fitr celebrations falling on Friday, the Id prayers in the morning are coinciding with the Juma prayer, another Sunnah obligatory prayer for Muslims.

The Muslims of Telangana will miss the rare chance of attending two prayers on a single day due to the ban on congregational prayers during the lockdown period to contain the spread of Covid-19.

What does Islam say about performing Id and Juma prayers on the same day? While some Islamic scholars say Muslims are

Juma is also considered as Id. If Id falls on Friday, there will be two sermons and two congregational prayers, one of the Id and the second of Juma.

On Juma and Id prayers, Imam delivers a sermon. On Juma, the sermon is delivered before the special prayer.

The Muslims of Telangana will miss the rare chance of attending two prayers on a single day due to the ban on congregational prayers during the lockdown period to contain the spread of Covid-19.

not required to perform both Id and Juma prayers and "performing only Id prayer is enough", others

THE MUSLIMS of Telangana will miss the rare chance of attending two prayers on a single day due to the ban on congregational prayers during the lockdown period to contain the spread of Covid-19.

say both can be performed on the same day.

A large number of faithful usually perform two congregational prayers, Id and Juma, while those who opt to skip the congregational prayer of Juma on the eve of Id just perform Zuhar (noon) prayer in place of Juma.

This time, both will miss the congregational prayers and the sermons too, as the government has banned the congregational prayers in the wake of a surge in Covid-19.

CJI recalls his reporter days

FROM PAGE 1

The CJI referred to his own, first-hand experience when he for a brief period, worked as a reporter for a Telugu newspaper before embarking on a legal career.

Recalling his brief association with the media before joining the legal field, CJI Ramana said: The media faces great challenges in reporting. I was a journalist for a brief time. That time we did not have car or bikes. Newspaper management discouraged accepting any conveyance from the organisers of events. I too encountered difficulties as a journalist."

The Supreme Court had, by an order of September 26, 2018, permitted the live streaming of court proceedings in cases of constitutional and national importance. However, the live streaming of sensitive

cases was excluded.

The virtual event for the launch of the app to help the media cover court proceedings without coming there physically following the second wave of Covid-19 was also attended by Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, A.M. Khanwilkar and Hemant Gupta.

Justice Chandrachud heads the court's e-committee credited with putting in place the infrastructure for court hearing via video conferencing even though he tested positive for Covid-19 on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Justice Chandrachud said: "We hope that this facility will keep you all safe. Journalists are exposed so much to the outside world. I hope this is a part of the many steps which will be taken by the Chief Justice of India in the near future."

He shared the news that all the six people who had developed the mobile app are down with Covid-19 but continued with their work despite being confined to their homes.

Justice Gupta cautioned the media that the "links given to you are to be used in a bona fide manner, and unauthorised persons (should) not use it. It will not be fair to the institution".

On the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the judiciary at all levels across the country, CJI Ramana said: "As per the data available, 2,768 judicial officers and 106 judges of high courts have tested positive. We are yet to receive the data from two major high courts. A total of 34 judicial officers and 16 high court judges have lost their lives battling the virus.

"It was done in good faith without any pressure with the sole purpose of providing protection cover to the people of India. It was felt that otherwise breakthrough infections will increase. Reviewing the vaccine doses is a constant and dynamic process. Several other countries are doing it. The United Kingdom and the World Health Organisation have already increased space between Covishield and other vaccines like Pfizer, but many countries did not change the vaccination pattern. We have taken a scientific decision," Dr Paul explained giving out the details.

"Based on the available real-life new evidences that have come from Oxford, the Covid-19 Working Group agreed to increase the dosing interval to 12-16 weeks between two doses of Covishield vaccine. No change in interval of Covaxin vaccine doses was recommended," Indian Council of Medical Research Chief (ICMR) chief Dr Balram Bhargava said.

The ICMR chief further added that in the coming days more scientific data in this regard will be presented.

NitiAayog member Dr V.K. Paul underlined there was no pressure from any side to increase the gaps.

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explore the possibility of involving all such production firms and enable them with the technology, intellectual property rights to deliver the vaccine as quickly and as affordable as possible. Anyone who can manufacture or is interested in manufacturing the vaccine should be encouraged to do so in the larger public interest," the Andhra CM had said.

Bharat Biotech's joint managing director Suchitra Ella said on Wednesday that the company was working overtime to supply vaccines despite hardships of lockdown and 50 of its employees testing Covid positive.

"Even Bharat Biotech has welcomed our decision to open up production to other players and it has also reached out to a few companies. The Centre will assist in all ways to increase the capacity of vaccines," said Dr V.K. Paul, member NitiAayog, who is part of Centre's major policy decisions on health.

The government has been facing criticism due to shortage of vaccines, particularly Covaxin, that was given full permission at a later stage compared to Covishield. Several states have suggested to the government to open up its production to other companies as well as to increase supplies.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had earlier urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to direct Bharat Biotech and ICMR-NIV to transfer the Covaxin manufacturing technology and provide the viral strain to all those who are capable of manufacturing the vaccine and ramp up production as the current rate of vaccines output was slow and did not cater to the country's requirement.

"It may take several months to get all vaccinated at this pace. Please

explore the possibility of involving all such production firms and enable them with the technology, intellectual property rights to deliver the vaccine as quickly and as affordable as possible. Anyone who can manufacture or is interested in manufacturing the vaccine should be encouraged to do so in the larger public interest," the Andhra CM had said.

Rama Rao welcomed a suggestion made by a netizen that the Centre should allow more companies to manufacture the Covid-19 vaccines. On the Opposition criticising the decision to invite global tenders to procure vaccine, the minister said it would not be proper to politicise the pandemic.

"I leave it to their wisdom," he said.

The minister also cautioned people against self-medication. Asked to give tips on coping with Covid-

IN BRIEF
Postal dept
revises timings

Hyderabad: The postal department has revised its timings for postal services during the lockdown. The senior superintendent of post offices, Hyderabad South East, stated that head post offices and bigger offices will function between 8 am and 12 noon, while all other post offices will function between 8 am and 10 am. Services like delivery of articles, Aasra pension payments will be continued as earlier. The public has been requested to avail of services accordingly duly following all Covid precautions.

**IN 71K TESTS,
4,693 FOUND
COVID POSITIVE**

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

The state recorded 4,693 new cases of Covid-19 and 33 deaths in the state on Thursday, taking the overall caseload to 5,16,404 and the toll to 2,867. A total of 71,221 samples were tested during the day.

The recovery rate was put at 88 per cent by the state health department bulletin, and the case fatality rate at 0.5 per cent. It said 56,917 persons are being treated in home and institutional care and isolation.

New cases in the GHMC area were 734. Nalgonda and Ranga Reddy districts recorded 296 each. Medchal Malkajgiri 285, Karimnagar 209, Khammam 198, Warangal Rural 189, Vikarabad 179, Warangal Urban 161, Nagarkurnool 156, Mancherlai 130, Mahabubnagar 122, Bhadrakadri Kotagudem 118 and Mahabubnagar district recorded 112 cases.

The government has set up 14 micro-containment zones in Hyderabad, Komaram Bheem 13, Jogulamba Gadwal 11, Siddipet 13, Warangal Urban 14 and Nirmal nine. There are 5,629 beds available in government centres for Covid-19 care, the department said.

**GOV. SUGGESTS
COMMUNITY
ISOLATION UNITS**

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

Governor Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan has called on residential welfare associations in colonies and apartment complexes to start their own Covid-19 isolation centres to help those from their areas who test positive. "Community isolation centres can be of help to those who are asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic," she said.

She was speaking at the Raj Bhawan on Thursday after inaugurating one such facility set up by the Art of Living Foundation.

She said medical professionals were under tremendous pressure and if those suffering from serious symptoms are to be provided the care they need, those who do not require hospitalization can be attended to in isolation centres.

"Such centres will also work as micro-containment zones," she said.

Prominent nephrologist and the Governor's husband, Dr P. Soundararajan said that if pressure on the healthcare system has to be reduced, then people must follow safety protocols.

**TRAIN WITH 02
CONTAINERS
REACHES CITY**

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

The first train with containerised liquid oxygen tanks carrying 160 tonnes of the life-saving gas arrived at the Sanathnagar goods complex here from Angul in Odisha on a special train on Thursday.

South Central Railway said transportation of the liquid medical oxygen in free-standing containerised cryogenic tankers helped in faster transportation, compared to the lorry-mounted tanks of similar nature.

The container tanks can be transported faster as they have better height clearance to pass more easily from under bridges.

However, as liquid medical oxygen is a cryogenic — or supercooled — cargo, transportation of the tankers by the railways is done taking into consideration limitations with regard to maximum speed at which it can be carried, maximum acceleration and deceleration.

Whistleblower doctors in trouble at top hosps

Staff shortage is main problem affecting patient care

King Koti docs hit by Covid, no stipend

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

Complaints by junior doctors about shortage of manpower, medicines and machines for treating Covid-19 patients in government hospitals are backfiring and they are targeted.

The doctors raising such issues in their groups, social media pages and internal group forums during the critical Covid times has irritated the higher authorities, and they are being given a dressing down. This is forcing the doctors to keep quiet.

There is constant counselling for junior doctors and senior residents that they have to manage with whatever is available. Any public airing of issues would lead to transfers and punishment postings, they are warned.

Doctors say the major problems they face are in the general and ICU wards. There is shortage of trained nurses for giving injections and medicines to patients from time to time. There are also not enough of ward boys to reach food and medicines to patients on time, sources said.

Patient care is compromised and only a handful of trained hands have to

Some 100-odd senior residents working at King Koti Hospital have not been paid their stipends from February. A dozen of them are now suffering from Covid-19 and not able to report to work.

A senior resident on condition of anonymity says, "How are we to work? What is the motivation? We are seeking our stipend that has not been paid. Many of us are now suffering from the disease

bear the entire burden, they say.

Shortage is being felt of non-invasive ventilators or continuous positive airway pressure machines, which are required for recovery of 'low oxygen level' patients. Patients whose oxygen levels have fallen to 60 or below require machine support for two to three days.

At the Chest Hospital, there are 217 oxygen beds but only 30 CPAP (continuous positive airway pres-

sure) machines. In King Koti Hospital, to meet the requirements of 70 ICU patients there are only 17 CPAP machines. The general ward of oxygen beds are accommodating 100 patients.

In Gandhi Hospital, seven floors are dedicated to Covid-19 patients. There are 600 high-end multi-model ventilators and CPAP machines but 200 of them are not functioning. Due to this, many patients are being turned away.

There is no machine to support them in situations of low oxygen levels.

The PM Care ventilators are posing technical problems and their functioning is non-satisfactory. A senior resident at Gandhi Hospital said, "We can't rely on them as they get shut suddenly. There are too many technical glitches in these machines."

The biggest problem faced in Gandhi Hospital is lack of ward boys and Class 4 employees. Care is suffering as patients need to be regularly fed and also cleaned. There are bed-ridden patients and doctors say they have to keep raising the issue of cleaning patients. Else, that can lead to spread of other infections.

A senior resident at King Koti Hospital told this correspondent, "Patients coming with low oxygen levels make us shiver. We don't know whether we will be able to provide the required care. It is not doctors alone, but the whole unit of nurses, ward boys and cleaning staff is responsible for patient-care."

Junior doctors say they are bearing the brunt from all sides and hence raising the issue in social media, but this is backfiring on them.

"Over the last two days of the lockdown, it is being noticed that people are crowding around during the relaxation hours and not wearing masks properly. This is seen at shops, in super markets and even at wine shops. Such behaviour might not help in controlling the spread of the disease and cases," health director Dr G. Srinivasa Rao said.

The government, he said, will take strict action against those not wearing masks and also forming crowds.

"There is a general trend over the past few days of a lesser number of people approaching hospitals for admission and for treatment. This is a sign that the current second wave might be coming under control," he said.

On the vaccination drive, Dr Srinivasa Rao said the second dose of the vaccines will be given to those of 45 years and above and there is no need for people to book time-slots online for their second shots. The facility is available at all vaccination centres, all medical facilities are exempt from the lockdown and they are responsible for patient-care."

Junior doctors say they are bearing the brunt from all sides and hence raising the issue in social media, but this is backfiring on them.

Situation stabilising, stay alert against Covid: TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

PVT. HOSPS SEND BLACK FUNGUS CASES TO GANDHI

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

toms have been provided with medicine kits and advised to monitor their progress.

Why is it that the maximum of people are not being tested or those found with symptoms not being tested, Dr Srinivas Rao was asked. The priority, he said, is to fight the symptoms instead of wasting time in conducting the test and waiting for the results.

The health department says there are sufficient stocks of oxygen in all government hospitals. An oxygen audit team is checking on its usage in private hospitals.

Dr Ramesh Reddy, director of health and medical education, said, "We have sufficient stocks of oxygen and if the levels in the tank come down, the company is notified immediately. This is a clear process. We also appeal to young doctors to come forward to work in the government sector."

The state government is keen on recruiting doctors but the response from the medical fraternity is lukewarm. Many of them have not come forward. Several doctors are falling ill and not able to report to work. There is a shortage of doctors in the department.

There are also complaints of non-functional ventilators and CPAP machines in government hospitals.

Dr Srinivasa Rao said the current state-wide fever survey has covered more than half the state and more than 1,59,000 people who were found with Covid-19-like symptoms.

ab injections, anti-viral medicines and other antibiotics can be procured directly from the government. Senior officials are monitoring and ensuring that all medicines and oxygen needed for hospitals are available, he said.

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MAN ARRESTED FOR SERIAL RAPE, THEFT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

A man accused in a series of rapes in the city was arrested by a CCS LB Nagar team and Hayathnagar police on Thursday. The accused used to target victims at toddy compounds.

Officials recovered 90 grams of gold, cash and a scooter along with a phone, all worth ₹3.9 lakh, from his possession. The accused, as Hussain Khan, 46, was a vegetable vendor residing near Narapally of Ghatkesar, police said.

He confessed to his involvement in ten cases of cheating, rape and theft in Rachakonda area from November. He was previously involved in nine cases of theft and rape in Rachakonda and Hyderabad commissionerate from 2005 till 2016, after which the Gopalapuram police detained him under the Preventive Detention Act at Cherlapally jail for one year," explained police commissioner of Rachakonda, Mahesh Bhagwat.

The official said that Khan used to go to toddy compounds, where he would sweet-talk women to have a physical relationship with him and offering money.

"He took them to isolated areas, forced the victims to leave their valuables in his scooter ad and allegedly raped them," Bhagwat said.

Lockdown rush



Motorists rushing home to beat the 10 am start of the lockdown cause a traffic jam on Thursday morning at Shaikpet in the city. — R. PAVAN



Shoppers complete a rushed 'drive-through' purchase of vegetables at the Gaddiannaram market. — DC



Motorists fill up at a petrol bunk before they head home in time before the lockdown takes effect. — DC

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

Helping hand



Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar distributes sanitizers and flasks to West Zone police personnel at Mehdipatnam in Hyderabad, on Thursday. — DC

HI-TECH | SCAM

Scamsters hack accounts, filch from contacts

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC

HYDERABAD, MAY 13

The cybercrimes police of Cyberabad received two complaints of scammers cheating WhatsApp account holders, wherein the victims lost ₹10 lakh each from their bank accounts that was linked to the social messaging application.

According to the police, the fraudsters were hacking WhatsApp accounts. It was found that they were calling the accounting holders and collecting the WhatsApp registration OTP by citing various reasons.

Following this, they would start a conversation

with the friends and family members of the users through the compromised/hacked WhatsApp accounts, pretending to be the original account holders and requesting financial help by citing some medical emergency that required immediate — and costly — attention.

"Now, they are hacking USA residents' mobile numbers from India by adopting this modus operandi. They then approach their friends and family living in India, requesting them for financial help," explained a cybercrimes official.

A victim from Gachibowli lost ₹10.98 lakh to fraudsters and

details used for registering WhatsApp. Do not believe in WhatsApp messages seeking financial help for medical emergencies through ISD or local contacts without confirming via direct voice call, do not transfer money to anyone based on a mere WhatsApp text message," the police said in an appeal to the users.

"Do not reveal or share banking credentials with anyone for any reason," advised the cops.

Breaching security via WhatsApp has come as something as a surprise as users are assured of end-to-end encryption but the scamsters found a way in easily.

SHORT TAKES

FOUR HELD FOR ILLEGALLY SELLING REMDESIVIR

DC CORRESPONDENT

KARIMNAGAR, MAY 13

Task Force police nabbed four persons, who were allegedly selling remdesivir injections in the black market at Kisannagar here on Thursday.

They were taking advantage of the critical situation caused by the dearth of remdesivir injections that are crucial for certain categories of Coronavirus patients.

On receiving complaints that lab technicians, anaesthetists, receptionists and drivers working in various hospitals were selling remdesivir injections at exorbitant prices, police commissioner V.B. Kamalasan Reddy deployed a special task force team to keep a check on black marketing of the injection.

Task Force inspectors Mallaiyah and Srujan Reddy, Three Town inspector Damodar, ASI Narasaiyah and others conducted raids and nabbed the four persons red-handed when they were selling the injections at an apartment in Kisannagar.

The accused were identified as Laudya Anjani Kumar (Saidapur mandal), Choppuri Gopichand (Kothapally mandal), Gajjela Shyam (Choppadandi mandal) and local resident Gantala Ugendar. The police seized seven remdesivir injections, ₹4,500 cash and four mobile phones from their possession.

Meanwhile, Kamalasan Reddy appealed to the people to bring to their notice whenever they come across anyone selling the injection at higher prices.

WARANGAL MGM LAB TECHNICIAN DIES OF COVID-19

DC CORRESPONDENT

WARANGAL, MAY 13

A senior lab technician, Gadipelli Ravishankar, working in the Covid-19 sample testing lab affiliated with the MGM Hospital and the Kakatiya Medical College, died of Covid-19, allegedly due to lack of proper facilities and negligence of authorities in the MGM Hospital while undergoing treatment on Thursday. This is the second such death in Warangal.

Fellow lab technicians complained that despite their requests to the MGM superintendent and KMC principal to provide better treatment to Ravishankar, there was no proper response from them.

Ravinder Manchala, general secretary of Telangana State Government Lab Technicians Association said the death of Ravishankar has left the lab technicians in acute depression as it reminded them of the fact that there was no assurance to their lives or their family members in case of their death.

"Ravishankar's death is once again a reminder of how the state neglects the lives of lab technicians who are directly exposed to the Coronavirus. Other states like New Delhi and Tamil Nadu have announced incentives and provided ex gratia but the Telangana state government is yet to take such a step and give an assurance to us for the daily risk we take. There is a need to provide facilities for treatment, quarantine and alternate day duties to avoid continuous exposure to Covid-19," he said.

The lab technicians extended their condolences to the family of Ravishankar and demanded the state pay ₹1 crore as ex gratia to his family members.

FELLOW LAB technicians complained that despite their requests to the MGM superintendent and KMC principal to provide better treatment to Ravishankar, there was no proper response from them.

Rythu Bandhu likely be late this monsoon

Farmers are waiting for their cheques to start cultivation

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MAY 13

Farmers are gearing up for monsoon cultivation in the state and Yasangi crop purchases are currently ongoing. The farmers will be ready for cultivation by the end of this month after the purchases are completed.

The Covid-19 pandemic conditions are a worry for farmers. They are waiting for investment assistance from the government under the Rythu Bandhu scheme. There is fear that the bond assistance given by the government under this scheme to farmers will be delayed this time too.

Last year, under the Coronavirus conditions, the distribution of Rythu Bandhu assistance was postponed until June. This was given after the start of the crop cultivation in 2020, and the cheques were deposited in farmers' accounts from June 20.

Cheques were being issued since May in the early phase of the Rythu Bandhu scheme launched by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao in 2018. By May 10, the cheques for

THE AREA under crop cultivation is increasing due to the rise in ground water levels. Last year, the crops were raised on 1.34 crore acres during the monsoon season. This year, the agriculture department has said it will be further raised to 1.62 crore. This means the cultivation will increase by about 28 lakh acres.

Farmers used to be distributed. In 2019, the government made the announcement at the start of May.

Farmers say if the cheques reach the banks before May end, it would be helpful.

They say that even when the checks were given on time, the payment had got delayed. The Covid pandemic will have an impact on the state's economy and this could further delay payments.

Cheques were being issued since May in the early phase of the Rythu Bandhu scheme launched by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao in 2018. By May 10, the cheques for

forecast heavy rain. With this, many farmers are selling the Yasangi grain and preparing for the rainy season. A sum of ₹14,800 crore has been allotted for the Rythu Bandhu scheme.

In the past three years, ₹35,911 crore has been released under the scheme.

The area under crop cultivation is increasing due to the rise in ground water levels. Last year, the crops were raised on 1.34 crore acres during the monsoon season. This year, the agriculture department has said it will be further raised to 1.62 crore. This means the cultivation will increase by about 28 lakh acres.

According to these calculations, the help for the farmers has to be increased.

On the other hand, it was estimated for the monsoon season last year that ₹7,352 crore will be required for 1.47,86,000 acres at the rate of ₹5,000 per acre. Accordingly, the government will earmark ₹7,00,000 crore and transfer this to the agriculture department in two tranches.

But reports from the agriculture department said that there is need to provide more funds for Rythu Bandhu as the area under cultivation can be further increased in the coming season.

ers. They were also provided with Rythu Bandhu under the rules changed by the government.

Last year, the agriculture department expected 1.47 crore acres to be cultivated but it was done in 1.34 crore acres. Yet, the government sanctioned Rythu Bandhu to farmers for the full 1.47 crore acres.

This monsoon, cultivation is expected to cover 1.62 crore acres.

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Strict checking



Police stop vehicle after 10 am and allow them after checking their purpose at MJ Market in Hyderabad on Thursday. — S. SURENDRA REDDY

Farmers seek more money for land in Sitammasagar

DC CORRESPONDENT

KOTHAGUDEM, MAY 13

Fixing of land prices in Aswapuram, Dummgudem, Charla and Mangurudu mandals in Bhadravathi-Kothagudem district has turned into a curse for the Sitammasagar Multi-Purpose Irrigation Project.

Farmers from the four mandals, whose lands are to be acquired for the project, are demanding the state government to first revise land prices that were last fixed in 2005 and subsequently pay them compensation in accordance with the Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act,

2013. Revenue officials decided to acquire 1,816 acres of land for the project that is being built at a cost of ₹2,600 crore. It intends to acquire 293.11 acres in Aswapuram, 356.06 acres in Mangurudu, 747.17 acres in Charla and 419.23 acres in Dummgudem mandal. Towards this, officials are conducting grama sabhas, which are being strongly opposed by farmers, who are insisting that land prices must be revised, first and foremost.

The lands are needed for building bunds on both sides of the project in order to store 37 tmc water. The price of the land as per 2005 is Rs one lakh per acre. Officials are saying that the farmers will be paid four times more than that price, which implies Rs eight lakh per acre.

Sodem Bujji, a farmer from Dummgudem mandal, said "Officials are violating tribal laws while acquiring lands and conducting grama sabhas. Adivasis will lose out heavily if the land prices are not revised".

At present, the land prices in these mandals are nearly ₹15 lakh per acre. Farmers, who generally raise paddy and chilli here, are demanding at least ₹12.5 lakh per acre and compensation of ₹50 lakh.

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though the state government has issued notification for filling 50,000 vacant posts in health department on a three-month contract, the response has been less than encouraging. He said the government must take immediate steps to fill up vacant posts on a permanent basis, given the prevailing situation.

Sanjay Kumar urged the state government to provide all facilities to frontline warriors, who are working hard while risking their own lives. He sought incentives to doctors, health staff, para-medical staff and police personnel.

He pointed out that staff crunch is a big issue in many hospitals. Even

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DC CORRESPONDENT

KARIMNAGAR, MAY 13

The Union government is ready to extend all help to the state government, if it submits details about the exact number of positive cases and deaths, said BJP state chief and Karimnagar MP, Sanjay Kumar.

After inspecting the government main hospital here on Thursday, Sanjay Kumar urged health officials to suitably maintain the Covid ward and ensure quality treatment to corona patients, who were undergoing treatment.

Later, he went around the PSA oxygen plant that

was established recently with central funds and also enquired about the plant's functioning.

Last year, the Centre sanctioned five oxygen plants in the state, including one at Karimnagar. The Union government is supporting the state by regular supply of remdesivir injections, oxygen

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IN BRIEF
26-year-old held for burglary

Hyderabad: A 26-year-old was arrested by CCS police of Malkajgiri on Thursday. He was involved in 20 burglary cases in the city. The officials seized gold and silver ornaments along with other valuables worth ₹2.1 lakh from his possession. Police said the accused, Shaik Majeed, is a resident of Moula Ali.

Explaining his modus operandi, officials said that Majeed used to do a recce of secluded residential colonies during the day and break into them in the night. "He was involved in cases in Jawaharnagar, Ghatkesar and Kushaguda. He was handed over to Jawaharnagar police for further action," CCS officials said.

FOUR DEAD, FIVE INJURED IN CAR ACCIDENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 13

Four members of two families including a four-month-old infant who were travelling in a car died when the vehicle hit a lorry. Five others were seriously injured in the accident that took place near the industrial area under Peddapuram police limits in East Godavari district on Thursday. The victims were travelling from Pedavalasala and Gollapalem to Rajahmundryvaram to attend a house-warming function. The dead were identified as Vanamadi Eswara Rao, 36, his wife Annapurna, 33 of Gollapalem, Aradari Swamy, 55, and the baby. Peddapuram police registered a case.

SHE TEAMS SAVE 100 CHILD BRIDES IN FOUR YEARS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

Rachakonda She Teams averted as many as 100 child marriages between 2017 and this year, data published by the police revealed.

Rachakonda She Teams, under the leadership of police commissioner Mahesh M Bhagwat, with the cooperation of self-help groups and awareness programmes, was taken up by the commissionerate to bring awareness among the common people against child marriage.

"Through these awareness programs, the She Teams of Rachakonda made the public understand the problems of child marriages and how alarming the situation was in rural areas. From 2017 to 2021, the teams averted as many as 100 child marriages and rescued 100 minor girls from their elders," he says.

Elsewhere, the Morangadda Hindu Smashanavatika, as at

Around 40 of the 100 were 17-year-old, 31 were 16-year-old, 20 were 15-year-old, six of them 14-year-olds while three were 13-year-olds, the data revealed. The top cop appreciated the good work done by She Teams and mentioned that according to the Child Marriages Prevention Act, priests, wedding card printers, elders and supporters of the marriage, including parents of children, will be held responsible for the crime.

2 LAKH ACTIVE CASES, 9K TOTAL DEATHS IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 13

Andhra Pradesh crossed 2 lakh mark in total Covid-19 active infections and 9,000 mark in total deaths on Thursday, with 22,399 new Covid-19 infections and 89 new deaths reported from across the state.

Covid-19 tests were conducted on 96,446 samples, of which 22,399 were found to be Corona positive. As many as 18,638 patients recovered in the past 24 hours.

The total Corona cases in the state reached 13,66,786, comprising 2,01,042 were active cases and 11,56,666 were recoveries. The total Covid-19 deaths were 9,077.

The single-day highest number of 3,372 new cases was registered in East Godavari district, followed by Chittoor with 2,646 new infections, Guntur 2,141, Anantapur 2,080 and Visakhapatnam 2,064 new infections. Nellore district reported 1,589 new Coronavirus infections, West Godavari 1,576, Prakasam 1,489, Kadapa 1,447 and Kurnool 1,365 new cases.

Lockdown mood


Scores of pigeons flock the divider on Mussalam Jung Bridge over Musi river in the city. Civilians, who often feed the pigeons, are missing as the city remains under lockdown. — BALU PULIPAKA

Bodies pile up due to cremation delay

Unprecedented deaths, lack of firewood add to woes

**SANJAY SAMUEL
PAUL | DC**
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

Panjagutta, is a firewood-only cremation facility. All its six cremation blocks are full, with eight bodies being cremated each day. Akash, one of the employees, says: "We have been asking people to take the bodies somewhere else because we have no space. All pyres are full for most part. We are helpless. There are also times when we have shortage of firewood, which delays cremations by four to six hours."

He adds: "Each body takes six to seven hours to be burnt. We charge Rs 6,000 to Rs 7,000 per cremation."

The Bansilalpet crematorium is much busier. It handles 10 or 12 bodies a day. "We are helpless and tell the families to go and try elsewhere," says its handlers.

At the Daira Hazrat Meer Mohammed Moamin Qibla Astrabadi, also known as Meer Moamin Sabh Daira - a Shia graveyard at Sultan Shahi, Mogulpura - it has been a very busy month from around April 13. The graveyard's joint secretary Syed Hameed Hussain Jaffery says, "From April 13, there have been close to 200 burials here so far. The workers have been at it round-the-clock, even burying bodies till around 2am after the ritual bath and prayers."

For Covid-19, its victims cut across religions and all classes of the society. At the Bhoiguda Christian graveyard, around 10 bodies arrive daily. At the Narayanaguda cemetery, there is a regular arrival of casket-bearing bodies. Families of Catholic and Protestant denominations are using the cemetery.

Jaffery adds: "The same



Family members and relatives of Covid-19 victims perform the last rites by following Covid protocols in Secunderabad on Thursday. — S. SURENDER REDDY
PPE kits are strewn next to the Puranapuri crematorium/graveyard near Bahadurpura by the Musi river. — BALU PULIPAKA

situation exists in other graveyards too. Fewer people are accompanying the bodies in these times. In many cases, even when a person died from Covid, the families are not revealing this and claim it was a natural death. This has happened at the Daira here. Some of those helping with the burials have been infected with the disease as a result."

Another senior Mason, Matheri Raju, says: "The cause of death is being misrepresented by some families. They manage to get certificates from some doctors saying the person died of natural causes. Burial is allowed here only if the deceased did not die of Covid. But on account of people who lie about the cause, there is constant fear among us of catching the disease."

Stated Jakarigari Shanti Kumar a mason at the cemetery, "Earlier, it used to be one or two, or at the most some three bodies a day. Now we get six to eight. For the ones who pass away from Covid, their burials are taking place at Dundigul, Balapur and Ghatkesar."

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Diagnostic labs cut prices in half after finance minister intervenes

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

Thanks to the efforts of finance minister T. Harish Rao, scanning centres at Siddipet have agreed to halve the bill for Covid-19 patients.

On Thursday, the minister held a tele-conference with district health officials, scanning cen-

tre owners and association representatives on the issue. The scanning centre operators offered to carry out scans at half the price during the pandemic.

Hailing the decision, Harish Rao thanked the association. The association said that scanning centre would collect ₹2,200 as against the

existing price of ₹5,500. The minister stated that hospitals can collect only government-decided prices for treatment from patients.

He stated that hospitals which converted into Covid hospitals would start treatment immediately. He said efforts were being made to ensure

that there is no shortage of oxygen and vital drugs like remdesivir.

Harish Rao warned the hospitals that he would undertake surprise visits of hospitals and inquire from patients about the treatment and the bills. He advised doctors to treat the Covid-19 patients well.

HC TO BANKS: DON'T TAKE ACTION AGAINST NAGARJUNA FERTILISERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

The Telangana High Court on Thursday directed a consortium of banks — SBI, PNB, BoI, UCO Bank, ICICI and Indian Overseas Bank — and investors like IFFCO not to proceed against or take any coercive action against the Nagarjuna Fertilisers and Chemicals Ltd and its directors, its shareholders and guarantors.

Lender banks had given credit to the company of around ₹1,675 crore. This is in complete contravention and a direct violation of the RBI guidelines, counsel for Nagarjuna Fertilisers submitted before the court.

The company's contention is that in view of irregular payments, the lenders have entered

into a joint lenders agreement as per an RBI circular. They have "considered, deliberated, agreed and concluded" the debt resolution plan between themselves and with the investors.

Now, however, the lenders unilaterally changed the agreed fundamental terms and approached the National Company Law Tribunal under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code to appoint the Resolution Professional.

This is in complete contravention and a direct violation of the RBI guidelines, counsel for Nagarjuna Fertilisers submitted before the court.

Serving Customers With A Smile

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Tender Notice

SRDEN/II/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following tenders Nos. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc are not allowed.

Tender No. Date 09-DRM-MB-21-22 Date : 13.05.2021

Name of Work TRR(P) of 25 Km and other allied works under ADEN/HRII.

Tender Closing Date Time 08.06.2021 (16:00)

Advertised Value (Rs.) 15510215.97

Earnest Money (Rs.) 0.00

Tender Doc. Cost (Rs.) 0.00

Bidding Start Date 25.05.2021

Period of Completion 12 months

No. 75-WI/2/3/WA/Publication Dated : 13.05.2021 1026/2021

Serving Customers With A Smile

WASHERMEN SEEK PAY HIKE, SHUNNED

D. SIVARAMIRI REDDY | DC
KURNool, MAY 13

Washermen from around 40 families in Karimaddela village of Gadivemula mandal were ostracised by villagers as they demanded a hike in

wages for washing dirty clothes. About 40 families eke out a living washing clothes in the village, which has a population of 5,000.

Trouble began when the washerman demanded enhancement of annual maintenance from ₹6,000 to ₹10,000.

CASH-FOR-VOTE SCAM: HC NOT TO GIVE ORDERS TO ANTI-CORRUPTION

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 13

The Telangana High Court on Thursday refused to issue any directions on a petition filed by Congress Lok Sabha member A. Revanth Reddy in connection with his cash-for-vote case.

The Congress leader had urged the court to set aside orders passed by the principal judge of ACB Special Court on April 19, which rejected his application seeking deferral of cross-examination until the examination of all witnesses and investigating officers is completed.

Justice Gandikota Sri Devi was on Thursday dealing with Reddy's petition, which contended that the orders of the trial court would cause prejudice.

He had filed an application before the ACB court, seeking to defer the cross-examination of Elvis Stephenson, TRS nominated MLA and complainant in the case, Markom Taylor and Jessica till the completion of examination of A. Srikanth (LW21), G. Kapoor (LW 22), Y. Mallikarjun Reddy (LW 36) and Ashok Kumar (LW 38).

He had submitted that if the cross-examination was conducted first, then it would give the prosecution a chance to fill the lacunae and influence witnesses and investigating officers may prepare their answers. However, the ACB court rejected Reddy's application. He approached the High Court with the same contentions and urged for setting aside orders of the trial court.

V Ravikiran Rao, senior counsel representing the ACB, said that Revanth Reddy was the main accused in the case and his intentions were clearly to delay proceedings. It is for this reason that he was filing one publication or the other in the ACB court or High Court. The court denied issue of any interim orders in the petition and adjourned the case to June 18 for final hearing.

• **REVANTH** had urged the court to set aside orders passed by the principal judge of ACB Special Court on April 19, which rejected his application seeking deferral of cross-examination until the examination of all witnesses and investigating officers is completed.

CORRIGENDUMS

Bidders may please note the following changes against following (1) e-Tender No. 0221119 Due date on 31.05.2021. Item Description: Feeder Junction Box for LHB Coach with BIO Toilet. Quantity: Existing 426 Sets to be read as 601 Sets, and EMD Amount: Existing Rs. 549770/- to be read as Rs. 775610/-, (2) e-Tender No. 12201216A Due date on 19.05.2021. Description: Water Tank Assy (03 Types) Regarding: Drawing Existing Entry: LG63106ALTf (PL No. 33550300), LR631122 ALTe (PL No. 33550311), LG63105 ALT (PL No. 33550300), LR631122 ALTf (PL No. 33550311), LG63105 ALT g (PL No. 33554663) respectively. (3) e-Tender No. 17211135 for Procurement of Set of Seats and Berths LHB coaches (Silicone Foam) Chair Car Coaches, Due date: Existing Entry 10.05.2021 to be read as 17.05.2021. All other terms & conditions of the tender will remain un-changed.

No. : G-RCF/122-01/Stores/012/2021-22 Dated: 13.05.2021

NORTHERN RAILWAY

E-TENDER NOTICE No. 196-S/71/2021-22/Tender Notice/TSO-IV/FEMO Dated 12.05.2021

On behalf of the President of India, Pr.CE, Northern Railway, Headquarters office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001 invites the following tenders through E-Procurement system:

SN	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Cost of tender document	Earnest Money (in Rs.)	Tender value (in Rs.)	Date & Time of opening of tender	Completion period
1.	211-2668-2021-22-NR	Manufacturing & Supply of Ferro Molybdenum, as per Northern Railway Thermit Portion Plant Lucknow's Standard Specification TPP/FeMo/2020 as amended up to date.	3.15 MT	NIL	1,14,710/-	57,35,331/-	03.06.2021 at 14.30	8 months
2.	14211083/10.06.2021	1) Aluminium Chequered Sheet 5X1000X2000MM To PL No. 35982020. 2) Aluminum Coil No. 2.5X1220MM To PL No. 91010895.	50000 Kg.					352640/-

1. For details and making On-line bids, visit Website <http://ireps.gov.in>. Drawings/specifications, wherever required can be downloaded from RCF Website <http://www.rcf.indianrailways.gov.in>. Class IIb digital signature certificate required for on-line bidding, can be obtained from licensed certifying agencies listed at <http://www.cce.gov.in>.

SHORT TAKES

SALARY OF K'TAKA MINISTERS FOR COVID RELIEF FUND

Bengaluru, May 13: The Karnataka government has ordered depositing one-year salary of State Ministers in the Covid Relief Fund.

This was decided by the State Cabinet a few days ago.

The order was issued on May 11 and would come into effect retrospectively from May 1 for a year.

The order was given on the direction of Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa.

The State has been reporting 40,000-50,000 Covid infections daily resulting in about six lakh active cases.

This has led to shortage of oxygen, hospital beds, and essential drugs.

The government has imposed a lockdown-like restriction from May 10 to May 24 to contain the spread of the virus.

NAXAL COUPLE SURRENDERS FOR COVID TREATMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAIPUR, MAY 13

A Maoist couple, who tested positive for Coronavirus, surrendered in north Bastar district of Kanker in Chhattisgarh, police said on Thursday.

Arjun Tatti and his wife Laxmi Padda, members of Medki Local Operation Squad (LOS) functioning under north Bastar division of Maoists, surrendered before police in Kamdelta BSF camp under Koyelibeda in Kanker district late on Wednesday.

"The Naxal couple deserted their unit owing to illness and approached the police for medical treatment. Both of them tested positive for coronavirus and were admitted to Covid care hospital in Kanker for treatment", Bastar range inspector general of police Sunderraj P told this newspaper.

According to him, 40-50 Naxals in south Bastar have contracted the virus as per the inputs received by the police.

"Due to strict vigilance at interstate and inter district border areas by security forces, Naxals are not getting medicines and other logistic supply", he added.

Police intelligence suggested that several top Maoist leaders of Bastar such as Rajesh, a divisional committee member and Sujata and Savitri, members of Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee of Maoists have contracted the virus.

"We have received inputs that several senior Maoist leaders have contracted Coronavirus", Mr Sunderraj said.

ODISHA URGES CENTRE TO GIVE 25L VAX DOSES

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 13

Odisha health minister Naba Kishore Das on Thursday urged the Centre to immediately provide 25 lakh doses of Covid vaccines to expedite the ongoing inoculation that has been seriously hit due to inadequate supply of the life-saving injections.

"I urge the Union government to immediately provide at least 25 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines so as to regularise the immunisation process. As many as 22 lakh people are awaiting the second dose of vaccine. In fact, I have already formally placed the demand before Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan during a discussion on the Covid situation on Wednesday," Mr Das said.

Other than the vaccines, Mr Das also demanded oxygen cylinders, Rapid Antigen Test kits, PPE kits and masks.

"We have enough oxygen but not cylinders and hence, we need 30,000 cylinders," he said.

Mr Das informed that the Union health minister has assured him to take Odisha's demand seriously.

The Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan had on Wednesday held a meeting with health ministers of seven states and one Union Territory and reviewed the progress of the Covid-19 vaccination drive.

On Thursday, Odisha again crossed 10,000 mark in single-day Covid spike with 10,649 people testing positive for the contagious disease and 19 deaths. The fresh positive cases took the state's cumulative count to 57,629. Similarly, the cumulative death count climbed to 2,251.

Of the new cases, 5,965 infections were detected from quarantines centres while 4,684 were local contacts.



A critical Covid-19 patient being shifted to the Hallet Hospital in Kanpur, on Thursday.



People buy sweets and new clothes on the eve of Id-ul-Fitr at Jama Masjid market, in Sadar Bazar during Covid-19 lockdown in Gurugram, on Thursday.

NHRC issues notice over bodies in Ganga**52 bodies were found in Ujiyar, Kulhadia, Bharauli ghats**

New Delhi, May 13: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, after receiving complaints about several bodies found floating in the Ganga river in the two states.

"It (NHRC) has issued notices to the chief secretaries of both the states and the secretary, Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, today calling for action taken report within four weeks," its statement noted.

According to residents in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh, at least 52 bodies were seen floating at the Ujiyar, Kulhadia and Bharauli ghats in the Narahi area. Similar

reports of bodies floating in the Ganga have come from Bihar.

In its statement, the NHRC said that it seems the public authorities have failed to take concentric efforts in educating the masses and checking the immersion of half-burnt or unburnt bodies into the Ganga.

It said it received a complaint dated May 11, 2021, based on several media reports, wherein apprehensions were expressed that these bodies floating in the Ganga were of Covid-19 victims.

The complaint noted that the disposal bodies in such manner may seriously affect all those persons who are dependent on the Ganga for their day-

and burial grounds across the country have been overburdened.

The NHRC's statement said, "The practice of disposal of dead bodies in our sacred river Ganga is clearly in violation of guidelines of the National Mission for Clean Ganga project of the Ministry of Jal Shakti."

It said that the disposal bodies in

such manner may seriously affect all those persons who are dependent on the Ganga for their day-

to-day activities, the NHRC mentioned.

"It (complaint) further stated that even if these dead bodies were not of Covid victims, then such practice/incidents are shameful to the society as a whole as that amounts to violation of human rights of even deceased persons," the NHRC added.

India added 3,62,727 new coronavirus infections in a day taking the Covid-19 tally of cases to 2,37,03,665, while the death toll rose to 2,58,317 with 4,120 daily fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday. The active cases have increased to 37,10,525 comprising 15.65 per cent of the total infections. — PTI

No entry in Maharashtra without negative RT-PCR

SONU SHIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, MAY 13

The Maharashtra government on Thursday announced the extension of Covid induced restrictions till 7am on June 1. Any person coming from anywhere in the country will have to carry a negative RT-PCR report to enter in Maharashtra by any mode of transport.

Maharashtra on Thursday reported 42,582 new positive cases taking the total number of active cases 5,33,294. While 850 new deaths were reported on Thursday raising a total fatality in state 78,857. Maharashtra is among the states that account for 82.51 per cent of the total active cases in the country, officials said.

The state government order said that the restrictions will remain in force till June 1. "Any person entering the state of Maharashtra by any mode of transport will have to carry a negative RT-PCR test report, which will have to be issued from upto a maximum of 48 hours before the time of his entering into Maharashtra," the order added.

It also said that all restrictions enforced as per earlier orders for people arriving from places of sensitive origin will be applicable to anyone arriving from any part of the country into the state.

"In the case of cargo carriers, not more than two people (driver and cleaner/helper) may be allowed to travel in the same (those vehicles). If these cargo carriers are originating from outside the state (Maharashtra), these may be allowed to enter into the state with a negative RT-PCR test which will have to be issued from upto 48 hours before the time of entry into Maharashtra and which will be valid for seven days," the government order said.

The order also allowed the personnel engaged in airport and port services to use the local trains, mono rail and metro services.

It also gave some relaxations to dairy industries. "Milk collection, transport and processing may be allowed without restrictions though its retail sale be allowed subject to restrictions imposed on shops dealing with essential items or

through home delivery," the order said.

The lockdown-like restrictions have been imposed in the state from April 5. The restrictions were further tightened on April 15 with Section 144 of the CrPC, banning assembly of five or more people, imposed in the entire state. However, even after a month, the Covid cases in some parts of the state are still increasing.

The state, which has consistently reported a high number of Covid infections and remains the worst affected state in the country due to the second wave of the pandemic, added 46,781 new cases on Wednesday and 816 related deaths. On Tuesday, the state reported 40,956 cases while on Monday, 37,236 new cases were logged by the state.

State health minister Rajesh Tope cautioned that some districts in the state have still been reporting high numbers of cases and therefore are a cause of concern for the government. "We need to focus on these districts more. The positivity rate is still not below 10 per cent."

The Bihar government has extended the lockdown till May 25 to stop the surge in Covid-19 cases in the state.

The decision was taken during a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday.

"The impact of lockdown in the state was reviewed during a meeting with ministers and officials. The positive effect of the lockdown is visible. Therefore, it has been decided to extend the lockdown in Bihar for the next ten days from May 16 to 25", tweeted chief minister Nitish Kumar after the meeting.

The lockdown was imposed in Bihar on May 4 after the Patna High Court stepped in and slammed the state government over its handling of the Covid-19 crisis. Bihar has been witnessing a surge in Covid cases. According to reports, the death toll went up to 3,503 on Wednesday after 74 people succumbed to the viral infection.

fight. The DM and CMO misbehave with us even after we have been working in limited resources in rural areas for the past one year. Instead of cooperating, administration officers misbehave with us," Dr Sanjiv alleged.

"Our work is being reviewed by the sub divisional magistrate (SDM) and block development officer (BDO) level officers," he added.

The agitated doctors claimed that their salaries were also withheld several times.

The fourteen doctors, who are in-charge of CHCs and PHCs here, submitted their resignation letters at the CMO office on Wednesday evening.

They also forwarded a copy of their resignation letters to the additional chief secretary (Health), director general (Health) and other senior officers.

"We will not fight under the banner of Provincial Medical Services (PMS) association. This is our

Cong. attacks PM on Covid-19 crisis

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 13**

• RAHUL said, Modi is also missing, along with vaccines, oxygen and medicines.

situation in Uttar Pradesh is 'inhuman and criminal' and demanded a judicial probe headed by a High Court judge into the several instances of bodies found floating in the Ganga in many parts of the State.

She tweeted, "What is happening in U.P. is inhuman and criminal. The government is busy image building while people are suffering unimaginably. There must be an immediate judicial enquiry headed by a High Court judge into these events."

"Also accused the governments of under-reporting of Covid cases and deaths. She added, "Bodies are floating in the Ganga in Ballia and Ghazipur. Reports are coming in of mass burials on the banks of the river in Unnao. Official numbers from cities like Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Jhansi and Kanpur appear to be grossly under-reported."

Aims to use state's resources and manpower to manage Coronavirus pandemic**C'garh govt suspends its 'Central vista' project**

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC RAIPUR, MAY 13

Amid mounting pressure by the Congress on the Union government to suspend the Central Vista project, Chhattisgarh government on Thursday announced that it was suspending all major projects, including the construction of a new Raj Bhavan, state legislative Assembly and the official residence of chief minister in Nava Raipur.

The tenders for two projects worth Rs 363 crore for the construction of a new state legislative Assembly building have been cancelled with immediate effect by the Congress state government led by

chief minister Bhupesh Baghel.

To focus the state's resources and manpower in managing the raging Coronavirus pandemic, the state government has also decided to take stringent austerity measures while announcing free education and scholarships for children who lost their parents due to the coronavirus pandemic in Chhattisgarh.

"In view of the circumstances arising in the state due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Chhattisgarh government has stopped construction works of all major projects with immediate effect and also decided to take even more stringent measures for austerity," a press release issued by the Chhattisgarh government said.

The state government has instructed all the departments that, like the previous year, austerity should be exercised in the

residences of chief minister, other ministers and senior officers in Nava Raipur have been suspended, the press release said.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony for these projects was performed on November 25, 2019.

"The chief engineer of the Public Works Department has issued orders to the concerned contractors to stop the construction work of the new Raj Bhavan, new CM house, new houses of ministers and officers and new circuit house in Nava Raipur," the press release said.

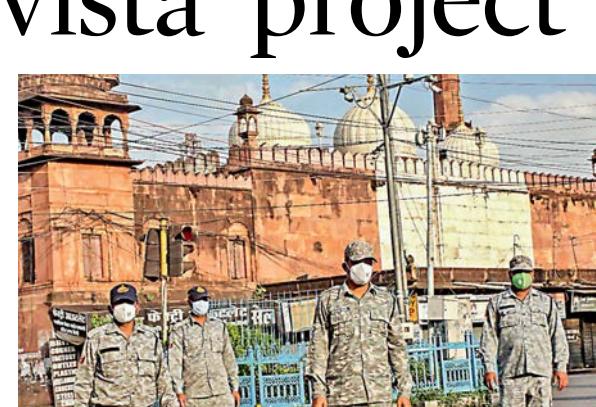
The state government has instructed all the departments that, like the previous year, austerity should be exercised in the

financial year 2021.

Mr Baghel also announced that his government will provide free education and scholarship to children who lost their parents due to the coronavirus pandemic in Chhattisgarh.

"The Chhattisgarh government will now bear the entire expenditure of the education of children who lost their parents due to coronavirus during this financial year.

Also a scholarship of ₹500 per month will be given to such children studying from standard first to eighth and ₹1,000 per month for children from standard ninth to 12th," a separate press release issued by the state government said.



Police officers patrol as security beefed up on the eve of id-ul-Fitr, during Covid-induced curfew, in Bhopal on Thursday.

SHORT TAKES

BOILER BLAST KILLS FOUR IN TN CHEMICAL FIRM

Cuddalore (TN), May 13: Four workers including a woman were killed and 10 injured on Thursday due to release of Ammonia after a boiler exploded in a chemical plant here, the government said.

Chief Minister M. K. Stalin ordered a solatium of Rs three lakh to the kin of each of the deceased. He has also directed an assistance of Rs one lakh to each of the injured.

"Ammonia gas got released following boiler explosion," a government release said adding it led to the death of four people and 10 were injured.

At the time of mishap, police said workers were engaged in their usual work this morning at the plant that produces chemical active ingredients and intermediates for crop protection.

The explosion led to diffusion of gas in the plant premises leading to asphyxiation of three men and a woman and the mishap caused injuries to 10 others, they said.

"They did not sustain burn injuries. Death was due to asphyxiation (due to gas release)," Cuddalore District Police Superintendent, Sree Abhinav told reporters.

MANIPUR BJP CHIEF S. TIKENDRA SINGH DIES

Imphal, May 13 : Manipur BJP president S. Tikendra Singh who had been undergoing treatment for COVID-19 at a hospital in Imphal passed away on Thursday evening.

He was 69. He had tested positive for the virus on April 27.

Chief Minister N. Biren Singh while informing about the death tweeted, "I'm at a loss of word to learn that Prof S Tikendu Singh, president BJP Manipur, has passed away just a while ago."

"We have lost a stalwart of BJP in Manipur who have dedicated his life for the service of people and the party. My deepest condolences to the bereaved family. May your soul rest in peace Oja."

BJP President J. P. Nadda and Union minister Kiren Rijiju have expressed profound grief over death of Manipur party head.

A Retired Professor, who have worked tirelessly with selfless devotion towards the ideology of BJP, was loved by one and all in Manipur, Biren Singh wrote on his official Facebook account.

Singh was appointed as president of the BJP Manipur unit in June 2020.

AJIT PAWAR'S SM PLAN SCRAPPED AFTER CRITICISM

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 13

The Maharashtra Government's decision to hire a public relations (PR) agency for Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has been mired in controversy as the opposition termed the move as a waste of money.

Facing flak, Mr Pawar finally cancelled the decision saying there was no need to appoint any external agency to handle the social media of his office.

The General Administration Department of the state government had issued an order on Wednesday for the appointment of an external agency for the office of Dy CM to announce his decisions, initiatives and policies on various social media platforms. The estimated cost of the work was ₹5.98 crore for the year 2021-22.

However, the move evoked sharp response from all quarters as several raised question mark over splurging nearly ₹six crore on Mr Pawar's PR activities when the state was facing a coronavirus crisis.

BJP spokesperson Atul Bhatkalkar sought cancellation of this decision saying expenditure should be avoided. "The state government cites fund crunch when it comes to paying to doctors and nurses, but has money to hire a PR agency. It is a highly shameless behaviour," he added.

Reacting to him, NCP leader Nawab Malik slammed the BJP saying those who are pointing finger towards the expenditure should recall how much money was spent on the CM and other ministers in the previous government. The expenses are nothing much compared to the huge amount of money spent by the Centre and BJP-ruled state governments for their publicity, he added.

Festive mood

Muslims celebrate with fireworks after sighting the moon on the eve of Id-al-Fitr, in Varanasi, on Thursday.

HC grants relief to Bir from arrest

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MAY 13

The Maharashtra government on Thursday submitted before the Bombay High Court that it would not arrest Param Bir Singh, the former Mumbai police commissioner, and 32 others till May 20 in connection with the FIR registered against him by Thane police under the Atrocities Act. The court is expected to hear the petition filed by Singh against the FIR on May 20.

Following Mr Ghadge's complaint, an FIR was registered against Mr Singh and other police officers on April 30. Senior counsel Darius Khambata, appearing for the state government, told a division bench of Justice P.B. Varale and Justice N.R. Borkar that the allegations of corruption levelled against Singh were of serious nature. He however, also said that the police need some time to file an affidavit in reply to the petition. "Till that time, we (police) will not arrest the petitioner (Mr Singh)," he said.

The Thane Police is investigating the case lodged by a subordinate officer for various offences under the SC/ST Act, Civil Rights Protection Act, Maharashtra Police Act and IPC. Bhimrao Ghadge, a police inspector currently posted at Akola, has alleged that Mr Singh misused his authority as Commissioner of Police (Thane) in 2015 to investigate four false complaints against him within eight days because he refused to instigate four false complaints against him within eight days because he refused to drop the names of certain influential people in the cases he was investigating. Mr Ghadge claims that Mr Singh instigated the same

The state government gave the assurance while seeking time to respond to Singh's plea for quashing the FIR against him and interim relief for no coercive action.

Advocate Khambata also said that the police would not arrest Mr Singh till May 20, by when the police would file an affidavit in reply to his petition. Mr Singh's counsel Mahesh Jethmalani on Thursday argued before the court that the case was filed with malafide intentions and was abuse of powers by the police. He also contended that it is a completely misconceived FIR and protection should be given to the petitioner.

While adjourning the matter for hearing till May 20, the HC noted that the alleged incident took place in 2015 and the complaint was filed in 2021. "It took the complainant five years to lodge a complaint," the court pointed out.

HIGH COURT ASKS MAHA TO SUBMIT BHARADWAJ'S MEDICAL REPORT

DC CORRESPONDENT MUMBAI, MAY 13

several inmates were found to be Covid-19 positive.

Advocate Yug Mohit Chaudhary on behalf of Bharadwaj informed the division bench of Justice K.K. Tated and Justice Abhay Ahuja that Bharadwaj had severe comorbidities. According to him she suffered from diabetes, heart disease, and had a history of tuberculosis. Furthermore, she has a high risk of contracting Coronavirus, where she has been kept, advocate Chaudhary said.

Bombay High Court on Thursday directed state prison authorities to give a report by May 17 on the health of Sudha Bharadwaj. Her daughter Maaysha Singh filed the petition for her mother's interim bail on the ground that she has several co-morbidities and that makes her extremely vulnerable against Covid.

Bharadwaj is currently lodged at the Byculla women's prison where

Sad sight

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankar meets Sitalkuchi-violence victims in Cooch Behar, on Thursday.

Health facilities will remain until Covid subsides: Home ministry

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 13

Learning from the experience of the second wave of Corona pandemic that has wreaked havoc across the country, Home Ministry has an important move decided that all health facilities being set up by para-military and defence forces across the country will remain in place permanently till Corona pandemic subsides completely in the next few years.

Some of these health facilities which were set up by defence forces, like in Delhi were dismantled after Covid cases dropped considerably a few months ago and it was largely believed that the situation was under control.

However, learning from the unprecedented second

ALL PARA-MILITARY and defence forces, including the Army, have been directed to set up at least two major health facilities or hospitals in two major cities of every State. While one such dedicated Covid hospital would be in the States Capital.

wave of the deadly virus it has been decided that even after things become normal these health facilities will remain in place to deal with the "anticipated third wave or any other unforeseen danger of the Corona virus."

Senior Home Ministry officials claimed that they were not willing to take any chances this time and that the devastation caused by the Covid's sec-

ond wave has been a "huge eye opener" for the Government.

Even if these health facilities, which also include jumbo Corona hospitals, will remain intact even after things normalise. It is only after there is confirmed scientific data to prove that Corona has subsided completely in the country that these health facilities will be removed. If nothing else these health facilities can be used as vaccination centres in future.

In fact, the Home Ministry is going a step further to prepare the future fight against Corona. All para-military and defence forces, including the Army, have been directed to set up at least two major health facilities or hospitals in two major cities of every State. While one such dedicated Covid hospital would be in the States Capital, the second one would come in the "worst affected area where the positivity rate is the highest in that particular States."

Central para-military forces have also been permitted to rope in fresh para-medical staff in this time of crisis and if required they can be hired on a Short Service Commission basis also.

"Unlike last time we are in hurry and will not dismantle any of these temporary health facilities. These shall remain in place to deal with any future Corona wave and if things remain under control can be put to use for other purposes like vaccination centres," a senior para-military officials explained.

INTL | RELATIONS

It would help international workers to avoid double contributions in a cluster of such nations

BRICS keen on multilateral social security framework

New Delhi, May 13: The representatives of BRICS nations have expressed willingness to have a multilateral social security framework in order to safeguard workers' rights.

The Social Security Agreement will help the international workers to port their benefit to their home countries thereby preventing loss of their hard earned money. Further they are exempted from contributing towards social security schemes both in home as well as host countries.

The multilateral social security framework would help international work-

ers to avoid double contributions in a cluster of such nations.

The views were expressed by member nations' representatives at the first BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) meeting held on May 11 and 12, 2021 at New Delhi in a virtual format, a statement said.

India Labour Secretary Apurva Chandra, chaired the meeting.

India has assumed the Presidency this year.

The prime agenda for the discussions were Promoting Social Security Agreements amongst

Apart from representatives of member nations, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the representatives of International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Social Security Agency (ISSA) also made valuable interventions and suggestions on the agenda issues.

"On the issue of Social Security Agreement (SSA), the member nations resolved to enter into dialogue and discussion with each other and take it forward towards signing of the agreements, while the ISSA and ILO on their part, expressed willing-

ness to provide technical support in facilitating conclusion of such agreements," it said.

The member nations also converged on devising a multilateral framework for the same (social security agreement) at a later stage, it said.

The member nations also discussed various initiatives taken by them towards formalization of jobs and how Covid-19 has enhanced informalization risk. The member countries resolved to promote participation of women in remunerative, productive and decent work and to extend social security



the labour force and Gig and Platform workers' role in the labour market.

SHORT TAKES

LANKA: INDIAN FAMILY HELD FOR FLOUTING LAWS

Colombo: Four members of an Indian family, including two children, have been arrested for allegedly entering Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula illegally and violating the local immigration and the quarantine laws, police said on Thursday.

The family, which consists of a 61-year old woman, her 34-year-old daughter and her two children, said they had entered Sri Lanka on May 6 with the help of fishermen.

Ajith Rohana, the deputy inspector general of police, said the members of the family were arrested at Gurunagar area in Jaffna for their illegal stay in the country and violating the immigration and quarantine laws.

They had arrived from India on May 6 on an Indian boat halfway and had travelled the rest of the way aboard a Sri Lankan fishing boat, Rohana said.

DEATH OF STUDENT IN CHINA TRIGGERS PROTEST

Taipei: It was a call no parent wants to receive. On Mother's Day, around 9 pm, a woman in Chengdu in southwestern China was told that her son, who she had dropped off at school just hours ago, had died. Distraught, she went to Chengdu No. 49 Middle School immediately, but could not even enter the school grounds, she wrote in a series of Twitter-like Weibo posts on Monday that were shared hundreds of thousands of times this week.

Her account disputing both the police and local government's account of her 16-year-old son's death has touched a nerve, becoming one of the most discussed topics on Chinese social media this week. One related [#ChengduNo.49Middle](#) racked up more than 1.5 billion views alone on Weibo.

People online called for justice for the mother and questioned the actions of the school, police and local authorities. On Tuesday night, videos of a protest in front of the school circulated. People clutching white flowers shouted "the truth!"

S.TAIWAN LOSES POWER AFTER PLANT FAILURE

Taipei: An equipment failure caused an outage at a power plant in southern Taiwan on Thursday, triggering rolling blackouts across the island affecting millions of people.

The outage in Kaohsiung trapped at least one person in an elevator and disrupted a daily briefing being given by government officials on the island's pandemic situation. Taipower, the government-run electric company, launched the rolling blackouts at 3 pm and said emergency repairs were underway. The outages affected 8,46 million households, Taipower said.

In Yilan county, one person was trapped in an elevator, the government-backed Central News Agency said. In Hsinchu, 150,000 households lost power. In the southern city of Tainan, 14 districts were affected. President Tsai Ing-wen issued a statement saying that "everyone can rest assured" and that the government was handling the situation. She said an investigation would be conducted into the cause of the outage.

UK: ROYAL MAIL TO ISSUE STAMPS FOR PRINCE PHILIP

London: The UK's Royal Mail will issue a set of special stamps in memory of Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II who passed away aged 99 last month.

A sheet of four black and white stamps, which are now available to pre-order, show Britain's longest serving escort to a British monarch in different stages of his life.

The first design features a portrait of the duke as a young man, taken by photographer Baron. The second depicts Prince Philip at the passing out parade of his son, Prince Andrew, at Dartmouth Naval College in Devon. Another stamp shows the duke at the Royal Windsor Horse Show. The final and most recent image is a portrait snapped by photographer Terry O'Neill.

"Throughout adulthood, the Duke of Edinburgh dedicated himself to the service of this country, the Commonwealth and to the many causes he was involved with," said Simon Thompson, chief executive of Royal Mail.

The stamps, officially on sale from June 24.

US vax beat strain found in India

Observation based on latest data about variant and three major vaccines approved in the US

Washington, May 13: Covid-19 vaccines approved by the United States like Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson have effectiveness against the B1617 variant of the virus that is predominant in India, which is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the pandemic, a top American health official said.

The observation is based on the latest data about the variant and the three major vaccines approved by the United States, said Dr Francis Collins, Director of National Institute of Science. "The data is coming in, and it looks very encouraging that the US-approved vaccines, the Pfizer, the Moderna, the J&J, do have effectiveness against this variant called B1617," Collins told the media.

"It's a little less effective in that case than some of the others, but it looks like it ought to be good enough to make Americans protected. And that's really a good thing to hear," he said in response to a question.

Early this week, the World Health Organisation classified the B1617 SARS-CoV-2 variant, which was first detected in India, as a variant of concern. The WHO said that evidence showed B1617 was more transmissible.

— PTI

INDIAN COVID-19 STRAIN REACHES LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas (US), May 13: The Las Vegas area has been added to places in Nevada where authorities have detected cases of a potentially worrisome strain of the Coronavirus first detected in India.

The Southern Nevada Health District reported on Tuesday that a woman in her 20s who had not travelled recently and was not vaccinated against Covid-19 tested positive for the variant subtype. She didn't require hospitalisation. A district spokeswoman said on Wednesday that there were no additional cases to report.

Eight other cases of the variant were previously identified in northern Nevada, including four confirmed last week in the Reno area.

— AP



Joe Biden

BIDEN TO BEEF UP FEDERAL CYBERSECURITY

Richmond, May 13: President Joe Biden has signed an executive order meant to strengthen US cybersecurity defences in response to a series of headline-grabbing hacking incidents that highlight how vulnerable the country's public and private sectors are to high-tech spies and criminals operating from half a world away.

The order signed on Wednesday will require all federal agencies to use basic cybersecurity measures, like multi-factor authentication, and require new security standards for software makers that contract with the federal government. Officials are hoping to leverage the federal government's massive spending power to improve security across all types of software.

The order comes as the administration has been grappling with its response to a massive breach by Russia of federal agencies and ransomware attacks on private corporations. Hit by a cyberattack, the operator of a major US fuel pipeline was forced to shut down service.

— AP



Worshippers stand on circles marked on the ground to help people maintain social distancing during religious ceremonies at the Catholic shrine in Fatima, Portugal on Thursday. Due to Covid-19, the shrine has limited to 7,500 pilgrims that can be present during the celebrations of May 12 and 13.

— AP

US Cong. urges to boost aid to India

Washington, May 13: Fifty-seven US Congressmen have written to President Joe Biden, urging him to bolster America's Covid-19 assistance to India.

The sharp increase in cases has overwhelmed India's healthcare system. We must do our part to quell the virus everywhere it persists, the law-

makers said in a letter to Biden on Wednesday.

We are extremely concerned with regards to India's deadly Covid-19 second wave. India is now the epicenter of the Covid-19.

Today, marked India's deadliest day, with 4,205 deaths reported, carrying the total number of confirmed deaths to more than 250,000, said the letter

initiated by Congressman Brad Sherman, the Democratic Chair of the Congressional India Caucus.

In the letter, the Congressmen relayed to the administration that India remains in need of additional medical equipment, supplies and other vital resources to emerge from this crisis.

They requested the

administration to provide oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators, oxygen generator plants, cryogenic oxygen tanker/container, Remdesivir, Tocilizumab and ventilators/BIPAP to India.

It is also in the US interest that everyone in India be vaccinated, the Congressmen wrote.

— PTI

Oz signs deal for 25mn Moderna vax

Canberra, May 13: Australia has reached a supply agreement for 25 million doses of Moderna Covid-19 vaccines, the US-based biotechnology company and the prime minister said on Thursday.

The deal included 10 million doses of the vaccine against the ancestral strain to be delivered in

2021 and 15 million doses of an updated variant booster to be delivered in 2022, Moderna said in a statement.

The vaccines have yet to be approved by the Australian regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

Pfizer and AstraZeneca are the only other Covid vaccines approved for use

in Australia. All three vaccines require two doses.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that he expected the first Moderna vaccines to arrive in Australia in the last three months of 2021.

The 15 million booster doses would deal with possible future variants of the virus, he said.

We're now well into the

phase of dealing with what's coming next because the pandemic's not going anywhere, Morrison told *Perth Radio 6PR*.

Moderna vaccines would help Australia achieve its aim of inoculating all willing Australian adults within a population of 26 million by the end of 2021.

— AP

Italy fines Google 100 million euros

Rome, May 13: Italy's anti-trust authority said Thursday it had fined Google more than 100 million euros (\$120mn) for shutting out a rival's smartphone app offering recharging of electric vehicles.

The authority said Google, whose Android operating system and Google Play app store dominate the Italian market, had abused its market position by blocking an Enel X app for users of electric vehicles.

The regulator added it would require Google to make Enel X's app available on Android Auto, which mirrors features of an Android device, such as a smartphone, on a car dashboard screen.

The fine of 102,084,433.91 euros is for a violation of article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which regulates monopolies and issues involving restriction of competition.

Italy found Google did not allow Enel X Italia to develop an Android Auto-compatible version of its JuicePass app.

JuicePass offers services relating to recharging electric vehicles.

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President Bidya Devi Bhandari had asked the Opposition parties to come up with the support of majority lawmakers to form a new government by 9 PM on Thursday after Oli lost a crucial trust vote in the House of Representatives on Monday.

However, as the deadline which ended at 9.00 pm on

Thursday, the NC-Maoist Centre alliance has its hopes crashing down as disgruntled Nepal-Khanda faction of the ruling CPN-UML did not forward their resignation, which they had been claiming to do for long as a bargaining chip with embattled former prime minister Oli.

As the time accorded by the President gradually runs out and the deadline approaches, it can well be assumed that Oli is all set to make a comeback, emerging victorious in this Game of Thrones, as the country grapples with unprecedented rise in Covid-19 cases and corresponding fatalities as the second wave of the pandemic rages on.

The Himalayan Times newspaper commented.

National Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda" held a meeting on Thursday at the former's residence at Budhanilkantha in the

outskirts of Kathmandu to discuss the formation of the new government.

Similarly, Prime Minister and chairman of ruling CPN-UML Oli and dissident leader of the party Madhav Kumar Nepal held a meeting in an attempt to patch up their differences.

After Prime Minister Oli withdrew action taken against four dissident leaders for working against the party, 28 lawmakers close to the dissident leader withdrew their decision to resign en masse from the House of Representatives, that would pave way for Deuba to stake a claim for the prime minister's post.

— PTI

COSMOS | DRAMA Pre-flight training to be documented by Channel One of Russia

Russia to send crew to ISS for first space movie

Moscow, May 13: Russia's space agency said on Thursday it was sending an actress and a director to the International Space Station in October to make the first feature film in space.

Filming will take place at the International Space Station. The start of the expedition is scheduled for October 5, 2021 from the Baikonur cosmodrome on the Soyuz MS-19 manned transport spacecraft," Roscosmos said in a statement.

Actress Yulia Peresild, 36, and director Klim Shipenko, 37, will undergo special training, including tests on a centrifuge and flights in zero gravity, starting no later than 1 June.

Their pre-flight training will be documented by one of Russia's main TV channels, Channel One, which will also be involved in producing the film.

The film's working title is "Challenge" and will be in the genre of a "space drama", Roscosmos said, without providing details about the plot of the film or Peresild's role.

Roscosmos said in September the movie will aim to "popularise Russia's space activities, as well as glorify cosmonaut profession".

The film will be co-produced by Dmitry Rogozin, the head of Russia's space agency, with the ambition of making Russia the first country to shoot a film in space.

— AFP

Elon Musk.

Maezawa and film producer Hirano, who will be documenting the mission, will begin pre-flight training in June at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in Star City, a closed town outside of Moscow, Roscosmos added.

It said that the flight will last 12 days and the crew will be led by Cosmonaut Alexander Misurkin.

The resumption of these tourist flights comes as Roscosmos lost its monopoly for ferrying crews to the ISS after a reusable SpaceX rocket last year successfully delivered NASA astronauts to space.

— AFP

India asks China to restore cargo flights

Beijing, May 13: India has asked China to help stop the sharp increase in prices of essential medical supplies being procured from Chinese manufacturers by private Indian traders to deal with the Covid-19 surge in the country and restore the normal frequency of cargo flight services to maintain a steady supply chain.

Soaring prices of medical supplies like oxygen concentrators and disruption of cargo flights to India are slowing arrivals of medical goods, India's Consul General to Hong Kong Priyanka Chauhan said.

"What I would like to say is that our expectation at this point is that the supply chain should remain open and product prices should remain stable," Chauhan said in an interview with the *South China Morning Post* on Wednesday.

"Even if there is a little bit of supply-demand pressure, there has to be some stability and predictability to product prices," she told the Hong Kong-based newspaper. "And there has to be a sense of governmental level support and efforts. I don't have the information as to how much influence the Chinese government can have in this matter but if they can, then it would be welcome," she said.

Her comments came in the backdrop of efforts by private Indian traders to source much-needed medical supplies, especially oxygen concentrators to meet the shortages in hospitals. The cargo flight disruptions were amplified by the decision by Sichuan Airlines to suspend all its 11 cargo flights for 15 days from April 26, citing the Covid situation in India.

— PTI

COVID-19 CASES DROP BY HALF IN UNITED KINGDOM

London, May 13: The number of people infected with the Coronavirus in England fell by almost half over the past month marking the lowest level of Covid-19 cases since last year, according to new statistics released in London on Thursday as UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said "cautious steps" were being taken on the virus variant first identified in India.

The Imperial College London-led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) study comes as it emerged that the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) is holding a review meeting on Thursday to discuss the Variant of Concern (VOC) first identified in India.

During a primary school visit in north-east England on Thursday, Johnson admitted the VOC named B.1.617.2 "has been spreading" and the UK wants to "grip it".

— PTI



Yusaku Maezawa

ipate in a 2023 mission around the moon aboard a Starship spacecraft of SpaceX, the Roscosmos rival of US billionaire

SHORT TAKES
ONE SWISS, ONE AMERICAN DIE ON MOUNT EVEREST

Kathmandu: A Swiss climber and an American have died on Mount Everest in the season's first casualties on the world's highest mountain, expedition organisers Thursday.

The Swiss climber, Abdul Waraich, 41, scaled the peak before having difficulties, said Chhang Dawa of the expedition organiser, Seven Summit Treks in Nepal.

"Abdul successfully reached the summit but began experiencing issues during his descent," he said. "We sent two additional Sherpas with oxygen and food. Unfortunately, the Sherpas couldn't save him."

US national Puwei Liu, 55, also died at the highest camp on the mountain at South Col. He had reached the climbing feature named the Hillary Step, located between South Col and the summit, but had to return because of snow blindness and exhaustion.

2 HELD FOR ATTACK PLAN ON BANGLA PARLIAMENT

Dhaka: The counter-terrorism police in Bangladesh have arrested two people for plotting an attack on Parliament and instigating others to join them, according to a media report.

The arrested persons have been identified as Abu Sakib, 22, a member of the banned militant outfit Ansar Al Islam, while the other Ali Hasan Osama is a radical orator.

According to the preliminary investigation, Sakib opened a Facebook group and urged everyone to come with a sword and a flag with Islamic phrases inscribed on it to attack the parliament building. *bdnews24* said in a recent report.

However, no one responded to his request.

Sakib, who is a college student, was detained from outside the Parliament building on May 5. He was charged with carrying a sword and a black flag, Saiful Islam, deputy commissioner of the counter-terrorism unit, was quoted as saying in the report.

Osama was arrested on May 6 and police did not provide any details about him.

MAN STEALS FROM KIDS GROUP, PLEADS GUILTY

Chicago: The former executive director of a suburban Chicago non-profit created to help children with disabilities pleaded guilty Wednesday to federal charges he stole more than \$800,000 from the organisation.

Stuart Nitzkin, 45, of Deerfield, Illinois, pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud during an arraignment conducted by video conference before U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis. A criminal information made public last week alleged Nitzkin stole more than \$831,000 from Organisation A.

However, online records show the non-profit was the American Friends of the Israel Sport Center for the Disabled. The group is the US chapter of a charity founded in 1960 that specialises in the physical and psychological rehabilitation of Israeli children and youth.

Nitzkin was accused of using funds stolen between April 2011 and September 2016 to pay personal expenses, including luxury vacations with his family, personal golfing expenses and other sporting events.

OZ TELCO FINED FOR EXPLOITING INDIGENOUS FOLK

Canberra: Australia's largest telecommunications company Telstra was fined 50 million Australian dollars (USD 39 million) on Thursday for unconscionable conduct in selling remote Indigenous customers mobile phone contracts that they did not understand and could not afford.

The fine ordered by a Federal Court judge is the second largest ever imposed under Australian consumer law.

Telstra admitted the offences in signing up 108 Indigenous customers, some of whom spoke English as a second or third language, to mobile phone accounts.

Staff sometimes manipulated credit assessments to say unemployed customers had jobs. They also failed to properly explain the potential costs and falsely represented products as free of cost.

Justice Debra Mortimer said Telstra staff took advantage of an Indigenous cultural propensity to express agreement as a way of avoiding conflict.

The customers owed an average AU\$7,400 (USD 5,700) and one owed AU\$19,000 (nearly USD 14,700).

Arab-Jew clashes open 2nd front

1,600 rockets launched from Gaza Strip, Israeli jets strike 600 targets; toll mounts to 82

Tel Aviv, May 13: Israel faced an escalating conflict on two fronts on Thursday, scrambling to quell riots between Arabs and Jews on its own streets after days of exchanging deadly fire with Islamist militants in Gaza.

Defence Minister Benny Gantz ordered a "massive reinforcement" of security forces to quell mob violence across the country, where police stations have been attacked and people savagely beaten on both sides.

Despite global alarm and diplomatic efforts to halt the spiralling violence, which US President Joe Biden said he hoped would end "sooner than later", hundreds of rockets again tore through the skies over the Gaza Strip overnight.

Israel's air force launched multiple strikes with fighter jets, targeting what it described as locations linked to Hamas, the Islamist group that controls Gaza.

In Gaza, 83 people were reported killed since Monday — including 17 children — and more than 480 people wounded as heavy bombardment has rocked the crowded coastal enclave and brought down entire tower blocks.

The Israeli military said it had struck Gaza targets more than 600 times, while Hamas had fired over 1,600 rockets towards Israel since Monday, with the Israel military saying it struck Gaza targets over



A ball of fire engulfing the Al-Walid building which was destroyed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza city early on Thursday morning. — AFP

Hamas fires rocket at Israel's airport

Gaza City, Palestinian Territories, May 13: Hamas on Thursday said

it fired a rocket at Israel's Ramon airport near Eilat, where incoming passenger flights were diverted after waves of rocket launches towards the main airport near Tel Aviv.

A spokesman for Hamas'

600 times.

Earlier on Thursday, Israel's civil aviation authority said that it had diverted all incoming passenger flights headed for Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport to Ramon airport, as

Hamas had fired over 1,600 rockets towards Israel since Monday, with the Israel military saying it struck Gaza targets over

were meanwhile cancelling flights to Israel.

Spokespeople for United Airlines and American Airlines said that their flights from the US to Israel had been cancelled "through May 15".

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quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48690.80 -0.96
Nifty 50	14696.50 -1.04
S&P 500*	4,112.51 1.22
Dollar (₹)	73.42 -0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.78 -0.12
Euro (₹)	89.10 0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,468/14 0.03
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.28 -2.94
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.010 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.674 -0.029

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Builders hope for recovery in 2nd half of 2021

The demand for luxury homes has slowed down during the last one-and-a-half months due to the second wave of Covid-19 but real estate developers and consultants are hopeful that sales will pick up once the situation normalises as it happened last year. Despite Covid wave, prices of luxury residential properties are likely to remain stable and may even rise slightly due to limited supply, they said.

Airtel fixed line, enterprise users to get quick service



Airtel fixed line and enterprise subscribers will soon be migrated to Amdocs' system for more rapid delivery of new digital customer experiences, according to a statement. The telecom company said seamless migration of Airtel wireless postpaid customers to Amdocs modern digital-business system, which enables the telco to quickly create and launch new digital services for customers.

Embassy invests in Pi Labs fund for proptech cos

Realty firm Embassy Group on Thursday said it has invested in venture capital firm Pi Labs' new fund that puts money in proptech startups. Founded in 2014, Pi Labs was the first venture capital firm in Europe to exclusively invest in proptech companies. Embassy has joined Pi Labs as a limited partner in its current Fund 3, the Bengaluru-based firm said. The company did not disclose the amount it has invested in the fund.

TVS picks Robert as CEO of Norton Motorcycle

TVS Motor Company on Thursday said it has appointed Robert Hentschel as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of iconic British brand Norton Motorcycle, which it acquired last year. Hentschel replaces John Russell who steps down from his role as an interim CEO. Besides, Vittorio Urciuoli has been named as the Chief Technical Officer (CTO) of the Solihull-based motorcycle brand.

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Interest shows a better demand scenario for gas 14 bidders slug it out for KG-D6 gas supply

New Delhi, May 13: As many as 14 users across sectors slugged it on a third-party electronic platform for seven-and-a-half hours to secure natural gas supplies from the eastern offshore KG-D6 block before the oil-to-chemical (O2C) unit of Reliance Industries Ltd bagged most of the supplies, sources said.

Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner BP Plc of the United Kingdom, who are bringing a second set of gas discoveries in their Bay of Bengal KG-D6 block, had offered 5.5 million standard cubic metres per day (mmscmd) of additional gas in the auction for a flexible tenure of between three and five years.

Gas users companies like Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Reliance O2C, GAIL Gas, Adani Total Gas Ltd, Torrent Gas, Torrent Power and gas trading companies like GAIL, Shell and IGS were locked in the intense bidding war on the e-auction that happened on May 5, sources in the Reliance-BP consortium said.

At the end of the intense bidding war, Reliance O2C walked away with three mmscmd of supplies, offering better prices than competitors, they said.

India Gas Solutions (IGS) - a gas sourcing and marketing joint venture of Reliance and BP - bagged another 1 mmscmd, while IOC got a similar volume.

The remaining volume was picked by Adani Gas



ONGC WAIVES MARKETING MARGIN BUT REFUSES TO LOWER GAS PRICE

New Delhi, May 13: ONGC has agreed to do away with charging users a marketing margin on the gas it plans to produce from its KG basin field but refused to lower the minimum rate, according to tender documents.

ONGC, India's top oil and gas producer, last month sought bids for the sale of initial 2 million standard cubic meters per day of gas from its KG-DWN-98/2 block (KG-D6).

The company asked bidders to quote a rate linked to prevailing Brent crude oil prices. It fixed the floor or minimum rate at 10.5 per cent of the three-month aver-

age Brent crude oil price. On top of it, the firm sought \$0.20 per million British thermal unit.

Potential bidders however opposed the levy of the marketing margin as well as the "high" floor price.

Responding to queries raised by bidders, ONGC said the floor price cannot be changed but the marketing margin is being dropped.

"Change in Reserve Gas Price (floor rate) is not agreed. However, considering requests from various bidders, the levy of marketing margin of \$0.20 per mmBtu over and above contract price is removed," the company said.

The government sets a cap or ceiling rate at which natural gas from difficult fields like deepsea can be sold.

This cap for the period April 1, 2021, to September 30, 2021 is \$3.62 per mmBtu.

With the return of demand, international rates have rebounded, which will reflect in the prices in the second revision due on October 1.

Covid fails to dampen PE, VC interest in India

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 13

The second wave of the pandemic has not been able to affect the enthusiasm of private equity and venture capital funds as investments continued to grow for four straight months as in 2019.

In the three auctions, Reliance-BP has sold around 18 mmscmd of domestic gas from new fields in the KG-D6 block, which would help substantially reduce reliance on imported LNG, the sources said.

In the May 5 auction, Reliance-BP had asked bidders to quote a price linked to Platts JKM (Japan Korea marker), the liquefied natural gas (LNG) benchmark price assessment for spot physical cargoes.

The intense competition indicates a preference for domestic gas vis a vis LNG for Indian consumers.

At current prices, the discovered price translates into a price of about \$9 per mmBtu, but the buyers will be required to pay only the cap or ceiling price that the government has set for such fields.

The government sets a cap or ceiling rate at which natural gas from difficult fields like deepsea can be sold.

This cap for the period April 1, 2021, to September 30, 2021 is \$3.62 per mmBtu.

With the return of demand, international rates have rebounded, which will reflect in the prices in the second revision due on October 1.

— PTI

0.15 mmscmd), IRM Energy (0.10 mmscmd), GAIL (30,000 cubic meters per day) and Torrent Gas (20,000 cubic metres per day). This is the third auc-

tion that Reliance-BP conducted on a third party independent platform approved by the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). The online

dropped marginally during the period under review to 19.9 per cent from 20.1 per cent in the December quarter.

Offshore mutual funds form an important component of total foreign portfolio investment, apart from other large FPIs, such as offshore insurance companies, hedge funds, and sovereign wealth funds.

During January-March 2021, FPIs invested a robust \$7.64 billion in Indian equities. In relative terms, it was much lower than the net inflows of \$19.21 billion recorded in the previous quarter, but in absolute terms, it is a significant amount, nonetheless, the report noted.

As of March 2020 quarter, the value of FPI investments in Indian equities was \$281 billion.

However, the contribution of overseas investors to domestic equity market capitalisation

FPI INVESTMENT IN EQUITY RISES 7% TO \$552B IN MARCH QUARTER

New Delhi, May 13:

The value of foreign portfolio investor (FPI) holdings in domestic equities reached \$552 billion in three months to March 2021, a surge of 7 per cent from the preceding quarter, according to a Morningstar report.

This was largely on the back of robust net inflows from FPIs, coupled with a strong performance of the Indian equity markets. As of the quarter ended March 2021, the value of FPI investments in Indian equities stood at \$552 billion, which was considerably higher than the \$518 billion recorded in the previous quarter, the report noted.

Technology was the top sector to grab \$3.1 billion, followed by e-commerce with \$1.5 billion. E-commerce also saw the highest monthly investment value in the past 31 months. The financial services sector received \$614 million and media and entertainment \$515 million.

"The revival in PE/VC

investments has been

driven by an increase in

large deals valued over

\$100 million.

Of the 41

large deals recorded in the

first four months of 2021,

32 were in the past two

months.

While Covid

resilient sectors like pharma,

healthcare, edutech,

online media, SaaS,

Technology and IT/ITeS

continue to see good traction

in both value and vol-

ume of PE/VC deals,

there

has been a significant

upick in the value and

volume of investments in

the e-commerce sector,"

dropped marginally during the period under review to 19.9 per cent from 20.1 per cent in the December quarter.

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Exits also were quite active in April. April

2021 recorded 13 exits worth

\$2.7 billion, almost 23

times the value of exits in

April 2020 at \$117 million

and 25 per cent higher

than the value recorded in

March 2021 at \$2.1 billion.

said Vivek Soni, Partner and National Leader, Private Equity Services, EY.

Exits also were quite active in April. April 2021 recorded 13 exits worth \$2.7 billion, almost 23 times the value of exits in April 2020 at \$117 million and 25 per cent higher than the value recorded in March 2021 at \$2.1 billion.

Secondary exits in April 2021 were highest at \$2.1 billion across three deals.

Exits worth \$7 billion in the first four months were 17 per cent higher than the total value recorded last year.

LABOUR FORCE SHRANK IN INDIA, SAYS CMIE



SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 13

The number of employed people fell by 7.35 million in April over March as the labour force shrank and the unemployment rate went up due to the second wave of the pandemic, finds CMIE.

The number of employed people in India fell from 398 million in March to 390.79 million in April — a decline of 7.35 million within a month.

Shrinkage of the labour force and rise in unemployment among those looking for jobs contributed to the decline. The labour force shrank by 1.1 million in April 2021 to 424.6 million compared to 425.8 million in March.

Labour Participation Rate fell for a third consecutive month in April and was the lowest since the nation-wide lockdown month of May 2020. The lockdowns imposed in some of the states to curb the second wave could have denied people from seeking employment and caused a fall in labour participation, finds Mahesh Vyas, CEO, CMIE.

However, despite this smaller labour force looking for employment, a greater proportion failed to find jobs. As a result, the unemployment rate shot up from 6.5 per cent in March to 8 per cent in April. Count of the unemployed who was willing to work and was actively looking for work but unable to find any expanded by 6.2 million from 27.7 million in March to 33.9 million in April.

Most of the job losses are from the agricultural sector, which is not impacted by the lockdowns. Of the 7.35 million people who lost employment in April, six million losses were from the agricultural sector.

LUPIN JUMPS INTO BLACK WITH ₹1,216 CR PROFIT IN FY21

New Delhi, May 13: Drug maker Lupin on Thursday reported an 18 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit at ₹460 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2021, driven by robust sales across domestic and international markets.

The Mumbai-based company had reported a net profit of ₹390 crore in the

January-March quarter of

2019-20.

The company's total income from operations, however, declined to ₹3,783 crore during the fourth quarter, as compared to ₹3,846 crore in the corresponding period of FY20, Lupin Ltd said.

The company on

Monday had announced

signing voluntary licensing agreements with Sun Pharma, Cipla and Lupin.

Eli Lilly has received

permission for restricted

emergency use by the

Central Drugs Standard

Control Organisation,

for Baricitinib to be used in combination with Remdes

SHORT TAKES
Lukaku fined for birthday party

Milan: Romelu Lukaku has been fined along with three Inter Milan teammates after a party in the early hours of Thursday morning to celebrate the Belgium forward's birthday which broke Covid-19 restrictions.

Lukaku, Achraf Hakimi, Ivan Perisic and Ashley Young were among a group of 24 people celebrating his 28th birthday in a Milan hotel after the Inter's 3-1 league win over Roma, Gazzetta Dello Sport reported.

Police were called with all present receiving fines for breaking coronavirus rules, Gazzetta said. According to Lukaku's entourage, the former Manchester United forward went out with friends, but had not organised the party.

Lukaku scored the final goal against Roma to bring his tally to 22 in the league this season, six behind Cristiano Ronaldo.

— AFP

Serena beaten in 1,000th match

Rome: Serena Williams' 1,000th tour-level singles match ended in defeat as she marked her return to action with a 7-6 (6), 7-5 loss to Nadia Podoroska in the second round of the Italian Open. The eighth-seeded

Williams, who hadn't played since the Australian Open, rallied from a break down twice in the opening set on Wednesday and saved the first three set points she faced in the tiebreaker before Podoroska converted her fourth. "It's tough to have a first match on clay. It was definitely kind of good to go the distance and to try to be out there, but clearly I can do legions better," said Williams.

Defending champion Simona Halep was forced to retire with a left calf injury in the second set of her match against fellow former No. 1 Angelique Kerber. Halep was leading 6-1, 3-3 before her injury. — AP

Djokovic sweeps into Italian last 8

Rome: World number one Novak Djokovic swept into the Italian Open quarter-finals on Thursday with a straight sets wins over Alejandro Davydovich Fokina in front of spectators who were allowed to watch in the Foro Italico for the first time.

The five-time Rome champion won through 6-2, 6-1 in 1hr 10min against the 48th-ranked Spaniard with the venue filled to 25 per cent of capacity. "It was not good, it was great. I missed the crowd," said the 33-year-old Serb. "It was nice to see them back." After losing his opening service game, Djokovic powered back with five breaks of serve, out-classing his rival, despite a late fightback, to seal the win on his sixth match point. — AFP

Oz players may return home soon

Male, Maldives: A group of Australian cricketers, coaches and players-turned-commentators, currently stranded in Maldives, may return home in a chartered flight on Sunday, though they are still waiting confirmation from their government, according to a report.

A group of 38 Australians, including 14 players, left for Maldives on May 6 after the suspension of IPL 2021 as their government had banned flights from India till May 15 due to surge in Covid-19 cases there. "Under plans currently being thrashed out... the group of 38 would be able to take a charter flight out of the Maldives via Malaysia to Sydney on May 16, where they would then serve their mandatory 14-day quarantine period," a report in ESPNcricinfo said. — PTI

Hockey legends kin to get ₹5 lac

New Delhi: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday announced financial support of ₹5 lakh each for the bereaved families of former hockey players M.K. Kaushik and Ravinder Pal Singh, who recently lost their lives to Covid-19.

Both Kaushik and Singh were a part of India's 1980 Olympic gold-winning team. "We've lost two hockey greats to Covid. MK Kaushik ji & Ravinder Pal Singh ji's contribution to Indian sport will always be remembered," Rijiju wrote on his Twitter handle.

"As a gesture of support, the Sports Ministry is handing over ₹5 lakh each to the bereaved families. We stand with them in this hour of grief."

India lost the revered stars on last Saturday. — PTI

Atletick on in Spain

Atletico on the cusp of La Liga glory after Sociedad win

Madrid, May 13: Atletico Madrid held their nerve to beat Real Sociedad 2-1 on Wednesday and move within touching distance of winning La Liga.

Yannick Carrasco and Angel Correa made a dominant first half count for Atletico, who retreated in the second and were left hanging on after Igor Zubeldia blasted in for La Real with seven minutes left.

When the final whistle blew, Diego Simeone jogged up the tunnel at the Wanda Metropolitano, punching the air as he went, fully aware how important this result could prove.

"We were excellent in the first half but the suffering was unnecessary when we had so many chances," Simeone said.

Outside, Atleti fans had gathered to cheer and sing throughout a nervy contest and when victory was confirmed, fireworks filled the sky.

"We thank all those who are outside tonight and all those who can't come because of everything that is happening," said Atletico captain Koke. "We could hear them outside when we needed them in the last 10 minutes."

Victory puts Atletico four points clear of Barcelona in the table and five ahead of Real Madrid, with Zinedine Zidane's side playing their game in hand away at Granada on Thursday.

It also raises the possibility of Atletico winning the title in the penultimate round on Sunday when they play at home to Osasuna.

Another victory this weekend would knock Barca out of the race regardless of what the Catalans do against Celta Vigo while Real Madrid would also concede if they had not taken six points from Granada and Sunday's trip to Athletic Bilbao.

Sevilla, in fourth, had earlier edged past Valencia 1-0 but they can no longer overtake Atleti, given their six-point deficit and a losing head-to-head record with the leaders. Youssef En-Nesyri scored his 26th goal of the season at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

The four-horse race is reduced to three and after weeks of various twists and turns, Atletico suddenly appear to have a route to the trophy.

In terms of the table at least, this game against fifth-placed Real Sociedad was their toughest remaining fixture, although Real Valladolid could well be fighting for survival on the final day. — AFP



Atletico Madrid's Angel Correa (left) vies for the ball with Martin Zubimendi of Real Sociedad in their Spanish League match in Madrid on Wednesday. — AFP

Rowe exploits Jorginho blunder as Arsenal win

London, May 13: Thomas Tuchel admitted Chelsea's 1-0 defeat against Arsenal was a "wake-up call" after Emile Smith Rowe punished Jorginho's blunder to dent the Blues' bid to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Midfielder Jorginho was guilty of a woefully misplaced back-pass that ended with Gunners youngster Smith Rowe slotting home early in the first half at Stamford Bridge.

Tuchel's side were bereft of quality in the final third as they succumbed to only a third defeat in their 26 matches in all competitions.

Chelsea remain in fourth place, but their bid to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish is now on a knife edge.

They sit six points clear of fifth-placed West Ham, who have a game in hand, and seven ahead of sixth-placed Liverpool, who could be the biggest threat with two games in hand.

"I don't know how

MILAN RUN RIOT TO KEEP THEIR CL CHANCES ALIVE

Milan, May 13: Ante Rebic scored a hat-trick and Theo Hernandez a double as AC Milan thrashed Torino 7-0 on Wednesday to keep their push for a return to the Champions League for the first time since 2014 on track.

The battle for elite European football remains tight with just three points separating second-placed Atalanta and Juventus in fifth.

Atalanta moved back second ahead of Napoli with a 2-0 win over relegation candidates Benevento.

The Bergamo side are equal on points with Milan, with Napoli a further two points adrift in fourth.

"Until you cross the finish line, you can't give up on anything," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli whose final two games are home against Cagliari and away to Atalanta. — AFP

Arsenal would have scored if we didn't give it to them. We scored more or less an own goal, a total gift," Tuchel said.

PSG MAKE IT TO FRENCH CUP FINAL

Paris Saint-Germain squeaked past Montpellier 6-5 on penalties in Wednesday's

French Cup semi-final to keep alive their hopes of ending the season with silverware.

Spot kicks were required after the two sides were all square at 2-2 after normal time in Montpellier.

"It was a real cup tie, they're never easy," said PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino. — AFP

Srikanth holds on to slim Oly hopes



Kidambi Srikanth

done anything differently, Srikanth said: "Now we can say a lot of things because the tournament is not happening but we really don't know what is happening between the organisers and BWF."

The BWF however, said it will issue a further statement on Tokyo Olympics qualifying at a later date.

"I could have qualified if I had participated in the qualifiers but there is nothing much I can do about it now. Just waiting to see what BWF says about this whole qualification things, so yeah holding on to some hope," Srikanth said.

There is no tournament scheduled till August and Telangana too has gone into a lockdown. Srikanth said he would now take a break from training.

Asked if BWF could have

Negative public opinion is no threat to Olympics

TOKYO-BOUND RACE WALKER IRFAN +VE

New Delhi, May 13: Olympic-bound race walker K.T. Irfan is among five elite track-and-field athletes who have tested positive for Covid-19 at the Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

The news conference on Wednesday followed a monthly meeting of the International Olympic Committee's executive board held amid a state of emergency in Tokyo to curb surging Covid-19 cases.

Polling in Japan also persistently suggests people want the July 23-August 8 Olympics to be called off, having already been postponed by one year.

"We listen but won't be guided by public opinion," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said, adding "everything is telling us... that the Games can go ahead and will go ahead."

Adams stood in for his boss, IOC president Thomas Bach, whose planned visit to Japan next week was called off Monday after states of emergency in Tokyo and other regions were extended through May.

The final question of the news conference, held by video call, was offered to a reporter from Yahoo Sports.



K.T. Irfan

not be confirmed.

"4 male players and 1 female player and 4 support staff tested positive for Covid-19," a SAI source stated.

Irfan had qualified for the Tokyo Olympics way back in 2019 after finishing fourth in the 20 km event of the Asian Race Walking Championships in Nomi, Japan. — PTI

Instead, an activist appeared on the screen holding up a black and white banner opposing the Tokyo Olympics.

"No Olympics anywhere, No Olympics anywhere," he said, before using a profanity and adding "No Olympics in LA, No Olympics in

India remain No.1 in Test rankings

Dubai, May 13: India remained the number one Test side after the annual update of the ICC team rankings, released on Thursday.

India head the table after gaining one rating point for an aggregate of 121, having accumulated 2,914 points from 24 matches.

Virat Kohli's men are closely followed by their World Test Championship final opponents, New Zealand, with a rating of 120. The Kiwis have garnered 2,166 points from 18 Tests and gained two rating points.

India's 2-1 win over Australia and 3-1 win over England over the past year and New Zealand's 2-0 series wins over the West Indies and Pakistan have helped them keep ahead of the pack.

after their 0-4 defeat to Australia in 2017-18 was dropped from the rankings.

Pakistan (94) have gained three points but remained at fifth spot, while West Indies (84), who beat Bangladesh 2-0 and drew 0-0 with Sri Lanka in series played this year, have jumped two places to sixth, their best position since 2013.

South Africa (80) and Sri Lanka (78) have dropped a rung each to seventh and eighth positions respectively, followed by Bangladesh (46), who have lost five points and Zimbabwe (35), who gained eight points.

England (109 rating) have climbed a place to third at the expense of Australia (108 rating), down to fourth. England's jump came

— PTI

PAIN HINTS AT GIVING UP CAPTAINCY AFTER ASHES

Melbourne, May 13: Australian Test captain Tim Paine has hinted at stepping down from the position if his team manages to defeat England in the Ashes series this year and backed former skipper Steve Smith to succeed him.

The 36-year-old Paine has been under intense scrutiny after Australia were beaten 1-2 by an injury-ravaged India in a home Test series earlier this season. Paine said that debacle was partly because his team got distracted by India's "niggling".

Paine also hinted that he might step down from captaincy if Australia can beat England in the Ashes later this year.

dal. "He's probably a bit like me when I was at the start of my captaincy journey in Tasmania — he was thrown into a very big role at a very young age and he probably wasn't quite ready for it," Paine was quoted as saying by news.com.au.

"But by the time I came in he was growing into that role and getting better and better. Then obviously (in) South Africa events happened and he's not doing it anymore. But yeah I would support him getting that job again," he added.

Paine also hinted that he might step down from captaincy if Australia can beat England in the Ashes later this year.

WOMEN'S CRICKET

Powar replaces Raman as coach

SHAFALI, RADHA READY TO MAKE WBBL DEBUTS

New Delhi, May 13: Former spinner Ramesh Powar replaced W.V. Raman as the Indian women's cricket team's head coach, regaining the position more than two years after he was sacked following a bitter fallout with ODI captain Mithali Raj.

The 42-year-old was recommended by the Madan Lal-led Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) after interviewing eight candidates, including Raman.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announces the appointment of Mr Ramesh Powar as the Head Coach of Team India (Senior Women)," a BCCI statement read.

The others in fray were former India wicketkeeper Ajay Ratna and four female candidates.

It remains to be seen how Powar works alongside Mithali, who had accused him of bias after the Harmanpreet Kaur-led T20 team dropped the veteran batter for the all-important World Cup semifinal against England.

Mithali, in a letter to the BCCI after the event, had alleged that Powar "was out to destroy and humiliate" her. Powar had hit back asserting that Mithali "threw a lot of tantrums and created chaos in the team".

The world number one batter in ICC women's T20I rankings will also be turning up for Birmingham Phoenix in the inaugural edition of The Hundred — the 100-ball domestic competition of the England and Wales Cricket Board later this year.

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