

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | THURSDAY | 27 MAY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 39.8°C
Min: 27°C
RH: 29%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy. Thundershowers likely. Max/Min temp. 40/27°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula
Padyami till 1.04 pm
Star: Jyeshtha till 10.30 pm
Varjyam: 6.13 am to 7.38 am
Durmuhurtam: 10.04 am to 10.55 am; 3.14 pm to 4.06 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HILARI CALENDAR
Shawwal 14, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.34 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 4.47 pm
Maghrib: 6.51 pm
Isha: 8.05 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.44 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.41 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.47 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 5.20 AM

COUNTER POINT



We have to enforce lockdown more strictly... hike fuel prices!

SHORT TAKES

IMA's ₹1,000cr suit on Ramdev

Dehradun: The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has served a defamation notice on Ramdev for alleged remarks against allopathic doctors, demanding an apology from him within 15 days, failing which it said it will demand a compensation of ₹1,000 crore from him. The notice describes Ramdev's remarks as damaging to the image of allopathy.

■ Full report on Page 4

Evaluate crime for bail, says SC

New Delhi: A court has to evaluate the seriousness of an alleged offence while granting bail to an accused and order without reasons is fundamentally contrary to the norms which guide the judicial process, the Supreme Court has said. A bench headed by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud made the observation while setting aside an Allahabad High Court order which granted bail to a man accused in a dowry death case.

Lanka prepares for major oil spill

Colombo: A Singapore-flagged cargo vessel, which caught fire near the Colombo beach last week, may sink, raising severe environmental concerns in the island nation, according to media reports on Wednesday. The *Colombo Gazette* reported that the *MV 'X-PRESS PEARL'* was "unstable" and "expected to sink" and officials prepared for an oil spill.

■ Full report on Page 5

EU sues AZ for delay in vaccine

Brussels: The European Union on Wednesday asked a Belgian court to impose penalties on AstraZeneca for Covid vaccine doses it has failed to deliver to the bloc. The request came as EU countries and their executive, the European Commission, began legal action against the Anglo-Swedish pharma company for "flagrant violation" of its contract with Brussels.

■ Full report on Page 5

WORLD | 5

Pak wants to pivot US ties on economy



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SPORTS | 8

Boxers punch big at Asian meet

TABLOID

Gun-trotting girls in T-town



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KCR tells junior docs to join duty for public health

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 26

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao on Wednesday asked the protesting junior doctors in the state to call off their strike in view of the overall public health and the existing Covid-19 situation, and advised them to join duties immediately.

The Chief Minister said the government was ready to resolve the issues if the demands of the doctors were genuine. "They can bring those demands to the government and get them solved. But it is not proper to abstain from duties now and then, under the pretext of strike without even understanding the time and situation and causing inconvenience to people time and again," Chandrashekar Rao said during a review meeting on the overall medical situation and vaccination programme with the medical and health officials.

He further added that no one would appreciate the doctors going on strike during the present emergency situation due to Coronavirus.

Following the review, a late evening meeting between representatives

KTR WARNS OF ACTION AGAINST JUNIOR DOCTORS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 26

Municipal administration minister K.T. Rama Rao, warning of possible action, called for the junior doctors to end the protest, saying this was not the right time to go on a strike.

"When the humanity is going through a crisis, there are other ways to resolve issues if any. The government will discuss the issues with them with an open mind," he said.

■ Full report on Page 2

TALKS WITH GOVT FAIL, JR DOCS TO INTENSIFY STRIKE

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 26

A marathon meeting between the Telangana Junior Doctors' Association and the Director of Medical Education here on Wednesday did not bear the expected results.

Even as CM Chandrashekar Rao assured the protesting doctors earlier in the day that their demands will be met, the meeting did not have any positive outcome, T-JUDA members said.

■ Full report on Page 2

of the Telangana Junior Doctors' Association and the director of medical education Dr K Ramesh Reddy, the junior doctors said no assurance on any of their demands was given by the officials.

The junior doctors warned that with the officials not willing to provide any assurance on their demands, they had decided to boycott even emer-

gency services from Thursday. On Wednesday, the junior doctors stayed away from all services other than attending to emergencies and treatment of Covid patients.

The CM, however, agreed to meet another demand of the junior doctors on ex-gratia amount.

■ Page 2: Medicos to get better facilities at Nims: CM

State Cabinet to take call on extension of lockdown

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 26

The state cabinet will meet on May 30 to discuss and take a decision on the extension of lockdown.

The meeting to be chaired by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao will discuss in detail about the impact of lockdown in the state since May 12 and the need to extend the lock-

down further to check the spread of coronavirus.

The state government had imposed a night curfew from the state from 8pm to 7 am from April 20 after the Covid second wave led to a steep increase in coronavirus positive cases and deaths. It was followed by the imposition of 20-hour lockdown from May 12. The lockdown was initially

imposed for 10 days until May 22 and subsequently extended till May 30.

Sources said the government was in favour of extending the lockdown by a week until June 7 initially and further by another week until June 14 depending on the situation after June 7.

■ Page 2: Health dept bats for lockdown's extension

Choksi captured in Dominica

New Delhi, May 26: Fugitive diamondaire Mehul Choksi, who had recently fled from Antigua and Barbuda, was captured in neighbouring Dominica after an Interpol Yellow Notice was issued against him, the local media reported on Wednesday.

Police in Dominica captured Choksi on Tuesday night (local time) after an Interpol Yellow Notice was issued by Antigua and Barbuda.

Efforts are on to hand him over to the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda, the local media reports stated.

Choksi had been living in Antigua and Barbuda since 2018 after taking the citizenship of the country,



Antigua News Room reported.

The Yellow Notice is issued by the Interpol to track missing persons.

Choksi, who is wanted in a ₹13,500 crore loan fraud in the Punjab National Bank, was last seen going for dinner in his car in Antigua and Barbuda on Sunday. His staff had

reported him missing after his car was found. The businessman's lawyer Vijay Aggarwal had confirmed that Choksi had been missing since Sunday.

The reports of Choksi gone missing created flutter in the Caribbeans island country after the opposition raised the issue in Antigua and Barbuda Parliament.

Responding to the opposition, Antigua Prime Minister Gaston Browne had said that his dispensation was "collaborating" with the Indian government, neighbouring countries and international police organisations to try and locate Choksi.

"Someone from his

household indicated that he is missing. Since then the Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda put out a statement to that effect. That statement will be shared with the Interpol," he had said.

Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi allegedly siphoned off ₹13,500 crore of public money from the state-run PNB, using fraudulent letters of undertaking. Modi is contesting his extradition lodged in a London jail after repeated denial of his bail by courts. Choksi had taken citizenship of Antigua and Barbuda in 2017 using the Citizenship by Investment programme before escaping India in the first week of January 2018. —PTI

arise from unexpected spots. Lending help, giving hope, sharing light, redefining love, and metamorphosing fan following.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle* about his inner motivations to emerge from the fringes of celebrity to becoming a trusted icon of a ravage nation's people, Sonu Sood, in a soft soothing voice of a healer, rather than a preferred negative actor of the movie screen, said, "Growing up in Moga, Punjab, I saw my mother, a teacher, give free tuition classes for decades. Outside my father's shop,

there would always be a langar, where I too would serve food. It was a lesson ingrained for life that you must always be there to serve in whatever capacity you have."

When asked about the incident that prompted him to emerge out of lockdown to become a frontline hero, Sood said, "Last year, when I started hearing stories of migrant workers, I knew I could no longer sit in the security and comfort of my home."

■ Page 2: Sonu Sood becomes India's superhero

Outside my father's shop,



Film actor Sonu Sood distributes lemon juice packs to Covid-affected people.

MANGROVES SAVED THE DAY FOR ODISHA

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 26

The long stretches of mangroves on the Odisha coast literally repulsed the ravaging fury and ferocity of cyclonic storm "Yaas" that made its landfall at Bhananaga on Wednesday morning with an alarming windspeed of 130-140 kmph. Experts said the mangroves took the steam out of the very severe cyclonic storm that steadily declined to a severe cyclone and then a depression.

"It's quite heartening to know that the mangroves on the Odisha coast, especially the stretches in Bhitarkanika National Park in Kendrapara district, stood a strong phalanx against Yaas. It absorbed a lot of wind force as a result of which the severity of the cyclone got drastically reduced," said H.R. Biswas, director of the Regional Met Centre, Bhubaneswar.

The IMD had initially predicted Yaas would have a furious landfall high velocity windspeed of 150-165 kmph, gusting up to 185 km. Windspeeds of this velocity can turn any human habitation into a war-ravaged zone. However, before Yaas made landfall, its squally winds had hours of friction with thick layers of mangroves that flank the coast. Finally, Yaas ceded a part of its force and made landfall with 130-140 kmph squally winds.

■ Page 2: Mangroves slowed ingress of high tides



Pedestrians use their mobiles to capture the flooded road during landfall of cyclone Yaas, in Kolkata, on Wednesday.

—PTI

as high as the coconut trees that line the popular beaches, were seen surging.

Cyclone Yaas, which spared Kolkata unlike last year, was followed by heavy rain in the districts of East Midnapore, South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas and Howrah.

In Odisha, seawater inundated several villages in Bhananaga and Remuna blocks in Balasore district, and Dhamra and Basudepur in the Bhadrak district, special relief com-

missioner P.K. Jena said. Thousands of kutcha houses in coastal villages in Bhadrak, Balasore and Kendrapara districts were washed away in the high tidal surge that accompanied the cyclone's roaring landfall.

The storm weakened during the afternoon but hollered on its destructive path towards Jharkhand. The state continued evacuating low-lying areas during the day amid the forecast that it would be hitting by midnight.

WhatsApp says new digital rules violate statute, moves Delhi HC

DC CORRESPONDENTS with agency inputs NEW DELHI/CHENNAI, MAY 26

WhatsApp has filed a case in the Delhi High Court challenging the government's new digital rules that came into effect on Wednesday, saying that the rules will compel the company to break privacy protection of users. The government has said that it is committed to ensure the right of privacy to all its citizens, but added that "at the same time it is also the responsibility of the government to maintain law and order and ensure national security."

In the petition filed on

● In the petition, WhatsApp maintained that the new rules require the message service provider to identify the first originator of any message and this is a violation of privacy rights provided by the Constitution.

Tuesday, WhatsApp maintained that the new rules require the message service provider to identify the first originator of any message and this is a violation of privacy rights provided by the Constitution.

"We have consistently joined civil society and experts around the world

in opposing requirements that would violate the privacy of our users," WhatsApp spokesperson said in a statement.

"Requiring messages to trace chats is the equivalent of asking us to keep a fingerprint of every single message sent on WhatsApp which would break end-to-end encryption and undermines people's right to privacy," he added.

However, a statement from IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said, "As per all established judicial dictum, no fundamental right, including the right to privacy, is absolute and it is subject to reasonable restrictions."

HEALING | TOUCH

Sonu Sood credits his upbringing for helping nature; says stories of migrant workers moved him

In bleak times, 'villain' Sood redefines 'real' heroism

SRIRAM KARRI | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 26

If a scriptwriter had proposed a few years ago a logline for a movie which read: "an actor from Punjab, with a six-pack body, who has played a villain on screen for over two decades, finds a calling in the midst of a pandemic", would some directors have accepted it?

His work makes him the most beloved superstar across the country, the trust in him built rapidly as he works to connect, first with migrant workers and try-

ing to help them, and as a second wave hits, responding to people from across India, reaching out to him with a trust they repose in him greater than in governments. And in film crazy Telugu states, gods of decades slide down the charts, downed by a virus, leaving only one real star.

Such a script would never have found a director accepting it. Even the audiences would have found it beyond plausibility, even for a story. But when life scripts stories and reality screens it, not for two hours but years, anything

As a migrant worker myself, though privileged and lucky, I could empathise with their angst. It started with serving food and giving basic financial help to organising to help them in larger numbers.

—SONU SOOD

is possible. Such has been the script starring Sonu Sood since Coronavirus spread its menacing tentacles and brought down every order of society and all semblances of sanity. But in dark times, heroes

IN BRIEF

**Extend lockdown:
Health department**

From Page 1

The health department submitted a report to the state government stating that the night curfew and lockdown since April 20 had contributed to a significant reduction in corona positive cases in the state and to ensure that this benefit is not lost, it suggested extension of lockdown further. The cabinet will discuss the suggestions of the health department and take a decision on the extension of lockdown. This apart, the cabinet would also discuss agriculture, crops, the ongoing paddy procurement process, availability of seeds and fertilisers, curbing the supply of spurious seeds ahead of Kharif season set to begin on June 1.

**Mangroves
slowed damage**

From Page 1

“We are fortunate that we have got huge stretches of thick mangroves along the coast in our district. We just cannot imagine the enormity of the devastation Yaas would have caused had it not been confronted by the towering mangroves,” said Dhruba Charan Sahoo, the local MLA from Rajnagar. Mr Dhruba Sahoo said that apart from absorbing the windspeed, the mangroves also considerably checked the ingress of high tides deep into the land mass. The mangroves are a group of trees and shrubs that live in the coastal intertidal zone. There are about 80 different species of mangrove trees. All these trees grow in areas with low-oxygen soil, where slow-moving waters allow fine sediments to accumulate. The felling of mangroves by unscrupulous people as well as government agencies in the name of building marine drives and undertaking other construction activities lead to the huge loss of life and property during sea storms.

Covid-19 surges ahead in Telangana districts

Lot of crowding in market areas as it is harvest season**KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

Though the authorities claim that the Covid-19 cases are decreasing fast, thanks to the ongoing lockdown, the fact seems to be the other way around.

More than 100 coronavirus positive cases have been reported daily from 11 districts each in the state for the past one week which means the number of cases is not falling despite the lockdown. Bhadradi Kothagudem, Karimnagar, Mahbubnagar, Peddapalli, Nagarkurnool, Nalgonda, Siddipet, Suryapet, Vikarabad, Warangal Urban districts are witnessing more than 100 new cases every day.

Indian Medical Association (IMA) Telangana chapter which carried out a mask drive in districts said there was a lot of crowding in markets due to the harvest season. There are also traders, daily wage workers and migrant labourers who came back home due to the lockdown in the states where they were working. Heavy influx of people from Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Odisha has been witnessed in these districts.

Dr Lav Kumar Reddy, president of IMA TS chapter says, “There were wedding ceremonies in the first week of May. Despite restrictions, more than 200 people attended these functions. The government is strict now but those who were infected earlier are coming to hospitals now. The IMA had a



People wait for check up at the ENT hospital on Wednesday as there has been an increase in eye ailments. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

meeting with sarpanches to sensitise them and it was found that there is one death every day in the districts with high caseload.”

Bhadradi Kothagudem reported 120 cases on May 20 and 128 new cases were reported on Wednesday. Caseloads in Karimnagar, Mahbubnagar and Siddipet have been constantly above 100. Karimnagar reported 170 new cases on Wednesday and in this week total caseload is 1,113. This district is also a shopping hub for people during the wedding season apart from the agriculture activities. Mahbubnagar reported 158 new cases on Wednesday and the total caseload in the week is 891.

In Siddipet, it was noted that there was no proper

social distancing maintained in huge agriculture markets. Experts say the concept of social distancing is not understood by farmers which shows that awareness about the disease at the ground level is limited or nil.

Siddipet recorded 131 new cases on Wednesday, showing the graph above 100 for a week. Total caseload for the week has been 766.

In Warangal Urban and Rural districts, during the first and second waves caseload has been high and experts attribute it to the agriculture and economic activities in both the districts. They also say that in districts, vaccination is very less which has led to the rise in positive cases.

Warangal Urban recorded 158 new cases on Wednesday and the total caseload for the week is 860. Warangal Rural recorded 102 new cases and there was a slight dip in the cases on May 23 with 61 new cases, yet the total caseload is 652.

Experts say that cases with mild symptoms have come down and with the strict implementation of lockdown, the numbers will reduce slowly. There were 3,762 new cases in the state and the total number of cases are 5,63,903. Total deaths are 3,189 of which 20 were reported on Wednesday.

Testing in the state has increased with 91,048 samples collected. Those in home and institutional isolation are 38,632.

**KTR OPENS NEW
COVID CARE
CENTRE IN HYD****DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

Information Technology minister K.T. Rama Rao inaugurated a ‘Project Ashray’ Covid care centre here on Wednesday. Project Ashray was started by Cyberabad police in coordination with the Society for Cyberabad Security Council (SCSC) and United Way of Hyderabad, on May 3.

Speaking on the occasion, Rama Rao said, “Hyderabad is the vaccine capital of the world. It is a manufacturing hub of vaccines. Unfortunately, we don’t have sufficient vaccines to inoculate our own people.”

The Telangana state government has the capability to undertake one million vaccinations a day and vaccinate the entire state in 45 days, the minister said.

He reiterated that they had appealed to the Centre to allow them to source vaccines directly from the manufacturers.

Eight other states have also made a similar request and they were all awaiting the Centre’s nod.

The minister said “there is a peculiar situation in countries like the United States, Denmark, and Canada where vaccines are lying idle unused while we are in dire need of them. I urge the Centre to step in and help us.”

Project Ashray is a Covid-19 care centre meant exclusively for early stage Covid patients.

From being a 50-bed facility initially, it has now doubled to 100 beds with a 6-bed bridge ICU facility.

KTR warns of action, urges docs to end stir

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

The Telangana municipal administration and urban development (MA&UD) minister K.T. Rama Rao, warning of possible action, called for the junior doctors to end the protest, saying this was not the right time to go on a strike.

“When the entire humanity is going through a crisis, there are other ways to resolve issues if any. The government will discuss the issues with them with an

open mind,” he said during an inauguration event of ‘Project Ashray’, a 100-bed Covid facility in Hitec City.

He said the government had already acceded to some of the demands and requests of the protesting junior doctors, and urged the doctors to resume duties. The Telangana Junior Doctors’ Association on Wednesday announced that they would escalate the protest in view of non-fulfilment of demands and further boycott emergency services as well.

Talks fail; docs strike to intensify

**HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

A marathon meeting that took place between the Telangana Junior Doctors’ Association and the Director of Medical Education until late Wednesday evening, did not bear the expected results for the medical staffers. Even as the Chief Minister

K. Chandrashekar Rao earlier in the day assured the protesting doctors that their demands will be met, the meeting bore different results from the claims made, members of the T-JUDA said.

Following what it described as their demands not being fulfilled, even after the Chief Minister’s assurances, the T-JUDA said it has decided to escalate its protest by further boycotting emergency services as well from Thursday. Senior residents at all teaching hospitals have also decided to join the protest by boycotting services. However, the Association said as soon as the government addresses and agrees to its, the doctors will resume all their duties.

The junior doctors have four demands - to clear the stipend with 15 percent pay hike for junior residents, senior residents and interns due since January 2020, to clear 10 percent incentives for all healthcare workers announced by the state government, and to provide the promised ex-gratia of ₹50 lakhs for doctors and Rs. 25 lakhs for nurses and supporting staff that have lost lives in line of duty. They also want the government to

issue orders guaranteeing beds in NIMS hospital for healthcare workers infected by the Coronavirus.

At the meeting with the DME, Telangana, the representatives of the junior doctors body were told that ex-gratia will only be provided as per the Central government guidelines. They were further told that their demands for the increased stipend will not be met, doctors said.

“The government is not ready to put these assurances on paper. Only verbal promises are being made. We are demanding that the government gives it in writing by releasing a circular that doctors and their families will be treated at NIMS, but they are accepting this demand as well. We are losing out on a year worth of arrears, something we have worked hard for, while putting our lives at stake. It is a shame that we are working for this government”, a junior doctor at Osmania General Hospital said.

Addressing the media after the meeting with the DME late in the evening, the junior doctors said all they are asking for is for the government to protect their lives so they can save the lives of others. “Some ministers are also issuing threats to us. The DME said any doctor who falls sick will be accommodated at Gandhi Hospital. If this is so, then why are ministers, MLAs and others going to private hospitals? Make it mandatory for them to come to Gandhi Hospital where we will take care of them,” the Association representatives said.

Insufficient stocks hits vaccination

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

Covid vaccination for people above 18 years has been started only in two to three multi-specialty hospitals as there are

only limited stocks of Covishield and Covaxin available in other hospitals.

Hospitals are hopeful that they will have sufficient stocks in the first and second week of June.

‘New social media rules half-baked’

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

As the social media giants and government are at loggerheads over the new Information Technology rules, 2021, intermediary guidelines issued by the Central government’s cyber experts opine that balance should be ensured between both the parties.

Cybersecurity experts say that the government guidelines are half-baked. Speaking to this newspaper, digital wellness expert Anil Rachamalla of End Now Foundation said, “Social media gave voice to voiceless people, now through the half-baked guidelines, the government is trying to infringe on the freedom of expression which is a fundamental right.”

He further said some of these guidelines would help cybercrime police officers for quick removal of unlawful content that affects online safety and dignity of users, especially women.

For example, as per the guidelines, tech companies should appoint a grievance redressal officer and a nodal contact officer, who should be an Indian and they should be available for the Indian government and should be in a position to acknowledge the issues raised by enforcement officials of Indian government within 24 hours and dispose the case within 15 days. The government, while issuing the

guidelines, raised several issues regarding misuse of social media like spreading of fake news, abuse of social media to share morphed images of women and contents related to revenge porn which often threatened the dignity of women.

“Unlawful activities should be curbed, but in the name of curbing misuse of social media, the government is trying to create a surveillance society. This shouldn’t be encouraged,” said Anil Rachamalla.

Sai Krishna, chairperson of the Global Cybersecurity Forum said, “There are high chances of misuse of data by social media as proven by the Cambridge Analytica scandal. It is important for the government to have power to direct social media giants. However, there should be a limit. It shouldn’t act in an autocratic manner.”

He further added that even social media companies did not have the technology to trace such a huge amount of content on a real time basis and filter the contents of billions of users.

“Social media can’t be a mouthpiece of the government and at the same time it should act responsibly. Both of them should ensure that the freedom of expression of social media users is not infringed. Balance should be ensured among all three stakeholders — social media, government and users,” said Krishna.

Money laundering: ED books rice firm MD

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

The ED has provisionally attached immovable assets worth ₹1,67,85,200 held in the name of Seemakurthy Narasimha Rao, managing partner of Sri Sai Krishna Rice Industry at Aswarapeta in Bhadradi-Kothagudem district. The attachment was made under

the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

ED had initiated investigations in a cheating case based on an FIR and charge-sheet filed by Telangana Police against Rao for allegedly cheating the erstwhile AP state civil supplies corporation that is now known as the TS civil supplies corporation TSCSCL.

50% beds empty in hosps: Official

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

Fifty per cent beds in government hospitals are empty — a sign that Covid cases are reducing. This was stated by state health director Dr Srinivas Rao. The new cases in the state will see a decline till June end, he said.

The government has started vaccination for those requiring the second dose of Covishield or Covaxin and sufficient stocks are available. Dr Rao says, “The government has identified the high-risk group of people, namely those who are in the essential services or others in close contact with people. They are the super spreaders. There will be a special drive to vaccinate them.”

There are 7.87 lakh individuals requiring vaccination on a priority basis, of which 80,000 are from civil supplies, 30,000 from fertilizer and pesticide shops, 20,000 journalists, 3,00,000 auto and cab drivers and 3,00,000 persons engaged in vegetable, meat, flower, kirana and saloon outlets.

This group is expected to be vaccinated from May 28. This is the first phase in GHMC and then it will be extended to other municipalities.

The government is expecting 3.35 lakh doses of Covishield and 2.5 lakh doses of Covaxin in the first

**USE POSACONAZOLE FOR PATIENTS WITH
BLACK FUNGUS: HEALTH OFFICIAL****DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

Alternative medicines like posaconazole must be used for patients of black fungus as the supply of liposomal amphotericin B is in limited stocks, stated Dr Ramesh Reddy director of health and medical education. There are innumerable applications for the anti-fungal medicines but the stocks available in the

market and with the company are very limited. While the state government was allotted vials by the Centre, the stocks are getting over soon due to the high load of cases. Dr Reddy says, “Production of the company will have to be increased and that will take time. Till that time, alternative medicines for anti-fungal treatment in injection form are available and that can be used.”

**CARRY OUT PROPER POST-COVID-19
FOLLOW-UP, STATE DOCTORS ADVISED****DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26**

Government doctors across the Telangana state, in government and teaching hospitals, have been advised to carry out a proper post-Covid-19 follow-up.

This is being done as there are complications and complaints of breathing problems after recovery.

This is due to scarring of lungs and lung fibrosis. Dr Reddy said that special units are being set up to follow up on these cases.

week of June.

The vaccination programme would be strengthened and the goal is to reach out to the maximum.

HELPING HAND

You can’t force a feeling of wanting to help people, says Bollywood actor

Sonu Sood becomes India’s superhero

From Page 1

“As a migrant worker myself, though privileged and lucky, I could empathise with their angst. It started with serving food and giving basic financial help to organising to help them in larger numbers.”

The legend grew quickly because of the vacuum. None of India’s conventional heroes — film stars, cricketers, billionaires — was there to really make a significant difference. Sood’s rise to being recognised as a saviour is also a deep reflection of the indifference of others.

“How do you feel about being recognised and trusted so much by people that they tag you on twitter for help before government agencies or ministers? Do you feel pressure to deliver?”

He smiles, and in one of



In this file photo actor Sonu Sood is seen managing relief works during the lockdown. (Right) Sood at the airport.

the most humane voices I have heard in a long time, replies, “There is no pressure when a friend or family member expects you to stand for them. It is no different. Every bit of time, money and effort I can

muster, I am out there because I know somewhere, someone who has reached out to me is waiting and expecting. It is a call I must respond to, and I can’t let them down.” I scratch my head, a bit



bewildered. Is it a mere PR exercise? Or did I get connected to the Dalai Lama by mistake? I do not think it is his fault that others in the cine world have used charity to sell more tickets for their next release. Last

year, we were stuck with the tragic story of another SS in Bollywood — Sushant Singh. This SS has risen now to become India’s superhero, without a cape, just a twitter handle. Are you a bit embar-

rassed Sonu, I ask him, that others in your film fraternity, Bollywood or Tollywood, who have received greater stardom and earned far more money and influence, never cared to take up work like yours in one of our worst years ever? He answers candidly, but with sangfroid. “You can’t force a feeling of wanting to help people. It can’t even be taught beyond a point. It must come from within.”

What next? Will this image harm your film career? Next time any film fans see him on screen as a villain, will the portrayal be convincing? “I am not thinking of the next film. Just my next SOS call.”

He disappears to do good for someone, somewhere. A villain has refined heroism, forever. My vote for the biggest star in films in India in a dark year — Sonu Sood.

SHORT TAKES

CM LIKELY
TO VISIT
NIZAMABAD GGHDC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 26

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao is likely to visit Nizamabad district soon. He will pay a visit to the government general hospital (GGH) and interact with patients in the Covid-19 ward. It may be recalled that he had already visited Gandhi and MGM hospital in Hyderabad and Warangal respectively as part of eliciting first-hand information on the Covid-19 medical services. On the same lines, he may visit GGH, Nizamabad, which is the third biggest government hospital in Telangana state after Hyderabad and Warangal cities. The district administration is ready to make arrangements for the Chief Minister's visit.

A MASK THAT YOU
CAN DISINFECT
ON THE MOVEDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 26

UV light has been in use across the globe for the disinfection of masks since the outbreak of Coronavirus pandemic. However, they are either used in UV rooms or cabinets.

In view of the rising Covid-19 cases, a young innovator from Warangal, Mupparapu Raju, has come up with an idea to disinfect his mask on the go. He arranged a small rechargeable UV light to his mask which can be turned on or off. The light is powered by a 3 volts battery which lasts 10 hours for after one-hour charge. The mask can be charged using a normal smartphone micro USB charger.

"This mask can be useful in crowded places like hospitals and markets where the risk of infection is high. The face mask has become a daily part of our life and we are constantly worried about the sanitation of the mask after we go outside. This UV light attachment can prove to be a useful addition if not a permanent solution to the disinfection of masks. The skin is protected by the layer of the mask which ensures light does not harm us. Only sterilised air is breathed by the user of the mask," Raju said, adding that he prepared the mask at a cost of ₹300.

KAMAREDDY COPS
USE DRONE FOR
SURVEILLANCEDC CORRESPONDENT
KAMAREDDY, MAY 26

Given that it shares a border with Karnataka and Maharashtra, Kamareddy district police are going the extra mile to strictly implement lockdown restrictions. Towards this, they have pressed into service drone surveillance to monitor vehicles and people's movement. As an additional precaution, patrolling and route march are being conducted in all police sub-divisions in the district.

Superintendent of police N. Swetha directly supervises lockdown implementation and personally checks vehicles and verifies documents of the people travelling around. Kamareddy, Yellareddy, Banswada sub-division police officers identified violators and imposed fines as prescribed by the government.

Meanwhile, Kamareddy district police have registered 2,680 cases so far.

First Covid care centre for
kids set up in Khammam

Facilities for adults are also being enhanced, says transport minister

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 26

Following reports that the third wave of Coronavirus will be affecting children, the state government has set up its first specialised Covid care centre for kids at the Matha Sishu Kendram in the District Headquarters Hospital of Khammam.

This first-of-its-kind centre in Telangana has 40 beds, including 20 in ICU. It will provide all services to kids, including oxygen support and nutrition. Each bed will have an oxygen concentrator.

Announcing this, transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar said, "We have been proactive in establishing a Coronavirus unit for kids as a precautionary measure following news that the third wave will have



The exclusive Covid care centre for children at Matha Sishu Kendram in Khammam.

— DC

more effect on children."

At the same time, the minister pointed out that facilities for adults are also being enhanced. He recalled that there had been no oxygen beds in Khammam District Headquarters Hospital prior to 2015. But the now upgraded 550-bed hospital

has 300 oxygen beds.

"We have put in place 35 ventilators, five high flow nasal cannula (HFNC), 10 continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machines, 30 multi-parameter units, 10 each in cardiology and nephrology wings; apart from a 13-kilolitre liquid oxygen

plant," Ajay Kumar pointed out.

The minister maintained that Khammam district is way ahead in treating Covid-19 patients. All government hospitals in the district have been strengthened by providing every facility.

Oxygen beds and remde-

sivir injections have also been made available at community health hospitals in Madhira, Penuballi and Sattupalli.

He said health teams have visited eight lakh houses as part of two-phase household fever survey in the district. This has helped reduce Coronavirus cases in the district. Non-resident Indians belonging to Khammam district are also supplying oxygen concentrators to hospitals.

Ajay Kumar expressed confidence that Bhadradi district will become a major health centre with sanctioning of a medical college-cum-hospital. He pointed out that private hospitals too have been given permission to treat Covid-19 patients. The hospitals should do so keeping social service in mind, he underlined.

Doctors protest,
seek incentivesDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 26

Junior and senior resident doctors boycotted their duties at MGM Hospital on Wednesday, protesting for fulfilment of their demands by the state government. They warned that if the state does not respond, they would withdraw from emergency duties also.

"This is a fight for our own protection. If one doctor is alive, he can save 1,000 lives. The state government has been promising to solve our issues but we continue to suffer. Even when Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhara Rao visited Gandhi hospital recently, he responded to us and said ours were valid demands and that he would solve them but no action has been taken so far," said Dr Swaroop, the

vice-president of Telangana Junior Doctors Association.

Listing out their demands, the doctors said all health care workers who are infected with Coronavirus should be given free home treatment. In order to avoid blocking beds in the hospital, they said they preferred home treatment. Currently, even the doctors treating Covid patients are unable to find proper health care.

In case of death due to Covid-19, the kin of the health care worker should be paid ex gratia. The 15 per cent hike in stipend is supposed to be implemented from January 2020 but the GO says it would be effected only from January 2021.

They also demanded that 10 per cent incentives be given to all the health care workers.

Angel investors
eye startupsANUDEEP CEREMILLA |
DC
WARANGAL, MAY 26

With Telangana offering great opportunities to invest in startups, Warangal is poised to be the next big platform for both startups and angel investors, opined Ravi Puli, Warangal-based American entrepreneur and founder-president of International Solutions Group (ISG).

Virtually addressing the Angel Investors Warangal

Edition Online Conference, hosted by Telangana State Innovation Cell and T-hub, he said, "There are great opportunities for investment here and right now angel investors are focusing on Warangal. The city will be the hub for investments in the coming days. Like in Hyderabad, all the required facilities are available in Warangal. Moreover, it is cost-effective when it comes to putting in place the required infrastructure."

Enforcing lockdown



Cops checking the identity of a biker and asking for reasons to come out during the lockdown, in Karimnagar on Wednesday.

— YELABAKA RADHAKRISHNA

Adivasis welcome new agri
season with 'Persapen' pujaPILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, MAY 26

Traditional drum beats are reverberating within all Adivasis gudums as part of annual Persapen puja before starting the agriculture season. All tribal farmers are placing seeds of various crops like red gram, cotton, jowar and maize before their gods and performing the puja. These sacred seeds are to be mixed up with other seeds for sowing in their agriculture fields.

These 'Persapen' pujas to 'Bheemayyak' have been going on since last one week in the old Adilabad district areas

'Contain sale of
spurious seeds'DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 26

Thudum Debba (Adivasi Hakkula Porata Samiti) leaders on Wednesday demanded police and agriculture officials to control the sale of spurious cotton seeds and pesticides that have been banned as the illegal business was thriving in old Adilabad district.

They asked police and agriculture officials to conduct raids on all such fraudulent seed and fertilizer shops and cancel licences.

Kolam Seva Sangham president Tekam Bhaskar said Kolams have been performing special pujas to Bheemayyak at

Bheemangondi (Potharaju) in Kerameri and Danthanpalli in Tiryani mandals. However, they are following all Covid-19 guidelines when gathering for pujas. Many Adivasis express confidence that they will not contract Coronavirus because they are following self-lockdown in their villages and not outsiders to enter.

MLAs, sarpanches, MPTCs and ZPTCs are participating in Persapen pujas in their respective areas. Komaram Bheem Asifabad district ZP chairperson Kova Laxmi participated in the puja in Patnapur village of Jainoor mandal.

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SHORT TAKES

ASSAM TO HAVE GUARDIAN MINISTERS

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MAY 26

In an obvious attempt to improve the governance and create a pro-people image of the government, Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday embarked upon an innovative idea of appointing guardian ministers for all the districts to implement government policy decisions, administrative reforms, and other welfare schemes for the public.

The decision was taken at the cabinet meeting on Wednesday. The Panchayat and Rural Development Minister and Assam BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Das has been given the responsibility of Barpeta, Bongaigaon, and Dhubri districts.

Agriculture minister Atul Bora will be the guardian minister of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia while minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma has been allotted the responsibility of Baksa and Chirang districts.

Transport, industries, and commerce minister Chandra Mohan Patowary has been given the responsibility of Darrang, Kamrup (R), and Kamrup (M) districts.

Environment minister Parimal Suklabaidya will be the guardian minister of Karimganj, Hailakandi, and Hojai. Health and family welfare minister Keshab Mahanta has been given the responsibility of the Golaghat and Morigaon districts.

JEE-ADVANCED POSTPONED DUE TO COVID-19

New Delhi, May 26: The Joint Entrance Examination (JEE)-Advanced scheduled for July 3 has been postponed in view of the Covid-19 situation, according to officials at IIT-Kharagpur, the institute which is conducting the exam this year.

The exam is conducted for admission to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology and the National Institutes of Technology.

"Considering the prevailing pandemic situation due to Covid-19, JEE (Advanced) 2021 which was scheduled to be held on July 3 stands postponed. The revised date of examination will be announced at an appropriate time," an official said.

For the JEE-Advanced, the JEE-Mains is considered as a qualifying exam and it is conducted for admission to engineering colleges across the country.

For admissions to IITs, apart from qualifying the JEE-Advanced, candidates are required to secure either minimum 75 per cent marks in their class 12 board exams or a rank among the top 20 percentile in their qualifying examinations.

The requirement pertaining to class 12 scores has been waived in view of the Covid-19 pandemic.

FARMERS' STIR COMPLETES SIX MONTHS

Chandigarh, May 26: Farmers in Punjab and Haryana put up black flags atop their houses, burnt effigies of the central government and held protests on Wednesday, joining a 'black day' call given by farmer unions to mark six months of their agitation at Delhi borders against the Centre's three contentious farm laws.

In Punjab, protesting farmers burnt effigies of the BJP-led central government at many places.

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief Sukhbir Singh Badal also raised a black flag at his house in Badal village in Muktsar district and urged the central government to accept the demand of protesting farmers. In Haryana, state Bharatiya Kisan Union chief Gurnam Singh Chaduni said farmers at many places hoisted black flags atop their houses and vehicles to register their protest. Several political parties including the Congress, SAD and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) have extended their support to the farmers' call of observing the day as 'black day'.

The Samkyukt Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of protesting unions, had announced that farmers will observe May 26 as 'black day' to mark the completion of six months of their protest. Farmers carrying black flags while women wearing black *chunnis* held protests in villages.



Police officers distribute food to the needy people during landfall of cyclone Yaas in Kolkata on Wednesday. — PTI



Residents take shelter inside a primary school building in Balasore district of Odisha state as cyclone Yaas barrels towards eastern coast in the Bay of Bengal. — AFP

Yaas leaves a trail of devastation

Thousands of kutcha houses washed, trees uprooted; standing crop lost in Odisha

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BALASORE, MAY 26

The cyclonic storm Yaas on Wednesday morning made its landfall at Bahanaga in Odisha's Balasore district with a wind speed of 130 to 140 kilometre per hour (kmph) and left a trail of devastation in the coastal districts.

Initial reports suggest an elderly person named Purnachandra Naik in Keonjhar died as a tree collapsed on him while he was going to a temple near his house for his morning prayers. Similarly, a youth in Balasore district died as a large branch of a tree fell on him.

Thousands of kutcha houses in coastal villages in Bhadrak, Balasore and Kendrapara districts were washed away in the high tidal surge that accompanied the roaring landfall. Massive tides ranging from 2 to 4 metres high gushed into seaside villages resulting in marooning of innumerable households in Basudebpur and Chandabali areas in Bhadrak district.

In Balasore district, Chandipur, Baliaipal, Bahanagar, Talasari and Bhograi areas were severely hit by the disaster. Kutcha houses and houses with asbestos roofs could not withstand the gusty winds and heavy downpour and collapsed.

Several areas in Rajanagar area in Kendrapara district also witnessed tidal ingress that led to complete disruption of road communication. Four to five feet high sea water was seen flowing over the roads connecting Kendrapara district with Bhadrak.

Farmers, especially the paddy growers, vegetable and betel-leaf growers, were worst hit as the squally wind and incessant downpours destroyed the standing crops.

"During its landfall, Yaas had turned into a very severe cyclonic storm. It hit the coast at Bahanaga, 20 km south of Balasore town at 10.30 am and the landfall process continued for nearly three hours. With its impact, several coastal Odisha districts including Kendrapara, Bhadrak, Balasore and Jagatisinghpur received heavy rainfall ranging up to 150mm in the last 24



A priest shifts an idol of Lord Jagannath from a seafront temple to a safer place in Balasore district in Odisha as cyclone Yaas barrels towards eastern coast in the Bay of Bengal. — AFP

● **FARMERS**, especially the paddy growers, vegetable and betel-leaf growers, were worst hit as the squally wind and incessant rain destroyed the standing crops.

hours. It also precipitated heavy downpours in the adjoining districts of West Bengal."

India Meteorological Department (IMD) director general Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said.

He added that the cyclone was moving further north and northwards and it would enter Jharkhand on Thursday morning after weakening into a deep depression. "From a severe cyclonic storm, Yaas will gradually weaken into a deep depression and enter Jharkhand with a wind speed of 50 to 60 km per hour," the IMD chief said.

Speaking to reporters after the cyclone passed the Odisha coast, state Special Relief Commissioner P.K. Jena efforts were being made to restore the road communication, power supply and drinking water systems.

"Till now, we have not received any reports of any major mishaps except loss of a couple of lives which unfortunately happened as they did not obey the government's order not to venture out during the cyclone. Now, we are focusing on restoration of essential services. We have asked collectors to submit the loss assessment reports as early as possible," said the SRC Mr Jena.

The SRC informed that Mayurbhanj, Balasore's adjoining district in the north had received heavy rainfall and it is likely to cause flash flood in Budhabalanga river which originates from the Similipal National Park in the district.

Meanwhile, exhibiting their high-skilled rescue expertise and daredevilry, the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Odisha police personnel on Tuesday night rescued at least 10 fishermen whose boat capsized near Japa village in Odisha's Jagatisinghpur district.

According to reports, after the fishermen sent

distress calls about the imminent danger they faced in the sea, the NDRF jawans immediately reached the spot and evacuated them from the ill-fated vessel to a rescue boat.

Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik praised the efforts of the rescue teams. The jawans also rescued hundreds of domestic animals in Odisha and West Bengal from drowning or getting swept away in tidal waves.

Apart from rescue activity, the NDRF personnel served cooked food to evacuees accommodated in various cyclone shelters.

The NDRF jawans also cleared almost all major roads in Odisha and West Bengal which were blocked by uprooted trees.

"The NDRF focused on saving lives of the people, domestic animals and evacuation of people during the cyclone. Post the landfall of the storm our men have begun the restoration work. We are also taking care of people in shelters," NDRF director general Satyanarayan Pradhan said.

CYCLONE IN FIGURES

15,04,506
No. of people evacuated in West Bengal

5.80 lakh
No. of people in vulnerable areas of Odisha shifted to safe shelters

1 crore
No. of people affected in West Bengal

3 lakh
No. of houses damaged in West Bengal

6 No. of flights cancelled by Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in view of cyclone Yaas

17
No. of columns deployed by the Army to assist the WB administration

969 tonnes
Of liquid medical oxygen moved to six states and a Union Territory through 12 Oxygen Express trains in a span of 24 hours

404
No. of rescue teams been deployed in Odisha

MASSIVE RESCUE AND RELIEF OP. ON IN BENGAL

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MAY 26

In a large scale rescue and relief operation in cyclone-hit West Bengal the Indian Army and Indian Coast Guard on Wednesday evacuated around 800 villagers stranded in East Midnapore and Howrah, which are among the worst-affected districts.

Eastern Command spokesperson Wing Commander Mandeep Huda said that around 700 villagers were rescued by the Army soldiers from the flooded areas of the two districts. Most of the rescued are from East Midnapore.

At Bodhra, more than 500 people were rescued while 50 more were evacuated from New Digha Market apart from 32 others from Old Digha Natun Kali Temple and 15 from another place in Old Digha. In Howrah the Army jawans conducted evacuation at Orphuli.

The Indian Coast Guard informed that it shifted around 100 people to safer places in its hovercraft after the group was found stranded at Nayachar Islands near Haldia in East Midnapore.

It stated, "Headquarters, Coast Guard Region (North East) at Kolkata is monitoring the overall situation and directing the Coast Guard Commanders/ Stations of both the states to execute the relief operations on ground. Three Coast Guard ships along with onboard helicopter, already on operational mission in the Bay of Bengal, have been diverted to coastal areas of both states with fastest speed to assess the situation in area and render appropriate assistance to any mariner in distress. They will be joined by two more ships to augment the efforts at sea. Coast Guard Dornier aircraft will be carrying out aerial rescue of the affected areas on improvement of weather."

It added, "Two inflatable boats have been dispatched to Contai/Digha area."

Cyclone Yaas: Tidal water flows into Haldia dock; assets safe

Kolkata, May 26: The cyclone Yaas has put the Kolkata port authorities on tenterhooks for some time as the rising water of the Hooghly river surpassed the height of the external lock gate of its Haldia Dock System, leading the draught level to go up to around eight metres on Wednesday, an official said.

However, water entered into the lock barrel the area between external and internal lock gates for not more than 30 minutes and no damage was done to ships or assets of the

Haldia Dock system in Purbia Medinipur district, port chairman Vinit Kumar said. Lock gates help Haldia dock to maintain the required draught level at berths. Being a riverine port, the level of draught (the depth of water required to float a ship) is very crucial for ships coming in and going out of the facility.

Kumar, who was in Kolkata, and Union Shipping Minister Mansukh Mandaviya from Delhi were monitoring the cyclone situation to ensure that prompt action

is taken in case of any eventuality, officials said.

"The situation is well under control. All ships and equipment assets are secured. There is no casualty. Water seeped into the barrel and the tide led the draught to rise to eight meters while the height of the lock gate is seven meters," Kumar said.

However, an official of the Haldia Dock said that they were on tenterhooks for some time but the problem was temporary. "There was no major problem. Pumps are pressed into service to

drain out the extra water," he said. Kumar said that he is not expecting any major damage in the port due to the cyclone.

"A clear picture would emerge after more reports come. Shipping operations will begin once the effects of the cyclone are dissipated," said the chairman of the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that six deer that strayed into residential areas from the Sundarbans, amid the cyclone were rescued and sent back to their habitat.

People living in darkness

Balasore, May 26: Trees and electric poles were uprooted, low-lying areas inundated while kutcha houses were badly damaged as cyclone Yaas left a trail of destruction in Odisha's coastal districts of Balasore and Bhadrak on Wednesday.

Residents of several parts of the two districts, which bore the brunt of the 'very severe cyclonic storm', are staying without power since Tuesday night while many people have been evacuated to safer places by the government.

Officials are yet to assess the damages caused by the storm in the two districts but said that it appears that devastations have

been less than previously feared.

"There has been a lot of damage here. Many trees and electric poles have been uprooted and there was very heavy rainfall," Sritam Mahajan, a resident of Soro town in Balasore district said.

"Now, there is intermittent rainfall, though the winds have subsided," said Mahajan, 27, adding that his area was out of electricity since Tuesday night.

He said he would try to arrange a generator so that he can continue working from home.

Pradyut Mohapatra, a 60-year-old resident of Balasore town, also said that there has been no

electricity in his house and was apprehensive that the power supply might not be restored anytime soon.

Sangram Tripathy, a resident of Chadabali in Bhadrak district, said that the tiled roof of his house got partly blown away in heavy wind and agricultural fields near his house got inundated due to the storm surge.

He said that there had been no electricity in his house since Monday night.

Special Relief Commissioner PK Jena said that the administration is yet to assess the damages in Balasore and Bhadrak district.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

JAPAN BOAT, RUSSIA SHIP COLLIDE, 3 DIE

Tokyo, May 26: A Japanese fishing boat collided with a Russian ship off the northern island of Hokkaido on Wednesday, killing three crew members, Tokyo said.

Japan's coast guard was informed that five crew members from the fishing boat were recovered by a Russian cargo ship, government spokesman Katsunobu Kato told reporters.

"We have been told that three were confirmed dead, while the remaining two suffered non-life threatening injuries," he added.

Japan and Russia are locked in a sovereignty dispute over four islands administered by Moscow, which refers to them as the southern Kurils.

Tokyo claims the islands, which it calls the Northern Territories, and the dispute has prevented the two countries from signing a formal peace treaty since World War II.

Fishing vessels in the area have sometimes been involved in tensions.

U.S. CUTS MEXICO'S AVIATION SAFETY RATING

Washington, May 26: US regulators have downgraded Mexico's aviation safety rating, a move that prevents Mexican airlines from expanding flights to the United States just as travel is recovering from the pandemic.

The Federal Aviation Administration said Tuesday it downgraded Mexico after finding that the country does not meet standards set by a United Nations aviation group.

The downgrade means that US airlines won't be able to sell tickets on flights operated by Mexican airlines, a setback that will mainly hit Delta, which has a partnership with Aeromexico.

The FAA said it will increase scrutiny of Mexican flights to the United States, but the downgrade does not immediately affect current flights.

The FAA decision to lower Mexico from "Category 1" to "Category 2" puts it in a group of countries including Bangladesh, Pakistan and Thailand.

ZUMA PLEADS NOT GUILTY IN GRAFT TRIAL

Pietermaritzburg, May 26: South Africa's former president, Jacob Zuma, pleaded not guilty on Wednesday in a much-postponed corruption case dating back more than two decades.

The 79-year-old faces 16 charges of fraud, graft and racketeering relating to a 1999 purchase of fighter jets, patrol boats and military gear from five European arms firms for 30 billion rand, then the equivalent of nearly \$5 billion.

Zuma — who at the time was president Thabo Mbeki's deputy — is accused of accepting bribes totalling four million rand from one of the firms, French defence giant Thales. Impeccably dressed in a dark blue suit and a red tie, wearing an anti-coronavirus mask, he was repeatedly asked by the judge, Piet Koen, to confirm in person the response of his attorney, given "the magnitude of what we're dealing with." "I plead not guilty," Zuma said without hesitating.

Thales also pleaded not guilty to charges of corruption and money laundering.

PAK JOURNALIST ATTACKED FOR CRITICISING ARMY

Islamabad, May 26: A Pakistani journalist, known for his criticism of the armed forces, has been attacked by unknown assailants outside his home in Islamabad, in another series of assaults on media persons.

Asad Ali Toor, who is also a YouTuber, was tied, gagged, severely beaten outside his residence in the upscale F-10 sector late on Tuesday night, according to police. A video showed three men briskly walking away from the apartment building after thrashing Toor who was staggering and trying to recollect himself.

Another video showed Toor moving in a hospital with his shirt soaked in blood at his elbow but apparently out of danger. Talking about the details of the incident in the clip, Toor said the attackers had asked him about the source of his funds. He also revealed in a separate video that he was being threatened and was informed by a "well-wisher" of some attack after Eid. Last year, a case was registered against Toor, a known critic of the armed forces.

EU asks for big penalties against AZ

European Commission begins legal action as pharmaceutical company failed to give vax

Brussels, May 26: The European Union on Wednesday asked a Belgian court to impose penalties running to millions of euros per day on AstraZeneca for Covid-19 vaccine doses it has failed to deliver to the bloc.

The request came as EU countries and their executive, the European Commission, began legal action against the Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical company for "flagrant violation" of its contract with Brussels.

The EU is suing AstraZeneca to force it to deliver 90 million more doses of its coronavirus vaccine before July, arguing that it failed in its contractual duty by handing over only a quarter of the shots it promised for the first three months of 2021.

The deadline for the contract is set for mid-June, according to the Commission, and the EU says the company should face financial penalties if it does not meet this deadline.

Its legal team demanded an upfront fine of 10 million euros (\$12 million) plus "10 euros per dose and per day of delay" in that event.

AstraZeneca delivered only 30 million doses in the first quarter, out of the 120 million it was contracted to supply. For the current quarter which runs until June 30, it plans to deliver only 70 million of the 180 million doses initially promised.

A Commission official close to the case said this month that AstraZeneca was currently delivering doses at a rate of only 10 million per month, well below the planned pace.

The company's defence — articulated ahead of the court case in a series of media interviews by AstraZeneca's French-Australian boss Pascal Soriot — relies on a part of the contract that speaks of "best reasonable efforts" by AstraZeneca and declarations that production was hit by unavoidable delays.

But the lawyer for the EU, Rafael Jeffereli, argued in court that the firm had prioritised supplies to Britain and beyond, while failing to make the best effort to step up production at its EU site in the Netherlands. — AFP

PAKISTAN OPENS JABS TO ALL ADULTS

Islamabad, May 26: Pakistan is offering jabs to its entire adult population in hopes of boosting Covid-19 vaccination rates, with only five per cent of the population inoculated so far.

Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar announced on Twitter that the registration of those ages 19 and above will begin from Thursday. So far, the vaccination was open to those 30 years and above. Pakistan has reported a steady decline in infections and fatalities. — AP

EU wants more from Big Tech against disinformation

Brussels, May 26: The EU on Wednesday tasked tech giants such as Facebook, YouTube and TikTok to do more against disinformation and provide much better access to their algorithms as well as beef up fact-checking.

The proposal is the EU's effort to strengthen its existing code of conduct against disinformation, which was launched in 2018 after revelations that platforms had facilitated and amplified false information in the ramp up to the Brexit vote and elections in the US in 2016. It was signed by Google, Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and in June 2020 by TikTok, as well as players in the advertising sector.



A photograph taken on Wednesday shows placards stuck on buses windscreens reading "SOS coach operator in danger", "Who's our minister", "Help" and "Silence we are sinking" during a slow-down operation in front of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, in Paris to protest against the lack of help by the French government concerning the professional situation of bus drivers due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

UK study finds long-term lung damage after Covid

London, May 26: Researchers in the UK have identified persistent damage to lungs in Covid-19 patients at least three months after they were discharged from hospital, and in some cases the duration is even longer.

The study, conducted by Sheffield and Oxford researchers using a cutting-edge method of imaging, said the damage was not detected by routine CT

scans and clinical tests, and the patients would consequently normally be told their lungs are normal. Early research by the team has shown that patients who have not been hospitalised with Covid-19 but who are experiencing long-term breathlessness may have similar damage in their lungs, and a larger study is needed to confirm this, a release by the Sheffield University said

on Wednesday.

In a paper published in Radiology, the world's leading radiology journal, the researchers from the University of Sheffield and the University of Oxford said that hyperpolarised xenon MRI (XeMRI) scans had found abnormalities in the lungs of some Covid-19 patients more than three months — and in some cases, nine months. — PTI

WHO asked to review Italy report, whistleblower case

Rome, May 26: Whistleblower protection groups urged the World Health Organisation on Wednesday to launch an independent review into the case of an Italian researcher who reported being pressured to falsify data in a now-spiked WHO report into Italy's Coronavirus response.

The groups, including Transparency International, Whistleblowing International Network and some 30 other public health

and anti-corruption groups, sent an open letter to the president of the World Health Assembly. The assembly, WHO's highest decision-making body, is made up of all WHO member states and is meeting this week.

In the letter, the signatories called for the UN agency to commit to reforming its whistleblowing protection policy. They said the Italian researcher, Dr. Francesco Zambon, had suffered retaliatory

treatment for having reported the incident within WHO's internal ethics system.

Zambon resigned in March, saying he had been isolated and marginalised after he complained internally, and then publicly, about the scandal.

Zambon has said he was pressured by a then-assistant director general, Dr. Ranieri Guerra, to falsify data about Italy's preparedness going into the pandemic. — AP

Taiwan: China curbing vax deal

Taipei, May 26: Taiwan on Wednesday accused China of hindering its efforts to obtain Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines from Germany as it struggles with a sudden spike in Coronavirus cases and a slow inoculation campaign.

For much of the Coronavirus pandemic Taiwan has had one of the world's best responses. But a sudden outbreak and trouble securing enough vaccines has

taken the shine off that fight. On Wednesday President Tsai Ing-wen explicitly accused China of being a stumbling block to getting Pfizer shots.

"We had almost completed the contract-signing with the German manufacturer at one point but it has been delayed till now because China has interfered," Tsai said in a post on her Facebook page.

Back in February Taiwanese officials previously

hinted China was causing difficulties, but officials steered clear of explicitly naming Beijing.

Authoritarian China regards democratic and self-ruled Taiwan as its own territory and works to keep the island diplomatically isolated.

Taiwan is currently locked out of the World Health Organisation and its annual health summit which is meeting this week. Tsai's administra-

TWO INDIANS OF FIRE-HIT SHIP TEST VIRUS +VE

Colombo, May 26: Two Indian crew members, who were rescued from a container ship that caught fire off the coast of Sri Lanka last week, have tested positive for Covid-19, according to a media report on Wednesday.

All 25 crew members, including five Indians, of the container ship, MV 'X-PRESS PEARL', were rescued on Tuesday after a 'fire alarm' dispatch was sent.

Of the five Indians, two of them sustained injuries during the rescue operation and were hospitalised at the Colombo National Hospital.

The two Indians tested positive with Covid-19 after undergoing a rapid antigen test (RAT) at a private hospital, reported newspaper *Daily Mirror* on Wednesday.

The Indians have not yet been identified. According to Johns Hopkins University, the Coronavirus has claimed 1,269 lives in Sri Lanka so far, along with 169,900 confirmed cases. Sri Lanka has received 500,000 doses of Sinopharm Coronavirus vaccine donated by China. — PTI

Ex-top aide: Boris thought Covid 1st wave 'scare story'

London, May 26: Dominic Cummings, the former top aide of UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, on Wednesday said that the government had fallen "disastrously short" in its response to the Covid-19 pandemic's first wave in early last year as the premier believed it was just a "scare story" at that time.

In a series of explosive claims during his evidence before a joint House of Commons hearing of the Science and Technology and Health Committees, Johnson's former Chief Strategy Adviser before an unceremonious exit last year declared that the officials in charge of the crisis were "out of their depth" and apologised to the families of those who died in the early days of the pandemic.

"At that stage, the Prime Minister believed it was a scare story, a new swine flu... I certainly told him it wasn't," Cummings told cross-party MPs during the evidence hearing, in reference to the period before the UK went into a complete "stay at home" lockdown to control the spread of the deadly virus on March 23, 2020.

"We have the Prime Minister chairing Cobra [Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms] meetings and he just tells everyone 'it is swine flu, don't worry about it. I'm going to get Chris Whitty to inject me live on TV with Coronavirus so everyone realises it's nothing to be frightened of. That would not actually help serious planning,'" he said.

Taking on some of the blame himself as one of the senior officials at Downing Street at the time, Cummings defended his stance as he did not feel equipped with all the facts and expertise to pull a so-called "emergency panic button" to push harder for a complete lock-



Boris Johnson

down earlier.

"The truth is, senior ministers, officials, advisers like me fell disastrously short of standards required by the public," he said. "When the public needed us the most, the government failed. I want to apologise to all those families who had people that died... In retrospect, it's completely obvious that many institutions failed," he said.

He also made a withering attack on UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock and claimed that he should have been sacked for 15-20 things including "for lying" to people, an allegation for which he was asked by the parliamentary committee chairs to submit further written evidence. During the questioning, Cummings was asked about the government's preparations for a pandemic in general and whether it was the intention of ministers to allow the virus to spread until there was so-called herd immunity.

He told the MPs the original plan had been for limited intervention, with the hope of achieving herd immunity, but that was abandoned when it became clear the scale of the death toll that would result. In reference to delayed lockdown, he claimed that by mid-March there was still "pushback in the system" against telling people to stay at home. — PTI

UK vax plan to cover over-30s

London, May 26: The UK's health service on Wednesday extended its Covid-19 age-based vaccination programme to the next cohort to cover everyone aged 30 and over.

The National Health Service (NHS) said 1 million more people aged 30 and 31 will be invited by text over the coming days, leaving only adults between 18 and 29 yet to get the nod to come forward for their first doses. It is the latest in a series of expansions this month opening up the vaccinations to people in their thirties, who are to be offered an alternative to the Oxford/AstraZeneca jabs —

either Pfizer/BioNTech or Moderna — following medical advice related to rare blood clot concerns for lower age groups.

"Our vaccination programme is moving at such a phenomenal pace and I am delighted that less than six months after Margaret Keenan received the first authorised jab in the world, we are now able to open the offer to everyone in their thirties and over," said UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock.

"The vaccine is our way out of this pandemic and recent data has shown the life-saving protection a second dose of the jab can give," he said. — PTI

CORRIGENDUM



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Gold Auction dates of the following auction centers of Muthoot Finance Ltd. have been Postponed due to some technical reasons. New dates of the auction with concerned auction centers are shown below:

Old Auction Date:	29.05.2021, 10:00 AM
New Auction Date:	22.06.2021, 10:00 AM
Auction Centre:	Muthoot Finance Ltd, 1-4-249/154/D, D1, E And F, Shivasai Complex, Kudakuda Road, Suryapet, 508213 (Suryapet District)
Old Auction Date:	31.05.2021, 10:00 AM
New Auction Date:	22.06.2021, 04:00 PM
Auction Centre:	Muthoot Finance Ltd, 1-1-1 To 1-1-3, First Floor, Rajiv Gandhi Chowk, Adilabad-504296 (Asifabad District)
Old Auction Date:	28.05.2021, 10:00 AM
New Auction Date:	21.06.2021, 10:00 AM
Auction Centre:	Muthoot Finance Ltd., # 8-7-152 To 158, First Floor, Beside Sunil Theatre, Station Road-506002 (Warangal District)
Old Auction Date:	28.05.2021, 04:30 PM
New Auction Date:	21.06.2021, 04:30 PM
Auction Centre:	Muthoot Finance Ltd., Building No.11, 1st Floor, Nr. Inspection Bungalow, N.H Road No.7, Mancherial-504208 (Mancherial District)
Old Auction Date:	28.05.2021, 01:00 PM
New Auction Date:	21.06.2021, 01:00 PM
Auction Centre:	Muthoot Finance Ltd., No: 3-1-879 To 884, First Floor, C.V.R.N Road, Karim Nagar-505001 (Karim Nagar District)

Place : Warangal
Date : 27.05.2021

For Muthoot Finance Ltd,
M/s. SSR & Co., Law Associates,
1-19-72/1/2, Rukminipuri Colony,
Behind Spencers, ECIL Post, Hyderabad – 62

DECCAN Chronicle

27 MAY 2021

Protest in time of Covid needs urgent resolution

Thousands of farmers protesting against the three laws that will govern Indian agriculture henceforth on Wednesday observed a “black day”, marking the completion of six months of their agitation at the gates of the national capital. “We are not going anywhere,” they said and insisted that they have no plans to go home unless the government listened to them, repealed the three laws and offered them legal guarantee for minimum support price for their produce. They also want protection from the impact of the proposed Electricity Bill. Farmers in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab and several other states also joined the protest, called by the umbrella organisation of farmers unions, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM).

The government has been playing hot and cold on the issue of the repeal of the Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020, and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

The government must resume talks at the earliest and convince the farmers about its earnestness or be convinced by their fears. Letting the annadatas go on an unending agitation does not behove a democratic government.

demonetisation and the introduction of Goods and Services Tax is not enough, then the government’s vanishing act while the nation fell prey to the second wave of the pandemic Covid-19 would add to the fear in the minds of the farming community.

The Opposition parties have also lent their support to the farmers’ demands. The government must stop being obdurate and immediately resume talks with the SKM, they have stated in a letter to the Prime Minister this week, reminding the government that it will help “protect lakhs of our annadatas becoming victims of the pandemic so that they can continue to produce food to feed the Indian people”.

While the government has been saying it had the welfare of the farming community at its heart, anti-social elements have been working overtime to malign the agitation. They almost succeeded in their mission with the drama played out on the Republic Day but for the dexterous move by the Bharat Kisan Union leader Rakesh Tikait. A similar attempt was made when a section of the media accused the protesters of stopping oxygen carriers to Delhi. That, too, was exposed in no time.

The government must realise that no agitation can be drawn this long unless there is a genuine cause. The government must resume talks at the earliest and convince the farmers about its earnestness or be convinced by their fears. Letting the annadatas go on an unending agitation does not behove a democratic government.

CJI plays a judicious hand

The fresh approach used in the selection of senior IPS officer S.K. Jaiswal, the current head of the CISF, as the new director of the CBI, commends itself.

In the selection meeting last Monday, the Chief Justice of India, N.V. Ramana, who is on the three-member panel to choose the CBI chief, besides the PM and the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, proposed that a Supreme Court judgment of March 2019 — that an officer should have at least six months’ service remaining in order to be considered for the position of DGP — be extended to the post of CBI director as well. The panel accepted the view.

It is to be hoped that the criterion will henceforth be adopted in selecting the chief of the IB and the R&AW as well. In the case of the appointment of the CBI Director, the government could well have taken shelter behind the CVC Act if it wished to torpedo the CJI’s well-considered suggestion.

But the notion is *ipso facto* sound. In too many cases, officers are selected for top slots with only days, weeks, or a couple of months remaining before their superannuation. This reinforces the impression of favouritism, the absence of neutrality at the highest levels of governance, and gives rise to the undue play of political factors. The ideals of transparency and fair play are undermined. In the event, the country is frequently deprived of the services of the most meritorious amongst those available.

The CBI chief has an assured two-year tenure. This is to reinforce the idea of autonomy and independence in decision-making in so sensitive a position. It is bad enough that the CBI has widely come to be seen as “a caged parrot” — the colourful description once supplied by the Supreme Court. It is now up to its new leader to disabuse us of this impression.

When the high-level panel accepted the CJI’s suggestion, two high-profile officers, who had less than six months’ service left but were deemed close to the powers-that-be, were taken out of contention. For reasons of good governance, this is just as well.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



Asymmetry of power & politics of revenge



Shikha Mukerjee

The asymmetry of power, resources and responsibilities between the Centre and the states in India’s federal structure has been so overwhelmingly tilted that it was but natural for the BJP led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to assume that it was unchangeable and universally so, allowing him to try to scare and repress a puny [sic] regional player, namely Mamata Banerjee and her Trinamul Congress party, after her splendid third-time victory. He and his party should have known better.

There is the power of the State, expressed through hundreds of articles in the Constitution of India, and then there is the power of the ultimate sovereign, the ordinary woman and man, who votes and delivers a verdict. In a statement that was unusually long and politically sagacious, CPI(M) West Bengal state secretary Surya Kanta Mishra delivered a summary of the attempt to induce turmoil and destabilise the Mamata Banerjee government as “revenge politics,” adding, “BJP should remember that the people of Bengal rejected their ideology in the Assembly elections”.

That the CBI’s sudden swoop and arrest on May 17 of three Trinamul Congress leaders, two of whom are ministers with responsibilities vital to bringing the Covid-19 surge and the six-week election administrative disarray under control, is vendetta politics is not any doubt in the minds of West Bengal’s voters. The CBI’s raid that netted three TMC leaders and one politician with no party affiliation in a case of bribery and corruption, aka the 2014 Narada sting operation, brought into sharper focus the “washing machine” politics of the BJP. Left out of the list of those arrested

were Mukul Roy and Union home minister Amit Shah’s prize recruit Suwendu Adhikari, prompting the public through the social media to question the exception.

The outcome is a further boost to the Trinamul Congress’ standing with the people and a further erosion of the BJP’s already tarnished credibility. The courtroom drama has further incensed the man/woman on the street, regardless of what the Centre’s lawyers may have argued, backed by the entirely irrelevant social media commentary by governor J.P. Dhankhar.

There is no difference of opinion on what these antics are all about — first the tweets by the governor about the near breakdown of the state’s constitutional machinery that were meant to signal that President’s Rule could be imposed at any moment, overthrowing the just elected government, followed by the raids have been identified by the Congress, CPI(M) and privately by some sane BJP leaders as well. In repeating behaviour similar to cattle raiders to hit back at the Opposition parties, the Narendra Modi government used exactly the same tactics of using or perhaps misusing the power to awe and smear vested in the Centre that had failed; governments led by Arvind Kejriwal in Delhi, Pinarayi Vijayan

In a statement that was unusually long and politically sagacious, CPI(M) West Bengal state secretary Surya Kanta Mishra delivered a summary of the attempt to induce turmoil and destabilise the Mamata Banerjee government as ‘revenge politics’...

The BJP’s wizards have created a bigger problem for themselves out of the West Bengal defeat. The queue of defectors pleading to rejoin the Trinamul Congress is the best indicator. As is the letter from a defeated BJP candidate, Locket Chatterjee...

in Kerala, Hemant Soren in Jharkhand, Uddhav Thackeray in Maharashtra and Ashok Gehlot in Rajasthan were all raided and pushed back and Narendra Modi and his party were the losers.

In the preceding decades the capacity to push back, a complex mix of regional political culture and history that shaped the popular perception, was weaker than it is now. In West Bengal, the capacity to fault the Centre and wrinkle out vendetta politics against the legitimately elected and popular government has been honed over decades, when the Congress used Article 356 to impose President’s Rule against the rickety coalitions of the United Front in the 1960s. Over years of experience of the politics of discrimination and the consequences of the asymmetry of power between the Centre and the state, the average man in the street and especially in the rural areas, is politically well educated.

If these were diversionary tactics as has been argued in some quarters, it was politically foolish. The frantic family members of all those who died because the Modi government had not taken steps to ensure adequate supplies of oxygen to meet the surge that every expert said was coming are not diverted or deceived. The scandalous incompetence of the ruling establishment to handle the crisis is evident in the number of deaths across the country — three lakhs and counting.

If these were tactics to assert the power of the Centre over the state, it was so badly timed that it has been described by BJP insiders as politically suicidal. Neither West

Bengal’s electorate nor voters across the country are impressed by the display of power when the lives of loved ones have been sacrificed to feed the Modi government’s hubris. There is so much traffic on the social media on this that there can be no room to challenge how the people have interpreted these shenanigans.

What is worse is that the judiciary has now been embroiled in what for the BJP is nothing more than a game that has gone wrong. A split decision on granting bail to the arrested leaders says it all. The simple conclusion, regardless of the complex interpretations by the Centre’s lawyers, is that the decision to arrest by the CBI is doubtful in law. No matter how long these hearings last, it is not possible to repair the political damage that the BJP has inflicted on itself in the people’s court.

The BJP’s wizards have created a bigger problem for themselves out of the West Bengal defeat. The queue of defectors pleading to rejoin the Trinamul Congress is the best indicator. As is the letter from a defeated BJP candidate, Locket Chatterjee, who is still an MP, to Amit Shah asking for the Central security detail to be removed, because she cannot be a protected entity while the party’s workers are unsafe.

Violence to settle political scores, before, during and after an election, is always condemnable; but that unfortunately is West Bengal’s culture. Having flaunted its arsenal of Central security forces to enforce peace before and during the elections, by constructing a narrative of locally uncontrollable violence, the BJP overplayed its hand. The post-election sending out of Central probe teams, frantic tweets by the governor or meddling by the Prime Minister are pointless gestures and understood by the public to be so. The verdict is out, and the BJP cannot overturn it, that West Bengal is not impressed by its leaders and categorically rejects its communal and divisive politics.

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

LETTERS

LOCKDOWN

The government must stop testing the patience of the common man (*Lockdown likely to get extended, DC, May 26*). It must provide fiscal relief and provisions to people first. Otherwise, extending the lockdown is not wise.

Nouman Ahmed Khan
Hyderabad

VACCINATION

Why did state governments delay the requisition and allow the Centre to send vaccine to other countries? (*Vaccines: Fix schedule, focus on procurement, DC, May 26*). Why did they wake up late? There is no coordination or steps to curb the virus spread in villages. At least now they must coordinate and complete vaccination.

Mangalampalli Satya Mohan Singh
Secunderabad

PRIVATE HOSPITALS

When the vaccination started for the 60+ age group and then 45+ from April 1, many private hospitals were roped in. It was needlessly stopped by the state (TS ropes in pvt hosps to vaccinate over 18-yr-olds, DC, May 26). When the government fixed a market price and allowed private hospitals to buy directly from vaccine makers, why was it stopped? The problem with our government is that they they will neither conduct the vaccination efficiently nor allow private hospitals to do so..

N.S. Rajan
Begumpet

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Nations urged to intervene in Bangla Dosh

NEW DELHI, May 26.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today asked the countries of the world to intervene in the situation in Bangla Dosh and to see that peace and security was re-established and maintained there.

Mrs. Gandhi was replying to an eight-hour debate on the genocide in Bangla Dosh and the attacks of Pakistani military forces in the border areas of West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. The Prime Minister said the international community must associate with the very critical character of the situation that had now developed. “Any failure to do so may well indeed lead to disastrous consequences for what was happening in Bangla Dosh is not a political or economic problem but the problem of the very survival of the people,” she said.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



Did PM pep talk with DMs, others breach protocol?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s pep talk to district magistrates on the Covid-19 issue in an online meeting has got some raising the issue of whether it was right for Mr Modi to interact directly with district magistrates and other officials while bypassing their respective ministers. Moreover, the event was telecast live when, just a few weeks ago, the Centre had objected sharply to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal for a live feed during Mr Modi’s meeting with chief ministers.

While seemingly there is nothing wrong with the Prime Minister addressing government officials whenever he chooses to, the question is about propriety and federalism. District officials work under elected state governments and chief ministers and report to them as well. Bypassing the state governments indicates thumbing one’s

nose at the federal structure, which is problematic, it is being said.

Interestingly, Mr Modi’s interaction follows a similar meeting organised by Union education minister Ramesh Pokhriyal who spoke directly with state education secretaries, overlooking the state education ministers. This was one reason why the Tamil Nadu government boycotted the meeting.

‘DOCS’ IN SERVICE DEPUTED TO ASSIST MEDICAL TEAMS

Taking a cue from Gujarat which took this step during the first wave of Covid last year, the Haryana government is using IAS and IPS officers who have a medical degree in the state’s fight against the pandemic.

Sources say that five Haryana cadre IAS officers and three IPS officers who have MBBS degrees have been pulled off their administrative duties and directed to

assist medical teams running Covid hospitals in the state. They have been deputed to additional chief secretary for health Rajeev Arora for the creation and administration of 500-bed hospitals in Panipat and Hisar and other related duties.

The IAS officers are Dr Chander Shekhar Khare, Dr R.S. Dhillion, Dr Sangeeta Tatarwal, Dr Manoj Kumar and Dr Vaishali Sharma. The IPS officers are Dr Dheeraj Kumar, Dr Anshu Singla and Dr Arpit Jain. The state government has also deputed 22 senior IAS officers to oversee Covid preparedness in different districts.

No doubt, this is a temporary arrangement to combat the second wave of the pandemic. However, it also coincides with the growing demand by some medical experts and organisations that the government create a special all-India cadre of medical officers along the

lines of the IAS and IPS, etc. If this stopgap measure is successful, it might prod the Centre to seriously consider the demand for a specialised medical service.

TWO SENIOR COPS LOCK HORNS IN HARYANA

An intra-service battle has erupted in Haryana Police. IGP Y. Puran Kumar, a 2001-batch IPS officer, has filed a petition in the Punjab and Haryana high court against the state police chief Manoj Yadava for alleged “discriminatory behaviour” towards Mr Kumar. Sources say that Mr Kumar has accused DGP Yadava of “partial attitude, discriminatory treatment and violation of service rules”. He has sought directions from the court to direct the additional chief secretary for home to take immediate decision on his complaints submitted against Mr Yadava.

The spat does not seem to be new.

Mr Kumar has accused Mr Yadava of targeting him since July 2020 “in a vindictive manner” ever since Mr Kumar was posted to Ambala instead of another officer favoured by the DGP. Mr Kumar has also sought directions from the court to restrain Mr Yadava from writing his annual performance appraisal report until the petition is decided.

The feud at the top in the state’s police service has happened at a time when the state is struggling with the Covid epidemic and also dealing with the farmers’ agitation against Central laws, and which shows no sign of disappearing. And when two senior cops take on each other instead of the issues facing Haryana, it can’t bode well for law and order in the state.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let’s multiply the effect.

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	51,017.52	0.75
Nifty 50	15,301.50	0.61
S&P 500*	4,201.23	0.31
Dollar (₹)	72.78	0.26
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.19	0.00
Euro (₹)	89.19	0.00
Gold (10gm) (₹)	48,589.527	1.08
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.59	-0.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.972	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.559	-0.005

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Mondelez to buy European snack maker Chipita

Mondelez International Inc, the packaged-food giant known for Oreo cookies and Ritz Crackers, agreed to buy European snack maker Chipita SA for about \$2 billion. Chipita had about \$580 million in revenue in 2020 and has “a proven track record of consistent growth from its portfolio of croissant and baked snack brands,” Mondelez said. The European firm produces in 13 plants and its goods are delivered to over 50 countries.

PharmEasy completes Medlife acquisition



Online pharmacy PharmEasy said it has completed the acquisition of Medlife to become India's largest healthcare delivery platform. All the users of Medlife would be migrated to PharmEasy. “This acquisition significantly strengthens our position in the healthcare industry, and further helps us in providing quality healthcare to a greater number of households,” PharmEasy co-founder Dharmil Sheth said.

Cadila, Taiwan's TLC in pact for black fungus drug

Zydus Cadila and Taiwan-based specialty pharmaceutical firm TLC said they have signed a pact to market liposomal amphotericin B, a critical drug to treat mucormycosis (black fungus), in India. The companies have announced signing of an agreement to commercialise AmphoTLC (amphotericin B liposome for injection 50mg) in India, Zydus Cadila said. TLC will produce and supply AmphoTLC to Zydus.

REIT provides O2, BiPaP machines in Pune, Delhi

Embassy REIT, India's first listed Real Estate Investment Trust and the largest in Asia by area, has sponsored oxygen concentrators and BiPaP machines in Pune and Delhi to ease the burden placed on the existing healthcare infrastructure. Embassy REIT has donated 10 oxygen concentrators with a capacity of 10 lpm each for two hospitals in Pune and 15 BiPaP ventilator machines to a government hospital in Delhi.



MGM's 4,000-title film library to strengthen streaming Amazon to buy MGM Studios for \$8.45 bn

KELLY GILBLOM & SPENCER SOPER
MAY 26

Amazon.com Inc agreed to buy the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer movie company for \$8.45 billion, a bet that a nearly century-old Hollywood icon can feed an insatiable demand for streaming content.

The proliferation of streaming services, including newer arrivals such as HBO Max and Disney+, has put pressure on Amazon to acquire more programming. Chief executive officer Jeff Bezos has made no secret of his desire for movie moguldom, and MGM's vast backlog provides an abundance of streaming material, not to mention an opportunity to mine the iconic James Bond and Rocky franchises for new films and television shows.

Moreover, with retail rivals like Walmart Inc rolling out more sophisticated online stores, Amazon must work even harder to keep its 200 million Prime subscribers loyal.

“This jumpstarts them by 50 years,” said Michael Pachter, an analyst with Wedbush Securities. “That's really what it comes down to. They weren't going to be able to produce enough content to ever get close to Netflix.”

Pachter said that Amazon's studios produce a few hundred hours worth of television shows and movies a year. MGM adds a back catalogue of 25,000 hours that Amazon could



divvy up between its Prime Video offering, or its free-to-stream, ad-supported IMDb TV.

The takeover is Amazon's biggest acquisition since it agreed to buy Whole Foods in 2017 for \$13.7 billion but follows investments of about \$11 billion on content for its streaming video and music services last year alone. Mike Hopkins, senior vice president of Prime Video and Amazon Studios, in a statement pointed to MGM's “deep catalogue” as justification for the purchase.

MGM has been seen as a takeover target for years, but was never able to close a sale before. The company made a fresh push last year, when it reportedly hired advisers to seek offers.

For MGM, the studio that brought James Bond and Scarlett O'Hara to the big screen, the deal provides a finale to a bumpy era of hedge-fund ownership that began with a bankruptcy over a decade ago. MGM's lead shareholder is the Anchorage Capital Group LLC, which became an owner with three other investors as part of a 2010 bankruptcy agreement

that erased about \$4 billion in debt.

MGM's Ebitda rose 48 per cent to about \$307 million last year, lifted by profit from its 4,000-title film library. But with a lack of new releases, sales declined 3 per cent to \$1.5 billion.

Under Anchorage Capital the studio aspired to its old glory—a legacy that includes “Gone With the Wind,” the top film of all time in ticket sales, and the biblical classic “Ben-Hur,” which shares the record for most Academy Awards at 11.

The new owners hired a moviemaker CEO in Gary Barber, a Hollywood heavyweight known for films such as “The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy” and “Ace Ventura: Pet Detective.” He oversaw a new James Bond movie, “Skyfall,” that generated more than \$1 billion in ticket sales—the studio's biggest-grossing film ever—and partnered with Warner Bros on the blockbuster “Hobbit” films.

MGM also branched out into television. The studio took control of the premi-

um cable network Epix, and acquired the TV production company owned by famed producer Mark Burnett, known for creating “Survivor” and “The Apprentice.” The studio also created the critically acclaimed series “The Handmaid's Tale” and “ Fargo,” adding to a lucrative library.

Hedge funds rarely hang on to such investments for more than a few years, and observers long thought that Barber was prepping the studio for sale. In 2017, reports suggested that MGM was in discussions with a Chinese company, though no deal materialised.

MGM traces its roots back to the 1920s merger of Marcus Loew's Metro films with a film company run by Hollywood legend Louis B. Mayer. The studio, while making great pictures like “Dr Zhivago” and “2001: A Space Odyssey,” drifted in and out of financial distress in the second half of the 20th century. Over the decades it was owned by Time Inc, CNN founder Ted Turner and more than once by the late billionaire Kirk Kerkorian.

Turner kept much of MGM's library, which is now owned by AT&T Inc's WarnerMedia, soon to be part of Discovery Inc.

“I am very proud that MGM's Lion, which has long evoked the Golden Age of Hollywood, will continue its storied history,” said Anchorage CEO Kevin Ulrich, who is chairman of the board of MGM.

—Bloomberg

GST: Centre has to borrow ₹1.58L cr more to pay states

VRISHTI BENIWAL & SUBHADIP SIRCAR
MAY 26

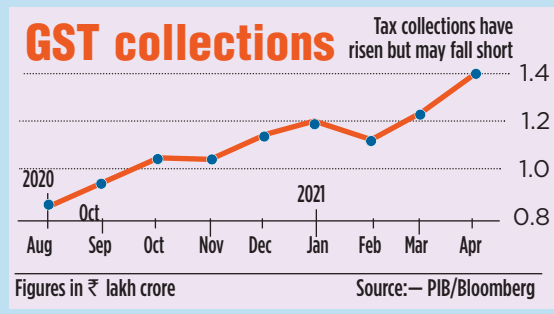
India may need to borrow more for a second straight year to compensate its states for their revenue loss due to a shortfall in a nationwide consumption tax collection, according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The additional borrowing requirement is estimated at Rs 1.58 lakh crore (\$21.7 billion) in the fiscal year started April 1, said the people, who asked not to be identified citing rules. A panel on goods and services tax will meet on Friday to discuss compensation to states, among other issues.

While the amount to be paid to states works out to Rs 2.7 lakh crore, the government is expected to muster only Rs 1.1 lakh crore, the people said.

Calls made to a finance ministry spokesperson weren't immediately answered.

The amount is part of a compensation that the central government agreed to pay states for any revenue loss on account of introduction of a nationwide GST. But the economic downturn caused by the world's worst coronavirus outbreak risks hurting tax collection, possibly forcing the administration to consider additional borrow-



Figures in ₹ lakh crore

Source:—PIB/Bloomberg

ings. Should the borrowing materialise, it will be in addition to the over Rs 12 lakh crore budgeted this year to bridge the fiscal deficit gap. The RBI, has so far, been able to keep yields under check through its various moves such as ‘Operation Twist’ and the announcement of a Rs 1-lakh crore bond purchase acquisition programme for the current quarter. The benchmark 10-year yield is down 20 basis points to 5.97 per cent this fiscal year.

Any additional borrowing will replicate an arrangement followed last financial year, where New Delhi borrowed Rs 1.1 lakh crore on behalf of the states and passed them on as back-to-back loans, the people said. The decision on the extra borrowing, the amount and the timing would be made after consulting with the Reserve Bank of India and states, the people said.

While the payment to

states was initially supposed to be for five years starting 2017, the central government last year extended its scope beyond 2022 to meet the revenue gap caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Government spending is key to sustaining the recovery of Asia's third-largest economy from a rare recession last year.

Although GST receipts have come in at more than Rs 1 lakh crore each month for seven successive months as of April, there are worries that it will slow amid regional lockdowns implemented by most states to curb the deadly second wave of the pandemic. The economic costs of the recent surge in cases are rising rapidly with economic losses estimated at \$74 billion, all of it contained in the second quarter, Barclays Plc said in a report to clients on Tuesday. The bank lowered its economic growth forecast by 80 basis points to 9.2% for the fiscal year.

—Bloomberg

GST penalty mop-up crosses ₹1,600 cr

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 26

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs has collected a total of Rs 1,612 crore as net penalties under GST since its introduction in July 2017. Experts want the CBIC to consider waiver of the penalties for violations, which were resultant of unintentional delays and breaches.

The CBIC collected net penalties of Rs 102 crore for the nine months of financial year 2017-18 since it was introduced in July. For the full year of 2018-19, it collected Rs 480 crore and in 2019-20, the net penalties went up to Rs 570 crore. The net penalties for the 11-month period of 2020-21 till February stood at Rs 460 crore, as per CBIC data, provided as a reply to an RTI filed by a chartered accountant Ram Bajaj from Rajasthan.

Experts find that some of the penalties could have been due to unintentional delays as GST was newly introduced in the country and there were several teething troubles when implemented. Some of the anomalies were corrected

during the subsequent years.

“These are still early stages of the GST law and in the last few years there have been several changes in the law, procedures and compliance timelines. Given the same, some of the penalties may have arisen due to unintentional delays or breaches and in such cases, the government may consider being lenient and waving penalties,” said Abhishek Jain, tax partner, EY.

Contrary rulings by GST authorities in different states continue to be a major issue. Experts have been asking for the constitution of a Central Advance Ruling Authority to avoid confusion created by such rulings.

In a recent case related to the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Maharashtra Authority of Advance Rulings held that the liaison office needs to discharge GST on the supplies undertaken by them. The AAR also ruled that the office should obtain GST registration. Earlier, the Advance Ruling Authorities of Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu had held that the liaison office was outside the GST purview.

Kia offers 30-day return on Carnival for unhappy buyers

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, MAY 26

Kia India, the fastest selling Korean automaker, on Wednesday said it has rolled out a scheme under which buyers of its premium MPV Carnival can return the vehicle, if they were not satisfied with it, within the first 30 days of buying it and get 95 per cent of the total cost refunded.

Under the ‘Satisfaction Guarantee Scheme’ offer, private owners of the Carnival luxurious car can return the vehicle if they are not pleased with



the car within the first 30 days of its purchase.

This one-of-a-kind initiative allows buyers to avail of this new offer valid on all variants of the Carnival.

“It will cover 95 per cent of the ex-showroom cost and overhead cost incurred for the registration and finances, etc. of the vehicle,” the company

said in a statement.

Available in five trims, the 7-seater Carnival is priced in the Rs 24.95 lakh-Rs 33.95 lakh range at Delhi showroom.

Customers need to ensure that the vehicle has not clocked more than 1,500 kilometres from the purchase date and is completely free of damages, failures, pending claims, to be able to return the car.

Additionally, the owner's agreement for the transfer of the vehicle, including all documentation and charges, etc in the name of a person will be obligatory, the automaker said.

Xiaomi gains from Huawei's exit

May 26: Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi Corp reported first-quarter revenue growth of 55 per cent on Wednesday, exceeding analyst expectations as it nabbed market share from one-time sector leader Huawei Technologies.

Revenue rose to 76.88 billion yuan (\$12 billion) in the quarter ended March 31, from 49.70 billion yuan a year earlier. Analysts

expected revenue of 74.5 billion yen, according to Refinitiv data.

Adjusted net profit rose to 6.1 billion yuan, versus market estimates of 3.97 billion yuan.

Xiaomi's share of the smartphone market in China increased 75 per cent year-on-year in the quarter, according to research firm Canals, as Huawei retreated from the

market following US trade restrictions that cramped its ability to source key handset components.

Revenue from smartphone sales jumped 69.8 per cent year-over-year to 51.5 billion yuan.

In India, one of its key overseas markets, the company will invest more in online sales as the government imposes strict lockdowns.

—Reuters

Court orders Royal Dutch Shell to cut net emissions by 45%

MIKE CORDER
THE HAGUE, MAY 26

A Dutch court on Wednesday ordered Royal Dutch Shell to cut its carbon emissions by net 45 per cent by 2030 compared to 2019 levels in a landmark case brought by climate activism groups, which hailed the decision as a victory for the planet.

The Hague District Court ruled that the Anglo-Dutch energy giant has a duty of care to reduce emissions and that its current reduction plans were not concrete enough.

The decision could set a

precedent for similar cases against polluting multinationals around the world. Activists gathered outside the courtroom erupted into cheers as the decision was read out loud. The climate won today, said Roger Cox, a lawyer for the Dutch arm of Friends of the Earth, one of the organisations behind the case.

This ruling will change the world. Worldwide, people are in the starting blocks to take legal action against oil companies following our example, Cox added.

The Hague court did not say how Royal Dutch Shell

should achieve the ordered cutback, saying the energy giant's parent company has complete freedom in how it meets its reduction obligation and in shaping the Shell group's corporate policy.

In a written reaction, Shell said it expects to appeal the “disappointing court decision.”

The firm said it is already investing billions of dollars in low-carbon energy, including electric vehicle charging, hydrogen, renewables and bio-fuels. Shell says it has set an ambition to be a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050.

—AP

Fewer bankruptcies a cause of worry: ADB

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 26

Fewer business bankruptcies in Asian countries, including India, can be a cause of worry in the coming quarters when the support measures are withdrawn, says the Asian Development Bank.

The number of bankruptcies fell in 2020 in many countries while more businesses were expected to fail, said Paul Vandenberg, senior economist of the ADB.

Business bankruptcy filings were down 30 per cent in India and down by 30 to 40 per cent in Singapore,



Malaysia and Australia. A multi-country survey by the ADB in March and April last year found 50 per cent of Asian SMEs had less than one month of cash reserves.

In India the threshold for initiating insolvency was raised from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 1 crore, mostly to help MSMEs. This occurred at the start of the pandemic

but may be a permanent change, said Vandenberg.

“This is all good news, but it is also worrying. It is good news because if enterprises, and specifically SMEs, are able to stay in business and ride out the pandemic...,” he said. However, it is worrying because support measures may have merely kept alive businesses artificially and these businesses may fail once the measures are rolled back and credit needs to be repaid. It is also likely that businesses that would normally have failed without a pandemic were also kept alive.

NO TOLL IF QUEUE IS LONGER THAN 100 METRES



SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 26

Vehicles will be allowed to move without paying toll if the queue is longer than 100 metres from the toll booth. The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has issued guidelines to ensure seamless flow of traffic at the toll plazas by not allowing vehicles to queue up more than 100 metres.

A yellow line at a distance of 100 meters from toll booth will be marked in each toll lane. This is to inculcate further sense of accountability in toll plaza operators, the NHAI said in a statement.

Waiting time at toll plazas also should not be more than 10 seconds even during peak hours.

The NHAI, said it has transitioned to 100 per cent cashless tolling from mid-February 2021. The overall FasTag penetration in NHAI toll plazas has reached 96 per cent, with many having 99 per cent penetration.

The NHAI said as social distancing has become the new norm, commuters are increasingly looking at FasTag as a toll payment option as it nullifies the chances of any human contact between the drivers and the toll operators.

The constant growth and adoption of FasTag by the highway users is encouraging and has helped in bringing more efficiency in toll operations, it added.

“It has been emphasised to have a new design, and construct the upcoming toll plazas as per traffic projections for the next 10 years to have an efficient toll collection system,” it said.

SHORT TAKES

Milkha is stable, wife catches Covid

Chandigarh: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh “continues to be stable on oxygen support” and he was on Wednesday shifted out of the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital where he is being treated for Covid pneumonia, indicating signs of improvement in his condition. However, his 82-year-old wife Nirmal Kaur, a former India volleyball captain, was on Wednesday admitted to the same hospital in Mohali after testing positive for Covid pneumonia. “Mr Milkha Singh continues to be stable on oxygen support. However, he is weak and we are trying to persuade him to increase his food intake,” Fortis hospital in Mohali said in an update. “Today, we have stepped him down from the ICU to a room which he is sharing with his wife who was admitted earlier in the day with Covid pneumonia,” he added. — PTI

Former hoopster Jagan no more

Hyderabad: Basketball Federation of India referee M. Jagannatham, former AP state basketball player and of TSRTC and erstwhile APSRTC breathed his last on Wednesday morning. He is survived by his wife and two sons. Jagan represented AP state which won the first Sub Junior National Championship at Kothagudem in 1975 and went on to represent AP in the Junior National championships, Osmania University in the South Zone Inter University Championships before joining the APSRTC. The Telangana Basketball Association and Hyderabad District Basketball Association condoled the death of Jagan who was also the General Secretary of Medchal Malkajgiri District Basketball Association.

Ex-cricketer Rane passes away

Mumbai: Former Mumbai player and scorer Ranjita Rane died here on Wednesday after battling cancer. She was in her mid 40s. “Deeply saddened to inform that ex-Mumbai cricketer and scorer Ranjita Rane has passed away,” a senior Mumbai Cricket Association official said. A well-known MCA scorer, who knew Rane, said she was admitted to a city hospital for the past fortnight. Rane, an all-rounder, who bowled medium pace, played 44 first class matches for Mumbai from 1995 to 2003. Another cricketer Prabhuhai Parmar, who had represented Saurashtra in domestic cricket, died due to Covid-19 on Tuesday. The 76-year-old had played four Ranji Trophy matches for Saurashtra in 1968-69. — PTI

Ankita out of French Open race

Paris: Ankita Raina's yet another attempt to qualify for the singles main draw of a Grand Slam failed as she bowed out of the French Open Qualifiers with a second-round defeat, here on Wednesday. Ankita, up against higher-ranked German Greet Minnen, could win only two games in the entire match that lasted one hour and 21 minutes. The 125th ranked Indian could convert only one of the three break points and eventually lost 2-6, 0-6. It was Ankita's seventh attempt to crack the singles main draw of a major. She had reached the final round of the Australian Open qualifying event early this year, falling at the final stage. — PTI

Davis, James pair too hot for Sun

Los Angeles: Anthony Davis and LeBron James delivered down the stretch on Tuesday as the NBA champion Los Angeles Lakers bounced back to beat the Phoenix Suns 109-102 and knot their playoff series at one game apiece. Davis had said he blamed himself after scoring just 13 points in the Lakers' 99-90 defeat in game one of the best-of-seven Western Conference first-round series. He wasn't about to let it happen again. Davis scored 34 points while LeBron James added 23 points as the Lakers gained the split of two games in Phoenix. — AFP

TWEAKING TWINS

Kiwis wary of spinners Ashwin and Jadeja ahead of WTC final

New Delhi, May 26: India's pace attack is on par with New Zealand's world class swing operators but the Black Caps batsman Henry Nicholls is more wary of the threat spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja may pose during the upcoming World Test Championship final. India and New Zealand will fight it out for the inaugural title at Southampton's Ageas Bowl, one of those rare English tracks known to aid the slow bowlers for a considerable period in Test matches.

“India have a very good seam attack and also have the experienced spinners like Ashwin and Jadeja. They have been consistent in all parts of the world (of late) and bring quality (to attack),” Nicholls said.

If there are no injury concerns, the Indian pace troika that is expected to be in the playing XI for the clash starting June 18 would be Jasprit Bumrah, Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Shami.

“Mohammed Shami along with Jasprit Bumrah and Ishant Sharma have proven their quality over the years which is similar to our seamers (Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Neil Wagner) on whom we really pride ourselves on.

“So if you are facing that kind of a line-up, it's an exciting challenge and as a group we are expecting it to be tough but also looking forward to the challenge,” he added.

His teammate Devon Conway's strategy of pouring dry kitty litter on the track in order to create rough was backed by Nicholls as they are playing at a “neutral venue” which is known to assist the spinners. — PTI



Indian allrounders Ravichandran Ashwin (left) and Ravindra Jadeja in this file photo.

Kohli, Rohit static in ODI chart

Dubai, May 26: India skipper Virat Kohli and his deputy Rohit Sharma held on to their second and third positions respectively in the batting chart, while pacer Jasprit Bumrah remained static at number five in the bowling list of the latest ICC ODI player rankings issued on Wednesday.

Kohli and Sharma were sitting pretty with 857 and 825 points respectively in the batting list headed by Pakistan's Babar Azam with 865 points.

In bowling, Bumrah was at the 5th position with 690 points, while New Zealand's Trent Boult was

● **Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma were sitting pretty with 857 and 825 points respectively in the batting list headed by Pakistan's Babar Azam with 865 points.**

atop with 737 points, followed by Bangladesh's Mehidy Hasan (725), Afghanistan's Mujeeb Ur Rahman (708) and Kiwi pacer Matt Henry (691). Bangladesh off-spinner Hasan became only the third bowler from his



Virat Kohli

country to be ranked among the top two after a fine showing in the first two matches of their ongoing World Cup Super League series against Sri Lanka.

Hasan has advanced three places to reach the

second position after returning figures of four for 30 and three for 28 bowling with the new ball.

All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan had grabbed the number one position in 2009 for the first time, while left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak is the other Bangladesh bowler to have been in the top two, reaching the second position in 2010.

Left-arm fast bowler Mustafizur Rehman is another one from Bangladesh to move up the list, his hauls of three for 34 and three for 16 lifting him eight places to ninth position. — PTI

MUSHFIQUR TON HELPS BANGLA CLAIM SERIES

Dhaka, May 26: Mushfiqur Rahim hit a gritty 125 to set up Bangladesh's maiden series victory over Sri Lanka across all formats with an emphatic 103-run win in the rain-hit second one-day international on Tuesday.

The wicketkeeper-batsman lifted Bangladesh from a precarious 74-4 to 246 all out after they elected to bat first at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka.

Sri Lanka managed just 141-9 in the tourists' revised chase of 245 in 40 overs as Bangladesh took an unbeatable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Mehidy Hasan Miraz and Mustafizur Rahman claimed three wickets each while Shakib Al Hasan took two key scalps. Mushfiqur remained the hero as he recorded his eighth ODI century and put on a crucial 87-run fifth-wicket stand with Mahmudullah Riyad, who made 41.

Brief scores: Bangladesh 246 in 48.1 overs (Mushfiqur Rahim 125, Mahmudullah 41; D. Chameera 3/44) bt Sri Lanka 141/9 in 40 overs (M. Rahman 3/16).

Umar pays hefty fine, to take part in ACU's rehab

Karachi, May 26: Controversial Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal has paid a hefty fine of 45 lakh (Pakistani) rupees to PCB, which now entitles him to join Anti-Corruption rehabilitation program of the board.

A source in the PCB confirmed that Akmal had deposited the fine imposed on him by the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) in February while disposing off cases filed by the batsman and the PCB.

“Umar has deposited the

full amount of 45 lacs rupees (Pakistani) with the board which means he is now eligible to start the rehab program of the Anti-Corruption code of the board,” the source said.

“But practically it will take some time before Akmal can resume his cricket career as his rehab program will take some time since the anti-corruption unit of the PCB is presently busy with the Pakistan Super League matches to be held in Abu Dhabi next month,” the

source said. Earlier the board had rejected Akmal's request that he be allowed to pay a 45 lacs (Pakistani) rupees fine in installments to pave the way for him to return to cricket after serving a ban since February 2020 for breaching clauses of the Anti-Corruption code.

Umar Akmal, who will turn 31 this month, has not played for Pakistan since November, 2019 when he last appeared in a T20 series at Lahore against Sri Lanka. — PTI

18,000 FANS ALLOWED FOR ENGLAND-N. ZEALAND TEST

London, May 26: Around 18,000 cricket fans will be allowed to attend each day of next month's second Test between England and New Zealand at Edgbaston, which will be the first of the government's next wave of pilot events.

Under current guidelines, smaller outdoor venues are only permitted to be at 25 per cent capacity, but the stadium will be 70 per cent full for the second Test against the Black Caps, which takes place between June 10 and 14.

To gain entry to the ground in Birmingham, each ticket holder will need to present a negative

lateral flow test, taken within the preceding 24 hours. The first Test at Lord's, which starts on June 2, will be played in line with existing regulations, meaning a capacity of around 25 per cent, or around 7,000 people.

“Having crowds back into cricket grounds is so important for the game and for our fans too. The last 15 months have shown just how big a role cricket plays in many people's lives, and we cannot wait to welcome a growing number of fans back to our stadia over the coming months said ECB chief executive Tom Harrison. — AFP

BITTER | BRAWL

The shine is off HCA top brass

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 26

The Hyderabad Cricket Association heavyweights got involved in another round of skirmish on Wednesday over a slew of appointments and counter claims.

First, secretary R. Vijayanand sent out a press release stating appointment orders were issued to members of several committees that were finalised at last month's 85th Annual General Meeting, which had continued after president Mohammed Azharuddin adjourned it without completing the agenda and walked out with his supporters even as other members of the Apex Council stayed on.

Azhar hit back saying the appointment letters were invalid as were the appointees and the AGM at which they were picked.

The Cricket Advisory Committee, Cricket Talent, Junior Selection, Umpires, Senior Tournament, Tour and Fixtures, Technical, TTL Governing Council, Grounds, Differently Aabled, Technical and Finance, Infrastructure & Law and Women's Selection were among the panels named on Wednesday. “The Women's Selection Committee and Men's Senior Selection Committee will be finalised by CAC and the names given under Women's Selection Committee are only in consideration,” the Secretary's note read.

Popular names to figure

● **Secretary R. Vijayanand issued appointment letters to members of several committees while president Mohammed Azharuddin termed them invalid.**

in the list include former Test players Narasimha Rao and Arshad Ayub; internationals Noel David, Sudeep Tyagi, Sravanthi Naidu and Diana David; Vivek Jaisimha, Vijay Mohan Raj, former Hyderabad captain Nandakishore and a clutch of club secretaries.

“I do not recognise these appointments,” Azhar stated.

“I shall not be held liable as president of HCA and member of the Apex Council for any commitment, promise, compensation, honorarium or any other pecuniary benefit that is conveyed to you through the invalid letter as an entitlement to you by virtue of your appointment,” he addressed the appointees.

The former India captain then threw down the gauntlet. “Let's see how far & how long this goes. Cricket may inadvertently become the victim but this culture of nepotism, using positions in the Association to gratify power groups to strengthen vote banks has been prevalent over ages here. As I mentioned repeatedly in the past, I will not cease,” he signed off.



India's Amit Panghal (left) lands a punch on Mongolia's Kharkhuu Enkhmandakh at the Asian Boxing Championships in Dubai on Wednesday.

Boxers poised for a rich medal haul

Dubai, May 26: Defending champion Amit Panghal (52kg) and the redoubtable Vikas Krishan (69kg) were among three Indian boxers who advanced to the semifinals on Wednesday as the country assured itself of an unparalleled medal haul of 15 in the Asian Boxing Championships here.

Debutant Varinder Singh (60kg) was the other Indian to make the last four.

Panghal secured a second successive medal after overcoming a stiff challenge from Mongolia's Kharkhuu Enkhmandakh in the last-eight stage, while Varinder defeated Filipino Jere Samuel Dela Cruz 5-0.

India's previous best medal haul was 13 that was achieved in 2019.

The World Championship silver-winning Panghal won 3-2 in a high-octane contest in which he overcame a sluggish start and used his combination punches to telling effect in the last two rounds.

After being somewhat

bested in the opening three minutes, the top-seeded Army man's trademark pace came to fore in the second round as he cleverly dodged his rival's aggressive attempts at connecting.

Meanwhile, National champion Varinder scored on counter-attacks against the swift-moving Dela Cruz to secure a medal on debut at the event.

Late on Tuesday night, Sanjeet (91kg), Sakshi (54kg), Jaismine (57kg) and the Olympic-bound Simranjit Kaur (60kg) joined Shiva Thapa (64kg) in the last four stage following wins in their quarter-final bouts.

They added to the seven medals, including that of six-time world champion M. C. Mary Kom (51kg), that were assured on the day of draws.

India Open gold-winner Sanjeet defeated Jasur Qurbonov of Tajikistan 5-0 to qualify for the semifinals in the men's draw along with Thapa. — PTI

ACHINTA CLINCHES SILVER IN JUNIOR WEIGHTLIFTING

Tashkent, May 26: Indian lifter Achinta Sheuli shattered seven national records, including three senior marks, en route clinching an overall silver medal in the 73kg category at the Junior World Championship here on Wednesday.

The 19-year-old lifted a personal best of 313kg — 141kg in snatch, followed by 172kg in clean and jerk — at the gold level Olympic qualifier event, creating three new senior and four junior national records.

The Commonwealth Championship gold medalist bettered both his earlier personal best in snatch and clean and jerk by two kilograms each. He had lifted 309kg (139kg+170kg) at the Asian Championships here last month. — PTI