

CHENNAI | MONDAY 10 | MAY 2021

சொன்னதைச் செய்வோம் !

செய்வதைச் சொல்வோம் !

**மக்கள் நலவாழ்விற்கு நீதியுதவி
கொரோனா பாதிப்பிற்கு நிவாரணம்**

உதவித் தொகை
முதல் தவணை

ரூ.2,000/-

நாள் : 10.5.2021 திங்கட்கிழமை

நேரம் : நண்பகல் 12 மணி

இடம் : தலைமைச் செயலகம்

புனித ஜார்ஜ் கோட்டை

மாண்புமிகு தமிழ்நாடு முதலமைச்சர்

திரு. மு.க. ஸ்டாலின் அவர்கள்

2.07 கோடி அரிசி குடும்ப அட்டைதாரர்களுக்கு
கொரோனா பாதிப்பு நிவாரண உதவித் தொகை
முதல் தவணையாக 2 ஆயிரம் ரூபாய் வழங்கும் திட்டம்
துவக்க நிகழ்ச்சி

கொரோனா போராளிகளை போற்றுவோம் !

கவனமாக இருப்போம் !

**நம்மையும் நாட்டு மக்களையும் காப்போம் !
தொற்றில் இருந்து தமிழகத்தை மீட்போம் !!**

புகக் கவசம் அணிவோம் !

சமூக இடைவெளி காப்போம் !

கோவிட்-19 தொப்பியை
சந்தேகங்கள் மற்றும்
அவசர உதவிகளுக்கு

104

மாநில உதவி எண்கள்

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சென்னை உதவி எண்கள்

044 - 4612 2300

044 - 2538 4520

சென்னை, 10.05.2021

OTHER STORIES

VIT celebrates NSS Day

Chennai: NSS VIT Chennai celebrated its annual day on May 8 online. The work of student volunteers who worked hard amidst the pandemic with the motto of "Not me But you" was appreciated. Mr.Sankar Viswanathan, Vice President VIT Chennai presided over the function and Dr.C.Samuel Chelliah, Regional Director NSS, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, was the chief guest and Dr.M.Senthilkumar, State NSS officer,TamilNadu guest of honour. The chief guest gave away the certificates to the best NSS volunteers. Mr.Sankar Viswanathan released the NSS magazines for the academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21.

TVS Motor Co to provide 2K oxygen concentrators

Chennai: To provide 2,000 oxygen concentrators to various state governments Hosur, Tamil Nadu, TVS Motor Company, along with Sundaram Clayton and its group companies, has pledged ₹40 crores as part of an integrated approach to support the nationwide efforts to curb the spread of Covid-19. The funds will be utilised to provide lifesaving supplies such as oxygen concentrators, PPE Kits, medicines and medical equipment across the country. This initiative is by Srinivasan Services Trust (SST), the social arm of TVS Motor Company and Sundaram-Clayton Ltd.

The company will supply 2,000 oxygen concentrators to hospitals and health centres and over 20,000 food packets per day for essential services workers in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Himachal Pradesh during the second wave of Covid-19. This will be supported by distributing over a million face masks, thousands of oximeters and PPE kits, hand sanitisers and essential medicines to more than 500 government health centres and hospitals in these states.

Mr. Venu Srinivasan, Chairman, TVS Motor Company, said, "This situation demands that we unify our efforts towards mitigating the severe impact of the pandemic. We are working with the Government to provide assistance to various health centres in rural India and create easy medical accessibility at the grassroots. We are focused on doing whatever it takes to alleviate and enhance the quality of lives of the communities we serve, as we have done in our 100-year history."

TVS Motor Company is also working closely with two hospitals in Chennai: Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and Stanley Medical College Hospital, to support them with supplies and aid their effort in treating Covid-19 patients.

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One lakh people can be saved if proper mask use becomes prevalent

Washington varsity study forecasts 15 lakh India deaths by September

T. SUDEESH | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 9

The University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), an independent health research organisation that provides comparable measurement of the world's health problems, has forecast 14,96,000 Covid-19 deaths in the country by September 2021.

The latest study report published cited that the projected death toll may come in an addition of 842,000 cases compared to the figures from May 3 to September 1. Daily deaths are expected to peak at 15,430 on May 17, 2021. These estimates are based in part on sero-prevalence surveys.

If at least 95 percent of universal mask coverage could be attained by the next week, the projected number can be curtailed to 1,01,000 deaths. On the contrary, if the situation gets worse, the country will lose at least 17,35,000 human lives by September. It is an additional 2,39,000 deaths compared to the reference scenario. If the vaccine rollout is implemented in a smooth and effective manner, the study says, 1,43,400 lives can be saved by September.

The current situation in the country, the analysis says, shows that daily reported cases in the last

Six IAS officers to coordinate Covid field team in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 9

Six senior IAS officers have been appointed to lead the field support team engaged in the Covid19 containment activities in and around Chennai.

Issuing an order on Saturday, Chief Secretary V. Irai Anbu said that the new team will ensure effective preventive measures are taken to arrest the outbreak of fresh active cases with the support of the newly designated 'War Room' or Unified Command Centre (UCC). The government has decided to designate Unified Control Centres (UCC) as "Covid19 War Room" to monitor Oxygen stock in hospitals across the state.

The 'war room' will act as the single nodal point and command centre for managing bed availability for both government and private hospitals, especially for critically ill

week increased to 3,70,900 per day on average compared to 3,19,700 the previous week. The estimated daily deaths in the last week increased to 10,500 per day on average com-

patients who require oxygen. Oxygen cylinder requirements in private hospitals will also be coordinated through the war room with the support of the State Drug Controller. The war room will reach out and address the needs of the public during the second wave of the pandemic through the 104 health helpline and social media.

In order to make the work of 'war room' efficient and effective, six IAS officers have been entrusted to coordinate the matters of UCC. Dr. Darez Ahemad, Executive Director, Guidance, Chennai, will handle the overall coordination of the centre. Mr. K. Nandakumar, Secretary, TNPSC, will be nodal officer for state oxygen monitoring and emergency response. He will coordinate Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation (TNMSC) in all matters relating to Liquid Medical

Oxygen and liaise with private hospitals.

Dr. Uma, Additional Collector, Chennai, is appointed as nodal official for the bed management in private and public hospitals. Dr. S. Vineet, JMD, Tangadco, Chennai is appointed as nodal officer for field inspection of all empanelled and non-empanelled private medical colleges and hospitals in and around Chennai. The field inspection team will also coordinate with the activities of the public health officers placed in the field support team in Greater Chennai Corporation.

Dr. K.P. Karthikeyan, Executed Director, TIDCO, is entrusted as nodal officer for major medical colleges and other dedicated Covid19 hospitals in and around Chennai. R. Alagumeena is the nodal officer for maintaining quality and responsiveness of the 'war room.'

been infected as of May 3. There were 152 tests per 100,000 people on May 3. At least 82 percent of people say they would accept or would probably accept a vaccine. This is up by 1.3

percentage points from previous surveys. The fraction of the population who are open to receiving a vaccine ranges from 60 percent in Tamil Nadu to 88 percent in Odisha. The study also projects that 778 million (77.8 Cr) will be vaccinated by September 1.

After the declining trend in the number of daily Covid19 cases and deaths in the country from September 2020 to mid-February 2021, there has been a sharp reversal of this trend with a dramatic rise in April and early May. Last week, the daily cases were about four times and the daily deaths three times the numbers in the previous peak in September 2020.

The daily cases increased by 16 percent and the daily deaths by 40 percent last week compared to the previous week. Without drastic measures to bolster the health system to deal with this onslaught, decrease social mixing, and increase effective face mask use, the situation currently looks quite grim for India', it says.

It may be recalled IHME studies had been cited in the past by the White House and its reports are watched closely by public health officials.

The model was run on May 5, with case and death data through May 2, and covariate data through May 3.

Lakhs of people leave Chennai to go home

D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 9

Lakhs of people left Chennai over the weekend to their native places in Tamil Nadu. Having announced a strict lockdown from Monday, the State government had made special arrangements to ply thousands of buses to ferry these people out of the State capital. As many as 3,325 buses left Chennai on Saturday ferrying 1.33 lakh people. The bus services were increased to 4,816 buses to leave the city from early on Sunday morning to cater to more than a lakh of people again.

The phenomenal movement of people saw bus stands and terminals crowded with little evidence of social distancing or even mask-wearing. The fear of the lock-

down besides the chances of it being extended as is being done in other States saw people leave Chennai in droves.

Not since the original lockdown of March 2020 had forced so many migrant workers from other States to leave on foot when there was no public transportation available have so many people been seen travelling en masse. Reverse migration to the city may take place once the second wave of the coronavirus subsides but that could be weeks away.

Tasmac weekend sales soar in crores

D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 9

Having done brisk sales of Rs 426.24 crore on Saturday, Tasmac outlets were doing roaring business on Sunday too, with consumers stocking up for the two-week lockdown that begins on Monday. The total sales for the weekend could cross a record Rs 1,000 crore if the crowds in front of Tasmac shops around the State are any indication. Chennai topped the list with sales of Rs 100.43 crore on Saturday, followed by Tiruchy Rs 82.59 cr; Salem Rs 79.82 cr; Madurai Rs 87.28 cr and Coimbatore Rs 76.12 cr. Tasmac has over 5,000 shops across the state, and on an average sells liquor worth ? 130 crore - ? 140 crore a day.

Auto, taxi drivers seek EMI moratorium

A. ARUL PALANI | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 9

Tamil Nadu Road Transport Workers Federation (TNRTWF) requested the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to announce EMI moratorium on loans obtained from banks and financial institutions by the call taxi and auto rickshaw workers in the State. More than 30 lakh workers have been pushed to penury as a result of repeated pandemic lockdown.

In a statement, K.Arumuga Nainar, President of TNRTWF on Sunday said that the second wave of Covid-19 is creating havoc everywhere as all the state governments are announcing lockdown restrictions. "Once again we are in fear of losing our livelihood. Hence, I humbly request you to consider announcing EMI moratorium from April 2021 to such time till the second wave subsides and normalcy is restored,

thereby alleviating the economic hardship and misery of about 30 lakh road transport workers from Tamil Nadu" he said.

He recalled that Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a nation-wide lockdown from March 24, 2020 due to the pandemic. The lockdown restrictions were gradually lifted over a period of six months and normalcy was beginning to restore. However, due to the non-operation of businesses during the lockdown, people from all spheres had requested to waive off EMIs towards bank loans and private finance institutions.

The Government had to announce EMI moratorium for 3 three months from March 1 to May 31, 2020 and it was later extended to six months till August 31, 2020. Even after the lockdown restrictions were lifted gradually, businesses and other economic activities have not fully normalised.

He said in services of rental vehicles such as

commercial goods carriers and rental passenger transport vehicles such as auto-rickshaws and call taxis remained crippled during the lockdown. Even as the lockdown restrictions were lifted in phases, people were hesitant in using rental transport vehicles and about 30 lakh workers, only in Tamil Nadu, who are involved in this business were put to irreparable loss and economic hardships.

The workers have purchased their vehicles only through loans and they depend solely on their daily income to repay their loans. As the businesses have largely been affected due to the pandemic, the workers were not able to make up for their livelihood and were also unable to pay their EMIs. And, now they are placed in a helpless situation where they could lose their vehicles, which are their only source of their income, due to non-payment of loans, he said.



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin greets his mother Dayalu Ammal on Mother's Day. — DC



Special prasadam from TTD temple for Chief Minister Stalin. — DC



CM Stalin being greeted by Muslims before upcoming Ramzan festival. — DC

An impressive start to Stalin's innings as CM



R. Mohan

Namma Chennai Diary

Having sat on his fore-ordained seat at Fort St George in the manner of a seasoned politician, MK Stalin soon faced the toughest decision as the chief minister of Tamil Nadu. The health care professionals would have told him that a total lockdown was the only credible tool to fight the rising second wave of the pandemic. To his credit, Stalin put lives before livelihood and a tough decision over image. The pain of a lockdown was required to stem the tide and he was prepared to do what was best for the people, however painful downing the shutters may be for the populace that had just voted his party in.

Stalin's predecessor had set high standards in letting health and medical profes-

sionals guide the decision making right through the pandemic. Despite the myriad problems faced by the people, Tamil Nadu was one of the better prepared and performing States in mitigation and management efforts. Technical issues with oxygen were fatal in a few instances but preparedness meant oxygen was by and large available to the Covid-sick. Since the April 6 poll, there was little of the harsh decision making required, even in an interregnum. Indians will not listen meekly to entreaties to stay at home and follow covid-appropriate behaviour.

The decisions confirming some of the freebies promised were easier, so too transfer of key officials, which is all very routine at



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin at his office in Fort St George

every change of regime. The tough call was the lockdown but made somewhat easier since Kerala and Karnataka had already decided to clamp down. The numbers having risen to unprecedented levels in new cases and fatalities and there being no alternative in sight, a stricter rules to curb people from moving around was the only way out. The results may not be seen for

weeks yet but that does not rub out the evidence of damage caused by poll rallies which were super spreaders in five regions.

At a time when a hapless central government has abdicated many of its responsibilities because it is melting in the face of the covid catastrophe, the States have been left to decide for themselves.

Beyond the lockdown deci-

sion there was much that showed how well drilled Stalin has been in administration. His briefing of officials contained gems in terms of asking for action. "Spell it out" was the message he had for those in admin vested with the responsibility of fighting the pandemic with policies showing a clear direction. No time for plaudits or rosy pictures painted of the

virus having been conquered.

This was no emperor dealing with his courtiers, just a CM asking his officers for honest appraisal of what the real situation is. The stress was on the coronavirus as the enemy and the need to beat it. The ability to look at problems as a decision maker rather than a king passing diktats and the willingness to listen to advice should set him apart at least from one of his strong predecessors in whose presence administrators would be so tongue-tied as to be unable to venture an opinion on the facts of the case.

Estimation of Stalin as CM is bound to have gone up after he read out lines to the effect that the truth be faced squarely now. Even earlier there had been signs that Stalin's rule is going to be different. His statesmanlike approach was itself a revelation. This came when the Edappadi government was scrambling for support through the legal crisis emanating from the trust vote. When the previous government was grappling

with the possible fallout of court verdicts and was leaning on New Delhi to sort it out, Stalin refused to countenance any moves to add pressure to the situation.

Stalin was almost stoic in standing by a principle in awaiting his turn, telling those closest to him that he would much rather take the Fort St George seat on his own right after elections rather than try and force the issue and be seen as trying to sneak his way in. There were rumblings in his own party that he was being docile and comparisons were made to his father who they said would have exploited such a political opportunity. Stalin sought the people's vote, which had been given to Jaya five years ago. There too, the feeling was had his father projected him as the CM candidate, the party might have closed the one per cent gap in the popular vote. It is by right that he occupies the CM's chair now.

(R. Mohan is the Resident Editor of the Chennai and Coimbatore editions of Deccan Chronicle)

CM assures transparency, says govt is for all

Chennai, May 9: TN Chief Minister MK Stalin on Sunday assured an honest and transparent administration and asserted that the government is for all the people. He pledged to take along all sections of society without any bias or discrimination and said that his desire was to 'transform Tamil Nadu into the best state' and to pass on to the next generation a vibrant TN.

Writing to his party cadres for the first time after assuming office as Chief Minister, Stalin assured good governance in sync with people's aspirations. He urged partymen to work towards resolving people's problems by taking along workers of other parties in a spirit of friendship.

"Though this is a government led by me, the president of the DMK, this is not the government of the DMK party; this government is for all the people which will take along all sections of society without any kind of partiality or differentiation," he said.

OTHER STORIES

Rural T'kudi badly hit by corona

ARULOLI | DC THOOTHUKUDI, MAY 9

Unlike the first wave, rural areas in the district have also now become equally affected by Corona. Of the total number of containment zones in the district, 142 are in rural areas, which is almost equal to containment zones in the municipal and Thoothukudi city corporation limits.

Kayathar is one of the severely affected rural areas with 34 containment zones, followed by Ottapattanam, Srivaikundam and Alwarthirunagari areas. Villages around Thoothukudi town also have been severely affected, said health department sources, adding that hospitals and temporarily created care centres lacked bed facilities.



Health Minister Ma Subramanian inaugurating the siddha covid care centre at Dr Ambedkar arts college Vyasarpadi, structured by GCC.

— DC

Strengthen inner self, build stronger self-identity

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 9

The book highlights the importance of strengthening one's inner self and build a stronger self-identity. It also points towards the futility of the need for external validation, the need to stand out in a crowd, fears, and other related aspects by which one seems to feel that they have no control over their own lives.

Having worked in the space

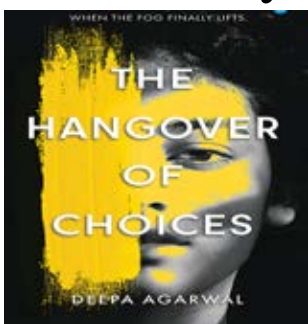
of mental health and gender equality Deepa Agarwal, has observed some commonalities amongst people, especially women: A negative body image, the feeling of 'am not good enough' in spite of reaching pinnacles of success in the outer world and other stressors. These sometimes lead to lack of authenticity and mental health issues.

To accomplish its intent of self-discovery, rather than making it prescriptive, the

book has been presented and packaged in fiction. It's an engaging and extremely relatable story of the protagonist, who takes on this journey of self-realisation, whilst she is on her deathbed.

It is an attempt to bring forth the idea of inner life and the criticality of taking self-action.

It's an invitation for the readers to honestly look at oneself, before being assailed by the hangover of their own choices in life.



The Hangover of Choices By Deepa Agarwal

NLC to set up O2 plants in govt hospitals

A ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, MAY 9

With a view to augmenting the supply of medical oxygen, the public sector NLC India Ltd is in the process of setting up Pressure Swing Medical Oxygen plants at its project sites including Neyveli and Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu and sites across the country.

In a release, Rakesh Kumar, CMD of NLCIL stated that the Navratna public sector has planned to set up nine medical oxygen plants with a capacity of 30

NM3/hour based on the requirement at different locations.

Two plants of 12 NM3/Hour capacity costing ₹25 to ₹30 lakhs will be installed at the NLCIL Hospital in Neyveli while three plants of 30 NM3/Hour capacity costing Rs.65 lakhs to 70 lakhs each will be installed in Chennai. The plants in Chennai will be installed in Government General Hospitals identified by the State government.

NLCIL will also be setting up three oxygen plants each

in Rajasthan and through its subsidiary NUPPL in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The Navratna public sector has operations in Neyveli and Thoothukudi in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Jharkhand and in a small way in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

"NLCIL is also in the process of placing orders for purchase of 500 Medical Oxygen Concentrators of 10 LPM capacity each. Tenders have already been floated and we will finalise the bidder in a week's time. The

oxygen concentrators will also be sent to States including Odisha, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan based on the requirement," Mr. Kumar said.

The plants will be funded through the NLCIL's CSR program for fiscal 2021-22. Tenders have been floated for the oxygen plants and once the process is completed, the plants will be set up within one month. The move is in line with the direction of the Union coal minister Pralhad Joshi to PSUs under its fold to set up oxygen plants to meet the

rise in demand for medical oxygen in hospitals across the country.

CMD Rakesh Kumar, who is directly monitoring the hospitals keeping in view the pandemic situation, has deputed Sathyamurthy, CGM (HR) as in-charge of hospital administration. A number of initiatives have been taken on a war footing with the new team.

NLCIL had augmented its Covid bed capacity in its hospital and other places in Neyveli from 90 to 500 beds (200 in the Hospital itself) for treatment of Covid-19

patients. The PSU had commenced hospital operations at Ghatampur UP within a week's time with the combined team of L&T, GE and BGR. A 70-bed hospital is in operation now and additional 200 beds arranged for Covid Care Centres in nearby buildings.

The PSU has also initiated steps on a war-footing for setting up CT scan facility at its hospital in Neyveli. The facility will be set up in one-and-a-half month's time and will be used for not only employees but also people from the surrounding

peripheral villages.

Dr. Santhalakshmi GS Medical (incharge) and Dr C Dharini Mouli, RMO have been working with a team of doctors to strengthen the management of hospitals in the company and guided to prepare SOPs for various critical activities.

A round the clock control room has been set up in the hospital to attend to exigencies. They are also working on starting shortly online medical consultation for its employees who can get medical advice from their homes.

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: You are likely to realize how painful it is to say goodbye to someone you love. At work you need to show patience, perseverance and optimism.



Taurus: It is a great day for love. Physical and mental illnesses resulting out of unhappiness would wear you down. You are likely to fulfill professional dreams.



Gemini: You will make good money but careless expenses will make it difficult to save. The day will bring love in your life. Take a balanced diet to improve physical health.



Cancer: Challenging situations at workplace will lead to some tense moments. At work, colleagues will be envious of your success but will fail to harm you in any way.



Leo: Association with a humanitarian group would immensely benefit you. A dominating attitude towards family members will only start useless arguments.



Virgo: You will prove yourself to be a faithful and caring partner in love. You will find time to do things that you love doing the most. Keep family interests in mind and prioritize them.

You share your b'day with

Paige O'Hara, is an American actress, singer and painter. O'Hara made her motion picture debut in Disney's animated movie Beauty and the Beast, in which she voiced the film's heroine, Belle.



Libra: A bad habit of complaining about lack of opportunities could land you in a problem today. Intense competition at workplace will bring forth you hidden talents.



Scorpio: Chances of suffering on the romantic front for unknown reasons are high today. It is a good day for financial dealings and investment in new ventures.



Sagittarius: New business plans or deals need extra care and active participation. There can be overseas visits for some of you. Few shall invest in property or assets.



Capricorn: Married and family life might get disturbed due to the erratic behavior of a family member. The day indicates an end of the past and the start of new beginnings for some of you.

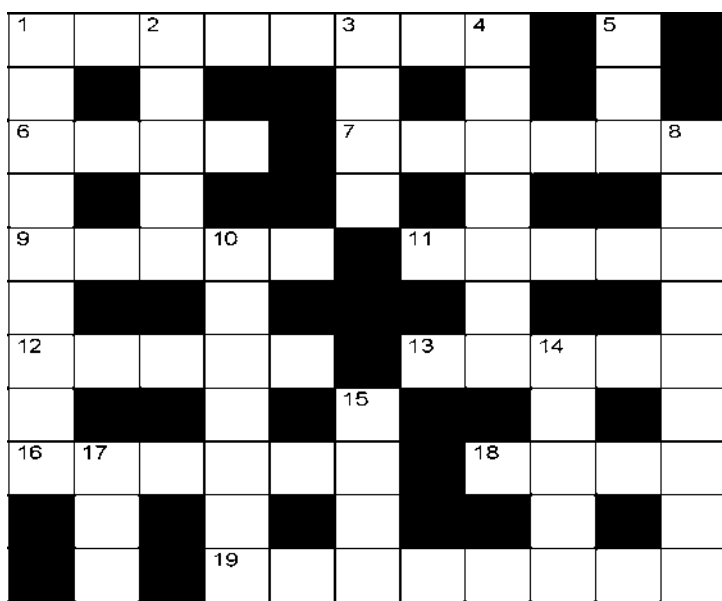


Aquarius: You might face some unpredictable events today. It is advisable to trust your intuition about people and environment. Health concerns of an elder in the family can bring you anxiety.



Pisces: It is a good time for students. For some of you prosperous overseas visits with desirable deals are expected. Good relations with children are indicated. Eligible bachelors can get married.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

1. Malaria-spreading Insect (8)
6. Inking (4)
7. Dog breed (6)
9. Edict (5)
11. Stuffed cushion (5)
12. Entertain (5)
13. Raise objections to (5)
16. Developing unborn (6)
18. Supplication (4)
19. Keep secret (8)

Down

1. Quick oven (9)
2. Arm of the sea (5)
3. Hanking (4)
4. Slanting (7)
5. Snow runner (3)
8. Bears arms (anag) (9)
10. Makes certain of (7)
14. Nolsy riotous fight (5)
15. Pen (4)
17. Drinking vessel (3)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 6. Auspicious, 8. Yolks, 10. Scabs, 13. Omnipotence, 14. Cable, 17. Forte, 19. Postscript.

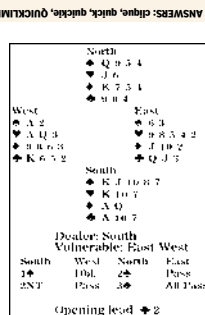
Down: 1. Purl, 2. Opus, 3. Acts, 4. Coma, 5. Isosceles, 7. Gyroscope, 9. Krill, 11. Credo, 12. Top, 15. Bass, 16. Ease, 17. Fork, 18. Rope.

Word Mine

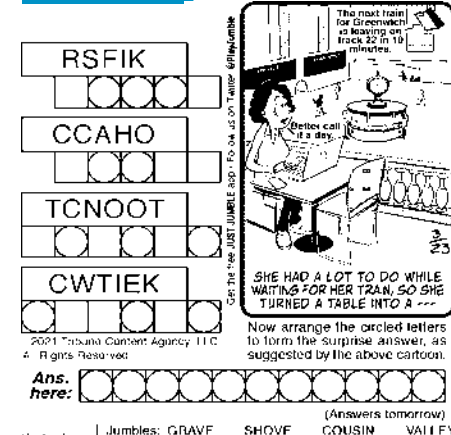
Q
EUK
ICLMI

TODAY'S RATINGS: 2 AVERAGE; 3 GOOD; 4 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.



jumble



Yesterday's Jumbles: GRAVE, SAVIOUR, COUSIN, WALKER, ANSWER: While visiting France's Erie region, they had their photo taken and got to - SAY CHEESE

South won East's Jack with the ace and continued with the spade Jack. Reading the position well, West went in with his ace, cashed the club king and continued with a low club to East's queen. Then East shifted to the heart nine, giving the defenders five tricks: one spade, two hearts and two clubs.

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Tamil Nadu adds 28,897 new Corona cases, 236 deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 9

The state on Sunday added 28,897 Corona cases and 236 deaths, registering yet another surge in the daily case count across the districts. The figure went up from 27,397 cases and 241 deaths on Saturday.

However, a total of 23,515 patients were also discharged after treatment from hospitals across the state the same day, while the number of recovered patients on Saturday were 23,110. According to data provided by the Health department, the total Covid-19 tally in the state has now reached 13,80,259, while the death toll has touched 15,648, including 5,209 in Chennai.

Chennai registered another single day spike with 7,130 cases, a surge from 6,846 on Saturday. A total of 56 deaths were also reported in Chennai district. The total number of positive cases in the district now stands at 3,90,589.

Chengalpattu district, which registered 2,458 cases on Saturday, has added 2,279 more cases. At least 20 persons also died in the district. Total cases

Concern over rise in Corona cases in Nilgiris

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MAY 9

The Nilgiris has been witnessing a steady increase in Corona cases over the past one week with an addition of 500 more cases.

The hills have now closed its borders with its

neighbours Karnataka and Kerala.

Though the Nilgiris saw Corona cases touch the five-digit mark barely a week ago, from then on, Corona positive cases are on the surge as the daily count over the week touched the three-digit mark consistently for the

past one week.

Already tourism activities were under curbs for almost nearly a month, and the district administration has taken steps to decongest the 'Uzhavar Sandhai' here by temporarily shifting it to the NCMS campus.

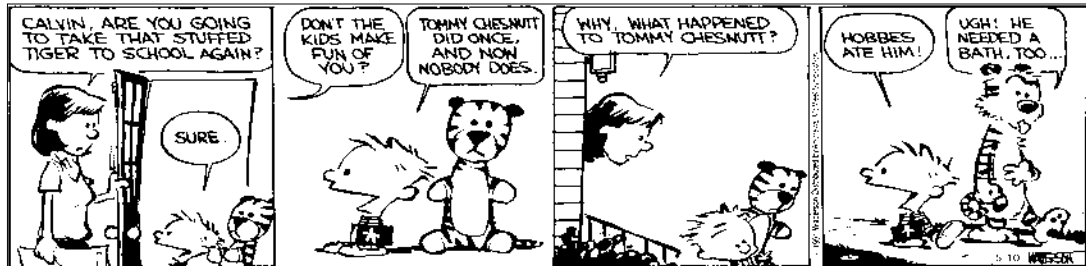
Vellore (588), crossed the 500 mark, while Dharmapuri (353), Dindigul (351), Krishnagiri (485), Ranipet (391), Thenkasi (385), Theni (450), Thiruvallur (302), Villupuram (383) and Virudhunagar (366) breached the 300 mark. While six districts reported over 200 cases, five others recorded over 100 cases.

Chennai and surrounding districts including Thiruvallur and Chengalpattu added 11,177 cases while the tally was 10,588 on Saturday. Daily active cases have also gone up to 1,44,547 from 1,39,401 on Saturday. Daily total active cases in Chennai district touched 32,863 while the number on Saturday was 32,858.

Tiruchy recorded 10 deaths, while 15 persons died in Vellore. The death toll across the districts are Cuddalore - 3, Dindigul - 5, Krishnagiri - 3, Nagapattinam - 5, Namakkal - 4, Nilgiris - 2, Ranipet - 6, Salem - 4, Thenkasi - 5, Thanjavur - 7, Thirupathur - 9, Thiruvannamalai - 4, Thiruvallur - 3, Thirunelveli - 6, Villupuram - 2 and Virudhunagar - 2.

Apart from this, six other districts reported one death each. A total of 1,45,952 persons were subjected to RTPCR tests through 264 labs, while total individual tests on Saturday were 1,48,295. At least 2,35,64,234 individuals have been tested so far in the state.

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & Craig Boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge PHILLIP ALDER

MOVE HALFWAY AROUND THE TABLE

Two weeks ago, we looked at opening leads.

Now let's move to the other side of the table and study some problems faced by the third hand at trick one.

First, the most basic agreement. Suppose partner leads a fourth-highest club two, and dummy has three low clubs. Which club should you play?

There is only one right answer: the jack. When going

third hand high, so you might even win the trick, play the bottom of your equal cards. Why? Suppose partner has the king and declarer takes your jack with the ace. If it is beyond your partner to work out that you must have the queen, get a new partner before the next trick begins! Why would declarer win the jack with the ace if he could have taken the trick with the queen?

That isn't always the end of

the defense, though -- as in this deal.

South had a close decision after his partner's two-spade raise. He knew from West's double that the opposing high cards would be badly placed, but South understandably felt that he had too much to pass.

West guessed well to lead the club two. (One could imagine a layout where the diamond nine -- top of nothing -- would work out better.)

South won East's jack with the ace and continued with the spade Jack. Reading the position well, West went in with his ace, cashed the club king and continued with a low club to East's queen. Then East shifted to the heart nine, giving the defenders five tricks: one spade, two hearts and two clubs.

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SHORT TAKES

U.P.: 67 NEW VENTILATORS LYING UNUSED

Firozabad (UP), May 9: A total of 67 new ventilators are lying unused at the 100-bedded Covid-19 isolation ward set up at a medical college here, a senior doctor has said.

When contacted, Chief Medical Superintendent Dr Alok Kumar Sharma said that last year, the medical college had got 96 ventilators under the PM-CARES Fund, and in all there are 114 ventilators available at the medical college. Of these, 25-30 ventilators are being used to provide treatment to patients.

He added that of the 67 ventilators, which are kept in a store room of the hospital, around 60-62 are in working condition.

Kumar, however, did not elaborate on the rest of the ventilators.

Principal of the medical college, Dr Sangeeta Aneja said, that the state medical department has been informed that 67 ventilators are there in the hospital.

In a letter to the state health department, it was also requested that if there is a need of a ventilator in any nearby district, then it could be sent there.

“Currently, we have ventilators, and they will be used when required. For operation of ventilators, technicians are needed, which we do not have in adequate numbers,” she said.

PMO CAN'T TACKLE IT, CONG TELLS PM

FROM PG 1

Parliament had allocated Rs 35,000 crores in the union budget to ensure free vaccines for all. Despite this, the Union government allowed private companies to set exorbitant and differential prices for vaccines and outsourced the procurement of vaccines to already stretched state governments.

“This will adversely impact millions of Indians. Sir, corporate profit cannot triumph saving lives. I, therefore, urge you to not relinquish the state's moral duty in immunising citizens. This is completely doable because India has a history of successful, large-scale immunisation programmes,” he said. It is heartbreaking to witness millions of ordinary Indians scrambling to access basic healthcare, oxygen, medicines, ventilators, hospital beds and even crematoriums and cemeteries, he said, adding that ordinary Indians are selling their land, jewellery and expending their savings to ensure treatment for their loved ones.

Crematoriums and cemeteries are choked, while parks are being repurposed as cremation grounds, he said.

Many state governments, opposition parties, doctors/nurses/allied health-care organisations, civil society and citizen groups have taken up the mantle and are working collectively on the frontlines in this extraordinary national battle against COVID-19, he added.

TEN STATES ACCOUNT FOR OVER 71% OF CASES

New Delhi: Maharashtra, Karnataka and Delhi are among 10 states that account for 71.75 per cent of the 4,03,738 new Covid-19 cases registered in a day, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

The other states in the list of 10 are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, and Haryana.

Maharashtra has reported the highest daily new cases at 56,578. It is followed by Karnataka with 47,563 while Kerala reported 41,971 new cases.

A total of more than 30.22 crore tests have been conducted so far across the country while the daily Covid-19 positivity rate stands at 21.64 per cent, the ministry said.

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Haryana, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh cumulatively account for 82.94 per cent of India's total active cases, the ministry stated. “The National Mortality Rate has been falling and currently stands at 1.09 per cent,” the ministry said.

Besides, 4,092 deaths were reported in a span of 24 hours.

Ten states account for 74.93 per cent of the new deaths. Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties (864). Karnataka follows with 482 daily deaths.

Delhi extends lockdown by another week, tightens curbs

Kejriwal says extension is to ensure that Capital does not let guard down

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 9

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal has extended the lockdown in the national capital by another week, making the restrictions stricter. Even Delhi Metro services have been suspended this time. The lockdown will be on till 5 am on Monday, May 17. Mr Kejriwal said the extension was meant to ensure that the city does not let its guard down even though the Covid-19 numbers have dropped marginally. “The positivity rate has gone down but still we can't afford leniency. We need to extend to lockdown,” the CM said.

There will be a total prohibition of wedding ceremonies at public places. Marriages can be held at homes or in the courts with not more than 20 people, under an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA). “There will be a complete prohibition on marriage ceremonies at public places, banquet halls, hotels and similar places during this period,” it said.

The service providers or owners of hotels, banquets, marriage halls, sound systems, DJs, and catering services will have to return the advance payments for marriages during the lockdown or have to mutually agree on a later date for the ceremonies, the order said.

Mr Kejriwal had also written to the Union health minister, urging him to direct the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to increase their monthly supplies to Delhi to 60 lakh doses from May to July.

While the positivity rate, which stood at 35 per cent in mid-April, has dropped to 23 per cent, doctors say even this is very high and there is a need to completely break the chain of transmission.

Delhi's cumulative Covid-19 vaccination coverage exceeded 38 lakh doses, the Delhi government said on Sunday.

The Delhi health department says it has vaccinated 2,75,540 people of the 18-44 age group so far and has a stock of 2,74,460 vaccine doses for this age group.

Deputy CM Manish Sisodia has, meanwhile, ordered an inquiry into reports that 23 Covid-19 patients had gone missing from Hindu Rao Hospital; and has instructed the health department to submit its report by Monday.

AAP MLA Atishi said, meanwhile, that Delhi has so far received 5.5 lakh doses for the 18-44 category, over 43 lakh for the 45-plus, and healthcare and frontline workers. “We have now 4.65 lakh doses available for 45-plus people, and healthcare and frontline workers; and 2.74 lakh doses for the 18-44 group,” she said. The total number of cases in Delhi has reached 13,10,231 — of which 87,907 are active cases. The total number of fatalities is 19,071. The city recorded a positivity rate of 23.34 per cent and a case fatality rate of 1.46 per cent. This will be the fourth week of the lockdown imposed as the Covid-19 numbers in the national capital skyrocketed.

PM speaks to CMs of 4 states on virus

New Delhi, May 9: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday spoke to the chief ministers of Punjab, Karnataka, Bihar and Uttarakhand on the Covid-19 situation in their states, official sources said.

Modi has been speaking to state chief ministers and lieutenant governors of union territories for the last few days to assess the pandemic situation there and offer suggestions.

Chief ministers have also briefed him on the measures being taken by them to deal with the raging second wave of the pandemic.



Patients on oxygen support wait outside the Covid-19 facility of the Chest Disease Hospital in Jammu, on Sunday. — PTI



Relatives mourn after the death of family member due to Covid-19, as Coronavirus cases surge in the national capital, at LNJP Hospital in New Delhi. — PTI



Family members along with medical workers shift a COVID19 patient to Level-3 ward of Swaroop Rani Nehru Hospital in Prayagraj, on Sunday. — PTI

India gets 6.7K O2 concentrators, 16 generation plants as aid from abroad

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 9

The Union Government on Sunday said a whopping 6,738 Oxygen Concentrators, 3,856 Oxygen Cylinders, 16 Oxygen Generation Plants, 4,668 ventilators and about three lakh vials of anti-Covid drug Remdesivir have been delivered to the country so far from abroad, adding that it was promptly allocating and distributing the supplies. This comes even as foreign aid continued to pour in from Britain, Japan, Canada, South Korea, Kuwait, China and other nations.

Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong tweeted on Sunday evening, “The first batch of 100 Oxygen concentrators, 40 ventilators, and other anti-epidemic supplies donated by the Red Cross Society of China (RCS) arrived in India today by a Chinese cargo flight from Chengdu. RCS also decided to provide US\$ one million in cash assistance to the Indian Red Cross Society through the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help India fight against Covid-19.”



Consignment of 3 O2 generators & 1,000 ventilators arrives from UK. Each generator has capacity to produce 500 litres of O2/min, enough to treat 50 people at a time. — PTI

19.” The Chinese envoy added, “Nothing in the world is more precious than people's lives. Actions of RCS shine the humanitarian spirit ...”

Meanwhile, SpiceXpress, the air cargo arm of airline SpiceJet, said it had airlifted 9,600 oxygen concentrators from Beijing, Wuhan, Nanjing and Hong Kong to Kolkata and Delhi on Sunday. The airline said it has airlifted more than 27,000 oxygen concentrators from the USA, Hong Kong, Singapore and China so far.

On British support, MEA Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi tweeted, “Taking forward our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Consignment of 3 O2 generators & 1,000 ventilators arrives from UK. Each generator has capacity to produce 500 litres of O2/min, enough to treat 50 people at a time. Deeply value the contribution from our close friend.”

Earlier on Saturday, 100 oxygen concentrators were sent by Japan as a part of the first batch of the emergency assistance to India. Japan is providing India with 300 oxygen concentrators and 300 ventilators and announced it will continue to extend further support.

Canada also announced that it is sending up to 25,000 vials of the antiviral drug remdesivir (brand name Veklury) and up to 350 ventilators from its National Emergency Strategic Stockpile to help respond to the critical situation across India. Canada is also providing support through UNICEF's response to the pandemic in India with the urgent provision of 1,450 oxygen concentrators. This support is in “addition to Canada's \$10-million support to the Canadian Red Cross Society, which is supporting the Indian Red Cross Society's procurement of essential supplies and medicines.” The Canadian Armed Forces are airlifting these supplies to India.

On South Korean support, the MEA tweeted, “A valued partner in our extended neighbourhood. First consignment of 30 oxygen concentrators & 200 oxygen cylinders with regulators arrives from the Republic of Korea. Welcome this support from our Special Strategic Partner.”

A total of 282 Oxygen cylinders and 60 Oxygen concentrators also reached India from Kuwait and another 60 MT of liquid oxygen, 800 oxygen cylinders and two concentrators is also on its way from the Gulf nation.

There has been a sharp surge in infections over the past couple of months, making the second wave much worse than the first one that began in early 2020 and peaked in the last quarter of that year before the tally hit a trough in the first quarter of 2021.

Several experts believe that a casual approach that followed the trough of the first wave could be a possible reason for the pandemic raising its head again, though others are also putting the blame on the new mutants and variants of the virus being more virulent.

K. VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser,

had said on Wednesday last week that the third wave was inevitable and it was necessary to be prepared for new waves, but clarified two days later that the “insidious asymptomatic transmission” can be stopped if prescribed guidelines about precautions, surveillance, containment, treatment and testing are followed.

“If we take strong measures, the third wave may not happen in all places or indeed anywhere at all. It depends on much how effectively guidance is implemented at the local level in the states, districts and cities everywhere,” he said. According to experts,

in a few months when the immunity people have developed naturally or with the help of vaccination fades, the virus strikes again and the only thing that can stop the virus from bouncing back is how people are guarding themselves.

“Early this year, as the new cases receded, people started interacting as if there was no virus. The immunity had already started declining. They organised mass gatherings, they stopped wearing masks, giving the opportunity to the virus to strike again,” said Dr Anurag Agarwal, director, Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology, New Delhi.

“While we anticipate a third wave, we cannot say when exactly it will come or how severe it will be. But if people keep following Covid-appropriate behaviour in coming months and we are able to vaccinate a large number of people, the third wave could be less severe,” Dr Agarwal added.

While the sudden surge in the number of cases during the second wave has led to panic among people, what is adding to their fear is the constant threat of new mutants of the virus and how these mutants could potentially harm them.

— PTI

Centre issues guidelines on fungal infection

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 9

India recorded 3,66,317 fresh cases on Sunday. The numbers have declined marginally over the past three days after hitting a peak of 4,14,554 on Thursday. Deaths continued to surge with 4,092 fatalities reported on Sunday. However there were early signs in the data that the second wave in the country could be reaching its peak. Several states too imposed lockdown or strict curbs as Coronavirus catastrophe continues.

Maharashtra reported 56,578 cases while Karnataka had 47,563. Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh were the other top contributors.

Rajasthan recorded 159 deaths and 17,921 coronavirus cases on Sunday, taking the death toll to 5,665 and the infection tally to 7,56,707.

Haryana reported 13,548 new coronavirus cases, taking the case tally to 6,15,897 while 12,639 recoveries brought the active number of cases in the state to 1,16,867. Haryana recorded 151 Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours, according to the health bulletin.

In Uttar Pradesh the number of new cases of Covid-19 continued to decline while recoveries went up in the state on Saturday, health officials said. At least 26,847 fresh cases were reported while 34,721 people were declared free of coronavirus infection in the last 24 hours. During

this period, total 2,23,656 Covid tests were conducted in the state.

In a first of its kind data released by the government, on Covid patients requiring critical care, shows that nearly 50,000 people are currently in ICUs while over 14,000 on ventilator support.

Meanwhile, Centre issues advisory on management of Mucormycosis fungal infection in Covid-19 patients

Mucormycosis, a fungal infection being found in Covid-19 patients with uncontrolled diabetes and prolonged intensive care unit (ICU) stay, may turn fatal if uncured.

Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana extended their ongoing lockdowns till May 17 to curb the unprecedented surge of Covid-19 cases and deaths.

Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Puducherry will also have a two-week shutdown starting Monday, while in Karnataka's stringent lockdown will come into effect on Monday till May 24. On Saturday, Kerala came under a nine-day complete lockdown. This means that from Monday, a majority of the country will be under either a strict lockdown or lockdown-like curbs.

M a h a r a s h t r a . Karnataka and Delhi are among 10 states that account for 71.75 per cent of new Covid-19 cases registered in a day, the Union health ministry said in its Sunday morning update.

The revised adult vaccination policy set to be announced by Chhattisgarh government very soon has proposed to give a major share to members of below poverty line (BPL) families in the third phase of inoculation launched in the state on May one, sources said on Sunday.

The proposed policy has divided people in the age group of 18-44 to be inoculated in the third phase of vaccination into four categories and quotas for each category of these people have been fixed, a senior officer in the Chhattisgarh health department told this newspaper unwilling to be quoted since he was not authorised to speak to media.

The four categories of people created in the proposed revised vaccination policy are BPL, above poverty line (APL), Antyodaya and frontline workforce, sources said.

Sources revealed BPL has been given a share of 52 percent in the vaccination drive, while APL,

Antyodaya and frontline workforce have been given quotas of 12 percent, 16 percent and 20 percent respectively.

Chhattisgarh is the first state to fix quotas for people in the third phase of vaccination in the state.

In a related development, Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday announced to include journalists and lawyers in the frontline workforce.

“Journalists, lawyers and their families will also get priority in vaccination like frontline workers”, Mr Baghel announced.

People with comorbidities, food providers, vegetable vendors, anganwadi workers, mitanis (health workers), panchayat secretaries, ‘Kotwar-Patel’ and public distribution system managers and vendors have also been included in the list of frontline workers.

The Chhattisgarh high court has earlier directed the state government to come out with a fresh adult vaccination policy after setting aside the existing policy which gave priority to Antyodaya card holders in the vaccination drive.

— PTI

Experts warn Covid-appropriate behaviour to fight future waves

COVID | BLUES

Experts warn Covid-appropriate behaviour to fight future waves

Vaccination a shield against virus

New Delhi, May 9: With the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic ravaging the country and concerns being raised about a possible third wave, experts caution that the next wave could be less severe if people keep following Covid-appropriate behaviour and a large portion of the population is vaccinated.

According to the Union Health Ministry data released on Sunday morning, India recorded 4,03,738 fresh Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the country's cumulative tally to 2,22,96,414, while the death toll climbed to 2,42,362 with 4,092 daily deaths.

There has been a sharp surge in infections over the past couple of months, making the second wave much worse than the first one that began in early 2020 and peaked in the last quarter of that year before the tally hit a trough in the first quarter of 2021.

Several experts believe that a casual approach that followed the trough of the first wave could be a possible reason for the pandemic raising its head again, though others are also putting the blame on the new mutants and variants of the virus being more virulent.

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had said on Wednesday last week that the third wave was inevitable and it was necessary to be prepared for new waves, but clarified two days later that the “insidious asymptomatic transmission” can be stopped if prescribed guidelines about precautions, surveillance, containment, treatment and testing are followed.

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While the sudden surge in the number of cases during the second wave has led to panic among people, what is adding to their fear is the constant threat of new mutants of the virus and how these mutants could potentially harm them.

— PTI

IN BRIEF

SLAIN JUDGE GETS CLOSER TO SAINTHOOD

Rome, May 9: An Italian judge murdered by the mafia in Sicily takes a step towards sainthood Sunday, almost three decades after being declared a martyr by pope John Paul II. The beatification of Rosario Livatino will take place in the cathedral in Agrigento, the Sicilian town near where he was gunned down aged 38 on September 21, 1990.

In a preface to a new book about the judge, Pope Francis hailed him as a “righteous man who knew he did not deserve that unjust death”.

Livatino, who prayed in church every day before going to court, had been involved in a mass trial against mafioso and was about to launch a new case when he died.

He was found in a ditch by the roadside a few miles from his home. He had refused armed protection.

Many of his notes were later found to be marked STD, for “sub tutela Dei”, a Latin invocation meaning “under the protection of God” which judges of the Middle Ages used before taking official decisions. The notes also showed he asked God’s forgiveness for the risks his work exposed his parents to, once he learned that the bosses of the Cosa Nostra had him in their sights. When John Paul II visited Livatino’s parents in 1993, he said the judge was “a martyr for justice and indirectly for the faith”.

PAK POLICEMAN KILLED IN KP MILITANT ATTACK

Peshawar: A Pakistani police official was killed when some unidentified terrorists opened fire on a patrol vehicle in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Sunday.

The terrorists attacked the police mobile van while it was doing a routine patrolling on Indus highway in Lakki Marwat district, Station House Officer of local police station Naveed Nawaz said.

While Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Muhammad Shah was killed in the attack, two terrorists were gunned down in the retaliatory firing, he said. In another incident, Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) police arrested three wanted terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Bannu district. The members of the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan outfit were wanted in several cases, including suicide attacks on police stations, extortions and target killings, police said.

Attacks on Pakistan government installations by militia in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province are quite common, in January, a police man was killed in Karak district for escorting a team of health care workers, who were supposed to administer polio vaccine to children in the highly-conservative and Pashtun-dominated area which borders Afghanistan. — *Agencies*

FIRE AT SYRIAN OIL REFINERY EXTINGUISHED

Damascus, May 9: Firefighters extinguished a blaze Sunday in a distillation unit at one of Syria’s two oil refineries, Syrian state TV reported.

No one was hurt, but the fire caused some damage to the facility, a refinery official said. The TV named the cause of the fire as crude oil leakage from one of the pumping stations at the Homs Oil Refinery in the central province of Homs. The fire came amid a series of mysterious attacks on vessels and oil facilities in Syria over the past months. The war-torn country has been suffering from fuel shortage in recent months.

Head of Homs Oil Refinery Suleiman Mohammed told state TV that the distillation unit that caught fire is one of four at the refinery.

In addition to the refinery in Homs, Syria has another one near the coastal town of Banias. Both are government-run and operating.

Syria’s oil resources are mostly outside of government controlled areas. Syria controls some small oil and gas fields but most of the large fields in the east are controlled by US-backed Kurdish-led fighters. This has made Damascus reliant on Iran for fuel.

The US sanctions have targeted a network that spanned Syria, Iran and Russia responsible for shipping oil to the Syrian government. — *AP*

Death toll soars to 50 in Kabul school bombing

Kabul, May 9: The death toll in a horrific bombing at a girls’ school in the Afghan capital has soared to 50, many of them pupils between 11 and 15 years old, the Interior Ministry said on Sunday.

The number of wounded in Saturday’s attack has also climbed to more than 100, said Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq Arian.

Three explosions outside the school entrance struck as students were leaving for the day, he said. The blasts occurred in a mostly Shiite neighborhood in the west of the capital. The Taliban denied responsibility, condemning the attack.

The first explosion came from a vehicle packed with explosives, followed by two others, said Arian, adding that the casualty figures could still rise.

In the capital rattled by relentless bombings, Saturday’s attack was among the worst. Criticism has mounted over lack of security and growing fears of even more violence as the US and Nato complete their final military withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The attack targeted Afghanistan’s ethnic Hazaras who dominate the western Dasht-e-Barchi neighborhood, where the bombings occurred. Most Hazaras are Shiite Muslims.

The area has been hit by violence against minority Shiites and most often claimed by the Islamic State affiliate operating in the country. No one has yet claimed Saturday’s bombings.

● Three explosions outside the school entrance struck as students were leaving for the day on Saturday.

● The blasts occurred in a mostly Shiite neighborhood in the west of the capital. The Taliban denied responsibility, condemning the attack.

The radical Sunni Muslim group has declared war on Afghanistan’s Shiites. Washington blamed IS for a vicious attack last year in a maternity hospital in the same area that killed pregnant women and newborn babies.

Soon after the bombing, angry crowds attacked ambulances and even beat health workers as they tried to evacuate the wounded, health ministry spokesman Ghulam Dastigar Nazari said.

He had implored residents to cooperate and allow ambulances free access to the site.

Bloodied backpacks and school books lay strewn outside the Syed Al-Shahda school. In the morning, boys attend classes in the sprawling school compound and in the afternoon, it’s girls’ turn.

Residents in the area said the explosion was deafening.

Naser Rahimi said he heard three separate explosions, and immediately thought that the sheer power of the blasts meant the death toll would almost certainly climb. — *AP*

3 hurt in Times Square shooting

New York, May 9: A shooting in New York’s bustling Times Square on Saturday injured a four-year-old girl and two women, in the latest incident of gun violence in the city, police said.

The shooting took place just before 5 pm local time (9 pm GMT), at the intersection of 7th Avenue and 44th Street, a NYPD spokesperson told AFP.

The three victims were a four-year-old child in a stroller, who was hit in the leg while her family was buying toys, a 46-year-old woman hit in the foot, and a 23-year-old

tourist from Rhode Island hit in the leg.

They were hospitalized in Manhattan, and their lives were not in danger, said New York police commissioner Dermot Shea, at a press briefing.

Shea said the three bystanders — who did not appear to know each other — stumbled into an argument between two to four men, at least one of whom fired a gun. No arrests had been made by early evening. Police issued an appeal for witnesses and released surveillance camera footage of a wanted man. — *AFP*

Variant fuelling Covid explosion: WHO

Geneva, May 9: A Covid-19 variant spreading in India is more contagious and may be dodging vaccine protections, contributing to the country’s explosive outbreak, the World Health Organisation’s chief scientist said Saturday.

In an interview, Soumya Swaminathan warned that “the epidemiological features that we see in India today do indicate that it’s an extremely rapidly spreading variant”.

India on Saturday for the

first time registered more than 4,000 Covid-19 deaths in just 24 hours, and more than 4,00,000 new infections.

New Delhi has struggled to contain the outbreak, which has overwhelmed its healthcare system, and many experts suspect the official death and case numbers are a gross underestimate.

Swaminathan, an Indian paediatrician and clinical scientist, said the B.1.617 variant of Covid-19, which was first detected in India

last October, was clearly a contributing factor to the catastrophe unfolding in her homeland.

“There have been many accelerators that are fed into this,” the 62-year-old said, stressing that “a more rapidly spreading virus is one of them”.

The WHO recently listed B.1.617 — which counts several sub-lineages with slightly different mutations and characteristics — as a “variant of interest”.

But so far it has stopped short of adding it to its

short list of “variant of concern” — a label indicating it is more dangerous than the original version of the virus by being more transmissible, deadly or able to get past vaccine protections.

Several national health authorities, including in the United States and Britain, have meanwhile said they consider B.1.617 a variant of concern, and Swaminathan said she expected the WHO to soon follow suit.

— *AFP*

SPACE | ALERT

Remnants of rocket burned up as they reentered atmosphere near the Maldives

China’s rocket debris falls into Indian Ocean

FROM PG 1

US and European tracking sites had been monitoring the uncontrolled fall of the rocket. Monitoring service Space-Track, which uses US military data, also confirmed the re-entry.

“Everyone else following the LongMarch5B re-entry can relax. The rocket is down,” it said.

@18SPCS confirms that CZ-5B (LongMarch5B) (48275 / 2021-035B) reentered atmosphere 9 May at 0214Z and fell into the Indian ocean north of the Maldives at lat 22.2, long 50.0. That’s all we have on this re-entry; thanks for the wild ride,” it said.

The US Space command

confirmed the re-entry into the atmosphere of the rocket over the Arabian peninsula, but said it was unknown if the debris had hit land or water.

“The exact location of the impact and the span of debris, both of which are unknown at this time, will not be released by US Space Command,” it said. Harvard astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell, who tracked the tumbling rocket part, wrote on Twitter, “An ocean reentry was always statistically the most likely. It appears China won its gamble But it was still reckless. The rocket, carrying the core module for China’s Tiangong Space Station, blasted

NASA DENOUNCES CHINA OVER ‘IRRESPONSIBLE STANDARDS’

Washington, May 9: US space agency Nasa on Sunday slammed China for failing to meet “responsible standards” regarding its space debris, hours after remnants of the country’s largest and an out of control rocket disintegrated over the Indian Ocean near the Maldives. Reacting to China’s space programme, Nasa

administrator Bill Nelson said: “It is clear that China is failing to meet responsible standards regarding their space debris. “Space-faring nations must minimize the risks to people and property on Earth of re-entries of space objects and maximize transparency regarding those operations,” he said in a statement.

off from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site on the southern island provi-

nce of Hainan on April 29. The large rocket stage that deorbited was more

Scotland renews bid to part ways with England yet again

Scottish National Party wins polls, pushes for 2nd plebiscite for independence

London, May 9: The Scottish National Party won its fourth straight parliamentary election on Saturday and insisted it will push on with another referendum on Scotland’s independence from the United Kingdom even though it failed by one seat to secure a majority.

Final results of Thursday’s election showed the SNP winning 64 of the 129 seats in the Edinburgh-based Scottish Parliament. The result extends the party’s dominance of Scottish politics since it first won power in 2007.

Other results from Super Thursday’s array of elections across Britain emerged Saturday, including the Labour Party’s victory in the Welsh parliamentary election.

The election with the biggest implications was the Scottish election, as it could pave the way to the



break-up of the United Kingdom.

SNP leader and Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said her immediate priority would be steering Scotland through the coronavirus pandemic and that the legitimacy of an independence referendum

BACK STORY

● England and Scotland became one kingdom after Scottish Parliament ratified the Treaty of Union in 1706 to merge both the kingdoms, which were ruled by one king for 100 years.

● Scottish King James VI became the English monarch in 1603 as England’s Queen Elizabeth I died without any children.

● The East India Company, which colonised India, also played a role in the integration of Britain and Scotland by harming the interests of Scottish traders, who were opposing the union.

remains, SNP majority or not.

This is now a matter of fundamental democratic principle, Sturgeon said. It is the will of the country.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the leader of the Conservative Party, would have the ultimate authority whether or not to per-

mit another referendum on Scotland gaining independence. Johnson appears intent on resisting another vote, setting up the possibility of renewed tensions between his government and Sturgeon’s devolved administration.

Johnson wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* newspa-

per published Saturday that another referendum would be irresponsible and reckless in the current context as Britain emerges from the pandemic.

He has consistently argued that the issue was settled in a September 2014 referendum, when 55 per cent of Scottish voters favoured remaining part of the UK.

Proponents of another vote say the situation has changed fundamentally because of Brexit, with Scotland taken out of the European Union against its will. In the 2016 Brexit referendum, 52 per cent of the UK voted to leave the European Union while 62 per cent of Scots voted to remain.

Sturgeon said it would be wrong for Johnson to stand in the way of a referendum and that the timing is a matter for the Scottish Parliament. — *AP*

Sadiq wins London Mayor post again



Re-elected Mayor of London Sadiq Khan hugs his wife Saadiya after the result declaration at City Hall, in London, on Saturday.

— *AP*

● Labour Party candidate Khan, 51, defeated his Conservative Party rival, Shaun Bailey, after winning a total of 1,206,034 votes as against 977,601 when both first and second preference votes from Thursday’s mayoral election were fully counted overnight on Saturday.

● The mayoral poll was due last year but was postponed by a year at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

Khan reiterated his previous pledge to be a mayor for all Londoners and work to improve the lives of every single person in this city.

Rival Bailey said he had been “written off” by pollsters, journalists and other politicians but Londoners didn’t write me off”.

His victory is one of the few positives for the Labour Party as the party held on to its dominance in the London Assembly as well.

However, overall the local election performance has been largely dismal for the Opposition party as it lost many of its strongholds. The Conservatives have gained control of around 12 councils. — *PTI*

Nirav Modi’s appeal against extradition stuck in UK HC

London, May 9: Fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi, whose extradition to India was ordered last month by UK Home Secretary Priti Patel in the estimated USD 2-billion Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam case, has filed an application for permission to appeal against the order in the High Court in London.

The Crown Prosecution

Service (CPS) confirmed an appeal has been lodged but a High Court judge who will make a decision on the matter is yet to be assigned.

The matter has not been sent to a judge for consideration on the papers, the Administrative Division of the Royal Courts of Justice in London said this week.

In the first instance, a

High Court judge will make a decision on the papers submitted for the appeal and determine if there are any grounds for an appeal against the Home Secretary’s decision or the Westminster Magistrates’ Court February ruling in favour of Modi’s extradition to India to face charges of fraud and money laundering. — *PTI*

Putin sees Nazi ideas in Europe

Moscow, May 9: Russian President Vladimir Putin marked the anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe with a speech warning that Nazi beliefs remain strong.

Speaking to the annual military parade here, Putin on Sunday decried attempts to rewrite history, to justify traitors and criminals, on whose hands lies the blood of

people. “Unfortunately, many of the ideologies of the Nazis, those who were obsessed with the delusional theory of their exclusiveness, are again trying to be put into service,” he said.

The anniversary of Nazi Germany’s defeat, which Russia calls Victory Day, is the country’s most significant secular holiday.

— *AP*



than 33 metres (108 feet) tall and weighed more than 20 tonnes, making it the sixth largest object to re-enter the Earth’s atmosphere, according to the Aerospace Corporation, a federally funded research organisation based in

California. Very little of the rocket stage’s mass survived re-entry, however, with the majority having burned up as it entered the Earth’s dense atmosphere at a speed of about 8 km per second, the *Post* report said.

— *PTI*

<p>CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS</p> <p>OPEN TENDER</p> <p>No. COS/CRJ/PUB/eTender/19/0162 Date: 06/05/2021. The following e-Tenders can be accessed under the link www.ireps.gov.in. Offers for such e-Tender can be submitted only electronically by accessing the link www.ireps.gov.in → login → E-Tender Stores/Supply. Vendors may also contact the following officials to obtain clarification regarding particular tender or IREPS related information if any. Dy.CMM/HQ/CLW/Chittaranjan, 0341-2525594 or SMM/CON/HQ/0341-2535631. Sl. No.; Tender No.; Brief Description of Item; Qty.; Earnest Money Deposit (Rupees); Tender Closing Date & Time (IST): [1]; 75214030; Cab Assy Complete for WAG-9 & WAP-7 as per Spec. No. CLW/MS/3/154 Alt-1; 283.00 Set; 2000000.00; 10/06/2021 at 11:00 am. [2]; 75213823; (1) S.S. Pipe Fittings for WAG-9HC (Shell Piping) for CCB Brake System as per Drg./Specn. No. CLW/MS/3/053 ALT-20. (2) S. S. Pipe Fittings for WAP-7 for CCB Brake System as per Drg./Specn. No. CLW/MS/3/053 Alt-20; (1) 60.00 Set, (2) 7.00 Set; 539390.00; 03/06/2021 at 11:00 am. [3]; 83210887; Rubber Bush for 6 FRA 6068 Drg. No. 4TWD.096.171 or latest, STR No. CLW/TM/14350 Rev.0 or latest; 10862.00 Numbers; 0.00; 07/06/2021 at 11:00 am</p> <p>Principal Chief Materials Manager ARUN-035 CLW/Chittaranjan</p> <p>Take us on: www.facebook.com/clarailways</p>
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DECCAN Chronicle

10 MAY 2021

No more bickering, enable new anti-Covid task force

The Supreme Court order constituting a National Task Force (NTF) for, among others, making an assessment and recommendations on the availability and distribution of medical oxygen and essential drugs and medicines for the entire country gives the Union government an opportunity to make quick amends to the lapses it committed in preparing the nation for the second wave of the pandemic Covid-19.

The cabinet secretary is the convenor of the NTF which has 12 members drawn from the bureaucracy, academics and the healthcare industry. The court would want the NTF to commence its work immediately and determine the modalities for oxygen supply within a week, reflecting the desperation of thousands of people suffering from the lack of healthcare facilities felt across the country. The court has also tasked them with anticipating the requirements of the nation to face a third wave of the pandemic, which the principal scientific adviser to the government has already warned is on its way. The Union and state governments and their agencies have been told to provide

The government must take the court's intervention as a call to assume the power and responsibility in a decisive manner and act. It must ensure that the NTF gets the best help from all concerned...

complete and real time data for facilitating the NTF's work while all private hospitals and other healthcare institutions have been asked to co-operate with it.

While repeatedly assuring all stakeholders that it has no plans to enter into the executive domain of the government, the apex court has said the constitution of the NTF will facilitate a public health response to the pandemic based on scientific and specialised domain knowledge and "enable the decision makers to have inputs which go beyond finding ad-hoc solutions to the present problems".

The ball is now in the government's court, contrary to a section of the cheerleaders of the NDA dispensation screaming themselves hoarse, saying the court's directive goes against the constitutional scheme of things. True, the court has stepped in to fill a vacuum people have felt but it has made it clear that it is for the government to take "appropriate decisions" on the task force's recommendations though it said the body shall submit its recommendations to the court also. True also that the Constitution vests all the executive power with the Union council of ministers headed by the Prime Minister, who also heads the National Disaster Management Authority, constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

The court must, however, have been disappointed with the response of the government when it asked for a plan to address the pressing issues people face during the pandemic, and hence the decision. That several high courts were also forced to intervene to ensure supply of oxygen and life-saving drugs may have also prompted the Supreme Court into taking a pro-active position.

The government must take the court's intervention as a call to assume the power and responsibility in a decisive manner and act. It must ensure that the NTF gets the best help from all concerned so that it comes up with readily actionable plan which will help address the mess the nation finds itself in now. Quibbling over constitutional niceties can wait till the pandemic is over.

Subhani



India, world in middle of a 'Third World War'

Abhijit Bhattacharyya



It's now a "Third World War". In the nineteenth century, Prussia's Maj. Gen. Carl von Clausewitz had said: "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means". That is what the People's Republic of China is now engaged in -- waging war in order to dominate the world.

We have now entered the third year of this epic campaign, which began in 2019 on a low key. The Chinese strategy was simple -- to subdue without shooting -- and to bring India to its knees. This has now turned into a conflagration. New Delhi was totally unprepared and last year, as the threat of the pandemic rose, it got caught up in health issues and couldn't put adequate infrastructure in place. This monumental misjudgment led to vast numbers of Indians shivering down their spine, failing as usual to read Chinese malice.

It's not just India. The world is in the midst of a long-drawn, protracted "Third World War", the first salvo of which was fired by Beijing's dictator-for-life Xi Jinping from Wuhan in 2019, to fulfil the Communist Party of China's twenty-first century ambition of becoming the planet's numero uno power.

The seeds were sown at Wuhan, President Xi's favourite venue to showcase his country's new global ambitions. Remember the "Wuhan spirit" of 2018 -- when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met the Chinese strongman in the aftermath of the Dokalam standoff earlier that year? The prime target was, of the West, and specifically the United States; but Beijing then changed course towards the secondary target, India; decimating Delhi's health and resources through a second-wave warhead that pene-

trated through the fragile firewall of Lutyens' Delhi's diplomatic gullibility, political vulnerability and strategic inability to retaliate against the CPC's malice. This not only brought Delhi down, forcing it to kowtow to the world for aid and help, but now threatens the very existence of India's demography.

As fatalities rise across the land and corpses pile up, the killer epicentre of the war has ferociously revived across the whole of India, wreaking havoc of the kind not seen by Indians before. Without a bullet fire or a bomb dropped, the flames of war are about to send India's economy and its health systems into the ICU. India's defence and diplomacy are on a psychological ventilator, with the polity embarrassed and bruised for going into an avoidable and premature celebration to declare victory over the China-origin virus pandemic.

New Delhi's enormous misjudgment in assessing the incendiary punch of the conflagration has sunk a nation of 1.3 billion into an unprecedented state of pessimism and panic, dejection and depression. India also miscalculated the swift course change of the "Third World War", because unlike all belligerents in previous conflicts in human history, its mass killing spree without military mobilisation doesn't have any visible or definite contours.

The deadly blow of the Chinese-origin virus (Covid-19) is far worse than the physical devastation and destruction that India faced in either the First or the Second World War. The outreach of this virus has been more devastating than the poison gas in the First World War (used by Britain, Germany and Austria-Hungary in the trenches adjacent to the Franco-

German border and beyond) and the subsequent reduced use by combatants in the Second World War following the public revulsion caused after the 1914-1918 war.

In the twenty-first century, however, the Chinese-origin virus has already affected around 320 million people globally and is now on an uncontrollable overdrive. Having afflicted 20 million-plus Indians and killing over 200,000 of them, this silent chemical-biological killer is infecting around 400,000 people in India every single day, with around 3,500-4,000 succumbing every day. The funeral pyres are everywhere, not just in crematoria: ambulances, alleys, parks, car parks, riversides are seeing corpses lit before the last rites.

Compared to the two world wars of the twentieth century, which were largely fought in Europe and other parts of the planet, this is the first "world war" in which India is one of the principal battlegrounds. Make no mistake. Even at the height of the bloodshed between the belligerents, the First World War was a European war, leading to 30 million deaths. It happened mostly on the European heartland, Russia, Turkey, Mesopotamia and East Asia, in which a maximum of 40 nations were directly involved or affected.

The 1939-1945 Second World War, however, killed 60 million people, double that of the First World War, with the devastation centred mostly in Europe, the Soviet Union, North Africa, Southeast Asia, East Asia and the Pacific islands. Mainland India survived a direct assault, along with most

of the African continent, Australia, plus North and South America.

Compare these with the Chinese-virus killer of the Third World War! It has spared no one, except perhaps the country of its origin, as is being claimed by the CPC in its centenary year. Hence, of the 223 countries (sovereign, semi-independent, autonomous, dependents) in the world, all are under attack except one! Isn't it a World War of one (among 223) against 222?

In the midst of this calamity comes the "offer" of proposed assistance to India from Mr Xi, who is also the CPC's general secretary! Should India accept it? As far as Beijing is concerned, we can emulate what then PM Manmohan Singh had done in 2004, in the aftermath of the tsunami, to politely refuse any assistance, at least from the CPC. India can seek or accept aid or help from any of the remaining 222, but not from the one that is actively trying to turn this country into a vassal state at a time of its distress. China has already proved that it is an existential threat to a large number of countries. Now the "Third World War" looms large, with the threat of the airborne "Made in China" germ/virus hovering over the planet.

You don't have to look very far for evidence of the Hans' mischievous thought and intent. On Weibo, see the image of a Chinese rocket launch positioned next to a photo of Covid-19 victims being cremated in India. The text read: "Lighting a fire in China versus lighting a fire in India". This nasty, nefarious image was published by an account of the official Chinese law enforcement agency -- CPC Central Political, Legal Affairs Commission -- that has millions of Weibo followers. It shows the Chinese rejoicing at the sight of funeral pyres of Indian victims of the "Third World War". Will nemesis catch up one day?

The writer is an alumnus of the National Defence College. The views expressed are personal.

LETTERS

NEED CLARION CALL

Now that the government proposed to avail the support of the private participation to control the pandemic, it should not end up merely deploying the private hospitals to share beds. Instead, a prudent decision will be to engage the private medical colleges that are aimed to help the government under the current contingency with participation in an active way since many of them have good infrastructure and an almost equal amount of health care workers. Under the present scenario, the post-graduate doctors and medical officers attached to the government institutions won't be comfortable handling the task given to them in this second wave due to obvious reasons. It's time for the government to make a clarion call to tackle the situation.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

MAHA TRICKS

It is human nature to search for a scapegoat for one's own inefficiency, incompetence and failure in a given assignment. True to the above 'Law of Life's 'Nature' the Maha government founded purely on opportunism, selfishness and utter betrayal of a trusted partner in BJP is now blaming the latter for its own failure to tackle the Covid issue and goes to the extent of heaping praises on the rule of previous governments headed by the Congress at the Centre under Nehru and Indira. No doubt Congress had some memorable achievements during its long rule of nearly 60 years. It is quite uncharitable and illogical to compare it with the short rule of BJP's 10+ years. Even during this short period, BJP could make big strides in road transportation by schemes like four and six lanes connecting every part of India, new ports built and old ports remodelled. Even in the Covid situation, the efforts of the Central government headed by BJP are too well known to be repeated and the tremendous help rendered by India to many foreign countries.

Kooduthuraiyan, Coimbatore

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary



Indian summer on UK's red list; royal duchesses in duel of creativity

April may be a cruel month but May heralds the beginning of the holiday season. For some reason, the English prefer to go abroad at the only time the weather is tolerable -- in the summer months. It was in the late nineteenth century that Parliament decided to have a summer break. The issue was the pollution of Thames. It stank. Members wanted the windows open due to the heat but that brought in the stink. So they decided to abandon the Westminster Palace for the summer. That brought summer holidays all around.

And now the traffic lights are back again -- to guide you whether you can travel to a particular country or not. Australia and New Zealand have made it to the "green" traffic lights, including others like Iceland, along with very few other countries. Which means that the Brits can travel there without having to quarantine for 10 days at a hotel chosen by the government when they return. But countries like India -- and some of its neighbours like Nepal and Pakistan fall into the "red" list. Thus while we

know that right now there is a travel ban between the two countries -- if any British citizen wants to travel to India they need to quarantine for ten days in a hotel upon their return, plus all the tests they have to undergo. Some people are deeply unhappy that these restrictions are still in place, despite the vaccine. But that is our "Brave New World" -- perfect only for armchair travellers!

So we still have rules of how many others you can meet and how closely they must be related. For instance, six members of two families can meet, etc. But it is only around the third week of June that many of these restrictions are going to be removed -- we hope that we can last that long! But of course getting back to "normal" will come with fresh caution as undoubtedly a life free of Covid and its many mutations is still far away. So while the "traffic lights" may turn green, many of us will still hang on to our masks.

Even so, it is not all pleasure and no work. May is also the month when local elections take place. Plus this year, vote to the Scottish Parliament. Municipal

elections in England were cancelled last year due to our first (of many but we did not know it then) lockdowns.

Mind you, despite all the difficulties the country has been through, the Prime Minister is still riding high. Perhaps it is the optimism that he exudes -- with the tousel hair and Houdini-like escape mechanisms. Throughout his career, he has got away with much, much more than any one else, and he carries no guilt for any wrong or fault he has committed. He apologises and carries on, a formula that has worked wonderfully.

Normally, the government party does not do well in the four yearly local elections as they are out of sync with general elections. But "lucky" Boris is emerging triumphant all over the English regions. The Labour Party under its leader Sir Keir Starmer (a rare Knighted MP) was hoping to reverse their losses in the North where they were supposed to have a "Red Wall". It had crumbled in the last general election. Alas, it cannot be rebuilt by Sir Keir, and Boris has once again managed to convince voters that he is

their best good news guy.

In London though things are different, the mayor of London has a four-year term. Boris was twice the mayor of London. But in 2016, Sadiq Khan, the Labour candidate, captured London. He has already had a bonus extra year due to the postponement of the election. Now he has won, and extended his stay for three more years. Thus he becomes not only the first minority ethnic candidate to continue to head one of the biggest cities in the world but now will establish the enviable distinction of having been mayor for a eight years. So come 2025 - prepare for Sadiq to turn his mind to leadership of the Labour Party and take a gamble on becoming the first minority ethnic Prime Minister of UK. Of course he may be running against Rishi Sunak or Priti Patel as the Conservatives' prime ministerial candidate. Who could have thought even 10 years ago, such a thing could happen?

And meanwhile a quick note on the publicity outreach of the two duchesses. Both Kate and

Meghan are doing their best to stay in the limelight. Who would have thought the ever productive Meghan Markle even had a book in her, and this time it seems to be a cute little children's book. She has come up with one called *The Bench*, dedicated to her husband Harry -- but written for her son. Undoubtedly a money spinner -- good or bad -- it means that now we all know what gift to buy a toddler.

One person who may not buy it will be the Duchess of Cambridge for reasons which are far too well known, especially after Oprah. But the competition is heating up -- as William and Kate have their own "YouTube" channel now. While the two duchesses continue their duel at dawn, from safely across the pond... one wonders, what next?

Kishwar Desai's latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani, has just been published and she is the Chair of the Trust that set up the world's first Partition Museum in Amritsar

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49206.47	0.52
Nifty 50	14823.20	0.67
S&P 500*	4,232.60	0.74
Dollar (₹)	73.51	0.36
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.30	0.33
Euro (₹)	88.76	0.11
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,185▲474	1.00
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.29	0.29
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.015	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.545	-0.016

* As of Friday/Saturday

CAMS lists on NSE

Chennai: CAMS, which acts as a registrar and transfer agent (RTA) for mutual funds, got listed on the NSE last Friday at ₹2,219.50 per share. In a statement, the company said it commenced trading on NSE at ₹2,219.50 per share in the morning trade and finally closed at ₹2,210. During the trading session, it touched a high of ₹2,249 and a low of ₹2,200. A total of 95,184 shares changed hands on the exchange. At the end of Friday's closing price, the company's market capitalisation stood at ₹10,790 crore. CAMS listed on BSE in October 2020 following its initial public offer (IPO) in September.

Over 2,100 PSB branches closed or merged in FY21



As many as 2,118 branches of 10 public sector banks have either been closed or merged with other banks in the last fiscal, according to an RTI reply. The highest number of 1,283 branches of Bank of Baroda were either closed or merged, according to information provided to an RTI query filed by Neemuch-based activist Chandrashekhar Gaud. No branch of Bank of India and Uco Bank was closed last fiscal.

Cholamandalam sales rise 4.40%

The net profit of Cholamandalam Investment & Finance Company rose 470.11% to ₹243.21 crore in the quarter ended March 2021 as against ₹42.66 crore during the previous quarter ended March 2020. Sales rose 14.40% to ₹2461.15 crore in the quarter ended March 2021 as against ₹2151.33 crore during the previous quarter ended March 2020. For the full year, net profit rose 43.95% to ₹1514.91 crore in the year ended March 2021 as against ₹1052.37 crore during the previous year ended March 2020. Sales rose 9.98% to ₹9516.01

FPIs pull out over ₹5,900 crore from equities last week

Foreign portfolio investors have pulled out Rs 5,936 crore from equities in the first week of May amid worries over the Covid second wave and its fall-out on the economy. FPIs had pulled out Rs 9,659 crore in April after infusing money in the preceding six months. If fears of Covid-19 persist among investors, then further redemptions cannot be ruled out, Himanshu Srivastava of Morningstar India, stated.

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■ NCLT starts proceedings on creditor plea Ahluwalia Contracts in insolvency soup

New Delhi, May 9: The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has initiated insolvency proceedings against construction firm Ahluwalia Contracts India Ltd for defaulting on payments to an operational creditor.

The New Delhi-based NCLT bench allowed the insolvency plea filed by A2 Interiors Products Pvt Ltd against Ahluwalia Contracts, claiming default of Rs 14.10 crore, and appointed an interim resolution professional.

Ahluwalia Contracts had engaged A2 Interiors Products for interior, furnishing and allied civil and electrical works at various project sites. It had supplied materials to Ahluwalia Contracts as part of various work orders issued for six projects at different locations in the country, according to the NCLT order.

It had raised invoices against each work order, which were duly received by Ahluwalia Contracts, however, it failed to release the full payment.

Later, in May 2019, A2 Interiors had issued a notice to Ahluwalia Contracts under the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) demanding Rs 12.54 crore along with interest, which was rejected by Ahluwalia Contracts in its reply and raised disputes.

Following this, A2 Interiors approached the NCLT under section 9 of IBC, which allows operational creditors to file an insolvency plea, claiming



a total outstanding debt of Rs 14.10 crore against Ahluwalia Contracts.

This was opposed by Ahluwalia Contracts, contending it as not maintainable, on the grounds that it is arising out of different work orders, which cannot be claimed under one single application and of different service in nature and each contract gives rise to separate alleged debt.

It also alleged that the applicant has concealed certain facts and documents and not disclosed all work orders executed between the parties.

However, the operational creditor said that though it was for work order for six different projects but the corporate debtor is a Principal Contractor. It also submitted that no notice of dispute was raised by Ahluwalia Contracts prior to the notice of demand issued by it.

An NCLT bench comprising members

Sumitapurkayastha and Deepti Mukesh said: "Considering the documents on records and submissions made, it is observed that there exists an operational debt which is due and payable by the corporate debtor."

It further observed that once the work is complete and the final bill is raised, the retention money becomes due and payable.

Though the corporate debtor has raised dispute prior to the issue of the demand notice with regards to non-completion of work on time, defective work and invoices raised but has itself admitted that retention money is payable.

While admitting A2 Interiors' plea, the NCLT observed that the corporate debtor had admitted to the debt and the said has become due as per their own statement in their email, leaving no scope for any further adjudication.

— PTI

GOVT RELEASES ₹8,900 CR FOR PANCHAYATS

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, MAY 9

Amid the rampant spread of Covid19, the finance ministry, on Sunday, released over Rs 8,900 crore as grants a month in advance for panchayats. Though the payment was scheduled for June, the ministry decided to release it in May in view of the prevailing Covid19 situation. The amount s will be distributed among 25 states, in which the highest share of over Rs 1,441 crore has been granted to Uttar Pradesh, followed by over Rs 861 crore to Maharashtra.

"The Department of Expenditure in finance ministry released an amount of Rs 8,923.8 crore to 25 states for providing grants to the Rural Local Bodies. The grants of Rs 8,923.8 crore are meant for all the three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions - village, block and district," a finance ministry statement said.

Cadila eyes nod for Covid vaccine by June

RAHUL SATIJA MAY 9

Cadila Healthcare Ltd plans to submit trial data for its Covid-19 vaccine by end of May and is looking for an approval in June, a newspaper reported citing Sharvil Patel, managing director of Cadila.

The Phase-III clinical trials of the ZyCoV-D vaccine will be representative of its efficacy against

Jewellers get HC reprieve on hallmarking

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 9

The Bombay High Court has directed the government not to take any coercive action against jewellers till June 14, 2021 for storing or selling non-hallmarked gold jewellery. The government had made hallmarking mandatory from June 1.

The Nagpur bench of Bombay High Court was hearing the appeal filed by the All-India Gems and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) and others. The court stayed "coercive action" till it further heard the matter on June 14.

The GJC had contended that the new regulation with effect from June 1 is likely to result in great hardships to around 5 lakh jewellers in India. There are at least 488 districts which do not have hallmarking centres and the Covid restrictions prevent a person from travelling from one dis-



trict to another for hallmarking purposes.

Further, there are 6,000 crore jewellery pieces which need to be hallmarked. Within the time available it is not possible to get all these pieces hallmarked. Any breach of the regulation is punishable with maximum imprisonment of one year.

"The court has in the meanwhile, directed that no coercive action shall be taken against the jewellers under Section 29(2) of the BIS Act, 2016, till the next date of hearing on 14th June 2021. This is

a big relief to the jewellers who shall now be fully protected from any actions from BIS even though they may wish to still go ahead with mandatory hallmarking," said Saiyam Mehra, vice-chairman, GJC.

According to Ashish Pethe, chairman, GJC, court has seen the hardship of jewellers and has taken note of the contention that in proportion to the large number of jewellers in India, the percentage of hallmarking centres available in India is just about 34 per cent.

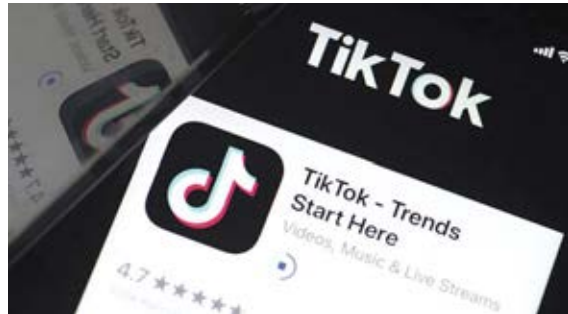
ByteDance aims to challenge Alibaba

COCO LIU & ZHEPING HUANG MAY 9

Zhang Yiming built ByteDance Ltd into the world's most valuable private company via a string of blockbuster apps like TikTok that challenged Facebook and other incumbents on their own turf. His latest target: Alibaba.

The 38-year-old AI coding genius, searching for ByteDance's next big act, has set his sights on China's \$1.7 trillion e-commerce arena. The co-founder has hired thousands of staff and roped in big-name sponsors like Xiaomi Corp impresario Lei Jun to drive what he calls his next "major breakthrough" into global business—selling stuff to consumers via its addictive short videos and livestreams. That endeavor will test not just Zhang's magic touch with app creation and ByteDance's AI wizardry, but also investor reception ahead of one of the tech world's most hotly anticipated IPOs.

His startup is already starting to make waves in an industry long controlled by Jack Ma's



Alibaba Group Holding Ltd and JD.com Inc. It sold about \$26 billion worth of make-up, clothing and other merchandise in 2020, achieving in its maiden year what Alibaba's Taobao took six years to accomplish. It's shooting for more than \$185 billion by 2022. Douyin, TikTok's Chinese twin, is expected to contribute more than half of the firm's \$40 billion domestic ad sales this year, driven in part by e-commerce.

"Short video platforms have so much traffic that they can basically do any business," said Shawn Yang, managing director of Blue Lotus Capital Advisors. "Douyin is not only in ads, but also live-streaming, e-commerce, local life services and

search. This has a lot of room for imagination."

A burgeoning e-commerce business could help the firm surpass its \$250 billion valuation when it goes public, countering concerns around Beijing's crackdown on the country's internet behemoths. Preparations are said to be underway for a listing that would be one of the world's most anticipated debuts. While ByteDance won't handle sales or merchandise itself, it hopes to sell more ads to merchants, boost traffic and take a cut of business.

The internet giant is a late entrant to China's social commerce scene, where influencers tout products to fans like a Gen-Z version of the Home Shopping Network.

The format, pioneered by Alibaba as a marketing tool in 2016, developed a life of its own last year when Covid-19 spurred demand for at-home entertainment. Last year, Alibaba's Taobao Live generated over 400 billion yuan (\$62 billion) of gross merchandise value.

ByteDance is counting on its artificial intelligence-driven, interest-based recommendations to help its e-commerce business catch up.

ByteDance's ambitions aren't limited to Alibaba. The firm has also started to let users book hotels and restaurants through Douyin, offering lifestyle services similar to super-apps like Meituan and Tencent's WeChat.

Douyin's e-commerce foray in China may offer a road map for TikTok, which has begun testing the waters in online shopping through tie-ups with Walmart Inc and Canadian e-commerce firm Shopify Inc. In December, Zhang told global employees that e-commerce, when combined with live-streaming and short videos, offers an even bigger opportunity outside China. — Bloomberg

New Delhi, May 9: As India suffers the world's worst outbreak of Covid-19 cases, global and domestic corporate giants are pitching in resources, from airlifting medical equipment, making medical oxygen and setting up hospitals to supplement a public health system buckling under the weight of surging infections and deaths.

Amazon and Google as well as Indian firms Tata Sons, Reliance Industries Ltd and Adani Group have set up Covid hospitals, airlifted cryogenic tankers from abroad for transporting medical oxygen and contributed funds to aid the Covid battle, going by company announcements and industry sources.

While Google CEO Sundar Pichai last month announced \$18 million donation, Amazon said 1,000 Medtronic ventilators will be delivered to India. Microsoft said it would work to provide India with 1,000 ventilators and 25,000 oxygen concentration devices. Mukesh Ambani-led

Reliance Industries tweaked manufacturing at its oil refineries to produce over 1,000 tonnes of medical grade liquid oxygen per day. It has also set up 1,875 hospital beds for free treatment of Covid patients in Jamnagar in Gujarat and in Mumbai.

India's largest steel maker JSW has stopped making some steel products to produce hundreds of tonnes of oxygen for hard-hit areas. It said it was building large Covid care centres around its plants, so that they can be serviced via a pipeline.

While Wipro and Azim Premji Foundation converted one IT facility in Pune into a 430-bed intermediary care Covid hospital, Infosys has set up a 100-room Covid hospital in Bangalore in association with Narayana Health, providing free care to the poor.

Cipla supported Maharashtra government in setting up Covid isolation ward, Vedanta is setting up a field hospital in Delhi NCR and Adani Foundation set up hospi-

tals in Gujarat and even converted the Adani Vidya Mandir school in Ahmedabad into an emergency Covid Care Centre with oxygen support and catered food.

Tata Group made about 5,000 beds available to Covid patients through its group companies and ITC set up a 200-bed makeshift hospital in Kishore Bharati Stadium for Covid patients in a record 72 hours.

State Bank of India set up 1,000-bed makeshift hospitals, 250-bed ICU facilities and 1,000-bed isolation facilities across the country, while Coal India Ltd set up the largest number of Covid beds totalling 2,000, including 750 oxygen and 70 ICU beds.

Tata Group also imported 1,000 cryogenic containers to transport liquid oxygen, supplying 900 tonnes of oxygen per day to state hospitals.

Tech Mahindra supplied medical equipment to over 20 hospitals and L&T Group committed 22 oxygen generators to needy hospitals. — PTI

Copper just smashed past a record. Here's what you need to know

MARK BURTON MAY 9

Copper soared last week to an all-time high, continuing a sizzling rally that's seen prices double in the past year.

The previous copper record was set in 2011, around the peak of the commodities supercycle sparked by China's rise. This time, investors are betting that copper's vital role in the world's shift to green energy will mean surging demand and even higher prices. Copper futures rose as high as \$10,440 a tonne in London on Friday.

What's the big deal about copper?

Through human history, copper has played a critical role in many of civilization's greatest advances: from early monetary

systems to municipal plumbing, from the rise of trains, planes and cars to the devices and networks that underpin the information age.

The reddish brown metal is mostly unrivalled as an electrical and thermal conductor, while also being durable and easy to work with. Today, a vast array of uses in all corners of heavy industry, construction and manufacturing mean it's a famously reliable indicator for trends in the global economy.

The copper market was one of the first to react as the Covid-19 coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, with prices slumping by more than a quarter between January and March last year. Then as China's unprecedented steps to control the domestic spread of the virus started

to yield results, copper rapidly rebounded—and it hasn't looked back since.

But it's not just China driving the rally. While the country accounts for half of the world's copper consumption and has played an integral part in copper's surge, demand there has actually softened this year. Yet prices continue to drive higher.

Why is copper surging?

It's partly due to evidence of recoveries in other major industrial economies, with manufacturing output surging in places like the US, Germany and Japan.

But investors have also been piling into copper on a bet that global efforts to cut carbon emissions are going to mean the world needs a lot more of the metal, putting a strain on



Explainer

supply. New mine production may be slow to arrive, as mines are hard to find and expensive to develop.

Electric vehicles contain about four times as much copper as a conventional car, and vast amounts of copper wiring will be needed in roadside chargers to

keep them running. Bringing electricity from offshore wind farms to national power grids is also a copper-intensive exercise.

What does it mean for the economy?

There are mounting concerns that the broad rally in everything from lumber to steel will force central bankers to step in to stop inflation in raw-materials markets spiralling out of control.

In turn, the stellar economic rebound that's driving the commodities rally may start to stall as businesses are hit by higher interest rates, compressed margins, and waning demand from consumers.

Could the rally fizzle out?

In the case of copper, there are some signs that spot

demand is starting to cool, particularly in China, and some analysts and traders say the record prices aren't justified by today's fundamentals.

The view among policymakers is that the rise in commodities prices will prove short-lived, as consumers will focus their spending on services and experiences as economies open up, easing the strain on demand for commodities-intensive items such as second homes, electronics and appliances seen during lockdown.

For copper though, it's not just about strong demand today. In fact, a lot of expected spending on renewables and electric-vehicle infrastructure is yet to really materialise. When it does, it could transform the outlook for copper usage in developed

countries.

How high could copper go?

Trafigura Group, the world's top copper trader, and Goldman Sachs Group both say prices could hit \$15,000 a tonne in the coming years, on the back of a global surge in demand due to the shift to green energy. Bank of America says \$20,000 could even be possible if drastic issues arise on the supply side.

The copper market itself may also be facing a big shift. Trafigura predicts that demand growth in China will be eclipsed by rising consumption in the rest of the world over the coming decade, in a dramatic reversal of the recent trend. That could help underpin a new "supercycle" in the copper market. — Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Pakistan on verge of second victory

Harare: Pakistan were on the brink of a second successive innings win against Zimbabwe despite a fighting performance by Regis Chakabva on the third day of the of the second and final on Sunday.

Bad light ended play with Zimbabwe on 220/9 in their follow-on innings, 158 runs short of making Pakistan bat again.

Chakabva made 80 as Zimbabwe made their highest total of a series in which they have been outclassed.

Chakabva followed up his top score of 33 in the first innings by making his team's only half-century in the two matches.

Pakistan fast bowler Hasan Ali took a career-best 5/27 as the host nation were bowled out for 132 in the first innings.

Brief scores: Pakistan 510/8 decl. vs Zimbabwe 132 (Chakabva 33, Hasan Ali 5/27) & **220/9** (Chakabva 80, Shaheen 4-45, Nauman 5-86).

Sakariya loses father to Covid

Rajkot: Young Saurashtra pacer Chetan Sakariya's father Kanjibhai Sakariya died due to Covid-19 at a hospital in Bhavnagar on Sunday.

He was 42 and was battling the infection for the past few days.

The Saurashtra Cricket Association condoled the demise, saying "Everyone at Saurashtra Cricket Association is deeply saddened on the sad demise of cricketer Chetan Sakariya's father."

"...Saurashtra Cricket Association conveys heartfelt condolences to Chetan and prays to the Almighty to give enough strength to everyone in his family to bear the loss and grant eternal peace to the departed noble soul," the cricket body said in a statement.

The 22-year-old Chetan played for the Rajasthan Royals in this year's IPL. — PTI

Maiden pro bout win for Manpreet

New Delhi: Commonwealth Games silver medal-winning Indian boxer Mandeep Jangra made a positive start in the professional circuit, beating Argentina's Luciano Ramos in his debut bout in Florida, USA.

Jangra travelled to USA two months back for training. The boxer won his first professional bout against Ramos in a four round unanimous decision in the super welterweight category on Saturday. Jangra has signed up with Florida-based Pro Box Promotions.

The 27-year-old, who is also a silver medalist from the 2013 Asian Championships, was supposed to fight on March 19 but that bout was put off.

"I'm so excited for a great run in the pro ranks and hopefully win a world championship with my team," said the boxer, who is training with American coaches Asa Beard and Marc Farrait. — PTI

Sabalenka lifts Madrid Open title

Madrid: Aryna Sabalenka is glad she changed her mind about playing at the Madrid Open. Two weeks after nearly withdrawing from the tournament because of a muscle injury, Sabalenka was standing on center court with the winner's trophy in her hands on Saturday.

Sabalenka defeated top-ranked Ash Barty 6-0, 3-6, 6-4 for her 10th WTA title and first on clay. In the men's final, 2018 champion Alexander Zverev will face eighth-seeded Matteo Berrettini.

Sabalenka's victory, coming two weeks after she was hurt in a loss to Barty in the Stuttgart final. "To be honest, after the final in Stuttgart I was injured, I couldn't even move, I really wanted to withdraw from here," she said. — AP

Westbrook wins it for Wizards

Los Angeles: Another historic night from Russell Westbrook helped the Washington Wizards to a 133-132 overtime victory over the Indiana Pacers on Saturday. Westbrook notched the 181st triple-double of his career on Saturday, tying Oscar Robertson for the most in NBA history.

Maldives mayhem

Bengaluru FC told to leave Male for violating Covid protocols

Male/New Delhi, May 9: It was a chaotic Sunday for Indian football as Bengaluru FC's AFC Cup play-off against Eagles FC was postponed and the team asked to leave Male for violating Covid-19 protocols, while all Group D fixtures in the same event were also put off after ATK Mohun Bagan reported two positive cases.

The Asian Football Confederation did not give any reason for postponing the matches but it is understood that the deadly resurgence of Covid-19 in many Asian countries is behind the decision.

It all started with Bengaluru FC's play-off match against Eagles FC, scheduled here on May 11, being left in doubt after the host country's sports minister asked the ISL side to leave citing breach of Covid-19 protocols.

"Bengaluru FC's 2021 AFC Cup playoff stage clash against Eagles FC has been postponed until further notice, as confirmed by the Asian Football Confederation on Sunday. The club is making all arrangements to get all its players and staff home at the earliest," BFC said in a statement.

"Bengaluru FC would like to place on record an unconditional apology for a health and safety breach, involving one member of staff and two players, in the Maldives, on Saturday," it added.

The exact nature of the violation by BFC, which is captained by India skipper Sunil Chhetri, was not specified but



Bengaluru FC's Sunil Chhetri during a training session in Male. BFC are in the Maldives for the AFC Cup.

— BFC

sports minister Ahmed Mahloof termed it as "unacceptable".

The sentiment was echoed by BFC owner Parth Jindal, who apologized and promised strict action against the errant players and support staff.

"Unacceptable behavior from @bengaluruFC breaching the strict guidelines from HPA (Health Protection Agency) & @theafcdot-com. The club should leave Flag of Maldives immediately as we can't entertain this act,"

Mahloof tweeted from his official handle.

"We have informed FAM that we cannot hold the match, and asked them to make arrangements for @bengaluruFC's departure. We will be in further correspondence with AFC through @MaldivesFA to postpone the group stage."

The minister's tweets came after reports emerged that some players of the side were seen roaming Male's streets in violation of the quarantine protocol.

Also, two ATK Mohun Bagan players — Prabir Das and SK Sahil — tested positive for Covid-19, hours before their group matches in Maldives were postponed by the continental football governing body.

"Participating clubs who have travelled to Maldives will be required to arrange for their return home while adhering to the Covid-19 health and travel protocols put in place by the country," the AFC said in a statement. — PTI

ATLETICO HOLD BARCA TO KEEP LA LIGA LEAD

Madrid, May 9: Atletico Madrid held on to their Spanish League lead again, this time by earning a draw against Lionel Messi's Barcelona at the Camp Nou Stadium.

Last week, they benefitted from a Barcelona setback to remain at the top, and on Sunday they will need Real Madrid to stumble to avoid losing first place.

Atletico drew with Barcelona 0-0 on Saturday to fend off the Catalan club's charge. It will depend on Sevilla to hold off Madrid when they meet on Sunday; Zinedine Zidane's team would take the lead with a home win.

"I'm not watching these matches, it's not something that is good for me," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said.

Saturday's draw kept Atletico two points in front of Barcelona with three rounds to go. Madrid were three points back but would take the lead with a victory on Sunday because they hold the head-to-head tiebreaker against their city rivals. — AP

GANGULY CONFIRMS INDIA WILL TOUR LANKA IN JULY

Kolkata, May 9: BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Sunday said that the Indian team, sans the top players, will tour Sri Lanka in July for a limited overs bilateral series.

Big names such as skipper Virat Kohli and vice-captain Rohit Sharma will not be part of the tour as they will be engaged in a marquee five-match Test series in England.

"We have planned a white ball series for the senior men's team during the month of July where they will play T20 Internationals and ODIs in Sri Lanka," Ganguly said in an interaction.

Asked how will India segregate the two teams, Ganguly said that it will be a different side, which won't have anyone from the outfit that will be in the United Kingdom at that time.

"Yes, it will be a team of

Red Devils delay City's title party

London, May 9: Manchester City's Premier League title celebrations were put on hold again as Manchester United fought back to win 3-1 at Aston Villa on Sunday.

Pep Guardiola's side missed a chance to seal the title when they lost 2-1 to Chelsea on Saturday.

City could have started the party if second-placed United lost at Villa Park, but their arch-rivals kept the leaders' champagne on ice with a second-half escape act.

Trailing to Bertrand Traore's first half rocket, United equalised through Bruno Fernandes' penalty before Mason Greenwood and Edinson Cavani netted to leave City frustrated.

City, with three matches to play, are now 10 points clear of United, who have four games left.

United host Leicester on Tuesday and Liverpool on Thursday, with a defeat in either of those matches guaranteeing the title for City, who are next in action at Newcastle on Friday.

The Europa League finalists would love to keep City waiting as long as possible as they bid to



Manchester United's Edinson Cavani celebrates after scoring against Aston Villa in an EPL match at Villa Park in Birmingham on Sunday.

— AFP

earn a runners-up finish, which would be their highest end-of-season position since Ole Gunnar Solskjaer took charge in December 2018.

But treble-chasing City's blistering form has turned the title race into

a procession since the new year and it is only a matter of time before their coronation is confirmed.

They will have to wait another 48 hours at least due to the latest display of United's fortitude.

Mercedes masterstroke helps Hami deny Max

Barcelona, May 9: Lewis Hamilton claimed his fifth successive Spanish Grand Prix on Sunday ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen after a Mercedes pit-stop masterstroke.

Hamilton moved on to 98 career wins after a surprise second change of tyres hoodwinked Red Bull to lift him 14 points clear of Verstappen in the drivers' standings.

Valtteri Bottas took third with Charles Leclerc's Ferrari in fourth.

Hamilton had set off from pole for the 100th time but was beaten to the first corner by Verstappen, with Leclerc dishing out the same treatment on Bottas on turn two.

On lap eight Yuki



Lewis Hamilton celebrates after winning the Spanish GP on Sunday.

— AP

Tsunoda's Sunday drive in Catalonia came to a premature end when his Alpha Tauri came to a grinding halt.

Verstappen held off

Villa took the lead in the 24th minute through Traore, who turned sharply in the penalty area and shrugged off Victor Lindelof before smashing a superb strike into the top corner from an acute angle.

But Solskjaer's team have been experts at second-half comebacks this season and Paul Pogba won a 52nd minute penalty when Douglas Luiz needlessly bundled over the United midfielder.

City's Sergio Aguero had missed a penalty against Chelsea with a risky 'Panenka' chipped effort, but Fernandes was far more clinical as he sent Villa keeper Emiliano Martinez the wrong way from the spot.

Greenwood put United ahead four minutes later as he swivelled past Tyrone Mings on the edge of the area and drove a low finish past Martinez's weak attempted save.

United suffered a blow when their captain Harry Maguire limped off after colliding with Anwar El Ghazi.

But Cavani wrapped up the points with a glancing header from Marcus Rashford's cross in the 87th minute. — AFP

WRESTLER | MURDER CASE

Police hunt on to trace Sushil

New Delhi, May 9: The Delhi Police recorded the statements of the victims of Chhatrasal Stadium brawl that led to the death of a wrestler here, officials said on Sunday.

The police said the clash took place over vacating a flat in Model Town area.

Two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, who has been named in the FIR in this case, is absconding and efforts are on to trace him. Raids are being conducted in Delhi/NCR and neighbouring states, a police officer said.

The victims alleged that Kumar was present at the spot when the incident took place, he said.

A 23-year-old wrestler died and his two friends got injured after they were allegedly brutally assaulted by other wrestlers inside Chhatrasal Stadium of the city on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday.

According to the police, the brawl took place between Kumar, Ajay, Prince, Sonu, Sagar, Amit and others in the parking area. Thereafter, police registered the case under sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Arms Act at the Model Town Police Station.

The crime scene and all the five vehicles were inspected. During the inspection, a double barrel loaded gun with five live



Sushil Kumar

cartridges was found in one Scorpio and two wooden sticks were also recovered from the spot.

"All the five vehicles and weapons of offense were seized. The crime scene was further inspected by forensic experts of FSL, Rohini," Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (northwest) Gurqib Singh Sidhu had said.

The police had apprehended one Prince Dalal (24), a resident of Jhajjar in Haryana, and seized one double barrel gun from his possession.

"It was not a case of trespassing. The accused took the victims inside the stadium where they assaulted them in the parking area. Kumar was present at the spot when the incident happened, however, police are investigating his role in the assault," an official source had said. — PTI

NZ PLAYERS REACH HOME AFTER IPL'S SUSPENSION

Auckland, May 9: All New Zealand cricketers and coaches, who were involved in IPL 2021, have arrived home safely by private jets in two groups after the indefinite suspension of the T20 league midway into the season due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

They arrived on board a Bombardier Global Express private jet via Tokyo in the first of two chartered flights repatriating the Kiwis after the league was suspended.

On Sunday, former Black Caps captains Brendon McCullum and Stephen Fleming were among the second group of cricketers to touch down here.

Meanwhile, five-time champions Mumbai Indians on Sunday said that all their foreign players and support staff have reached their respective destinations safely.

A total of 14 foreign players and support of MI have left India after the cash-rich tournament had come to a halt on May 4.

PBKS DOMESTIC PLAYERS ARE HOME

All the Indian members of the Punjab Kings team have reached home safely after the suspension of the IPL, the franchise said on Sunday.

"Following the suspension of the IPL 2021, all PBKS team members have reached home safely while a few are quarantining outside India before they head back to their respective countries," the club said in a statement on twitter. — PTI

T20 Cup could be delayed: Chappell

New Delhi, May 9: Australian great Ian Chappell feels the suspension of IPL is a reminder of cricket's vulnerability and does not rule out the Covid-19 pandemic forcing a postponement or shifting of the upcoming T20 World Cup from India.

The 2021 edition of the lucrative T20 league was suspended earlier this week after four players — Sunrisers Hyderabad batsman Wriddhiman Saha, Delhi Capitals spinner Amit Mishra and KKR's Varun Chakravarthy and Sandeep Warrier — tested positive for Covid-19 in the bio-bubble.

"The suspension of the 2021 IPL tournament because of surging Covid infections and deaths among the public, and a number of participants testing positive, was a reminder of the game's vulnerability," Chappell wrote in his column for *ESPNCricinfo*.

India, which is grappling with a devastating second wave of the pandemic with cases rising by over 4 lakh everyday, is scheduled to host the T20 World Cup in October-November.

"In the current disastrous climate, the suspension of the IPL could also produce a precedent. It may lead to the World T20 event, programmed for India later in the year, either being postponed or moved."

— IAN CHAPPELL
Australian legend

In the current disastrous climate, the suspension of the IPL could also produce a precedent. It may lead to the World T20 event, programmed for India later in the year, either being postponed or moved.

— IAN CHAPPELL
Australian legend

"In the past, tours have been aborted and matches abandoned for a variety of reasons. Many of these involved back stories, some of which were tragic and others amusing."

The 77-year-old recollected how poor weather during the 1970-71 Boxing Day Test between hosts Australia and England led to the first ever One-Day International.

"In 1970-71 the MCG Boxing Day Test between Australia and England was abandoned without a ball being bowled after heavy rain ruined any chance of a competitive match."

"That led to the first ever ODI being played in lieu of the Test in an effort to recoup some of the lost revenue. The match was agreed between officials of both countries without the players being consulted, and this angered many in the England camp," Chappell said.

The former Australia skipper also wrote about the time when Pakistan players forfeited a Test in 2006 against England over ball-tampering allegations. — PTI

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