THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI FRIDAY 21 MAY 2021



Sergei Lavrov says talks with Blinken constructive;



SPORT 8

Dravid set to be head coach for Team India during Sri Lanka tour

DELHI AGE 16

Big lineup of movies for Huma, actress to play a role inspired by Rabri Devi



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www.asianage.com



Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo holds the cup after Juevntus won the final of the Italian Cup against Atalanta at the Citta del Tricolore Stadium in Reggio Emilia on Wednesday.

Crisis in Nepal: Oli won't face floor test, hunt for a new govt

Kathmandu: Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari on Thursday asked all political parties to stake claim to form a new government after embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli expressed unwillingness to undergo another floor test to prove his governmen's majority in the House of Representatives. Mr Oli, who is the Chairman of the Communist Party of Nepal-**Unified Marxist Leninist** (CPN-UML), was sworn in as Nepal's Prime Minister as per Article 76 (3) of the Constitution on May 14, four days after he lost a crucial vote of confidence in Parliament. — PTI

Deadline to file I-T is

extended till Sept. 30 New Delhi: The government has extended the due date of filing income-tax returns for 2020-21 for individuals by two months till September 30. The Central Board of Direct Taxes has also extended the HR filing dead. line for companies by a month till November 30. -PTI

Bengal & Odisha facing

Full report on Page 7

new cyclone next week

Kolkata: Close on the heels of Cyclone Tauktae's strike on the western coast, another cyclone, "Yaas", is now bound for the eastern coast and will likely hit Odisha and West Bengal next week. A year ago, the two states were devastated by Cyclone Amphan on May 20. Full report on Page 4

COUNTERPOINT

NETA

Our kids are having enough milk... they are using only our urine and dung!



Max: 33°C Min: 24°C **RH:** 58% **Rain:** 10%

Forecast: Sunny

ASTROGUIDE

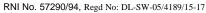
Plava: Uttarayana Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Navami till 11.06 am Star: Poorva Phalguni till 3.16 pm Varjyam: 10.05 pm to 11.36 pm **Durmuhurtam:** 8.21 am to 9.12 am; 12.38 pm to 1.30 pm Rahukalam: 10.30 am to noon **SUNSET TODAY 7.08 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.27 AM**

MOONRISE TOMORROW 1.36 PM

MOONSET TODAY 1.57 AM

WORLD 6

US-Russia ties will mend



■ PM asks officers to devise new solutions, strategies for rural India **Centre alerts states: 'Black** fungus' the new challenge

VINEETA PANDEY

Terming the emergence of "mucormycosis" as the new challenge before the health authorities across the country, the Centre has asked all state governments to notify "Black Fungus" under the Epidemic Diseases Act under which all government, private health facilities and medical colleges have to follow guidelines for screening, diagnosis, management of mucormycosis. This law also makes cosis. This law also makes it mandatory for the states to report all suspected and confirmed cases of mucormycosis to the health department through district chief medical officers and subsequently to the IDSP cur sequently to the IDSP surveillance team.

The Centre has said that the treatment for this fungal infection requires a multi-dciplinary approach, consisting of eye surgeons, ENT specialists, general surgeons, neurosurgeons and dental maxillo facial surgeons and the institution of Amphotericin B as an antifungal medicine.

Give free edu to

Covid orphans,

Sonia asks Modi

New Delhi, May 20:

Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Th-ursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide free

Navodaya Vidyalayas

to children orphaned

due to the Covid-19

nation, we owe it to

them to give them

hope for a robust future after the un-

them," Mrs Gandhi said in her letter to

More on Page 4

tragedy

befallen

'I feel that as a

education

pandemic.

imaginable

the Mr Modi.

SHAHAB ANSARI

MUMBAI, MAY 20

The Indian Navy on

Thursday confirmed the death of 37 personnel onboard barge P305 with

the recovery of their bod-

ies. Barge P305 went adrift and sank in the

Arabian Sea off Mumbai

coast during Cyclone

Tauktae and search oper-

ation for at least 36 miss-

ing personnel is still on. A

total of 188 of the 261

onboard have already

been rescued by Indian

The barge sank 35 nauti-

Navy and Coast Guard.

that has



Doctors perform a diagnostic nasal endoscopy on a patient to detect "black fungus" at a hospital in . Hyderabad on Thursday.

Covid-19 treatment and

deranged sugar control.

The fungal infection is

leading to prolonged morbidity and mortality among Covid-19 patients.

According to the reports

available so far, Maharashtra has detected 1,500 cases of black fungus

till now, leading to 90 deaths. Tamil Nadu,

Rajasthan and Telangana

too have detected a few

cases of black fungus,

prompting these state gov-

ernments to declare it an

epidemic. Besides, four

new cases of a deadlier

form of mucormycosis — **Turn to Page 4**

Don't take dip in Covid-19 cases

lightly, HC warns Centre, Delhi

THE COURT warned

pvt hospitals and nurs-

ing homes that failure

tions to update data on

ability of beds will invite

telling you, we mean busi-

ness. Please don't take it

lightly, we are again warn-

ing you," a bench of Jus-

tices Vipin Sanghi and Ja-

smeet Singh told the

While the high court

was told by the Delhi gov-

ernment counsel that it

has created a buffer stock

of 419 MTs of oxygen at different locations and

Gujarat Coasts. Vigorous

SAR efforts continue for

the missing crew of Barge

P305 which sank off Mumbai with five IN

ships, aircraft and helos

deployed," the Indian

Navy spokesperson tweet-

The Navy is leading a massive, round-the-clock

rescue effort that includes

several of its ships, P-81

reconnaissance aircraft

and Sea King helicopters,

as well as Coast Guard and ONGC vessels, to

detect survivors from the

sunken barge and other

vessels stranded or affect-

ed on Thursday.

Centre.

to comply with direc-

occupancy and avail-

precipitate actions

GRIM REALITY

Only 50% of nation's population found using

Out of 50% only 14% wear it correctly – cover nose, mouth, chin & with a clip on the nose

▶ 2% have mask on neck ≥ 20% have mask on chin

64 per cent cover

mouth but not nose

The infection was detected among those who were on steroid therapy for

New Delhi, May 20: The

Delhi high court Thurs-

day warned the authori-

ties that they should not take lightly the dip in Covid cases in the nation-

al capital as there is a

likelihood that the virus

would again raise its ugly

head and hit the citizens

badly and reminded them

about their responsibility

to create buffer stock of

The high court said it is

the duty of the Centre and

Delhi government to ensu-

re that they are not caught

underprepared again to

"If you have not taken

steps, we will come and chase you again. We are

Cyclone Tauktae battered India's west coast. P305

was amongst the four

barges that suffered during the cyclone. The other

Constructor and Support

Station-3 — deployed by

the engineering firm Afcons for its ONGC (Oil

Natural

lenging SAR Ops in the

survivors have been res-

cued & 37 #BNV recov-

off Mumbai

"In one of the most chal-

325

Corporation) contract.

#CycloneTauktae,

aftermath

deal with the situation.

medical oxygen.

EXPLAINED Mucormycosis, or

black fungus, is a serious but rare fungal infection. People get mucormycosis by coming in contact with the fungal spores in the environment.

BLACK FUNGUS

During Covid-19 when lungs get damaged and immune systems get suppressed during therapy in severe cases, these spores can grow in airways and invade tissues.

Sinus, brain mucormycosis symptoms include one-sided facial swelling, headache, nasal or sinus congestion, black lesions on nasal bridge, fever

Fever, cough, chest pain, shortness of breath are some symptoms of lung mucormycosis

Skin mucormycosis can look like blisters or ulcers, the infected area may turn black

Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, gastroin-testinal bleeding maybe signs of gastrointestinal

ments for creating further

stock in next 10 days, it

noted that the Centre has

not disclosed as to what

steps it has taken to fulfil

order.

tate actions.

ed by the storm.

mission, deploying heli-

copters and Indian Navy

ships through the night,

Modi, Shah to reciprocate if **Ulfa ready for** talks: Himanta

MANOJ ANAND

Assam chief minister Biswa Sarma on Thursday said that if Ulfa-I chief Paresh Baruah comes out

its obligation in terms of Supreme Court's The court also warned private hospitals and nursing homes that failure to comply with directions to update data on occupancy and availability of beds for Covid-19 official press conference, also made an appeal for the release

patients in their institutions will invite precipi-The court was informed that the institutions were still not complying with the judicial orders. — PTI Tauktae: 37 deaths, 36 still missing Indian Navy Commodore Ajay Jha said that the Navy on Thursday morning launched a fresh aerial search and rescue

> to trace any movement in the dark waters to look for survivors. According to him the search operations would continue for another three days at least. The Directorate General ONGC employee
> Ritual Saikia in the
> Turn to Page 4 of Shipping had already ordered an investigation into the deaths. Now the



Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan greets CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury during the swearing-in ceremony in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday.

CM takes oath with 20 mantris, mostly new faces

Thiruvananthapuram, May 20: CPI(M) veteran Pinarayi Vijayan, who led the LDF to an unprecedented consecutive victory in the April 6 Assembly polls, on Thursday took oath as chief minister of Kerala for the second time along

with 20 ministers, mostly new faces.

Governor Arif Mohammed Khan administered the oath of office to Mr Vijayan and ministers in a low-key function at the Central Stadium, which was held completely in accordance with the Covid protocol. Congratulating Mr Vijayan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted: "Congratulations to Shri @vijayanpinarayi Ji on taking oath as CM and commencing his second term in office.

■ More on Page 2

Baruah announces release of abducted ONGC worker

GUWAHATI, MAY 20

with a formal proposal for peace talks, he was confident that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah would reciprocate it positively. Mr Sarma, who addressed his first

of the ONGC employee to Ulfa-I commander-in-chief Paresh Baruah to which he reciprocated within a few minutes by announcing that the outfit has decided to release the abducted employee Ritul Saikia, and in next two or three days he will be with his family. The ONGC employee was abducted by Ulfa-I rebels and is in the captivity of the outfit in

Myanmar.
The Ulfa chief called up the editor of local news channels to say that he was responding to the appeal of the chief minister and had decided to release ONGC employee

■ Mamata: PM's meet was a 'super-flop'

'Opp. CMs treated like puppets, not allowed to speak'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, MAY 20

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday directly accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of barring her other Opposition party CMs from speaking up for their demands on the Covid-19 pandemic at a virtual meeting chaired by him.

This was also the first time the Trinamul Congress supremo came face to face with Mr Modi officially after her party came to power for the third time in the state by defeating the BJP in the Assembly election. Tearing into Mr Modi,

Ms Banerjee alleged: "Ten CMs, including me, were present with some district magistrates there. We however did not allow the DMs from our state to attend it since a CM, if present, gets the



federal structure, though the CMs were invited they were not allowed to speak about their public demands. They were made to sit like puppets and bonded labourers. Only the PM kept talking all through without even giving us a chance. It was just a casual and a super-

flop meeting."
She said: "We were astonished at the bulldozing of the federal structure by an arrogant PM as if martial law has been imposed in the country. felt insulted and **Turn to Page 4**

HC defers hearing, 4 Trinamul leaders still in judicial custody

AGE CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MAY 20

The four TMC leaders arrested in the Narada case, including two sitting ministers, failed to get any relief Thursday as the Calcutta high court did not hold a hearing due to "unavoidable circumstances". All four remain in judicial custody. The matter is likely

to come up on Friday. West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee described the arrests by the CBI as a "deliberate political vendetta" and complained they have been subjected to "unlimited injustice"

The chief minister has been made a party in the CBI's plea to transfer the More on Page 4

Smoke rises following Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City on Thursday.

Fresh Israeli airstrikes, truce hopes rise Gaza City, May 20: Israel

unleashed another wave of airstrikes across the Gaza Strip early Thursday, killing at least one Palestinian and wounding several, and Hamas fired more rockets, even as expectations rose that a ceasefire could be coming. PM Benjamin Netany-

Turn to Page 4

ahu has pushed back against calls from the US to wind down the Gaza offensive. determined to inflict maximum damage on Hamas in a war that could help save his political career. Still, officials close to the negotiations say they expect a truce to be

Egypt plays mediator, seeks influence Cairo, May 20: Egypt is served as a mediator

trying to prove itself to the world once again as an indispensable mediator as it rushes to broker a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, the fourth in just over a

It's the latest instance in which Egypt has

In another possible sign of progress, Mr Netan-yahu scheduled a meeting later Thursday with his

announced in the next 24

between Israel and Gaza's ruling militant Hamas group. Egypt borders both Israel and the Gaza Strip, and has been a key player since Israel withdrew troops from Gaza in 2005 and Hamas seized the territory in 2007.

Security Cabinet, where

the issue of a cease-fire was likely to be debated. Explosions shook Gaza City and orange flares lit up the pre-dawn sky, with

bombing raids also reported in the central town of Deir al-Balah and the southern town of Khan Younis. As the sun rose, residents surveyed the rubble from at least five family homes destroyed in Khan Younis. There were also heavy airstrikes on a commercial thoroughfare in Gaza City. The Israeli military said

it struck at least three homes of Hamas commanders in Khan Younis and another in Rafah, targeting "military infrastructure," as well as a weapons storage unit at a home in Gaza City. -

■ More on Page 6















as CM of Kerala for second time

20 ministers inducted in Cabinet

Thiruvananthapuram, May 20: CPI(M) veteran Pinarayi Vijayan, who led the Left Democratic Front (LDF) to an unprecedented consecutive victory in the April 6 assembly polls, on Thursday took oath as chief minister of Kerala for the second time along with 20 ministers.

Governor Mohammed Khan administered the oath of office to 77-year-old Vijayan and ministers in a low-key function at the Central Stadium here, which was held completely in accordance with the Covid proto-

Congratulating Vijayan, Prime Minister Narendra "Congratulations to Shri @vijayanpinarayi Ji on taking oath as CM and com-mencing his second term in office." in office.

Mr Vijayan was also greeted by new Tamil Nadu chief minister M K Stalin who led the DMK-Congress alliance to a thumping win in the April 6 assembly

"Best wishes to my brother @vijayanpinarayi on his swearing in as @CMOKerala and I hope that his determination and perseverance will lead to social equality, peace and prosperity for the people,' Stalin said in a tweet.

It is the Marxist veteran's second stint in the top

While the chief minister later.



Pinarayi Vijayan and 14 ministers took the oath and made solemn pledge, five took oath in the

name of God. Representative of the Indian National League in the CPI(M)-led ministry, Ahamed Devarkovil, took

oath in the name of Allah. ceremony began after the governor reached the venue at 3.30 pm and concluded at 4.50 pm.

Ahead of the swearing-in of the LDF government, Vijayan and minister-designates paid tributes to the martyrs of Punnapra-Vayalar uprising, a work-ing class movement that occurred in Alappuzha district during the 1940s.

It has been a years-long practice for the Communist ministers to pay floral tribute at the martyrs' column before the swearing-in of the Left government.

After taking Vijayan reached his office at the state secretariat to take charge as chief minis-

He also chaired the first meeting of the cabinet

Mother, son found dead at their house

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 20

Bodies of a mother-son duo was found lying at their house in northeast Delhi's Nagar Thursday morning, police said. The deceased, Umlesh (56) and her son Ashok (29) stayed on the first floor and ran a general store on the ground floor of the house,

The police said an information was received around 8 am. When the team reached the spot, body of the woman was found lying on the floor and blood was still oozing from her nose whereas her son's body was lying on the bed in the same room and froth was oozing from his nose, a senior police officer said.

"We have registered a case and shifted the bodies to morturary for postmortem.

INVESTIGATION OF the case is under way but prima facie, it seems a murder by strangulation, yet without any conclusive evidence no conclusion can be drawn

Investigation of the case is under way but prima facie, it seems a murder by strangulation, yet without any conclusive evidence no conclusion can be drawn," he said. Efforts are being made to find any clue about the accused persons and ascer tain the motive of murder, he added.

The woman is survived by another son named Siddarth, aged 39, who lived opposite to her house. Her husband expired Shyam Sunder, was a retired employee of DDA and expired on April 29, police

Vijayan sworn in Centres for black fungus treatment soon: CM

Says Delhi to procure medicines for treatment from Central government Nearly half of vaccination sites

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA

chief minister Kejriwal, Thursday, said dedicated centres will be set up for the treatment of black fungus or mucormycosis cases at three city government-

run hospitals. He made the announcement after discussing the rise in black fungus cases with officials and specialists at a meeting.

"Three important decisions were taken at the meeting. Centres will be set up at Lok Nayak Jai

Tender No

Name of Work

Tender Closing Date Time

Advertised Value (Rs.)

Tender Doc. Cost (Rs.)

Validity of Offer (Days)

Period of Completion

supply of the following items:-

01 16210349

02 16200376

03 16210387

04 02212511

05 19210644

06 12211555

07 16200179

08 16210115

10 07211149

Name of work with

S.N. Tender No. Brief Description

Tender No. 75-W/2/3/WA/Publication Dt. 19.05.2021

Earnest Money (Rs.)

Bidding Start Date



Arvind Kejriwal

Prakash Narayan Hospital, Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, and Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital for treatment of black fungus," the CM tweeted. The drugs used in the

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

SRDEN/III/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders

against following tender bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto

closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any

such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make

payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only

through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit

card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE

Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for

COMPLETE WINDOW ASSEMBLY

HYDRAULIC MOTOR FOR 700 HP

MOTOR HYDRAULIC FOR VENT

LOW MAINTENANCE LEAD ACID

125 AMPERE 1000 VOLT HRC FUSES

ELEMENT FILTER FOR EMD LOCO

SET OF DAMPER FOR WAG-9H

DOUBLE ACTING HYDRAULIC SHOCK ABSORBER

Note:-1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY

Invitation of Tender through E-Tendering (E-Procurement System)

BATTERIES 75 AH

LEVELING VALVE

Tender Notice No. 12/2021-2022 Dated: 20.05.2021

Approx. Cost of work Rs. 51,12,606.37

Date & time for submission of

tender & opening of tender

Website particulars where

can be seen & downloaded

3. Completion period of the work 06 (Six) Months

Tender Notice No: 32-W-BR-974-1258-MB-21 Dated: 19.05.2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

09 16213633 TAPERED ROLLER BEARING

13-DRM-MB-21-22

Date :- 19 05 2021

SPN in the section of SSE/W/SPN under ADEN/SPN

Road Widening and Road Repair Tai Tanki to Block No. OHE-15 Malgodam Road & Misc. Works of IInd Entry at

15/06/2021 16:00

89.17.366.31

01.06.2021

45 days

1078/2021

Qty. Closing Date

27 NOS

SET

583 SET

345 NOS

139 SET

1624 NOS

strengthening of top lateral bracing angles X-angles

gussets etc. and replacement of corroded rivets of Br.

No. 974 UP at Kms 1241/18 to 1242/2 on SPN-MB

section and replacement of badly corroded rivets &

Gusset plates of Br. No. 1258 DN on MB-SRF section

tender after 15.00 hrs on same day

under the jurisdiction of AXEN/BL/MB of MB Division.

bers i.e. Lateral bracing angles, Cross frames

Up-to 15.00 hrs on 14.06.2021. Opening of

Above tender available on IREPS site i.e.

14.06.21

15.06.21

16.06.21

16.06.21

18.06.21

18.06.21

21.06.21

21.06.21

22.06.21

23.06.21

spread of the disease and give the best possible treatment to those suffering from it," he said in another tweet. The Delhi government

treatment of the fungal

infection will be arranged in enough quantity and

awareness will be created

among people for preven-

tion against the disease, he

"We have to stop the

will also procure medicines for the treatment of the disease from the

Central government.
Mr Kejriwal said, "Delhi is the capital of the country and people from out-

Meanwhile, the CM will take a call on lifting the lockdown in Delhi over the weekend after a discussion

treatment. We should have sufficient quantities of medicines to cater to everyone who is coming for the treatment of black

with lieutenant governor Anil Baijal. The lockdown was declared last month as the Covid cases started an upward trend and reached numbers that left the healthcare system

for 18+ may shut today: Atishi AGE CORRESPONDENT **NEW DELHI, MAY 20**

MLA Atishi on Thursday said nearly half of the vaccination sites for the 18-44 age group in Delhi are likely to be shut from Friday as the city has less than a day's stock of Covishield left.

The vaccination centres administering Covaxin to the people in the city have been shut for nearly a week, she said.

"We have less than a day's

stock of Covishield left for the 18-44 age group. There are 99 schools where 368 vaccination sites are there. Nearly 150 of these sites will have to close down from tomorrow owing to vaccine shortage," Atishi said while issuing the vaccination bulletin.

The national capital has two days of Covaxin and nine days of Covishield stock left for the 45 plus age group, healthcare workers and frontline workers, she

General public is hereby informed that one boy, (depicted in the photo), Namely: Mohit Shukla @ Suraj Shukla, S/o: Smt. Suman Shukla, R/o: H.No. 1101/B, Gali No. 22, S.B.S. Colony, Karawal Nagar, Delhi, Aged: about 23 years, has been missing from his house since 05.01.2021. In this regard a case vide DD No. 1-A, Dated 05.01.2021, has been registered at P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi. His physical description



Height: 5'7" Feet, Complexion: Wheatish, @ Suraj Shukla Face: Oval, Built: Thin, Clothing: Not Known.

Any person is having any information/clue about this missing boy, may inform SHO, Karawal Nagar, Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in or website: http://cbi.nic.in or Fax No. 011-24368639, Tele No.: 011-24368638 or 24368641, Extn. 2101.

SEARCH OF MISSING

P.S. Karawal Nagar, Delhi Ph: 011-22932232 DP/519/NE/2021.

SEARCH OF KIDNAPPED General public is hereby informed that one boy, (depicted in the photo), Namely: Raj Singh Raghav, S/o: Dilip Singh Raghav, R/o: H.No. A-508/3, Mishra Market, 4th Pusta, Kartar Nagar, New Usmanpur, Delhi Aged: about 17 years, has been kidnapped from his house since 27.03.2021. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 150/21, u/s 363 IPC, Dated 30.03.2021, has

011-24368638 or 24368641, Extn. 2101.



been lodged at P.S. New Usmanpur, Delhi. His Raj Singh Raghav physical description is as under:

Height: 5'4" Feet, Complexion: Shallow, Face: Round, Built: Medium Clothing: Blue Colour T-Shirt, Grey Colour Jeans and Grey Colour

Any person is having any information/clue about this kidnapped boy, may inform SHO, PS New Usmanpur, Delhi at E-mail: cic@cbi.gov.in or website: http://cbi.nic.in or Fax No. 011-24368639, Tele No. :

DP/699/NE/2021

P.S. New Usmanpur, Delhi Ph. 011-22172410, 22175468

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the East Coast Railway has decided to cancel/reduce the frequency of the following Rajdhani Special Trains due to low occupancy as per the following details:-

TEMPORARY CANCELLATION	ON/REDUCTI	ON IN THE FRI	EQUENCY O	F RAJDHANI SPECI <i>i</i>	AL TRAINS
Train No. & Name	Running (via)	Existing days of run (from originating station)	Active days of run (from originating station)		Days of Cancellation
02823 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Rajdhani Special	Tatanagar Jn	Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri	Tuesday	21, 24, 27, 28 & 31.05.21	Mon, Thu, Fri
02824 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special	Tatanagar Jn	Tue, Wed, Thu, Sat	Wednesday	22, 25, 27, 29.05.2021 & 01.06.2021	Tue, Thu, Sat
02825 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Rajdhani Special	Adra Jn	Wednesday, Sunday	Sunday	26.05.2021	Wednesday
02826 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special	Adra Jn	Monday, Friday	Monday	28.05.2021	Friday
02855 Bhubaneswar - New Delhi Rajdhani Special	Sambalpur City, Anara	Saturday		22.05.2021 & 29.05.2021	Saturday
02856 New Delhi - Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Special	Sambalpur City, Anara	Sunday		23.05.2021 & 30.05.2021	Sunday
			1		

For any other information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website https://

Visit RailMadad website: www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in





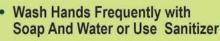
Haryana Government to Protect Every **Urban & Rural Area** From Covid-19





DURING HOME ISOLATION

Maintain Distance with Family Members and Use Mask



Regularly Monitor Your Body Temperature and Oxygen Level

Follow Respiratory Etiquettes



- Keep in Touch with Your Doctor and Take Medicines as Prescribed
- Dispose off Tissue Paper etc. **Properly After Use**
- Contact Doctor Immediately if you have Difficulty in Breathing, High Grade Fever or Severe Cough for More Than Five Days





For prevention of corona in Rural areas



Multidisciplinary Teams Home Isolation Kits to Patients with Mild and Moderate Symptoms, Immediate Treatment to Patients with Severe Symptoms in Nearby **Medical Centres**

Screening and Testing of Everyone by

Arrangement of Oximeters, Steam Machines,

Thermometers and Essential Medicines

S i→i Social Distancing



Helpline For Assistance Regarding Covid-19 8558893911 (for Entire State) 1075 (Except Gurugram & Faridabad)

🧚 Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana 🙉 www.prharyana.gov.in 💟 @Cmohry 💟 @DiprHaryana

IPS man charged for sexual assault on teen daughter of a fellow officer **MANOJ ANAND**

The criminal investigation department of the Assam police has chargesheeted an IPS officer of 2012 batch of Assam-Meghalaya cadre for allegedly sexually assaulting the 13-year-old girl child of a colleague after a birthday party at his residence.

The chargesheet has been filed against Gaurav Upadhyay under IPC Sections 354 and 354A (assault or criminal force to outrage modesty, sexual harassment) and under the POCSO Act on March 31.

According chargesheet, the girl's mother, a senior police officer, had gone to Diphu, the headquarters of Karbi Anglong, along with her daughter and nine-year-old son in December 2019 to attend the birthday party of Upadhyay's

Around 2.30 am, Upadhyay dropped the three at a hotel where he had booked a suite for them. He allegedly touched the girl inappropriately on the pretext of showing her a video on his mobile phone in the sitting room of the suite while her brother and mother were in the bedroom. Upadhyay tried to kiss the girl, but she rushed to the bedroom and

closed the door. The mother filed a case on January 3, 2020, at a women police station in Guwahati before the case was transferred to the CID.

Kind Attention Rail Passengers IMPORTANT NOTICE

Negative RT-PCR report mandatory for train passengers arriving in Maharashtra

It is notified for the information of all concerned that Passengers travelling in trains are advised to follow COVID-19 appropriate behaviour while boarding, travelling and de-boarding at destination.

Any person entering the State of Maharashtra by any mode of transport will have to carry a negative RT-PCR test report which should have been issued from up to a maximum of 48 hours before the time of his entry into Maharashtra.

All the restrictions that have been made applicable to persons arriving from States of Kerala, Goa, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Delhi and NCR region, Uttarakhand, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh as per the orders dated 18th April 2021 and 1st May 2021 will be applicable to everyone arriving from any part of the country in to the State.

The latest State-wise advisory is available on website http://contents.irctc.co.in/en/stateWiseAdvisory.html Passengers travelling in long distance trains are requested to check the advisory and follow COVID-19 appropriate behaviour for their own safety and safety of others.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

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Chhattisgarh **NYAY to Last Mile Continues**

Farmers Get Agriculture Input Subsidy



Commemorating Martydom Day of Former Prime Minister

Shri Rajiv Gandhi on 21st May 2021



RAJIV GANDHI KISAN NYAY YOJANA

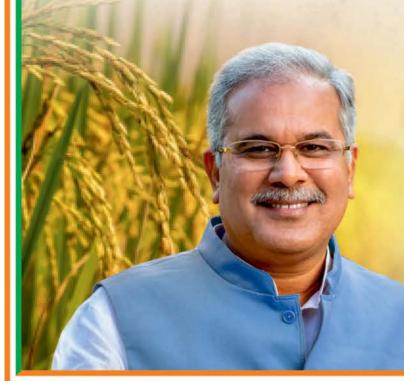
Direct Bank Transfer of First Instalment of Input Subsidy

₹1500cr

to more than 22 lakh farmers

- ❖ For Kharif year 2020-21 input subsidy of ₹9000 per acre to paddy farmers, same rate to be applicable in coming years
- Farmers selling paddy at MSP this year will receive input subsidy of ₹10000 per acre for Kharif season 2020-21 if switching crops or planting trees
- For Kharif year 2021-22, besides paddy, farmers cultivating maize, soybean, kodo, kutki and arhar will receive input subsidy of ₹9000 per acre
- Kodo-Kutki support price raised and fixed at ₹3000 per quintal

Payment of ₹5628 CT made last year



Shri Bhupesh Baghel Hon'ble Chief Minister, Chhattisgarh



GODHAN NYAY YOJANA

Cow Dung Monetizing Scheme

Making Cattle Rearing Economically Profitable

Payment of

₹7.17cr

(for 15th march - 15th may 2021)

to cattle owners towards cow dung procurement

Payment of ₹88.15 cr made so far

Smt. Sonia Gandhi Ji & Shri Rahul Gandhi Ji

(Hon'ble Members of Parliament)

To Grace the Occasion through Video Conferencing











SHORT TAKES

Cops beat woman

without mask

Sagar, MP: A woman was allegedly beaten up and dragged by some police personnel on a road for not wearing a mask while going out to buy vegetables amid Covid-19 in Madhya Pradesh's Sagar district. After a video of the incident, which took place on Monday in Rahli town, went viral, a police offi-cial said the woman allegedly hit a female cop first. The woman and her daughter were stopped by police around 11 am on Monday for not wearing masks. The police tried to take them away in a jeep to an open jail as punishment, but the duo resisted and allegedly hit a policewoman. In the video some police personnel, including a female cop, were seen beating up the woman, pushing her down and dragging her by her hair. They were trying to shift her in the police jeep while she was resisting it and in the process,

Bharat Biotech to ramp up production

they thrashed her. - PTI

New Delhi: Bharat Biotech on Thursday said it plans to produce additional 200 million (20 crore) doses of vaccine 'Covaxin' at its subsidiary's Gujarat-based facility, taking the overall production volume of the vaccine to about 1 billion (100 crore) dosages per annum. The

Hyderabad-based firm said it will utilise the Ankleshwarbased production facility of its wholly-owned subsidiary Chiron Behring Vaccines to

add another 200 million doses of Covaxin. The company plans to produce 200 million doses of Covaxin per annum in the GMP facilities that are already operational for the production of vaccines based on Inactivated Vero Cell Platform

Technology, under stringent

levels of GMP and biosafety," Bharat Biotech said. The Ankleshwar-based plant would start rolling out the much in demand vaccine from the fourth quarter of the year, it added. — PTI

67 more die of **Covid-19 in J&K**

Srinagar: Even as 67 more patients died of Covid-19 in Jammu and Kashmir in the past 24 hours, the authorities said the silver lining in the ostensibly gloomy situation is that over two lakh people who had contracted

the virus have recovered completely over a period of time in the UT. Officials said patients died of Covid-19 including 41 in Jammu region and remaining 26 in the Kashmir Valley, 4,169 new positive cases of the coronavirus in the UT since Wednesday evening.

'Opp. CMs treated like puppets, not allowed to speak'

■ Continued from Page 1

humiliated. It happened one way. I think all the non-BJPruled states should form a team to lodge a protest against the BJP at the Centre."
The TMC chief wondered:

"Why is the PM feeling so insecure and scared? Why is he fleeing away? In his speech, he claimed that Covid-19 deaths are decreasing. Then why are so many deaths there? Why are bodies being thrown away in the river? Namami Gange has now become Mrityupuri

Ms Banerjee also noted that her demand for the dispatch of three crore vaccines had not

been met by the Centre. Lashing out at Ms Banerjee, Leader of the Opposition Shuvendu Adhikari tweeted: "Today, our respected CM @MamataOfficial has once again shown her total disinterest in administration. True to her style, she has politicised a meeting Hon'ble PM @narendramodi held with District Officials, where grassroots level practices to fight COVID-19 were being discussed.

He also claimed: "5 out of the 7 District Officials who spoke today belonged to non-BJP ruled states of Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra Rajasthan and AP. Cooperative federalism is the firm commitment of PM @narendramodi unlike CM @MamataOfficial who only believes in confrontational federalism. West Bengal's Covid numbers are miserable, but the Chief Minister wants to play politics. The @AITCofficial is still busy in gory victory dances and targeting opponents. It is better they get down to work because the great People of West Bengal are watching!"

■ Modi is not disturbed by death of crores of people: Patole Maha Cong endorses Gadkari for PM

BHAGWAN PARAB MUMBAI, MAY 20

Maharashtra Congress has demanded that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should be replaced by the Union road transport minister Nitin Gadkari. Mr Modi is not disturbed by the death of crores of people due to coronavirus, said state Congress chief Nana

"We feel that Nitin Gadkari should be made the prime minister of the country as Mr Modi just

KOLKATA, MAY 20

Close on the heels of

Cyclone Tauktae's strike

on the western coast of

eastern coast and is likely

to hit the states of Odisha

and West Bengal next

week. A year ago, the two

states off the Bay of Bengal were devastated by

cyclone Amphan on May

20, killing more than 90

people altogether while

destroying properties amid Covid-19 pandemic. According to the India meteorological depart-

ment on Thursday, "A low

pressure area is very like-

ly to form over North

Andaman Sea and adjoin-

ing East Central Bay of

Bengal around 22nd May,

country, another cyclonic storm — "Yaas" — is now bound for the does not bother about crores of people dying due to Covid-19 pandemic," he

The Congress leader's statement came on the backdrop of the demand made by Maharashtra BJP head Chandrakant Patil, who said if the Lok Sabha elections were held today, his party under the leader-ship of Mr Modi will win 400 seats in the country.

'If Mr Patil is saying that elections should be held, it means the BJP leaders and activists have realised that Modi has

Bengal, Odisha facing new

likely to move North West

wards and reach near

coasts around May 26

morning."

It added that the proba-

bility of cyclogenesis (formation of depression)

during the next 96 hours

(four days) is "moderate"

which can be "high" in

between 96-120 hours. West Bengal chief min-

ister Mamata Banerjee

said, "We are preparing to

cyclone

become routine every year. All the district mag-

istrates have been alerted.

Besides alerts have been

sounded in the Sundarbans and Digha

coastal area. Our disaster

management department

The Northeast regional

Disasters have

is looking into it.

Bengal

cyclone 'Yaas' next week

Odisha-West



Nitin Gadkari

failed as a prime minister. In fact, some BJP leaders have demanded that Modi should resign and Gadkari should be made the PM Chandrakant Patil should

ering Odisha and West Bengal, stated that it "is

closely monitoring the

weather development and

has initiated pre-emptive

/preventive measures. Though fishing ban is enforced in the east coast

of India, Coast Guard

Dornier and Ships at sea

are intimating the fisher-

men operating close to

coast and those at sea

about likely formation of

cyclonic storm over Odisha/West Bengal coast

and directing these fish-

ing boats to return back to

Additionally, radar stations of ICG in West

Bengal and Odisha have

also started transmitting

weather warnings at regu-

lar intervals both in

English and in vernacular

language to alert mer-

chant vessels and fishing

boats operating at sea, it

harbour for safety.

ask Modi to resign and hold elections. It will make clear what people have in their mind and who will get how many seats," said Mr Patole.

The state Congress chief alleged that the Centre turned a blind eye towards the second wave of coronavirus in the country. "On the contrary it said the corona has been eradicated. We are facing the consequences of it as people have lost their lives and farmers have suffered losses due to the pandemic," Mr Patole added.

MHA plans NDRF unit to deal with pandemics

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 20

Learning from the experience of the devastation caused by corona, the home ministry plans to set up a highly specialised division within the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to deal "exclusively with pandemics."

As of now the mandate given to NDRF allows it to deal with all "natural and manmade disasters" like cyclone, floods, earthquake, chemical or gas leakageetc.

But now the MHA is planning to set up a high specialised unit within the NDRF which will also deal with pandemics like Corona. This will not only allow NDRF to have specialised medical teams but also the necessary infrastructure to set up health facilities at a sĥort notice.

Sources said they were examining the proposal and looking into the legality whether it will have to approach the Cabinet for the sanction or the new division can be set up through an executive order itself.



Tainted cop Davinder

sacked for terror links

after considering the facts and circumstances of the case and on the basis of information available that the activities of Singh, who last served as deputy superintendent of police with the anti-hijacking squad at the Srinagar airport, are such as to warrant his dismissal from service.

"The lieutenant-goverrenewed campaign to clean the administration nor is satisfied under subof undesirable elements clause (c) of the proviso to clause (2) of Article 311 of "in the interest of the the Constitution of India that in the interest of the security of the state, it is

from service, with immediate effect," the order reads. Singh, a resident of Tral area of southern Pulwama district, is facing charges under various anti-terror laws for helping militants, including Hizb's commander Syed Naveed Mushtaq alias Naveed Babu. The case is being investigated by the NIA which had on July 6 year filed

chargesheet against him

and six others for their

alleged terror activities.

Accordingly, the

tenant-governor hereby

dismisses Davinder Singh

The police officer, along with Naveed Babu and another militant Asif Ahmed Rather, was Ahmed Rather, was arrested while they were travelling to Jammu from the Valley in a Hyundai i20 owned and being driven by lawyer Irfan Shafi Mir in January 2020.

A government order issued on Thursday said that the L-G is satisfied not expedient to hold an **Sonia to PM: Make edu free**

YUSUF JAMEEL

SRINAGAR, MAY 20

teachers too have been fired over their alleged

anti-national activities.

Lieutenant-governor (L-

G) Manoj Sinha has over

the past few weeks sacked

half a dozen government officials on such charges

in what the officials say a

security of the state".

New Delhi, May 20: Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Thursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to provide free education in Navodaya Vidyalayas to children orphaned due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In her letter, Mrs Gandhi said the nation owes it to children to give them hope and provide them a robust future after their tragedy. "I am writing to request you to consider providing free education at the Navodaya Vidyalayas to children who have lost either both parents or an earning parent on account of the Covid-19 pandemic," the

Congress chief said. The BJP, however, took a swipe at the Congress chief, saying her idea of looking after kids orphaned during the pandemic is "outdated and copied". "Several state governments are already



doing it except perhaps those run by the Congress. Instead of writing to the PM, she

Sonia should have written to Amarinder Singh and Ashok Gehlot, BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya said.

Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi shared the letter

on Twitter and said it is high time the government of India listened to the suggestion. "Children are amongst the worst hit by Covid trauma, many having lost their parents to the dreadful situation. Congress president makes an important sugpresident gestion to safeguard their future and provide them free education at NVs (Navodaya Vidyalayas). It's high time GoI listened," he said in a tweet.

Puniab to give ₹1,500 per mth for orphan kids

Chandigarh, May 20: The government Thursday decided to provide ₹1,500 per month as social security pension and free education up to graduation to all those children orphaned in the pandemic, as well as families that have lost their breadwinning member, beginning July 1.

minister Amarinder Singh said his government will ensure free education in government institutions for such children as well as kids belonging to families that have lost their breadwinner to Covid, according to an official statement. Mr Singh said affected persons would also be eligible for ₹51,000 under the Ashirwad Scheme with effect from July 1 and would be entitled to free ration under the state smart ration card scheme. -PTI

Odisha govt preps for cyclonic storm 'Yaas'

2021. It is very likely to headquarters of the intensify into a cyclonic headquarters of the Indian Coast Guard, cov-

AKSHAYA KUMAR

BHUBANESWAR, MAY 20

The Odisha government on Thursday said it had taken a slew of measures on a priority basis in view of the development of cyclonic storm "Yaas" in the Bay of Bengal. "The state government has put in place a slew of measures to face the possible situation during and after the cyclonic storm that is developing in the Bay of Bengal," the state revenue department said.

Special relief commissioner Pradeep Kumar Jena asked all the departments concerned ensure readiness with full preparedness of manpower and other resources for any exigency arising out of the storm that is likely to intensify into a cyclone from a low pressure between May 22 and May 25 before advancing towards Odisha-Bengal coast in northwest direction by May 26. Mr Kumar informed

that the exact track and intensity of the cyclone was not vet clear as different weather forecasting models were suggesting different pictures. "As per the direction of

minister Naveen Patnaik, a draft plan has been made to mobilise emergency rescue and disaster management troops like fire, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force and National Disaster Response Force at strategic points but the final execution will be done as soon as we get clear information on the cyclone," the SRC said.

The panchayati raj and water resources department has been asked to make necessary preparations to ensure an unhindered drinking water supply and plan to pre-position water tankers wherever necessary to help people during the aftermath of the cyclone.

PM must give ₹1,500cr aid to Maha: Sena **SONU SHRIVASTAVA** MUMBAI, MAY 20

A day after the Central government announced the relief package of ₹1,000 crore for immediate relief work in ate relief work in Gujarat, which has been hit hard by Cyclone Tauktae, the Shiv Sena on Thursday said that they are hopeful that Maharashtra will also be provided financial aid of ₹1,500 crore as Prime Minister Narendra Modi is aware of the losses in Maharashtra. Sharad Pawar led NCP asked as to why Maharashtra being given step motherly treatment by the Central government.

Sena spokesperson Sanjay Raut said that Gujarat has suffered huge loss. The Central government has provided ₹1,000 crore to Gujarat, which is a part of this country. Therefore, there is no need to be upset about it.

Didi sees vendetta in Narada arrests RAJIB CHOWDHURI **KOLKATA, MAY 20**

Describing the arrests of four heavyweight Narada sting bribery accused including two of her cabinet colleagues by the Central Bureau of Investigation, as a "deliberate political vendetta," West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday complained that they have been subjected to an "unlimited injustice.

The Trinamul Congress supremo, who alongwith state law minister Moloy Ghatak and party MP

made a party by the CBI in its petition to transfer the high-profile case outside the state, also expressed her anguish over no relief to the arrested quartet, now in the judicial custody, as the hearing of the case at the Calcutta High Court was not held due to 'unavoidable circumstances.

Ms Banerjee alleged, "I am not saying anything since the matter is subiudice. But the injustice that has been meted out to them is unlimited. I will not make any comment on the court proceedings.

But beyond the court I, as a political person in govdeliberate political vendetta. Praising the work of

state housing minister Firhad Hakim, also the outgoing Kolkata Mayor, and state panchayat minister Subrata Mukherjee amid Covid-19 pandemic, the CM claimed, "Bobby works a lot with his full team on the street always. He was the one who received the trial vaccine, risking his life. Alongwith him and Subratada, others have been kept in confinement for days. I hope justhree-four days have passed when Bobby and Subratada could not do their job. So I will have to check whether there is a pile-up of the dead bodies."

Earlier the hearing in the case did not take place as the high court issued a notice stating, "Due to unavoidable stances, the First Division Bench will not assemble today." Following this, the four arrested leaders spent another night in judicial custody. Their matter is likely to come up for hearing on Friday.

37 deaths, 36 still missing

■ Continued from Page 1 Mumbai police has also announced a probe into barge P305 remaining in the area despite storm warnings. An ADR (accidental death report) was registered Wednesday in connection with the

On Thursday morning the Coast Guard said another missing tug --Sangeeta, with a crew of 10 -- had been located about 10 nautical miles west of Maharashtra's Tarapur. The Coast Guard found the ship and has provided food, water and medical support to the crew while it is being

Another Navy ship, *INS Talwar*, was the "On Scene Coordinator" off Gujarat coast and assisted Support Station 3 (SS-3) and Drill Ship Sagar

Bhushan, which were being safely towed back to Mumbai by ONGC support vessels, an official The ministry of petrole-

um and natural gas announced a high-level inquiry into "lapses and gaps" in the system. It will probe the sequence of events leading to the ONGC support vessels left stranded by the cyclone, see whether warnings by the India Meteorological Department and other statutory authorities were acted upon or not, and if the SOP for securing vessels and disaster management was followed.

According to barge's chief engineer Rahman Shaikh, everyone onboard could have been saved had many of the life rafts not had punctures and the captain had taken the cyclone

Mr Shaikh has been admitted Apollo Hospital in Tardeo with injuries on his knee. He stated that they had received the cyclone warning a week before it hit

Many other vessels in the vicinity left and he had told the captain, Balwinder Singh, that they must also leave for the harbour. However, the captain said that winds were not expected to be over 40 kmph and the cyclone would cross Mumbai in one or two hours.

Maharashtra The Congress demanded the resignation of Union minister petroleum Dharmendra Pradhan on moral grounds over the death of 37 personnel on board the barge that sank in the Arabian Sea, and termed it as a "man made

'Black fungus' the new challenge

"white fungus" — is reported to have been detected in Bihar. Meanwhile, interacting

with state and district officials from across India on the Covid-19 situation via video conferencing on Thursday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged them to devise new solutions and strategies to tackle mounting challenges, and specifically for rural areas, with cases rising outside the cities, to ensure rural India remains Covid-free. The officers briefed the PM on the improving situation in certain districts. On vaccine wastage, Mr Modi said wastage of a single vaccine means not being able to provide the necessary security to an individual. On Friday, the PM will interact with doctors,

paramedical staff and other frontline health workers of Varanasi and review the working of various Covid hospitals in his parliamentary constituen-

The new challenge of black fungus comes as daily new Covid-19 cases have started showing a slight decline and for the fourth consecutive day less than three lakh cases were recorded. In the last 24 hours, 2.76 lakh fresh cases were detected from 20.44 lakh tests and daily recoveries -- 3.69 lakh -- outnumbered daily new cases for seventh consecutive day. The daily positivity rate of the country stands at 13.44 per cent, while the deaths in the past 24 hours were 3,874, which was 655 less than the previous day.

"Things seem to be set-

tling and improving slightly but still we are in the midst of the second wave and strict vigil and control has to be kept. The districts which have a positivity rate of 10 per cent or more need stricter containments measures," said Dr Balram Bhargava, the

head of ICMR.

While cases may be reducing in cities where there is some awareness of testing, there seems to be a major outbreak in rural peri-urban areas where lack of testing may be giving a faulty national picture.

"Even as the second wave declines, my patients from rural areas have a different story to tell -- one of masses of people with fever, some dying, all without testing. Terribly worried that there is a Covid surge in rural India that is going largely unchecked and undetected," tweeted Dr Arvinder Singh Soin of Gurgaon's Medanta Hospital.

Dr Bhargava said states have been asked to deploy Rapid Antigen Tests in rural areas and only symptomatic negative RAT have to be followed by RT-PCR tests. The Centre has approved home test-ing RAT kits by Pune-based MyLab, which are priced at Rs 250. Dr Bhargava said more such kits will be out in the market in the coming days as India plans to take up testing from 22.55 lakhs to 40 lakhs per day. The country as of now has 2,553 RT-PCR testing centres. The home test kits are expected to bring down pressure on the RT-PCR testing centres that are all together checking about 12 lakh

Modi, Shah to reciprocate if Ulfa ready for talks: Himanta

■ Continued from Page 1 next three days. The editor claimed that Mr Barua was very happy that Assam has finally got a chief minister who is pre-

pared to take responsibility for taking maximum benefit from oil companies for the welfare of the state's people. It is significant that the response of Ulfa-I chief came before the chief minister's press

conference was over. Mr Sarma told reporters that he was waiting for a detailed statement from the outlawed Ulfa-I chief that the recent unilateral ceasefire in the name of Covid was also an indication of his willingness to conflict resolve the through talks. On being asked about the response of the Central government, the chief minister

said, "If Ulfa chief expresses his willingness for talks, I am confident that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union home minister Amit Shah would also reciprocate."

Clarifying that the contribution of oil companies of the state was immense in the development of the state, Mr Šarma said, "Some people propagated that oil companies are

exploiting the natural resources of Assam -- it became a slogan for decades but no one ever tried to know the fact that state's economy is dependent on the contribution of taxes from outside the state. Even if we calculate the entire possible income from the oil sector, it can run the state only for three-four months. For the remaining months' expenditure, the state has to be dependent on the share of the Central government taxes from other states.'

Mr Sarma, who on Wednesday visited the parents of abducted ONGC employee, said that he was moved by the "hardworking life history of Ritul who earlier worked in a Maruti workshop outside the state

before joining the ONGC

as a junior technician. Mr Sarma asserted that his government was committed to fulfil all the electoral promises. "It is delayed due to Covid crisis, we would have started advertising vacancies in the government sector. We will provide one lakh government jobs to our youths besides relief to women from micro-financing companies," said Mr

Mr Sarma has also directed to immediately initiate the process of transition of dissolved Madrassas into general schools. He said that the previous BJP led government brought a law which converted all the government-run Madrassas into upper primary, high school and higher secondary schools.



THE ASIAN AGE

21 MAY 2021

Govt must act fast to beat Covid's spread in villages

he stringent lockdown declared in several states to contain the spread of coronavirus seems to be paying some dividend as is evidenced by the gradual decline of the daily caseload numbers, from a daily average of four lakh or above a week ago to below three lakh now. However, the daily death toll has shown no signs of easing; it hovers around 4,000 steadily for more than a week now.

It is in this background that we must see reports about the second wave targeting India's villages, as admitted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a meeting with state chief ministers a week ago. "I want to warn you about corona. The infection is spreading fast in villages," the Prime Minister has been quoted as telling the chief ministers. And all the anecdotal evidence available points to the fact that rural India is finding it difficult to cope with it as everything is in short supply; the bodies that floated on river Ganga was an indication of the crisis that has gripped the villages.

It is going to be a long and tough game to play the virus in rural settings as

a programme for the lack of health infrastructure is going to be a major issue there. However, no challenge is insurmountable if there is political will.

every single factor is in its favour. Compared The government will with the urban settings, the rural areas lack have to quickly roll out a health infrastructure. Testing hesitancy, which is proving to be a major hurdle in the a programme for the path of the health workers to identify the trouble spots, is on the rise in the villages due to many factors. The lack of awareness about the fatal nature of the infection and the trust in quacks and their home remedies are going to be major obstacles in the efforts to contain the pandemic in rural areas. Taking these factors together, the recent fall in numbers gives a realistic person very little reason to be optimistic about it.

The government will have to quickly roll

out a programme for the rural areas, and the lack of health infrastructure is going to be a major issue there. However, no challenge is insurmountable if there is political will. Top US public health expert on Covid-19 and former director of the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Anthony Fauci, is on record saying India must put to use all its national resources, including the military, to fight and stop the virus spread. He has even gone on to suggest that the government make use of the services of the armed forces to get medical facilities available for its suffering population by building field hospitals. The government must consider the suggestion as it has little choice if it wants to save its massive rural population from

The government must use all the tools available with it to convince the people into dropping their testing hesitancy and joining the governmental efforts. This is easier said than done but people following Covid protocol would be the most cost-effective and efficient line of defence against the pandemic. There are experts who warn of a more fatal third wave; but the government must find ways to manage the wolf which is already at the door.

The WhatsApp conundrum

The Indian government has told WhatsApp once again to withdraw its new privacy policy while giving it seven days to respond to the notice. India is taking this up as a serious issue that concerns its sovereign laws and it would be up to Facebook-WhatsApp to determine whether it needs its Indian presence. The problem is, of course, bigger for WhatsApp as some of its trackillies were the local problem. two billion users are leaving the app in droves because they are fed up with its ham-handed and obstinate handling of issues over sharing data with its principal Facebook, which is often described as the world's greediest data harvesting machine

Any user of the Internet should know the minute he signs up for a free site like the messaging platform WhatsApp that his privacy has already been compromised. In Facebook's case, it stood exposed by rivals, including Apple, that it collects much more data — device ID, user ID and contact info — of a user than is really required for offering its secure messaging. Encryption of messages is still its best feature as all individual user's conversations are secure and no one has access to them unless they are leaked by other users in a group. However, the reason for collecting excessive data is hard to understand.

Being a free platform, WhatsApp was at liberty to base any advertising fed to the user on the basis of the data collected. But it was not free to share some data with Facebook, whose last quarter of 2020 revenues were upwards of \$28 bildid clarify that its change of terms would only enable its busi ness customers to communicate to WhatsApp users who allow access. A user can now turn off, in WA settings, access to anyone who is not on his/her con-

Facebook-WhatsApp's performance during this privacy storm was never transparent enough and it exacerbated the situation by warning users now to sign up under new terms or face cuts in access to full functionality. It is now up to users to decide whether to stay on or switch off and look for alternatives.



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Mahir Ali

Killings don't end; but America's love

the courage to timorously call for a ceasefire, Joe Biden has been echoing the mantra recited by a long line of his predecessors: Israel has the right to defend itself. That discredited framework glosses over pertinent questions, such as: does that entail the right to slaughter children, including infants? Ignoring the scale of the carnage in Gaza, the predictable riposte would be: well, Israeli children have also been killed, and remain at risk. Besides, Hamas invited the retaliation.

That's not an absurd argument. Hamas could not possibly have been unaware that its largely ineffective rockets would elicit a brutal response. And Israeli kids obviously have as much right to safety as Palestinian

But that is not how the moral calculus operates in that part of the world. Much of the mainstream Western media has no qualms about implying some kind of equivalence between the

ding the extreme imbalance of military power, there's a kind of unacknowledged truth in there: if Hamas can be framed as a terrorist organisation, the Israeli state qualifies for that

accolade many times over. That is borne out by its behaviour both historically and in the present instance, where the ratio of casualties is already roughly 1:20, and destined to grow even more disproportionate. All too often, the crude missiles lobbed by Hamas and its allies land in the desert. Sometimes they pose a hazard for Palestinians. Israel claims that 90pc of the rest are intercepted by its Iron Dome defences. That's worth bearing in mind when reading about thousands of Hamas rockets heading into Israel.

Yes, they are 'indiscriminate'. The Israel Defence Forces, on the other hand, are extremely discriminating in aiming their attacks. Hospitals, schools and towers housing media offices all fall in the category of military targets. If entire families are slaughtered in the process, that's always 'inadvertent'.

As a senator in 1988, Biden declared that if Israel did not exist, America would have been obliged to invent it as a means of defending US interests in the Middle East. For 'interests', read 'oil'. The significance of that fossil fuel has been diminishing in recent years, but the ardency of the fossilised

Biden faces a somewhat tougher task in this context than most of his Democratic predecessors. The Democratic establishment's hitherto more or less unconditional allegiance to Israel is no longer going unquestioned. Most Democratic senators, including several prominent Jews, were calling for a ceasefire long before the president chimed in, after his administration resisted efforts to produce a UN Security Council statement. Of course, Israel is in no way obliged to heed such requests, regardless of their source, because it knows there will be no price to pay. Key UNSC resolutions have remained unheeded.

Apart from the dogged moral support it proffers, the nearly \$4 billion it unconditionally provides every year offers substantial scope for leverage. That subsidy feeds directly into the client state's fascist tendencies.

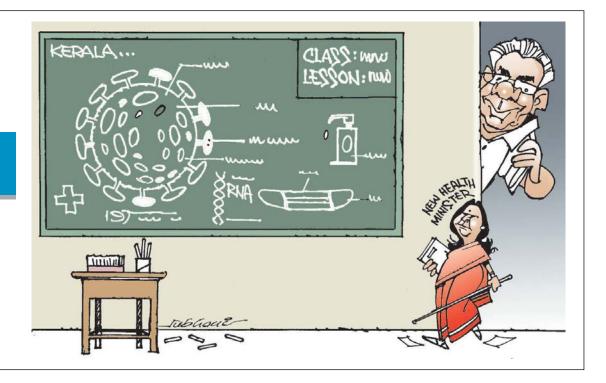
That grotesque US-Israel love affair now faces a threat, with a growing number of American Jews wearying of the Zionist project, particularly its manifestations under Benjamin Netanyahu's reign. Netanyahu, though, is merely a symptom of the problem which has been writ large since the days of David Ben-Gurion. The Zionist project wasn't incompatible with 19th-century European imperialism, but something of an anachronism in the postwar 20th century, when the broad trend was towards liberation rather than colonialism.

In the wake of the horrendous Holocaust, the biggest global powers able. The consequences for the land's entity in the Arab world were mainly ignored. The ethnic cleansing of 1948 elicited no Western opposition: there was no alarm over certain Nazi tendencies being echoed by their victims.

The Arab world too has frequently faltered in its (often foolish) response to Israeli power. Lately, much of it has abandoned the pretence of caring for the plight of dispossessed Palestinians. Last weekend, the hashtag "Palestine is not my cause" reportedly circulated in the UAE, Bahrain and Kuwait. It never was, frankly, but one must be grateful to the over-privileged Gulf Arabs for admitting as much. Israel, on the other hand, will never admit that it encouraged the Muslim Brotherhood precursors of Hamas and Islamic Jihad to set up shop in the occupied territories as a counterweight to the broadly secular Fatah. The project was a success: where would Netanyahu and his ilk be today without Hamas? As for how long this dance of death can be sustained, the answer is still blowing in the wind.

By arrangement with **Dawn**





RSS & BJP: Is there a shift in the equation?



Anand K. Sahay

anxiety.

Far & Near

recent observations on India's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic ema-nating from the highest levels of the RSS praised by many as a selfless, nationalist outfit doing social service, and denounced as a "fascist" or "militarist" body by a range of critics have left the country mystified. This is because the RSS is the inspiration behind the founding of the BJP.

The RSS can obfuscate - speak assertively, but also as a ventriloquist, when needed. It works in a bamboo curtain kind of inner culture. As with China's power pyramid, words coming out of the RSS's Nagpur headquarters lend themselves to plausible multiple meanings.

probably because the organisation was suppressed in certain periods like after assassination, but also because before the BJP's rise to power, it sought to play down its ambition that its creation should proceed to capture power.

Now that the BJP is at the pinnacle of political power and not any rival, the RSS should no longer have to deploy the artifice of stealth in negotiating relations with the holders of national power. But here lies the irony: though the BJP, election-fighting instrument it created, is in power in New Delhi, the RSS still appears to be careful in the way it says things out aloud. The reasons are up for

speculation. However, in the context of the Narendra Modi government's conspicuous failure to tackle Covid-19's second wave, as well as its striking failure to offer the country hope — with crematoriums and graveyards becoming increas-

ingly out of reach, oxygen, medicines and hospital beds running short, and hundreds of (pre-sumably Hindu) corpses floating downstream from UP in the holy downstream Ganga — RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's pierc-ing words, although couched in calm deliv-RSS chief ery, may give the gov-ernment cause for

On May 15, winding up the "Positivity Unboun-ded" lecture series sponsored by the RSS, Mr Bhagwat gave a pep talk on "collectively" facing the present "difficult" times, when there might be a death in every family one knows, and go into a fightback mode against the virus. But he also said: "The people, administration, government each got into gaflat!" In other words. they goofed up; they failed to gauge the situation and respond appropriately.

of the words an leader, Opposition except that they weren't. RSS no doubt intends that the Modi government regain its composure and is ready to help. But perhaps there is also something else implied here: there is no immediate rush. But should there be a run on the bank, the RSS may prefer to be

Some Assembly elections are due next year, including in Uttar Pradesh, the nation's biggest state where the BJP did far from well in the recent panchayat polls. If popular disenchantment surfaces in a big way in voting behaviour in the Assembly election early next year, UP, which sends up the largest contingent of BJP MPs, the RSS is unlikely to settle down to regard situation with

equanimity. And the way to prepare for any eventuality may

the ground from now to be able to guide key changes in the govern-ment's top tier if push came to shove. All of this must be done in good time and none of this can be spelt out. But it is hard to miss that a new particle now hangs in

Through one policy disaster after another — demonetisation, GST rollout, the sapping farmers' agitation (which continues), the disconcerting unemployment graph, the RSS stood foursquare behind the government. But the Covid-19 disaster, with corpses floating down the holiest river for Hindus, is a different matter — indeed a different kind of matter.

In a recent newspaper article, a senior RSS figure, Ram Madhav, who until recently was a BJP general secretary, asked the "political leader-ship" — meaning the top government leadership
— to show "a little more transparency, a little more engagement with the public, and a little more openness to constructive criticism and enlightened expert opinion from outside the government... After all, the stake". It does seem the RSS is signalling that all

is not well. Wearing BJP colours, two RSS "pracharaks", or full-time volunteers dedicated to the spread of Hindu nationalism in a country of many religions and spiritual mores, have made it to the top. But Atal Behari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi had framed a very different relationship with the mother organisation, the RSS, upon becoming Prime Minister.

Mr Modi has been on the whole solicitous, his

The spirit of the RSS is the fountainhead of the culture and organisation of the BJP too. But the BJP has become something of a mass party.

was more correct, rather than deferential. A part of the reason may have been that Vajpayee's government had to depend on a host of secular coalition partners for survival. Speculation still abounds on this issue, but it's evident the relationship between the BJP and RSS is not carefully studied

well-known While research studies exist on the RSS itself, the sociology of the organisation, its inner workings, and the way it seeks to articulate power in relation to the BJP (earlier Jan Sangh) and influence in Hindu society more generally, has not been adequately studied. The literature is mostly in the nature of self-serving propaganda, hagiography, or trenchant criticism from critics.

The Jan Sangh was created under the RSS's aegis in 1951, and the BJP in 1980. Both were the same thing in spirit. However, at no point did the Jan Sangh wield national power become a mass party. The RSS, its creator, was the shadow that loomed over it. The spirit of the RSS is the fountainhead isation of the BJP too. But the BJP has become something of a mass party. It has secured power at the Centre for which it doesn't depend on allies. Therefore, its government and leadership may not be a pushover if the RSS showed displeasure.

On the other hand, the BJP can't fail to notice that it's the spread of the RSS itself in a communalised polity that ineluctably promoted the BJP's rise as a mass party. At every level of the party and government, the levers are in the hands of RSS personnel. It's evident that the RSS-BJP leadership is shot through with contradictions. What factors give one the upper hand and not the other, at a time when the BJP holds national power, is a complex subject and needs attention. Which entity will prevail is a matter of great interest to the entire country.

WELCOME SUNIL

Captain Sunil Chhetri making a return to the Indian football squad after recovering from Covid-19 must gladden the hearts of his many fans and admirers. The team leaves for Doha for the three matches of the joint 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup Qualifiers. Chhetri had missed the two international friendlies against the UAE in late March. India is already out of the reckoning for a World Cup berth but is still in contention for the 2023 Asian Cup in China.

N.J. Ravi Chander Bengaluru

BIASED MODI

THE PRIME MINISTER needs to be reminded that he is not only the leader of Gujarat but that of India. His aerial survey of damages caused by the cyclone and the promise of ₹1,000 crores aid cannot be faulted. But why limit it only to Gujarat when neighbouring Maharashtra has also suffered? He could have well conducted an aerial survey there. Such bias must be avoided.

Anthony Henriques

MINISTERS NOT VIPS

ONE FAILS TO understand why ministers and MLAs get free and unlimited medical care. As our political servants they should get nothing more than what we, their masters, are entitled to. There is no reason why there should be VIP rooms reserved for them at government hospitals. Like all other citizens, they should stand in queue and shell out money from their deep pockets for medicines and services.

Aires Rodrigues Ribander, Goa

THIN-SKINNED TAMILS

THERE IS NEEDLESS controversy over the portrayal of LTTE in the second season of the Amazon Prime series, Family Man, due to release on the channel. It will coincide with the Tamil genocide remembrance week. Unfortunately, Tamil champions are worried that the LTTE has been portrayed crudely in the show because some members of the audience have interpreted the blackened faces of the actors playing the guerrillas in a racist light instead of understanding it as camouflage.

Priyanka Mathur



affair with Israel is slowly withering Tell before he plucked up

supposed combatants. Notwithstan-

fools remains intact.

It's unlikely the UN could make much difference, but the US can.

found Israeli exceptionalism acceptindigenous inhabitants were barely taken into consideration. The plethora of potential risks involved in

IMPEACHMENT VOTE AGAINST SLOVENIA PM

Ljubljana, May 20: Less than takes over the EU's rotating presidency, conservative Prime Minister Janez Jansa is battling fires at home and abroad - including an impeachment

The vote in the Alpine country's parliament is the latest crisis for the combative 62year-old, known for his support for former US president Donald Trump and his outspo-

ken Twitter posts.

Four centre-left opposition parties have initiated the impeachment bid, alleging among other things that Jansa mismanaged the country's coronavirus response

With the nation of two million suffering a relatively high proportion of pandemic deaths tries, the premier's public approval ratings have slumped to their lowest point since he took office in March 2020.

13 KILLED IN AFGHAN ROAD BOMBINGS

Kabul, May 20: Roadside bombings in southern and central Afghanistan killed 13 people, including nine members of one family, officials said Thursday. Meanwhile, militants stopped a bus in western Afghanistan, ordered three men to get out and shot and killed them. No one has claimed responsibility for the latest attacks. The three men on the bus were ethnic

The government blamed the Taliban, who denied responsibility. Previous attacks on Hazaras, who are mostly Shiite Muslims, have been claimed by the Islamic State group. Large swaths of war-ravaged Afghanistan have been littered with

bombs and land mines. Many have been planted by insurgents to target military convoys but often kill civilians instead. One of the two bombs struck a car carrying a family of 12 in southern Helmand province late on Wednesday, said provincial police spokesman Zaman Hamdarad. Several of the nine family members who died were children.

NIGERIA'S BOKO HARAM LEADER BADLY WOUNDED

Kano, May 20: Nigerian Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau has been seriously wounded after trying to kill himself to avoid capture during clashes with rival Islamic State-allied jihadists in the north of the country, intelligence sources said Thursday.

Shekau's Boko Haram faction and fighters from the Islamic State West Africa Province had been battling in northeastern Borno state, where ISWAP militants have become the dominant force in Nigeria's more than decade-long jihadist insurgency. Shekau, who made international headlines when his men kidnapped nearly 300 schoolgirls in Chibok in 2014, has been reported dead several times since Boko Haram first began its insurgency in 2009.

After a series of clashes, Shekau and some of his fighters were surrounded on Wednesday by ISWAP jihadists in Boko Haram's Sambisa forest stronghold, where they demanded he surrender, one intelligence source said.

2012 CAMPAIGN FINANCING: **SARKOZY ON TRIAL**

Paris, May 20: The trial of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy on charges that his unsuccessful 2012 reelection bid was illegally financed has formally started on Thursday. The scandal had thrown his conservative party into turmoil. Sarkozy, 66, is facing allegations that he spent almost twice the maximum legal amount of 22.5 million euros (\$27.5 million) on the presidential race he lost to Socialist Francois Hollande. He has denied wrongdoing. Sarkozy wasn't present Thursday at the Paris court, where he was represented

by his lawyers. The trial is scheduled to last until June 22. Sarkozy, who was president from 2007 to 2012, faces up to one year in prison and a fine of 3,750 euros (\$4,580), if found guilty. The proceedings got underway less than three months after Sarkozy was convicted of corruption and influence peddling in another case. He has appealed that verdict. According to the judicial investigation in his case, Sarkozy "indisputably benefitted from fraud that allowed him to have, during his 2012 campaign, resources much superior to what the law authorised.'



Slovak Foreign Mnister Ivan Korcok (C) and his counterpart from the Czech Republic Jakub Kulhanek (2nd R) listen to remarks by their Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi (L) during a tour of a building that was hit by a rocket fired by Palestinian militants from the Gaza Strip, in the Israeli city of Petah Tikva on Thursday. -AF

Israel unleashes strikes as chances of truce rise

Bibi pushes back against US calls to wind down offensive

Gaza City, May 20: Israel unleashed another wave of airstrikes across the Gaza Strip early Thursday, killing at least one Palestinian and wounding several, and Hamas fired more rockets, even as expectations rose that a cease-fire could be coming.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against calls from the US to wind down the Gaza offensive, appearing determined to inflict maximum damage on Hamas in a war that could help save his political career.

Still, officials close to the negotiations say they expect a truce to be announced in the next 24 hours. In another possible sign of progress, Netanyahu scheduled a meeting later Thursday with his Security Cabinet, where the issue of a cease-fire was likely to be debated.

Explosions shook Gaza City and orange flares lit up the pre-dawn sky, with bombing raids also reported in the central town of Deir al-Balah and the southern town of Khan Younis. As the sun rose, residents surveyed the rubble from at least five family homes destroyed in Khan Younis. There were also heavy airstrikes on a commercial thoroughfare in Gaza City.

The Israeli military said it struck at least three homes of Hamas commanders in Khan Younis and another in Rafah, targeting "military infrastructure," as well as a weapons storage unit at a home in Gaza City. With hundreds already killed in the worst fighting since Israel and Hamas' 2014 war, US President Joe Biden told Israel on Wednesday that he expected "a significant de-escalation today on the path to a cease-fire" — but Netanyahu pushed back, saying he was "determined to continue this opera-

tion until its aim is met."
It marked the first public rift between the two close allies since the fighting began and poses a difficult test of the US-Israel relationship early in Biden's presidency. Still, an Egyptian intelligence official said a cease-fire was likely late Thursday or early Friday, after the US appeal bolstered Cairo's own efforts to halt the fighting. The official spoke on cial. Visiting the region,

Stop hostilities at once, says UN chief

United Nations, May 20: The UN chief is urging an immediate cease-fire between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers at the start of a UN General Assembly emergency meeting.

The session is expected to hear from about 100 speakers, including 12 ministers mainly from Arab and Islamic countries. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Thursday's in-person meeting in the assembly chamber that he and the UN Mideast envoy are engaged in "extensive diplomatic efforts" in the region, including with Egypt, Jordan and Qatar, to stop the fighting.

He called on all members of the international community "to do everything in their power to enable the parties to conflict to step back from the brink." The UN chief also called on Israel and Hamas "to allow for mediation efforts to intensify in order to bring the fighting to an end." Guterres implicitly criticised Israel and Hamas for violating "the laws of war" which ban indiscriminate

GUTERRES IMPLICITLY criticised Israel and Hamas for violating "the laws of war" which ban indiscriminate attacks and att-

acks against civilians and

civilian property as well as

attacks on military targets that cause disproportionate civilian casualties. and attacks against civilians and civilian property as well as attacks on military targets that cause dis-proportionate civilian casualties. He said "counter-

terrorism or self-defence'

are not justifications. He urged Israeli authorities to abide by the laws, 'including the proportionate use of force" and called on them "to exercise maximum restraint in the conduct of military operations." He urged Hamas and other militant groups 'to stop the indiscriminate launching of rockets and mortars from highly populated civilian neighbourhoods into civilian population centres in them over everything.'

EXPECTED COSTLY BATTLE: ISLAMIC JIHAD LEADER

Beirut, May 20: The leader of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group says militant factions in Gaza went into the latest battle with Israel knowing it will be "costly but also knowing that it is the only road to freedom and to protect Jerusalem.' Ziad Nakhaleh said in a

televised speech from Beirut on Wednesday that neither nuclear weapons, warplanes nor peace agreements with some Arab states could bring Israelis security and peace. He added that militant groups in Gaza have "made miracles that you can see with your own eyes and you live them every moment when you run to shelters.

Nakhaleh was referring to thousands of missiles and rockets that Gaza militants have fired toward Israel. Nakhaleh said that after Israel's moves that threatened the eviction of Palestinian families in east Jerusalem, "we were in front of two choices, to surrender and to give them everything or fight

message: "Stop the violence." He responded to Isr-

ael's claims of acting in

self-defence by saying:

"How can an occupying

power have the right to

defend itself when a whole

people under occupation

is deprived of the very

same rights?" He said the

Palestine cries genocide

United Nations, May 20: The top Palestinian diplomat is accusing Israel of committing "genocide" against Palestinian families and urging the international community to protect the Palestinian people until their freedom is assured. Foreign Minister Riad Al-Malki told Thursday's emergency meeting of the UN General Assembly on the conflict between

condition of anonymity to

discuss the delicate talks.

Khalid Okasha, director of the Egyptian Center for

Strategic Studies, which

has close ties to the gov-

ernment, also said a cease-

fire was likely in that tim-

eframe, as did Osama Ha-

mdan, a senior Hamas offi-

Israel and Gaza's Hamas countries, sends a clear rulers that "every country in the world has a responsibility to ensure that peace, justice and freedom prevail." He urged the assembly ensure that Israel is held accountable for killing innocent Palestinians and is not provided with arms. He said the presence of a

dozen ministers, almost all from Arab and Islamic

Palestinians have informed the Biden administration. German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said Israel has "the right to defend itself against such unacceptable attacks." But he also expressed concern about the rising number of civilian victims and voiced support for truce efforts.

strength, an Israeli airstrike smashed into the Khawaldi family's two-story house in Khan Younis, destroying it. The 11 residents, who were sleeping outside of the home out of fear, were all wounded and hospitalised, said Shaker al-Khozondar, a neighbour.

constructive **Reykjavik, May 20:** Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Wedneswere the first high-level day praised his talks with United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken as "constructive" and "useful", saying both sides understand the need to

Lavrov says talks with Blinken

The conversation appeared constructive to me," Lavrov was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies after nearly two hours of talks v Blinken in Reykjavik.

The discussions were the first high-level ones between the two countries since Joe Biden became president.

"There is an understanding of the need to overcome the unhealthy situation in ties between Moscow and Washington," Lavrov told Russian reporters after meeting Blinken on the sidelines of the Arctic Council meeting in Iceland.

Since taking over the White House in January, Biden has taken a strong line against Russia, going as far as describing Putin as a "killer" — in sharp contrast to his predecessor Deadd Truppe who sor Donald Trump, who was accused of complacency towards the Russian president. But signs have emerged that the two sides are seeking to appease each other.

Lavrov said there were "a lot of logjams" in the two countries' ties and working through them was not easy.

"But I sensed the determination of Antony Blinken and his team to do it. We will not be found

wanting," he said. "I believe the talks were useful," he added, saying the two sides also looked into the work of US and

ones between the two countries since Joe Biden became president. SINCE TAKING over

the White House in January, Biden has taken a strong line against Russia, going as far as describing Putin as a "killer" — in sharp contrast to his predecessor Donald

BUT SIGNS have emerged that the two sides are seeking to appease each other.

Russian diplomatic missions following tit-for-tat expulsions of diplomats.

"We've agreed to continue our joint actions which are developing rather successfully — on regional conflicts where US and Russian interests

overlap," he also said. Lavrov and Blinken discussed Washington's proposal to organise a summit between the Russian and US leaders, possibly in June. But asked by reporters if Russia formally agreed to the summit between Biden and Vladimir Putin, Lavrov did not reply.

He said however that

the two had agreed to prepare proposals for the top-level summit, including those on strategic stability. He said he had reiterated Moscow's suggestion of beginning broad dialogue with the United States on strategic stability, stress-ing that Blinken did not refuse.

"But experts will have yet to work on it," he

MOBS ATTACK SYRIANS HEADING FOR PREZ VOTE

Beirut, May 20: Lebanese mobs attacked buses and cars carrying Syrians expatriates and those who fled the war heading to the Syrian embassy in Beirut on Thursday, protesting against what they said was an organised vote for Presi-

dent Bashar Assad. Assad is running for a fourth seven-year term facing symbolic competition from two candidates in a vote all but guaranteed to bring him back as president.

The in-country vote is expected next week, while Syrians abroad are casting their votes Thursday. The election is the sec-

ond since the country's civil war broke out 10 years ago and is seen by the opposition as well as Western and some Arab countries as a sham designed to give the incumbent a new mandate with a veneer of legitimacy. Scattered mobs of anti-Syrian Lebanese, most of them from the Christian rightwing Forces group, waited for convoys of cars and buses carrying Syrian voters at intersections in Beirut, outside the capital and in the eastern Bekaa region. They pelted them with rocks and smashed windows with sticks. In one incident near Nahr el-Kalb on the highway north or Beirut, one attacker poked a wooden stick inside the car, poking the driver as others smashed the windshield.

Buses carrying hundreds of voters featured pictures of the incumbent president on the windows. They don't need to carry pictures and flags for an absurd criminal regime, said Fadi Nader, one of the

UK TO REUNIFY RAIL NETWORK UNDER GOVT

London, May 20: Britain plans to bring the national rail network back under government control, reversing one of the most controversial elements of the privatisation drive carried out by the Conservative governments of the 1980s and 1990s.

Under plans announced Thursday, the government will create a new entity known as Great British Railways that will own all railroad infrastructure, set most fares and schedules, collect ticket revenue and run a single ticketing website. Private companies will continue to operate trains under contracts with the state.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government said the move would end "a quarter-century of fragmentation" that created a confusing, expensive patchwork of privately run rail franchises. That system was created after the railroads were privatised in the 1990s under former Prime Minister John Major who, like Johnson, led a Conservative Party government. "I am a great believer in rail, but for too long passengers have not had the level of service they deserve," Johnson said in a statement.

The privatisation of Britain's railroads followed the sell off of other state-owned assets that began under PM Margaret Thatcher.

TECH | REASONS | Nasa says Beijing failed to meet standards regarding debris

China 2nd protest over US navy move Beijing, May 20: China on Thursday issued its second protest in as many days over US naval activities. CHINA ON Wednesday issued a complaint over the Wilbur's passage through the Taiwan

ty in the region, accusing a US ship of intruding into its territorial waters surrounding the Paracel island group in the South China Sea.

A statement from the Southern Theater Command said the guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur committed the "illegal" action on Thursday, prompting Chinese forces to mobilise and demand it leave the area. The US action "artificia-

lly increases regional security risks, and is prone misunderstandings, misjudgments, and accidents at sea," the statement said. It called the ship's manoeuvres "unprofessional and irresponsible," saying Chinese forces were determined to defend the country's sovereign claims while maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea.

The US refuses to recognise China's claim to virtually the entire South China Sea and regularly conducts what it calls freedom of navigation operations to assert its right to sail in international waters. China on Wednesday issued a complaint over the Wilbur's passage through the Taiwan Strait, also calling it a provocation that undermined peace and stability in the region. While the strait is in international waters, China claims self-

through the Taiwan Strait, also calling it a provocation that undermined peace and stability

CHINA HAS fortified its island holdings in the strategically vital South

governing Taiwan as its own territory and regards the US Navy's presence near the island as providing support for its inde-pendence-leaning democratically elected govern-

Along with building the world's largest navy and coast guard by numbers of vessels, China has fortified its island holdings in the strategically vital South China Sea and created new island outposts by piling sand cement on coral reefs and topping them with airstrips and

other infrastructure. It has ignored rival territorial claims by its smaller Southeast Asian neighbours, as well as an international arbitral ruling that declared most of China's claims in the South China Sea invalid. An emboldened China faced with the scaling up

of US military operations in the area has increasingly raised concerns about a possible clash or confrontation, whether intended or not.

US man survives mauling by bear

Anchorage (US), May 20: Allen Minish was alone and surveying land for a real estate agent in a wooded, remote part of Alaska, putting some numbers into his GPS unit when he looked up and saw a large brown bear walking about 30 feet away. "I saw him and he saw me at the same time, and it's scary," he said by phone Wednesday from hospital bed in Anchorage, a day after being mauled by the bear in a chance encounter.

The mauling left Minish with a crushed jaw, a puncture wound in his ed less than 10 seconds after he startled the bear Tuesday morning.

scalp so deep the doctor told him he could see bone, lacerations and many stitches after a 41/2hour surgery. He also is wearing a patch over his right eye, saying the doctors are worried about it. All that damage came from a very brief encounter — he estimates it lastChina delays mission to space station

Even as the diplomatic

efforts appeared to gather

Beijing, May 20: China postponed a supply mission to its new space station Thursday for unspecified technical reasons. The Tianzhou-2 cargo

spacecraft was expected to have been launched early Thursday morning. China Manned Space announced the delay on its website but didn't say when the rescheduled launch may occur. It would be the first mission to head to the main Tianhe module of the space station that was launched on April 29.

Another 10 launches are planned to deliver the station's other two modules, various components and supplies, and a three-person crew. The launch of Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony, was considered a success although China was criticised for allowing the uncontrolled reentry of part of the rocket that carried it into space.

Usually, discarded rocket stages reenter the atmosphere soon after liftoff, normally over water, and don't go into orbit.

Nasa Administrator Sen. Bill Nelson said at the time that China had failed meet responsible standards regarding space debris. China's space programme has suffered relatively few setbacks since it first put an astronaut into orbit in 2003, although the space station launch was delayed by the failure of an earlier version of the massive Long March 5B rocket.

Earlier this month, China also landed a probe and its accompanying rover on

Mars and has begun sending back pictures from the surface of the red planet. Only the United States has successfully landed and operated a spacecraft on Mars — nine times, beginning with the twin Vikings in 1976 and, most recently, with the Perseverance rover in February.

China also recently brought back lunar samples the first by any country's space programme since the 1970s, and also landed a probe and rover on the moon's less explored far

side. China earlier laun-ched two smaller experimental space stations. It has been excluded from the International Space Station largely at the insistence of the United States, which is wary of the secrecy surrounding the Chinese space programme and its close military links.
Despite that, China has

entered into increasingly close cooperation in space and other countries.







E FINANCIAL

Chronicle

FRIDAY | 21 MAY 2021 | NEW DELHI

INDICATO	RS	%
Sensex	49,564.86	-0.68
Nifty 50	14,906.00	-0.83
S&P 500*	4,161.83	1.12
Dollar (₹)	73.10	0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.23	0.39
Euro (₹)	89.09	0.28
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,994▲237	0.49
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	65.37	-1.94
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.968	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.642	-0.041
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

Sugar exports subsidy cut to ₹4,000/ tonne

The Centre slashed subsidy on sugar exports from Rs 6,000 per tonne to Rs 4,000 per tonne with immediate effect in view of firm global prices. For the ongoing 2020-21 marketing year (Oct.-Sept.), the government had fixed a subsidy of Rs 6,000 per tonne to facilitate exports. Sugar mills were mandated to export 6 million tonne of sugar in the current year. So far, 5.7 million tonne of sugar has been contracted for export.

Bosch Q4 net jumps six-fold to ₹482 crore



Auto component major Bosch posted a six-fold increase in its consolidated net profit to Rs 482 crore for the fourth quarter. from Rs 81 crore a year ago, driven by robust sales. Revenue from operations rose to Rs 3,218 crore from Rs 2,237 crore. For FY21, Bosch reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 481 crore igainst Rs 650 crore in 2019-20 Revenue from operations stood with Rs 9.842 crore in FY20.

Mindtree to buy L&T's NxT **Digital Business**

Mindtree said it will acquire the NxT Digital Business from Larsen and Toubro for Rs 198 crore, a move that will enable the mid-sized IT firm to capture opportunities in the IoT and Industry 4.0 space. The total consideration for the deal was "Rs 198 crore including earnouts.", Mindtree said in a filing L&T is the promoter/ holding company of Mindtree with a 61.03 per cent stake in the Bengaluru-based company.

Nucleus Software gets Bank of **Sydney contract**

Nucleus Software, a provider of lending and transaction banking products, said Bank of Sydney has chosen its lending solution, FinnOne Neo, to accelerate its digital lending transformation strategy. Bank of Sydney wanted a sophisticated lending soluthe origination processes for mortgages and credit cards. With FinnOne Neo, Bank of Sydney will be able to launch new products faster, it said.

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■₹250 kit to give result in 15 minutes

Covid home test kit to hit market next week

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, MAY 20

A Pune-based research laboratory's indigenously developed self-use rapid antigen test (RAT) kit called CoviSelf, which enables Covid-19 test at home for as little as Rs 250 would be available across pharmacies from next

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the nodal body in the fight against the tricky virus. on Wednesday officially approved the test kit, India's first such.

This test at home will take just two minutes and results will be available in 15 minutes flat," Sujeet Jain, director at Mylab

Discovery Solutions, told Financial Chronicle.

"The CoviSelf test kit will be priced Rs 250 inclusive of taxes," Jain said, adding that the firm was ready to produce 10 lelby ready to produce 10 lakh test kits every day and the production would be ramped up to 15 lakh units daily within 15 days.

He said the kits would be available by the end of next week in more than seven lakh pharmacies and the company's online pharmacy partners across India.

After meeting the needs of our country, we will also export the kits," he said, adding that about 40 scientists and technicians had worked on the project for about five-six months top develop the kit.

Jain said the firm had spent over Rs 150 crore on the product in capex and on operating expenses.



'This test is for self-use. If you test positive via this there is no need for RT-PCR test, as per ICMR. Any adult can use this kit by reading our manual,' he explained.

kit has been designed in a way that it is extremely simple to use and it is not a biohazard. There is a disposal bag that comes along for safely disposing off the items

Meanwhile, the ICMR said only symptomatic individuals and immediate contacts of people who have tested positive in laboratory-conducted tests should use this kit.
"Indiscriminate testing is not advised," the top medical body said while issuing detailed guidelines on the kit's use.

"All symptomatic individuals who test negative by RAT should get them-selves immediately tested RT-PCR," the ICMR

The testing will be monitored using Mylab's mobile phone application, through which users are advised to click a picture of

the test strip after complet-

ing the test procedure. "This easy-to-use test combines with Myab's AIpowered mobile app so that a user can know his/her positive status, submit the result to ICMR directly for traceability, and know what to do next in either case of result," Jain said.

Data transmitted by the phone will be centrally captured in a secure server that is connected to the ICMR's Covid-19 testing portal, where all data will be eventually stored.

Experts say these homebased tests are useful when a runaway infection pattern is observed.

These tests are used in developed countries such as US and UK. Since these tests have high specificity, it can be used at places where positivity rate is high so as to be able to detect cases early. Positive cases through RAT are mostly true positives," Dr G.C. Khilnani, former head, pulmonology depart-ment at AIIMS, Delhi, said.

BANKS MAY SHIFT ABOUT 80 LARGE NPA A/Cs TO NARCL

New Delhi, May 20: Banks are likely to transfer about 80 large NPA accounts for resolution to the National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL), expected to be operational soon.

NARCL is the name coined for the bad bank announced in the Budget 2021-22. A bad bank refers to a financial institution that takes over the bad assets of lenders and undertakes resolution.

The size of each of these NPA accounts is over Rs 500 crore and the banks have identified about 70-80 such accounts to be transferred to the proposed bad bank, sources said. NPAs of over Rs 2 lakh crore could move out of the books of the banks to the bad bank.

minister Finance Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget 2021-22 announced that the high level of provisioning by public sector banks of their stressed assets calls for measures to clean up the bank books.

Gold to gain from crypto fall, dollar weakness

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 20

The fall in the value of cryptocurrencies and a subdued dollar index will be supportive of gold. Once the speculative money starts moving from cryptocurrencies to gold, the yellow metal prices are likely to touch fresh highs.

"Cryptocurrency is neither a currency nor an asset class. But we have seen enormous amounts of speculative money going into them in the past one year as Bitcoin value moved up from \$8,000 to \$60,000 levels. Single day drop of 40 per cent has made investors realise that cryptocurrency movement has been just speculation," said Ajay Kedia, MD,

Kedia Commodities. According to him, the movement of speculative money into cryptocurrencies had led to slug-

gishness in gold in the past few months despite fundamentals. strong However, now the trend shall see a reversal and this has been evident from the gold price movement in the past few ses-

"Gold prices in the international markets have gained by around 11 per cent while on the MCX futures it has gained by around 10 per cent between March 8 May 19," said hamesh Mallya, Prathamesh AVP-research, non-agri

commodities and currencies, Angel Broking.
Analysts at JPMorgan

Chase too have found that large institutional investors are dumping bitcoin in favour of gold. The bank in January had predicted that bitcoin conceivably become an alternative to gold, hitting \$146,000 in

the long term.

The fall in the value of the dollar in recent weeks also increased optimism in gold prices. The dollar index on May 19 came down to 89, lowest level in a year.
Mallya expects gold

prices to move higher towards Rs 51,000 per 10 gm mark in a month. According to Kedia, it will take at least a month's time for the speculative money to move into gold. Once this happens, international prices can move towards \$2,100 per ounce in a couple of months.

FY21 ITR filing deadline extended till Sept. 30

New Delhi, May 20: The government on Thursday extended the due date of filing income tax returns for 2020-21 for individuals months till two September 30.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has also extended the ITR filing deadline for companies by a month till November 30. As per the income tax law,

individuals whose accounts are not required to be audited and who usu-

ally file their income tax

return using ITR-1 or ITR-4 forms the deadline to file ITR is July 31. The deadline for taxpayers, like companies or firms, whose accounts are required to be

audited is October 31.
In a circular, the CBDT said an extension of time limits is being given for certain tax compliances "to provide relief to taxpayers in view of the severe pan-

Also, the deadline for issuing Form 16 by employ-ers to employees has been extended by a month till July 15, 2021, the CBDT The due date for filing the

tax audit report and transfer pricing certificate has been extended by a month till October 31 and November 30, respectively. For filing belated or revised return of income, the due date is now January 31, 2022.

Besides, the deadline for financial institutions to furnish the Statement of Financial

(SFT) report has been extended till June 30, from

May 31, 2021. Also, the Income Tax Department is expected to launch a new e-filing web portal for taxpayers, which they use to file routine ITRs and perform other tax-related works, early next month, officials said.

The existing web portal will be shut for six days between June 1 and 6. The officials said the new portal will be made more user-

DBS HAS FUNDS

TO BUY CITI INDIA

UNIT: BERNSTEIN

New investment projects down 68%

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 20

Despite the recovery seen during the second half of the year, new investment projects declined by 68 per cent in FY21. Government share in the new projects came down to 32 per cent last fiscal.

In FY21, new investment projects aggregated to Rs 5.18 lakh crore against Rs 16.28 lakh crore in FY20. This was also the lowest since FY04, when total investment projects stood at Rs 4.73 lakh crore. Since FY05, new investment projects were always above Rs 10 lakh crore each year with seven of them witnessing above Rs 20 lakh crore, as per data from Care Ratings.

New investment projects had stood at Rs 2.92 lakh crore in FY03 and it steeply went up to Rs 27.07 lakh crore in FY09. A trough was witnessed in the FY12-FY14 period when there was an increase in NPAs of banks and subsequently the quantum of stalled

Until FY17, government companies dominated the mix with a share of 58 per cent. This has been coming down since then and in FY21 it was 32 per cent from 49 per cent in FY20. The fall in investments

in FY21 can be primarily attributed to the lockdown. The capacity utilisation rate had fallen sharply in June 2020 to 47.3 per cent and since then recovered to 63.3 per cent and 66.6 per cent respectively in September and December 2020. Lower investments also

indicate the increased borrowings witnessed last year was for working capital and refinancing purposes. Of the Rs 5.18 lakĥ crore, metal and metal products, electricity and chemical and chemical products chemical products accounted for major share of the new invest-

ment projects. Investment is a concern because the gross fixed capital formation rate has been falling from 34.3 per cent in FY12 to 28.8 per cent in FY20.

HOME LOAN MARKET GROWS 9.6%

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 20

The home loan market grew 9.6 per cent in the December 2020 quarter over the year-ago period despite the pandemic

With a 9.6 per cent growth, the home loan market made a recovery towards pre-Covid December 2019 level, when the growth was 10.4 per cent. Active housing loan borrowers' base as of December 2020 stood higher than pre-pandemic levels in December 2019, with a yearly growth of nearly 5 per cent, as per the data

from CRIF High Mark. The affordable housing segment constituted 60 per cent of the market by value and nearly 90 per cent by volume. Tier- II and III geographies witnessed a higher annual growth rate in home loan book compared to metros with a large part of the growth coming in from the affordable and midmarket segment. Visakhapatnam

Coimbatore were among the top 10 cities, having the largest yearly growth of over 10 per cent.

'Not very social' ByteDance founder to hand CEO reins to college buddy **ECHO WANG &** "I'm more interested in

YINGZHI YANG

Zhang Yiming announced he will step down as CEO of TikTok-owner Byte-Dance, saying ne iacked the social skills to be an ideal manager and naming his college roommate Liang Rubo as his successor to navigate a rising tide of Big Tech regulations.

In a surprise announcement to employees on Thursday, Zhang said the change would enable him "to have greater impact on longer-term initiatives". He will move to a "key strategy" position at the end of the year, ByteDance

The 38-year-old will be succeeded by Liang, a longtime colleague and the current head of human resources at ByteDance, one of the world's biggest private tech companies with an estimated value of about \$300 billion in recent

The management shakeup - ByteDance's biggest since its launch in 2012 comes as Chinese regulators are increasing scrutiny of the country's biggest

BADGE LOF HONOUR Verification application to appear in Account Settings tab

Twitter starts verification for blue tick



technology firms.

In April, they handed ecommerce giant Alibaba Group Holding Ltd with a \$2.8 billion fine for anti-competitive practices, and last year suspended fintech affiliate Ant Group's initial public offering (IPO).

Anti-trust regulators have also told Tencent Holdings Ltd they are preparing to fine the gaming giant as much as \$1.55 billion.

Zhang, who turned ByteDance into a social media force, said he was not in fact a social person. He blamed the day-to-day

challenges of a ČEO as being a hurdle to research and innovation, while calling Liang "an invaluable partner" with "strengths in management, organiza-tion, and social engage-

analysing organisational and market principles, and leveraging these theories to further reduce management work, rather than ctually managing people Zhang, who will remain in his role as chairman, wrote in the memo.

"Similarly. I'm not verv social, preferring solitary activities like being online, reading, listening to music, and contemplating what may be possible. In an internal memo seen

by Reuters, Liang - also 38 said the new role represented a "huge challenge" with "a lot of pressure"

Liang, not a household name in China, roomed with Zhang at Nankai University in Tianjin, China. He also worked with him at real estate website 99fang.com prior to joining ByteDance. Liang on his LinkedIn profile said he is a ByteDance co-founder.

ByteDance, employs over 100,000 people worldwide, had been preparing for a much-anticipated IPO this year, but halted the plans in

CHANYAPORN CHANJAROEN DBS Group Holdings Ltd has sufficient capital to bid for Citigroup Inc's consumer assets in India alued at S\$2.7 billion (\$2 billion) without needing

to raise additional funds, Sanford C. Bernstein & Co analysts said. It's a case of "either go big or go home" for DBS to further expand in India where the Singaporebased bank also acquired Lakshmi Vilas Bank Ltd in November. Bernstein analysts led by Kevin Kwek wrote in a report on Thursday. DBS chief executive officer Piyush Gupta last month said he is interested in the US

bank's assets that are for

sale in the South Asian

country, as well as in China, Taiwan and Indonesia. A takeover of Citi's India unit would be DBS's largest acquisition since 2001, when the Singapore firm spent \$5.4 billion buying the Hong Kong unit formerly known as Dao Heng Bank Group Ltd. Among the US bank's assets for sale, India stands out as "the crown jewel," Kwek wrote. Its credit card and wealth business would be attractive to any bidder given the country's economic growth rate and popula-

tion size, he added.

DBS has pledged to make more income outside its home turf, where the bank derived 70 per cent of its S\$4.7 billion profit in 2020.

DBS remains very disciplined on acquisitions and wouldn't be drawn into any "bidding frenzy," Gupta said April 30 when asked about his interest in Citi's asset sale.

Citi plans to exit retail banking in 13 markets across Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa, as part of a strategy by CEO Jane Fraser, who took over in March.

In April, DBS said it would pay \$\$1.1 billion for a 13 per cent chunk in China's Shenzhen Rural Commercial Bank Corp., and Gupta has indicated an interest to raise the

size of that stake. Bloomberg

THAILAND PRIORITISES **WORKERS FOR JABS** TO REVIVE ECONOMY

RANDY THANTHONG-MAY 20

Thailand is adding workers to the front of the vaccination queue in an effort to buttress the economy as a raging Covid outbreak threatens to delay plans to reopen bor-

ders for foreign tourists. Millions of employees under the social security programme in Bangkok, the nation's capital and financial hub, and nine provinces with large economies will get their shots along with other priority groups, according to Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha.

"This group is an important engine to the nation's economy," Prayuth said. Bloomberg

New Delhi, May 20: Twitter will start rolling out its verification application process from Thurs-day after which approved

the 'blue verified badge'. Twitter had paused its public verification programme a few years ago. However, last year, Twitter said it would re-launch the verification process in 2021.

user accounts can sport

On Thursday, Twitter highlighted that it has also started automatically removing the verified badge from those accounts that no longer meet the updated criteria. We're excited to share that starting today, we'll

begin rolling out our new

verification application process and reviewing

public applications for ver-Today's application rollout marks the next milestone in our plans to give more transparency, credibility, and clarity to verification on Twitter, Twitter said in

Verified accounts that repeatedly violate the Twitter Rules are subject to have the blue badge removed, it added. The microblogging plat-

form said over the past several months, it has been working to bring clarity to the verification eligibility criteria and has launched a new policy shaped by public feedback. Twitter highlighted that

it has also started enforc-

ing that policy by automat-

ically removing the veri-

fied badge from accounts that no longer meet the updated criteria for verification, such as those that are inactive or incomplete. The coveted 'blue badge'

is one of the ways Twitter helps people distinguish the authenticity of accounts that are of high public interest, and gives Twitter users more context about who they're hav-

ing conversations with.
With today's application launch, we're also introducing new guidelines for verified accounts on Twitter. These verification guidelines are intended to encourage healthy conversations for the betterment of the Twitter community overall, the US-based company said

To qualify for verification, users must belong to one of the six categories government; companies /brands/organisations: news organisations and journalists; entertainment; sports and gaming; and activists/organisers/other influential individu-

Twitter pointed out that it is planning to introduce more categories later this

year, such as those for scientists, academics, and religious leaders. It said users must also provide a profile name, a

profile image, and either a confirmed email address or phone number. The account must also be active within the last six months and have a record adherence to the Twitter Rules. Over the next few weeks,

everyone on Twitter will start to see the new verification application directly in the Account Settings tab, Twitter said, adding that once the application is submitted, users will get an emailed response. If the application is approved, users will see the blue badge automatically on their profile. — PTI their profile.

SHORT TAKES

Legendary Milkha Singh is Covid +ve

New Delhi: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh has tested positive for Covid-19 and is in isolation at his Chandigarh resi-

The 91-year-old, popularly known as Flying Sikh, is asymptomatic and claims to be in "high spirits" "A couple of our helpers earlier tested positive and so all the family members did the tests. Only I returned positive on Wednesday and I am surprised," Milkha said.

"I am fine and there is no fever or cough. My doctor told me I will be alright in three-four days. I did jogging just yesterday. I am in high spirits," he added.

None of the other family mem-bers, including Milkha's wife Nirmal Kaur, a former India volleyball captain, returned a positive test. - PTI

Shooting coach Monali dies at 44

New Delhi: In a big loss to the Indian shooting fraternity, coach and technical official Monali Gorhe died of mucormycosis on Thursday. She was 44 and is survived by her mother and a sister. Monali was admitted to a hospital after being diagnosed with Covid-19 but was discharged, only to get re-admitted to treat mucormycosis.

Many people recovering from Covid-19 have of late been afflicted by black fungus — or mucormycosis - disease. It is a fungal infection that affects the nose, eye and sometimes the

A few hours before her death, her father Manohar Gorhe too succumbed to Covid-19. Monali was the coach of the pistol core group. She had also served as the national coach of the Sri Lankan shooting team. — PTI

Bhuvneshwar's

dad passes away

New Delhi: India pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar's father, Kiran Pal Singh on Thursday died at his Meerut residence after battling liver cancer for the last eight months. He was 63 and is survived by his wife Indresh Devi and son and daughter Bhuvneshwar and Rekha respectively. According to *ESPNCricinfo*, Singh was first detected with the illness in September last year when Bhuvneshwar was playing for Sunrisers Hyderabad in UAE for the IPL. "It is understood that Bhuvneshwar's return from the IPL in UAE. where he was representing Sunrisers Hyderabad, was mainly due to his father's health condition," the report said. Singh was undergoing treatment, including chemotherapy, at the All Institute of Medical Science here after consulting doctors in the UK. -PTI

Archer doubtful for India series

London: England pacer Jofra Archer will undergo a surgery on his right elbow on Friday. which could effectively rule him out of the first part of the fivematch Test series against visiting India beginning on August 4. Archer is already out of the upcoming two-match Test series against New Zealand and this will be his second surgery after being operated upon on his right hand. "Jofra has been reviewed by a medical consultant in respect of his right elbow soreness. He will now proceed to surgery tomorrow," the **England and Wales Cricket** Board said in a tweet. — PTI

Medical insurance

for sportspersons

New Delhi: The government has decided to widen its medical insurance cover for sportspersons by increasing the number of beneficiary athletes and including contractual coaches and support staff from this year in the wake of the pandemic. The Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Thursday said that with this decision, the coverage would increase to more than 13,000 athletes, coaches and support staff, Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said the well-being of athletes, coaches and support staff are his ministry's priority. — PTI

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REJUVENTUS

Dethroned as league champions, Juventus claw back to claim Italian Cup Reggio Emilia (Italy), first with Parma.

May 20: Dethroned champions champions Juventus beat Atalanta 2-1 to win the Italian Cup for the 14th time on Wednesday as fans returned to the stadium for the first time in over

Goals in either half from Dejan Kulusevski Federico Chiesa gave coach Andrea Pirlo his second second trophy of the season after the Italian Super Cup, on the day he turned 42.

Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini was denied a first trophy of his coaching career, and Atalanta's second trophy after the 1963 Coppa

It was a boost for Juventus who go into the final weekend of the with their ns League season Champions qualification going down to the wire after Inter Milan ended their nine-year league reign. Gianluigi Buffon was in the Juventus goal for the final time in his career and the veteran keeper was solid on the night winning his sixth Coppa Italia 22 years after his

The veteran pulled off a big save just after kickoff at the Mapei Stadium in Reggio Emilia.

Duvan Zapata had pulled back for Jose Luis Palomino with 43year-old Buffon using his legs to stop the ball. Despite the Bergamo side's early domination

Juve made the breakthrough after half an hour. Cristiano Ronaldo went down but amid a scramble in front of goal Weston McKennie sent the ball across to Kulusevski who curled into the net. But ten minutes later

Malinovskyi Ruslan blasted in the equaliser. Pierluigi Gollini denied Kulusevski a second just before the hour after good work from

Chiesa. Chiesa then clipped the post after latching onto a Ronaldo backheel flick. But the former Fiorentina forward made no mistake with quarter of an hour remaining after combining with Kulusevski to beat Gollini.

Dravid to coach India on SL tour

New Delhi, May 20: considered for National Cricket assignment. Academy chief and former India captain Rahul Dravid is set to be the head coach of the Indian white-ball squad that will tour Sri Lanka in

Dravid, who stopped travelling with the India 'A' and U-19 teams after taking over as NCA head in Bengaluru, will be the head coach of the sec-ond-string side in the absence of Ravi Shastri, who will be busy with the Test side in England at the same time.

"He will travel with the team to Sri Lanka in all likelihood," a BCCI source said.

It was reported on May 17 that Dravid was being

assignment.
Bowling coach Paras

Mhambrey will also be a part the of the support India are expected to play three ODIs and as many T20s in Sri Lanka

in July though the schedule has not been announced yet. The squad will have

plenty of fringe players and some established white-ball specialists. Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer are in the

running for captaincy. It remains to be seen if Iyer recovers in time from his shoulder surgery to play in Sri

India not safe for T20 WC: Hussey

Sydney, May 20: Former Australia batsman Mike Hussey, who tested positive for Covid-19 in IPL's bio-bubble, has advocated moving this year's T20 World Cup from India to the UAE as he feels teams will be "nervous" to travel there because of the raging pandemic.
Batting coach Hussey

was among three members of the Chennai Super Kings contingent who contracted the virus during the IPL, which had to be suspended after cases were detected in four teams.

"I think it's going to be very difficult in my view to play that tournament in India," Hussey told Fox Cricket upon his return to Sydney.

Hussey had also spent two weeks isolating in India after testing positive for the virus in Delhi from where he was transported to Chennai in an air ambulance. "We're talking about eight teams in the IPL. I think there are probably similar number, maybe more teams coming in from overseas (for the T20 World Cup), there'd be more venues. As I said earlier, if they're playing in different cities, that is when the

risk goes up.
"I think they'll have to look some pretty big contingency plans, perhaps looking at the UAE or somewhere like that that could host the World T20. I think there will be a lot of cricket boards around the world that'd be pretty nervous about going back to India for a cricket tour-

nament," said Hussey. UAE has already emerged as the back up venue and the ICC is likely to take a call on the tournament on June 1. Talking about his ordeal in India, Hussey said he had symptoms but he never feared for

PEREZ LEADS 1ST PRACTICE SESSION, HAMILTON FIFTH

Monaco, May 20: Red Bull driver Sergio Perez clocked the fastest time Thursday during the first practice session for the Monaco Grand Prix. Perez had a best lap of 1 minute, 12.49 seconds

on the sinewy 3.4-kilometre circuit that snakes around the picturesque Principality. Ferrari driver Carlos Sainz Jr. and Max Verstappen, Perez's teammate, were next. AlphaTauri driver Pierre Gasly had the fourth

fastest time. He was followed by F1 champion

Lewis Hamilton and Mercedes teammate Valtteri Hamilton is 14 points ahead of Verstappen in the standings after they finished 1-2 in the first four races. Hamilton will be aiming for his 101st career pole position on Saturday and his 99th win

MBAPPE DAZZLE AS PSG CROWNED WITH FRENCH CUP

domestic double in their sights after they won the French Cup by beating Monaco 2-0 in Wednesday's final at the Stade de France. Goals from Mauro Icardi and Kylian Mbappe won a largely uninspiring final for PSG who now go into the week-

Paris, May 20: Paris Saint-Germain have a end's final round of French league fixtures with 10th league title still a possibility. PSG have now won the French Cup six times in the last seven seasons having reached the final every year since 2015. It was also the second trophy of coach Mauricio Pochettino's managerial career. — AFF

Liverpool move into top 4, Spurs' Euro hopes dented

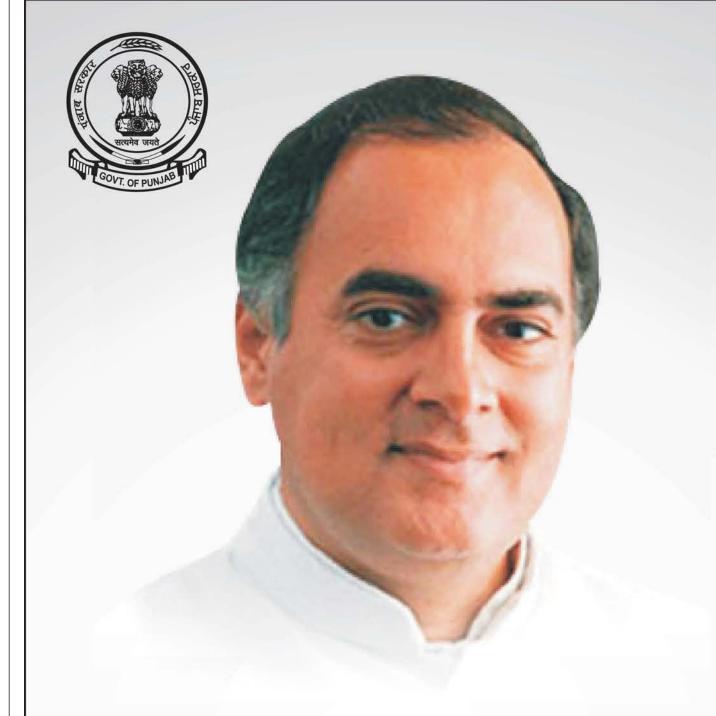
London, May 20: Liverpool set up a dramatic final-day battle to qualify for the Champions League with a vital 3-0 win at Burnley, while Tottenham's bid to reach the Europa League suffered a blow in a 2-1 defeat against Aston Villa

on Wednesday.

Jurgen Klopp's side
moved into fourth place in
the Premier League thanks to goals from Roberto Firmino, Nathaniel Phillips and Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain.

Liverpool are above fifth-placed Leicester on goal difference, with the Reds on +24 and the Foxes on

If Liverpool win their final game at home to Crystal Palace on Sunday, they should finish in the top four and salvage a difficult campaign that saw them tamely surrender the title to Manchester City. Leicester host Tottenham on Sunday, while Chelsea travel to Aston Villa.



Remembering

Sh. Rajiv Gandhi

30th Death Anniversary

'We are on the threshold of a mighty revolution... it is a revolution that will bring democracy to the doorsteps of crores of Indians.'

66 With these words late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had ushered in the Panchayati Raj revolution in the country back in 1989, empowering millions of our people in villages. Today, as we pay tributes to him, we pledge to harness the power of the Panchayats in Punjab to fight the Covid pandemic that is fast spreading in our villages. That would be the most befitting tribute to the great leader, whose vision for India continues to steer our values and goals. "

> Capt. Amarinder Singh Chief Minister, Punjab



Department of Information & Public Relations, Punjab