

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | 20 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 37°C
Min: 22°C
RH: 38%
Rain: 0.1 mm

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Misty morning. Max/Min
temp. 37/23°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha
Ashtami till 12.17 pm
Star: Magha till 3.51 pm
Varjyan: 11.39 pm to 1.13 pm
Durmuhrulam: 10.04 am
to 10.55 am; 3.13 pm to 4.04 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Shawwal 7, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajr: 4.35 am
Zohar: 12.22 pm
Asar: 4.44 pm
Maghrab: 6.48 pm
Isha: 8.02 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.42 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.43 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.48 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 12.15 AM

COUNTER POINT



3-day package tour includes
vaccination, immunity
boosting food, sightseeing...

SHORT TAKES

**Super Blood
Moon on May 26**

Kolkata: A rare Super Blood Moon will be seen in the eastern sky on May 26 evening, just after a total lunar eclipse. Kolkata had seen its last total lunar eclipse, 10 years ago, on December 10, 2011, said renowned astrophysicist Debiprasad Duari. "On the night of May 26, the sun, earth and moon alignment will be such that from earth it will be viewed as a full moon and also eclipsed for some time," he said.

FB rolls out
Covid tool

New Delhi: Facebook on Wednesday said it is expanding its 'COVID-19 Announcement' in India that will help health departments of states and union territories share essential Covid-19 related updates with their communities. India is the second country after the US to launch this feature. Facebook said it has partnered with 33 states and union territories to roll out this tool in their respective jurisdictions.

E-Way bill to be
with Fastag

New Delhi: GST officers have been armed with real-time data of commercial vehicle movement on highways with integration of the e-way bill (EWB) system with Fastag and RFID, a move which will help in live vigilance of such vehicles and check GST evasion. Additional features have been added to the e-way bill mobile app of tax officers to provide them real-time tracking details of e-way bill and vehicle.

Mamata named
in CBI's petition

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and state law minister Moloy Ghatak have been made parties in a petition by the central investigating agency CBI before the Calcutta High Court seeking transfer of the Narada sting tape case from the state. A division bench presided by Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal fixed the matter for hearing at 2 pm on Wednesday.



WORLD | 9

Israel to deter, but
can conquer Hamas



SPORTS | 12

Mary Kom desperate
for competition



TABLOID

Who's the
greater player?

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Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao listens to a Covid patient at Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad on Wednesday. Finance minister Harish Rao and chief secretary Somesh Kumar look on.

— DC

KCR makes a surprise visit to Gandhi Hospital

Harish gets back his mojo after Etala's exit

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao on Wednesday made a surprise visit to Gandhi Hospital for the first time along with finance minister T. Harish Rao, in order to boost the morale of doctors, staff and Covid patients there.

The Chief Minister spent nearly an hour at the hospital, which was converted as a full-time Covid treatment centre, went around the wards, interacted with patients, doctors, nurses and examined the treatment and facilities provided to Covid patients.

The Chief Minister enquired with the patients about the treatment being given to them. He gave them confidence that he is there for them. He then went around the ICUs, emergency, outpatient wards and general wards where the Covid patients were being treated. He went to the beds and spoke to the patients. The Chief Minister also enquired about their personal details as well as their wellbeing.

Giving them words of solace and courage, the Chief Minister asked them whether they were getting the proper treatment and about the quality of food supplied to them. He quickly responded to some of the problems raised by the patients and gave instructions to the medical officers there and continued his interaction with the patients.

Against the backdrop of the state government's recent decision to set up oxygen plants in all government hospitals, the Chief Minister examined the oxygen plant set up at the Gandhi Hospital.

Recently this plant was set up on the instructions of the Chief Minister to supply 2,000 litres of oxygen per minute at the Gandhi Hospital.

He examined the plant

L. VENKAT RAM
REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

Hospital on Wednesday. Normally, city ministers Talasani Srinivas Yadav, Mohd Mahmood Ali, local TRS MLAs and leaders accompany the Chief Minister whenever he participates in any programme in the city.

After Chandrashekhar Rao took over the health portfolio from Etala early this month, Harish has been handling the health ministry on the directions of the Chief Minister.

Harish participated in Covid review meetings conducted by the Centre with state health ministers recently via video conference. He also chaired review meeting with CS Somesh Kumar and senior health officials.

■ Page 2: Harish gets charge of Huzurabad

and asked Gandhi Hospital superintendent Dr Raja Rao on how the plant worked and the purity of oxygen it generated.

He also interacted with senior doctors, contract nurses and junior doctors. He congratulated them and complimented them for offering services to Corona patients putting their own lives at risk. He said the government would solve any problem they were facing and as young doctors they had to stand by the people in these troubled and turbulent times. He directed officials to send proposals to solve the problems of junior doctors and nurses.

"In these difficult times you are doing a great job by standing with the people. Continue these services. In case you have any problem or difficulty, please contact me directly," he said.

■ Page 4: TSPSC has to recruit 50,000 people

**CM APPOINTS
NEW MEMBERS
FOR JOBS PANEL**

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao has picked up principal secretary of agriculture department B Janardhan Reddy as new chairman of the Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC). This is the first time that the commission is headed by an IAS officer since its inception.

Governor Tamilisai Soundararajan on Wednesday gave her assent to the proposal sent by the Chief Minister.

■ Page 4: TSPSC has to recruit 50,000 people

Covid ALERT

Asymptomatic children spread Coronavirus in families living in apartments

Play areas turn into super-spreaders for kids

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

Common play areas in apartments and gated communities seem to have become centres for Covid-19 spread among children. Boisterous children rush out of households and then come to the common areas to play with peers, oblivious of the tragedy lurking around.

In many cases, unsuspecting parents are falling prey to the pandemic as most children are asymptomatic but are capable of



A representative file photo

in contact with the person who was positive. As a precautionary measure, using my influence, I got my

child tested and her result was positive. Unable to isolate the child, I, along with my 32-year-old wife, took

care of her and developed symptoms earlier this week and we too have tested positive," he said.

"It is difficult to control the children in the apartment who are keen to meet her without knowing the gravity of the issue," he said. Adding to the woes, the bank employee said his comorbid parents had been living in a room in the same flat.

In another incident in Mangapuram Colony in Alwal, a birthday party of a two-year-old child resulted in the death of his 37-year-

old father. According to the family members, the techie decided to celebrate the birthday of his baby in a grand way by inviting children in the neighbourhood.

However, while doing the birthday shopping, the family contracted the virus and eight of his family members including three kids fell prey to the coronavirus. Depressed over the development, the man did not have food for two days.

■ Page 2: We must protect our kids: Niti Aayog member



MODI DOLES OUT ₹1,000 CR FOR CYCLONE RELIEF IN GUJARAT

Ahmedabad, May 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday approved assistance ₹1,000 crore for "immediate relief activities" in Gujarat after conducting an aerial survey of areas hit by cyclone Tauktae in the state, an official release said.

He also announced ex-gratia compensation of ₹2 lakh for the kin of those killed due to cyclone in all affected states.

Immediate financial assistance for the other affected states would be given after the respective state governments share the assessment of the damage with the Centre, the Press Information Bureau (PIB) release added.

The announcement was made after Modi held a review meeting here with Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani and top officials to assess the damage caused by the cyclone.

Gujarat will get additional financial assistance after an inter-ministerial team which will visit soon submits its assessment, the release said.

Modi announced an ex-gratia of ₹2 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased and ₹50,000 to the seriously injured in the cyclone across Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Damodar and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, the PIB release said.

— PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi makes an aerial survey of cyclone Tauktae affected areas of Gujarat on Wednesday.

— PTI

storm on Monday night and completed landfall around 1.30 am Tuesday, 15 deaths were reported from.

In Maharashtra, a Navy spokesperson said the bodies were brought to Mumbai along with 125 of the 186 rescues from P305.

In Gujarat, 24 deaths were reported due to wall collapses during the cyclone, while six died after trees fell on them. Five each died because of house collapse and electrocution, four due to roof collapse and rest died due to a tower collapse, an official said.

As many as 30,000 structures including 28,430 kachcha houses, 74,493 electricity poles and 674 roads were damaged, 68,753 trees uprooted and power supply snapped in over 9,000 Gujarat villages.

From Amreli district in Gujarat's Saurashtra region, the worst affected in the cyclone that crossed the state coast as an extremely severe cyclonic

— Agencies

PG 8 | ANOTHER CYCLONE TO HIT EAST COAST

Infected after 1st dose? 2nd dose after 3 months

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 19

In a set of new guidelines, the Union health ministry on Wednesday said those who got infected with Covid after taking the first dose of vaccine, should defer the second shot by three months after recovery.

"In the case of Covid patients, who have been given anti-SARS-2 monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma, vaccination should be deferred by three months from the date of discharge from the hospital. Persons with other serious general illness requiring hospitalisation or ICU care should wait for 4-8 weeks before getting the vaccine. There is no requirement for screening of the vaccine

on the basis of being from a different state.

The Union health ministry has also stated that severe cases must be given a priority and hospital beds must not be occupied by those who do not need it.

—

recipients by rapid antigen test prior to vaccination," the ministry said.

The ministry further said that an individual can donate blood after 14 days of either taking the Covid-19 vaccine or recovering from Covid infection. Vaccination has also been recommended for all lactating women. The vac-

cination of pregnant women is still under discussion by the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization. The ministry says the delay of vaccination is expected to ease up more slots for those who are struggling to schedule a vaccination, particularly in the 18-45 age group.

The ministry has taken a strong stand on the matter, and made it clear that it is not just problematic but also "irresponsible" for the messaging platform to leverage its position to impose "unfair" terms and conditions on Indian users, when many depend on WhatsApp to communicate in everyday life, according to the sources.

When contacted, a WhatsApp spokesperson said the company continues to engage with the government.

"... we reaffirm what we said before that this update does not impact the privacy of personal messages for anyone... we'll take every opportunity to explain how we protect people's personal messages and private information," the spokesperson added.

In its letter dated May 18, the ministry has drawn attention of WhatsApp as to how its new privacy policy is a violation of several provisions of the existing Indian laws.

DROP YOUR NEW PRIVACY POLICY, WHATSAPP TOLD

New Delhi, May 19: The government has ordered WhatsApp to withdraw its controversial new privacy policy, saying the changes undermine the sacrosanct values of privacy, data security and rights of Indian citizens.

The ministry of electronics and IT shot off a letter to WhatsApp on May 18 on the issue, sources said and warned that necessary steps in accordance with law will be taken if a satisfactory response was not received within seven days.

The ministry has taken a strong stand on the matter, and made it clear that it is not just problematic but also "irresponsible" for the messaging platform to leverage its position to impose "unfair" terms and conditions on Indian users, when many depend on WhatsApp to communicate in everyday life, according to the sources.

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— PTI

20 TS docs died in 2nd Covid-19 wave

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

A total of 20 doctors have died in the second wave of Covid-19 in Telangana, according to the Indian Medical Association.

Ten doctors from Hyderabad, three each from Nizamabad and Karimnagar and one each from Warangal, Mahabubnagar, Khammam and Nalgonda have died due to the infection, it said in a release on Wednesday.

Of the 20 dead, five had had both the vaccine doses.

Dr Lav Kumar Reddy, president of IMA TS chapter says, "It is important that all doctors must get vaccinated

soon. Dealing with patients requires them to stay safe. Vaccination provides safety and if the virus strikes, it is generally not fatal."

Those who are working in Covid and non-Covid wards and have been vaccinated have got mild Covid19 symptoms but recovered.

A doctor said, "Doctors reinfected with Covid19 got only mild inflections. Vaccine does prevent people from serious inflections. Unfortunately there were too many misnomers due to which many people initially kept off the vaccination drive. They must not be hesitant anymore and opt for vaccination, as it really works."

SCB TO OPEN HOSPITAL FOR COVID PATIENTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) has announced that a dedicated Covid-19 hospital with oxygen supply will be opened shortly for residents staying in the cantonment area.

The announcement was made over SCB's website on Wednesday. Currently, Coronavirus treatment facilities are available at

Cantonment General Hospital, Bolarum, apart from dispensaries in Trimulgherry, Picket, and Bowenpally. According to SCB officials, efforts are on to augment supply of oxygen, ventilators and medicines to hospitals under the board's purview. Officials said Covid-19 vaccines are available for the eligible at Cantonment General Hospital, Bolarum, and dispensaries in Trimulgherry.

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DECCAN Chronicle

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Hospitals make beeline for black fungus drugs

State government introduces special online application

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 19



A patient with black fungus being treated at King Koti Hospital in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

the medicine can be purchased.

The step has been taken at a time when black fungus cases among Covid-recovered patients in the state are witnessing a steady rise. There has been an unprecedented demand for the drugs that are not easily available. Social media platforms too have in the past few days witnessed constant SOS requests from families and friends of patients seeking the treatment drug.

Several people have in the past 24 hours taken to Twitter to reach out to minister KT Rama Rao, requesting him to arrange for medicines, including remdesivir and

Tocilizumab. Twitter user Bharat Babu in his tweet addressed to the minister sought 50 vials of Liposomal Amphotericin B, which they need of the order of at least 168 vials of 50 mg each for four weeks. At SLG Hospitals, doctors need 105 to 150 vials for a 21-day treatment or 5 to 7 vials per patient.

The LBN Global Hospital has requested for Amphotericin B, Isavuconazole and Posaconazole for five patients. Other hospitals are yet to submit their applications, they said.

"It is a good governmental initiative to stop black marketeering of these medicines. Mucormycosis has been a rare condition until now and the extent of drug production and availability is low and cannot match the overwhelming numbers we are facing now because of post Covid complications," said Dr. Kishore Savaram, ENT Specialist at SLG Hospitals.

CM gives word to contract nurses

SANJAY SAMUEL
PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao's visit to Gandhi Hospital on Wednesday turned into a blessing in disguise for the outsourced contract nurses. Their long-pending demand for full-fledged appointment as government employees will soon be a reality, going by the assurance given by Rao during his visit. And the nurses are already in a jubilant mood.

Gandhi Hospital, which is a Covid care centre, has a nursing staff strength of 650, including around 220 working as outsourced contract nurses since 2007. Rao went around inspecting the treatment and facilities for Covid-19 patients.

The LBN Global Hospital has requested for Amphotericin B, Isavuconazole and Posaconazole for five patients. Other hospitals are yet to submit their applications, they said.

Nursing superintendent of the hospital, B. Mangamma, said, "the Chief Minister visited all wards where Covid patients are undergoing treatment, including the AMC ward. It surprised us when he spoke to outsourced contract nurses and promised to absorb them."

Dharani Reddy, an outsourced contract nurse, said, "For me and all my colleagues, it's a very big day. Our diligent services and selfless treatment since years have been recognised."



Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao speaks to outsourced nurses of Gandhi Hospital in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

TS RECORDS 3,837 COVID CASES ON WED.

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MAY 19

New Covid-19 cases in TS on Wednesday were of the order of 3837 while 25 more C-deaths were confirmed in the state, taking the total cases in the state so far to 5,40,603 and C-deaths to 3037. "There are 46,946 persons in home and institutional isolation. New cases in GHMC areas were 594, Ranga Reddy 265, Khamman 227, Medchal Malkajgiri 239, Nalgonda 175, Karimnagar 140, Narakurnool and Warangal urban 139 each, Siddipet 126, Mahbubnagar 120, Jagityal and Mancherial 101 each.

MAN BOOKED FOR SEXUALLY ABUSING, STALKING, KIDNAPPING MINOR GIRL

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MAY 19

A minor girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by a man who stalked her and kidnapped her from a nearby park and tied a knot and claimed that they are married. However, when he tried to sexually assault her, she escaped and reached her parents," said the police.

According to the police, the accused, Shiva, had become friends with the victim, who was living in the same neighbourhood as Shiva. "They both

started talking over the phone and began to text each other on social media applications, following which he proposed to her and she accepted. He then took her to a nearby park and tied a knot and claimed that they are married. However, when he tried to sexually assault her, she escaped and reached her parents," said the police.

Based on a complaint, the police booked a case and are investigating.

STORIES OF HOPE

Helping patients with free home-made food

AISHWARYA A.V.S.K. | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

work with us. We also have hired a person who runs an auto to deliver food."

"Unfortunately, we lost three volunteers who were working with us," he added. "Right now, we are delivering food to people in the form of food, medicines, resources, etc. to Covid-positive patients and their families. Many are providing free home-cooked food and are delivering them to the patients or families suffering from Covid. Deccan Chronicle caught up with three such groups.

AASHRI SOCIETY

Aashri Society, an orphanage, started providing free home-cooked food for patients suffering from Covid-19 in Hyderabad. The organisation started this initiative after its patrons Prapurna and her husband Ramakishore Reddy felt people needed help.

Prapurna, speaking about the initiative, said, "We saw one of our friends' families suffering from Covid and facing problems because of food. Their entire family was down with Covid. They called me up saying they were all affected and no one was helping them."

"Till now, we have served 259 Covid-affected families. We are providing breakfast and lunch to three hospitals — Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences, Basava Tarakam Indo American Cancer Hospital, and Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences, Gachibowli," she said. "We are taking help of Rapido drivers to deliver food," said Ramakishore. "We hired a Swiggy driver, who willingly came forward to



Food items being arranged for Covid patients by Aashri society.



Food prepared by Soumya Chaturvedi on the left and above Alishetty Aravind and his group of volunteers on two-wheelers on their way to serve food to Covid patients.

Speaking about their delivery options, Abhishek, who is a cycling enthusiast and part of several such interest groups, said, "Some riders in the city have made a group called Relief Riders, of

which I am a part. I asked them to deliver home-made food in their respective areas.

"But we could not deliver to faraway places or city outskirts because that becomes a problem for the

patients there. Although we have people, we are looking for more people who are willing to deliver or cook to join us in this cause," she added.

"We deliver food at Balanagar, Bowenpally, Kukatpally, Nizampet, and upto Chandanagar, while our kitchen partners are serving in areas where we are unable to deliver," Soumya added.

"We cook and deliver food to Covid patients, elderly people, quarantined people or families, and people staying alone," she said, adding that they had, in the last 20 days since initiative started, delivered at least 400 meals.

ALISHETTY ARAVIND AND VEDAM FOUNDATION

Alishetty Aravind started helping Covid patients with free food after he witnessed many people around him suffering for food because of the infection.

"I saw many posts on social media where people were suffering because they could not get proper food as they were down with Covid. I wanted to help these people, so I started this initiative," Aravind said.

A week ago, Aravind and his group of 10 volunteers provided customised food to patients. The group takes orders a day prior and customises orders as per patient's choice (vegetarian or non-vegetarian food). "We are currently delivering at Madhapur, Jubilee Hills, Srinagar Colony, Yousufguda, and Kukatpally. We are constantly in touch with Swiggy and Dunzo to take their help," Aravind said.

IN BRIEF

DSP MOINUDDIN TO BE VIGILANCE OFFICER AT WAKFDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

State government has appointed deputy superintendent of police Syed Khaja Moinuddin as vigilance officer of the Telangana State Wakf Board. He will head the Task Force team constituted by the board to protect wakf properties and institutions.

Board chairman Mohammed Saleem reviewed the functioning of various wings of the wakf with Khaja Moinuddin. He asked the DSP and his Task Force to take immediate action on receipt of information about encroachment of wakf properties. These encroachments should be removed with help from police and other departments after lodging criminal cases against fraudsters, he stated.

Wakf board chairman also dwelt on complaints over social media that some mutawallis and managing committees are refusing to bury Coronavirus victims in their graveyards on one pretext or other, including that they do not belong to nearby areas. He said people can inform the board about refusal of burials by calling 7995560136. He instructed DSP Moinuddin to take action against those refusing to bury Covid-19 victims in their graveyards.

PROTESTS AT CPI OFFICE AGAINST ISRAELI ATTACKSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

The All India Tanzeem Insaf and the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation on Wednesday staged a solidarity demonstration at the CPI headquarters 'Maqdoom Bhawan' in Himayatnagar to condemn Israel's atrocities and to reaffirm the rights of Palestinians over East Jerusalem.

Syed Azeez Pasha, former Member Rajya Sabha and president All India Tanzeem Insaf, said the war that started on May 10 acquired unequal proportions and Israel is using all its evil force more forcefully and cruelly despite the directives of the UN Security Council to halt its attacks. Till now, more than 220 persons including 62 children have died in the offensive, he noted.

The entire Gaza city turned into rubble and every three minutes a Palestinian is either killed or getting injured. On May 10, during the holy Ramzan, the barbaric Israeli forces opened fire on worshippers in Masjid-e-Aqsa in which several innocent persons were killed.

Pasha complained that though the Centre was talking about cessation of all military activities from both sides, it is not talking about East Jerusalem to be designated as the capital City of Palestine with clear border demarcations. Such a commitment from India had already been made by Manmohan Singh as PM in 2013 and by Pranab Mukherjee as President in 2015. Unfortunately, the Modi government has withdrawn this commitment, he said.

Syed Pasha said the peace-loving persons throughout the world should pressurise Israel to rebuild Gaza city which is in ruins and restore electricity and water connection forthwith.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that my clients Sri Nitin K. Shah, S/o Late Sri Krishnadas M. Shah aged about 50 years, Occupation: Business, and Smt. Sugita N. Shah, W/o. Sri. Nitin K. Shah, aged about 45 years, Occupation: House, wife, both residing at H.No. 30-100, 100A, 100B, Venkateshwara Colony, Narayanguda, Hyderabad, is intending to purchase all that the Western portion of Ground Floor of Shop No.2 of "Anushka Sridha Pride" in premises bearing Municipal No. 8-2-120A & 59 (New No. 8-2-120B) forming Plot No. 104, Plot No. 128D, 129D & 129D, situated at No.12, Rear side Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, T.S., with a built-up area measuring 6000 square feet, including (15) No.'s. car parking together with the undivided share of land measuring 200 square yards, from my clients Mr. Deen Dayal, Mr. Hanumandas Malu, Mr. Srinivas Malu, Mrs. Sunitha Malu, Mrs. Tara Malu, Mrs. Surekha Malu, Mr. Deen Dayal alias Deen Dayal Gupta, Mrs. Kalawati Bai, Mr. Nikhil Kumar Agarwal and Mr. Purshotam Kumar Agarwal and residing at Hyderabad for an agreed sum, consideration entered and executed an Agreement of Sale and paid a part sale consideration towards the purchase of the above mentioned property. Hence, the public is hereby informed that any person(s), financial institutions, organizations, societies, etc., having any Claim, Right, Interest, Other, Mortgage, Objections or any other encumbrances pertaining to the property mentioned above may contact the undersigned with relevant supporting documents and title deeds in support of them, and if required, to file a suit for recovery of the amount due, or any other encumbrances within Seven (7) days from the date of issue of this notice, failing which, my clients shall thereafter proceed with the registration formalities for completing the above said transaction. No Claim shall be entertained thereafter.

Sd/- P.H. PANNAGASAI, B.Com, LL.M
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Hiked salary for TS staff to be delayed

9 lakh state staff hit as file pending with CMO**IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 19**

EMPLOYEES TOO are hesitant about bringing pressure on the government as the state is struggling to control the virulent second wave of Coronavirus

are busy in dealing with the current crisis.

Moreover, considerable revenue has been lost due to imposition of the lockdown. Under the circumstances, it would be inappropriate for employees to demand higher salaries.

Further, the CM had announced in State Legislative Assembly that revised salaries, as per recommendations of the Pay Revision Commission (PRC) with 30 per cent fitment will be applicable from

April. Employees will anyway get the higher component of their salaries in the form of arrears, though at a later date.

Yet some of the employees had been hoping that they would start salaries as per the higher scales from June onwards.

For that to happen, the wage bills with the increased component must be sent to Finance Department before 22nd of the month. That has not happened.

Further, employees are required to give options on their increments in 22 (a) and 22 (b) formats after implementation of the PRC.

While this process can be completed quickly in a minor department, where employees are below 100 members, it

would take much longer when it comes to major departments, as much as about 20 days.

As the government is also struggling to mobilise resources because of the lockdown, it is stated instructions have been issued that salary bills be prepared as per the old wages. Same will be the case with contract and outsourced employees too.

In fact, when the last PRC was announced, even then there was a delay in payment of new wages. Similar delay will be experienced with the new PRC too. If wages are to be paid as per the new PRS, the total amount required, including arrears, will be more than ₹1,280 crore, it is stated.

Dasoju smells a rat in CM's Ayushman move

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19**

Reacting to the hurried implementation of Ayushman Bharat scheme in the state, All India Congress Committee (AICC) spokesperson Dr Dasoju Sravan demanded reimbursement of medical expenses to people belonging to poor and middle-class backgrounds suffering from Covid-19.

In his statement, the AICC spokesperson questioned the motives of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekhar Rao who first chose Aarogyasri over Ayushman Bharat in the Assembly.

"In a sudden move, he chose to implement

THE AICC spokesperson questions the motives of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao who first chose Aarogyasri over Ayushman Bharat in the Assembly.

HE ASKED TRS leaders to look beyond their personal benefits

the Ayushman Bharat scheme instead," he said.

Sravan also asked the Chief Minister to look up to the state leadership of Tamil Nadu under Stalin and Jharkhand under Hemant Soren towards responsibility during the health emergency.

He also found fault with the implementa-

tion of GO 248 in terms of overcharges by private hospitals despite slabs and the accused minister K T Rama Rao of hoarding important medicines like Remdesivir and others.

He further asked the ruling TRS to look beyond their personal benefits and rescue the state from the health emergency.

R. Satyanarayana, a journalist.

The TSPSC has been functioning with just one member for the past few months hitting the recruitment drive plans of state government to fill over 50,000 posts in various departments as the commission lacked the required quorum to issue job notifications.

When TSPSC was formed in the new state in 2014, the state government had appointed Prof Ghanta Chakrapani as the first chairman along with nine members. Of them, five members retired in 2019. The chairman and three members retired in December 2020.

With this, the commission was left with only one member Prof Sailu Chinta, who is working as in-charge chairman as well as member since December 2020. With full-fledged TSPSC in place now, the government is planning to initiate recruitment drives soon to fill over 50,000 posts.

TSPSC has to recruit 50,000 personnel

FROM PAGE 1

The Chief Minister also selected eight members as the members of the commission, which was also approved by the Governor.

They include Ramavath Dhan Singh, a retired engineer-in-chief, public health, Prof B Linga Reddy, head, department of physics, Chaitanya Bharathi Institute of Technology, Kotla Aruna Kumari, special grade deputy collector, Sumithra Anand Tanoba, Telugu language pandit, Karam Ravinder Reddy, former TNGO president, Dr Aravelli Chandrashekhar Rao, Ayurvedic doctor, and

Congress leaders are not being allowed to extend help to Covid patients and their attendants in government hospitals across Adilabad district. Reportedly, such instances are rising by the day.

Some Congress leaders regretted that authorities were not even allowing them to distribute food at Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Adilabad. There is a fear within the ruling party that help extended by Opposition would indirectly expose the state government's failures in dealing with Covid.

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AIMIM complains on cops harassing vendors

**DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19**

AIMIM legislators approached the city police commissioner Anjani Kumar on Wednesday evening and complained about the "excesses and offensive conduct" of the police personnel against vendors while enforcing Covid-19 lockdown on the city.

MLAs Ahmed Balala, Jafar Hussain Meraj, Kausar Mohiuddin, Moazzam Khan and MLC Riyazul-Hasan Effendi complained that cops in the Old City are harassing petty vegetable vendors, hawkers, cab drivers and

only four hours for their business a day. How can the vendors control the public on matters like maintaining the physical distance, they asked, and added: "Due to heavy challans, these traders are not able to stir out of their homes and do the daily business for their family upkeep."

Ahmed Balala appealed to chief minister Chandrashekhar Rao to provide free ration to the poor as was done during the first lockdown. A large number of people in different trades are unable to earn any penny during the lockdown, he pointed out.

shopkeepers and slapping on them heavy challans citing violation of Covid-19 lockdown regulations. They said these traders were getting

ABVP WELCOMES NEW TSPSC CHIEF APPOINTMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

ABVP Telangana unit welcomed the appointment of TSPSC chairman and other members of the commission.

State secretary Praveen Reddy said in a statement here on Wednesday that the decision was taken as per the directions of the High Court and not by the Chief Minister of his own accord. He said similarly they should release employment notification without any further delay.

Reddy hoped that the commission would work towards bringing relief to the unemployed and not wilt under government pressure. He demanded the commission fill all 1.91 lakh vacancies in accordance with the report of Biswas committee.

11th DAY CEREMONY

Sri V.T. RATAN BABOO
(12.02.1933 to 13.05.2021)
South Central Railway (Retd.)
Passed away on 13.05.2021
Funeral was held on 14.05.2021
Nadupu Ceremony will be held
on 22.05.2021
11th Day Ceremony will be held
on 23.05.2021
In grief: Family Members of
Sri.V.T. Ratan Baboo
0407661, 8096798070,
9640963186

OBITUARY

T. JAGADISHWAR RAO GARU
General Manager (Finance) Retd.
Bharat Dynamics Limited
Mumbai
Expired: 17.05.2021
Our Deepest Condolence and Prayers
to the family members.
Inserted by:
B.D.L. FINANCE DEPARTMENT
Ph: 949384703
(S/2122/D00216)

13th DAY CEREMONY

SRI KODAM KRISHNA GARU
Date of Birth: 17-11-1944
Date of Death: 11.05.2021

OBITUARY

Smt. M.J. SUDHA RANI
My loving mummy ji
D.O.B: 21-9-1962 D.O.D: 8-5-2021
We cannot imagine a life without you.
We will treasure the countless memories
and Love and Courage and the Legacy
shown by you.

13th Day Ceremony will be held at our
Residence, H.No.30-100, Kanagaludu,
Trimulgerry, Secunderabad.
Inserted by:
M.S. Jagdishwar Singh (Husband)
Sons & Daughters-in-Law and
Grand Children.

OBITUARY

SHRADHANJALI

SRI KODAM KRISHNA GARU
Date of Birth: 17-11-1944
Date of Death: 11.05.2021

OBITUARY

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SHORT TAKES

AP BETTER IN GSDP GROWTH RATE THAN INDIA

MD ILLYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 19

Andhra Pradesh has done far better than the nation as a whole in achieving growth rate in the gross state domestic product (GSDP), according to the Socio-Economic Survey 2020-21 which was released by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy at the CM camp office at Tadepalli on Wednesday. The survey would be presented in the Assembly on Thursday during the budget session. According to the revised estimates for the year 2020-21, the GSDP growth of AP at current prices is 1.58 per cent as against nation's growth of -3.8 per cent, which has shown a downturn trend due to Coronavirus pandemic.

The per capita income has gone up to ₹1,70,215 in 2020-21 from ₹1,68,480 in 2019-20. This is in comparison with all-India per capita income for 2019-20 which stands at ₹1,34,186.

Meanwhile, the Budget session of the AP Assembly will be held on Thursday with an address by Governor Biswa Bhushan Harichandan who will address it virtually. Initially, the government decided to conduct the budget session for one day only. Opposition Telugu Desam decided to boycott the budget session. The Cabinet meeting would be held at 8 am and the Governor would address virtually at 9 am. According to the sources, the BAC meeting would be held and it would decide about the extension of the Assembly session according to the need. The government initiated measures for the smooth functioning of the Assembly following Corona protocol. AP also claimed that the state has improved its position in the sustainable development goals from the fourth rank in 2018 to the third rank in 2019. In the latest (2019) rankings given by NITI Aayog, the secured the first rank in 2 SDGs – Goal-6 (Clean water and Sanitation) and Goal-16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

BLACK FUNGUS CARE UNDER AAROGYASRI IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 19

Andhra Pradesh government has decided to treat Coronavirus patients infected with black fungus disease under Aarogyasri scheme.

Principal secretary (Health) Anil Kumar Singh told media persons here on Wednesday that a government order has already been issued in this regard.

He said the state government had placed an order for purchase of 15,000 vials for treatment of black fungus, while the centre has allotted 1,650 injections. He expressed confidence that the vials will be available commencing May 22 or 23. Referring to experts' opinion on number of vials to treat a patient with black fungus, the principal secretary said on an average a black fungus-infected patient will require 60 vials as well as Rs. 3 lakh for treatment. He said the state government is ready to purchase more number of vials based on need.

On Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's decision to make fixed deposits of Rs. 10 lakh each for children who have lost their parents to Covid-19, Singh said an order has been issued for the purpose. All district collectors have been instructed to identify such children, so that the financial benefit could be extended to them.

Lockdown violators



A policeman attempts to stop a motorist as he tries to evade a police checkpoint in Secunderabad on Wednesday. Despite the lockdown, motorists with silly excuses continue to roam around the city. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

5 held for illegal sale of anti-fungal injections in city

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 19

North Zone Task Force team apprehended a gang of five, including doctors of leading private hospitals, for illegally selling anti-fungal injections to needy Coronavirus patients in the city on Wednesday. Five Amphotericin B injections have been seized from their possession.

Police have identified those arrested as Dr Bachhulu Ram Charan, 25, of Yashoda Hospital, Dr. Ghali Sainath, 24, of Dr. Reddy's Labs, Bhonsle Suresh, 26, X-ray machine operator at Malla Reddy Hospital, Kai Srikanth, 33, a lab technician at Balaji Diagnostics, and Ganaparam Saivardhan Goud, 22. These people were selling each Amphotericin

B injection for ₹ 50,000 without any valid documents.

The main supplier, Dr. Chellagolla Raviteja Chowdary of Neo Care hospital is reportedly absconding.

"Amphotericin B injection is being used to treat black fungal infection. Due to its high demand and shortage of the drug, these people formed a gang and used their credentials to supply injections to those in need at exorbitant prices," police explained.

Following a tip off, North Zone Task Force team laid a trap near pillar number 84 at Langer House and apprehended the gang members. They have been handed over to Langer Houz police for further investigation.

Doc booked for death of patient

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 19

A doctor of a private hospital in Khammam has been booked for murder over the death of a patient after the latter was administered an outdated Remdesivir injection.

Dr Syam of Balaji Chest Hospital has been arrested under IPC 302. Police are producing the doctor before a magistrate for remand orders before question him.

As per details of the case, Madala Bhadraiah, belonging to Gollagudem in Khammam Rural mandal, was admitted to the hospital 10 days ago for treatment of Coronavirus. When he turned serious a couple of days ago, hospi-

tal doctors asked his son Sandeep to get Remdesivir injections for administering to Bhadraiah. When Sandeep expressed his inability in getting the injections, doctors told him that they will try and procure them from the black market. But they will cost Rs. 30,000 per vial. The hapless Sandeep agreed and made payment for five injections.

During the period, Sandeep videoed the process of giving injections to his father as well as other patients. In the process, he noticed there were different types of injections. The one administered to his father was powder-based mixed in distilled water before administering it.

trace black fungus cases, including in government and private hospitals and home isolation.

In Kamareddy district, while two succumbed to the fungus, six infected persons have been shifted to Hyderabad for treatment.

Anjal Reddy (51) of Gidda village in Ramareddy mandal and Srinivas Goud (45) of Meesaniyally village in Yellareddy mandal died due to the fungus.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Kamareddy district medical and health officer P.Chandrasekhar said that there was no need to worry about black fungus, as it was not contagious.

Meanwhile, the district medical and health department alerted its staff to

NARENDER PULLOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, MAY 19

Black fungus has claimed its fourth victim in Nizamabad district besides two in Kamareddy district sending alarm signals all across.

Meanwhile, around 10 people with black fungus symptoms have been shifted to Hyderabad. Incidentally, some Covid-19 recovered patients are now infected from black fungus.

As there is no treatment for it in Nizamabad district, patients are being referred to Gandhi hospital and ENT hospital in Hyderabad.

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DECCAN Chronicle

20 MAY 2021

Pinarayi springs surprises, Kerala gets new-look govt

One startling exclusion and a historic allocation of a portfolio in a brand new team with an old captain mark the formation of the ministry of the Left Democratic Front (LDF) in Kerala, led by Pinarayi Vijayan. Seventeen of the 21 ministers in the new cabinet are freshers — the largest constituents, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India, which have 12 and four ministers each, have nominated all fresh faces as ministers except the chief minister who belongs to the CPI(M).

The LDF broke a 43-year-old history when it returned to power for a second consecutive term in the elections held on April 6 on the back of its performance in the last five years, four of which were marred by events unprecedented in the state's history — an epidemic, a pandemic which is at its peak even now, and two back-to-back floods. The hallmark of the first edition of the Pinarayi Vijayan government was that it left none to fend for himself or herself when faced with a calamity; the government and all its apparatus

were there to fight the battle together with them. The government took upon itself the responsibility of protecting the dignity of human life and fought ferociously whenever it was challenged. The voters returned the favour at the hustings.

The CPI(M) had taken a calculated risk in the election when it chose not to field leaders who had completed two consecutive terms in the Assembly. This criterion ruled out from the contest several veterans such as finance minister Thomas Isaac and works minister G. Sudhakaran who had a record of sterling performance. And the gamble paid off — the electorate sided with the party which fielded new faces and the LDF won 99 seats in the 140-member Assembly, improving on its 2016 tally of 91 seats.

The CPI(M)'s decision to keep all the old faces in the previous ministry out led to the ouster from the new one of K.K. Shailaja, the health minister who led Kerala's fight against the epidemic Nipah and now, the pandemic Covid-19, and earned global recognition. The decision to drop Ms Shailaja shocked many and triggered angry reactions even by fellow travellers. Observers read inner-party dynamics in the decision but the CPI(M) explains it away saying it cannot give exception to one minister when there are one too many performers. The party also points to its bitter experience in not experimenting with new crop of leaders in West Bengal and Tripura. Explanations apart, the new team will have to compete against the record of its predecessor..

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The allocation of the department of dewaswom, which looks after the Hindu public places of worship, to a senior leader who comes from the dalit community is hailed as historic as it is for the first time a dalit leader heads it after it was created in 1996. It sends out a message to Kerala society, which has started showing the signs of dissipating its renaissance spirit that the leftists cannot let it happen.

The LDF has taken the road less travelled by. What difference it will make is for its team to prove.

In Tauktae's path

The extremely severe cyclonic storm Tauktae has caused not only widespread damage all along the western coast from the tip of India to Gujarat but also affected normally secure barges allied to oil exploration. In fact, the loss of life may become the highest among those from ONGC stationed on Arabian Sea barges as many are still missing, which poses a huge challenge to the brave Indian Navy crew who are risking their lives in daring search and rescue operations in mid sea amid the turbulence caused by the storm. The toll may run to 100 or more considering Gujarat itself has lost at least 45 people on land even as coastal Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra have lost people as the states were in the path as the storm barrelled its way.

Weather events like annual tropical storms in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea are bound to get more severe as time passes as the phenomena are clearly linked to climate change caused by global warming, which is also known to raise sea surface temperatures. We may be somewhat more fortunate in the most modern era as forecasts of such storms are getting more accurate and are issued days in advance from a better equipped IMD, which also has free access to forecasts from international organisations and weather watchers on the web.

No tribute can be too high for personnel of the services and disaster response forces who are deployed in advance in the storm's path and help to mitigate the effects of supertyclones. Coastal infrastructure invariably takes the biggest hits, among them the ramshackle beach huts of Goa and film sets of Mumbai this time. With the Centre not known to be too generous or to come forward with timely disaster funds, it is largely up to the states to help vulnerable coastal communities and fishermen cope with the weather hazards. To make sturdier infra on the coast would, of course, call for great capital expenditure.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

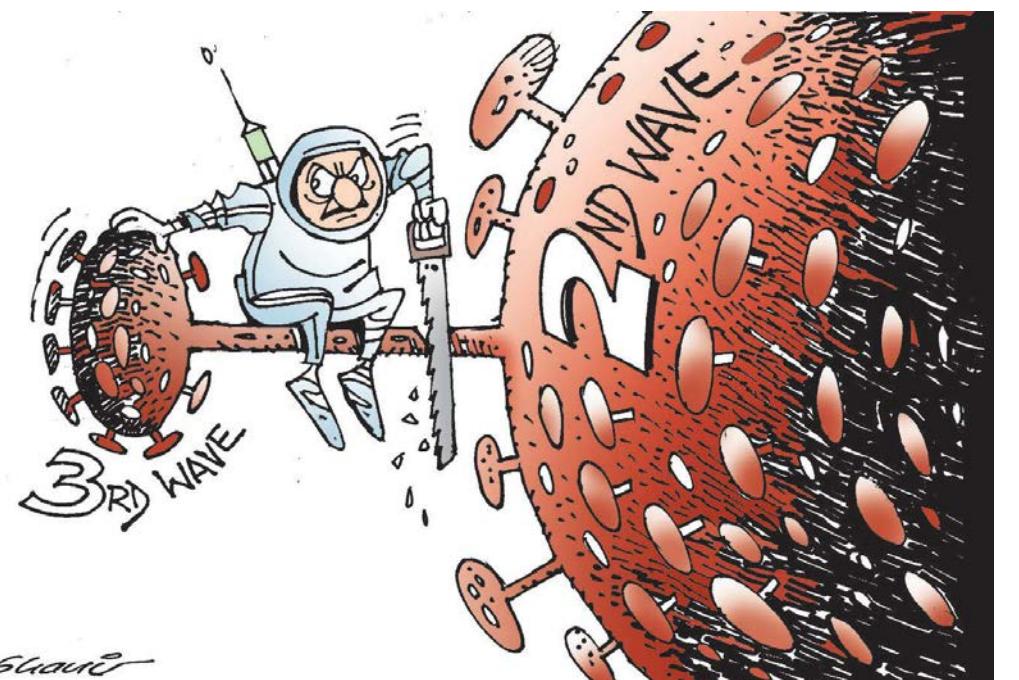
KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

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Subhani



Imposed solutions in Mideast won't work



Syed Ata Hasnain

It is perhaps necessary to start with a description of the trigger which led to the escalation resulting in the current run of cross-border strikes in the Israeli-Palestinian standoff. This is important although we have seen much of the same in the past. What is also important is to get the bigger picture right. But first, we need to outrightly condemn the sheer lack of concern for the loss of civilian lives by both sides in the senseless conflict which has been in perpetuity in the Middle East. It is one of those conflicts in which one starts tracing history to lay blame but in reality can take no sides. Hamas is an organisation sworn to the use of unbridled violence and is never concerned about the misery it brings to its own people without even a positive hope in return. Israel justifies its use of overkill of counter violence because of its isolation in a sea of adversaries, where any evidence of its softness is perceived to play against it. It's a dilemma for us in India too as our interests lie with both sides and with peace.

The cause of the trigger reportedly was an attempt to evict a few Palestinian families from the Sheikh Jarrah area in East Jerusalem where some Israeli settlers were to be housed; an old legal case was coming to judgment. This is not something unusual. However, it came in sync with another event involving sentiment and that was the imposition of the limit of 10,000 attendees at the Al Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem, the third of the holy sites of Islam. The Israeli police attempt to implement this rather harshly in the period of Ramzan led to violence and frayed tem-

pers. That spiralled more violence, which in turn led to the firing of missiles by Hamas from Gaza on Jerusalem and other Israeli cities, and a very strong response from Israel with threats of ground operations as well. It was the first time that this was happening after 2014, and many television serials such as Fauda have been made in the interim period through which the dynamics of this unfortunate conflict get to be better known. The seriousness can be gauged from the fact that ordinary Israeli Arabs and Jews have been making attempts at lynching each other in some cities.

In this decade so far, it's clear that the Palestinians have never been so alone, and Hamas ruling over their destiny has given them little hope of peace and stability. Fatah's moderation does not really count, and most Arab governments have been busy with Abraham Accords, virtually signing off on the Palestinian cause. The Trump administration's peace formula favoured Israel and Palestinian voices were never heard through the so-called "deal of the century", anchored by Jared Kushner, Donald Trump's son-in-law. Even the Palestinian capital offered in the accord is not East Jerusalem; it's a territory offset from it with the Shuhaf refugee camp within. Building a capital is never a problem, but it's the angle of fairness and perception which Mr Kushner and Mr Trump had no time for. There were no responses from Palestinians then, possibly because of the known stance the Trump administration would take. The sentiments have all been there, the eviction and fraying of Palestinians from

Shiekh Jarrah and the police action at Al Aqsa mosque are just events which triggered emotions. Events in conflicts many times bring to a head some issues that then spiral out of control and that is exactly what is happening here.

Pent-up fury among Palestinians against Mr Kushner's peace formula probably erupted but could have been aided by external backing — the usual finger-pointing is towards Iran. Tehran actually has little to gain from this turbulence because it's in negotiations with the JCPoA with the United States in Vienna and needs no demonstration of its capability to play proxy games anywhere in the Middle East. The one trend to which all fingers appear to point as having a connection with the trigger is the political instability within Israel keeping Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on tenterhooks due to the political minority status of his government and the personal corruption charges which he is attempting to overcome through shenanigans such as appointing a loyalist as justice minister. These events have come to his rescue and the robust Israeli response and the casualties suffered by Israel have helped bolster a nationalistic fervour which Mr Netanyahu hopes will enable his Likud Party to retain power.

How does the conflict affect the international geopolitical environment? First, both Iran and Turkey, having already established a moral ascendancy over the Arabs by being critical of the Abraham Accords, chose to strongly condemn Israel's resort to violence against

A conflict which has occupied the world's centre space for seven decades can't be artificially resolved without having on board all the stakeholders

The writer, a retired lieutenant-general, is a former GOC of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps

LETTERS

LOCKDOWN WOES

Neither the night curfew nor the lockdown has cut any ice with Covid-19 (20-hr lockdown in TS to continue till May 30, DC, May 19). Cases are soaring instead of plummeting. The extension of the lockdown will take a heavy toll on the poor and common man. Their patience is running out. TS is delaying ration delivery and pecuniary aid to poor.

Mohammed Laeequllah
Hyderabad

The continuation of lockdown till May 30 will be tough for BPL people and the middle classes. The government should take immediate steps to provide food and forego power bills and water bills at least for one month or till the lockdown is lifted.

Sivaprasad K. Vanoor
Nacharam

The very purpose of lockdown is defeated by giving a four-hour break wherein people are rushing to markets and congregating in large numbers. It would have been better to have a shorter duration of complete lockdown after giving enough notice to people to procure essentials.

Shashi Karan
Hyderabad

TELANGANA NEET

Many students have lost an opportunity to study in government medical colleges due to the faulty Telangana NEET counseling. It was totally unjust. Such a faulty process must not be adopted in future.

Preethi Reddy
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Everest ascent may begin today

KATHMANDU, MAY 19.

Two British climbers with the International Everest Expedition were today set for a final assault on the world's highest peak — possibly tomorrow.

Don Williams, 37 and Dougal Haston, 31, pitched camp about 610 metres from the top and were getting ready for the last ascent via the south summit, according to a radio message received here yesterday.

The message said Williams and Haston estimated they would need at least two more days to prepare the path through the difficult band of rock barring their way to the top.

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu

Grassroots gap: Doctors intensify call for all-India medical service

The devastating Covid crisis has renewed demand for the creation of an Indian Medical Service along the lines of the all-India services such as IAS and IPS etc., at the earliest. The second wave of the epidemic has caught India's creaking health infrastructure on the wrong foot again. It has blown the lid off the "system", exposing the shortage of critical beds, oxygen, equipment and doctors and other medical staff.

Sources say that this demand has been raised on several occasions by several medical organisations including the Indian Medical Association (IMA), the Federation of Resident Doctors Association (FORDA) and the doctors' association of the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

Those in the know say that recently FORDA has renewed the demand and written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi asking him to expedite the creation of a national medical service.

Interestingly, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare had also suggested that the government explore the possibility of setting up an exclusive service as part of the much-needed changes that have now become necessary to revamp the healthcare system. Will Mr Modi oblige?

C'GARH WHISTLEBLOWER FIGHTS LONE BATTLE

A district women and child development officer in the Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh is on a crusade against departmental corruption. He has gone on a hunger strike for the government's inaction in a ₹30 lakh corruption case related to various state government schemes. Though the amounts appear small, it is the principle that matters for this champion of honesty in administration.

All eyes are on how the government responds to Mr Bodele's "tactics". Watch this space for updates.

EX-BABU 'INDISPENSABLE' FOR MVA GOVT

It is common practice with state governments, but when the Maharashtra government decided to reappoint IAS officer V.K. Gautam, who retired last month as additional chief secretary in charge of irrigation as an officer on special duty (OSD) in the same department, it has not gone down well with other officers, serving as well as retired.

The rationale offered by the MVA government is that Mr Gautam had shown able leadership in the post and the government would continue to benefit from his experience and ability to handle large projects.

Sources say that the MVA government was actually keen on retaining Mr Gautam's services on a three-year contract as irrigation secretary. However, it could not do so since the post of secretary is a cadre post and cannot be made contractual to retain an IAS officer. So, it made him an OSD instead.

Mr Gautam's retention on a contractual basis seems to have upset

quite a few senior IAS officers, who see this as a wrong trend. It is also pointed out that Mr Gautam has an inquiry pending against him for alleged violation of rules as a member of the Commonwealth Games managing committee more than a decade ago.

But Mr Gautam is not the only senior official to have benefited. Chief secretary Ajoy Mehta after retirement has been hired as principal advisor to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). Similarly, R. Mopalwar who retired in 2018 is overseeing major road projects in the state and R.A. Rajeev is still heading MMRDA although he retired in February.

So, while retaining retired babus may be bad in principle, it is a widely prevalent practice and not just in Maharashtra.

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

IN BRIEF

SINGAPORE SUMMONS INDIAN ENVOY

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 19

Singapore on Wednesday summoned India's High Commissioner there and lodged a strong protest against a recent tweet by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal that claimed there was a Singapore variant of the Coronavirus that was harmful to children, following which the Indian High Commissioner promptly told Singapore authorities that the Delhi Chief Minister had "no competence to pronounce on Covid variants or civil aviation policy".

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also swiftly "clarified" that "the Delhi CM does not speak for India".

Lauding Singapore's dispatching of military aircraft with oxygen supplies recently to help India battle the second Covid wave, Jaishankar - in a thinly-veiled barb at Mr. Kejriwal - lamented that "irresponsible comments from those who should know better can damage long-standing partnerships".

Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan - who had lambasted Mr. Kejriwal and asked him to "stick to facts" - then thanked Jaishankar for the clarification. Mr. Kejriwal's tweet on Tuesday when he called for a ban on flights from Singapore to India had led to a furore in the tiny nation which is an important member of South-east Asian grouping ASEAN.

OXYGEN LANGAR HELD IN GUWAHATI

Guwahati, May 19: With many Covid-19 patients in the city facing problem in getting oxygen cylinders at home, the Khalsa Centre North East (KCNE) is providing them free oxygen concentrators for four days.

Naming the initiative as 'Free Oxygen Langar', KCNE chairman Capt P.P. Singh on Wednesday said the concentrators after four days with a patient will be circulated amongst other needy Covid-19 patients.

The 'Free Oxygen Langar' was launched on Monday, he said.

Singh said the oxygen concentrators are given to people for a maximum of seven days by keeping a security deposit of ₹11,000 which is refunded after the safe return of the machine that cost almost ₹90,000.

To ensure that maximum people get the benefit, he said the oxygen concentrators are given free for the first four days and thereafter they are charged at the rate of ₹500 per day so as to discourage people from keeping them for a longer period than actually required.

The service in the city had been started in association with internationally acclaimed Khalsa Aid which has provided 20 machines for the purpose, Singh said.

DELHI HC RAPS MINISTERS, OFFICIALS

New Delhi, May 19: Politicians and bureaucrats find it very difficult to accept their failure and inability as it is not in their veins, the Delhi High Court Wednesday said while expressing concerns over the condition of subordinate judiciary's judicial officers who are at risk of contracting Covid-19 owing to the nature of duties.

The high court said three judicial officers have already died after contracting the virus in the national capital and it was of the prima facie view that they should be treated akin to frontline workers like armed forces and police forces personnel and asked the government to consider it.

In Supreme Court and High Court, we hold constitutional positions. Our protocols are different but that is not the case of subordinate judiciary. The judicial officers' exposure is different and you should take steps for good reasons. You examine it and then decide, a bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said.

The bench was not impressed with the submissions of the Delhi Government that high court had earlier passed an order by which the Delhi district judges were to coordinate with district magistrates to address the medical concerns of judicial officers and their families during the pandemic.



Doctors treat a patient infected with Black Fungus in the operation theater of Medical College Jabalpur on Wednesday.

₹1,250-cr aid by K'taka for those hit by lockdown

MP GOVT. COMES TO RESCUE OF ORPHANED CHILDREN

Bengaluru, May 19: As Karnataka is battling the second wave of the pandemic, Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Wednesday announced a over ₹1,250 crore financial package, to provide relief for those whose livelihood has been affected by Covid-19 induced lockdown.

He also said a decision will be taken on extending the current lockdown, a day ahead of its coming to an end on May 24.

"Our government had given financial packages to various sectors during the Covid first wave."

Despite that, as the current restrictions have affected the livelihood of those in unorganised sector and farmers, to mitigate its impact, we are announcing a relief programme of over ₹1,250 crore," Yediyurappa said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said the government was announcing the package despite the state facing financial constraints, and is standing by the people, during this difficult time.

"We have done the best we can, within the current financial limitations, and will consider if anything needs to be done in the future," he said in response to a question.

The state government had initially announced 14 days "close down" from April 27, but subsequently imposed a total lockdown from May 10 to 24, as cases continued to spike. With the current lockdown ending next week, several leaders have expressed themselves in favour of extending it, to control the spread of Covid.

The CM said the relief amount will be deposited in the accounts of the beneficiaries, and honest efforts will be made to ensure that the money reaches them immediately.

Of the 1,621 deaths, more than 90 per cent of the teachers were on panchayat election duty, he had said, while also demanding ₹1 crore to be paid to the kin of deceased teachers and workers as financial assistance.

However Satish Chandra Dwivedi, the UP minister of state for basic education, had said that all these deaths cannot be attributed to elections and according to government data, only three teachers died due to Covid. - PTI

hectare loss. It will benefit about 20,000 farmers and may cost ₹12.73 crore.

For the losses suffered by fruit and vegetable growers, ₹10,000 per hectare financial relief

will be given, limiting it to one hectare, he said.

This will benefit about 69,000 farmers and may cost ₹69 crore. A sum of ₹3,000 each relief will be given to auto, taxi and maxi cab drivers who have licence and have registered, benefiting 2.10 lakh beneficiaries.

TEJASHWI MAKES HIS OFFICIAL RESIDENCE A COVID CENTRE

NAYEER AZAD | PATNA, MAY 19

Leader of the opposition in Bihar assembly Tejashwi Yadav on Wednesday converted his official bungalow 1, Polo Road into RJD Covid care centre and urged the Bihar government to use it for patients suffering from the deadly virus.

"Nearby in Maijan tea estate, another 66 tested positive last week," said the health officials pointing out that 46 people in Biswanath district's Pratapgarh tea estate (Nilpur division) tested positive, as did another 50 in Golaghat district's Borsapori tea estate.

"I have converted my official bungalow into a fully equipped Covid care centre. Since it is a government bungalow allotted to me as an official residence I cannot run it. Therefore, I have requested the state government to use it as an isolation centre for those who are not getting beds or other medical facilities in hospitals. It can be expanded if required", RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said in a video message.

Sources said that earlier this week Tejashwi Yadav had sought permission from Bihar CM Nitish Kumar to allow legislators to open Covid care centre at their official bungalows for the benefit of the people who are suffering due to lack of adequate medical facilities.

Bihar on Tuesday recorded 111 Covid-19 fatalities, the highest in a single day. The death toll has gone up to 4,093, with a total of 6,64,115 positive cases. The number of active cases in the state is 64,698 and recovery rate is 89.65 per cent.

Priyanka, Akhilesh slam UP govt over teachers' deaths

UP government refutes reports that over 1,600 teachers died of Covid

Rahul highlights vaccine shortage

New Delhi, May 19:

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused the Centre of diverting attention and said while deaths due to Covid-19 are increasing the vaccines are reducing.

He also shared graphs showing a decline in Covid-19 vaccinations and the rise in number of daily deaths due to coronal poll duty.

As per a statement by Dr Dinesh Chandra Sharma, president of the Uttar Pradesh Praarthik Shikshak Sangh, 1,621 teachers and workers of the Basic Education Department have died from the first week of

virus. "Vaccines are decreasing and Covid deaths are increasing. The Central government policy - Divert attention, spread untruth, make noise by hiding facts," he charged in a tweet in Hindi.

With a total of 2,67,334 fresh infections, India's total tally of cases climbed to 2,54,96,330.

April to May 16 following the outbreak of the second Covid-19 wave. Of these 1,621 deaths, more than 90 per cent of the teachers were on panchayat election duty," he said.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav also

accused the Uttar Pradesh government of lying about the number of teachers who lost their lives during the recent panchayat poll duty to avoid giving them compensation.

"To avoid giving compensation, the ruthless BJP

government in Uttar Pradesh is now lying that only three teachers have died during election duty while the figures given by the teachers' body is more than 1,000," Yadav said in a tweet in Hindi.

"The BJP government is creating a 'world record of big lies'. How would the heartless BJP members realise the grief of these families?" he further said, and attached a newspaper report.

Of the 1,621 deaths, more than 90 per cent of the teachers were on panchayat election duty to avoid giving them compensation.

"I have given instructions to disburse the amount immediately, and there is no shortage of funds for this," he said.

Yediyurappa on Wednesday held a meeting with senior ministers of his cabinet and officials, ahead of announcing the package at a press conference.

Listing the details of the relief package, the Chief Minister said ₹10,000 relief will be given to flower growers for per

PM all praise for Bihar's Covid app

Patna, May 19:

An innovative Home Isolation Tracking (HIT) App developed by the Bihar government to keep an eye on the condition of Covid patients recuperating at their residence has drawn special praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Modi came to know about the HIT App while talking to Patna district magistrate Chandrasekhar Singh during an interaction with officials of several districts of nine states on Tuesday.

Impressed with the con-

cept, the prime minister ordered to send its details to the union health ministry for its utilisation across the country. Singh said. "The health department has sent one-page detail of the HIT COVID App to the union health ministry." Additional Chief Secretary, Health, Pratyang Amrit said on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had launched the app on Monday to reach out to patients undergoing treatment in home isolation.

- PTI

Spread of Covid in jails, tea gardens is a matter of concern for Assam

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MAY 19

Amidst sharp decline in positivity rate in urban areas, the spread of pandemic in jails and tea garden areas of Assam has been the new area of concern for the health authorities who on Wednesday detected at least 52 Covid positive inmates in the Dibrugarh Central Jail.

The prison currently has 530 inmates. Out of them, 223 were tested for the infection. Over the past two days, 52 have been

found to be Covid positive. Among those included top Ulfa-I leader Jibon Moran, who recently left the outfit due to health reasons and is in judicial custody at the Dibrugarh prison.

Indicating that remaining jail inmates have been kept in isolation and would be tested soon, state

government sources said that there are 31 jails in Assam, including six central jails and 22 district jails. Pointing out that positivity rate in the state has seen a sharp decline from 9.2 per cent to 6.47 per cent in the last six days, sources said that the state on Tuesday recorded 5,835 fresh cases.

Admitting that Dibrugarh is among the districts worst affected in the second Covid wave in Assam, sources in the state health department said that major area of

concern is the tea garden areas. "At least 193 workers, including their family members as well as some members of the management, tested positive in the Zalon tea estate of Dibrugarh district.

"Nearby in Maijan tea estate, another 66 tested positive last week," said the health officials pointing out that 46 people in Biswanath district's Pratapgarh tea estate (Nilpur division) tested positive, as did another 50 in Golaghat district's Borsapori tea estate.

"I have converted my official bungalow into a fully equipped Covid care centre. Since it is a government bungalow allotted to me as an official residence I cannot run it. Therefore, I have requested the state government to use it as an isolation centre for those who are not getting beds or other medical facilities in hospitals. It can be expanded if required", RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav said in a video message.

Sources said that earlier this week Tejashwi Yadav had sought permission from Bihar CM Nitish Kumar to allow legislators to open Covid care centre at their official bungalows for the benefit of the people who are suffering due to lack of adequate medical facilities.

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FIGHTING | COVID Hospitals in Delhi also report a rise in the number of black fungus cases

Black fungus declared an epidemic in Raj

Jaipur, May 19: Mucormycosis (black fungus), which is primarily affecting people recovering from Covid-19 during the second wave and it could be ascribed to "irrational" use of steroids at home without consulting a doctor.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government has set up a four-member technical expert committee (TEC) to prevent the indiscriminate use of Amphotericin-B injection and to establish a transparent and efficient system of distribution of this drug to the needy and hospitalised Covid-19 patients.

The drug is used in the treatment of black fungus or mucormycosis and is currently in short supply. Hospitals in Delhi have

reported a rise in the number of black fungus cases among people recovering from Covid-19 during the second wave and it could be ascribed to "irrational" use of steroids at home without consulting a doctor.

The expert committee will be headed by Pulmonologist Dr M.K. Daga, and include Dr Manisha Aggarwal, Dr S. Anuradha and Dr Ravi Meher from Maulana Azad Medical College.

All Covid hospitals requiring Amphotericin-B for treatment of patients will have to apply to the experts committee which will meet twice a day to scrutinise these applications and facilitate rapid

decision making "as time is of the essence in such cases", according to an order issued by the health department.

The guiding principles for TEC shall be evidence-based clinically approved parameters as well as principles of equity, distributive justice and transparency," the order read.

The Directorate General of Health Services should coordinate with the TEC and facilitate rapid decision making and also monitor the overall management of the drug from approval till delivery to the hospital concerned, it said.

The decision of daily meetings will be conveyed

to all the stakeholders through e-mail and reasons for refusal will be written and informed to the requisitioning hospitals.

Meanwhile, five people have died due to black fungus in Sirsa district of Haryana, officials said on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar said the infection has become a matter of concern and directed officials to make necessary arrangements for its treatment.

Mucormycosis (black fungus), which is primarily affecting people recovering from Covid-19, has claimed five lives in the district in the past two days, Sirsa Chief Medical

Officer Manish Bansal said. He said 25 people from districts adjoining Sirsa were admitted to a hospital, of whom some were referred to other major health facilities.

Khattar said black fungus has become an issue of concern among the health experts amid the raging coronavirus pandemic.

Taking cognisance of the cases of black fungus, he directed the officers concerned to make necessary arrangements for its treatment, an official statement said.

Khattar also directed that all medical colleges, including PGI Rohtak, be notified for the treatment of this disease. - PTI

IN BRIEF
VERDICT IN TARUN TEJPAL CASE TOMORROW

Panaji, May 19: A sessions court in Goa on Wednesday said it will pronounce the verdict in the Tarun Tejpal case on May 21.

The former *Tehelka* editor-in-chief is accused of sexually assaulting a female colleague inside the elevator of a luxury hotel in Goa in 2013.

The additional district court was to pronounce the verdict on April 27 but judge Kshama Joshi had adjourned the verdict to May 12. On May 12, it was further adjourned to May 19. The court had earlier said the adjournment was due to lack of staff due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The Goa police registered an FIR against Tejpal in November 2013 following which he was arrested.

Tejpal has been out on bail since May 2014. The Goa crime branch had filed a charge sheet against Tejpal.

He faced trial under IPC sections 341 (wrongful restraint), 342 (wrongful confinement), 354 (assault or criminal force with intent to outrage modesty), 354-A (sexual harassment), 354-B (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe), 376(2)(f) (person in position of authority over women, committing rape) and 376(2)(k) (rape by person in position of control).

He had earlier moved the Bombay High Court, seeking a stay on the framing of charges against him, but his petition was dismissed.

PUSHKAR DEATH CASE: COURT DEFERS ORDER

New Delhi, May 19: A Delhi court on Wednesday adjourned for a month the order on framing of charges against Congress leader Shashi Tharoor in a case related to his wife Sunanda Pushkar's death in a luxury hotel here.

Special Judge Geetanjali Goel deferred the pronouncement of order in view of the coronavirus pandemic for June 16.

The court had on April 12 reserved the order after hearing arguments from the counsel appearing for Delhi Police as well as Tharoor.

During the arguments, while police had sought framing of various charges, including 306 (abetment of suicide), Senior Advocate Vikas Pahwa, appearing for Tharoor, told the court that the investigation conducted by the SIT completely exonerated the politician of all the charges levelled against him.

Pahwa sought Tharoor's discharge in the case, saying there was no evidence against him to prove the offence punishable under either section 498A (husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty) or 306 (abetment of suicide) of IPC.

HC ORDERS STAN SWAMY'S EXAMINATION

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MAY 19

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday directed the Dean of state-run JJ Hospital to form a committee of expert doctors to examine the health condition of Father Stan Swamy, an 84-year-old tribal rights activist. Swamy has been arrested in connection with the Elgar Parishad case. The court, hearing his bail plea on medical grounds, has sought his medical report on Friday morning.

A vacation bench of Justice S.J. Kathawalla and Justice S.P. Tavade said that the committee should have a neuro-physician, ENT specialist, Orthopedic surgeon, general physician and any other doctor. The bench ordered the Superintendent of Taloja Central Prison to arrange to send Father Stan to JJ Hospital at 12 noon on Thursday. It further asked the JJ Hospital committee to submit their report by 11 am on Friday.

The judges also said if the jail has the facility of video conferencing, a virtual meeting shall be arranged to produce him before the court on May 21.

Swamy, arrested in October 2020, is currently lodged in the Taloja prison in Navi Mumbai, has approached the HC challenging a Sessions court order that has rejected his interim bail plea on the health ground. The court took up Swamy's matter for hearing on Wednesday, as his counsel Mihir Desai had claimed need for an urgent hearing.

ODD STIR AT RAJ BHAVAN IRKS BENGAL GOVERNOR

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOLKATA, MAY 19

West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has now started taking serious offence to freak protests, even if it involves a herd of sheep, against him outside Raj Bhavan. Alleging "security breach," he sought a report from city police commissioner Soumen Mitra by 5 pm on Wednesday.

On Tuesday afternoon Suman Mitra, a member of Citizens Against Dirty Politics and Corruption demonstrated with a herd of sheep in front of the Raj Bhavan slamming the governor's indifference to the pandemic.

Mr Dhankhar however argued, "one male person along with a posse of half a dozen sheep blocked the North Gate of Raj Bhavan and posed for photos and videos before a large contingent of media persons while a large contingent of policemen stood watching this drama. No efforts were made to dissuade this person from blocking the entry and egress to Raj Bhavan or for his personal checking to ensure safety of the Raj Bhavan premises."

On May 17 a group of angry Trinamul Congress workers agitated at the gate of Raj Bhavan soon after the CBI, empowered by the Governor, arrested four of their accused party leaders in the Narada sting bribery case.

Mr Dhankhar claimed, "the Security of the Raj Bhavan premises was breached with impunity near its North Gate...by certain unruly elements in front of a huge posse of policeman under Kolkata Police. The so-called demonstration by these lumpen elements continued unabated in the presence of a huge police contingent for over two hours from around 1.30 pm onwards. These persons shouted slogans against the Constitutional Head of State, and hurled unsavoury slogans denigrating the dignity and prestige of the Head of State. They also continuously blocked the access to the North Gate, threatening the safety of the high-security Raj Bhavan and compromising the security of His Excellency the Governor of West Bengal as well as his family members."

"During this episode, no responsive stand was taken by the senior police officers present at the spot," he said.

It is for the first time in the history of the Kerala

state that a father-in-law and son-in-law will come together to be part of the House and the cabinet.

Bindhu, a college professor by profession, had served as the first woman Mayor of Thrissur.

Besides Bindhu, Aranmula MLA Veena George and J. Chinchu Rani, who won from Chadayamangalam constituency, would be the other women to be part of the new Left government.

Four five-year-old Riyas, the DYFI national president and the son-in-law of Vijayan and R Bindhu, wife of Marxist Party's acting state secretary A. Vijayaraghavan, (both CPI-M) and G.R. Anil, Prasad (all CPI) and Ahammed Devarkovil (INL) are among the first-time MLAs who got the cabinet berth.

Though the portfolios are yet to be announced by the ruling front, Vijayan on late Tuesday evening handed over the letter electing him as the Parliamentary party leader to Governor Arif

Arif.

In its plea before the division bench of acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and

Justice Arijit Banerjee of the Calcutta high court, the CBI submitted that the CM, after storming its anti-corruption branch office at Nizam Palace in central Kolkata, sought "unconditional release of the arrested accused... while resisting their court production. She also used many derogatory and defamatory comments about the CBI and threatened the CBI officers present there (with) registering cases".

It claimed "a battery of lawyers" led by Mr Banerjee, Serampore MP, also "forcefully entered the CBI office and started

heckling CBI officers and staff, including the head of branch, anti-corruption branch, CBI, Kolkata. The CBI officials were threatened with dire consequences".

According to the CBI, "The terror which was created by and at the behest of the arrested accused persons by the Chief Minister herself remaining present outside the CBI office along with a well-engineered crowd of thousands of miscreants, and after ensuring media presence. All these efforts were a part of the larger design to terrorise the probe agency."

It along with others wore a life jacket and jumped into the waters.

The workman, who had joined as a helper on the barge only last month, said he lost all his documents and mobile phone in the cyclonic storm.

Asked if he would return

to the rig again, Gite said he is not keen to go back and is contented to be alive after the nightmarish experience.

Another workman, who was injured in the incident, thanked the Indian Navy for saving his life.

"It is because of the Navy that we all are alive and safe today, otherwise we don't what would have happened to us," the workman said while fighting back his tears.

One of the officials on the barge had claimed the cyclone was "not huge", another workman said.

Narada case: Didi made party in CBI plea

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 19

Dragging Trinamul Congress supremo and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee, her Cabinet colleague Moloy Ghatak and party MP Kalyan Banerjee into its petition on the transfer of the Narada sting bribery case from the state, the CBI on Wednesday made threats to the CBI officers present there (with) registering cases".

It claimed "a battery of lawyers" led by Mr Banerjee, Serampore MP, also "forcefully entered the CBI office and started

heckling CBI officers and staff, including the head of branch, anti-corruption branch, CBI, Kolkata. The CBI officials were threatened with dire consequences".

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Niladri Bhattacharya (C), one of the lawyers of arrested TMC leaders, arrives at Calcutta High Court for a hearing on the Narada scam case on Wednesday. - PTI

CYCLONE HIT Workmen said they had lost hope of making it alive back home
Rescued workmen from barge recall horror

Mumbai, May 19:

Battling tidal waves as high as 10 metres and strong winds while trying to stay afloat in the cyclone-hit rough Arabian Sea for almost 12 hours, workmen rescued from a sinking barge near here narrated their horrifying experience in their quest for survival.

Some of them said they had almost lost the hope of making it alive back home.

The warship INS Kochi arrived in Mumbai on Wednesday with 125 workmen rescued from barge P305, an accommodation

barge that sank amid the cyclone Tauktae fury. Of the 273 people on the ill-fated barge, 184 have been rescued so far by the Indian Navy.

"It was a horrific situation on the barge. I had not thought I would survive. But, I swam in the waters for seven to eight hours with the determination to stay alive and was rescued by the Navy," workman Manoj Gite told reporters here.

Gite (19), a resident of Kolhapur, said as the barge started sinking, all workmen got worried and

to the rig again, Gite said he is not keen to go back and is contented to be alive after the nightmarish experience.

Another workman, who was injured in the incident, thanked the Indian Navy for saving his life.

"It is because of the Navy that we all are alive and safe today, otherwise we don't what would have happened to us," the workman said while fighting back his tears.

One of the officials on the barge had claimed the cyclone was "not huge", another workman said.

"The official is now missing. We tried to search for him, but in vain," he said.

Another rescued workman said as their barge started sinking, he jumped into the waters in the middle of the night and tried to stay afloat.

"I swam for about 12 hours before the Navy rescued me," he said.

Another personnel, who works as a fitter at the rig, said the sea waves were higher than the height of the barge and there were high speed winds blowing around.

3-DAY ASSAM ASSEMBLY SESSION BEGINS TOMORROW

Guwahati, May 19: Former minister and AGP MLA Phani Bhushan Choudhury was on Wednesday sworn in as the pro-tem speaker of 15th Assam Legislative Assembly.

In absence of Governor Jagdish Mukhi, the state Chief Secretary Jishnu Barua administered the oath of office and secrecy to Choudhury at Janata Bhawan, the secretariat complex.

Choudhury is an eight-time MLA from Bongaigaon constituency and was a minister in the last BJP-led Assam government.

Mukhi has convened the Assam Assembly on May 21 for the first session of the BJP-AGP-UPCL government, headed by Himanta Biswa Sarma. "We will hold the three-day session following all Covid-19 protocols. On the first day, we will administer the oath to the elected members," Choudhury told reporters here.

Jailed anti-CAA activist Akhil Gogoi will be the first ever MLA in the state to be sworn in while being in jail. "The court has permitted him to take oath and it will be done as per directives. He will be brought in by jail authorities and will leave after the oath taking ceremony," the pro-tem speaker said.

TN CM ORDERS 30-DAY LEAVE FOR RAJIV CASE CONVICT

Chennai, May 19: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin on Wednesday ordered 30-day ordinary leave for A. G. Perarivalan, Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convict who is lodged in the Puzhal Central Prison here.

Stalin, considering a petition from Arputhammal, mother of Perarivalan seeking leave on medical grounds for her son, relaxed relevant rules and "ordered grant of 30 day ordinary leave," an official release here said.

Perarivalan, serving life sentence, is among the seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case.

The former Prime Minister was assassinated on May 21, 1991 at Sriperumbudur near here by a woman suicide bomber Dhanu at an election rally. - PTI

Super Blood Moon to be seen on May 26

Kolkata, May 19: A rare Super Blood Moon will be seen in the eastern sky on May 26 evening, just after a total lunar eclipse.

Kolkata has seen its last total lunar eclipse, 10 years ago, on December 10, 2011. Director of M P Birla Planetarium and renowned astrophysicist Debiprasad Duari said Wednesday. "On the night of May 26, the sun, earth and moon alignment will be such that from earth it will be viewed as a full moon and also eclipsed for some time. Moon on its journey around the earth will be passing through earth's shadow for a few moments and will be totally eclipsed."

CYCLONIC STORM TO DEVELOP OVER BAY OF BENGAL BY MAY 26: IMD

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANEWAR, MAY 19

A cyclonic storm is very likely to develop by May 26 over the Bay of Bengal.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), a low pressure area is likely to form over the north of Andaman Sea and adjoining Bay of Bengal around May 22. This low pressure area is very likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm in the subsequent 72 hours.

SHORT TAKES
SEARCH FOR MAN ON TERROR LIST IN BELGIUM

Brussels, May 19: The search for an armed man who is on a Belgian terror watch list because of his extreme right sympathies and who had threatened several people, including a top virologist, entered a second day on Wednesday.

Justice Minister Vincent Van Quickenborne described the man as an "acute threat" and is known for his extreme right sympathies. Earlier this month, he had threatened several people, including Marc Van Ranst, one of the best-known virologists working on containing the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a Twitter message early Wednesday, Van Ranst said that "let one thing be clear: such threats do not make an impression on me." Authorities were centering their efforts to look for the man, who has a military background, in the northeastern part of Belgium in Limburg province. His name wasn't disclosed.

XI, PUTIN SEE LAUNCH OF NUKE ENERGY PROJECT

Beijing, May 19: Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Wednesday hailed the nuclear cooperation between the two neighbours as they virtually attended the groundbreaking ceremony of the biggest nuclear energy project to build four nuclear power plants in China costing about \$3 billion.

The ceremony, which was attended by the two leaders via a video link, was held to mark the first day of construction of power units No. 7 and 8 of the Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant, and No. 3 and 4 of the Xudapu Nuclear Power Plant. The Tianwan Nuclear Power Plant is located in the city of Lianyungang in eastern Jiangsu province. The Xudapu Nuclear Power plant is located in Xingcheng in northeastern Liaoning province. "This has been the biggest China-Russia nuclear energy cooperation project to date and represents the highest level of practical cooperation between the two sides," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian said.

1ST U.S.-RUSSIA MEET SINCE BIDEN TOOK OVER

Reykjavik, May 19: The United States and Russian foreign ministers are meeting in Iceland's capital Reykjavik on Wednesday evening to gauge the enormous gulf between the rival powers and confirm a potential summit between Presidents Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin.

Statements preceding the face-to-face talks on the sidelines of the Arctic Council meeting in Iceland do not bode well for the de-escalation of tensions that the two say they want, with relations at their lowest point since the end of the Cold War.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken seemed to want to make the Arctic — a new geopolitical issue at the heart of the regional meeting Wednesday and Thursday in Reykjavik — a laboratory for cooperation focused on common challenges such as the fight against global warming.

But his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov issued a strongly worded warning.

CHINA PROTESTS U.S. NAVY'S TAIWAN STRAIT PASSAGE

Beijing, May 19: China on Wednesday protested the latest passage by a US Navy ship through the Taiwan Strait, calling it a provocation that undermined peace and stability in the region.

The US Navy's 7th Fleet said that the guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit on Tuesday in accordance with international law. The passage "demonstrates the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific".

"The United States military will continue to fly, sail, and operate anywhere international law allows," the Navy said in a statement. While the strait is in international waters, China claims self-governing Taiwan as its own territory and regards the US Navy's presence in the area as a show of support for the island's democratic government. In a statement on the Defence Ministry website, spokesperson for the Eastern Theater Command Col. Zhang Chuhui said the US actions were "sending wrong signals to the Taiwan independence forces, disrupting and sabotaging the regional situation and endangering peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait."

Israeli airstrikes kill 6, level large family home in Gaza

Military: 52 aircraft hit 40 underground targets over a period of 25 minutes

Gaza City, May 19: Israeli airstrikes killed at least six people across the Gaza Strip and destroyed the home of a large extended family early on Wednesday. The military said it widened its strikes on militant targets to the south amid continuing rocket fire from the Hamas-ruled territory.

Residents surveyed the piles of bricks, concrete and other debris that had once been the home of 40 members of al-Astal family. They said a warning missile struck the building in the southern town of Khan Younis five minutes before the airstrike, allowing everyone to escape. The Israeli military said it struck militant targets around the towns of Khan Younis and Rafah, with 52 aircraft hitting 40 underground targets over a period of 25 minutes.

Gaza's Health Ministry said a woman was killed and eight people were wounded in those strikes. Hamas-run Al-Aqsa radio said one of its reporters was killed in an airstrike in Gaza City. Doctors at the Shifa hospital said his was among five bodies brought in early Wednesday. The fatalities included two people killed when warning missiles crashed into their apartment.

The latest strikes came as diplomatic efforts aimed at a cease-fire gathered strength and Gaza's infrastructure, already weakened by a 14-year blockade, rapidly deteriorated. The Palestinian territory is ruled by Hamas, an Islamic militant group.

US officials said the



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gestures as he presents a slideshow during a briefing to ambassadors to Israel at the Halkirya military base in Tel Aviv on Wednesday. — AFP

Turkey rejects US accusations

Istanbul, May 19: Turkey rejected as "absolutely unacceptable" accusations by the US that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made "anti-Semitic" remarks in his criticism of Israeli strikes in Gaza, his top press aide said Wednesday. The latest tensions could further sour the relationship between two Nato allies Turkey and the US.

"The US statement about our President Erdogan's remarks on the Israeli violence against Palestinian civilians is absolutely unacceptable," Erdogan's press aide Fahrettin Altun tweeted.



RIVLIN SPEAKS TO KIN OF INDIAN CAREGIVER

Jerusalem, May 19: Israeli President Reuven Rivlin on Wednesday spoke to the family of the Indian caregiver who was killed on May 11 in a rocket attack by Palestinian militants from Gaza, and conveyed his condolences. Soumya Santosh, 30, who hailed from Kerala's Idukki district, worked as a caregiver attending to an old woman at a house in the southern Israeli coastal city of Ashkelon.

She was talking to her husband Santhosh over a video call in the evening on May 11 when a rocket fired from Gaza directly hit the house where she was working. The details of the conversation the Israeli President had with the family were not available but an Adviser to Rivlin confirmed to PTI that "it did take place".

The Indian caregiver was living and working in Israel for the last seven years. She has a nine-year-old son whom she had left with her husband in Kerala. Her 80-year-old elderly charge survived the hit. — PTI

Bibi: Israel can conquer Hamas

Gaza City, May 19: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that Israel's bombing of Gaza targets aims to deter Hamas but he did not rule out a campaign to "conquer" the enclave's Islamist rulers.

Deafening air strikes and rocket fire once more shook Gaza in the conflict that has claimed 219 Palestinian lives according to the Gaza health ministry and killed 12 people in Israel according to Israeli police. While an international diplomatic push

aims to end the worst bloodshed in years, Netanyahu issued another tough threat against the armed group that has fired thousands of rockets at Israel since May 10.

"There are only two ways that you can deal with them," he said. "You can either conquer them, and that's always an open possibility, or you can deter them, and we are engaged right now in forceful deterrence, but I have to say we don't rule out anything." — AFP

Anti-Semitism by Chinese TV: Israel

ROCKETS FIRED FROM LEBANON TOWARDS ISRAEL

Beijing, May 19: Israel's Embassy in China is protesting what it describes as "blatant anti-Semitism" on a programme ran by the overseas channel of state broadcaster CCTV discussing the ongoing violence in Gaza and elsewhere.

In a tweet, the embassy said "we have hoped that the times of the Jew's controlling the world" conspiracy theories were over, unfortunately anti-Semitism has shown its ugly face again."

"We are appalled to see blatant anti-Semitism expressed in an official Chinese media outlet," the tweet said. Calls to the embassy were answered with a message saying it was closed on Wednesday and it wasn't immediately clear what it objected to in the three-minute segment. On the Tuesday CGTN broadcast, host Zheng Junfeng questioned whether US support for Israel was truly based

on shared democratic values, saying "some people believe that US pro-Israeli policy is traceable to the influence of wealthy Jews in the US and the Jewish lobby on US foreign policy makers." — AP

Fighting: France seeks UNSC resolution

United Nations, May 19: China's UN ambassador says France is seeking a UN Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militants who control Gaza.

Zhang Jun, the current council president, confirmed that France's UN Ambassador Nicolas De Riviere informed the cou-

ncil during the third round of closed consultations Tuesday on the conflict that a resolution was being prepared. The United States has blocked the UN's most powerful body, which is charged with maintaining international peace and security, from issuing a press statement calling for a halt to the violence, insisting that it wo-

uld not help diplomatic efforts to end the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Diplomats said the 14 other council members supported the statement proposed by China, Tunisia and Norway.

But Security Council press and presidential statements require approval of all 15 members. Resolutions, which are legally bind-

ing, do not. They require at least nine "yes" votes and no veto by a permanent member. This would put the United States in the position of voting in favour, abstaining, or vetoing a ceasefire call.

Zhang told reporters that China, Tunisia and Norway "haven't given up our effort ... and that draft statement stays there on the

table, and we will continue to make our effort, making sure that the Security Council is fulfilling its mandate and responsibilities." He said US President Joe Biden's support for a ceasefire is "consistent with what we are proposing in the Security Council," and China will support "all efforts facilitating the ceasefire." — AP

CAR | FAN US Prez's \$2 trillion infra plan includes rebuilding roads, bridges

Joe Biden lives his electric dreams

Dearborn, United States, May 19: Joe Biden, sporting aviator sunglasses, looked out from the driver's seat of Ford's new electric truck and delivered a presidential proclamation: "This sucker's quick." The battery-powered Ford F-150 Lightning is due to be unveiled on Wednesday as the auto giant's new big bet on the emerging electric auto market. But avid car enthusiast Biden not only got a sneak preview Tuesday night he acted more like a

giddy teenage driver. The Lightning can hit 0-60 mph in about 4.4 seconds, he marvelled, prompting a moment of consternation among Ford executives who had wanted to keep details like that secret until launch day. When queried by a journalist whether she could ask him a question about ongoing fighting in Israel, Biden snapped in a mock rebuke: "No you can't. Not unless you get in front of the car as I step on it." How fast had he managed

to go? Now that did interest him.

Biden said he'd show everyone.

"Ready?" Journalists, Ford executives and White House staffers hurriedly got out the way.

Biden floored the accelerator to disappear across the tarmac a second time.

Biden was racing around in a yet-to-be-sold Ford truck to promote his \$2 trillion infrastructure plan. In addition to rebuilding standard stuff like roads and bridges, Biden's pack-

age would pour \$174 billion into electric vehicle development.

Getting to Michigan required a 10-minute flight in a helicopter, 90 minutes of aviation fuel in Air Force One and 15 minutes riding in a gas guzzling motorcade comprising dozens of non-electric cars.

Biden had no doubt about what the future should look like.

"We're at a great inflection point in American history," he said. — AFP

Lebanese acting FM resigns over Gulf, IS remarks

Beirut, May 19: Lebanon's acting foreign minister stepped down on Wednesday amid a diplomatic row with Gulf Arab countries after he suggested in a TV interview this week that they had provided backing to extremists, helping the rise of the Islamic State group.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait summoned Lebanese ambassadors in their capitals to protest Charbel Wehbe's remarks during an interview with Alhurra news channel. They accuse Wehbe of violating diplomatic norms and making derogatory and racist statements.

In the interview late Monday, Wehbe said that "friendship and brotherhood countries" brought Islamic State militants to Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. When asked if he meant that Gulf countries financed IS, he retorted sharply: "Financed by me then?" When a Saudi commentator interviewed along with Wehbe criticised Lebanon's president, the minister became agitated, saying that as a Lebanese, he couldn't accept being insulted by a "Bedouin" — a term he used derogatorily to describe

NY AG SAYS TRUMP PROBE IS NOW CRIMINAL

Washington, May 19: Congress approved legislation Tuesday intended to curtail a striking rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, sending President Joe Biden a bipartisan denunciation of the spate of brutal attacks that have proliferated during Coronavirus pandemic. The bill, which the House passed on a 364-62 vote, will expedite the review of hate crimes at the Justice Department and make grants available to help local law enforcement agencies improve their investigation, identification and reporting of incidents driven by bias, which often go underreported.

"We have informed the Trump Organisation that our investigation into the company is no longer purely civil in nature," Fabien Levy, a spokesperson for Attorney General Letitia James, said in a statement. "We are now actively investigating the Trump Organisation in a criminal capacity, along with the Manhattan DA," Levy said.

James' investigators are working with the Manhattan district attorney's office, which has been conducting a criminal investigation into Trump and his company, the Trump Organisation, for two years. James and District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. are both Democrats. — AP

newspaper everyday and see that yet another Asian American has been assaulted, attacked and even killed." In February, an 84-year-old man died after he was pushed to the ground near his home in San Francisco. A young family was injured in a Texas grocery store attack last year.

As cases of the illness began to rise in the US, so too did the attacks, with thousands of violent incidents reported in the past year. Rep. Judy Chu, D-Calif., said it's painful for many to "open up the

OHIO PRIMARY: GOP VIES FOR DON'S BLESSING

Philadelphia, May 19: Progressive Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner survived a challenge in the Democratic primary that pit his progressive reforms against growing concern over a rising tide of homicides and gun crimes.

Many pundits nationally saw the primary as the first referendum on whether a wave of prosecutors elected on promises of criminal justice reforms — measures like shorter probation and parole and a curtailing of cash bail that disproportionately keeps poor defendants confined pretrial and his wife stopping by a third candidate's fundraiser just to say hello.

The US Senate primary in Ohio is still a year away, but Republican contenders already are working furiously to cast themselves as Trump's favorite in the open race. That work can be awkward and far from subtle. But it is a measure of how badly the candidates covet a Trump endorsement in a state the ex-President twice carried by 8 percentage-point margins. — AP

SHORT TAKES
**SUSPECT DEAD, 2
ILLINOIS COPS
HURT IN FIRING**

Champaign (US), May 19: A suspect in a domestic disturbance was fatally shot and two central Illinois police officers were wounded, one critically, in an exchange of gunfire early Wednesday, police said.

Champaign police said in a statement that two officers who were called to the scene of a domestic disturbance on the city's north side about 3:20 am encountered an armed person after exiting their police cars and an exchange of gunfire followed. The suspect was pronounced dead at the scene, while both officers sustained gunshot wounds and were taken to a hospital.

One officer was in critical condition and the other was stable, police said.

**I. COAST JAILS 22
FOR TRAFFICKING
CHILDREN**

Abidjan, May 19: Twenty-two people have been jailed for trafficking children to work on Ivory Coast's lucrative cocoa plantations, police said.

Five received jail terms of 20 years, while the other 17 were given five years, the deputy director of the criminal police, Luc Zaka, said late Tuesday.

The convictions by the tribunal in Soubre, in the heart of Ivory Coast's cocoa-growing region in the west of the former French colony, resulted from a swoop early this month.

The two-day operation was the fifth of its kind carried out since 2009, involving around 100 members of the security forces as well as forestry officials. They rounded up 68 children, Zaka said.

Ivory Coast is the world's top producer of the cocoa bean, commanding more than 40 percent of the market with an annual output of some two million tonnes of cacao, the raw material for chocolate.

The sector employs between five and six million people, but more than half subsist under the poverty line.

**TURKEY BANS
POLYETHYLENE
PLASTIC IMPORTS**

Istanbul, May 19: Turkey has banned the importation of ethylene polymer plastic waste as environmental groups sound the alarm on the world's plastic consumption and lack of effective recycling.

In an amendment published in Turkey's Official Gazette on Tuesday, the Trade Ministry added ethylene polymer plastics to its list of waste materials that are illegal to import. The ban will take effect in 45 days. The environmental group Greenpeace Mediterranean welcomed the news, calling it a "very important step towards the goal of zero waste importation" as set out by Turkey's Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation.

The group said 74% of the plastic waste imported by Turkey last year will now be on the banned list.

In an investigation published this week, Greenpeace said plastic waste like shopping bags and packaging from the UK and Germany were being dumped and burned in southern Turkey.

**INDIAN JAILED IN
U.S. FOR STALKING
ESTRANGED WIFE**

Washington, May 19: An Indian national from Texas has been sentenced to 56 months in prison and three years of supervised release on the charges of kidnapping and stalking his then wife.

Sunil K Akula, 32, faces deportation to India upon completion of his sentence. Last November, he pleaded guilty to the charges of kidnapping, stalking, obstruction of justice and witness tampering.

According to federal prosecutors, on August 6, 2019, Akula travelled from his home in Texas to Agawam, Massachusetts to confront his then wife, from whom he was living apart.

He subsequently assaulted his wife and forced her to leave her apartment and get into a car with him, stating that he was taking her back to Texas.

Akula then drove his wife through multiple states, during which time he again assaulted her, forced her to send a resignation e-mail to her employer, and smashed her laptop and threw it on the side of the highway.

Federal prosecutors alleged that Akula stopped at a Knox County Tennessee hotel, where he again beat his wife. Akula later opened the door to the hotel room and was arrested by local law enforcement officers.

Curbs return as virus resurges in Asia

Taxi drivers starve for customers, weddings cancelled, schools closed, restaurant service restricted

**EU TO REOPEN
BORDERS TO THE
VACCINATED**

Brussels, May 19: EU member states agreed Wednesday to reopen the bloc's borders to travellers who have been fully vaccinated against the Coronavirus, European sources said.

Meeting in Brussels, diplomats also agreed to increase the level of new cases a country can hit before being declared unsafe — a measure that would open up travel into the EU from more places.

The recommendations will be adopted by EU ministers on Friday, they said. An EU Commission spokesman confirmed that the envoy had endorsed the update to travel rules. Since March 2020, non-essential travel into the 27-member European Union has been banned, apart from a small number of countries deemed safe because of their low Covid case rate.

But businesses on the continent are reopening as virus restrictions are phased out and bars, hotels and restaurants are worried about the summer tourist trade.

— AFP

ed travellers arriving from "high-risk" countries, including Singapore, Malaysia and Japan, and, farther afield, Argentina, Italy, the Netherlands and Kenya. China has set up checkpoints at toll booths, airports and railway stations in Liaoning province, where four additional cases were reported Tuesday. Thailand reported 35 deaths, the highest since the outbreak started, on Tuesday.

— AP

Hong Kong has responded to fresh outbreaks by increasing the quarantine requirement from 14 to 21 days for unvaccinated



Customers sit in the sun at the outdoor terrace of a cafe restaurant in Bordeaux on Wednesday, as restaurants, cafes and other businesses re-opened after closures during the Coronavirus pandemic.

— AFP

**OUTPOURING OF
U.S. AID TO INDIA
IN COVID FIGHT**

Washington, May 19: Americans, cutting across party and ideological divide, have rallied behind India to help the country in fight against the deadly second wave of the Covid-19 infection that has claimed thousands of lives in the last several weeks.

Not only scores of top American lawmakers from the two Democratic and the Republican parties but also the progressive, moderates and liberals, along with those from the Congressional Black Caucus and the Hispanics have played a key role in pushing the entire administration and the corporate world to mount one of the largest ever public-private American assistance partnerships to a foreign country. President Joe Biden himself is taking a personal interest in this assistance effort, while the corporate sector led by US Chambers of Commerce along with US India Business Council and US India Strategic and Partnership Forum have brought together 40 top CEOs to create a global task force to help India in particular.

— PTI

**BIDEN URGED TO
GIVE 60M VAX
DOSES TO INDIA**

Washington, May 19: Eminent American civil rights leader Rev. Jesse L. Jackson is urging President Joe Biden to release 60 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to India, which is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the pandemic in the world.

Rev. Jackson will be joined by a number of prominent Indian leaders in the national capital on Wednesday, to make a public appeal to Biden for more humanitarian aid, according to a community statement.

"The pandemic poses a threat to humanity, not to any one country. Our response must be as encompassing as the threat," Rev Jackson said in a statement. He will urge Biden to give India 60 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine, it said. Dr Bharat Barai, chairman, US India Friendship Council, urged the President to facilitate the supply.

— PTI

Grand day for the French: Cafe, bistro terraces reopen

Paris, May 19: It's a grand day for the French.

Cafe and restaurant terraces reopened Wednesday after a six-month Coronavirus shutdown deprived residents of the essence of French life — sipping coffee and wine with friends.

The French government is lifting restrictions incrementally to stave off a resurgence of Covid-19 and to give citizens back some of their signature "joie de vivre." As part of the plan's first stage, France's 7 p.m. nightly curfew was pushed back to 9 p.m. and museums, theatres and cinemas reopened along with

door cafe terraces.

President Emmanuel Macron, among the first to take a seat at a cafe terrace, was seen chatting with Prime Minister Jean Castex, who was attending a movie later in the day. Actress Emmanuel Beart went to a movie theatre opening in the centre of Paris where her latest film "L'Etreinte" ("The Embraçage") was showing — among the scores of movies produced during the shutdown. France is not the first European country to start getting back a semblance of social and cultural life.

Italy, Belgium, Hungary and other nations already have started allowing outdoor dining, while drinking and eating indoors began Monday in Britain's pubs. Eateries in France have been closed since the end of October, the longest time of any European country except Poland, where bars and restaurants reopened Saturday for outdoor service after being closed for seven months.

Some French cafe and restaurant owners have spent days preparing for Wednesday's milestone,

to extend the curfew until 11 p.m. and to permit indoor dining at restaurants and bistros starting.

The final phase of the three-stage reopening plan is scheduled for June 30, when the curfew will end and all other restrictions will be lifted.

— AP

Restaurants are can fill only 50% of their outdoor seating areas and put no more than six people at a table. Movie theatres can only seat 35% of capacity, while museums must restrict entries so there is 8 square metres of space (86 square feet) per visitor. Starting June 9, the French government plans to extend the curfew until 11 p.m. and to permit indoor dining at restaurants and bistros starting.

The final phase of the three-stage reopening plan is scheduled for June 30, when the curfew will end and all other restrictions will be lifted.

— AP

UK: Vax works against Indian Covid variant

Taiwan raises alert level after spike in infections

Taipei, May 19: Taiwan on Wednesday raised its Coronavirus alert level, tightening social distancing measures as it battled a widening outbreak.

The Level 3 alert was imposed on the entire island with entertainment venues, libraries, sports facilities and community centres closed.

People are required to wear masks all the time

when going out while indoor gatherings of more than five and outdoor gatherings of more than 10 people are banned.

"(Infections) are successively increasing in other cities and counties besides Taipei and New Taipei," said health minister Chen Shih-chung while announcing the new measures.

Those cities, Taiwan's largest, were already on

Level 3 because of the Coronavirus spike.

The rise in infections had prompted the government to close the island to non-resident foreigners for a month.

On Wednesday, an additional 267 locally transmitted infections were reported. The island has recorded more than 1,200 local infections in five days.

— AP

Myanmar town pleads for help

Yangon, May 19: Desperate residents of a Myanmar town hit by clashes between the military and an anti-junta defence force pleaded for help Wednesday as the UN warned the fighting may have forced thousands to flee.

"All the people rely on a government pipe for their water supply... in these conditions we have to stop washing if we want to be able to cook," the resident said. The fighting around Mindat between the Chinland Defence Force and the Myanmar military has

likely displaced "thousands" of civilians, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said Tuesday. "Access by humanitarian partners to the people

added to the United Kingdom's "red list," meaning arriving travellers have to quarantine in hotels at their own cost.

But more than 100 flights have still arrived from India since then, and the variant has been spreading in parts of northwest England with large South Asian communities, potentially endangering the plans to reopen the economy fully from June 20.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock meanwhile is under pressure to explain his claim that the growing prevalence of the Indian variant in Britain is due to a refusal by some people to get vaccinated.

They need... a safe zone recognised by international organisations like the UN." Myanmar has been in uproar since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a February 1 coup, triggering a massive uprising in Mindat.

— AFP

town by the fighting had now fled, but those left behind faced a grim struggle for basic supplies.

"We have been constantly helping the people from the town to relocate to the remote villages," another resident said.

"We have one of the strongest border regimes

ich authorities have sought to quell with lethal force. Some in the anti-junta movement have set up local militias armed with homemade weapons to protect their towns from security forces — which have killed more than 800 people according to a local monitoring group.

A CDF spokesman, who declined to be named, said that fighters had set fire to several army trucks, destroying them, and ambushed reinforcement troops during the fighting in Mindat.

— AFP

public in October Knowledge of the 15th-century navigator's early life is scant. A major breakthrough in establishing a fuller profile of the man who died 515 years ago came after DNA tests in 2003 established that bones in a tomb in the cathedral of Seville were those of Columbus. But after that discovery, the research team from Spain's University of Granada that is leading the Columbus research decided to halt its investigation. The reason: DNA tech-

nology at the time was neither accurate nor reliable. After leaps in the sophistication of DNA testing in recent years, gene geography may now ascertain the rough area of a European person's ancestry.

The bones of Columbus, his son Hernando and his brother Diego are to be examined at Granada University and also sent to genetic identification laboratories in Europe and the United States. As a prelude to the work, Granada University on Wednesday was hosting

what it called the first world meeting of Columbus researchers, who are presenting evidence for their different theories about the explorer's origins. Columbus's four transatlantic voyages on behalf of the Spanish monarchs between 1492 and 1504 opened a door to Europe's colonisation of the Americas, then known as the New World.

Columbus died on May 20, 1506 and was buried in the Spanish city of Valladolid.

— AP

and smashed her laptop and threw it on the side of the highway.

Federal prosecutors alleged that Akula stopped at a Knox County Tennessee hotel, where he again beat his wife. Akula later opened the door to the hotel room and was arrested by local law enforcement officers.

CHINA LAUNCHES SAT FOR OCEAN OBSERVATION

Beijing, May 19: China on Wednesday successfully sent a new ocean-monitoring satellite into orbit as part of its effort to build an all-weather and round-the-clock dynamic ocean environment monitoring system which would provide early warning on marine disasters. The satellite was launched by a Long March-4B rocket carrying the Haiyang-2D (HY-2D) satellite from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China, the state media reported. The HY-2D will form a constellation with the HY-2B and HY-2C satellites to build an all-weather and round-the-clock dynamic ocean environment monitoring system of high frequency and medium and large scale, Xinhua reported.

The constellation will support the country's early warning and prediction of marine disasters, sustainable development and utilisation of ocean resources, effective response to global climate change as well as ocean research.

The HY-2D was developed by the China Academy of Space Technology, and the carrier rocket by the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology.

— PTI



Residents gather outside a damaged house after a 5.8 magnitude earthquake hit Besishahar, some 200 km west of Kathmandu, Nepal on Wednesday.

— AFP

Kathmandu, May 19: A 5.8-magnitude earthquake struck Nepal's western Lamjung district on Wednesday, injuring at least six persons and damaging dozens of houses, officials said. The epicentre of the quake, which occurred at 5:42 AM (05:27 IST), was located at Marshyangdi Rural Municipality of the district, 200 km west of Kathmandu. According to Inspector Jagdish Regmi of the District Police Office, six people have been injured in the quake. "Three people were injured after a wall of a house gave way while the other three were injured while running away," he said.

— PTI

Where Columbus came from?

OCT. ANSWER
Transatlantic trips led to Americas' colonisation

What it called the first world meeting of Columbus researchers, who are presenting evidence for their different theories about the explorer's origins. Columbus's four transatlantic voyages on behalf of the Spanish monarchs between 1492 and 1504 opened a door to Europe's colonisation of the Americas, then known as the New World.

Columbus died on May 20, 1506 and was buried in the Spanish city of Valladolid.

— AP

— PTI

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	49,902.64 -0.58
Nifty 50	15,030.20 -0.52
S&P 500*	4103.61 -0.59
Dollar (₹)	73.16 -0.15
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.69 0.04
Euro (₹)	89.40 -0.17
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,853.97 0.20
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.52 -3.19
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.975 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.630 -0.012

* As of 9:30 PM IST

NBCC, Suraksha submit revised bids for Jaypee

NBCC and Suraksha Group, which are in the fray to acquire Jaypee Infratech Ltd (JIL) through an insolvency resolution process, have submitted their revised bids and have also clarified issues raised by financial creditors. The companies have also improved their offers, which were submitted to the Committee of Creditors (CoC) on Tuesday. A meeting of the CoC will be held on May 20 to discuss the final resolution plan.

IOC net profit rises to ₹8,780 cr in March quarter



Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's biggest oil firm, reported a better-than-expected net profit of Rs 8,781.30 crore in the March quarter, helped by a surge in refining margins as higher crude prices boosted the inventory value. Standalone net profit was at Rs 8,781.30 crore, or Rs 9.56 a share, compared with a loss of Rs 5,185.32 crore in the same period a year back, IOC chairman S. M. Vaidya said.

GST payers can now withdraw application

The CBIC has rationalised GST refund provisions, including giving option to taxpayers to withdraw application. It has amended the GST rules and has excluded the time period from the date of filing of refund application to the date of issuance of deficiency memo by the officer from the overall time limit to file refund application. Many GST refund applications are being returned on the grounds of deficiency.

JSW opens 1,000-bed Covid care hospital

JSW Group launched a 1,000-bed oxygenated Covid care hospital at Toranagallu in Ballari district of Karnataka. It was inaugurated virtually by Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa. "This is one of the country's biggest Covid care facilities with a dedicated 4.8-km-long oxygen pipeline originating from its steel factory and supplying medical oxygen directly to the hospital for treatment of patients," JSW said.

Defective ignition coil detected Enfield to recall 2.37 lakh bikes

MICHAEL GONCALVES
PUNE, MAY 19

Royal Enfield, the motorcycle making arm of Eicher Motors, on Wednesday said it will be recalling nearly 2.37 lakh motorcycles in India and various international markets due to defects in the ignition coil that can cause misfiring and reduce vehicle performance and in rare cases, cause an electric short circuit.

This is the biggest recall announced by the company since automakers started reporting recalls voluntarily in 2012.

Royal Enfield is an iconic brand in India, the world's biggest motorbike market, with a dedicated fan-fol lowing for its range of cruisers and classic-looking motorcycles.

Royal Enfield, the motorcycle maker, has issued a recall for 236,966 motorcycles specific to the Classic, Bullet and Meteor models. "Of these, the company will call in Meteor motorcycles manufactured and sold between December 2020 and April 2021, and the Classic and Bullet manufactured and sold between January and April 2021," the company said in a statement.

These motorcycles will undergo inspection and replacement of the defective part, if required, it said.

The Chennai-based bike maker says it has discovered a defect in the ignition coil that can in rare cases lead to an electric



The recall will apply to Meteor, Classic and Bullet model motorcycles sold in India, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia

short circuit.

"The defect was discovered during routine internal testing and the issue has been isolated to specific batches of material sourced from our external supplier between December 2020 and April 2021," the company said, adding that the issue is rare and does not impact all motorcycles manufactured during the period.

The recall will apply to Meteor, Classic and Bullet model motorcycles sold in India, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia, Royal Enfield said.

We would like to reiterate that we have very stringent sourcing protocols and that all our motorcycles are rigorously tested to global validation standards of quality and durability, it said.

The mid-sized motorcycle maker also said the safety of its riders was of prime importance and "we are deeply committed to the duty of care to all our customers".

The company said it was committed to swiftly implement the recall action, and customers will be proactively contacted through respective local dealerships.

Royal Enfield claimed that it expects less than 10 per cent of the recalled motorcycles to need replacement of the defective part.

Royal Enfield service teams, and/or local dealerships will reach out to consumers whose motorcycle vehicle identification number (VIN) falls within the manufacturing period mentioned above, the company said.

We would like to reiterate that we have very stringent sourcing protocols and that all our motorcycles are rigorously tested to global validation standards of quality and durability, it said.

DRL in talks to make Sputnik V for other countries

RAJESH KUMAR SINGH
MAY 19

Hyderabad, May 19: Dr Reddy's Laboratories, which is in a pact with Russian Direct Investment Fund to sell 125 million people doses (250 million vials) of Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V in India, is holding parleys with RDIF for acquiring rights for more countries, a senior official of the drug maker said.

Dr Reddy's which had received over two lakh vaccines from RDIF, recently soft-launched Sputnik V in India.

"We are also in discussions with them (RDIF) about quantities and rights, assets permit for other countries."

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A Dr Reddy's official had earlier said it expected to receive about 36 million doses of Sputnik V in two months.

—PTI

Adani Green to acquire SoftBank RE unit for \$3.5 bn



agreements with buyers. SoftBank holds an 80 per cent interest in SB Energy, with Bharti holding the remaining 20 per cent.

Bloomberg News reported earlier that Adani Green was in advanced talks for a deal.

SoftBank pursued a deal with Adani after talks to sell its stake to Canada Pension Plan Investment Board fell through. The Japanese mobile phone and investment company founded by billionaire Masayoshi Son had said in 2015 it planned to invest \$20 billion in the Indian renewables business along with partners.

The exit of SoftBank comes at a time when India has been courting foreign investors to fund its massive roll-out of clean energy.

—Bloomberg

E-way bill integrated with FasTag, RFID

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 19

In a move that will check GST evasion and help real-time vigilance of commercial vehicles, the e-way bill system has been integrated with FasTag and RFID.

"E-way bill system is successfully integrated with FasTag and RFID and details of commercial vehicle movements through the state and national highway tolls are received into the e-way bill system on a near real time basis. On an average 25 lakh goods vehicle

movements from more than 800 tolls are reported on a daily basis to the e-way bill system," the government said.

Based on the RFID information received, live vigilance report, RFID related report for e-way bill, of the vehicle and movement of vehicle between two dates will be available on the officer's mobile app.

The Live Vigilance report can be used by the vigilance officers to know the vehicles that have passed the selected toll on a near real time basis.

past few minutes. Also, the vehicles carrying critical commodities specific to the state and have passed the selected toll can be viewed. Any suspicious vehicles and vehicles of EWBs generated by suspicious taxpayer GSTINs, that have passed the selected toll on a near real time basis, can also be viewed in this report.

RFID related reports can be used to know the tolls passed by the vehicles of a given e-way bill number and the last tolls that have been passed by any vehicle.

Flipkart grew strong, PhonePe 150% in March quarter: Walmart

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 19



Flipkart continued its strong growth in the March quarter while PhonePe grew more than 150 per cent, Walmart said in its quarterly update.

However, considering the surge in Covid cases and localised restrictions in India, Walmart refrained from giving a fresh guidance on its sales for the second half of the year.

"In India, for the first quarter, Flipkart and PhonePe continued to experience strong growth, as annualised total payment value run rate at PhonePe grew by more than 150 per cent versus last year. At Flipkart, monthly active customers and users are key metrics, and we're performing well," C. Douglas McMillon, president, chief executive officer and director of Walmart in the company's earnings call.

"Our recent announcement of our intent to acquire Cleartrip, a leading online travel company, underscores our commitment to transform the customer experience through

strength in India, Canada and China.

However, it acknowledged that certain international markets, including India, are negatively affected by a surge in Covid cases and hence the company was not issuing fresh guidance for the second half of the year.

"Certain international markets continue to be negatively affected by the resurgence in Covid cases and related government restrictions and operations, particularly in India and Canada. Given continued uncertainty, we're maintaining our original guidance for the back half of the year, and we'll update you as we gain clarity on key external variables related to the health crisis and their potential impact on our business and the global economy," said McMillon.

Walmart also said it will support India in its fight against Covid. "As it relates to Covid-19, the past several weeks have been more challenging in some countries. India, Canada, Chile and South Africa are priorities at the moment," it said.

TCS CEO Rajesh Gopinathan draws ₹20.36 cr package in FY21



New Delhi, May 19: Tata Consultancy Services CEO and MD Rajesh Gopinathan took home a pay package of about Rs 20.36 crore in 2020-21, according to the company's annual report.

In 2019-20, Gopinathan had received a total remuneration of Rs 13.3 crore.

According to TCS' annual report for 2020-21, Gopinathan received Rs 1.27 crore in salary, Rs 2.09 crore in benefits, perquisites and allowances, and Rs 17 crore in commission.

TCS chief operating officer N. Ganapathy Subramaniam drew a pay package of about Rs 16.1 crore in the last financial year. This includes Rs 1.21 crore in salary, Rs 1.88 crore in benefits, perquisites and allowances, and Rs 13 crore in commission.

The increase in the managerial remuneration for the year was 55.22 per cent, the report said.

"Increase in the managerial remuneration for FY2021 is not comparable with FY2020 owing to decrease in remuneration of 15 per cent in FY2020 in view of the economic conditions impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic where the directors had decided to moderate the executive remuneration for FY2020 to express solidarity and conserve resources," it added.

The average annual increase in salaries was 5.2 per cent in India. However, during the course of the year, the total increase is approximately 6.4 per cent, after accounting for promotions and other event-based compensation revisions.

Employees outside India received a wage increase varying from 2 to 6 per cent, the report said.

—PTI

Companies cut debt amidst pandemic

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 19



In bad times, like the last financial year, corporates with high debt levels brought down their debt substantially to reduce financial cost to the companies to soften the pandemic blow.

Tata Steel, Bharti Airtel and others in the mid and small-cap space, like Orient Cement, 3i Infra, Subex, Reliance Power, JK Tyre, Kesoram and Pioneer Embroideries brought down their debt, as per their fourth quarter and annual financial performance data.

Outstanding fourth quarter and FY21 financial performance of Tata Steel, riding on rising steel demand and steel prices, helped the company reduce a big chunk of its outstanding debt.

"Net debt reduced by Rs 10,781 crore in the fourth quarter and by Rs 29,390 crore in FY21," Tata Steel said while announcing the fourth quarter earnings report.

JK Tyres' total liabilities were down from Rs 8,846.11 crore to Rs 8,207.66 crore.

Flying taxis could take off in Europe by 2024: regulator

KATHARINE GEMMELL & CHARLOTTE RYAN
MAY 19

Electric flying taxis may be cleared for takeoff in European skies by 2024 or 2025, according to the region's top air-safety regulator.

Piloted craft that take off vertically could see commercial use carrying packages before passengers, Patrick Ky, executive director of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency, said in an online event on Wednesday.

Autonomous drones will take at least five more years, Ky said, with larger aircraft following. EASA has just started to work with companies on how to address unmanned flight, the regulator said. The agency is working on a coordinated approach with the US Federal Aviation Administration and other international regulators.

Orient Cement's total liabilities came down from Rs 1,789 crore on March 31, 2020 to Rs 1,506 crore as on March 31, 2021.

JK Tyres' total liabilities were down from Rs 8,846.11 crore to Rs 8,207.66 crore.

—Bloomberg

save and auto-fill passwords across the web. This will help easily change compromised passwords with Google Assistant; provide automatic, proactive notification of compromised passwords; and provide a new tool to make it easy to import passwords from files or other password managers.

The tech giant is also releasing the first beta of Android 12, featuring the biggest design change since 2014. The latest version includes features that give more transparency around which apps are accessing user data, and offers more controls so users can make informed choices.

—PTI

Indian fared better on trade in Q1: Unctad

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 19

India was among the few countries that performed well in terms of trade in the March quarter against the lockdown hit corresponding quarter of 2020. India improved its export performance while bringing down export volatility found a UN body.

"China, India, and South Africa have fared relatively better than other major economies during Q1 2021," Unctad said in its global trade update.

When compared to lockdown hit March quarter of 2020, India's merchandise exports grew 26 per cent and imports 45 per cent. Services exports grew 2 per cent and imports 14 per cent. Against the same

quarter of 2019, merchandise exports grew 7 per cent and imports 10 per cent. In case of services, exports declined 3 per cent while imports grew 2 per cent.

In Unctad's last global trade update, India's imports had declined during all the months between January and September 2020, except February. Exports had grown only in February and September.

