

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 19 MAY 2021



WEATHER

Max: 35.6°C
Min: 22.8°C
RH: 43%
Rainfall: 5 mm

Forecast: Rain in the evening or night
Max/Min temp. 34/24°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava; Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha
Saptami till 12.45 pm
Star: Ashlesha till 3.42 pm
Varjyam: 3.46 am to 5.23 am

Durmuhuram: 11.46 am to
(Friday)
12.38 pm

Rahukalam: 12 pm to 1.30 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Shawwal 5,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajr: 4.36 am

Zohar: 12.22 pm

Asar: 4.44 pm

Magrib: 6.47 pm

Isha: 8.02 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.42 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM

MOONRISE 10.52 AM

MOONSET NA

COUNTER POINT



The positive sign is, no complaints from the people about beds, vaccine, oxygen...

SHORT TAKES

No-mask fine:
TS earns ₹31 cr

Hyderabad: People in the state have paid up ₹31 crore in penalties to the police for not wearing a mask during the lockdown, as per a report submitted by Director-General of Police M. Mahendar Reddy to the High Court. The DGP stated that the police have booked 98 cases against those who were black-marketing medicines used for the treatment of Covid-19.

■ Report on Page 5

Lt. Col. held for test paper leak

Hyderabad: A Lieutenant Colonel was arrested from the AOC Centre in Secunderabad by the Pune city police on charges of leaking a recruitment exam paper. His 'cut' in the scam was said to be ₹1 lakh per candidate, investigators alleged. Lt. Col. Bhagatpreet Singh Bedi, 44, had leaked the paper for the Army relative recruitment exam, scheduled on February 28.

■ Report on P4

TS TELLS GHMC TO OFFER FREE MEALS IN CITY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The state government on Tuesday ordered the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) to provide free meals to people during the ongoing lockdown through the 250 Annapurna canteens located in various parts of the city.

The free meals programme will continue until further notice.

Arvind Kumar, principal secretary (municipal administration), said free food is being supplied on directions of minister K.T. Rama Rao.

Annapurna canteens have been providing food to more than 45,000 persons in different parts of the city every day. Patients' attendees, daily wage workers, hawkers, people living in shelter homes and others are benefiting from these canteens during the lockdown.

These canteens otherwise change ₹5 per meal.

NATION | 8

3 TMC leaders 'fall ill' in jail, land in hospital



SPORTS | 12

Renowned badminton umpire Sudhakar no more

TABLOID

'E-pass' to better health



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

Vol. 84 No. 138 Established 1938 | 20 PAGES | ₹6.00

20-hr lockdown in TS to continue till May 30

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18



● **THE CHIEF** Minister directs Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar to issue a government order on the extension of the lockdown.

ation period from 6 am to 10 am every day will be continued as usual till May 30.

As the ministers are busy monitoring the Coronavirus curtailment measures and medical services at the field level, the Chief Minister has cancelled the Cabinet meeting, which was earlier scheduled on May 20 to take a decision on extension of lockdown.

The Cabinet which met on May 11 earlier had decided to impose 10-day lockdown in state from May 12 to May 22. It was also decided to convene a Cabinet meeting again on May 20 to take a decision on extension of lockdown. But that meeting now stands cancelled as the Chief Minister has taken a decision to extend the lockdown till May 30.

State joins Centre's Ayushman, inks pact

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The Telangana state government has decided to implement the Centre's Ayushman Bharat (Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana) scheme. It signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Health Authority to this effect on Tuesday.

The state government has finalised the guidelines for implementation of the scheme in the state. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao has asked officials to extend medical services to the people according to the guidelines. The guidelines will have to be implemented in the empanelled hospitals by the Aarogyasri Health Care Trust.

Private hospitals which are part of Aarogyasri cards, there will be a separate PMJAY e-cards issued to the beneficiaries.

● **THE HEALTH** insurance coverage is for ₹5 lakh for beneficiaries under Ayushman Bharat.

● **PRIVATE HOSPITALS** which are part of the state's Aarogyasri should be enrolled afresh in the scheme to implement the Centre's Ayushman Bharat.

Small and big hospitals which are presently catering to Aarogyasri scheme will be approached by the state government, according to the new guidelines. Ayushman Bharat also covers Covid-19 treatment for the economically weaker sections of the society.

The health insurance coverage is for ₹5 lakh for beneficiaries.

Like the Aarogyasri cards, there will be a separate PMJAY e-cards issued to the beneficiaries.

The state will pitch for abolition of GST on medicines, vaccines and equipment used for Covid cure at the GST Council meeting on May 28.

Finance minister T. Harish Rao will take part in the meeting called by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman via video mode from Delhi. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao has asked the minister to raise this issue at the meet. West Bengal and Punjab have already urged the Centre to abolish GST on drugs and equipment being used for Covid treatment, besides on hand sanitizers, face masks, PPE kits, temperature check, oximeters, etc.

■ Page 2: TS feels GST burdens states

KCR sends KTR, Harish Rao to win Huzurabad from Etala

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

TRS president and Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao has decided to rope in ministers K.T. Rama Rao and T. Harish Rao to take control of Huzurabad, the bastion of health minister Etala Rajender.

Party's official sources said though minister Gangula Kamalakar had been assigned this task, the party leadership was not satisfied with the outcome. Rama Rao and Harish Rao were asked to tour Huzurabad frequently after the lockdown in June to strengthen the

ZPTCs, MPTCs, sarpanches, ward members, councillors etc to remain in the event of a bypoll anytime. Kamalakar was immediately appointed as Huzurabad party in-charge after Rajender's dismissal from the Cabinet on May 2. Kamalakar has been holding meetings with local party leaders and cadre in Huzurabad since then.

The task assigned by the party leadership to Kamalakar was to ensure that no leaders or cadre from the TRS sail with Rajender.

Though Kamalakar could convince several party's local leaders like

not slap them with fine and not seize their bikes during the lockdown period at least.

Swiggy delivery executive Bheravat Santosh Naik said, "During the lockdown, we are getting good money, but many working in the food delivery units are down with the infection. Several of those to whom we deliver food could be infected persons. How do we know?" Our appeal to the aggregators is to convince the customers living in apartments to take the order from the gate."

Many cases of Covid-19 are reported from apartments in the second wave and several of their colleagues, they say, have been infected. Delivery boys also request the police

not to slap them with fine and not seize their bikes during the lockdown period at least.

Swiggy delivery executive Bheravat Santosh Naik said, "During the lockdown, we are getting good money, but many working in the food delivery units are down with the infection. Several of those to whom we deliver food could be infected persons. How do we know?" Our appeal to the aggregators is to convince the customers living in apartments to take the order from the gate."

Santosh said, "In Sainikpuri, there are 600

plus delivery executives just for Swiggy. We are scared of the infection." Jhangir, a Zomato delivery executive, said, "At the

390 missing from ONGC barges, search ops on

7 killed in Gujarat as Cyclone Tauktae batters parts of state

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
MUMBAI, MAY 18



Rescued crew members of the barge Gal Construction being brought by an Indian Navy helicopter at INS Shikra in Mumbai, on Tuesday.

The Search and Rescue (SAR) operations to locate and bring to safety the 390 missing persons off Mumbai coast in the Arabian Sea was on till late night on Tuesday. Till Tuesday evening the Indian Navy and Coast Guard had rescued 317 people on board two barges that went adrift. At least seven people were killed in Gujarat as Cyclone Tauktae battered parts of the state.

According to the Indian Navy, 180 persons were rescued from Barge P-305 off Bombay High. This barge went adrift off Heera Oil Fields on Monday with 273 persons onboard due to the extremely severe Cyclone Tauktae.

Naval Ships Beas, Betwa and Teg had joined INS Kochi and Kolkata in the search and rescue operations for Barge P-305,

which sank 35 nautical miles from Mumbai (in the Mumbai Offshore Development Area). SAR has also been augmented with P8I and naval helicopters, who continue to undertake aerial search of the area. Since the commencement of the SAR on Monday, 180 survivors have been rescued.

Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) stated that all drifted vessels, except P-305, are taken in control, and their crew is safe. Indian Navy and ONGC were actively engaged in rescuing the crew of vessel

P-305. Apart from P-305, cargo barge GAL CONSTRUCTOR with 137 personnel on board, accommodation barge SS-3 with 196 personnel on board and the Sagar Bhushan oil rig with 101 personnel on board also went adrift in Cyclone Tauktae.

In a statement the ONGC said, "Due to severe cyclonic storm, unfortunate incidents have occurred involving three construction barges of Afcons working on a project of ONGC in Western Offshore fields in the Arabian Sea and one drilling rig of ONGC deployed for exploration purpose. ONGC is taking

all possible measures in coordination with ODAG (Offshore Defence Advisory Group) and MRCC (Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre) to ensure the safety of personnel and vessels."

Search and Rescue Operation efforts were also in progress off the coast of Gujarat for three vessels — Support Station 3, Great Ship Aditi and Drill Ship Sagar Bhushan — which are 15-20 nautical miles South East off the Gujarat coast (Pipavav), said the Indian Navy.

■ Page 2: Tauktae hits power to Covid hosps

TS got ₹24 cr for AIIMS, other states well-funded

N. VAMSI SRINIVAS | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

It is official. The Centre has made a meagre financial allocation to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bibinagar, located on the city outskirts, proving right the allegations of neglect of the state by the Narendra Modi-led government levelled by the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) and the Congress against their political rival, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Ever since the Centre announced AIIMS for several states after 2014, the facility in Telangana state has got just ₹23.85 crore. This is against the allocation of ₹1,028 crore and the Centre wanted to make the facility fully operational by 2022.

According to details of 15 new AIIMS under construction approved for establishment after 2014, obtained under Right To Information Act by Inagni Ravi Kumar, an RTI activist, AIIMS, West Bengal, received the highest funding of ₹967 crore against ₹1,754 crore for obvious reasons. The AIIMS, Mangalagiri, in Andhra Pradesh, received ₹879 crore out of the allocated ₹1,618 crore.

The AIIMS established in other states which

received considerable allocations were Maharashtra (₹945 crore), Uttar Pradesh (₹755 crore), Punjab (₹668 crore), Himachal Pradesh (₹858 crore), Assam (₹435 crore), Jharkhand (₹380 crore) and Jammu (₹370 crore).

The BJP leaders from Telangana state sought to defend the record, saying that higher allocations in other states were due to the requirement of construction of buildings whereas in Telangana state the AIIMS was located in buildings already constructed for the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences by the Congress government in combined Andhra Pradesh.

The AIIMS established in other states which

are moving on bike, our spines will be taking the extra burden, and many customers behave rudely with us."

"Police stop us and ask us to pay for previous chalan(s), if one or more are pending, and they seize the vehicles. At least for this period of the lockdown, the police should leave us alone. We all come from humble backgrounds. A thousand rupees is a lot, and not easy to arrange."

The Telangana Gig and Platform Union has given a representation to the aggregators for bringing food delivery boys into the insurance bracket.

The 77-year-old Vijayan's election comes days after he led the ruling LDF to a stupendous victory in the April 6 Assembly polls, where the alliance won 99 of the 140 seats.

However, Shailaja's non-inclusion led to a debate and many eyebrows were raised over the matter. Having won global accolades for her deft handling of the first wave of Covid-19 in Kerala, which saw the country's first case in 2020, Shailaja's surprise omission drew instant comparisons with the late K.R. Gowri Amma, the firebrand Marxist once tipped to head Kerala but never did.

She was, however, made party whip. — PTI

FOOD ON THE GO

In pandemic-hit city, delivery staff fight odds to satisfy the hunger of citizens

Delivery staff make good earnings in lockdown

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Food delivery staff in the city are happy as their earnings have gone up during the lockdown with more of daily business. Yet, worried over the Coronavirus, they are taking all precautions and urging customers to take the delivery at the gate, and not at the doors inside the buildings.

The free meals programme will continue until further notice.

Arvind Kumar, principal secretary (municipal administration), said free food is being supplied on directions of minister K.T. Rama Rao.

Annapurna canteens have been providing food to more than 45,000 persons in different parts of the city every day. Patients' attendees, daily wage workers, hawkers, people living in shelter homes and others are benefiting from these canteens during the lockdown.

These canteens otherwise change ₹5 per meal.

6 new med colleges: Docs doubt claim, say focus on basics

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The state government's decision to establish medical colleges in Sangareddy, Jagtial, Kothagudem, Wanaparthy, Mancherlai and Mahbubabad districts on Monday has received mixed response from the medical community. Of several doctors contacted by *Deccan Chronicle* on Tuesday, some said it was a much-needed decision considering the pressure that medical infrastructure has been facing especially during the pandemic, while others said the decision was too little too late.

Director of Medical Education Dr Ramesh Reddy said, "The six medical colleges will help create advanced intensive care and emergency facilities, apart from enabling us to deal with disasters and accidents."

Healthcare Reforms Doctors Association-Telangana president Dr Mahesh Kumar, however, said the focus of the government should have been on primary and secondary healthcare centres. He maintained that opening more medical colleges would not solve medical deficiencies existing within the community.

"Primary healthcare centres and area hospitals are in a shambles because the med-

ical community and government are not focusing on them. The level of medical teaching has gone down by several notches too. Just setting up buildings will not improve health infrastructure", Dr Kumar pointed out.

Dr Vijay Mohan, professor with the Osmania Medical College, said there was a need to boost the morale of medical students as well as teachers. He underlined that facilities at medical colleges and curriculum have to be improved to enable students learn and perform better in the face of a medical crises like the one country is facing since the past two years.

A government sector doctor in Hyderabad, who wished to remain anonymous, was not convinced. "The announcement is just an attempt to take the blame away from the government over its mismanagement of Coronavirus crises," the doctor remarked.

"Can anyone guarantee that the medical colleges will start admissions from the next academic year? At a time when the medical fraternity is facing the most difficult times in decades, in addition to receiving poor pay, what good will another college do? The crunch being faced is now. We cannot wait for another five or six years for help," another doctor remarked.

GHMC hides Covid facts; staff figures don't add up

Officers told not to reveal disease status in city limits

MADDY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The GHMC has just one auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) per 50,000 population, as against the requirement of one per 5,000. Despite having this meagre staff strength, the corporation has claimed that has identified over 2.19 lakh residents with fever after covering 9.98 lakh households during the door-to-door fever survey.

In the GHMC limits, 1,162 ANMs have been performing the door-to-door fever survey, testing and Covid-19 vaccination along with Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers and staff from the entomology wing of the GHMC.

The GHMC, in its official releases, said it had constituted 1,600 teams only for the fever survey. Each team comprised an ASHA worker, ANMs and staff from the entomology wing, it said.

ing under the human resource development (HRD) section, 205 working under the National Urban Health Mission (NUHM), 40 appointed under the European Commission during 2005 (EU) and 197 working in basti dawakhana. Medchal-Malkajgiri district has 273 ANMs in these four categories, and Ranga Reddy district about 400.

The civic body has not been forthcoming with data on the the number of medical kits distributed in the city to those with fever symptoms, and medicines provided to the patients after the fifth day of fever. The officials were reluctant to share the data claiming that they might land in trouble.

According to highly placed sources, Hyderbad district has 47 ANMs work-

A senior official requesting anonymity said the corporation had been "manipulating" the figures of door-to-door surveys, Covid-19 vaccination and testing. He said with the existing staff, it was impossible to conduct surveys and perform other duties.

The official said instructions were given not to reveal accurate data about the number of persons identified with the Covid symptoms during the survey, until the government identified ample space to accommodate symptomatic people in state-run community halls and basti dawakhana.

Apart from identifying space for symptomatic patients, officials were also calculating the number of Covid-19 kits distributed, steroids provided and the number of people referred to hospitals. Till the process was completed, they would not reveal

data. The GHMC official further said that despite rigorous efforts, there was a massive rise in the mosquito menace in the city. This had made things even more complicated in areas adjoining major water bodies and along the Musi River, he said.

He said the corporation was waiting for the decision of the government to enhance manpower to fight Covid-19, provide vaccination and to deal with vector-borne diseases. The official said the government would release its plan of action in a couple of days after holding meetings with experts.

"I request people to be brave and stay at home since the situation would become worse in the next couple of weeks with Covid-19, dengue, malaria and other vector-borne diseases due to recent rains," the official said.

Jr doctors to strike work from May 26 for hiked stipend

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Junior doctors from government medical colleges said they have decided to boycott duties and sit on a strike from May 26 due to the government's refusal to meet their demands.

Among the demands of the Telangana Junior Doctors' Association (T-JUDA) are: Clear the stipend with 15 per cent pay hike for junior residents, senior residents and interns due since January 2020; clear the 10 per cent incentives for healthcare workers announced by the government and; provide the promised ex gratia of ₹50 lakh to the families of doctors and ₹25 lakh for the relatives of nurses and supporting staff that have lost their lives in the line of Covid-19 duty.

The association said that during the pandemic, infected healthcare workers announced by the government, we are bound to face a loss of arrears of one year. There has been a well-noted mortality among doctors in the past two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We deserve to be paid fairly. We are putting our lives, along with our families, in serving the nation."



MLA Bigala Ganesh Gupta hands over free meals to those attending on Covid-19 positives, in Nizamabad. — BY ARRANGEMENT

Burial ground is isolation centre for Covid-infected

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC
MAHBUBNAGAR, MAY 18

With the spread of Covid-19 infection even to remote areas, the residents of Kishtampalli Thanda in Nawabpet Mandal of Mahbubnagar district have hit upon a novel idea — of shifting those tested Covid-19 positive to the burial ground for isolation purpose.

Kishtampalli village sarpanch Srinivasulu said the burial ground is adjacent to the Palle Vanam (village forest). A congenial atmosphere prevails there with sufficient natural oxygen supply.

The thanda is 500 metres away from Kishtampalli. The burial ground is adjacent to the thanda that has a population of 200. The village is safe from Covid-19 but residents of the thanda were infected.

The sarpanch urged the thanda people to take care of their health and shift people with symptoms of corona to the isolation room. Villagers are helping them with food and medicines.

"We have served these isolated people with biryani in the past two days," the sarpanch said.

A tribal who was isolated along with 10 others from his thanda said he was feeling better with sufficient sunlight and air. "We were told by doctors to stand facing the Sun for about an hour in the morning to get Vitamin-D. The villagers are helpful in our time of distress," he said.

Are they afraid of sleeping in the burial ground at



Covid-affected persons from a thanda sit in a graveyard near Kishtampalli village, Mahbubnagar district. — DC

Covid-19: Nizamabad MLA turns messiah, feeds hungry

NARENDER PULLOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, MAY 17

ONE-SITTING/ Fasttrack-Graduations (All), Post-Graduations (All), PG Diplomas, Polytechnic Diplomas Secondary (10th) & Senior Secondary (12th), Provided Online results & Online verifications, Eligible for Private & Abroad Ph: 912540111, 7337291133, www.hydrec.com (A/2122/IC0006)

POLYPOULTRY
VENCOPP CHICKEN rich in protein, great in taste eat & enjoy. Vencopp's Broiler Hyderabad Zone price per kg, Farm Gate Rs.75, Retail Live Bird Rs.97, Dressed with Skin Rs.141, Skinless Rs.160. (HOPE) (S/2122/C00289)

SUMMER CAMP
THIS SUMMER let your child learn French. This 50 hours introductory course shall cover basic conversation in French, simple sentence formation, day to day french etc. Interactive Learning through Rhymes, crafts and games. Classes on zoom & google meet. For details contact Aditi- 8109325974. (HYMM/2122/C01197)

NOTICE
Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertisements in these columns. Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. does not vouch for any claims made by the Advertisers. The Printer, Publisher, Editor and Owner of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. shall not be held responsible / liable for any consequences, in case such claims are found to be false.

HEAD OFFICE
36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3.
Ph: 27803930 (Ext: 330, 312 - Classified)
(Ext: 318 - Display) Ph: 040-27800180
Email: classifieds@deccanmail.com, advt@deccanmail.com

TIMINGS: Weekdays: 7 am to 3 pm Sunday: 7 am to 3 pm

EXCLUSIVE COUNTERS

Somajiguda : No.8 A, Amrutha Villa, Rajbhavan Road, Hyderabad - 500083. Ph: 23396395.

Basheerbagh : Pragati Chambers, Skyline Theatre Lane, Ph: 23228693.

L.B. Nagar : Opp. Prajapri Princeton Towers, Next to Chitra layout. Ph: 8555048740

TIMINGS: Weekdays: 7 am to 3 pm

BOOK DC Classifieds online

ads2dc.com

For details and queries call: 040-27800180

FOR NEXT DAY EDITION BOOKING CLOSES AT 6.30 P.M.

DECCAN Chronicle

శాంతికుమారు

BOOK YOUR CLASSIFIED / DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS at

HEAD OFFICE

36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3.

Ph: 27803930 (Ext: 330, 312 - Classified)

(Ext: 318 - Display) Ph: 040-27800180

Email: classifieds@deccanmail.com, advt@deccanmail.com

TIMINGS: Weekdays: 7 am to 3 pm Sunday: 7 am to 3 pm

EXCLUSIVE COUNTERS

Somajiguda : No.8 A, Amrutha Villa, Rajbhavan Road, Hyderabad - 500083. Ph: 23396395.

Basheerbagh : Pragati Chambers, Skyline Theatre Lane, Ph: 23228693.

L.B. Nagar : Opp. Prajapri Princeton Towers, Next to Chitra layout. Ph: 8555048740

TIMINGS: Weekdays: 7 am to 3 pm

Book DC Classifieds online

ads2dc.com

For details and queries call: 040-27800180

FOR NEXT DAY EDITION BOOKING CLOSES AT 6.30 P.M.

DECCAN Chronicle

శాంతికుమారు

BOOK YOUR CLASSIFIED / DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS at

HEAD OFFICE

36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3.

Ph: 27803930 (Ext: 330, 312 - Classified)

(Ext: 318 - Display) Ph: 040-27800180

Email: classifieds@deccanmail.com, advt@deccanmail.com

TIMINGS: Weekdays: 7 am to 3 pm Sunday: 7 am to 3 pm

EXCLUSIVE COUNTERS

Somajiguda : No.8 A, Amrutha Villa, Rajbhavan Road, Hyderabad - 500083. Ph: 23396395.

Basheerbagh : Pragati Chambers, Skyline Theatre Lane, Ph: 23228693.

L.B. Nagar : Opp. Prajapri Princeton Towers, Next to Chitra layout. Ph: 8555048740

TIMINGS: Weekdays: 7 am to 3 pm

Book DC Classifieds online

ads2dc.com

For details and queries call: 040-27800180

FOR NEXT DAY EDITION BOOKING CLOSES AT 6.30 P.M.

DECCAN Chronicle

శాంతికుమారు

BOOK YOUR CLASSIFIED / DISPLAY ADVERTISEMENTS at

HEAD OFFICE

36, S.D. Road, Secunderabad-3.

Ph: 27803930 (Ext: 330, 312 - Classified)

(Ext: 318 - Display) Ph: 040-27800180

Email: classifieds@deccanmail.com, advt@deccanmail.com

TIMINGS: Weekdays: 7 am to 3 pm Sunday: 7 am to 3 pm

EXCLUSIVE COUNTERS

Somajiguda : No.8 A, Amrutha Villa, Rajbhavan Road, Hyderabad - 500083. Ph: 23396395.

Basheerbagh : Pragati Chambers, Skyline Theatre Lane, Ph: 23228693.

L.B. Nagar : Opp. Prajapri Princeton Towers, Next to Chitra layout. Ph: 8555048740

TIMINGS: Weekdays: 7 am to 3 pm

Book DC Classifieds online

ads2dc.com

For details and queries call: 040-27800180

FOR NEXT DAY EDITION BOOKING CLOSES AT 6.30 P.M.

DECCAN Chronicle

శాంతికుమారు

BOOK

SHORT TAKES

TWO HELD FOR TRANSPORTING FAKE SEEDS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The Shamshabad Special Operations Team (SOT) police nabbed two persons for illegally transporting spurious cotton seeds at Tondupally toll plaza on the city outskirts on Monday night. Officials seized 56 bags of cotton seeds and the truck.

The arrested were T. Madhu, 23, and Shiva Keshava Reddy, 39, farm workers from Kurnool. Their vehicle was going from Nandyal towards Medchal. One Pavan, a receiver from Hyderabad and Madhu Sudan Reddy, a supplier from Kurnool, were absconding.

The public have been advised to call the police on Dial 100 or the Cyberabad Police WhatsApp number 94906 17444 to alert about spurious seeds deals.

RACHAKONDA POLICE LAUNCH FREE FOOD DRIVE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The Rachakonda police on Tuesday launched 'Swasthya Seva', an initiative to provide food to orphans, old age homes and drivers on highways with the help of non-government organisations.

Launching the initiative at the Abhi Sai Datta Child Home in Uppal, Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat said that it was aimed at providing food to children, elders and mentally challenged persons in orphanages, old age homes and special homes.

"As many as 18 orphanages have been adopted by the Rachakonda police along with old age homes and we will be distributing one meal to them for two months. The programme is aimed at not only looking after their physical health through providing good lunch, but also to enable philanthropists help them," the police commissioner said.

He said that last year the Rachakonda police had adopted 77 homes of different kinds with 2,876 inmates being served food and dry ration throughout the lockdown with the help of several NGOs.

The commissioner thanked the Haryana Nagrik Sangh who along with Agarwal Samaj, HNS Chikitsala came forward to partner with the police for the initiative. The commissioner served lunch to nearly 30 kids of the orphanage and interacted with them.

Gesture, woe during pandemic



(Top) A staffer from an outlet distributes ice creams to Hyderabad police personnel on Covid duty. More than 5,000 ice creams were given to the police at 83 checkposts across the city.
— BY ARRANGEMENT

People wait in a long queue at Fever Hospital for a Covid check-up, in Hyderabad on Tuesday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Demand for ICU beds continues to rise in TS

Pvt hosps get 10-12 calls for beds despite drop in cases

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Despite the fall in Covid cases, the demand for intensive care unit beds has not come down in the state. There are a minimum of 10 to 20 inquiries for ICU beds to private hospitals in Hyderabad. Small hospitals on the outskirts say they get between 50 and 100 calls a day from districts.

An ICU bed is required for ventilator support and some of them require a combination of ventilator and dialysis machine. Hospitals that have ventilators but no dialysis machines are not of use to Covid-19 patients in a serious condition.

Dr Rahul Medakkar, chief operating officer of Care Hospitals, said the recovery rate on ventila-

tor support is 75 per cent. "Those who are on ventilators require care for 15 to 21 days. These beds do not get vacated fast."

Experts say those who require ventilator support have been at treatment at home for six days and in small hospitals for at least four to seven days. It is when their condition worsens that they look for beds in multi-speciality hospitals.

This situation in the second wave has been worrisome. A senior doctor says, "We have maximum cases in home treatment. There are some who, after three to four days of recovery, are going back to work. On day 10 or 15, their oxygen levels are reducing and then we see the relatives frantically seeking help from doctors."

Volunteers co-ordinating with government and private hospitals say the demand for oxygen concentrators has come down but not of ICU beds.

Private hospitals in the city have a total of about 3,000 ICU beds — Apollo Hospitals has 130, Care Hospitals 120, Yashoda Hospitals 40, and Asian Institute of Gastroenterology 400, Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences 85, SLG Hospitals 65 and other small and medium hospitals have 20 beds with ventilators.

The other ICU beds in the private hospital are for non-Covid patients, which are operational in the 10 multi-speciality hospitals of the city.

The health department has, in a detailed note, stated that there are 1,677

ICU beds of which, 493 are vacant in government hospitals. In the private sector, there are 6,677 ICU beds; of which 2,592 are vacant.

But, in the city, no hospital is responding for ICU beds and the only response is that there are no beds available to desperate relatives and friends.

A volunteer at Gandhi Hospital said, "There are patients who go around private hospitals and come to Gandhi Hospital at the end. By the time treatment starts, there are very few who survive as precious time has been lost. Since the last 15 days, we are seeing this; and in the last seven days, the demand for ICU beds is very high. Many patients arrive too late."

TWO HELD FOR SELLING COVID DRUG ILLEGALLY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The North Zone Task Force along with the Afzalgunj police nabbed two persons who were illegally procuring and selling remdesivir on Tuesday and seized five vials from them.

The apprehended were identified as Kiran Kumar, 35, owner of a medical agency from Bhongir, and Mohd Khaled, 23, a security guard from Chandrayangutta working at the Osmania General Hospital in Afzalgunj.

"Kiran, a BPharm graduate, recently started his own business by opening a medical shop in Medipally. He procured remdesivir vials for ₹3,000 through dealers and sought the help of Khaled to find customers offering him a commission," a Task Force official said, adding that the two were selling the injections at ₹30,000 each to customers.

STATE RECORDS
3,982 FRESH COVID CASES, 27 DEATHS IN 24HRSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The state recorded 3,982 Covid-19 cases on Tuesday taking the total caseload to 5,36,766, and the death tally to 3,012 with 27 new fatalities, according to the daily medical bulletin released by the state health department.

According to the bulletin, 5,186 Covid-19 patients recovered on Tuesday, taking the recovery rate in the state to 90.47 per cent. There were 48,110 patients reported to be under home isolation.

The highest number of cases continues to be reported from the GHMC area, with 607 new cases on Tuesday followed by Rangareddy with 262 cases, Khammam with 247 cases, Medchal-Malkajgiri with 225 cases, Karimnagar with 188 cases among others that contributed to the total daily tally.



TS issues notice to 3 pvt hospitals for extorting patients

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

● VACCINATION IN the state will be started once there are sufficient stocks with the government. The health department stated that they sent requests to the Central government for vaccines. Once there are sufficient stocks, vaccination will resume again.

Dr G. Srinivas Rao says, "We are warning private hospitals that if they charge unnecessarily from patients, action will be taken against them."

The health department states that one crore households have been covered in the fever survey of the government. There are auxiliary nurse midwives who are monitoring these patients.

The total cases in the second wave are 2,37,843 till May 18 and after the lockdown, there is a declining trend now, said Srinivas Rao. The government is optimistic as the recovery rate from Covid-19 has shown an improvement to 90.4 per cent in May. The recovery rate in the last week of March was 82 per cent.

Director of public health

SHRI VILE PARLE KELAVANI MANDAL
SVKM's NMIMS New Building, 10th Floor, V.L. Mehta Road,
Vile Parle (West), Mumbai - 400 056, Tel. No. 4219 9999;
www.svkm.ac.in; hr@svkm.ac.in

Shri Vile Parle Kelavani Mandal (SVKM), an 86-years old reputed Educational Trust is looking for:

HYDERABAD

PROJECT MANAGER /SR. CIVIL ENGINEER
ELECTRICAL ENGINEER/SR. ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
ELECTRO-MECHANICAL ENGINEER
ELECTRICIAN
IT PROJECT OFFICER
NETWORK ADMINISTRATOR
DESKTOP SUPPORT ENGINEER

For all interested applicants, knowledge of local language is desirable. Salary will not be a constraint for the right candidate. For details of Job Responsibilities and required qualification and experience please visit our website. Interested candidates can fill the application form with updated resume on our website "Careers" at www.svkm.ac.in within 10 days.

Sd/-
Chief Executive Officer

State to supply black fungus drug to hosps

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The state government will supply the drug, liposomal amphotericin B, to hospitals for treatment of the black fungus infection.

The government has also formed a task force in the health department to regulate its supply, in order to ensure its overuse, abuse and black marketing. This panel will evaluate the cases and accordingly allocate the supply.

The Telangana drugs control administration has asked stockists and distributors to supply the injections to hospitals directly but after approval from the task force. There exists a severe shortage of the medicine as production is limited.

Dr Ramesh Reddy, director of health and medical education said, "We will get the stocks in two to three days and this is to be used judiciously. Those who require it will be supplied. There are alternative medicines too and doctors would use them."

At the Government ENT Hospital and Gandhi Hospital, there are a total of 50 black fungus cases currently under treatment.

Dr Reddy said the recovered Covid-19 patients must adopt preventive steps like wearing of masks at home so that the nose is protected. Fungus from the air invades the nose. "Invasive fungal infection starts due to the immune-compromised state of the body. Wearing face-mask at home for a month after recovery, till the immunity level improves, will help."

It is also important for sugar levels to be checked for diabetes. "Random blood sugar is an indication of

Bhagwat leads march to check lockdown status

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat, along with other senior police officials, participated in a route march jointly conducted by the special police, mounted police and traffic police from Dilrukhnagar to LB Nagar on Tuesday.

Bhagwat urged the citizens to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour during the daily four-hour relaxation of the lockdown. The route covered the Gaddiannaram fruit market, Rythu Bazaar and other areas under the commissionate.

other areas under the commissionate.

The Rachakonda police chief warned of strict action against those who are not wearing masks, not maintaining physical

distance and those who are responsible for large gatherings. Such people would be prosecuted using sections of the Disaster Management Act and the Indian Penal Code.

"The second wave of Covid-19 can be definitely stopped by adhering strictly to Covid-appropriate behaviour. Since last week, we have booked as many as 12,394 lockdown violation cases. Apart from this, 46 check posts are covered by about 3,000 police personnel who work in three shifts," said the police commissioner.

Cherish the flavour of Victory

OONCHE LOG, OONCHI PASAND®

RMD PAN MASALA
NO TOBACCO, NO NICOTINE
Formulation by Rasiklal Manikchand Dhariwal

MRP ₹7 2g

MRP ₹12 3.5g

Tiger

OONCHE LOG, OONCHI PASAND®

Formulation by: Rasiklal Manikchand Dhariwal

RMD PAN MASALA CAN BE STORED & SOLD FREELY IN THE STATE.

Available at all leading outlets

STATUTORY WARNING: CHEWING OF PAN MASALA IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH. NOT FOR SALE TO MINORS.
NO TOBACCO, NO NICOTINE

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
ANSARI NAGAR, NEW DELHI – 110 608
EXAMINATION SECTION
Advertisement No. 69/2021

Date: 07.05.2021

No.F.A.IIMS/Exam.Sec./Advt.4-11/SR/SD-July-21)/2021

Competitive Examination (Stage-I) for Recruitment to the post of Senior Residents / Senior Demonstrators for July 2021 session at AIIMS, New Delhi

Online applications are invited from Indian Citizens as per Govt. of India Residency Scheme, for the tenure posts of Senior Residents/Senior Demonstrators for a maximum period upto 3 years. These posts include existing vacant posts, backlog vacancies of SC, ST, OBC and the posts which are likely to be vacant (Stage-I) between 01.07.2021 to 31.12.2021. Details of posts can be seen on website. The Examination will be conducted in online (CBT) mode only followed by Interview (Stage-II) of eligible candidate.

Online Registration for applications		
Opens on	Closes on	
11 th May, 2021 (Tuesday)	28 th May, 2021 at 5:00 pm (Friday)	
Date of Recruitment Examination		
Date of Exam	Duration of Exam,	Exam City
Date of Exam will be declared later	10:00 AM to 11:30 AM	4 Metro cities in India (Delhi/NCR, Mumbai, Kolkata & Chennai)

Admit cards of eligible candidates will only be uploaded on the website. If the status of Registration Form or Admit Card is not available on website, applicant should immediately write an email through Registered email ID to the Assistant Controller (Examinations), AIIMS, New Delhi-110608 on aiims.srsdexams@gmail.com along with candidate name, exam/test, subject applied, candidate ID and specific query/clarification.

Important : For Prospectus, number of post, eligibility criteria, detailed information etc. please visit the website www.aiimsexams.ac.in. All applicants are required to visit the website regularly since all subsequent Corrigendum/Addendum/Updates will be uploaded in the website only.

DAVP 17112/11/0003/2022

ASSISTANT CONTROLLER (EXAMS.)

IN BRIEF
**Bandi hails move
on Ayushman**

Hyderabad: BJP state president Bandi Sanjay on Tuesday welcomed the state government decision on implementation of Ayushman Bharat in the state. In view of this, the proposed deeksha on Wednesday demanding implementation of the Ayushman Bharat in the state has been postponed. He said that BJP exerted pressure on the government to implement the scheme and has succeeded in this. He urged the state government to enhance the limit for Aarogyaasri from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh for Covid-19 treatment.

ABVP: TAKE ACTION AGAINST COLLEGES FOR 'PRE-FEE'

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) demanded that the state government take action against engineering colleges who were collecting 'pre-fee' from students. On Tuesday, ABVP state secretary Praveen Reddy alleged that several college managements were collecting fees from students without following rules and regulations. He stated that though there was a provision to collect fees term-wise they were collecting it even amid the Covid pandemic situation.

Praveen alleged that corporate colleges were sending threat messages to parents students would not be allowed to write exams without paying the entire fee at one go. He demanded that the education department take immediate action against such colleges.

MWD REVIEWS PENDENCY OF FEE REIMBURSEMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The minorities welfare department (MWD) on Tuesday reviewed the pendency of fee reimbursement and scholarships amounts for four years between 2014-15 and 2017-18. MWD director Shahnaaz Qasim asked the district minorities welfare officers (DMWOs) to send the bills at the earliest.

The clearance of fee reimbursement of students belonging to certain colleges was pending due to various reasons. Some of the colleges could not submit the details of the students, while bills of some colleges were pending due to a delay in processing. Hyderabad DMWO Mohammed Qasim has submitted bills of 23 institutions amounting to ₹25.53 lakhs while scholarship bills of ₹70 lakh.

He informed the officials that there is no pendency in Hyderabad as of now.

Qasim addressed the officials online and expressed satisfaction over the disbursement of amounts under the schemes till 2020 and asked the DMWOs to submit the bills immediately if any were pending with them.

THE CLEARANCE of fee reimbursement of students belonging to certain colleges was pending due to various reasons. Some of the colleges could not submit the details of the students, while bills of some colleges were pending due to a delay in processing. Hyderabad DMWO Mohammed Qasim has submitted bills of 23 institutions amounting to ₹25.53 lakhs while scholarship bills of ₹70 lakh.

Gutha likely to be renominated

Cabinet to okay MLC seat in Gov. quota

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Telangana Legislative Council chairman Gautha Sukender Reddy is likely to be re-nominated as MLC under Governor quota. TRS sources said Chief Minister Chandrashekhar Rao has decided to continue Sukender Reddy as chairman of the Legislative Council.

his term as MLC and Council chairman ends on June 3. An MLC vacancy under the Governor quota will arise on June 16, when incumbent MLC Madireddy Srinivas Reddy's term ends.

The Election Commission had recently deferred elections to six MLC seats under MLAs quota but has left out the governor quota. Following this, the CM decided to con-

vene a Cabinet meeting soon to approve nomination of Sukender Reddy under the Governor's quota and refer the matter to Governor for formal approval.

However, the TS Legislative Council will witness a rare occasion of appointment of pro-temp chairman for the first time in its history on June 3 as both chairman and deputy chairman retired in Karnataka in 2018 following which the Governor had appointed a pro-temp chairman.

According to officials, such an instance was witnessed only once in India so far when the chairman and deputy chairman retired in Karnataka in 2018 following which the Governor had appointed a pro-temp chairman.

The CM is reportedly considering the names of V.G. Goud, Naradasu Laxman Rao, D. Rajeshwar and Farooq Hussain for the pro-temp chairman's post.



Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy inspects the oxygen plant at Gandhi Hospital in Secunderabad, on Tuesday.

—S. SURENDER REDDY

Kishan: Ventilators not used as staff not trained

Cantt hosp to treat Covid-19 patients

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD MAY 18

Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy on Tuesday took a round of the two newly operational PSA oxygen plants sponsored by the PM-Cares Fund, each of which produces 1,000 litres of liquid oxygen per minute at Gandhi Hospital.

The minister also visited the ICU wards and enquired about the treatment being administered to patients. Hospital superintendent and others explained to him the details of treatment being given to Covid patients at the hospital.

He also spoke to the defence secretary and health secretary to provide equipment to the Cantonment Hospital from PM-Cares funds.

Kishan Reddy also spoke to senior officials of the Cantonment Board, and took their advice

and discussed the next course of action.

Top officials and staff of the board were asked by the minister to ensure that there would be no problem for the residents due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The hospital has 60 beds with oxygen cylinders and 10 additional ICU beds would be set up at a later stage. This is in addition to the 50 D-Type oxygen cylinders given to the hospital by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Hyderabad.

₹1 crore has been sanctioned from the MP Local Area Development Scheme for this project

Cares were not utilised due to non-availability of technicians. Some 50 ventilators remained unused at the MGM Hospital in Warangal, he said.

He said junior doctors are requesting treatment for their parents at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (Nims). He advised the doctors against strike and instead talk to the government and sort out their problems.

The minister said the state government has taken delivery of the black fungus medicine stocks and suggested that it also install oxygen plants sanctioned by the Centre.

Eventually the leaked paper was sold to some candidates writing the exam. Lt Col Bedi's cut was ₹1 lakh per candidate. He reportedly received some money, but had to refund it after the exam got cancelled," said the police officer.

Explaining the leak, officials said that during the printing, Lt Col Bedi managed to get a copy while ensuring that the act was not captured by CCTV cameras. "He forwarded it to Narnepati, who was

On Tuesday, a team of Pune police, including

assistant police inspector Shirish Bhalerao, along with cops Atul Sathe and Pravin Rajput, took the Army officer into custody from Secunderabad. Before his arrest, his associate, identified as Virprasad Narnepati, 41, posted as store-keeper at the Ordnance Depot in New Delhi, was nabbed by the police.

On Tuesday, a team of

Pune police, including

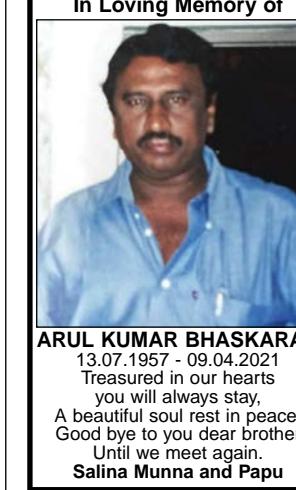
ADVOCATES TO KCR: SANCTION ₹25 CR FOR WELFARE

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The advocates and members of the Telangana Bar Council requested Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao, to sanction ₹25 crores for the welfare of the advocates community during the pandemic. They said a majority of advocates were struggling to make ends meet as the courts are fully not functioning.

A Narasimha Reddy, chairman of the Bar Council of Telangana state, addressed a representation on behalf of advocate community on the matter, also stated that some advocates had died of Covid-19 as they were unable to pay for treatment.

40th DAY MEMORIAL PRAYERS



ARUL KUMAR BHASKARAN

13.07.1957 - 09.04.2021

Treasured in our hearts

you will always stay,

A beautiful soul rest in peace.

Good bye to you dear brother

Until we meet again.

Salina Munna and Papu

(S/2122/D00219)

OBITUARY



Mrs. MALIWAT AGNES MENDOZA

National of Philippines

D.O.B: 31 January, 1968

D.O.D: 16 March, 2021

W/o: Mohamed Abdul Sami

H.No.12-2441, Flat No.402, Sait Ali Guda, Asif Nagar, Hyderabad,

Telangana- 500028

Contact No.: +91 948052530, 9848020333

(S/2122/D00206)

OBITUARY



Late KANDI BHAGYAVATHI

DOB: 05.04.1947 DOD: 17.5.2021

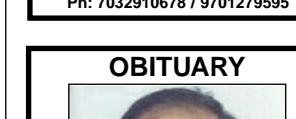
With profound grief we inform the sudden demise of our beloved friend.

Inserted by: Family Members

Ph: 7032910678 / 0712729595

(S/2122/D00211)

SAD DEMISE



Smt. Dr. K. VIMALA BAI & Sri. KATHI CHANDRIAH

I.A.S (Field)

Smt. & Dr. K. Pragul Chandra MS. FRCS

Smt. & Sri K. Pradeep Chandra MS

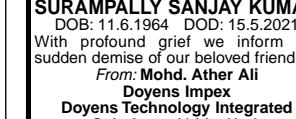
Smt. K. Ratna Prabha MS. & Sri. A. Vidyasagar MS

and Grandchildren

Mobile: 98499 01752

(S/2122/D00211)

OBITUARY



Y. SRIVINAS (VASU)

D.O.D: 19-5-2014

Your memories will remain

in our hearts forever

Inserted by:

RANJIT BEHARA

(S/2122/D00207)

7th DEATH ANNIVERSARY



Puli Giri Vardhan

Door No. 11-1-717/67D Class

Near Seetha Rama Temple,

Lane to Friends Cafe, Seetha Ram Bagh,

Hyderabad- 500001

Contact: 80741 3285, 80999 98199

From: Full Family

(B/2122/D00031)

OBITUARY



A. PRABHAKER RAO (M.C.H.)

"You are always the symbol of love

and affection and your thoughts will

always inspire us. You will remain in

our hearts forever."

Daughter: P. Ramaa

Son-in-law: P. Naveen Kumar

Grand-Daughter: P. Sai Pranathi

(S/2122/D00210)

OBITUARY



LATE SRI PARVATHALA LAXMAN RAO

Retd. E.E. GHMC

DOB: 06-03-1947 - DOD: 19-05-2017

Your memories will always remain in our hearts. We love you and miss you a lot.

Inserted by:

Elder Son : P. AMARENDER

Ph: 9246563024

(S/2122/D00210)

OBITUARY

GADDE ERNEST JAYAKAR

Former Sr Accounts Officer, South Central Railways

DOB: 23 MAY 1934 DOD: 17 MAY 2021

Inserted by:

Mrs. Elizabeth Jayakar (Wife)

Mrs. Anita Rachel (Daughter)

Mr. Reinhold Goier (Son-in-Law)

Ms. Olive Subashini (Sister USA)

And All Near & Dear

Ph: 9030065456

(S/2122/D00215)

SHORT TAKES
Man booked for extortion attempt

Hyderabad: A rowdy-sheeter, Mohd Naseeruddin alias Chaaku Nasser, was arrested for threatening and demanding money from S.S.M.A.

Kashif Pasha Quadri, mutavalli (caretaker) of the Ujalesha graveyard.

In his complaint, the mutavalli said, "Mohd Naseeruddin had been interfering with the affairs of the graveyard. He demanded ₹10,000 over the phone and threatened that he would kill me if I do not pay."

Saidabad police booked a case, arrested the rowdy-sheeter and remanded him to judicial custody.

MASK RULE VIOLATORS PAY ₹31CR PENALTY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD MAY 18

People in the state have paid up a total of ₹31 crore in penalties to the police for not wearing a mask during the lockdown, as per a report submitted by Director-General of Police M. Mahendar Reddy to the Telangana High Court.

The DGP stated that the police have booked 98 cases against those who were black-marketing medicines used for the treatment of Covid-19.

"The police had booked 3,39,412 cases against those who did not wear face masks or wore it improperly. We also booked 22,560 cases against those who did not follow social distancing," the report said.

The statistics were revealed when the High Court took up the hearing on the batch of petitions filed on the status of Coronavirus in the state.

The DGP, in his report, also said that the police had taken all steps to curb the spread of the Coronavirus. "We are taking steps for the prevention of the black marketing of the medicines. We are maintaining a strict implementation of the ongoing lockdown and booked a total of 4,31,823 cases from May 1 till May 14," the report said.

TS FEELS GST ON COVID MEDS BURDENS STATES

FROM PAGE 1

State governments are procuring all these for free treatment for Covid patients at government hospitals as well as for supplying medical kits to the patients under home isolation.

The TS government is of the view that imposing GST ranging from 5 per cent to 12 per cent on these items burdened the states as also those undergoing paid treatment in private hospitals.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on May 9 ruled out exempting Covid-19 vaccines, medicines and oxygen concentrators from GST, saying such an exemption will make the life-saving items costlier for consumers. Manufacturers will not be able to offset the taxes paid on inputs, and several states are planning to press their council again at the GST Council meet.

Currently, domestic supplies and commercial imports of vaccines attract a 5 per cent GST, while Covid-19 drugs and oxygen concentrators attract a tax of 12 per cent.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi had also pleaded that life-saving drugs, equipment and instruments required to treat Covid-19 patients must be exempted from GST.

VACCINE REGISTRATION WORRIES MANY

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 18

While vaccines continue to be in short supply, another issue is worrying people a lot: registration for their dose.

Many people find it difficult to get registered and find a slot. Even though the first dose was taken, in some cases, it was not registered due to technical problems. When these people try for the second dose, it is not being registered as the first dose is not shown as administered.

"Many people are returning home disappointed as their names were not registered in the first dose. My mother faced a lot of hurdles in getting the second dose of vaccine. At last, she got it as the first dose for the second time," said N. Ananda Rao of Ramanaiahpet.

Covid deaths go unreported

Kin take home patients in serious condition to bid farewell despite risk

21,320 Covid cases in AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 18

Several Covid-19 deaths are going unreported, especially at private hospitals as people are taking their loved ones home against medical advice when there were bleak chances of survival and performing last rites after their death in various parts of AP. This practice is very much prevalent in rural areas where family members take patients to hospitals in critical stage, and return with them when told there are no beds, oxygen or other facilities.

Such deaths are not being reported to the government. The families prefer this way as they do not want to miss the chance to bid final farewell and conduct last rites, because they would not be handed over the bodies if deaths were due to Covid-19.

Though this practice is also found in urban centres, it is more prevalent

in rural areas.

What is worrying is that people are taking back the sick home even if they are found to contract the viral infection, and thus are putting themselves at risk. In Rajahmundry, a 63-year-old woman was infected with Coronavirus and was admitted in a private hospital. After a few days, as her oxygen levels dropped alarmingly, the hospital advised the family to shift her to any other hos-

pital which has a ventilator. However, losing hope in her recovery, her son hired an ambulance to take her home and on the way, he even purchased a body bag and placed an order for a coffin. She died within a few hours of reaching home.

Though it was a Covid-19 death, it went unaccounted for. Her family members buried her body at a burial ground as per their tradition. However, her husband and two

sons were infected. Her husband is in critical care at KGH, Visakhapatnam. A distant relative, who was asked to take care of her grandchildren aged 10 years, was also infected along with the older child. Though the child recovered, he lies in critical condition at KGH. The deceased woman's daughter and son-in-law who wore PPE kits during the funeral were, however, not infected.

In the daily caseload, 10 districts reported more than 1,000 cases each, with East Godavari coming at the top with 2,923 followed by 2,804 in Anantapur, 2,630 in Chittoor, 2,368 in Visakhapatnam, 1,762 in West Godavari, 1,466 in Srikakulam, 1,291 in Guntur, 1,251 in Nellore, 1,048 in Krishna and 1,036 in Kadapa.

In another case at Kakinada, a 65-year-old retired employee was infected with the Coronavirus and was taken to the government hospital. His oxygen saturation was down to 80 per cent and also the pulse rate was down. As they could not get a bed, the family made enquiries with some hospitals and called for an ambulance. By the time it arrived, the patient died. The body was taken home and the death went unreported.

A senior government doctor said, "If Covid-19 deaths fail to be reported properly, the government may not be able to assess the spread of virus so as to come up with a plan to tackle it. A mechanism should be evolved to report all such deaths. Covid-19 bodies should never be given to family members as it will result in spread of the virus. A test should also be done on those who died due to other reasons to play safe."

TD TO BOYCOTT DAY-LONG AP ASSEMBLY MEET

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 18

Telugu Desam state president K. Atchannaidu has announced that his party would boycott the Assembly session being convened for a day on May 20.

Addressing a press conference in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday, Atchannaidu said the Budget should have been passed in the Assembly in March, as was done at the Centre and by many states. It should not be passed by an ordinance, he said.

During the last two years, the YSRC government did not convene a sufficient number of Assembly sessions to discuss public issues.

"When we asked the government to convene the Assembly in March this year, it said the session cannot be held due to Covid-19. Then how it being held now," Atchannaidu asked.

He blamed the government for not focusing on the Covid-19 situation. "If the Chief Minister has any responsibility, he should have convened an all-party meeting. The government did not take any cue from the neighbouring states which have been handling the situation effectively. The government completely failed in administration of vaccine to the people and in providing oxygen to the needy patients," he said.

Atchannaidu said 10 patients had died due to the government failure in supplying oxygen at a crucial time. The YSRC had been blaming TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu for "the loss of a few lives" at the Godavari pushkar but more lives have been lost now.

Atchannaidu said while the patients were crying for beds, oxygen, medicines and food to save themselves, the Chief Minister had announced ₹15,000 towards cremation charges to add insult to injury. Any responsible government would make all out efforts to save lives and the Chief Minister should draw lessons from Kerala, he said.

Rly hospitals get upgraded infra

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

● ORDERS HAVE also been issued to admit Covid-affected employees to empaneled hospitals.

to 296.

Railway officials said constant efforts are on to add critical medical equipment like BPAP machines, oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders etc in railway hospitals.

Orders have also been issued to admit Covid-affected employees to empaneled hospitals on referral basis.

The authorities said the railways is moving 'Oxygen Express' freight trains swiftly carrying oxygen tanker trucks to different states. It is continuing with the usual movement of passenger and freight traffic.

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
Corporate Identification Number: U4019PB2010SGC033813,
Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact Number: 96461-18774)
Tender Enquiry No. MQP-177/2021-22/PO(M) Dated: 18.05.2021
Chief Engineer/Metering, C-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala, invites E-tender for Design Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, Reading, Analysis and 8 year O&M of 1,17,500 number Smart Meters, AMI system & Communication infrastructure with a network platform in Agranagar Special Division of Ludhiana City on Turnkey Basis (OPEX Model). For detailed NIT and tender specification, please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 18.05.2021 from 05:00 PM onwards.

Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in

C-190/21 RO No PR-Advt. No.: 76155/12/257/2021/4628

HYDERABAD METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER-I
7th Floor, Swarna Jayanti Commercial Complex, Ameerpet, Hyderabad 500007, Tele - Fax: 040 27014060
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
NIT No.: HMDA/DEV/SE/03/2021 Date: 17-05-2021
Tenders are invited on e-procurement from valid registered Contractors for the work of "Supply and Erection of 9.0Mtrs Octagonal poles with 120W LED Street lights from TSPA junction to Azinagar (approximately 6.5km stretch)". The last date for submission of the bids is 08-06-2021 up to 3.00 pm. Tender documents and conditions can be downloaded from e-procurement website https://tender.telangana.gov.in. R.O. No.: 1798-PP-CL-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22 Sd/- Superintending Engineer-I, HMDA

COFMOW (INDIAN RAILWAYS)
E-TENDER NOTICE No. 24, DATED : 19.05.2021
PCMM/COFMOW's Office invites e-Bids for the following STORES Tenders:

Tender No.	Brief Description	Closing Date
OP-407650	Radial Drilling Machine	07.06.2021
OP-109240	Fully Automatic Micro Under Cutting & Deburring Machine	07.06.2021
OP-712732	Oil Immersed Type Power Distribution transformer, Cap-1000 KVA	08.06.2021
OP-109050	Hydraulic Press 200 Ton	11.06.2021
OP-909572	Pneumatic Coil Spreading Machine	14.06.2021
OP-407272	Test Rig for E-70 Brake Equipment for Locomotive	18.06.2021
OP-909640	CNC Gas Profile Cutting Machine	18.06.2021
OP-609140	CNC Axial Turning La Machine	18.06.2021

Bidders may visit the website www.reps.gov.in to download the tender document and submit their e-Bids. No manual offers shall be accepted.

CORRIGENDUM, DATED : 19.05.2021
Following corrigenda have been issued to e-Tenders already uploaded on the website www.reps.gov.in:

Tender No.	Corrigendum No.	Closing Date
OP-108161	Corrigendum No. 01	27.05.2021
OP-109160	Corrigendum No. 01	24.05.2021
OP-712730	Corrigendum No. 01	08.06.2021

Bidders may visit the website to download the details mentioned in the corrigendum and submit e-Bids accordingly.

RAIL COACH FACTORY, KAPURTHALA
E-TENDER NOTICE
On-line bids are invited by PCMM, RCF on behalf of President of India for following items:-

Sr. No.	Tender No. & Due Date	Description	Qty. (Nos/Sets)	EMD(Rs.)
1.	17211083A / 09.06.2021	Supply and Application of Set of SS Luggage rack in LHB parcell van	32 Sets	729390/-
2.	17211092 / 09.06.2021	Luggage rack Mounting for SLR LHB Coach	32 Sets	60370/-
3.	17211361 / 09.06.2021	Set of FRP ceiling panels for LHB GS coaches	61 Sets	269650/-
4.	17211083B / 09.06.2021	Luggage racks-2 types	56 Sets, 8 Sets	397640/-
5.	14201164B / 11.06.2021	Oxygen Gas Compressed	NIL	51732 cuft
6.	17211255C / 11.06.2021	Set of Attachment Wall and Floor Covering for LHB SLR HOG Coaches	143 Sets	41410/-
7.	17211360 / 14.06.2021	Set of seats and berths for LHB SLR HOG coaches (31 Seater), with cushioning material re-coat	69 Sets	300710/-
8.	17211359 / 14.06.2021	Set of Seats for LHB GS Coaches, with cushioning material re-coat	67 Sets	418800/-
9.	05211166 / 14.06.2021	Front Part (2 types)	16 Sets	67430/-

1. For details and Making On-line bids, visit Website http://reps.gov.in Drawings/specifications, wherever required can be downloaded from RCF Website http://www.rcf.indianrailways.gov.in. Class IIIB digital signature certificate required for on-line bidding, can be obtained from licensed certifying agencies listed at http://www.cce.gov.in. All Limited tenders and Advertised tenders will normally close at 11:25 Hrs and 14:25 Hrs respectively on the stipulated date and will be opened at 11.30 Hrs and 14.30 Hrs. Tenders at Sr. No. 1 to 8 will be opened at RCF, Tilak Bridge, New Delhi-110002. 4. For queries contact IREPS Helpdesk at 011-24102855, 011-24105180 or RCF Helpdesk at 011-23378658. NOTE: "GST No. of RCF is 03AAAGM0289C1Z1. All the suppliers are advised to quote this in dispatch documents for the supplies made by them".

Notice No.: G-RCF/122-01/Stores/01/2021-22 Dated: 18.05.2021 PCMM

कार्यालय कार्यपालन अभियंता, लोक स्वास्थ्य यांत्रिकी खण्ड अधिकारीपुर जिला सरगुजा (छ.ग.)
// Notice Inviting Tender //
एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत उपयुक्त श्रेणी में नियमित लेनदेन से कार्य हेतु जिला जल एवं स्वच्छता विभाग सरगुजा (जल जीवन विभाग अंतर्गत) ऑनलाइन (Online) निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है।

Sr. No.	Tender No. (System No.) & Date	Last Date (Bid Due Date)	Name of Work	P.A.C. (Rs. In Lakh)
1	19 (76686) Date 05.05.2021	25.05.2021	Constit of O.H.T., Pipeline work, Instt. Of Submersible Pump, Providing of FHTC, At Village- Guturuma, Block- Sitapur, Under JJM	122.50
2	20 (76687) Date 05.05.2021	25.05.2021	Constit of O.H.T., Pipeline work, Instt. Of Submersible Pump, Providing of FHTC, At Village- Kerju, Block- Sitapur, Under JJM	144.66
3	21 (76688) Date 05.05.2021	28.05.2021	Constit of O.H.T., Pipeline work, Instt. Of Submersible Pump, Providing of FHTC, At Village- Rajpuri Kala, Block- Lakhnupur, Under JJM	184.16
4	22 (76689) Date 05.05.2021	03.06.2021	Constit of O.H.T., Pipeline work, Instt. Of Submersible Pump, Providing of FHTC, At Village- Jamgala, Block- Lakhnupur, Under JJM	163.86

उपरोक्त नियमित कार्यों की ऑनलाइन (Online Tender) टेंडर आमंत्रित की जाती है। धरोहर राशि एवं अन्य जानकारी ई-प्रक्षेपणमें वेब पोर्टल (

DECCAN Chronicle

19 MAY 2021

CBI's partisanship mars its actions over Narada

Those who are found to have broken the law must face the full force of the law. In a democracy no one is too high to be placed above this principle, which cannot but apply in the case of the West Bengal ministers and MLAs arrested in the Narada sting case that came to light in 2016 though the sting had been carried out two years earlier.

Where public servants are concerned — and the expression includes legislators — there is a moral dimension as well. They are keepers of public trust and exercise authority, including over public finances, in the name of the people. When they misuse their position for their private gain, the faith of the people in the system as a whole is shaken, and that is why they must not be permitted to get away when they do that.

However, in order that public servants are not harassed through motivated or frivolous complaints, or for vexatious ends, procedures are laid down for their investigation or arrest. The first step here is grant of sanction for their prosecution by appropriate authority.

In the case of chief minister Mamata Banerjee's ministers — Firhad Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee — and MLA and former minister Madan Mitra — ordinarily the Speaker of the Assembly should have been the proper authority to accord sanction for their prosecution. This is pretty much standard procedure.

Instead, state governor Jagdeep Dhankar, who appears to be fast acquiring a reputation for political partisanship losing over his status as high constitutional authority, was approached by the CBI and the arrests followed in five days flat.

The Assembly had just been constituted after the recent state election and the Speaker would

have been in place in a matter of days. Yet, the CBI chose to approach the governor for sanction although it could just easily have waited a few days more in such an old case. This cannot but re-confirm its status as the Centre's "caged parrot". Sadly, the governor did not send the file back either. This is so much the pity and does no good to India's claim to be a constitutional democracy.

Is not it a little curious that the CBI did not seek permission for the prosecution of Mukul Roy, who defected to BJP some years ago, and Suvendu Adhikari, who defected to the saffron party weeks before the recent election and is now the leader of the Opposition in the Assembly? This episode re-confirms the widely held impression that the BJP has become a dry-cleaner and acquiring its membership permits allieviated tainted politicos to come out smelling of roses.

This is a time when a responsible Centre should be working in partnership with states to fight the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic. But the Modi government's priority evidently lies elsewhere.

It is signalling that after BJP's emphatic defeat at the hands of the Trinamul Congress in the recent state polls, the Centre would take the fight against the legitimate victors to the extremes through the blatant manipulation of procedures even at the cost of hurting the spirit of democracy. Centre-state relations become collateral damage in such a scenario. Development and people's welfare will be on the backburner as political fights escalate, probably in the end leading to street battles. Truly, all this means the willful negation of the mandate of the people.

Taxes & FDI: Change attitude

It is one of life's simplest aphorisms that you can't have the cake and eat it too. If the Government of India's approach to getting foreign investment is akin to having the cake, its attitude towards trade disputes in which foreign investors emerge victorious as in international arbitration is the equivalent of wanting to eat the cake. The Scottish oil exploration company Cairn Energy has exposed this contradiction in official India's approach even as it has escalated the process by moving to attach Air India's properties abroad on the legal premise that the national carrier is India's alter ego.

A law on retrospective taxation that the previous UPA government passed in 2012 had proved extremely damaging to the country's reputation as an investment destination. Vodafone hit the arbitration trail to expose India's income tax claims as arbitrary. The basic approach hasn't changed despite NDA being in the saddle when losing such claims in arbitration awards. Far from being graceful in defeat and settling, official India has pursued matters legally through appeal and this after having acted in a questionable and predatory manner in the Cairn issue by selling the company's assets and shares to monetise its claims.

Official India can lay a claim to a sovereign right to its tax laws but this does little for the image of a country desperately seeking foreign investments in industry as they come with considerable job generating qualities while also fulfilling the "make in India" criterion dear to the central government as a policy initiative best serving national interests. At one time, there were as many as 17 claims, stemming from disputes over undelivered incentives, retrospective taxation and payment disputes, with regard to investments under bilateral treaties through which capital flowed into India.

The impression India leaves in potential foreign investors is it is a difficult country to deal with because its track record is not that good in keeping its word and delivering on promises after attracting investments. Only a change in attitude can help correct that and settling Cairn's \$1.2 billion award would be one way to demonstrate that India is keen on facilitating ease of doing business.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamatra, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234
Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Venagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208
Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904
Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
Nellore: Survey No.52/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/4230525
Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ram Nagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

DECCAN CHRONICLE

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:

Hyderabad: 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad - 500 003, Ph: 040-27803930-4; Fax: 040-27805256
Vijayawada: No.C-3 & 4 Patamatra, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-2555284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555234
Visakhapatnam: Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-2552333/2552334; Fax: 0891-2755285
Rajahmundry: Venagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208
Anantapur: Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904
Karimnagar: Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433
Nellore: Survey No.52/2, Burrampur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chennudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580
Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/ 48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/4230525
Coimbatore: 77, Vivekananda Road, Ram Nagar, Coimbatore - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255
Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Sanjay Kumar

Political fallout of the Covid crisis across India

Various factors contributed to the BJP's poor performance in the West Bengal Assembly elections and one can't relate its poor showing only to the severe Covid-19 crisis and its mismanagement across the country. But the political fallout of the Covid crisis and its mismanagement for the BJP can't be ruled out. The results of the Uttar Pradesh panchayat elections have already given a glimpse of the challenge the BJP may face in the near future. It faced a tough challenge from the Samajwadi Party in the panchayat polls. The severe health crisis that India is facing at the moment may not have yet made the extremely popular Prime Minister Narendra Modi unpopular, but disappointment among a large number of Indians has started building. People may not directly blame the PM for the present health crisis, though some do, but what seems to have disappointed many Indians is his continued campaign for his party in West Bengal, which saw eight phases of voting.

With Covid cases rising alarmingly in several states, and cities gasping for

oxygen, there were even demands to merge the last few phases of the West Bengal polls to reduce the campaign, but the Centre was silent and BJP leaders continued to address big rallies in that state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi cancelled his rallies, which seems to have done damage control over people's disenchantment with Mr Modi, but the Election Commission, that announced a ban on big rallies hours after Mr Modi's announcement that he was cancelling his rallies, created the perception among ordinary people that his move was guided by the EC's decision, of which he may have got a hint in advance.

What seems to have disappointed many people is Mr Modi's somewhat delayed effort in trying to address the Covid crisis, weeks after India plunged from one crisis to another — from non-availability of beds to the shortage of oxygen, not to mention the non-availability of ventilators for patients in desperate need of it for treatment. When the country faced these multiple health crises, what people saw was Prime Minister Modi addressing several election rallies in West Bengal. People saw

this as a huge contrast to last year's Covid crisis and Mr Modi's handling of it. Last year, when Covid-19 had just erupted in India, Prime Minister Modi was in full command, as he took charge and announced a nationwide lockdown. There was criticism of the way the lockdown was announced and implemented without giving advance notice, but overall, Mr Modi was applauded for his bold decision which seemed to have prevented the spread of Covid-19 across India.

Now, when people were looking towards Mr Modi for his leadership in handling this crisis, he failed to establish a connect with people. Citizens remember that during last year's crisis, that was far less severe than this one, he led from the front, addressed the nation several times, and kept a connect with ordinary people. It is true that the Centre is trying its best to solve even this present crisis and started the import of Covid vaccines and oxygen, along with several other such steps, but these should have been done much earlier. Though the Centre took these initiatives, at the same time it always tried to shift the responsibility to state

governments, on the ground that health is a state subject. Putting the blame on state governments for the current health disaster was not appreciated by most people. It is important to note that there has been no change in the constitutional provisions — health was a state subject last year, as it is this year — so why did the Centre take all the praise last year and now, as things are going out of hand, is trying to pass the blame to the states?

What might complicate the issue further and contribute to the growing disengagement of people with the Central government, Prime Minister Modi and the BJP, is the emerging controversy around the pricing of the Covid vaccines. Not that there were no controversies around vaccination earlier, there were news about a shortage of vaccines and India having exported vaccines to various countries, but the *tu-tu-mai-mai* between the states and New Delhi may increase further on the differential pricing of the vaccines. It is understood that as of now the same vaccine will be procured by the states at a higher price, but it would be available to the Centre at a lower price. This dif-

ferential price is understandable if it is between private and government hospitals, but it is hard for an ordinary citizen to understand why he has to pay a higher price if he is given a vaccine purchased by a state government and a lesser price if the same vaccine is purchased by the Central government.

What seems to have made people feel unhappy with the Centre is its lack of initiative in negotiating with the Serum Institute of India for a better price, and instead advising the states to negotiate the price themselves. The question is — why can't the Centre take the initiative on this? This is not a "normal" health crisis across the country, in the midst of a raging pandemic, the question of whether health is a state subject or not should not even arise. Some states may have erred in their preparations, but it is not the time to play the blame game. This is a time for all the states and the Centre to work together and fight a national calamity.

The writer is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and a political analyst. The views expressed here are personal.

Subhani

India can vaccinate swiftly by using 'mohalla method'

Probal DasGupta

The irony is stark. Millions scramble for oxygen cylinders and hospital beds, oscillating between life and death. Around the same time, several other millions decided the political fortunes of five states/UTs.

Earlier this year, Indians defied a mortal fear of the coronavirus and voted in large numbers, with a turnout of 70 per cent or higher across states. On jabs, though, it was different. A listless rollout plan curtailed the availability of vaccines and people's tentativeness only hastened the inevitable. In two weeks, a second wave swept India, spiralling into its biggest crisis. An overpowered medical infrastructure burst at its seams.

But that's not the point. While every life-saving equipment is a survival kit, it's the pace of vaccinations that will ultimately ensure India's endurance against the virus. The point is: the secret to winning this war lies in our learning from past experience, including elections.

January 13, 2011 was a historic day for India. A two-year old child in West Bengal was found crippled by polio but was later cured. It was the last time polio would strike here. That day, India became polio-free. Two years earlier, India housed half the world's polio cases. No one thought the country could ever eradicate it. However, aided by the state, Unicef and others, India's feverish campaign against polio, led by 2.5 million vaccinators, touched 200 million homes, with 700,000 vaccinations in each round. Despite its challenges of poor infrastructure, India relied on its strengths: a "mohalla" or community, outreach.

Today, only 12 per cent Indians have got their first dose, against 50 per cent in America. Currently, the vaccination rate is less than half a million a day,

We can reach a national jab rate of 10 million (one crore) a day, which means vaccinating the country in 4-5 months. If a third wave were to arrive in late 2021, most of India would have been vaccinated.

The "mohalla method" demands deployment of substantial numbers of health workers, logistics, and vaccines. Cynics may say this isn't possible. But it actually works. India has over 12 lakh medical professionals, 7-8 lakh alternative medicine professionals, around two lakh medical students, diagnostic centre professionals, and armed forces doctors, nursing assistants to provide jabs, the local police and paramilitary to handle the logistics and the armed forces to provide administrative support. Every neighbourhood can plan 5-6 centres of 25-30 volunteers each. Neighbourhood clusters could be simultaneously vaccinated in around 45-60 days (given availability of healthcare resources, vaccine supplies and errors in calculation). We can reach a national jab rate of 10 million (one crore) a day, which means vaccinating the country in 4-5 months. If a third wave were to arrive in late 2021, most of India would have been vaccinated.

But do we have vaccines? Choosing just two vaccines and then exporting them when just eight per cent of India was vaccinated was bound to lead to shortages. India needs over two billion jabs. Scaling up is a no-brainer. J&J's Phase 3 trials are set to begin. Russia's Sputnik V is here and will be distributed by Dr Reddy's Labs. Bharat Biotech has ramped up its capacity from 200 million to 700 million doses a year. India has asked for a waiver on intellectual property and barriers on vaccines from Europe and America. It's taken a catastrophe for us to realise we must speed up vaccinations. To execute the blueprint, the bottom line is to shed lethargic bureaucracy and ensure an efficient supply chain and execution. A crisis taskforce needs to have a crack team of senior experts from amongst medical professionals, the armed forces and civil services. Like the polio campaign earlier, a targeted media campaign involving cricket and movie stars must be the focus. The campaign must be on a war footing and the national leadership has to make this period count. The war isn't over till we have enough ammunition to fight for our citizens. And we must vaccinate to win.

The writer, a retired Army officer, is the author of Watershed 1967, based on a forgotten war between India and China, and a member of the guest faculty at New York's Columbia University

LETTERS

THIRD WAVE

The Telangana High Court is right in seeking details of the strategy of the government to combat the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic (*HC seeks details of third wave strategy, DC, May 18*). While we fought the first wave bravely, we are now struggling and clueless to combat the second wave mainly due to our lack of planning. Now, the state government can be proactive and have well-planned strategies in place to fight the third wave of the pandemic.

G.V.N. Murthy
Hyderabad

INTER EXAMS

It is not wise to conduct Intermediate exams during the rampaging second wave of the Covid-19. It is better to declare all students as passed which will be a great relief to not only students but also worried parents. Colleges had hardly run for one to two months in the beginning of the year. The government must also give strict directions to private colleges not to collect more than 50 per cent annual fee for basically the survival of the institutions.

T. Kailash Ditya
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

New colony to come up on Jubilee Hills

HYDERABAD, May 18. The Jubilee Hills Co-operative House Building Society here, as been making good progress during the last two years and construction of about 500 houses is expected to commence shortly.

The Society has acquired about 1,400 acres of land, with a view to provide fully developed plots for nearly 2,500 members for construction of houses. Facilities have not been made for starting construction of 500 houses in the first phase.

Situated as it is at a height of about 2,000 feet, the colony, when developed, would be one of the most beautiful residential places in the city with well laid out parks and lawns, wide roads and all facilities.

Standing atop the hillocks or sitting in the balcony of a house, one can have a panoramic view of the city.

DECCAN CHRONICLE | HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 19 MAY 2021

IN BRIEF

NO HIGH COURT RELIEF FOR KALRA

New Delhi, May 18: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday declined to direct an expeditious decision on the bail plea of businessman Navneet Kalra, arrested in connection with alleged black marketing of oxygen concentrators, saying "let the law take its own course".

Justice Subramonium Prasad declined to interfere with the observations made by a sessions court while dismissing Kalra's anticipatory bail plea, saying the Supreme Court has already laid down the law with regard to observations made by courts and their reporting by media organisations.

The high court declined to grant the reliefs sought on behalf of Kalra, represented by senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, saying that he had moved an anticipatory bail plea which has become infructuous due to his arrest and therefore, nothing remains in the matter.

Pahwa had made two oral prayers on Tuesday, that directions be issued to the trial court concerned to decide his client's bail plea expeditiously and secondly, to expunge the observations made against Kalra by the sessions court as due to his arrest he can no longer challenge the order denying him anticipatory bail.

NIGHT CURFEW TO CONTINUE IN 36 GUJARAT CITIES

Ahmedabad, May 17: The night curfew in 36 cities of Gujarat, including nine metros, has been extended by three more days to control the spread of coronavirus, the state government said on Monday.

As per the decision taken by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, the limited restrictions, including the curfew between 8 pm and 6 am, will continue to be in place in 36 cities from Tuesday to Thursday, a government release said.

Restrictions currently in force in other parts of Gujarat except these 36 cities will also continue between 6 am on May 18 till 6 am on May 20, it said.

Rupani said the government will take a call on whether to extend the night curfew and other curbs beyond May 20 after assessing the situation.

Gujarat on Monday reported 7,135 new coronavirus positive cases, taking its infection count to 7,59,754, while 81 deaths increased the toll in the state to 9,202, an official said.

The government has only ordered the continuation of essential services and activities during these three days, in accordance with the Centre's guidelines, said the release.

Services directly associated with the operation of Covid-19 and those specified as essential and urgent will not be affected. Medical, paramedical and allied health services, oxygen production and distribution systems will also continue, it said.

BADRINATH OPENS AFTER WINTER CLOSURE

Gopeshwar (U'khand), May 18: The famous temple of Badrinath in the upper Himalayan region of Uttarakhand opened after the winter break early on Tuesday amid traditional rituals.

The chief priest of the temple, Ishwar Prasad Namboodiri, opened the portals of the temple at 4.15 am chanting Vedic hymns and praying for the well-being of all.

However, the opening ceremony was a subdued affair with only a limited number of people, including the priests, the Dharmadhikari and administrative officials, attending it in compliance with the Covid-19 standard operating procedure.

In normal circumstances, thousands of people turn up at the high-altitude temple dedicated to Vishnu to witness its opening ceremony.

For the second consecutive year, the temple witnessed a simple, thinly-attended opening ceremony.

The temple was decorated with around eight quintals of marigolds on the occasion. With the opening of Badrinath, all the four Himalayan temples known as char dham are now open in Uttarakhand. Kedarnath opened on Monday while Yamunotri and Gangotri opened on May 14 and 15 respectively. However, they have been kept out of bounds for pilgrims for the time being due to the pandemic.



Guest workers leave for their native states from the inter-state bus terminal at Kaushambi during the second wave of the Coronavirus in Ghaziabad on Tuesday.



A medic, wearing a PPE, conducts random Covid-19 testing of street vendors near Charbagh Railway Station in Lucknow on Tuesday.

- PTI

EFFORTS BEING MADE TO RAMP UP VACCINE SUPPLY: MODI

New Delhi, May 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that continuous efforts are being made to ramp up Covid-19 vaccine supply in a big way, asserting that attempts are on to provide states 15-day advance schedule of the inoculation programme as it will allow them to prepare accordingly.

Interacting with state and district officials at a virtual meeting, he described them as "field commanders" in the fight against Covid-19 and said localised containment zones, aggressive testing and sharing correct and complete information with people are weapons to defeat it.

The meeting was attended by district magistrates from 46 districts across nine states.

People's convenience increases when information like bed availability for the sick or the vaccine availability are easily available. Modi said and also asked officials to curb black-marketing and take strict action should be taken against those who do so.

Noting that coronavirus infections are decreasing in some states and increasing in some others, he emphasised the need to be more vigilant in the face of decreasing tally and underlined that he has always stressed that the fight is about saving every single life.

Asserting that vaccination is a strong way to fight Covid, Modi said myths about it have to be collectively rooted out.

The health ministry is streamlining the system and process of vaccination, he said, stressing the need to stop vaccine wastage.

Noting that every district has its own unique challenges, he told officials that they had a free hand to innovate to suit their local needs and asked them to share their feedback about any change in policy they may want without any inhibition.

Hailing officials, the prime minister said many of them worked despite being Covid positive while some lost their family members but they gave duty their foremost priority.

"You understand the challenges of your district much better. So when your district wins, the country wins. When your district beats Corona, the country defeats Corona," a PMO statement said quoting Modi. He asked officials to also take care of the ease of living of every citizen of their district, saying there is a need to stop infection and also ensure unimpeded flow of essential supplies.

● Hailing officials, Modi said many of them worked despite being Covid positive while some lost their family members but they gave duty their priority.

MP sees rise in black fungus cases

Medical examination of all those who have recovered from Covid-19 to be conducted

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
Bhopal, May 18

Surge in black fungus infection in Madhya Pradesh has sent alarm bells ringing in the state administration forcing the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government to launch microbiological surveillance in the hospitals.

State medical education minister Vishwas Sarang told reporters that the government has launched a drive to detect black fungus infection cases in the state by conducting medical examination of all the

people who have recovered from Covid-19 in MP.

"We have launched microbiological surveillance in all the government as well as private hospitals in the state to detect potential cases of black fungus infection. We have ordered medical examination of all the people who have recovered from Covid-19 to detect developing infection cases and treat them", Mr Sarang said.

An official report said a total 500 cases of black fungus infections have been reported in the state so far.

"We are facing shortage of antifungal drugs and

The infection has claimed life of a man who had recovered from Covid-19 recently in the state.

"The ongoing survey to detect such cases could only establish the gravity of the situation in the state", a senior officer of the MP health department said.

The state government has created dedicated treatment facilities for such cases in the five government-run major hospitals in Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur, Gwalior and Rewa.

The state government on Tuesday fixed prices of the anti-fungus injections manufactured by various pharmaceutical companies and warned that

injections in the market.

We have approached the Centre to ensure adequate supply of antifungal drugs and injections to the state as soon as possible", Mr Sarang said.

The Madhya Pradesh government had earlier declared that all the patients suffering from black fungus infection would be treated free of cost in all the government hospitals.

The state government on Tuesday fixed prices of the anti-fungus injections manufactured by various pharmaceutical companies and warned that

action would be taken against the druggists who were found selling the products at inflated prices.

Meanwhile, Chhattisgarh government has also ordered microbiological surveillance in all the government and private hospitals in Chhattisgarh to detect cases of black fungus infection.

"As many as 76 cases of black fungus infections have been detected in Chhattisgarh so far", a spokesman for the Chhattisgarh health department told this newspaper on Tuesday.

Chhattisgarh health

director Dr Priyanka Shukla has written letters to all chief medical health officers of the districts in the state and all the medical establishments in the state to conduct microbiological surveillance in the government and private hospitals in their areas and send weekly reports to the state health department.

The state health department asked the government and private hospitals in Chhattisgarh to follow the standard treatment protocol set for treatment of people suffering from black fungus infection.

Ex-IMA chief dies of Covid; 2nd wave claims 270 doctors so far

Corona cases continue to fall

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, May 18

There appears to be some light at the end of the dark tunnel of the Covid-19 second wave, as for the second consecutive day India recorded less than 3 lakh daily new cases while daily recoveries crossed more than 4.22 lakh for the first time.

A decline of 1.63 lakh in the active caseload in the last 24 hours was registered, and 2,63,533 new cases.

However, the death fig-

ures continue to be very high.

It may be noted that a total of 4,329 fresh fatalities were recorded in 24 hours on Tuesday.

Also, several states that were earlier reporting very high cases are now showing a decline in daily trends while some others continue to show an upward trajectory.

However, a Union health ministry official on Tuesday said that only two per cent of total population has been affected so far and 98 per cent are still susceptible.

Association (IMA), was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here and was on ventilator support since last week.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal described his death as a "setback for the whole nation".

"Even during the pandemic, he made constant efforts to educate the masses and was able to reach out to 100 million people through numerous videos and educational programmes and saved countless lives.

He wanted his life to be

human being. RIP! (sic)," he wrote on Twitter.

According to the statement posted on Twitter, Aggarwal passed away at 11.30 pm on Monday after a "lengthy battle with Covid-19".

"Even during the pandemic, he made constant efforts to educate the masses and was able to reach out to 100 million people through numerous videos and educational programmes and saved countless lives.

He completed his MBBS from MGIMS, Sevagram under the Nagpur University where he was adjudged the best graduate in 1979.

PTI

celebrated and not mourned," the statement said.

Aggarwal posted videos raising awareness about the deadly virus on his Twitter handle. Even while he was hospitalised, his team at the Heart Care Foundation of India kept uploading videos about Covid-19.

In January, Aggarwal's banter with his wife during a live session on a social media platform had left netizens in splits. In the video, Aggarwal's wife was heard scolding him for going to take the anti-Covid vaccine shot alone and not taking her along.

The former IMA president is survived by wife Dr Veena Agarwal, son Nilesh and daughter Naina. He had received the Padma Shri, the country's fourth-highest civilian honour, in 2010. He was also honoured with the Dr B.C. Roy Award.

Aggarwal's name was mentioned in the Limca Book of Records for training the maximum number of people in the lifesaving technique of hands-only CPR at one go.

Aggarwal was born in Delhi on September 5, 1958.

He completed his MBBS from MGIMS, Sevagram under the Nagpur University where he was adjudged the best graduate in 1979.

PTI



Relatives of a patient react to the non-availability of a bed at a Covid hospital in Kolkata.

- PTI

Odisha extends curbs till June 1

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, May 18

The Odisha government on Tuesday extended the lockdown restrictions in the state till June 1 to arrest the steady surge in cases of Covid-19.

The first two-week long lockdown that came into force in the state on May 5 is set to end on Wednesday.

According to chief secretary Suresh Kumar Mohapatra, after thorough consultation with health experts, the government decided to extend the lockdown for two more weeks.

Sources said the State had exhibited a Test Positivity Rate (TPR) of 20 per cent but after nearly two weeks of lock-

down, the TPR has now dipped to 18.2 per cent.

This apart, in another major development, the government revised the period of relaxation for availing of essential commodities from 6 am to 12 pm daily to 7 am to 11 am.

"The weekend shutdown will however continue as usual. Tighter restrictions will be clamped during the weekends and violators will be strictly dealt with," chief secretary Mr Mohapatra informed through a virtual press briefing.

Offices in private/corporate and civil society sector shall work with reduced manpower, preferably at 33 per cent of their staff strength. Government offices will function with not more than 10 per cent staff.

Hailing officials, the prime minister said many of them worked despite being Covid positive while some lost their family members but they gave duty their foremost priority.

"You understand the challenges of your district much better. So when your district wins, the country wins. When your district beats Corona, the country defeats Corona," a PMO statement said quoting Modi. He asked officials to also take care of the ease of living of every citizen of their district, saying there is a need to stop infection and also ensure unimpeded flow of essential supplies.

● Hailing officials, Modi said many of them worked despite being Covid positive while some lost their family members but they gave duty their priority.

Over 1,000 children, parents reach out to govt helpline to tackle Covid woes

Kids, parents open up about Covid stress

New Delhi, May 18: From facing loneliness in Covid-19 isolation ward to exhibiting aggressive behaviour after parents contracted the virus, over 1,000 children and parents have reached out to government helpline seeking help.

With an objective of providing psychological first-aid and emotional support to children affected during the pandemic, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is providing telecounselling to children through Samvedna

(Sensitising Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance) - a toll-free helpline launched to provide psycho-social mental support for affected children.

According to Women and Child Development Ministry officials, redressal of 1,009 complaints have been done between September, 2020 to May 7, 2021.

In a case from a Covid-19 isolation centre in Aurangabad, a 15-year-old child expressed frustra-

tion over not getting enough love from parents due to more number of siblings and called up to talk about her parents' pressure of getting her married of early.

The counsellor spoke to the child and her parents and suggested to encourage her to focus on academics.

In another case, parent of a six-year-old child in Kanpur called to discuss the aggressive behaviour of their child who was lodged in an isolation centre after contracting the virus.

The counsellor suggested that the child engage in different activities like narrating stories or playing with toys. It was found that as the parents were keeping to themselves after the family tested positive, the child was feeling lonely and exhibiting aggressive behaviour.

A 17-year-old boy from Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli isolation centre called up and talked about being scared of loneliness.

The counsellor advised him to spend time engaging in activities he is interested in and making a reg-

ular routine to get away from boredom.

This tele-counselling service is available on a toll-free number 1800-121-2330 from Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm and 3 pm to 8 pm and is exclusively for children who are willing to talk and are in need of counselling.

When a child/caretaker/parent dials Samvedna, they get to speak to a professional counsellor in a safe environment. Tele-counselling is provided to children under three categories: children who are in quarantine/isolation/C

IN BRIEF
**JOURNALIST,
ACTIVIST BOOKED
UNDER NSA**

Imphal, May 18: The Manipur Police has booked journalist Kishor Chandra Wangkhem and activist Erendro Leichombam under the National Security Act (NSA) for their allegedly derivative social media posts involving state BJP chief S. Tikendrajit Singh, following his demise due to Covid-19 last week, police sources said.

The duo, both in their 40s, was arrested on Thursday after they took to Facebook to extend their condolences, while also writing that cow dung or cow urine was no cure for Covid-19, in two separate posts.

The saffron party's state vice-president Usham Deban Singh and general secretary P. Premananda Meetei filed a complaint against Wangkhem and Leichombam, and shortly after the police picked them up from their residences here.

They were granted bail on Monday, but the government subsequently invoked the NSA.

Th Kirankumar, the district magistrate of Imphal West, said in his order that the two might "resume activities which are prejudicial to the security of the state and maintenance of public order on being released on bail".

Earlier, too, Wankhem, associated with news portal 'Frontline Manipur', had faced arrest on two occasions for his criticism of the BJP.

Erendro is the convenor of political outfit Peoples' Resurgence and Justice Alliance.

**JUSTICE GAVAI
RECUSES FROM
PARAM BIR CASE**

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 18

Supreme Court judge Justice B.R.Gavai on Tuesday recused from hearing former Mumbai police commissioner Param Bir Singh's petition seeking transfer of all the departmental inquiries initiated against him by the Maharashtra government either to another state or to an independent agency like the CBI as he has no confidence in the probe by the state government.

Justice Vineet Saran, heading the vacation bench also comprising Justice B.R.Gavai told senior lawyer Puneet Bali appearing for Param Bir Singh that his brother (Justice Gavai) has "difficulty in hearing the matter."

The court directed the listing of the matter before a bench of which Justice Gavai is not a member.

The former Mumbai police top cop has alleged that he faced a "witch-hunt" as he had accused then Home Minister Anil Deshmukh of telling his subordinate officers including now suspended assistant inspector Sachin Waze to collect ₹100 crore per month for him from Mumbai city including from those running bars and restaurants.

**SC NOTICE TO WB
OVER POST-POLL
VIOLENCE**

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 18

The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued notice to the West Bengal Government over the killing of two BJP workers on May 2 in the post-poll violence on a plea by the brother of one of the deceased and wife of the other deceased.

A vacation bench comprising Justice Vineet Saran and Justice B.R.Gavai issued notice to the West Bengal government on a petition by one Biswajit Sarkar - brother of BJP leader Avijit Sarkar and by the widow of BJP worker Haran Adhikari.

The court directed further hearing in the matter on May 25.

Appearing for the petitioner Biswajit Sarkar, senior advocate Mahesh Jethmalani told the court that there was total inaction by the state machinery to control the violence.

"The activists murdered belonged to the BJP. It was encouraged by the state administration and police stood idly. It requires action and court monitoring," Jethmalani told the court.

Jethmalani sought the post-mortem of Sarkar's body, which has not been cremated so far. Violence had erupted in parts of West Bengal after the election results were declared on May 2 giving a thumping majority to Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress.

3 TMC leaders 'fall ill' in jail, land in hospital

Party ropes in Cong's Abhishek Manu Singhvi to move HC

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 18

A day after getting arrested and charged-sheeted by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the Narada sting operation case, three of the four accused TMC leaders, who are in judicial custody now, took admission to SSKM Hospital one after another since early Tuesday complaining of respiratory distress in Presidency Central Jail.

At around 3.45 am, state panchayat minister Subrata Mukherjee, Kamarhati MLA Madan Mitra and former Kolkata Mayor Sovan Chatterjee were rushed to the state government-run hospital from the prison.

Mr Mitra and Mr Chatterjee were admitted to the Woodburn Block immediately.

They were given oxygen support. Their condition is stable now.

But Mr Mukherjee returned to the prison after feeling better. In the morning he again felt the discomfort and was brought to the hospital where he was admitted in the same ward where Mr Mitra and Mr Chatterjee are undergoing treatment.

The fourth accused, Firhad Hakim, also felt discomfort at the prison. The doctors checked his health at the prison hospital.

Shaba Hakim, one of the daughters of the state



Security personnel stand guard outside the CBI office, Nizam Palace, in Kolkata on Monday. The Calcutta High Court issued a stay order on the bail of the four TMC leaders who were arrested Monday in the Narada sting case. - PTI

• The three Trinamul leaders have urged the high court to hear their appeal alongwith the CBI's prayer for transfer of the case.

minister, who met him at the prison, said, "My father is sad because he can not work for the people now amid pandemic despite being the administrator of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation."

Baishakhi Banerjee, a close friend of Mr Chatterjee, who had visited the prison late on Monday night to meet him

but failed, alleged that she was not allowed to hand over his medicines to him. She, however, met him at the hospital during the day.

In the afternoon the TMC fielded Congress leader and veteran lawyer Abhishek Manu Singhvi to move the Calcutta High Court appealing for the reconsideration of the stay order on Monday night by the division bench of acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justice Arif Banerjee on behalf of the four accused.

The trio also urged the high court to hear their appeal alongwith the CBI's prayer for transfer of the case.

Both the matters would come up for hearing on Wednesday when the judicial custody of the four accused would also end.

ning to file a caveat at the Supreme Court in the case.

Alongwith TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee and Siddhartha Luthra, Mr Singhvi argued that the representatives of the accused could not take part in the hearing at the high court.

The trio also urged the high court to hear their appeal alongwith the CBI's prayer for transfer of the case.

Both the matters would come up for hearing on Wednesday when the judicial custody of the four accused would also end.

**'GIRLFRIEND'S
SUICIDE: FIR
FILED AGAINST
CONGRESS MLA**

DC CORRESPONDENT
Bhopal, May 18

Police have filed an FIR against Congress MLA and former minister Umang Singh for 'abetting' suicide of his 'girlfriend' Sonia Bhardwaj, giving a new twist to the case.

Hours after he was booked under suicide abetment charges, the deceased's son produced him before the media here to give clean chit to the tribal leader.

"Neither I nor my grandmother have put him (the Congress MLA) under scanner in the case. There is no justification for police to book him for instigating suicide of my mother. He is my only guardian now," the 18-year-old son of the deceased said.

A delegation of Congress met director general of police Vivek Johri here demanding an impartial probe into the incident.

The Congress called police action against the party legislator as 'politically motivated'. "Mr Singh has been falsely implicated in the case at the behest of ruling BJP," senior Congress leader and former minister P.C. Sharma alleged.

Police, however, claimed to have gathered 'enough evidence' to prove the charges of abetment of suicide of the woman by the MLA.

"Police has gathered enough evidence against him. Investigation is still in progress", Bhopal additional superintendent of police Rajesh Singh Bhadoria said.

Sources said police have seized the cell phone of the deceased and accessed WhatsApp messages which clearly indicated that she had a strained relationship with the MLA and she was under severe mental stress. The deceased woman and the MLA came in contact with each other through a matrimonial site a couple of years ago.

Both of them were married. According to Mr Singh, they were going to tie the nuptial knot very soon.

The woman was found hanging in the Congress MLA's bungalow here on Sunday.

Cong. alleges BJP citing 'fake toolkit' to defame it

New Delhi, May 18: The Congress on Tuesday accused the BJP of propagating a "fake toolkit" to defame it and lodged a police complaint against the party's chief J.P. Nadda, Union minister Smriti Irani, and leaders B.L. Santosh and Sambit Patra.

Gowda said, "When our country is devastated by Covid, instead of providing relief, BJP shamelessly concocts forgeries," he also alleged.

"This is stated that in delicate and tough times like this when the nation is fighting to survive against the Covid-19 virus the BJP functionaries are sharing and creating fake news with intent to create communal disharmony and civil unrest in the country, in order to divert attention of the people from the failures of the Modi government handling the pandemic," he complained further said and demanded registration of an FIR on basis of this and punishing them strictly with law.

Addressing a joint press conference, the party's research cell head Rajeev Gowda and spokesperson Pawan Khera said instead of helping people during the Covid-19 pandemic, the BJP is stooping to low-level politics, asserting that it will neither bow nor be cowed down to such pressure tactics.

They claimed this is being done to divert the attention of people from the government's failures in handling the Covid pandemic that has led to a large number of deaths across the country in the wake of shortage of ICU beds, oxygen and essential medicines.

"The BJP is propagating a fake 'toolkit' on 'Covid-19 mismanagement' and attributing it to AICC Research Department which has to potential of creating communal disharmony, civil unrest in the country and the said document is being

utilized by the BJP to spread fake news which has the potential to be escalated into violence and fueling hate at the hands of BJP leaders directly," the complaint made by Gowda and Congress Social media cell chairman Rohan Gupta said.

"It is stated that in delicate and tough times like this when the nation is fighting to survive against the Covid-19 virus the BJP functionaries are sharing and creating fake news with intent to create communal disharmony and civil unrest in the country, in order to divert attention of the people from the failures of the Modi government handling the pandemic," he complained further said and demanded registration of an FIR on basis of this and punishing them strictly with law.

Khera said, "You cannot scare us into silence. We are not afraid".

"BJP president J.P. Nadda, party spokesperson Sambit Patra, Union minister Smriti Irani and BJP general secretary B.L. Santosh and others in connivance with each other had forged, fabricated and manufactured the said documents on the letterhead of AICC Research Department and printed such material on the same

which has the potential of creating communal disharmony, civil unrest in the country and the said document is being

utilized by the BJP to spread fake news which has the potential to be escalated into violence and fueling hate at the hands of BJP leaders directly," the complaint made by Gowda and Congress Social media cell chairman Rohan Gupta said.

"It is stated that in delicate and tough times like this when the nation is fighting to survive against the Covid-19 virus the BJP functionaries are sharing and creating fake news with intent to create communal disharmony and civil unrest in the country, in order to divert attention of the people from the failures of the Modi government handling the pandemic," he complained further said and demanded registration of an FIR on basis of this and punishing them strictly with law.

The opposition party was reacting after the BJP alleged that the Congress wants to tarnish the image of the country and Prime Minister Narendra Modi by calling the new strain of the coronavirus the "India strain" or the "Modi strain".

Citing a purported Congress toolkit, Patra said according to the document, it is clear that the Congress extending help to the needy during the pandemic is "more of a public relations exercise with the help of friendly journalists and influencers than a soulful endeavour".

The opposition party was reacting after the BJP alleged that the Congress wants to tarnish the image of the country and Prime Minister Narendra Modi by calling the new strain of the coronavirus the "India strain" or the "Modi strain".

Citing a purported Congress toolkit, Patra said according to the document, it is clear that the Congress extending help to the needy during the pandemic is "more of a public relations exercise with the help of friendly journalists and influencers than a soulful endeavour".

Patra said, "Pratap Sarnaik has siphoned off ₹305 crore from NSEL Scam. ED searching for Sarnaik for a few weeks, Mr Somaiya said. (sic)

• The CBI had registered its case on May 15, 2017, alleging irregularities in a Foreign Investment Promotion Board clearance granted to INX Media group for receiving overseas funds of ₹305 crore in 2007 during Chidambaram's tenure as finance minister.

CBI to enquire and investigate into the allegations of huge economic fraud and corruption at the highest level, having national and international ramifications.

It added that this would impinge the power of the



**KEJRIWAL
WANTS FLIGHTS
FROM S'PORE
CANCELLED**

New Delhi, May 18: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday appealed to the Central government to immediately cancel all air services with Singapore, saying a new strain of coronavirus there is said to be "very dangerous" for children.

Responding to the chief minister's appeal, Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said only a few flights are being operated between the two countries under the government's Vande Bharat Mission to bring stranded Indians back,

and added that "all precautions are being taken".

• The day Assam police in a breakthrough caught the perpetrator of a grenade blast killing two civilians, Mr Sarma told reporters, "We are looking into the announcement of unilateral ceasefire by the Ulfa-I as a ray of hope".

The day Assam police in a breakthrough caught the perpetrator of a grenade blast killing two civilians, Mr Sarma told reporters, "We are looking into the announcement of unilateral ceasefire by the Ulfa-I as a ray of hope".

• Special Director General of Police G P Singh lauded the role of Tinsukia police for the breakthrough.

• The CM while renewing his appeal to Ulfa-I commander-in-chief Pares Baruah to join the peace process reiterated that people of Assam are fed up with bloodshed and violence.

district of Nagaland.

Earlier, the Ulfa-I was denying the presence of an ONGC employee in its captivity but on Tuesday Ulfa-I chief Pares Baruah again spoke to a local news channel and admitted that ONGC employee Ritu Saikia was in their captivity.

We have set some terms and condition before the ONGC and negotiation was going on, as soon as it materialise, we will release their employee," said the Ulfa-I chief who also appreciated Assam chief minister's call to Ulfa-I for peace-talks saying that it was a positive move of the government.

Meanwhile, Assam police in a major breakthrough on Tuesday apprehended the Ulfa-I cadres involved in the Tingri grenade blast in which two civilians were killed.

Special Director General of Police G P Singh lauded the role of Tinsukia police for the breakthrough and said,

"Both the accused involved in the Tingri grenade blast have been apprehended. The motorcycle used by militants has also been recovered. The blast was carried out at the directions of senior Ulfa-I leaders based outside Assam."

The Ulfa-I rebels involved and arrested in connection with the grenade blast are Hiren Gogoi and Alakesh Saikia, were rescued on April 24 after an encounter with security forces and help of local villagers near the Indo-Bangladesh border in Mon

Rats in MP nibble newborn's toes

The new born's toe fingers were found to be nibbled by rats in a government hospital in Indore.

The incident took place in the MY Hospital.

Mother of the newborn discovered the wound on his toes when she was breastfeeding him on Monday night and reported the matter to her husband.

"This is a grave incident. We have constituted a three-member team to probe the incident.

Stringent action will be taken against those found responsible for the incident", hospital superintendent P S Thakur said.

He said the baby was undergoing treatment following the unfortunate incident. The mother had given premature birth to the child 19 days ago.

The newborn has been kept in the neonatal care unit of the hospital.

The incident sparked outrage among the patients and visitors to the hospital forcing the authorities to order a probe into the incident.

"This is a grave incident. We have constituted a three-member team to probe the incident.

Stringent action will be taken against those found responsible for the incident", hospital superintendent P S Thakur said.

He said the baby was undergoing treatment following the unfortunate incident.

The mother had given premature birth to the child 19 days ago.

The newborn has been kept in the neonatal care unit of the hospital.

The incident sparked outrage among the patients and visitors to the hospital forcing the authorities to order a probe into the incident.

"This is a grave incident. We have constituted a three-member team to probe the incident.

Stringent action will be taken against those found responsible for the incident", hospital superintendent P S Thakur said.

<p

SHORT TAKES

SHARK KILLS SURFER OFF OZ EAST COAST

Sydney, May 18: A surfer was killed by a shark on Tuesday off the Australian east coast, police said.

The man, aged in his 50s, had been surfing off Forster, 220 kilometres (137 miles) north of Sydney, when he was attacked late in the morning, a police statement said.

Onlookers pulled the man from the water suffering critical injuries to his upper right thigh, police said.

The Ambulance Service said the man could not be resuscitated despite the best efforts of paramedics and bystanders at the scene.

Forster beaches have been closed. Police said they were working with government authorities to identify the species of shark.

Lower North Coast Surf Life Saving branch president Brian Wilcox said a drone search after the attack had spotted two sharks in the area.

JET RETURNS TO SAN JOSE AFTER ENGINE ISSUE

San Jose, May 18: Federal officials say an American Airlines plane returned to the main San Jose airport shortly after takeoff on Monday after pilots reported an issue with one of the plane's two engines.

The airline said the pilots shut down the engine after an indicator light came on. The Federal Aviation Administration said it was investigating the incident. American Airlines flight 2049 took off for Phoenix but circled and returned to Mineta San Jose International Airport shortly after takeoff. The airline said the plane landed safely and taxied to the terminal, and no one was injured.

There were 112 passengers and five crew members on board the Airbus A320.

The two engines on the 20-year-old jet were made by International Aero Engines, a joint venture of Pratt & Whitney and German and Japanese companies.

In February, a Pratt & Whitney engine shed pieces of the housing over Denver during a United flight.

400 KG COCAINE BOUND FOR KOSOVO SEIZED

Rome, May 18: Italian border police said Tuesday they seized more than 400 kilograms of cocaine from South America in a joint operation with Kosovar and Albanian authorities.

The drugs, with an estimated market value of more than 100 million euros (\$122 million), were first detected at the port of Gioia Tauro, in the southern Italian region of Calabria.

They were hidden in a container coming from Santos, Brazil "officially containing chicken," the Guardia di Finanza border police said in a statement.

Italian authorities decided to let the container continue its journey and arrive at its final destination in Lipjan, Kosovo.

There, Italian, Albanian and Kosovar police intervened and arrested 25 people, including seven charged with international drug trafficking.

Italy is known as a key hub for the illegal drugs trade, and its fearsome 'Ndrangheta mafia, based in Calabria, controls most of the cocaine entering Europe.

CANADIAN JAILED FOR SMUGGLING IMMIGRANTS

Washington, May 18: A Sri Lankan-origin Canadian national on Monday was sentenced to 32 months in prison on charges of smuggling undocumented immigrants from Sri Lanka into the US for financial gains. Sri Kajamukam Chelliah, aka Mohan, in his February guilty plea admitted to conspiring with others to facilitate the travel of undocumented immigrants from Sri Lanka through Haiti, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the Bahamas to the United States from on or about July 1, 2019, through on or about October 10, 2019.

Federal prosecutors said during the course of the conspiracy, Chelliah worked with other human smugglers, arranging housing and transport for undocumented immigrants en route to Canada through the United States.

Chelliah arranged for the individuals to be transported from the airport in Port Au Prince, Haiti, to a hotel where he housed and provided them with food. He then arranged for transportation by boat from Haiti to Turks and Caicos Islands, then to the Bahamas, and then by boat to Miami, Florida.

HK suspends operations of its Taiwan office

NEW CATHOLIC BISHOP: RESPECT PLURALITY

Hong Kong, May 18: Hong Kong is temporarily shutting its representative office in Taiwan, officials said Tuesday in the latest indication of strained ties.

"The Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office (Taiwan) has temporarily suspended operations with effect from today," Hong Kong's government said in a brief statement, which did not give a reason for the closure. A government spokesperson said that the decision "has nothing to do with the Coronavirus situation" in Taiwan where cases have recently spiked and prompted the reimposition of some social distancing measures.

Asked whether the closure was tied to politics, the spokesperson declined to comment.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which handles relations with China, said it "deeply regrets the Hong Kong government's unilateral decision" and vowed to keep its own office in the financial hub open despite strained ties.

Hong Kong abides by authoritarian China's view that democratic, self-ruled Taiwan is part of its territory and must be seized one day, by force if necessary. Like Beijing, Hong Kong does not recognise Taiwanese authorities as legitimate.

Bangladeshi journalist Rozina Islam, (C), is escorted by police to a court in Dhaka on Tuesday. — AP

Scribe's health anomaly stories lands her in jail

Dhaka, May 18: A senior Bangladeshi woman journalist, known for her investigative reporting, was arrested on charges of violating a colonial-era official secrecy law, the police said on Tuesday, triggering protests by the rights groups and her colleagues.

Rozina Islam, a senior reporter of Bangla daily *Prothom Alo*, the largest daily newspaper based on circulation, was on Monday detained for over five hours by the Health Ministry officials for allegedly clicking a picture of a document with her cell phone without permission.

She was later arrested by the police. The ministry filed a case against her at around midnight under the 1923 Official Secrets Act while she spent her night under the police custody, the police said. She was produced before a court here with a petition seeking her to be remanded in custody for five days, which the judge rejected and sent her to jail to await the routine legal procedures.

The judge said he would entertain the prosecution charge and the defence statements including her bail petition on Thursday. A prosecution lawyer told reporters that "whether the allegation is true or false, a case has been filed" which needed a procedure to be disposed of.

Rozina, who earned the reputation of being an investigative journalist, has in recent months published several reports exposing the health ministry's alleged malpractices during the Covid-19 pandemic, drawing public attention. She also published several reports involving the health sector which included alleged graft in procurement at the health ministry, corruption in doctors' recruitment and how urgent medical equipment for coronavirus treatment were left at Dhaka airport for months. "The incident is unfortunate," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told TV channels without elaborating further. — PTI

Nagurskoye (Russia), May 18: During the Cold War, Russia's Nagurskoye airbase was little more than a runway, a weather station and a communications outpost in the Franz Josef Land archipelago.

It was a remote and desolate home mostly for polar bears, where temperatures plunge in winter to minus-42 Celsius (43 degrees below zero Fahrenheit) and the snow only disappears from August to mid-September. Now, Russia's northernmost military base

is bristling with missiles and radar and its extended runway can handle all types of aircraft, including nuclear-capable strategic bombers, projecting Moscow's power and influence across the Arctic amid intensifying international competition for the region's vast resources.

The shamrock-shaped facility — three large pods extending from a central atrium — is called the "Arctic Trefoil" and is painted in the white-red-and-blue of the national

10 wounded, 4 seriously, in Gaza strike: Israeli medics

Attack came as Palestinians went on strike in a rare collective action



Palestinians carry the body of Obaida Jawabreh, killed on Monday during clashes with Israeli soldiers, at his funeral in al-Aroub refugee camp, north of Hebron city in the occupied West Bank, on Tuesday. — AFP

Biden supports Israel's right to self defence

Washington, May 18: US President Joe Biden, in a telephonic call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, supported Israel's "right to defend itself" against indiscriminate rocket attacks and encouraged him to make every effort to ensure the protection of innocent civilians.

Israel said it was targeting militants, their tunnels and rocket launchers across the territory. "The whole street started running, then destruction, an earthquake," said Jamal Herzallah, a resident of the area. "This whole area was shaking."

Heavy fighting broke out May 10 when Gaza's militant Hamas rulers fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem in support of Palestinian protests against Israel's heavy-handed policing of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a flashpoint site sacred to Jews and Muslims, and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers. — AP

BIDEN WELCOMED efforts to address inter-communal violence and to bring calm to Jerusalem, the White House said in a readout of the call.

The two leaders discussed progress in Israel's military operations against Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza, the White House said. "The President expressed his support for a ceasefire and discussed the US engagement with Egypt and other partners towards that end," said the readout.

Palestinian militant group Hamas has fired more than 3,000 rockets over Israel during the past seven days, pushing more than half of Israel's popula-

tion into shelter houses and Israel has carried out hundreds of devastating retaliatory attacks in Gaza. More than 200 people have been killed in the recent escalation in the region, including a caregiver from India.

US Secretary of State Tony Blinken, who is travelling right now, also spoke to his Israeli counterpart, Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi and discussed America's efforts to address inter-communal violence and to bring calm to Jerusalem, the White House said.

The two leaders discussed progress in Israel's military operations against Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza, the White House said. "The President expressed his support for a ceasefire and discussed the US engagement with Egypt and other partners towards that end," said the readout.

Palestinian militant group Hamas has fired more than 3,000 rockets over Israel during the past seven days, pushing more than half of Israel's popula-

EU MULLS WAYS TO HELP DEFUSE ONGOING CONFLICT

Brussels, May 18: European Union foreign ministers are meeting Tuesday to discuss how to use the 27-nation bloc's political clout to help diplomatic efforts to end the fighting between the Israeli armed forces and Palestinian militants.

The EU has been united in its calls for a ceasefire and the need for a political solution to end the latest conflict — now in its second week — but the nations are divided over how best to help. No firm decisions involving threats of sanctions or other measures are likely from the ministers' video-conference. At least 212 Palestinians have been killed in heavy airstrikes so far, including 61 children, and over 1,400 people wounded, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

— AP

China offers to host Afghan peace talks

Beijing, May 18: China, which has stepped up its diplomacy between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the wake of the US troops withdrawal from the war-torn country, has offered to host peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Significantly, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who in the last two days held telephone talks with his Pakistani and Afghan counterparts, said that

China will back the Afghan government headed by Ashraf Ghani in playing a leading role. The offer to facilitate peace talks was made during Wang's phone talks with his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Hanefi Atmar on Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a media briefing on Tuesday.

Asked to elaborate, Zhao said, "China is ready to facilitate intra-Afghan talks.

During their telephonic

conversation, Wang told Atmar that "China will continue to support the Afghan government in playing a leading role in the country's peace and reconciliation process," state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported.

Wang also called on all parties to support and implement relevant UN Security Council resolutions to promote a smooth transition of the Afghanistan situation, to avoid in particular a resurgence of terrorist forces, it said.

In a comment that may not go down well with the Taliban, Wang, according to the report, expressed his hope that Afghanistan's future leadership will pursue a moderate Muslim policy, promote a foreign policy of peace, maintain friendship with neighbouring countries, and firmly combat all forms of terrorism.

— PTI

6K migrants arrive by sea: Spain, Morocco square off

Madrid, May 18: Spain faced a humanitarian and diplomatic crisis Tuesday after thousands of Moroccans took advantage of relaxed border controls in their nation to swim or paddle in inflatable boats onto European soil.

By Tuesday morning, around 6,000 people had crossed the border into

the Spanish city of Ceuta since the first arrivals began early Monday, the Spanish government said, including 1,500 thought to be teenagers.

The city of 85,000 people lies in North Africa on the Mediterranean Sea, separated from Morocco by a double-wide, 10-metre (32-feet) fence.

The sudden influx of migrants into Spain has deepened the diplomatic row between Rabat and Madrid in the wake of Spain's decision to allow in for medical treatment of the chief of a militant group that fights for the independence of Western Sahara.

— AP

The sudden influx of migrants into Spain has deepened the diplomatic row between Rabat and Madrid in the wake of Spain's decision to allow in for medical treatment of the chief of a militant group that fights for the independence of Western Sahara.

Yusuf's elevation comes in the backdrop of the reported backchannel communication with India early this year, resulting in the restoration of the 2003 ceasefire agreement on the Line of Control in February. A notification dated May 17 was issued by the Cabinet Division to appoint Yusuf as the NSA. "The Prime Minister has been pleased to approve that Dr Moed W. Yusuf, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Security and Strategic Policy Planning, shall function as National Security Adviser with the status of Federal Minister, with immediate effect," the notification read.

Last month, Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhry was asked by several journalists about reported backchannel talks with India.

Instead of outright rejec-

tion, he said: "States have their ways and means to communicate which remain available even during wars. Therefore, whether any talks are taking place between India and Pakistan is not important."

In New Delhi, asked about the media reports that backchannel talks between India and Pakistan were going on for more than a year, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi did not give a direct reply.

"If you talk about channels of communication on this issue, let me just recall that our respective high commissions exist and are functioning. So that is a very effective channel of communication," Bagchi said last month. India has told Pakistan that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Islamabad in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. India has said the onus is on Pakistan to create an environment free of terror and hostility.

Yusuf is an academic with experience of working at various think tanks in the US. — PTI

VAST RESOURCES

Shrinking polar ice offers opportunities for shipping routes

Russian base projects its Arctic power

flag, brightening the otherwise stark vantage point on the 5,600-kilometre (3,470-mile) Northern Sea Route along Russia's Arctic coast.

Other buildings on the island, which is called Alexandra Land, are used for radar and communications, a weather station, oil storage, hangars and construction facilities. Russia has sought to assert its influence over wide areas of the Arctic in competition with the United States, Canada, Denmark

and Norway as shrinking polar ice from the warming planet offers new opportunities for resources and shipping routes.

China also has shown an increasing interest in the region, believed to hold up to one-fourth of the Earth's undiscovered oil and gas. Russian President Vladimir Putin has cited estimates that put the value of Arctic mineral riches at \$30 trillion.

Tensions between Russia and the West will likely loom large over Thursdays

y's meeting of the Arctic nations' foreign ministers in Reykjavik, Iceland, where Moscow is set to take a rotating chairmanship in the Arctic Council.

The base, which sits about 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) south of the geographic North Pole, was built using new construction technologies as part of Kremlin's efforts to bolster the military amid spiralling tensions with the West following Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula. — AP

— PTI

SHORT TAKES
**23 RESCUED
FROM SUSPECTED
SMUGGLING BOAT**

San Diego, May 18: Twenty-three people were rescued Monday from a suspected smuggling boat off the San Diego coast not far from where another vessel broke up a few weeks ago, killing three people, authorities said.

The small boat, known as a panga, was spotted shortly before 3 am by a US Border Patrol video system as it drifted near rocks off the coast of Point Loma. The Coast Guard responded but the craft refused commands to stop, authorities said. The boat got stuck in the surf line. San Diego lifeguards and harbour police were called and the Coast Guard pulled the vessel out of the surf and unloaded the people, authorities said.

**MALAYSIAN COPS
KILL PHILIPPINE
MILITANTS**

Kuala Lumpur, May 18: Five suspected members of Philippine militant group Abu Sayyaf have been shot dead in a fire-fight with police on the Malaysian part of Borneo island, authorities said Tuesday.

Police were attacked by men armed with guns and machetes Monday when they raided a settlement near the town of Beaufort in Sabah state, and returned fire.

"Five male suspects were successfully defeated," said Sabah police commissioner Hazani Ghazali in a statement.

They were believed to be from the Abu Sayyaf group, police said, self-proclaimed Islamic militants whose stronghold is in the Muslim-majority southern Philippines, not far from Sabah.

One of them has been identified as Mabar Binda, a militant leader on the Philippine police's wanted list, Malaysian newspaper *The Star* reported.

Abu Sayyaf, which has distant links to the Islamic State group, has been responsible for some of the Philippines' worst terror attacks in recent years.

**MORE THAN 50
DROWN OFF
TUNISIA**

Tunis, May 18: Tunisian authorities say more than 50 migrants have drowned off the coast of the North African country, while 33 others were rescued by workers from an oil platform.

Defence Ministry spokesman Mohamed Zekri said Tuesday that a boat carrying the migrants sank Monday off Sfax, on Tunisia's southeast coast. He said navy units were sent to search the water for missing passengers.

Flavio Di Giacomo, a spokesperson for the Mediterranean coordination office of the International Organisation for Migration, said on Twitter that the 33 survivors were all from Bangladesh.

The boat departed from Zwara, Libya, on Sunday, he said. The nationalities of the people who died were not immediately clear.

An International Organisation for Migration spokesman in Tunisia, Riad Kadhi, said the survivors reported that the boat carried about 90 passengers when it left Libya.

**PIO PLEADS
GUILTY TO WIRE
FRAUD IN U.S.**

Washington, May 18: An Indian-American in Maryland has pleaded guilty to wire fraud and identity theft in connection with a fraudulent investment scheme worth approximately \$1.26 million, according to the Department of Justice.

Manish Singh, 48, faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison when sentenced on July 30.

"In the midst of a jury trial, the defendant admitted that he deceived victims into believing they were investing more than \$1.2 million in a high-end fabric design business, when in reality, he fraudulently used their money to fund personal expenses," said Raj Parekh,

Acting US Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. According to court records and evidence presented at trial, Singh entered into an agreement in 2016 with a married couple to create a business that would design and sell high-end fabrics.

The couple was to provide the capital for the business, and Singh was to contribute his expertise and contacts in the fabric industry.

Singh represented to the victim investors that their money was being used for numerous expenses related to the business, such as the manufacture of fabric in India.

EU hits 200-million vaccine jab milestone

Figure indicates it is on track to meet its target of fully vaccinating 70 percent of adults by late July

Brussels, May 18: At least 200 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines have been given in the European Union as of Tuesday, according to AFP data tallying up official figures given by member states' health services.

The milestone indicates that the European Union should be on track to meet its goal of fully vaccinating 70 percent of adults — meaning roughly 255 million people out of its total 448 million population — by late July.

As of 0830 GMT, at least 200 million doses have been administered in the European Union, according to the AFP data.

At least 52.9 million people have been completely vaccinated, with two doses in the case of the vaccines from BioNTech/Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca, or one dose for those inoculated with the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

That figure amounts to 11.8 percent of the European Union population. The data showed that Malta was leading the European Union table, with 32.5 percent of its small population fully vaccinated, while Bulgaria was trailing badly, with just 6.1 percent having been inoculated.

Of the big European Union countries, Germany has 11.1 percent fully vaccinated, France has 13.5 percent, Italy has 14.6 percent and Spain has 15.4 percent.

Globally, the AFP data showed that 1.5 billion doses have been administered.

By way of comparison with other wealthy territories, Israel has 59 percent of its population inoculated with two doses, while the United States has 35 percent fully vaccinated, and Great Britain has 30 percent.

The European Commission, contacted by AFP, did not immediately respond with comment about the vaccination milestone.

It did however say that its vaccine export authorisation mechanism had, between January 30 and May 11, approved 941 export requests from pharmaceutical companies producing Covid-19 vaccines in the European Union and rejected one —



A make-up artist applies the finishing touches to the wax statue of US President Joe Biden as it is unveiled at the Musee Grevin wax museum in Paris on Tuesday. The museum is expected to reopen on Wednesday after months of closure due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

— AFP

Shuttered Oz becoming hermit nation, say experts

Sydney, May 18: Prime Minister Scott Morrison defended his "Fortress Australia" Covid-19 restrictions Tuesday, as experts warned that plans to keep the borders closed for another year will create a "hermit nation".

"Everyone is keen to get back to a time that we once knew," the conservative leader said in the face of growing calls for international borders to reopen. "The reality is we're living this year in a pandemic that's worse than last year." Last March, Australia took the unprecedented step of closing its borders to foreign visitors

and banning its globetrotting citizens from leaving.

That prompted the first population decline since World War I, stranded tens of thousands of Australian citizens overseas and separated hundreds of thousands of residents from family members.

But the country now has almost no community transmission and life for most is relatively normal.

And the government's recent suggestion that borders could remain closed for another year has sparked fierce debate.

Australian Medical Association president Omar Khorshid on Tuesday wa-

rned: "Australia cannot keep its international borders closed indefinitely." He called for improved quarantine facilities and vaccination efforts to permit borders to slowly open. "At some point, it will not be possible to justify the maintenance of border closures given their impact on lives and livelihoods," he said.

A University of Sydney task force examining how Australia can safely reopen this week went further, warning the country "cannot continue to lock itself off from the world as a hermit nation indefinitely".

— AFP

ALL GERMANS IN TWO HIGH-RISES QUARANTINED

Berlin, May 18: Health officials say they have quarantined the residents of two high-rise buildings in the western German town of Velbert after several people tested positive with the Coronavirus variant first detected in India.

Officials from the county of Mettmann said "there are currently several infections with the Indian virus variant in Velbert." They said several families who were in close touch with each other were affected and that everyone was being tested. Local broadcaster WDR reported about 200 people in the two buildings were affected.

They have been quarantined, are getting tested and the Red Cross is providing food and other help. So far, the Covid-19 variant that was first detected in India has not been found a lot in Germany, but is said to be more contagious than other variants currently more prevalent.

— AP

Hike vax access, urges Red Cross

Geneva, May 18: The Red Cross on Tuesday stressed the need for "extraordinary steps" to increase access to Covid-19 vaccines around the world, including speeding up negotiations towards patent waivers.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement called for states and pharmaceutical companies to move much faster towards evening out glaring inequities in access to the jabs around the world.

Among other things, countries should accelerate thorny negotiations at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) towards removing intellectual property protections for the Covid vaccines, and other barriers blocking a rapid scale-up of production in developing countries and address the dramatic inequity in access. But that notion has long met with fierce opposition from pharmaceutical giants and their host countries.

— AFP

Asylum curbs to be eased by US

San Diego, May 18: The Biden administration has agreed to let about 250 people a day through border crossings with Mexico to seek refuge in the United States, part of an obscure 1944 law that former President Donald Trump used to let the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention effectively end asylum at the border as it sought to prevent Covid from spreading.

Biden has exempted unaccompanied children from Title 42 but kept it for single adults and many families. He has come under criticism from progressives for keeping asylum off-limits to many and for encouraging some parents to send children across the border alone.

— AP

Myanmar arms ban meet put off

United Nations, May 18: A UN General Assembly meeting set for Tuesday to discuss a non-binding resolution on halting arms transfers to Myanmar was postponed indefinitely because there was not enough support to pass the text, diplomatic sources said Monday.

The resolution, which would have been non-binding but politically powerful, called for the "immediate suspension of the direct and indirect supply, sale, or transfer of all weapons, munitions, and other military-related equipment to Myanmar." It asked for military authorities in Myanmar — which took control of government operations in a coup February 1 — to "end the state of emergency" and to "immediately stop all violence against peaceful demonstrators."

The authors "did not have the support they expected" in order to pass the motion with a large majority of the Assembly's 193 member countries, one diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

And they "wanted more time for negotiations," especially with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, another source said. The text was drafted at the request of Liechtenstein, with the support of 48 countries, including Britain, the European Union and the United

a March shipment of 250,000 AstraZeneca doses meant for Australia.

The vaccines exports went to 45 countries and territories, it said, including the United States, Great Britain, Israel, India, Australia, Canada and Brazil.

— AFP

Montreal, May 18: Coordination of Canada's Coronavirus vaccination campaign is set to be taken over by another army general, the public health agency said Monday, after a probe into allegations of sexual misconduct sidelined her predecessor.

Brigadier General Krista Brodie, a logistic expert who served in the Balkans and Afghanistan, is to replace General Dany Fortin.

— AFP

that members of a state financial investigations department had searched her home and the homes of several of her employees.

It confirmed Tuesday that it was investigating Tut by for tax evasion.

The investigative body also notably probed Lukashenko's opponent Viktor Babaryko, who was arrested two months before last August's presidential election.

The state control committee's financial investigations department, which confirmed the searches, is

a powerful enforcement body that has previously targeted the opposition.

It confirmed Tuesday that it was investigating Tut by for tax evasion.

The investigative body also notably probed Lukashenko's opponent Viktor Babaryko, who was arrested two months before last August's presidential election.

In response, the opposition refused to debate the immigration bill.

— AFP

Japan drops immigration bill reform

Tokyo, May 18: Japan's ruling lawmakers on Tuesday dropped a controversial push to change rules on handling asylum seekers and deportations after opposition pressure over the death of a Sri Lankan woman.

Journalists in the ex-Soviet nation are facing mounting pressure in Belarus, with security agents searching the offices and homes of journalists working

won by strongman President Alexander Lukashenko. The long-serving authoritarian leader has drawn scorn from the West, and the United States and EU have slapped sanctions on him and his allies.

The Tut by news portal on Tuesday became the latest media targeted by authorities in Belarus, with security agents searching the offices and homes of journalists working

won by strongman President Alexander Lukashenko. The long-serving authoritarian leader has drawn scorn from the West, and the United States and EU have slapped sanctions on him and his allies.

She was detained for overstaying her visa after seeking police protection, reportedly to escape an

abusive relationship.

Sandamali reportedly complained repeatedly of stomach pain and other symptoms, starting in January, and campaigners allege she was given inadequate medical care. The cause of her death has not been officially disclosed.

Human rights campaigners have long criticised conditions at Japanese

detention centres, including how guards respond to medical emergencies.

Opposition parties had pressed the government to release video footage of the woman's condition in the facility, which the government declined, citing security reasons.

In response, the opposition refused to debate the immigration bill.

— AFP

Songs and oral sources are used to fill gaps where no records exist

Dutch slavery exhibition confronts brutal past

Amsterdam, May 18: A set of leg irons that once chained slaves by the ankles for punishment. A pair of Rembrandt portraits of a rich Dutch couple dressed in slavery-funded finery.

Dozens of objects like these go on show on Tuesday at the Dutch national Rijksmuseum as it opens a landmark exhibition on slavery highlighting the Netherlands' dark colonial past.

Focusing on the stories of 10 people ranging from enslaved people to slave owners, the show covers 250 years of Dutch involve-

ment in slavery in Suriname, Brazil, the Caribbean, Asia and South Africa.

Curators at the museum say they want to start a "better conversation" in a country still reckoning with its role in colonialism, and with questions raised by the Black Lives Matter movement last year.

"This is national history, not just for a small group but for every one of us," Valika Smulders, head of the Rijksmuseum history department, said during a preview.

"The colonial past is an important element in our

national history. So it was timely, as it was not done before, to present an exhibition on slavery." In a sign of the changing times, Dutch King Willem-Alexander will formally open the exhibition Tuesday. It will open to the public as soon as Coronavirus measures are lifted for museums, but be viewable online and for school parties.

Called simply "Slavery", the exhibit traces the 10 individual stories using both objects from the Rijksmuseum's collection — some never seen before — and from other museums.

Paintings of slaves on

the plantation sit alongside a manuscript detailing Wally's interrogation by slave owners.

Like the other stories in the exhibition, his tale is told in the auditorium by someone with a connection — in his case Dutch former world champion kickboxer Remy Bonjasky, whose ancestors are believed to have fled the same plantation.

Elsewhere sit the portraits of affluent Amsterdamer Oopjen Marten Soolmans, which they commissioned legendary artist Rembrandt

to paint in 1634.

Soolmans' family made a fortune from a sugar refinery supplied by slave plantations in Brazil. After he died, Oopjen remarried to a man who had once kept slaves in Brazil.

"We know Oopjen had several links with slavery and that's also very interesting," said Sint Nicolaas.

"It really affected Dutch society in many ways, it wasn't history that just happened far away in the colonies." The exhibition features jarring contrasts of art and atrocity, brushstrokes and branding irons.

— AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	50,203.73
Nifty 50	15,108.10
S&P 500*	4,159.06
Dollar (\$)	-0.10
Pound Sterling (£)	73.04
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	0.24
Euro (€)	103.58
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	-0.30
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	88.95
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	0.05
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,833▲333
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	0.69
INR 10-Yr bond yield	67.56
INR 10-Yr bond yield	-2.74
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	5.976
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.654
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Credit Suisse to hire over 1,000 IT staff in India

Credit Suisse Group said it planned to hire over 1,000 IT employees in India this year to show its commitment to the country and its intention to establish it as a global technology innovation centre for the bank. The hires will comprise developers and engineers with capabilities in technologies such as cybersecurity, data analytics, cloud, API development, machine learning and artificial intelligence.

CCI okays APSEZ stake buy in Krishnapatnam



The Competition Commission of India (CCI) gave nod to proposed acquisition of additional 25 per cent stake of Adani Krishnapatnam Port Ltd by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. The acquirer already holds 75 per cent shareholding in Adani Krishnapatnam Port. "As a result of the proposed combination acquirer will hold 100 per cent shareholding and sole control of the Target," a release said.

Maruti opens ₹126-cr hospital in Ahmedabad

Maruti Suzuki, in partnership with Zydus Hospitals, has announced the start of a multi-specialty hospital at Sitapur in Ahmedabad. With a total capital expenditure of Rs 126 crore, the hospital has been fully funded by the Maruti Suzuki Foundation—a CSR initiative of Maruti Suzuki. At present, it is being used as a Covid care facility to help treat patients in the region. The facility is expected to serve more than 3.75 lakh people.

Ujjivan SFB Q4 net jumps 86% to ₹136 crore

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (SFB) reported an 86 per cent jump in its net profit to Rs 136 crore for the fourth quarter from Rs 73 crore a year ago. Total income was down by 9 per cent at Rs 735 crore from Rs 810 crore. Net interest income also fell by 21 per cent to Rs 368 crore against Rs 467 crore. "The quarter was exceptionally good. Our disbursal was at an all-time high," MD & CEO Nitin Chugh said.

Printed & Published by K Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Printed at Deccan Chronicle Press at Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. #563/9/089/E, Behind Andhra Bank Pet Basheerbagh, Komappally, Ranga Reddy Dist. Editor: T Venkatram Reddy, RNI Reg No. APENG/2008/24282. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

Occupancies improve, but revenues nearly halve Covid hotels stay in biz on thin margins

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 18

In order to address the scarcity of beds, hospitality chains have tied up with hospitals to provide accommodation with care for Covid patients. While this has improved the occupancies, the revenues are significantly lower.

Since mid-April, several hospitality chains, including Taj Hotels, Ginger ITC, Crowne Plaza, Radisson, Sarovar, Welcomhotel and Oyo, have opened their properties for Covid patients with mild symptoms as well those seeking isolation.

"At present, we have over 80 active quarantine and isolation facilities. Additionally, we have mapped and ensured readiness across 750 properties, which can be turned into quarantine centres across



the country, in case the need arises or demand increases," said Rohit Kapoor, CEO, Oyo India and South-East Asia.

"For mildly affected employees, we have isolation facilities with healthcare service providers. This includes 24*7 nurse care, on-demand pathology and pharmacy support, daily doctor visits, meals, among other services," he said.

According to Pradeep Shetty, honorary secretary

of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India, more than 100 properties should be offering accommodation to Covid patients across key cities. "The occupancies should have been otherwise nil in these hotels due to the lockdown and Covid fears. Now the properties would be having around 30 per cent occupancies," he said.

However, the revenues are significantly low for the rooms. Some of the

state governments have capped the room rates for these facilities. As per the directive of the Delhi government, five star properties should not charge more than Rs 5,000 per patient per day and Rs 4,000 for four and three star properties.

"The average revenues per room would be around 50 per cent of the usual tariffs. Further, there could be some revenue sharing with the hospital partner," said Shetty.

According to Jaison Chacko, secretary general, FHRAI, there is also reluctance from the part of the staff. "We have been requesting the government to categorise hotel staff as frontline workers and provide them vaccination. Most of the hotel employees are not vaccinated and this puts their lives at risk," he said.

To make matters worse, a cyclone in the vicinity of import terminals has also forced diversions.

LNG IMPORTERS DEFER DELIVERIES ON WEAK DEMAND

STEPHEN STAPCZYNSKI
MAY 18

India's liquefied natural gas importers are asking suppliers to defer deliveries as measures to curb the spread of the deadly Covid-19 virus have cut demand for the fuel.

At least three companies, including Indian Oil Corp, have asked to delay shipments slated for May and June delivery, according to traders. Inventories at import terminals in western India, such as Dahej, are near full capacity, the traders said.

The deferrals illustrate the extent of the natural gas glut, which has worsened over the past several weeks. While Indian firms have been accepting most contracted LNG deliveries, they have disappeared from the spot market since the virus worsened last month and shipments became too pricey.

To make matters worse, a cyclone in the vicinity of import terminals has also forced diversions.

—Bloomberg

Tata Motors Q4 loss narrows to ₹7,600 cr

BIG SURGE

Jaguar Land Rover saw soaring demand in China last quarter

■ Q4 FY20 retail sales ■ Q4 FY21



Source: Bloomberg

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, MAY 18

the same quarter last year.

On a standalone basis, Tata Motors, India's biggest automaker, which owns British iconic luxury car maker Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), narrowed its losses in the March 2021 quarter.

The Mumbai-based passenger and commercial vehicle maker's consolidated net loss for the quarter came down to Rs 7,605.4 crore, mainly on account of asset write downs in its subsidiary JLR, compared with a net loss of Rs 9,864 crore in the year-ago quarter.

The company has incurred cash write downs on assets worth Rs 9,606.1 crore during the quarter. This is apart from the restructuring costs of Rs 5,388.2 crore. This is apart from the restructuring costs of Rs 5,388.2 crore.

In total, the exceptional loss in Q4 related to JLR stood at nearly Rs 14,000 crore.

It posted a loss of Rs 9,894.2 crore in the corresponding period last year and profit at Rs 2,906.45 crore in the December 2020 quarter.

The carmaker's revenue from operations came at Rs 88,628 crore for the fourth quarter up 42 per cent from the revenue of Rs 62,492 crore clocked in

"Supply chain issues, in particular for semi-conductors, have become more difficult to mitigate and are now impacting production plans for Q1."

The company is working closely with affected suppliers to resolve the issues and minimise the effect on customers."

Tata Motors said in an exchange filing on Tuesday.

"While demand remains strong, the supply situation over the next few months is likely to be adversely impacted.

We expect Q1 FY22 to be relatively weak," it said.

Sensex rises above 50,000 pts, Nifty regains 15K zone

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 18

The market trended higher for the second consecutive session on further drop in fresh daily Covid cases and gained over 1.2 per cent, anticipating limited impact of lockdowns currently in place in various parts of the country.

The Sensex gained 612.60 points, or 1.24 per cent, and settled well above the 50,000 mark at 50193. The

Nifty-50 too crossed the 15,000-mark to close at two-month high of 15108, gaining 184 points.

"Barring the rising daily deaths and slower vaccination drive, we observe more positivity around the Covid-19 situation. Daily cases have fallen below 0.3 million mark this week with visible peaking, driven by Maharashtra, UP, Delhi, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Haryana,

Gujarat, MP, Telangana, Jharkhand and Bihar. India's recoveries exceeded daily cases for the first time since mid-March and India's share in global recoveries rose to 53 per cent versus 50 per cent in daily cases," JM Financial said about Covid situation.

"Even as 25 states/Union territories (UT) comprising 90 per cent of GDP have lockdown-like curbs overlapping between May

12 and May 24, cases in 20 states/UTs comprising 70-72 per cent of GDP have peaked. Thus these restrictions could be eased soon," analysts from JM Financial said.

"NSE's India VIX index, an indicator of market volatility fell further by 1.89 per cent from 19.60 to 19.24 levels, a new low for 2021. Declining volatility is supporting the bullish market sentiment," said analysts.

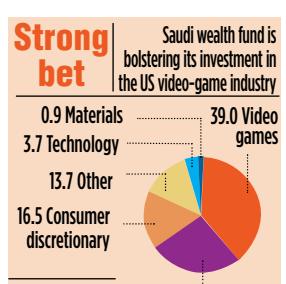
The broader market outperformed which led to market capitalisation of all companies traded on BSE hitting a new high of over Rs 216.39 lakh crore.

The BSE Mid-cap Index gained 1.87 per cent and BSE Small-cap Index gained 1.28 per cent.

Both foreign portfolio investors and the domestic institutions were net buyers of equities worth Rs 618.49 crore and Rs 449.52 crore respectively.

Saudi wealth fund loads up on video-game makers

PAUL ABELSKY
MAY 18



giant Coupang Inc, whose biggest backer is Japanese conglomerate SoftBank Group Corp.

Another new investment last quarter included Compute Health Acquisition Corp, a blank-check company set up by Intel Corp chairman Omar Ishrak, with the PIF buying a 6.7 per cent stake for \$75.7 million. The fund exited its stake in Suncor Energy Inc, Canada's top

integrated oil producer, selling 51 million shares.

The \$400-billion PIF is funded through a mixture of borrowing, cash and asset transfers from the government, and retained earnings from its investments. Chaired by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and managed by governor Yasir Al Rumayyan, the fund has outlined a plan to grow its assets to over 4 trillion riyals (\$1.1 trillion) by 2025.

As the PIF is positioning itself to power the local economy, it's also made several high-profile investments in recent years, including a stake in Uber Technologies Inc and big commitments to Softbank's Vision Fund.

The Riyadh-based fund acquired more than \$8 billion worth of stock in the three US video-game makers

for the first time during the fourth quarter. By contrast, its exposure to US equities in the third quarter fell by \$3 billion, mainly because the PIF sold stakes in exchange-traded funds that track the real estate and materials sectors.

Prince Mohammed is a big fan of video games, particularly "Call of Duty," Activision's best-selling franchise. He told Bloomberg Businessweek in 2016 that he was part of the first Saudi generation to grow up with the gaming technology.

In the first quarter, the fund more than doubled its Activision Blizzard stake to 33.4 million shares and almost doubled its holding in Electronic Arts, reaching 14.2 million shares at the end of March.

—Bloomberg

Mineral Production

During March 2021

March 2021

April–March 2020–21

(Change over the same period of previous year)

Base: 2011–12=100

Bauxite (Utilised)
(2,103 thousand tonnes)

Gold
(148 kilogram)

Manganese Ore
(331 thousand tonnes)

Chromite
(601 thousand tonnes)

Iron Ore
(227 lakh tonnes)

Crude Petroleum
(26 lakh tonnes)

Lead Concentrate:
(41 thousand tonnes)

Phosphorite
(124 thousand tonnes)

Coal
(960 lakh tonnes)

Lignite
(52 lakh tonnes)

Zinc Concentrate:
(164 thousand tonnes)

Copper Concentrate
(11 thousand tonnes)

Limestone
(391 lakh tonnes)

Diamond
(34 carat)

Magnesite
(12 thousand tonnes)

(Provisional figures)

Change in Mar 2021 over Mar 2020

SHORT TAKES
Big guns Federer, Serena busted

Geneva: Roger Federer lost the first match of his comeback proper on Tuesday as the Swiss tennis great tumbled out of the Geneva Open on his first outing in two months.

Federer lost 4-6, 6-4, 4-6 to Spanish clay court specialist Pablo Andujar to wreck the 39-year-old's hopes of stringing a run of matches together. Meanwhile, former world number one Serena Williams crashed out of the WTA tournament in Parma, Italy, on Tuesday when she was beaten in straight sets 7-6, 6-2 in her second round match by Czech Katerina Siniakova.

The 39-year-old, currently ranked eighth in the world, had been given a wild card to play in Parma after her premature exit from the Italian Open, where she also lost in the second round in what was her first match in three months. — AFP

England rest IPL stars for NZ series

London: England on Tuesday rested IPL stars including Jos Buttler and Jonny Bairstow for the upcoming two-Test series against New Zealand while Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes were not considered for selection due to injuries. England named a 15-man squad for the series starting June 2.

"Multi-format players Moeen Ali, Jonathan Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran and Chris Woakes are rested after completing a quarantine period following the cancellation of the Indian Premier League earlier this month. They will spend some time resting before joining up with their respective counties in due course," the ECB said in a statement. — PTI

Covid-free Saha fit for English tour

New Delhi: Wriddhiman Saha has recovered from Covid-19 and will be available for India's tour of England next month. Saha has reached his home in Kolkata after completing over a fortnight-long quarantine at a Delhi hotel. The wicketkeeper was picked for the England-bound squad subject to fitness. The 36-year-old was among the players who contracted the dreaded virus in the currently-suspended Indian Premier League while playing for SunRisers Hyderabad.

"Wriddhiman is back home yesterday after two and half weeks of hotel quarantine in Delhi," a source close to the player said. Saha will have to return another negative RT-PCR test before joining the pre-departure bio-bubble in Mumbai, where the squad will undergo hard quarantine before boarding the flight to England. — PTI

BCCI pays for Oz players' quarantine

Sydney: The BCCI is footing the bill for the 14-day quarantine of Australian IPL players, who have arrived here from Maldives. Cricket Australia interim CEO Nick Hockley said on Tuesday. Most of the 38 members of the Australian contingent, including top players, officials and commentators, landed at the Sydney airport on Monday after a forced stop-over at Maldives. The players had to spend 10 days in Maldives due to a ban imposed by the Australian government on travellers from Covid-ravaged India till May 15. Hockley said the BCCI has kept its promise and funded the whole operation. "Yes," Hockley told Sydney Morning Herald when asked if BCCI was paying for the quarantine. — PTI

Cricketer Priya's mom dies of Covid

New Delhi: India international Priya Punia, who is part of the UK-bound women's cricket squad, has lost her mother to Covid-19. The 24-year-old cricketer wrote a heartfelt post on social media after her mother succumbed to the deadly virus.

"Today I realised why you always told me to be strong. You knew that one day I would need the strength to bear the loss of yours. I miss you so much! No matter the distance I know you are always there with me. My guiding star, my mom. Love you always," Punia wrote on Instagram. — PTI

GHOST FROM PAST

Bancroft backtracks, other Aussies urge to end ball-tampering row

Sydney, May 18: Cameron Bancroft backtracked after dropping hints of other bowlers' involvement in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal while the men in question, including top pacer Pat Cummins, claimed innocence and pleaded for an end to "rumour-mongering and innuendo" surrounding the incident that tarred Australia's cricketing reputation.

Bancroft kicked up a storm recently when he stated that it was "pretty self explanatory" when asked whether other bowlers in the team knew of the plan to use a sandpaper on the ball during the Cape Town Test against South Africa in 2018.

On Tuesday, a *Sydney Morning Herald* report, quoting sources familiar with the situation, stated that Bancroft had no fresh information to give to Cricket Australia's integrity unit, which contacted him. CA had offered a reinvestigation after Bancroft's interview.

The men who were caught in the storm triggered by his statement were Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon, who were all part of the team during the series. They issued a joint statement to deny any knowledge of the illegal plot.

"Bancroft, who is playing county cricket in the UK, had responded overnight on Monday in a conciliatory manner and indicated that he did not have significant new information to share with CA," the *Sydney Morning Herald* report stated.

"Bancroft is said to have told CA he is supportive of the investigation and satisfied with the outcome," it added.

The Australian bowling attack in the Cape Town



A file photo of Cameron Bancroft addressing a press conference in Perth to issue an apology for his role in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal.

Test also comprised allrounder Mitchell Marsh.

According to the report, Bancroft also reached out to the affected bowlers in order to explain his recent comments.

"...Bancroft had claimed he was left flustered by the unexpected line of questioning and that there was no malice behind his remarks."

The joint statement issued by Cummins, Starc, Hazlewood and Lyon never closed.

"We pride ourselves on our honesty. So it's been disappointing to see that our integrity has been questioned by some journalists and past players in recent days in regard to the Cape Town Test of 2018," the statement read.

"...we feel compelled to

put the key facts on the record again: We did not know a foreign substance was taken onto the field to alter the condition of the ball until we saw the images on the big screen at Newlands."

The four bowlers said they learned valuable lessons and it is time to move on from the issue.

"None of this excuses what happened on the field that day at Newlands. It was wrong and it should never have happened."

"We've all learned valuable lessons and we'd like to think the public can see a change for the better in terms of the way we play, the way we behave and respect the game."

"We respectfully request an end to the rumour-mongering and innuendo.

...we feel compelled to

put the key facts on the record again: We did not know a foreign substance was taken onto the field to alter the condition of the ball until we saw the images on the big screen at Newlands."

It has gone on too long and it is time to move on," the statement said.

WARNER CAN REVEAL MORE, SAYS BROAD

England pacer Stuart Broad feels Australian cricket would be in for an "interesting time" if David Warner ever decides to write a book and open up about the ball-tampering scandal that led to him being barred from national captaincy for life.

Broad also agreed with Bancroft — who was banned for nine months for his role in the scandal — and then Australian bowling coach David Saker that the knowledge of the illegal ploy was not limited to the three men who were suspended for

their part in it.

"I have seen a couple of comments from David Warner's agent, too, and I think it will be an interesting time when he stops playing for Australia and writes a book," Broad said.

"There's no doubt the Aussies would have been hoping this episode was signed sealed and delivered. It was an incredibly tough thing for those three players to go through. I can't see it still being a conversation (when the Ashes start) in November, but I can see it being sung in the Barmy Army stands if they're allowed."

Broad said in his experience, a bowler is very sensitive to the condition of the ball.

— PTI

Kane ready for showdown



India captain Virat Kohli and his New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson.

London, May 18: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson is excited to face India in the World Test Championships (WTC) final next month as he considers show-downs against Virat Kohli's men to be a "fantastic challenge". India and New Zealand square off in the final of the inaugural World Test Championships in Southampton from June 18.

"When we play against India, it has always been a fantastic challenge and so it is really exciting to be playing against them," Williamson said in a video posted by the ICC on its Twitter handle.

"It's really, really exciting to be involved in the final, obviously to win it would be that much better," said the 30-year-old considered one of the best current batsmen in the world.

Talking about championship and how it progressed, Williamson said: "We saw the contests in the WTC has brought real excitement."

"...the games were really tight such as in the India-Australia series and our series against Pakistan as well where you had to really fight hard to get the results, which is really great."

New Zealand pacer Neil Wagner admitted India possess fast bowlers who

try to exploit the English conditions but said the wickets can change anything and become flat also.

"India has a lot of quality fast bowlers who have done well in different conditions, they can swing the ball under overcast conditions but when the sun comes out it (wicket) is flat and nothing happens."

"(English) Conditions can change throughout and so I am not getting carried away too much,

I am excited but I would want to be in that moment and not to get too much carried away by the importance of the situation," he said.

"But as a sportsman, to play for India in the final

of inaugural World Test Championships is always a great feeling," said the 27-year-old batsman who is currently playing county cricket in England.

The majority of the Kiwi players have reached the UK as they play a two-match series against England starting June 2 before the WTC final.

The Indians are expected to reach here in the first week of June.

— PTI

New Delhi, May 18: Former South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis has revealed that he and his wife received death threats after a mix-up with AB de Villiers led to the latter's run out during their 2011 World Cup semi-final defeat to New Zealand.

Played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Dhaka, South Africa lost the match by 49 runs to be knocked out of the tournament, which was won by co-hosts India. "I received death threats after that (match). My wife received death threats. We turned on

social media and we were quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"It makes you introverted towards people and you put a shield up. All players go through this and it

forces us to keep our circles very small. It's why I've worked so hard on creating a safe space within our camp," he added.

SAOUTH AFRICA ANNOUNCE SQUAD

South Africa named 19 players for two Test matches to be played in St Lucia and 20 players for five T20 internationals in Grenada.

Squads: Test: Dean Elgar (c), Temba Bavuma (vc), Quinton de Kock (wkt), Sarel Erwee, Beuran Hendricks, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Andile Phelukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreyne, Lizaad Williams.

Faf received death threat for Cup debacle



Faf du Plessis

social media and we were quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"It makes you introverted towards people and you put a shield up. All players go through this and it

forces us to keep our circles very small. It's why I've worked so hard on creating a safe space within our camp," he added.

SAOUTH AFRICA ANNOUNCE SQUAD

South Africa named 19 players for two Test matches to be played in St Lucia and 20 players for five T20 internationals in Grenada.

Squads: Test: Dean Elgar (c), Temba Bavuma (vc), Quinton de Kock (wkt), Sarel Erwee, Beuran Hendricks, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi, Andile Phelukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreyne, Lizaad Williams.



Sudhakar Vemuri

Quiet please! Ref Sudhakar leaves badminton court

Covid claims renowned official

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Renowned badminton official Sudhakar Vemuri passed away in Hyderabad on Tuesday morning while being treated for Covid-19. He was 71 and left behind his wife and two daughters.

Sudhakar umpired at three consecutive Olympics — Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000, only Asian to do so.

The respected umpire also officiated in several tournaments including two Asian Games in 1982 (New Delhi) and 1994 (Hiroshima, Japan), one Special Olympics in 1995 (Connecticut, USA), Thomas and Uber Cups, Sudirman Cups and World Championships, and many other national and international tournaments in India and across the world.

After retiring as an umpire in 2004, he became a referee and later a Course Conductor and Assessor.

He was the deputy chairman of Badminton Asia's Technical Officials Committee till he breathed his last.

He is also the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from Badminton World Federation (BWF) and Dr Ramineni Foundation Award in USA.

Born on December 1, 1949 in Hyderabad, Sudhakar did his schooling from Methodist Boys High School, graduation at Nizam College and completed his Master's degree from Osmania University before working for the Food Corporation of India, Syndicate Bank and Airtel.

Sudhakar entered the field of badminton in 1976 as a Line Judge in the Asian Championships held in Hyderabad. He became a State Umpire in 1980, National Umpire Grade II in 1982 and Grade I in 1984 by securing 99%, the highest mark.

Putting to rest speculations around his comeback, CSA said that discussions with AB de Villiers have concluded with the batsman deciding once and for all that his retirement will remain final.

The statement was reportedly made after CSA announced the team for upcoming tour of the West Indies, though it focussed largely on the squads for the two Test matches and five T20Is in the Caribbean islands rather than de Villiers' retirement.

In May 2018, de Villiers had announced his retirement from international cricket. He played 114 Tests, 228 ODIs and 78 T20Is before announcing the surprise decision.

However, last month the 37-year-old versatile cricketer said it would be "fantastic" to make an international comeback ahead of the T20 World Cup.

— PTI



Sushil Kumar

the investigation against him is biased and that no injuries are attributable to him.

However, Additional Sessions Judge Jagdish Kumar denied the relief to Sushil Kumar against whom a case of murder, abduction and criminal conspiracy has been registered.

Wrestler Sagar Rana

died, while two of his friends Sonu and Amit Kumar got injured, after they were allegedly assaulted by Sushil Kumar and other wrestlers on May 4 night, at the stadium premises in the national capital.

Fearing arrest, the international wrestler moved the Rohini court in Delhi on May 17 seeking anticipatory bail, asserting that

— PTI