

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | MONDAY | 17 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 32.6°C
Min: 25.8°C
RH: 73%
Rainfall: Trace

Forecast: Rain or thunder showers likely
Max/Min temp. 34/24°C

WORLD | 5

Media questions Israel over attacks

SPORTS | 8

Battled anxiety for years, says Sachin

TABLOID

Lift, copy, remake by Tollywood films



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ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Panchami till 11.31 am
Star: Punarvasu till 1.17 pm
Variyam: 9.48 pm to 11.30 pm
Durmuhurtam: 12.38 pm to 1.29 pm; 3.12 pm to 4.03 pm
Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am
HIJRI CALENDAR
Shawwal 4,1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.37 am
Zohar: 12.22 pm
Asar: 4.42 pm
Maghrib: 6.47 pm
Isha: 8.00 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.41 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.43 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 9.57 AM
MOONSET TODAY 11.28 PM

COUNTER POINT



14 days quarantine for those who criticise our minister over vaccination!

SHORT TAKES

REBEL MP SENT TO JAIL AFTER MEDICAL TESTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 16

The AP High Court on Sunday directed the CID to shift YSR Congress rebel MP K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju to a private hospital (Ramesh Hospitals) for treatment following a CID special court order. Raju is currently lodged in the Guntur district jail.

The CID special court had directed the CID to shift the MP to Ramesh Hospitals for treatment after the completion of medical tests at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Guntur. He was shifted to the jail after completion of the tests that held amidst high security. Reports said a team of specialists at GGH conducted 15 to 18 tests on him.

The MP and his supporters expected to secure bail after submission of the medical report in the High Court by the CID, but the tests took a long time and, by evening, he was shifted to the district prison at Guntur.

■ Full report on Page 5

Modi poster row: Arrest me too, Rahul dares govt

New Delhi, May 16: Congress leaders on Sunday slammed the police action against some people for allegedly putting up posters critical of the Prime Minister and dared the government to arrest them for raising questions on the export of Covid-19 vaccines.

Led by Rahul Gandhi, Congress leaders changed their profile pictures on Twitter with the poster asking why Covid vaccines were sent abroad. The Opposition party said tough questions will be asked from the prime minister if people don't get vaccines, medicines and oxygen. "Arrest me too," said Gandhi in a tweet while sharing a picture of the poster "Modi ji, why did you send our children's vaccines abroad".

The challenge was posed after a few people were arrested by Delhi police for putting up posters in the national capital on the vaccine issue.

The Delhi Police also registered a number of FIRs and arrested people for pasting posters critical of the prime minister.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh dared the prime minister and home minis-



Rahul Gandhi

ter to arrest him, saying he was putting up such posters on his compound wall. "Putting up critical posters against PM is now a crime? Is India run by the Modi Penal Code now? Is the Delhi Police so jobless in the middle of a raging pandemic," he asked. "I am putting up posters on my compound wall tomorrow. Come get me," Ramesh dared.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said at a press conference that questions will be asked from the prime minister if people don't get vaccines, medicines and oxygen they desperately need to fight Covid. "I dare you to arrest me. Where is my vaccine, where is my oxygen? We will continue to ask you questions," he said. —PTI

KCR to pay salary, pension; bills later

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

The state government has decided not to settle any bills except for paying this month's salaries and pensions and clearing emergency bills of the health department. The decision was taken in the wake of the prevailing Covid-19 situation.

Finance department officials said that they have been given verbal instructions not to clear any bills except for those pertaining to wages and urgent bills of the health department. Revenue generating sources have been impacted because of lockdown. Even sales in liquor outlets have taken a beating as business timings have been restricted to four hours.

Consequently, there has been a decline in tax collection. Land registrations have been put on hold and taxes from the transport department have also nosedived.

Given the precarious situation, indications are that the government is keen on securing funds to meet emergency requirements in the drive to contain the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic.

According to finance department officials, although the government wanted to pay retirement gratuity this month, it may be compelled to postpone it.

Meanwhile, there is no clarity on implementation of the revised Pay Revision Commission.

They said that all departments have been asked to prepare only wage bills and keep all other payments pending.

They said it would be difficult to pay GPF, medical reimbursement and leave cash bills for government employees. Almost all bills are pending in wings like irrigation, roads, GHMC, municipality and panchayati raj.

■ Page 2: Tokens issued, bills not paid

KTR THANKS PM FOR ADDITIONAL OXYGEN, DRUGS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

The Telangana government was taking every step required and possible to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, minister K.T. Rama Rao said here on Sunday.

He thanked the Central government for increasing the supply of oxygen, remdesivir injections and vaccines to the state that would help further in treatment of Covid-19 patients.

Rama Rao was speaking at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Shamshabad after receiving 200 oxygen concentrators donated to the state by Greenko, a renewable energy company. The concentrators arrived on a special flight from China and were handed over to the state.

■ Page 2: TS ensuring no oxygen deaths: KTR

Police lob tear gas, use force against farmers in Hisar

Hisar, May 16: Police here on Sunday lobbed tear gas shells and used force to disperse a group of farmers who tried to march towards the venue where Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar had gone to inaugurate a Covid hospital. Many people were injured in the violent clash. Khattar inaugurated a 500-bed Covid hospital on a school premises and had left the venue just before the protest took a violent turn.

The farmers were stopped before they could reach the venue, police said. They allegedly jumped police barricades after which police used force and lobbed tear gas shells.

While farmers claimed that over 50 of them sustained injuries in what they alleged was a police lathicharge, an official spokesperson said over 20 policemen, including a DSP and five policewomen, were also injured. Police claimed some farmers pelted them with stones when they tried

to stop them. Five police vehicles were also damaged by the protesters, they said.

The incident took place when the farmers, who have been protesting against the Centre's new farm laws, started proceeding towards Hisar from the Ramayan toll plaza to stage a protest against Khattar, who was to inaugurate a 500-bed Covid hospital there. Police detained some agitators, including women. Police claimed they were marching towards the hospital to create obstructions in the chief minister's event. Haryana DGP Manoj Yadava said, "I appreciate the patience and bravery displayed today by police personnel, in confronting the unruly mob and saving the newly inaugurated Sanjeevani Covid hospital at Hisar from damage."

"Each of the injured police personnel will be given ₹5,000 for their diet and medical needs," he said. Later in the evening, farmers leaders said they will not hold tehsil and district-level protests on Monday in Haryana and UP after the police authorities agreed to release those detained.

"An agreement has been reached between farmers and police administration. The protest programme in Haryana and UP will not happen. All those detained are being released," BKU leader Rakesh Tikait told reporters here. Farmers are protesting against the Centre's new farm laws since late November and have been opposing public functions of BJP-JJP leaders in the state. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), an umbrella body of farmers' unions spearheading the stir against the farm laws, earlier in the day condemned the "brutal assault" on the protesters.

A police spokesperson said the protesters broke metal barricade installed on a canal bridge and threw it into the canal. After this, the protesters attacked DSP Abhimanyu Lohan, the spokesperson said.

ISRO TO HELP FIX SNAG IN O2 PRODUCTION

Chennai, May 16: Vedanta Ltd owned Sterlite Copper plant has roped in experts from ISRO to help rectify the technical glitch developed in the cold box of its oxygen plant, leading to a suspension in production of the life-saving gas.

The company formally commenced production of medical oxygen on Thursday and the very next day, the facility in Tuticorin, about 600kms from here, suffered a jolt in operations after developing a 'technical snag'.

In a statement shared on the micro-blogging site on Sunday, Sterlite Copper said, "efforts to resume production at our oxygen plant are progressing".

"Today, an expert team from the Indian Space Research Organisation arrived at the premises to support our ongoing efforts and collaborate with our technical team."

—PTI

VAX | HESITANCY

People rush to quacks, fear hospitalisation for virus

Fear of test puts villagers in peril

SANJAY BASAK | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

With Covid-19 cases and deaths raging across India, testing hesitancy among the rural population and small towns has emerged as a major obstacle. A considerable number of people living in villages and small towns are rushing to "jhola chap" doctors (quacks) to get treated for their fever, cough and cold rather than going in for Covid tests. The fear that is stalking these sections is that "those testing positive would be shifted to Covid hospitals, from where no one comes out alive".

Sandeep Sharma, a resident of a small village, Milak Khanderi, in Uttar Pradesh, got himself tested only after a team of health workers reached the village on May 12. Speaking to this correspondent, he said: "We



A health worker collects swab sample of a passenger at a Covid-19 testing counter at Patna railway station. —PTI

are not going for tests. It's not safe to go to the hospitals for tests." Sharma claimed that most of the villagers believed that "test karane gaye toh who pakar lenge aur hospital mein dal denge" (If we go for tests, we

will be forcibly admitted to the hospitals). Of the 500 villagers living in Milak Khanderi, the team of health workers managed to test only 75 of them. Sharma was among those tested. They are still wait-

ing for the reports. Sharma virtually boasted that there had been "no Covid-19 cases" in his village. When asked how he would know since no one had got tested, he only said: "Koi toh abhi tak mara nahi" (No one has died so far).

A similar problem continues to plague Chausa, the village in Bihar which hit the headlines as several bloated and decomposed bodies were flushed out from the river in this particular region. Ashwini Varma, a social activist, lawyer and president of the Maharishi Chausa Thermal Power Mazdoor Sangh, claimed that "log darke maare test nahi kara rahe hain" (People are not getting tested as they are scared).

■ Page 2: Fake news fuelling vaccine hesitancy

TIGRESS FOUND DEAD AT PANNA RESERVE IN MP

Bhopal, May 16: A radio-collared tigress was found dead in Madhya Pradesh's Panna Tiger Reserve, a senior forest official said on Sunday. This is the fourth tiger death reported from the state in 10 days.

The carcass of the tigress, identified as P-213 (32), was found on Saturday in Gahrighat range of the Panna Tiger Reserve, located over 350 km from Bhopal, the official said. The tigress was spotted with swelling in its left leg on May 12, he said, adding the feline was then tranquilised and later released after being provided medical treatment. On Saturday, forest officials reached the spot after getting information about the carcass. They did not find any illegal activity there, the official said.

The tigress seems to have died of natural causes, he said. —PTI

SC to hear plea against NCB chief after 4 weeks

New Delhi, May 16: The Supreme Court would hear after four weeks a plea by a dentist who has challenged the Delhi High Court order dismissing his petition seeking directions to the Centre, Central Vigilance Commission and CBI to probe and launch prosecution on his complaint against Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) chief Rakesh Asthana.

The plea against the high court's order came up for hearing on May 13 before a bench of Justices U.U. Lalit and B.R. Gavi.

"At the request of the counsel for the petitioner, the matter is adjourned for four weeks," the bench said in its May 13 order. The high court had on February 15 dismissed the plea filed by Chandigarh resident Dr Mohit

● THE PETITIONER alleged that the HC had not appreciated that both the CVC and CBI have failed to adjudicate upon the criminal complaints.

Dhawan, who had sought directions to the Centre, CVC and CBI to investigate and launch criminal prosecution on his complaint against Asthana. The high court had rejected the plea with a cost of ₹20,000 to be paid by the petitioner in favour of the Delhi High Court Legal Services Committee.

In his plea filed in the apex court, Dhawan has claimed that the high court had erred in not appreciating that CVC has failed in "dispensing its constitutional duty" cast upon it by its "disappoint-

ing act of total inaction by just sitting over" the criminal complaint submitted by him against the senior IPS officer under the provision of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The plea alleged that the high court had not appreciated that both the CVC and CBI have failed to adjudicate upon the criminal complaints filed by the petitioner. The dentist had earlier moved the apex court seeking directions to investigate and launch criminal prosecution against Asthana, who also heads the BSF, on the basis of his allegations. However, he had on February 8 withdrawn the plea from the apex court and said that he would approach the HC to pursue the remedy.

—PTI

OTHER STORIES

SOME TOKENS
ISSUED, BILLS
NOT PAID

FROM PAGE 1

Incidentally, those departments have not cleared bills for works that were executed last month.

Tokens have been issued for some bills but payments have not been made.

Authorities state that bills to the overall tune of ₹19,000 crore are pending across departments. The break-up is: irrigation department ₹14,000 crore, R&B (₹1,200 crore), GHMC (₹1,000 crore), panchayat raj (₹900 crore) and ₹800 crore for works related to Mission Bhagiratha, among others. Officials have made it clear that the bills will not be paid even this month.

With regard to the 12,751 gram panchayats, although cheques were issued in the second week of March, nearly ₹1,300 crore remain outstanding. Though some funds were released for Palle Pragathi, cheques are not being honoured for various projects and works, including Prakruthi Vanalu, Vaikunta Damas and Haritha Haram.

YSRC MP RAJU
SENT TO JAIL
AFTER CHECKUPDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 16

The AP High Court on Sunday directed the CID to shift YSR Congress rebel MP K. Raghuram Krishna Raju to a private hospital (Ramesh Hospitals) for treatment following a CID special court order. The MP is currently lodged in the Guntur district jail.

The CID special court had directed the CID to shift the MP to Ramesh Hospitals for treatment after the completion of medical tests at the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Guntur. He was shifted to the jail after completion of the tests that held amidst high security. Reports said a team of specialists at GGH conducted 15 to 18 tests on him.

The MP and his supporters expected to secure bail after submission of the medical report in the High Court by the CID, but the tests took a long time and, by evening, he was shifted to the district prison at Guntur.

Sources said the injuries on the feet of the MP were not due to police third degree action but due to an illness Raju is suffering from.

His lawyers objected to shifting the MP to the Advocate Adinarayana said that the court clearly ordered to shift MP to Ramesh Hospitals for treatment after completion of medical tests at GGH but the CID did not honour the orders and instead shifted him to the jail with an ulterior motive.

The lawyers then informed the High Court about the issue of shifting Raju to the jail and skipping treatment at Ramesh Hospitals, thus violating the court orders. The High Court judges read the report submitted by the GGH medical committee on the health of the MP.

The report clearly stated there were no injuries on the body of the MP and added that he was in perfect health. The High Court then ordered the CID to implement the orders of CID court and shift him to Ramesh Hospitals for treatment.

Additional Advocate General (AAG) P. Sudhakar Reddy said that the High Court had issued orders at 6.40 pm on Saturday, rejecting examination by private doctors and the presence of CRPF security and family members during the tests.

He informed the court that he himself had arranged the GGH medical team. He said that the CID court ordered to send Raju to Ramesh Hospitals at 8.30 pm, which meant its orders came after the orders of High Court.

He said that he took the issue to the notice of the CID court. The AAG informed the High Court that the CID court would amend the judgment once the High Court order copy was submitted. He stated that the CID court ordered to upload the judgment copy of the High Court online and said it would be done by the night.

The AAG objected to sending Raju to Ramesh Hospitals, stating it was sending him to Telugu Desam office.

He said that it was not good to send Raju there as the report was submitted by GGH doctors after a careful examination. The High Court ordered him to file an affidavit in this regard.

STORY OF HOPE

Five friends who help the
needy in pandemic times

A group of five philanthropists is busy raising funds to help Covid-19 affected families after witnessing their predicament

AISHWARYA A.V.S.K I DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Moved by the plight of several families which were devastated by the pandemic due to lack of resources to buy medicines and other necessary items, city-based Sanjay Reddy, along with his five close friends, started raising funds to help those who are in need. The group first raised ₹5,000 all by themselves and donated it to a person who was undergoing treatment for Covid-19.

“One of my friend’s friends and his wife passed away due to Covid-19. They are survived by two kids (one 8-year-old and the other 9-year-old) but now the kids don’t have any immediate family. That is when I thought I should start helping people who cannot afford medicines or hospital bills,” Sanjay said.

“I then called my five close friends, who, like me, were willing to help people monetarily. We all collected ₹5,000. Our first help was to a woman named Bhaskaramma who was suffering from Covid-19 and had a huge amount of hospital bills to pay. Her husband and both her children had passed away. So, we took it upon ourselves to help her and we paid her hospital and pharmacy bills,” he added.

The initiative started by Sanjay has more than 50 volunteers working tirelessly. They have, till now, collected ₹7 lakh, apart from helping at least 25 families and four orphanages. Sanjay said that their help was not only to people



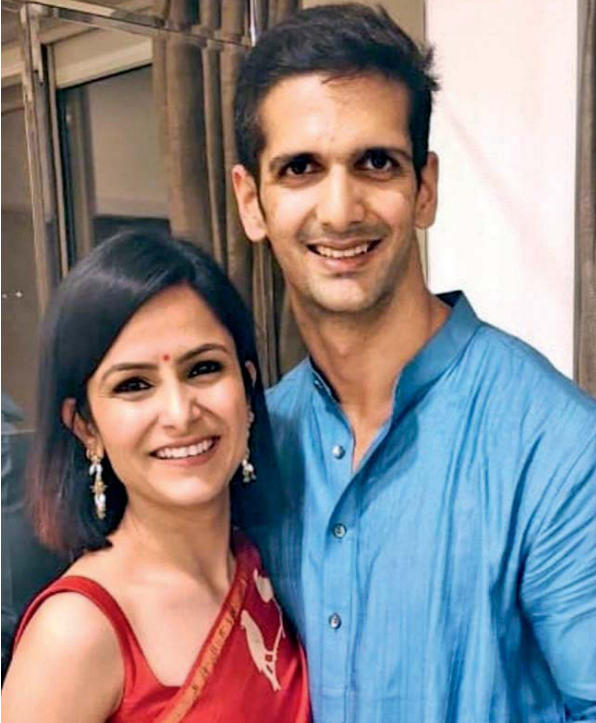
Sanjay Reddy providing succour to the Covid-hit families.

suffering from Covid-19 but anyone who was in need.

When asked if their charity works were only Hyderabad-centric, Sanjay said, “Initially, we wanted to help people in Hyderabad so that we could verify the patients and do the needful. But recently, we helped two families from Vijayawada and one family residing in a village on the Telangana state border after complete verification.”

Talking about the process of verification, Sanjay said the team collected medical reports, admission form of the patient, recent medical bills, outstanding bills, Aadhaar card and proof of relation of the person who contacted them to authenticate if the person was genuine or not.

“We also call up the hospital and verify if the patient’s admission num-



Helping the needy: Shilpa Nainani with husband Alay Razvi.

ber is in its records and if the patient admitted is genuinely in need of money,” he added.

Shilpa Nainani, a certified neuro-linguistic programming master practitioner and an anchor, and her husband Alay Razvi, an independent lawyer and founding partner of M/s Accord Juris LLP, joined the initiative recently.

Speaking about her journey and the reason behind contributing to this initiative, Shilpa said, “Sanjay’s friend Rajeev is my husband’s friend. When he told us about this initiative, we thought this could

be our chance to help needy people and joined Sanjay in his noble work.”

She added that she was extremely glad that the whole initiative was transparent — where did the money go, who were the families which needed the money, what was their condition etc.

“Apart from monetary help, we also take care of the groceries for people who need them. Once we got a request from a pizza delivery executive, who, along with his wife, was down with Covid-19. So, we provided groceries to them,” Shilpa added.

Orange alert in 3 Kerala districts

FROM PAGE 1

The IMD has issued orange alerts — a warning indicating heavy to very heavy rain — on Sunday in three districts —

Ernakulam, Idukki and Malappuram. The catchment areas of many dams in the central Kerala districts have reported heavy rains, prompting the authorities to sound alert warnings before upping their shutters.

The Thrissur district administration said spillway shutters of the Peringalkuthu dam will be opened if the water level crosses the permitted limit of 419.41 metres. In a statement, the administration

has urged the people living on the banks of Chalakudy river to be cautious.

Shutters of Malankara dam in Idukki district will be opened on Sunday, as the water level has increased, the district authorities said. The administration has directed those people living on the banks of Thodupuzha river,

Muvattupuzha river and their tributaries to be cautious. In the coastal areas, high tidal waves continued to wreak havoc. Hundreds of families living in coastal areas and low lying areas of the state have been shifted to relief camps. Meanwhile, the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) headed

by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba met on Sunday, where the top bureaucrat of the country directed agencies to ensure “uninterrupted” functioning of the COVID hospitals in the states affected by the impending Cyclone Tauktae and secure “zero loss” of lives.

Several officers, chief secretaries of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu and the administrators of the Lakshadweep, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu took part in the meeting, a statement issued said. The NCMC met to review the preparedness of the Central and state agencies to deal with the

cyclonic storm that is expected to reach the Gujarat coast in the morning of May 18 with wind speeds ranging from 150-160 km per hour, accompanied by heavy rainfall and storm surge, it said. Reviewing the preparedness, Gauba stressed that all measures be taken to evacuate people in the areas affected by the cyclone so as to ensure zero loss of life and damage. “All steps are to be taken to avoid disruption of functioning of hospitals and Covid-19 centres and maintenance of regular supply of oxygen to patients,” the statement quoted him as saying. Necessary arrangements have been made in this context, it added.

ELEPHANTINE | WOES

Wildlife vet from Maha designs chain, pain-free restraints for elephants

Painless restraints for captive tusk-ers

BALU PULIPAKA I DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

A simple device, designed using high-strength woven belts as restraints to limit the movement of captive elephants used in wildlife rescue operations in Maharashtra, has resulted in elimination of painful injuries on the legs of pachyderms caused by traditional steel chains used as restraints.

Industrial strength belts, capable of handling loads of more than 5 tonnes, are being used on the legs of elephants. These belts, connected to a shackle, are linked to steel chains that afford the animals some space to move. “Though the elephants we use are trained, as with all captive elephants, these ones which we use in operations to tranquillise wild animals including tigers, are tied to chains. But in the past, the chains were wrapped around the legs directly. It was quite common for the elephants to develop wounds because the chains would begin biting into their skins,” Dr Ravikant Khobragade, a wildlife veterinarian working in the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, told this newspaper.

There was once an incident of an elephant in “musth”, a state when it is high on testosterone and



began pulling the chain on its leg leading to a deep cut and nasty injury and the elephant also killed a mahout, he said. Captive elephants that are chained and frequently suffer from wounds from steel chains that bite into their legs, and the device Khobragade designed has made it safer for elephants. Khobragade, incidentally, is the wildlife

vet on call for any possible capture of tiger A2, a wandering big cat from Maharashtra that in November and December last killed two tribals, a young man and a girl, in Asifabad district of Telangana.

“The animals are no longer irritated by the steel chains on their legs. The mahouts too are happy,” he

said, about the new belt restraints being used for five elephants in Tadoba tiger reserve, and a few more in other tiger reserves in Maharashtra. Several states have captive elephants to help in rescue, or tranquillising of wild animals that might stray into human habitations, or need to be captured for other reasons.

Fake news fuelling
vaccine hesitancy

FROM PAGE 1

It’s the fear of testing positive which is apparently preventing the villagers from getting tested. Varma further claimed that besides fear, the lack of infrastructure in Buxar was another major reason for the lack of testing.

“Shortage of oxygen, hospital beds and vaccines” continue to hit Buxar, Varma said. In fact last year, a paper published on ‘Coronavirus Testing Hesitancy among the Masses in India’, by Priya Thappa and Kirtan Rana, had said clearly that “in spite of the clear instructions from the government that no loss of wages should be suffered by people undergoing quarantine, many people, especially the ones belonging to the economically weaker sections of society, still face the fear of losing their livelihood”. One of the other major factors contributing to hesitation could be the long waiting period between the sample collection and declaration of reports.

The paper further claimed that “apart from these spheres, the lesser discussed issue is the social stigma associated with it”.

In Jaipur, Deepak Khandelwal, a businessman, was facing a herculean task to get his workers tested. Even threats of “sacking” them have failed to work. “The workers are scared that if they go for tests, they would be forcibly quarantined in some centres and no one would come out alive.”

Khandelwal claimed the majority of his workers were in a “denial mode”.

Deepak Methi and Amit Singhal, members of an NGO Om Foundation, came up with similar stories of testing hesitancy among people. Singhal claimed that NGO workers had found that a “majority” of people in Gijhore, a small village in Uttar Pradesh, were “refusing to be tested”. Methi felt “this was a major cause of concern, as the people refusing to get tested could be spread-

ing the virus all across”. Similar reports of testing hesitancy continue to emerge from tribal-dominated areas in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

In fact, the “fear” stalking villagers and even some urbanites which is driving them to refusing to be either vaccinated or tested was due to ignorance and the massive spread of fake news. Neelesh Misra of Gaon Connection, a media platform, wrote: “The massive wall of suspicion, rumours, fake news and fear were driving the hesitation or plain refusal to both vaccine and testing.”

For instance Chhavi Methi, a budding yoga instructor, who comes from an affluent background in Noida, felt that her “body has the ability to develop immunity on its own against the virus”. Chhavi is averse to the inoculation “at least for now” due to “serious side effects of the vaccine”.

Even though her husband and daughter have got themselves vaccinated, Chhavi spoke of the reports about people “dying even after vaccination”.

Rajit Mehta, MD and CEO of Antara, while talking about this particular apprehension that people “die even after being vaccinated”, wrote in an article “no single vaccine provides 100 per cent protection”. He noted: “The annual influenza vaccine offers only 40-60 per cent protection and the measles vaccine offers only 97 per cent protection.” He went on to add: “Similarly, no Covid-19 vaccine developed in India or outside offers 100 per cent protection.”

The ICMR in a recent report also said that “only 2-4 people in 10,000 were found to get infected after getting both doses”.

While the government and the medical fraternity put “ignorance” behind the testing and vaccine hesitancy in India, social activists and a majority of doctors felt a massive awareness drive needs to be launched to counter these obstacles.

TELANGANA STATE IS ENSURING NO
OXYGEN DEATHS TAKE PLACE: KTR

FROM PAGE 1

He said the state was ensuring continuous oxygen supply to avoid any deaths due to the oxygen supply crisis.

Led by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, the state government was working with complete coordination with medical institutions, he

added. Rama Rao also thanked Indigo Airlines for transporting the concentrators and called on corporates to step up and contribute to the battle against Coronavirus.

Speaking on the occasion, Somesh Kumar said that 200 oxygen concentrators would help provide two metric tonnes of oxygen.

KCR MUST TAKE
BLAME FOR COVID
SITUATION: UTTAMDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

State Congress leader Uttam Kumar Reddy on Sunday concluded that the Covid-19 pandemic is spreading in Telangana due to the “thoughtless and negligent” style of governance of Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao.

Addressing the meeting of the TPCC core committee via video app, he said private hospitals are collecting lakhs from Covid-inflicted in the state whereas patients in the other states are getting treatment free of cost. “The government is not bothered about the people, medicines are not available, there is shortage for ventilators and hospital beds even to those who are ready to make payments. The middle class and the poor are in utter panic,” Uttam said.

CLP leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, AICC secretaries Bose Raju, Srinivasan Krishnan, Sampath Kumar, MLAs and other leaders participated in the meeting.

Uttam alleged that the Chief Minister did not take steps to add Covid-19 to the Arogyasri scheme in the state. He also did not implement Ayushman Bharat that provided free treatment to Covid patients. Other states have been forcing private hospitals to provide free treatment to patients, he said.

The Congress leader said that the state government failed to protect the health of the people at this critical juncture. The Congress would wage a fight against the government’s failures on the healthcare front.

He called upon Congressmen to take to relief work for the benefit of Covid patients. They were also urged to distribute masks, medicines and food on the 30th death anniversary of former PM Rajiv Gandhi on May 21. Relief works should be undertaken in every village on that day. Masks should be distributed free to at least 50 persons in each booth area as per instruction from the AICC.

BJP: ENSURE
COVID-19 IS
COVERED BY
AAROgyasRI

Hyderabad: BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar on Sunday emailed a memorandum to Governor Dr. Tamilisai Soundararajan seeking her immediate intervention in ensuring Covid-19 treatment under Arogyasri.

He expressed concern that the state government had failed miserably in tackling the corona epidemic. He said villagers were facing severe financial problems and were unable to pay medical bills.

They can get relief in going about the corona treatment if it is included in Arogyasri, he explained.

He pointed out that poor people were selling whatever assets they had and were running into debts while raising money for treatment in private hospitals. Sanjay Kumar demanded that free corona treatment must be provided under Arogyasri, on the lines of the central scheme ‘Ayushman Bharat’.

OTHER STORIES

FARM MARKET
TO BE OPEN
FROM MAY 24DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 16

Khammam Agricultural Market Committee chairman Maddineni Venkata Ramana said that the market will be reopened on May 24. It is found that the farmers had the farm produce like chilli and cotton in their fields and waiting to bring it to the market. The market was closed during lockdown and no lifting operations are being done there. He said that the government agreed to open the market from May 24 and the farmers can bring their produce and sell it in the market.

WILD CATS
RESCUED FROM
POULTRY FARMDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

Two jungle cats that raided a poultry farm and fed themselves on the chicken stock have been caught in Veluguralla Thanda in Kadthal mandal of Ranga Reddy district.

According to poultry farmer Kishan and village sarpanch Pandu Naik, the two regularly raided the poultry farm at night and stole chickens. They were caught -- one on Saturday and the other on Sunday -- in cages set up to trap them. Forest officials said the farmer and the sarpanch were aware of forest laws and sought assistance in trapping the animals.

The two cats are in good health and have been kept in observation at the Nehru Zoological Park. They will be released into the wild after the mandatory observation period is over.

Meanwhile, as a part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations, a webinar was held on Malabar Pied Hornbill by the curator of Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad, at which a presentation was done by Pooja Powar, a wildlife biologist.

RAINS BRING
DOWN MERCURY
IN TELANGANADC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 16

The state witnessed moderate rainfall in many parts, bringing down mercury levels on Sunday. As of 5.30 pm on Sunday, the highest rainfall was registered at the Dr MCRHRD Institute at Shaikpet followed by Balajinagar in Kukatpally and HMT Hills in Hyderabad. They had received 55.5 mm, 49.3 mm and 47.5 mm of rainfall, respectively.

The enforcement, vigilance and disaster management (EV&DM) teams of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) cleared water-logged streets in the city, in places like Tolichowki, Karwan, Langar House, Jubilee Hills, among other areas.

In a warning issued for the state till May 20, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) said, "Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are very likely to occur at isolated places in the districts of Adilabad, Kumaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Nalgonda, Mahbubabad, Warangal (Rural and Urban), Jangaon, Siddipet, Nagarkurnool, Wanaparthy and Jogulamba Gadwal.

According to the Director, IMD, Hyderabad, Dr K. Nagarathna the cyclonic storm Tauktae is moving at a speed of 11 kilometres per hour (kmph), and therefore the state would have very less impact.

"But, since the outer bands of the storm extend up to parts of the state, we would witness light to moderate showers. These showers would come coupled with strong gales going up a speed of 30-40 kmph," she said.

According to the IMD's glossary, light rainfall means rainfall amount received in a day between 2.5 and 7.5 mm. Whereas moderate rain means rains amounting to anywhere between 7.6 mm and 35.5 mm.

Miscreants committing thefts
at RIMS amidst Covid miseries

Women doctors, medicos, nurses, other female staff at the facility feeling insecure

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 16

Miscreants are on the prowl committing thefts by wearing face masks at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in these times of Covid-related miseries.

Several thefts have taken place in the late night hours at this premier health facility. Many victims are hesitant to report the matter to the police to avoid further hassles.

Miscreants are wandering in the wards, wearing masks and claiming themselves to be attendants to patients on treatment in various wards.

A few days ago, an elderly man sleeping in the ward as attendant to his wife under treatment was robbed of his cell phone and cash. He was threatened by a youth holding a knife to him around midnight.

Family members of another Covid patient at the hospital alleged that someone tried to snatch away a gold chain from a woman patient. He ran away when the victim raised an alarm.

Security lapses are noticed for long at RIMS. Miscreants are frequently visiting the facility at night-time and creating nuisance. Taking advantage of the Covid situation, they are now wearing face masks and committing thefts and robberies. This makes identification difficult.

Women doctors, medicos, nurses and other female staff at the facility are feeling insecure as miscreants stray into the wards in the guise of attendants to patients. In one incident, some miscreants reportedly misbehaved with female doctors on duty when they were questioned as to why they were roaming around the wards at night.

The security guards at RIMS are to the minimum at night and police security is slack. It is suspected



Minister for Panchayat Raj Errabelli Dayakar Rao, along with Chief Whip Vinay Bhaskar and Mayor Gundu Sudharani, takes part in the review meeting in Warangal on Sunday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

Spl panel to monitor Covid
treatment in Warangal distDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 16

Special committees have been appointed to monitor the medical services being provided to coronavirus patients in private hospitals and also to supply oxygen and injections to public and private hospitals, said Minister for Panchayat Raj, Errabelli Dayakar Rao.

Speaking during a review meeting on steps being taken for the treatment of coronavirus in Warangal Urban and Warangal Rural districts, he said the government was providing all kinds of facilities for the treatment of corona victims.

The minister said the outsourcing staff working in the corona ward in MGM are likely to be made permanent in the coming days depending on their performance.

that some security guards might be helping the miscreants. No proper inspection

● **THE MINISTER** said the outsourcing staff working in the corona ward in MGM are likely to be made permanent in the coming days depending on their performance.

● **THE STATE** government is providing 1650 remdesivir injections a day to private hospitals in the Warangal Urban district, he directed private hospitals to increase the oxygen beds as much as possible.

He said it is gratifying that the private hospitals have come forward to reduce the scanning fees.

Despite the Centre's lapses in disbursing vaccines to states, the Telangana government has decided to provide the vaccine through global tenders and vaccinate everyone, he said.

Informing that the state government is providing 1650 remdesivir injections a day to private hospitals in the Warangal Urban district, he directed private hospitals to increase the oxygen beds as much

as possible.

"The government and private hospitals in the Warangal Rural district will be provided with adequate remdesivir injections and also supply 55 tonnes of oxygen per day," he assured.

Mr Rao also directed the officials to install flow meters on 150 beds without oxygen facility at the MGM hospital.

Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar, GWMC mayor Gundu Sudharani, officials of both the districts were present among others.

when patients are in deep sleep. Guards often take a nap at night.

BLACK FUNGUS
CASES TO THE
FORE, ONE DEADDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 16

Instances of black fungus infection are being reported from old Adilabad district. The first casualty was 58-year-old Dadarao, who died with the symptoms in Ichoda a day ago.

Gradually, more such cases are coming to light. Earlier, doctors treated such cases on the lines of the Covid-positive cases. Two Covid19 patients were found suffering from black fungus infection at Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), Adilabad.

PATIENTS QUEUE
UP AT BLACK
FUNGUS WARD

Hyderabad: The Government ENT hospital has started a special ward for treating patients with black fungus infection on Sunday. A 30-bed special ward has been set up and patients are already being seen in the out-patient department. A senior doctor at the ENT Hospital, on condition of anonymity, says, "We can remove black fungus via surgery but the medicine required to completely eradicate it from the body 'liposomal amphotericin B' is out of stock. There are alternative drugs like 'posaconazole' and 'fluconazole' being used apart from antibiotics but the stock is limited." Doctors say that surgical intervention can only help in treating black fungus to a certain extent. To completely remove the fungus from the body, medicine is required. Prescription of medicine depends on the extent of invasion of black fungus.

Chemists told
no sales sans
prescriptionDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 16

Khammam district collector R.V. Karnan has warned chemists, druggists and pharmacists against sale of steroids, anticoagulants, antibiotics, blood thinners and anti-viral medicines as also scheduled drugs without prescription.

"Every chemist should follow the guidelines on dispensing of Covid-19 medicines during the pandemic situation. People treating themselves without consulting doctors should be discouraged. It would affect their health. Some people are buying medicines after reading misleading WhatsApp messages," he said.

At a virtual meeting with the chemists and druggists, the collector asked them to follow the Covid guidelines strictly.

If chemists find that someone is selling life-support drugs for Covid-19 in the black market, they should inform the police on toll-free 1077 and 100. Remdesivir and amphotericin-B drugs should be sold only to the patients undergoing treatment in hospitals. Doctors in private and government hospitals must write the names of the medicines clearly

and avoid any ambiguity in it.

Pharmacists should explain to patients about the use of medicines. Action will be taken against pharmacists selling drugs at prices higher than the MRP, he said.

Drug inspectors should visit chemist shops and ensure there are no rule violations.

"Pharmacists should check expiry date before selling medicines. They should be ready to deliver the medicines at the door-steps in case the patient cannot visit the store. Employees at pharmacies should wear identity cards and sanitizer should be available at the counter for customers.

Shop owners should use plastic body cover and avoid direct interaction with customers.

Collector Karnan said Covid care centres have been functional at eight places including the Sarada Institute of Technology, the YTC Centre, Maddulapalli, the SBCE college and the minority welfare residential college. The government has made available 1,100 remdesivir vials at 37 government hospitals in all the mandals of Khammam district, he said.

DR CHANDRASHEKAR APPOINTED AS
SUPERINTENDENT OF MGM HOSPITALDC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 16

Dr Valapadasu Chandrasekar has been appointed as the in-charge superintendent of Mahatma Gandhi Memorial (MGM) hospital, on Sunday. The Director of Medical Education, Dr Ramesh Reddy, issued orders to this effect at midnight on Saturday. Dr Nagarjuna Reddy, who is currently the in-charge superintendent, has been in office

since August 5, 2020.

Dr Chandrasekar previously worked as the principal of Kakatiya Medical College, MGM Covid ward in-charge during the first wave and also head of General Medicine at Kakatiya Medical College (KMC).

The state government has taken the decision to give the responsibility of the MGM hospital to Dr Chandrasekar in its efforts to provide better services in the hospital.

TS REPORTS 3,816
NEW COVID CASES,
27 MORE DEATHS

Hyderabad: Telangana on Sunday reported 3,816 new Covid-19 cases and 27 additional deaths due to Coronavirus in the state. 5,892 of those infected with the disease have recovered from the disease, according to a health department bulletin. Sunday's tally takes total Covid-19 deaths in the state to 2,955, cases to 5,28,823 and recoveries to 4,74,899.

Health department said 44,985 Coronavirus determination tests have been conducted in the state during the day, with results of 1,396 tests yet to be received.

STORIES OF HOPE



Covid-19 patients undergoing treatment at a Covid care centre set up at Nirmal Hriday School in NSP Colony in Khammam.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

BVK draws praise for running free
Covid-19 care centre in KhammamDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 16

The Covid-19 care centre set up by Bodepudi Vignana Kendram (BVK) is helping poor patients get proper treatment. This is more so because all services, including testing, medicines and food, are provided free of cost.

Set up at Nirmal Hriday School in NSP Colony, the centre has 50 beds. Patients are treated by a team of ten doctors, including Ravindranath, Cheekati Bharavi, G. Venkateswarlu, Papa Murali, Ponnamm Subba Rao, Pillalamarri Subba Rao, Kollu Sriharsha, M. Sumanth and Kolli Anudeep.

Patients and their families from Yellandu, Tallada, Jamalapuram, Khammam, Wyra and other areas are availing the facilities.

The isolation centre in-charge Bandi Ramesh

● **PATIENTS AND** their families from Yellandu, Tallada, Jamalapuram, Khammam, Wyra and other areas are availing the facilities.

● **THE ISOLATION** centre in-charge Bandi Ramesh said that NRI Foundation and Satya Seva Sanstha are also involved in the activities. "If any patient's oxygen levels are found to be below 95, they are being shifted to a government hospital. The superintendent of district headquarters hospital is promptly making available beds", he said.

said that NRI Foundation and Satya Seva Sanstha are also involved in the activities.

"If any patient's oxygen levels are found to be below 95, they are being shifted to a government hospital.

The superintendent of district headquarters hospital is promptly making available beds", he said.

He said that Ponnamm Venkateswara Rao is looking after logistical services while Venigalla

Srinivasa Rao supervises medical services. He said that staff from Dr Anudeep's hospital collects samples of those with Covid-19 symptoms.

Nannaka Appa Rao, a farmer from Nagulavancha, said, "BNK is rendering a good service.

The pressure on existing hospitals will be reduced if more such centres are opened by philanthropists. It will also help patients from the economically poor strata".

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SHORT TAKES

VENEZUELA FLAYS ‘KIDNAPPING’ OF EIGHT SOLDIERS

Caracas, May 16: Venezuela on Saturday condemned what it said was the “kidnapping” of eight soldiers by armed groups operating on the Colombian border, where clashes have been ongoing for nearly two months. “During the fighting, eight professional soldiers were captured and on May 9 we received proof of life,” Venezuelan Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said in a televised statement.

“We denounce before the international community... the appalling kidnapping of these soldiers,” he said.

Venezuela’s armed forces have engaged in clashes with Colombian armed groups along the border since March 21, displacing thousands of civilians who fled to Colombia.

Venezuela does not name the armed groups it blames for the unrest, apart from calling them “terrorists” or linking them to drug trafficking.

EXTENSION OF CJ TENURE WRONG: ZIMBABWE COURT

Harare, May 16: Zimbabwe’s High Court on Saturday ruled that President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s controversial extension of tenure of the country’s top judge is illegal.

Mnangagwa announced last week that he had extended Luke Malaba’s term of office by five years, just hours before the Chief Justice was to due to retire, a move seen as aimed at consolidating the president’s power. Three high court judges sat through Friday night as lawyers argued over the legality of the extension.

The court ruled on Saturday that “Malaba ceased being a judge and Chief Justice of Zimbabwe at 0000hrs on 15 May 2021.” Malaba has been accused of favouring Mnangagwa’s administration. He dismissed opposition leader Nelson Chamisa’s presidential election petition following the 2018 vote.

Decrying the ruling as “baseless and meaningless”, the government said the case was “a typical case of judicial overreach”.

TWO KIDS FOUND DEAD IN ARIZONA, MOM DETAINED

Tempe (Arizona), May 16: Two children were found dead Saturday morning in a suburban Phoenix apartment after a woman flagged down a police officer and said she was hearing voices telling her to kill her children, police said.

Officers went to her apartment and found a nine-year-old girl and a seven-year-old boy dead with “obvious signs of physical trauma,” Tempe Police spokesman Sgt. Steven Carbajal said. The mother who flagged down a Tempe officer about 7 a.m. near a police station is Yui Inoue, 40, Carbajal said in a statement.

Inoue was arrested and charged with two counts of first-degree murder, he said. No other identities have been released. Police said they had been called to the same apartment earlier Saturday morning because of a domestic dispute involving a husband and wife. Carbajal said the couple was separated, and no one was arrested. The children were safe in bed at the time, and there was no apparent reason to call child welfare authorities.

EASING AFRICA’S ECONOMIC WOES AT VIRTUAL MEET

Paris, May 16: French President Emmanuel Macron will on Tuesday host a virtual summit of European and African leaders to seek solutions to the financial crisis in Africa, where governments hope to boost development while managing massive debts.

The “summit on financing African economies” was planned last year after the International Monetary Fund calculated that African economies risk running into a total “financial gap” of \$290 billion by 2023.

Economic growth on the continent, which experienced its first recession last year, is expected to rebound to 3.4 percent this year and 4.0 percent in 2022. A moratorium on debt servicing, put in place in April 2020 by the G20 and Paris Club group of creditor nations, has given Africa a bit of breathing space, suspending the repayment of 5.7 billion euros (\$6.9 billion) by 50 countries.

The G20 also convinced China, by far the biggest bilateral lender on the continent, and private creditors to take part in future debt negotiations.

Israel kills 42 as Bibi warns war will go on

Prime Minister says country wants to levy a heavy price on the militant Hamas rulers of Gaza City



People inspect the rubble of the Yazegi residential building that was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike, in Gaza City, on Sunday. — AP

BIDEN TALKS TO ABBAS ON GAZA ESCALATION

Ramallah, May 16: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has spoken on the phone with President Joe Biden and urged the US to intervene in the conflict and “put an end to Israeli attacks on Palestinians”.

The official Palestinian news agency *Wafa* says Abbas on Saturday updated Biden on the escalations across the Palestinian territories and said he was working to halt “the Israeli aggression against our people and to reach a cease-fire”.

The report says Abbas also told Biden that “security and stability will be achieved when the Israeli occupation ends,” adding that Palestinians are ready and willing to work toward peace with international mediators.

Biden stressed the need to achieve calm and reduce violence in the Mideast, noting intensive American diplomatic efforts to that end. That’s according to the *Wafa* statement.

Biden told Abbas on Saturday that Hamas must stop rocket attacks on Israel, the White House said.

Biden “stressed the need for Hamas to cease firing rockets into Israel,” a statement said.

Biden also “underscored his strong commitment to a negotiated two-state solution as the best path to reach a just and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

— AFP

Why were news offices destroyed, asks media

Gaza City, May 16: News organisations demanded an explanation Saturday for an Israeli airstrike that targeted and destroyed a Gaza City building housing the offices of *The Associated Press*, broadcaster *Al-Jazeera* and other media outlets.

AP journalists and other tenants were safely evacuated from the 12-storey al-Jalaa tower after the Israeli military warned of an imminent strike.

Three heavy missiles hit the building within the hour, disrupting coverage of the ongoing conflict between Gaza’s Hamas rulers and Israel.

At least 145 people in Gaza and eight in Israel have been killed since the fighting erupted on Monday night.

“The world will know less about what is happening in Gaza because of what happened today,” AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt said.

He said the American news agency was seeking information from the Israeli government and engaging with the US State Department to learn more.

Mostefa Souag, acting director-general of *Al-Jazeera Media Network*, called the strike a “war crime” and a “clear act” to stop journalists from reporting on the conflict. Kuwait state television also had office space in the now-collapsed Gaza City building.

“The targeting of news organisations is completely unacceptable, even during an armed conflict. It represents a gross violation of human rights and internationally agreed norms,” Barbara Trionfi, the executive director of the International Press Institute, said.

— AP

Israel faces highest ever rate of rocket attacks

Jerusalem, May 16: Israel has faced the highest ever rate of rocket attacks on its territory during its latest confrontation with the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas that controls Gaza, the army said Sunday.

Since Monday, armed groups in Gaza have fired about 3,000 rockets towards Israel, surpassing the pace during an escalation in 2019 and during the 2006 war with Lebanon’s Hezbollah, said Major General Ori Gordin.

Gordin, commander of Israel’s home front, presented a graphic to reporters with data of rockets fired toward Israel in past years and now.

During an escalation in November 2019 between the army and the Islamic Jihad group, 570 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel over three days. And in the 2006 war with the Iran-backed Hezbollah, a total of 4,500 rockets were fired at Israel over 19 days, according to the data Gordin shared with reporters.

Asked if the pace since Monday was the highest ever rate of rocket attacks on Israeli territory, Gordin said: “Not only do I agree, this is what I present.”

— AFP

03 days: 570 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel during escalation between army and Islamic Jihad group in Nov. 2019.

19 days: A total of 4,500 rockets fired at Israel during 2006 war with the Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Qatar FM wants attacks to stop

Doha, May 16: Qatar’s foreign minister on Saturday met with the political chief of Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas and called for an end to Israel’s bombardment of Gaza, state media said.

“The international community must act urgently to put an end to Israel’s brutal and repeated attacks against civilians in Gaza and (Jerusalem’s) Al-Aqsa mosque,” Qatar’s Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said in a statement carried by the official QNA news agency.

He also assured Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh of Qatar’s support for its “Palestinian brothers”.

Their meeting came amid days of Israeli air strikes on Gaza, the group’s stronghold, in response to rocket fire by Palestinian militants in the coastal strip.

The violence was sparked by clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli forces at the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound, one of the holiest sites in Islam.

Hamas issued an ultimatum for Israel to remove its forces, then started firing rockets into the Jewish state.

“We warned that the blessed Al-Aqsa mosque was a red line and we told Netanyahu: ‘Don’t play with fire,’” Haniyeh, who lives in exile, told hundreds of supporters at a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Doha.

He was speaking hours after an Israeli air strike flattened a building housing international media outlets, including *The Associated Press* and Qatar-based *Al Jazeera*.

Qatar, a key Hamas backer, has used its vast natural gas riches to provide aid and loans to Israeli-blockaded Gaza as well as mediating with Israel.

— AFP



Antonio Guterres

ISRAEL STRIKES ON GAZA ‘DISTURB’, ‘DISMAY’ UN CHIEF

United Nations, May 16: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was “dismayed” by civilian casualties in Gaza and “deeply disturbed” by Israel’s strike on a building containing international media outlets, a spokesman said.

Guterres spoke as Israel pummeled the Gaza Strip with air strikes, killing 10 members of an extended family and demolishing the 13-floor Gaza building housing Qatar-based *Al Jazeera* and the *Associated Press* news agency, with Palestinian militants firing back barrages of rockets.

“The Secretary-General is dismayed by the increasing number of civilian casualties, including the death of 10 members of the same family.”

— AFP

EGYPT SENDS AMBULANCES TO BRING WOUNDED

Cairo, May 16: Egypt opened its Rafah border crossing with Gaza Saturday to allow 10 ambulances to transport Palestinians seriously wounded in Israeli air strikes to Egyptian hospitals, medical officials said.

Egypt “exceptionally opened the Rafah crossing to allow 10 Egyptian ambulances into the Gaza Strip to transport wounded Palestinians... to be treated in Egypt,” a medical official said.

An official at the Gaza border said the opening was “exceptional” because it is usually closed during public holidays including Eid al-Fitr.

The Egyptian public health authority said that the holiday was being suspended for some Egyptian doctors and nurses.

— AFP

Protesters in US cities decry airstrikes

Los Angeles, May 16: Pro-Palestinian protesters took to the streets of Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia and other US cities to demand an end to Israeli airstrikes over the Gaza Strip.

Thousands of people shut down traffic on a major thoroughfare in west Los Angeles on Saturday as they marched two miles from outside the federal building to the Israeli consulate. The protesters

waved signs that said “free Palestine” and shouted “long live intifada,” or uprising. In San Francisco, a raucous crowd banged drums and yelled “Palestine will be free” as they marched across the Mission district to Dolores Park. A similar scene played out in Boston as protesters walked a short distance from Copley Square to the Israeli Consulate for New England, blocking traffic.

Footage on social media shows protesters unfurl a banner in the colours of the Palestinian flag with the words “Free Palestine” while standing on top of the awning of the building where the consulate is located. In Washington, thousands of protesters streamed from the Washington Monument and to the National Archives.

In Philadelphia, demonstrators filled Rittenhouse Square to decry US support for Israel. At a protest in Pittsburgh, one speaker called on lawmakers to put restrictions on how Israel can spend aid from the United States.

The protests were stoked by five days of mayhem that left at least 145 Palestinians dead in Gaza and eight dead on the Israeli side. The violence, set off by Hamas firing a rocket into Israel on Monday, came after weeks of mounting tensions and

BIG CAT Animal owner maintains 2017 murder charge against him for fatal shooting was in self-defence

Police: Missing Texas tiger has been found safe, healthy

Houston, May 16: A tiger that frightened residents after it was last seen briefly wandering around a Houston neighbourhood has been found after a nearly week-long search and appears to be unharmed, police announced Saturday evening.

In a short video tweeted by Houston police, Cmdr. Ron Borza can be seen sitting next to the tiger, petting the animal and saying it has been a long week searching for it. “But we got him, and he’s healthy,” Borza said as the wife of the man police allege is

the animal’s owner sat next to him and fed the tiger with a baby bottle.

The tiger was being held at BARC, the city of Houston’s animal shelter, but was expected to be taken Sunday morning to the Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch, an animal sanctuary in Murchison, Texas, located south-east of Dallas. Authorities had been searching for the tiger, a nine-month-old male named India, since it was spotted May 9 in a west Houston neighbourhood. At the time, it was nearly shot by an off-duty

deputy before being whisked away in a car by Victor Hugo Cuevas, who police allege is the owner.

At a news conference later Saturday evening, Borza said that Cuevas’ wife, Giorgiana, turned over the tiger to police on Saturday after a friend of hers reached out to officials at BARC. “It is Victor’s tiger. That’s what I was told by (Giorgiana Cuevas) ... She says they’ve had that animal for nine months,” Borza said. He alleged that the tiger was passed around to different people but that Cuevas’

wife knew where the tiger was at all times this week as authorities searched for it. Police are still trying to determine where exactly the tiger was held this week and if any charges related to having the tiger will be filed.

Tigers are not allowed within Houston city limits under a city ordinance unless the handler, such as a zoo, is licensed to have exotic animals. But Cuevas’ attorney, Michael W. Elliott, on Saturday night continued to insist his client doesn’t own the tiger, saying, “I am not sure if

makes any difference who technically owns India as he does not have a birth certificate or title.”

“Victor was not the primary owner of India nor did India stay with him the majority of the time,” Elliott told *The Associated Press*. “Victor was however involved in the caretaking of India often. Victor loves India as anyone else would love a favorite pet ... He treated India with love and fantastic treatment in all respects.” Cuevas was arrested Monday by Houston police and charged with evading arrest for

allegedly fleeing his home with the tiger after officers had responded to a call about a dangerous animal.

At the time of his arrest by Houston police, Cuevas was already out on bond for a murder charge in a 2017 fatal shooting in neighbouring Fort Bend County. Cuevas has maintained the shooting was self-defence, Elliott said.

Cuevas was released on a separate bond for the evading arrest charge on Wednesday. But prosecutors in Fort Bend County then sought to have him held with no bond on the

murder charge.

After an all-day hearing on Friday, a judge revoked Cuevas’ current \$125,000 bond on the murder charge and issued a new bond for \$300,000.

He remains jailed. During Friday’s court hearing, Waller County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Wes Manion, who lives in the Houston neighbourhood where the tiger was seen, testified he interacted with the animal for about 10 minutes to make sure it didn’t go after someone else.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

17 MAY 2021

Covid-19 in India is more than a crisis of numbers

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exhortation to states to be transparent with the Covid-19 numbers — mainly about the number of people who test positive and those who fall victim to the virus — could not have come at a more opportune time than now as there have been reports of numbers being fudged by several states, including Gujarat and Delhi. Worse, the officials have still not yet completed counting the bodies of Covid victims floating in the river Ganga even as those bizarre images have created consternation among Indians living in India and abroad.

The world has lived with the virus for one-and-a-half years. Medical science and responsible administrations all over the world have come out of their initial confusion on the ways to deal with the micro-organism, and have developed fairly elaborate treatment protocols. There are also proper guidelines on ways to count a death as a Covid-related one. However, the reports coming from Gujarat inspire little confidence as the number of death certificates issued in the state far outnumber the recorded Covid deaths; it also bears little comparison with the number of total deaths in the previous years, giving room for suspicion that the government has discounted some. Such allegations are not limited to Gujarat; there are states which refuse to list a death under the Covid head once the patient tested negative and then succumbed to medical conditions triggered or exacerbated by the viral infection. Accurate data is critical to the proper analysis of the impact of the pandemic that would guide policymakers and scientists into taking proper decisions. Hence the Prime Minister is right in telling the states that they should be transparent with numbers "without pressure of high numbers showing

The Prime Minister is right: we should have accurate numbers. Yes, we miss the numbers. But we miss a government more. And it shows.

adversely on their efforts".

The bodies floating in the holy river points to a deeper malaise. Governmental apathy last year had lakhs of guest workers, women and children included, walking hundreds of kilometres to their homes after losing their livelihoods in the cities in the aftermath of the national lockdown. There was no government to help them out, and hundreds of Indians died on the road. The government, in fact, has no data on them. They presented this nation with images that generations will remember with a sense of shame and guilt.

A repeat of what Indian roads saw last year is happening on its rivers now. Villagers with infected lungs that disallowed them to breathe could not get oxygen, a hospital bed, a shot of life-saving drug and die helpless deaths. Their bodies are flung in the waters, as relatives have no wherewithal, financial and otherwise, to attend to the dead and accord them a decent farewell. The bodies of Indians float, or caught in the current, or stuck in the rocks or nibbled by crows and vultures. What we miss is the presence of a government, central and state, mandated to protect the right to life, guaranteed by the Constitution. All we need is a government that is willing to do a minimum job.

The Prime Minister is right: we should have accurate numbers. Yes, we miss the numbers. But we miss a government more. And it shows.

Bengal Gov. must follow norms

West Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's public observations in the context of post-poll violence in the state appear to be a bundle of contradictions. Last Friday, visiting Dhubri district in Assam, where according to him 175 people from his state fled to be safe from post-poll violence, Mr Dhankhar expressed "concern" that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had maintained "silence" on this issue and on the subject of post-poll violence as such. He noted at the same time, "I should not say much as the cases are under investigation."

Well, if the cases are being investigated, then the CM has clearly not been silent. So, where is the misdemeanour on her part that the governor darkly hints at? Without a shred of evidence, and when investigation is on, the governor seems to have done his best to give a communal touch to the violence. This is a matter of record and deserves to be discussed in the state legislature.

If the Governor's numerous observations were to be placed before a commission of inquiry, it might become amply clear that the burden of his song is that law and order does not exist in the state and that the constitutional machinery has broken down. If such is indeed his extraordinary reading, it is not clear what prevents him from reporting exactly this to the Centre, and recommending President's rule.

It is noteworthy that Mr Dhankhar, although a Constitutional head with severely circumscribed authority except the discretionary powers to appoint a CM, has been touring various parts of the state to study first-hand the post-poll violence situation. He has visited Cooch Behar and Nandigram. His most unusual Assam visit was also in the same context.

The state government frowned on these trips (when an inquiry is on). These did not deter him. For a Governor, to make repeated forays into the countryside is unconventional, to say the least. It is akin to the role that Opposition parties, journalists, and NGOs play. In a formal communication, the Chief Secretary has now urged Mr Dhankhar to desist from further trips since the state has just been placed under a lockdown to deal with Covid. It is to be seen if the Governor's wanderlust gets the better of constitutional propriety.

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Sanjaya Baru
Sanjayovacha



The mango as a metaphor: The pluralism of our palate & politics

For the second year in a row Covid-19 has disrupted India's mango exports to the United States because the two governments have not been able to devise a solution to the problem of securing US government clearance of export consignments. India's mango exports to the US were the fruit of prolonged negotiations that finally came to fruition as part of the new strategic partnership inaugurated by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

In June 2007 I was presented with the opportunity of handing over the first basket of mangoes legally imported into the United States to then US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice at the annual meeting of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) in Washington D.C. I insisted that the USIBC include in the basket that I was to hand over to Ms Rice at least ten different varieties of mangoes, and not just the most popular export variety — Alphonso or Hapus.

While presenting the basket I said to Ms Rice that it represented India's national motto — unity in diversity. Every Indian regards the mango as the "king of fruits", I told her, but each In-

dian has his/her own favourite variety, and most of us can get very argumentative about which is the best variety.

The diversity in the subcontinent's preference for its favourite fruit is a metaphor for an India that is home to around 1,500 varieties of mangoes. While Maharashtra's Alphonso and Gujarat's Kesar dominate the export basket, other varieties like Andhra Pradesh's Banganapalli and Uttar Pradesh's Langra are also being increasingly marketed around the country and exported overseas.

But the immensely popular mango is not the only edible symbol of unity in diversity. Consider the case of the biryani. The social media has seen from time to time animated arguments about which is the best biryani among biryani aficionados and the authority of food columnists has often been summoned to pass judgement. Yet, between the biryani of Malabar, Bengal, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Chettinad and a dozen other places, it is difficult to select the best.

In the larger discussion on India's plurality and diversity, the culinary preferences of over a billion and a quarter people does not get the attention it deserves.

Just as most Indians who agree that democracy is the best form of governance would have sharp differences on which political party they would support in the interests of preserving that democracy, most of us would be united in our view that Indian food is the tastiest in the world, and yet argue about which part of India offers the most scrumptious cuisine. Unity in diversity is written into our social and cultural DNA.

Foreigners used to imagining that Indian food is tandoori chicken and mattar paneer or dosa and sambar are always surprised by the diversity of what Indian kitchens can conjure up. From imagining that there is something called Indian cuisine, they slowly get used to the idea that there may well be a north, east and south Indian cuisine. But when they discover that "Rayalaseema ruchilu" can be very different from "Telangana vantakalu", they give up looking for a common thread.

I have so far made a series of fairly obvious observations. Who would disagree with any of these statements? If we are a land of 1,500 mangoes, we are also the land of 15,000 gods and goddesses and 150,000 local deities. While

the Constitution recognises 22 official languages, close to 20,000 languages and dialects are spoken as the mother tongue across the subcontinent.

The miracle of Indian democracy and development is that despite this diversity the country has remained united and the roots of national unity now run deep into the soil of Mother India. Against this background, the desperate attempts by certain political elements to impose one religion, one language, one election on this diversity is an insult to the national imagination and an affront to our national personality.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the resistance to the "Hindu-Hindi-Hindustan" project has most recently been asserted by a clutch of regional political parties in the non-Hindi-speaking states.

The electoral victory of the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal and the DMK in Tamil Nadu are only recent examples. They remind those who need reminding that diversity has never been India's weakness. Rather, it is its strength since it prevents the emergence of majoritarian authoritarianism.

If there is one lesson that the present political leadership in New Delhi

should re-learn, it is that India cannot be governed as if it was a land of homogeneity. Unity is rarely imposed on a nation from the outside. It is the product of shared values, interests, culture and experience.

No Indian has to be commanded to love the mango. That love is second nature to us. No Indian can be commanded to love just one variety of the mango. That assertion of independent thinking too is second nature to us.

There is much that political and religious leaders can learn from the preferences of the Indian palate. The national popularity of a dosa and a tandoori naan has not been imposed on us by any overbearing political philosophy of national unity. They have become popular across the length and breadth of the subcontinent because, like the majestic mango, we have all come to like their taste. We have our own favourite biryani and we love our own language, but we recognise that we belong to one nation.

The writer is an economist, a best-selling author and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. His latest book is India's Power Elite: Class, Caste and a Cultural Revolution.

Subhani



Israel's brutality in Gaza has dented heroic image



Mohan Guruswamy

The ongoing Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip is horrific in its ferocity and far exceeds any limits of justifiable and even acceptable retribution. There was once an image of the Israelis being a people of heroic dimensions and sterling character forged by the many tyrannies that the Jewish diaspora have suffered, including the industrial scale programme of extermination by Nazi Germany.

The founding of the State of Israel held out the promise of a new nation that, being tempered by their experiences and motivated by the high idealism of its founders, would give the world something to look up to. It was this idealism that inspired India to be among the first three nations to recognise Israel.

The first generations of Israeli leadership, drawn from the European Jewry known as the "Ashkenazim", were generally liberal and progressive. This was seen in early Israel when most agriculture was under cooperative farming organised around the kibbutz, which also entailed a communal (sharing) lifestyle.

The Histadrut, the labour union, which was the bedrock of the Labour Party and political movement led by Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, was also Israel's biggest employer and owned much of its transportation, dairy, construction and services sectors. Israel was intended as a progressive, socialist and democratic state. It has moved along quite a bit away from that now.

During the initial years of its existence, Israel heroically defied the odds and many writers like the late Leon Uris captured this new promised spirit of the Israeli people. His 600-page masterpiece *Exodus* created a sensation in 1957 and

propelled him to the highest literary fame. It was a detailed and heroic chronicle of European Jewry from the turn of the last century to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

Exodus, while being the epic story of a nation seeking a state, was also the touching love story of Ari Ben Canaan, an Israeli freedom fighter, and Kitty Fremont, an American nurse who joins Canaan's fight for a Jewish state.

In 1958, after it became one of the most popular novels of the century, *Exodus* was made into a film by Otto Preminger and featured Paul Newman as Canaan. It was probably the first time that Hollywood had portrayed a Jewish man in such heroic dimensions. The book and the movie contributed to the mythologising of the Israeli fighter as an indomitable and idealistic hero.

But it is not that Israel lacked such men those days. The founders of the Palmach, the elite strike force of the Haganah that was the forerunner of the Israeli Defence Forces, were men like Moshe Dayan, Haim Bar Lev, Ezer Weizmann, Yigael Yadin, Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Allon, who were all men of heroic proportions and each one could have been a prototype for Canaan.

But it was Yigal Allon who came closest of all to it. Allon, who died in 1980, began life as a Haganah field commander in 1936 when he was just 18 years old. In 1941 he was one of the founders of the Palmach, the Haganah's commando-style strike unit. In 1948 he was made a lieutenant-general and commanded Israeli forces in the south that "liberated" the Negev in what became to be known as the War of Independence. He retired from the IDF in 1950, at the ripe old age of 32.

In 1960, Allon went to Oxford's St. Anthony's

College to study international relations. He later entered public life and became deputy prime minister in 1967 and devoted himself to seeking a durable peace with the Palestinians.

The Haganah was founded in 1920 as the underground military organisation of the Jewish *Yishuv*, or community, and was then a loose organisation of various local defence groups. The Palmach was its first mobilised unit, gained battle experience in the Second World War as the Jewish Brigade under British command. The Palmach consisted of many first generation "Sabra", or Palestine-born Israelis, who were also fluent Arabic speakers, which gave it the ability remain concealed among the Arab population and to wage a lethal unconventional war on them.

The British learned as much from this experience. Captain Orde Wingate, who later led the famous Chindits Brigade in Burma, learned his art of fighting from the Palmach. Wingate was a charismatic dreamer who, though a Christian, had joined the Jewish movement and led the joint British-Haganah's Special Night Squad which fought in Ethiopia. Wingate's African experience found expression in Burma and its successes led all traditional armies to establish special warfare forces to give them similar deep strike capabilities.

The combination of unconventional warfare by the British SAS and US Special Forces and deep and precision air strikes by modern fighter and bomber aircraft in Afghanistan has now given

The continued occupation of the West Bank since 1967 and the continued building of settlements in defiance of UN resolutions and in the face of world opinion are ugly and contemptuous manifestations of a narrow nationalism

modern warfare a new dimension. Of the three battalions who formed the original Chindits Brigade, the 2/4 Gurkha Rifles is still with the Indian Army and carries the Chindits tag with great pride. Wingate was born in Nainital in 1901 and died in Manipur in 1944.

The Israeli Defence Forces' heroic sheen has now largely dissipated with its emergence as a mighty army with the latest weapons and America's unstinted support. It is now no longer David with a slingshot facing mighty Goliath. In the four major wars that it has fought, the IDF had worsted numerically superior Arab armies with ease. It is difficult to remain a heroic David against such adversaries for long.

The Palestinian intifada is now the heroic struggle of a people seeking to find their identity and their freedom. Just like Israel was before 1948.

The atrocities during the War of Independence can even be justified by the fact that there was a war declared on the Jewish State by all its Arab neighbours, Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and supported by the entire Arab world. The moth-eaten Israel mandated by the UN was not tenable in terms of security, and addition of territory to gain security could have even been justified.

But the continued occupation of the West Bank since 1967 and the continued building of settlements in defiance of UN resolutions and in the face of world opinion are ugly and contemptuous manifestations of a narrow nationalism.

Israel is no longer the valiant and beleaguered underdog, but increasingly seen as an increasingly arrogant oppressor seeking to crush another old nation under its jackboots. The sad truth about Israel is that Benjamin Netanyahu is fact and Ari Ben Canaan is fiction.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

MENTAL HEALTH

In the middle of chaos, where all of us are suffering, it's really important to invest some time on our mental health. First thing is to stay positive and stick to positive news. Secondly, workout and meditate on a regular basis. It helps improve a person's mental well-being. It is also essential to spend time with family. We must call our dearest friends and give them mental support. Instead of sticking to our rooms, we must try to get some sunlight and fresh air.

Aishwarya Gunupuru
Hyderabad

LOCKDOWN

Despite strict lockdown in Telangana state, people are moving freely on roads. It surprises me that police are not as active like last year. The purpose of lockdown fails when it is not implemented in the true spirit. Hence, the onus rests on authorities to enforce strict lockdown. Citizens must also act as per directions of government to break the chain of Covid-19. The economy and people are going to be affected.

G. Thirupathiah
Hyderabad

STOPPING AMBULANCE

Stopping ambulances with Covid-19 patients at the state borders is unfortunate (*Court: Do not stop Covid ambulances, DC, May 15*). Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao should recall his words "Let us divide ourselves like brothers but remain united as a family" during the separate state agitation. The issue can be settled amicably through discussions. Where there is will, there is way.

Kshirasagara Balaji Rao
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Ceiling an urban property

LUDHIANA, May 16. Communications Minister H.N. Bahuguna today said that ceiling would be imposed "soon" on urban property and that the only question before the Government was whether it should be decided by the Union or the State Government.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,732.55	0.09
Nifty 50	14,677.80	-0.13
S&P 500*	4,173.85	1.49
Dollar (₹)	73.28	0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.05	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,110▲146	0.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.44	2.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.645	-0.023

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Cairn picks \$70b Indian assets in US for seizure

The United Kingdom-based oil major Cairn Energy has identified \$70 billion of Indian assets overseas for potential seizure to collect \$1.72 billion due from the government — a move if successful will put India in league with Pakistan and Venezuela which faced similar enforcement action over failure to pay arbitration awards. These assets are across several jurisdictions, sources said without giving further details.

Special drive to clear GST refunds by month end



The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has launched a special drive to clear all pending GST refunds by month-end. The 15-day GST refund drive is on the lines of an ongoing similar drive organised by the CBIC for refund of customs and duty drawback claims. The CBIC said there is a need to focus on timely disposal of all pending GST refund claims to provide immediate relief to business entities.

Airtel offers free pack to 5.5 cr low-income users

Bharti Airtel on Sunday announced offering a recharge pack of ₹49 for free to as many as 5.5 crore low income customers to help them stay connected during the pandemic. Additionally, customers buying the ₹79 recharge coupon will now get double the benefits, the company said. It said the scheme is worth ₹270 crore, covering credit of ₹49 mobile plan for 5.5 crore low income group customers.

Geojit Financial Q4 net profit nearly doubles

Reflecting the buoyancy in the markets, Geojit Financial Services has nearly doubled its net profit at ₹36.8 crore for the quarter to March, up 95 per cent from ₹18.8 crore a year ago, when the market was ravaged by the pandemic last year. The board of the company, which is leading distributor of mutual fund SIPs, has also decided to enter the International Finance Centre in Ahmedabad with an AIF.



Data shows recovery in manufacturing Power use up despite Covid

New Delhi, May 16: Power consumption in the country grew by around 19 per cent in the first fortnight of May to 51.67 billion units (BU) over the same period last year, showing recovery in industrial and commercial demand of electricity, according to the power ministry data.

Power consumption in the first fortnight of May 2020 was 43.55 BU. The power consumption in the entire month of May last year was 102.08 BU.

During the first fortnight of May this year (from May 1 to 14), peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of 168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded growth of over 15 per cent over 146.54 GW (peak met) recorded in the same period in 2020 (on May 13, 2020).

The power consumption in April grew nearly 40 per cent to 118.08 BU. Power consumption in April 2020 had dropped to 84.55 BU from 110.11 BU in the same month in 2019, mainly because of fewer economic activities following the imposition of lockdown by the government in the last week of March 2020 to contain the spread of deadly Covid-19.

The power consumption also fell in May 2020 to 102.08 BU from 120.02 BU in May 2019.

Similarly, peak power demand met or the highest power supply in a day also slumped to 132.73 GW



in April last year from 176.81 GW in the same month in 2019, showing the impact of lockdown on economic activities.

The fewer economic activities also resulted in a fall of peak power demand in May 2020 to 166.22 GW from 182.53 GW in May 2019. Davinder Sandhu, advisor, Primus Partners said, “Energy is derived demand, and with onset of summer and the productive pre-monsoon cycle of the Indian economy, an uptick is always expected.”

Sandhu who is also a former Advisor at World Bank said, “Both energy demand and supply have risen by 25-40 per cent over March-May 2021, with thermal PLFs (plant load factor or capacity utilisation) rising to 75 per cent and more, after many quarters. This is aided by the opening of the economy in Q1 (January-March 2021), with rising economic output as well as sharp uptick in exports.”

The second wave of lockdowns will certainly impact economic activity, and in turn, energy demand. The larger than usual increase in part is attributed to lower base, and as well as to the pent up demand being executed now, he added.

After a gap of six months, power consumption had recorded a 4.6 per cent year-on-year growth in September 2020 and 11.6 per cent in October 2020.

In November 2020, the power consumption growth slowed to 3.12 per cent, mainly due to the early onset of winters. In December 2020, power consumption grew by 4.5 per cent while it was up 4.4 per cent in January 2021.

Power consumption in February this year recorded at 103.25 BU compared to 103.81 BU last year. But 2020 was a leap year. In March this year, the power consumption grew nearly 22 per cent to 120.63 BU compared to 98.95 BU in the same month of 2020. — PTI

GRANULES TO INVEST ₹1,000CR FOR CAPITAL SPEND IN 3 YRS



New Delhi, May 16: Drug firm Granules India has earmarked a capex of around ₹1,000 crore which it aims to invest over the next three financial years on expansion of operations, according to a top company official.

The Hyderabad-based firm plans to invest on a new manufacturing facility and on expanding production capacities at existing plants.

“During FY22, we expect to spend ₹400 crore and the rest of the ₹600 crore is spread over FY23 and FY24,” Granules India chairman and MD Krishna Prasad Chigurupati said in an analyst call.

The drug firm plans to invest about ₹180 crore on a Multiple Units Pellet System (MUPS) block, around ₹250 crore on expanding active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) capacity, ₹320 crore on a new formulation plant and another ₹30 crore on expansion of a facility near Hyderabad which rolls out paracetamol and metformin, he noted.

“And then there is maintenance capex. So this is a broad breakup of what we are doing. There’s very clear visibility, and we are very excited that we’re going to invest all this cash. And all this, like I’ve been repeatedly saying, we are very confident we can meet with our internal accruals. And I don’t see the need for any debt going forward,” Chigurupati said.

The company, which manufactures several off-patent drugs, including paracetamol, ibuprofen, metformin and guaifenesin on a large scale for customers in the regulated and rest of the world markets, also aims to invest in the range of ₹150 crore on R&D activities every year. — PTI

Hester in talks with Bharat Biotech to make Covaxin

New Delhi, May 16: Hester Biosciences on Sunday said it has tied up with the Gujarat government to explore production of Covid-19 vaccine through technology transfer from Bharat Biotech.

The Ahmedabad-based firm said it has already initiated the discussions with Bharat Biotech in this regard.

“A tripartite consortium has been formed with the government of Gujarat as the lead partner, to explore the prospects of manufacturing the Covid vaccine through technology from Bharat Biotech,” Hester Biosciences CEO and MD Rajiv Gandhi said in a statement.

The discussions are currently ongoing with Bharat Biotech towards reviewing the infrastructure at Hester; the technology adaption process and the regulatory compliances, he added.

Based on the outcome of the review, the next course of action will be determined, he noted.

Hester Biosciences is a



leading player in the animal healthcare segment. It is the second largest poultry vaccine manufacturer in the country.

Only three vaccines have so far been approved to be sold in India — Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V.

Sputnik V has been approved to be imported from Russia by Dr Reddy’s, but is yet to be widely available in the country.

Last week the Delhi government urged the Centre to use its special

Markets to witness robust IPO line up in H2 of 2021

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 16

While the government’s proposed privatisation drive has been hit by the Covid’s second wave, a strong initial public offerings (IPOs) pipeline of privately owned companies is building up for the second half of calendar year 2021.

Several new names have filed draft red herring prospectus and some of them have already received market regulator Sebi’s approval.

In the last few days some new names have filed DRHP like Go Airlines, Penna Cement Industries, Nuvoco Vistas Corp (Nirma Group’s Cement Company), Supriya Lifescience, Krsnaa Diagnostics, Aptus Value Housing Finance,

In the last few days some new names have filed DRHP like Go Airlines, Penna Cement Industries, Nuvoco Vistas Corp, Supriya Lifescience, Krsnaa Diagnostics, Aptus Value Housing Finance, Devyani International and Windlas Biotech.

Zomato, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, Glenmark Life Sciences, Shriram Properties have also filed DRHP last month for their respective initial public offerings.

Sona BLW Precision Forgings’ proposed Rs 6,000 crore IPO received Sebi nod last week. Another IPO by Shyam Metalics and Energy

worth ₹1,100 crore is awaited after getting Sebi approval.

In the first half of 2021 so far 19 IPOs have successfully listed on the bourses and only four of them are trading below their public issue price.

Among these, three government owned companies listed were Indian Railway Finance corporation, Powergrid Infrastructure Investment Trust and RailTel Corporation Of India.

Meanwhile, the much awaited IPO of Life Insurance Corporation of India is getting pushed back as the health crisis has also hit the bureaucracy badly with many key officials infected by the coronavirus, slowing decisions on privatisations, among other proposed reforms, said a report.

Hero MotoCorp to foray into electric two-wheeler market

New Delhi, May 16: The country’s leading two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp is looking to launch an electric model next year and mark its entry into the segment, according to a senior company official.

Bullish on the electric vehicle (EV) vertical, the company is utilising its Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Stephanskirchen (Germany) based R&D set-ups to develop its own products.

Besides, it has tied up with Taiwan-based Gogoro Inc to bring the latter’s battery swapping platform to India. The partners have also decided to collaborate on electric vehicle development to bring Hero-branded, powered by Gogoro network vehicles to market.

“We are trying to launch one of the EV products in fiscal year 2022, and you will see multiple actions, whether it is our own product or a swap product

or with Gogoro. All of those actions you will see in the next calendar year,” Hero MotoCorp CFO Niranjan Gupta said.

In order to tap the segment, the two-wheeler maker has already invested in Bengaluru-based EV startup Ather Energy, which already has introduced models in the market. He said the company’s R&D centres have been working to develop products based on fixed charging system. — PTI

Centre plans to amend depositors insurance law

New Delhi, May 16: In a bid to ensure timely support to depositors of stressed banks, the government may bring amendment to DICGC Act in the monsoon session with the objective to provide account holders easy and time-bound access to funds to the extent of the deposit insurance cover.

Last year, the government raised insurance cover on deposit five-folds to ₹5 lakh with a view to provide support to depositors of ailing lenders like Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank. Following the collapse of PMC Bank, Yes Bank and Lakshmi Vilas Bank too came under stress leading to restructuring by the regulator and the government.

The amendment to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act, 1961 is the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister and the Bill is almost ready, sources said.

It is expected that the Bill will be tabled in the upcoming monsoon session after being vetted by the Union Cabinet,

● The amendment to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act, 1961 is the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister and the Bill is almost ready, sources said.

● Once the Bill becomes the law, it will provide immediate relief to thousands of depositors who had their money parked in stressed lenders such as PMC Bank and other small cooperative banks.

sources added. Once the Bill becomes the law, it will provide immediate relief to thousands of depositors who had their money parked in stressed lenders such as PMC Bank and other small cooperative banks. As per the current provisions, the deposit insurance of up to ₹5 lakh comes into play when the licence of a bank is cancelled and liquidation process starts.

COVID CLAIMS RISE MANIFOLD FOR HEALTH INSURANCE COS

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 16

Commensurate to the rise in Covid-19 cases, insurers are witnessing a surge in claims. Compared to the September-October period, Covid-related claims have gone up by more than three times.

“When the country is witnessing three to four lakh Covid cases every day and all hospitals are running beyond their bed capacity, a significant percentage of patients are also making insurance claims. The insurance industry is seeing a significant surge in claims,” said Dr S Prakash, managing director of Star Health and Allied Insurance.

According to Sanjay Datta, Chief Underwriting, Claims and Reinsurance, ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company, the industry has seen a three-fold rise in Covid claims in April compared to September-October 2020. Though the industry-wide loss ratios for FY21 are not yet out, insurers expect that it would be much more than 100 per cent.

However, during the first half of last fiscal, the claims of non-Covid cases were considerably down due to the lockdown. But now, he said, claims related to elective procedures have once again tapered down.

“We are only receiving claims of emergency non-Covid cases,” said Prakash.

DICGC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, provides insurance cover on bank deposits.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget speech in February said the government had approved an increase in the Deposit Insurance cover from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh for bank customers last year.

It could not be presented in the Budget session due to curtailment of the last session following the spread of second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

It is to be noted that the enhanced deposit insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh is effective from February 4, 2020. The increase was done after a gap of 27 years as it was static since 1993. The cover is provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RBI. With increased insurance cover, the banks are paying a higher premium of 12 paise against 10 paise per Rs 100 deposited without any additional burden on account holders. — PTI

CHANGING TIMES Ticket size of cash withdrawals at ATM rises

Covid wave spikes digital payments again

New Delhi, May 16: The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a behavioural change in usage of cash with people withdrawing larger amounts from ATMs but preferring to make digital modes to make payments, said experts.

The ferocity of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic has scared people, forcing them to withdraw larger amounts from the ATMs with a view to avoid frequent visits. The money thus withdrawn is mostly held for emergency use and often payments are being made through UPI and other digital modes.

Talking about the behavioural change in currency usage, Sarvatra Techno-



ple withdraw in larger quantities and prefer to hoard, pre-empting medical or any other form of emergencies, which ultimately is not consumed as much.

“The average ticket size of withdrawals which earlier ranged between 2,000-3,000 now has invariably gone up by 20 per cent to ₹3,000-4,000 across both rural and urban India,” Adashe said.

He further said UPI was taking care of small-ticket transactions with the average ticket size constant at Rs 1,000.

Owing to this behavioural shift, daily average transactions on IMPS have now gone up to Rs 9,000 which was earlier in the range of around Rs

6,000-7,000, he said. “The second wave of the pandemic has had a significant impact on the handling and management of cash.

“This has in turn brought about substantial shift in behavioral patterns among the masses which will play out in favour of digital transactions in the long run,” he added.

Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) is an instant interbank electronic fund transfer service through mobile phones.

According to the RBI’s latest data, the outstanding currency in circulation on May 7 was ₹2,939,997 crore, up from ₹2,858,640 crore on March 26. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Shankar bags high jump gold in US

New Delhi: Indian high jumper Tejaswin Shankar has claimed a gold medal at the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, USA. Representing Kanassas State University, Tejaswin cleared 2.28 metres on Saturday, making a facility record. It was also the season's finest performance for the Indian but a centimetre short of his personal best and the current national record of 2.29m which he created in 2018. University of Oklahoma's Vernon Turner (2.25m) and Texas Tech University's Jequan Hogan (2.11m) claimed the silver and bronze respectively. This was Tejaswin's second successive gold at the event. — *PTI*

Covid-free Hussey off to Australia

Chennai: Having recovered from Covid-19, Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey left for Australia on Sunday via Doha, a top official of the IPL franchise said. Following an RT-PCR test, the former Australia batsman had returned negative for Covid-19 on Friday, paving the way for his departure in the early hours of Sunday. "Yes, Hussey has left for Australia via Doha by a commercial flight. He left in the early hours of Sunday," CSK CEO K. S. Viswanathan said. Hussey, who had first tested positive for Covid-19 during the now-suspended Indian Premier League, is expected to reach home on Monday. — *PTI*

Bryant inducted into Hall of Fame

New York: Los Angeles Lakers icon Kobe Bryant was inducted posthumously into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame on Saturday part of a star-studded group that also included Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett. Bryant was inducted as part of the Class of 2020, almost 16 months after he and his 13-year-old daughter Gianna were killed in a helicopter crash along with seven others in southern California. Bryant's wife, Vanessa Bryant, took the podium Saturday to speak movingly about his love for basketball, his family, his teammates and his fans. "You did it. You are in the Hall of Fame now. You are a true champion, not just an MVP. You are an all-time great," Vanessa said. — *AFP*

Countdown begins for Paralympics

Tokyo: As Japan struggles to slow infections ahead of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, officials in Japan held an event marking 100 days to go to the start of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. The event was held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building with strict corona countermeasures in place. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike in her opening remarks paid tribute to all the medical professionals fighting against Covid-19 and also thanked all the businesses in Tokyo that have been cooperating with the latest state of emergency requirements. Koike went on to point out that Tokyo will be the only city to have hosted the Paralympic Games twice and lauded the barrier free initiatives that have been implemented in the city thanks to the Paralympics. — *AP*

Indian women likely to tour Oz

New Delhi: The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September. India, who have played only one series amid the Covid-19 pandemic, tour England next month to play their first Test in seven years besides three ODIs and as many T20s. Australia pacer Megan Schutt dropped a hint that India will be visiting in September though Cricket Australia is yet to announce the schedule. The tour is expected to comprise ODIs and T20 Internationals. "We have got a tour against India in mid-September," Schutt said. — *PTI*

TIM AND AGAIN

Paine says Kohli will always be remembered as world's best

Melbourne, May 16: Virat Kohli seems to have left an indelible mark on Australian Test captain Tim Paine, who says he will "always remember" the Indian skipper for being the world's best batsman, capable of also getting under the opposition's skin with his competitiveness.

Kohli and Paine have had a fiery rivalry which goes back to India's 2018-19 tour of Australia. Their on-field spats were an interesting sub-plot during the historic showdown in which India became the first Asian country to win a Test series Down Under.

"For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world," Paine said on the 'Gilly and Goss' podcast.

"He (Kohli) is challenging to play against and he can get under your skin because he is so good and he is so competitive. But yeah, for me from where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago, He is certainly someone I will always remember," he added.

Interestingly, last year Paine had said that Kohli is "just another player" in the Indian team who "doesn't really bother me".

He had also stated that the Australian team "loves to hate" the superstar for his awe-inspiring abilities with the bat.

Paine, after the stunning loss in 2018-19, endured another debacle earlier this year when an injury-ravaged Indian team, which did not have Kohli after the opening Test, upstaged the Aussies in the Tests for a second successive tour.

He had recently caused a flutter by stating that his side was distracted by the Indian team's "niggling" during this year's series. — *PTI*



Virat Kohli and Tim Paine in this file photo.

Sachin reveals he battled anxiety for 10 to 12 years

New Delhi, May 16: Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar on Sunday said he battled anxiety for a major part of his 24-year-old career before realising that his pregame quirks were an important part of his preparation.

Talking about mental health, which has gained significance in the Covid times with players spending lot of time in bio-bubbles, Tendulkar said acceptability is the key.

"Over period of time I realised that besides preparing physically for a game, you have to prepare

yourself mentally also. In my mind the match started long before I entered the ground. The anxiety levels were very high," Tendulkar said in an interaction organised by Unacademy.

"I felt the anxiety for 10-12 years, had many sleepless nights before a game. Later on I started accepting that it was part of my preparation. Then I made peace with times I was not able to sleep in the night. I would start doing something to keep my mind comfortable."

That "something" included shadow batting,

watching TV and playing video games in the wee hours of the day. Even making his morning cup of tea helped him prepare for the game.

"Making tea, ironing my clothes also helped me prepare for the game. I would pack my bag the day before the game, my brother taught me all of it and it became a habit. I followed the same drill even in the last match I played for India," he said.

Tendulkar said a player is bound to go through ups and downs but it is important to accept when one is feeling low. — *PTI*

VIRAT VS KANE DEBATE TURNS UNSAVOURY

London, May 16: Former England skipper Michael Vaughan on Sunday launched a sarcasm-laden counter at Salman Butt, wishing that the ex-Pakistan skipper had shown such "clarity" of thought while "fixing matches", like the one that was on display while trashing his Kane Williamson greater than Virat Kohli viewpoint.

Vaughan told New Zealand's host broadcaster *Spark Sport* that had Black Caps captain Kane Williamson been an "Indian, he'd be the greatest player in the world".

"But he's not because you're not allowed to say that Virat Kohli is not the greatest, because you'd get an absolute pelting on social media. So, you all say Virat is the best purely to get a few more clicks and likes, few more numbers following here.

"Kane Williamson, across formats, is equally the best. I think the way he plays, the calm demeanour, his humbleness, the fact that he is silent about what he does," Vaughan said.

Speaking on his YouTube channel, Butt, who was banned from cricket for 10 years for the spot-fixing scandal in 2010, which was later reduced to five years, slammed Vaughan for stirring up an unnecessary controversy by drawing comparisons between Kohli and Williamson. "Kohli is from a country that has a huge population. So, he will have a bigger fanbase. Moreover, no other batsman in the world has 70 international centuries. He has dominated the batting rankings for a long period because his performances have been outstanding. So, what is the need of this comparison," Butt said. — *PTI*

OLYMPIC | PREPARATION

Sindhu sings Sang's praises

New Delhi, May 16: The lack of competitions before the Olympics is a major concern for Indian shuttlers but not so much for P. V. Sindhu, who trusts her Korean coach Park Tae Sang to create match situations for her in training itself.

Owing to the raging Covid-19 pandemic, the Badminton World Federation has been forced to cancel the remaining three Olympic qualifiers in India, Malaysia and Singapore. These were to be the last set of events before the Tokyo Games in July-August.

Asked if cancellations will affect her preparations, Sindhu said: "Well, we were thinking that Singapore will be the last event before Olympics but now we don't have another option, so I am playing matches against different players and my coach Park is trying to create match situations for me in training."

"Different players have different styles like Tai Tzu (Ying) or Ratchanok (Intanon) have different styles of play but Park is there to guide me, to prepare me for it. Obviously, we will be playing each other after a few months and there will be something new in our games, so I will have to prepare for



P. V. Sindhu

that," she added.

Sindhu doesn't train with the rest of the Indian Olympic-bound team. She has been training at the Gachibowli indoor stadium in Telangana and does her fitness training at Suchitra academy.

The 25-year-old endorsed BWF's decision to cancel the events, saying while it is sad that competitions could not take place but but life is more important than sports.

"It is sad that the whole world has come to a standstill but before sportspersons, we are human beings and life comes first. If tournaments happen, we don't know if we will be safe, we might think we will be but we can't be sure because we don't know from where this virus will come," Sindhu said. — *PTI*

BHAKER TO WRITE BA EXAMS WHILE SHOOTING IN CROATIA

New Delhi, May 16: Inside her hotel room in Croatian capital Zagreb, India's Olympic medal hope Manu Bhaker is juggling shooting-related activities and studies.

However, a day before the Tokyo-bound Indian shooting contingent hits the range for its first training session in Croatia, Bhaker's pistol will give way to a pen and the shooting gear to her study materials, as she logs in for her BA fourth semester exam.

A student of political science in the Delhi University's prestigious Lady Shri Ram College for Women, the champion shooter's exams start on May 18 while the European Championship in Osijek, in which the Indian team will compete as a guest invitee, begins two days later, from May 20.

The continental tournament and Bhaker's exams will run almost concurrently but she is relieved that the dates of her events are not clashing with the papers. "I will manage both, as I have done in the past. At least I don't have competition on days I have my papers, so it's manageable," Bhaker said. — *PTI*

Djokovic, Nadal set up final clash

Rome, May 16: World number one Novak Djokovic on Saturday battled past Italian Lorenzo Sonego to set up a clash with nine-time winner Rafael Nadal for the sixth time in the Italian Open final.

Defending champion Djokovic won through 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2 in 2hr 44min against the 33rd-ranked Italian after second seed Nadal earlier swept past American Reilly Opelka 6-4, 6-4.

Djokovic had earlier survived a three-set battle with Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas in their rain-delayed quarter-finals.

The five-time Rome winner had been trailing 6-4, 2-1 when the tie was halted overnight.

But he came back to win through 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 after 3hr 16min.

Djokovic and Nadal, who will be facing each other for the 57th time, last played in the 2020 French Open final which the Spaniard won.

The pair have won 14 of the last 16 Rome titles between them while Nadal leads their head-to-head in finals in the Italian capital 3-2.

Djokovic had two match points in the 12th game of the second set of his semi-final before Sonego forced a third set to the delight of the home crowd in the Foro Italico.

The Serb saved three break points in the first game of the third set, coming back from 0-40 before powering towards his 11th Rome final.

"I think I bounced back very well after the second set and 0-40, maybe if he started with a break up in the third it would be different," said Djokovic.

"I've only myself to blame for not closing the match in the second set, I could have and should have. First of all I need to recover. I don't have much time but hopefully I'll have fresh legs necessary to have against Rafa," he added. — *AFP*

Spurs continue last-four quest

London, May 16: Harry Kane scored his 22nd Premier League goal of the season as Tottenham Hotspur beat Wolves 2-0 on Sunday to maintain their hopes of a top-four finish.

England captain Kane fired Spurs ahead on the stroke of half-time before Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg doubled their lead in the 62nd minute.

Victory left Spurs in sixth place, five points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, with a maximum of six points available to them from their final two league games.

The top four in the Premier League are assured of a place in the 2021/22 Champions League.

Already crowned Premier League title-winners Manchester City and Chelsea will contest this season's Champions League final in Porto on May 29.

Earlier, Crystal Palace twice came from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-2, with Tyrick Mitchell's first goal for the club sealing victory six minutes from time.

Victory lifted south London club Palace to 13th. — *AFP*

JUVENTUS PIP INTER TO KEEP ALIVE CL BID

Milan, May 16: Juan Cuadrado scored twice, including a late penalty, as Juventus beat Inter Milan 3-2 to keep their Champions League hopes alive on Saturday in a game where three spot kicks were awarded and both teams finished a man down.

Juve moved up to fourth equal on points with third-placed AC Milan and two points ahead of Napoli who both play on Sunday.

The win ended the 20-match unbeaten run for Antonio Conte's Inter who had denied Juventus a 10th consecutive league title this season. "It was important for us to win so we can keep hoping," said coach Andrea Pirlo.

Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty after 24 minutes but turned in the rebound to bring his tally to a Serie A leading tally 29 goals this campaign. — *AFP*

FABULOUS WIN

Schmeichel hails Leicester's historic win

London, May 16: Kasper Schmeichel described leading Leicester to the club's first ever FA Cup as a dream come true after he played a huge role in beating Chelsea 1-0 on Saturday.

Youri Tielemans's stunning strike just after the hour mark separated the sides in front of the largest sports attendance in England since the coronavirus pandemic hit, with 22,000 fans at Wembley.

But Schmeichel had to rescue his side late on with brilliant saves from Ben Chilwell and Mason Mount. "I've dreamt about this since I was child," said Schmeichel, whose dad Peter Schmeichel won three FA Cups with Manchester United.

"We have talked about wanting to win trophies. The performance today, the grit and determination, I'm so proud of everybody, everybody contributed to get to the final. Everyone has played and been sensational," he added.

Even when Schmeichel was eventually beaten, Chilwell's late equaliser against his former club



Leicester goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel (right) and Wesley Morgan hold the trophy aloft after winning the FA Cup in London on Saturday. — *AP*

was ruled out for offside after a VAR review. "Thank you VAR! What an amazing technology," said Tielemans.

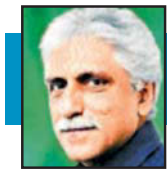
SUPPORT FOR PALESTINE

Leicester players Hamza Choudhury and Wesley Fofana showed support for the Palestinians after winning the FA Cup final. English midfielder Choudhury and French

defender Fofana were seen holding a Palestinian flag. Choudhury had the flagged draped over his shoulders as he collected his winner's medal.

A social media post from Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny also showing his support for the Palestinian people has been hit by a backlash from Jewish fans. — *AFP*

Dravid as NCA head has excelled in making Indian cricket stronger



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

Former Australia captain Greg Chappell has credited Rahul Dravid for India's pre-eminent position in cricket in the past few years. Chappell says Dravid understood the Aussies system of excellence, picked his brains (and of others from

his country) and replicated it successfully as coach of the under-19 and India A teams and now as director of the National Cricket Academy.

The ICC Test rankings put out last week seem to support his contention. India are top of the pops at no.1, New Zealand no. 2

and England no. 3. Australia, vying with India for the top place not too long back, have slipped to no. 4.

Barring a few weeks here and there, India have been no. 1 in the Test rankings for almost five years, which is a remarkable achievement. It shows consistency of performance, the only yardstick for excellence. This is true for India not just in Tests, but also in the other formats.

Fundamentally, India's current strength is based on a regular supply of high quality players. This

was the case with the Australians almost since the time cricket went Down Under. The West Indies too, till three decades back. And therein lies a message.

The West Indies faded away after a decade or so after the Packer Series, but the Australians continued to be strong, and in fact got better. What this showed was that it is not enough to just have a legacy of outstanding talent, also effective systems and structures for sustaining excellence.

Which brings me to why

Indian cricket is flourishing currently.

Primarily, credit must go to the BCCI for spreading the footprint of cricket all over the country. The more youngsters play, the larger the talent pool, the greater the number of elite cricketers. The BCCI has ensured this. It has also put in place institutions like the National Cricket Academy that can make a big difference.

The NCA has been around for just over two decades. For the most period, it functioned as rehab centre-cum-sanatorium for

injured cricketers. While putting cricketers back on their feet is obviously a big part of the academy, the NCA can't be limited to just that.

This is where Dravid has been of great value. As head of NCA he has gone beyond his job profile of being just administrator. He's proactively pursued the agenda of making Indian cricket stronger.

In this, he's drawn not just on his understanding of the Australian system, as Chappell highlights, but has brought his vast experience as player, and coach

of under-19 and India A teams to set up a more dynamic agenda to enrich Indian cricket.

This includes spotting and mentoring talent, mitigating fear of competition in young players and a desire for success.

Dravid's success is not an exhaustive formula or curriculum. It provides a kind of template of intent and practices. For India to keep excelling at the highest level depends on how this is assimilated, absorbed, improved upon at every nodal point in the cricket system.