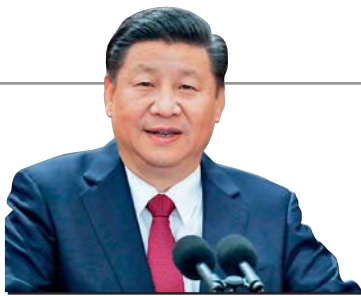


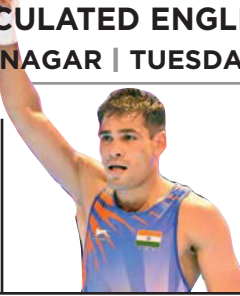
DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
KARIMNAGAR | TUESDAY | 25 MAY 2021



WORLD | 5

China's Wuhan lab staff were treated



SPORTS | 8

Hussam starts well at Asian boxing

TABLOID

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WEATHER

Max: 38.9°C
Min: 25.5°C
RH: 32%
Rain: 0.2 mm

Forecast: Partly cloudy. Thundershowers likely. Max/Min temp. 40/26°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Chaturdasi till 8.28 pm
Star: Swati till 7.04 am, later Vishakha till 4.10 am (Wed)
Varjyam: 12 noon to 1.24 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.20 am to 9.12 am; 11.06 pm to 11.50 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
HILARI CALENDAR
Shawwal 12, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.34 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 4.46 pm
Maghrib: 6.50 pm
Isha: 8.05 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.44 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.41 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.40 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 4.30 AM

COUNTER POINT



Now, I am more worried about my hospital bills!

SHORT TAKES

You can enrol for job on-site

New Delhi: On-site registration and appointment has now been enabled for the 18-44 years age group on the CoWin platform for Covid-19 vaccination, the Union health ministry said on Monday. However, this feature is being enabled only for government Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs) at present, it said. This feature will not be available for private CVCs and they will have to publish their vaccination schedules.

SC notice on Covid ex gratia

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday sought the Centre's reply on pleas seeking ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh to the families of those who have died of Covid-19 and said that there should be a uniform policy for issuing death certificates to those succumbing to the deadly virus. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, sought time to obtain instructions.

Farmers march to Delhi border

Chandigarh: Punjab farmers in large numbers are marching towards Delhi borders, said state BKU leaders in the wake of a call given to observe May 26 as a "black day" to mark six months of the agitation against the Centre's farm laws. Farmers are protesting at the Delhi's Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders since late November, demanding the repeal of the laws, which the Centre claimed is for their benefit.

Suu Kyi attends court in-person

Bangkok: Myanmar's ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, appeared in court in person on Monday for the first time since the military arrested her when it seized power on February 1. One of her lawyers, Min Min Soe, said Suu Kyi was able to meet with her defence team before the hearing began at a special court set up inside the city council building in Naypyitaw.

Full report on Page 5



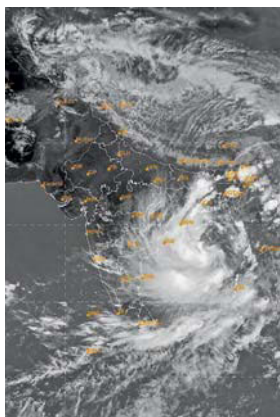
Storm-like weather conditions have developed near Howrah Bridge due to the formation of Cyclone Yaas in the Bay of Bengal, in Howrah, on Monday. The cyclone will make landfall on Wednesday. — PTI

WB, Odisha border to bear brunt

DC CORRESPONDENTS
KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, MAY 24

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday accused the Central government of "repeatedly depriving" West Bengal by allocating a lesser amount of money to her state than the others facing the threat of the "Very Severe" Cyclone Yaas. The cyclone is expected to make its landfall in the afternoon instead of the evening of May 26 near Balasore in Odisha.

"Amit Shah babu held a meeting in the morning and assured us of helping with advance funds which are, however, payable to the states from their share. This is not extra. Odisha and Andhra Pradesh are getting more than ₹600 crore, while it is only around ₹400 crore for



A satellite image shows Cyclone Yaas approaching the east coast. — PTI

Bengal. I pointed out to Mr Shah that Bengal is a bigger state than Odisha and Andhra Pradesh," she said.

Mr Shah chaired a meeting on Monday morning

held through video conferencing to review the preparedness for Cyclone Yaas. Apart from Ms Banerjee, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, and Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar, D.K. Joshi, have attended the meeting.

Mr Shah came up with some key suggestions at the meeting and in particular stressed the need to ensure electricity backup in hospitals with ICUs for uninterrupted ventilator function and oxygen supply for the treatment of Covid patients.

In its bulletin at 4.30 pm, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) stated that Cyclone Yaas "is very likely to move north-northwestwards, intensify further into a Severe Cyclonic Storm during the next 12 hours and into a

Very Severe Cyclonic Storm in the subsequent 24 hours. It would continue to move north-northwestwards, intensify further and reach Northwest Bay of Bengal near north Odisha and West Bengal coasts by 26th May early morning. It is very likely to cross north Odisha-West Bengal coasts between Paradip and Sagar islands around Balasore, during noon of 26th May as a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm."

According to the weather department's forecast, Yaas is likely to clock its maximum wind speed at 155-165 kmph gusting to 185 kmph from 11.30 am on Tuesday for the next 24 hours.

Its maximum wind speed will however drop to 105-115 kmph gusting to 125 kmph 11.30 am onwards covering the landfall till late evening on May 26.

Death for AP serial killer, 11 aides for murdering 13

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 24

In a sensational judgment, the eighth additional sessions court in Ongole sentenced a notorious serial killer Munna and 11 of his gang members to death on Monday.

The court also sentenced seven other members of the gang for life. The accused were involved in the murder of 13 persons and there are seven criminal cases booked against them nearly 13 years ago.

The accused murdered, over a period of one year, drivers and cleaners of several lorries plying on Vijayawada-Chennai National Highway No 16 after stopping the vehicles under the guise of police.

Their modus operandi was to demand the crew members to produce

Modus operandi was to demand the crew members to produce records after signalling to stop and strangle them with a rope when they were showing records.

records after signalling to stop and strangle them with a rope when they were showing records.

They used to keep the bodies in gunny bags and bury them in nearby forest areas and dispose of the loads. They hired an abandoned godown at Maddepadu to dismantle the lorries and sell the spare parts.

The murder spree continued from 2008 to 2009 with the first case involving dreaded criminal Munna and his gang at Taluk Police Station,

Ongole, in 2008.

Thanks to the efforts of a trainee DSP Damodar, who stumbled upon a small piece of evidence, the police could zero in on the suspect Abdul Sammad alias Munna and his gang.

Munna was already accused of murdering some people after luring them in the name of some hidden treasure. He used to eliminate them after collecting huge sums to unearth the treasure.

The police played a key role in detecting the cases and also in preventing Sammad from securing bail with the help of a political leader. However, he managed to secure bail and left for Bengaluru some years ago. However, the Kurnool police arrested him and sent him to remand.

Lockdown likely to get extended

State mulls continuing curbs till June 7

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The Telangana state government is planning to extend lockdown by one more week until June 7. The lockdown with four-hour relaxation every day was imposed in the state on May 12 to contain the spread of Coronavirus and subsequently extended until May 30.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao would review the extension of lockdown on May 28.

Official sources said the health department has submitted a report to the Chief Minister seeking extension of lockdown by one more week.

Following this, the state government too is in favour of extending lockdown by a week as it feels that lockdown imposed since May 12 contributed to decreasing Coronavirus cases.

The government imposed a night curfew from April 20 from 8 pm to 7 am after the second wave of pandemic, leading to a drastic increase in Covid cases across the state. It was followed by the imposition of lockdown from May 12 with a four-hour relaxation from 6 am to 10 am.

The health department's

SECOND DOSE OF VACCINATION TO RESUME TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao directed officials to resume the second dose vaccination in the state from Tuesday. The drive was halted on May 15 due to lack of stocks.

The CM issued orders during the review meeting held on Covid situation in the state on Monday. He asked those who have taken the first dose of vaccine to go to government vaccination centres nearby and take the second dose. He asked minister T. Harish Rao to prepare guidelines to identify super-spreaders and vaccinate them.

report says that the night curfew and lockdown have improved the situation in Telangana.

To ensure that this benefit is not lost, the health department felt that it would be better to extend the lockdown by one more week and take a decision on extension later depend-

VACCINE TENDER PLAN COMES TO NAUGHT FOR TS

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The hopes of the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh governments to procure Covid vaccines through global tenders took a hit after manufacturers told states like Delhi and Punjab that they would not supply directly to the states but would deal with the Centre.

These states had invited global tenders much before the TS did although the AP government was the first in the country to invite global tenders on May 14.

Full report on Page 2

Uppal TRS MLA, Kapra tahsildar in land grab case

DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The Rachakonda police on Monday registered a case against Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MLA from the Uppal constituency Bethi Subhas Reddy and Kapra tahsildar K. Goutham Kumar for allegedly intimidating a property owner in March this year. Following directions from a local court in Medchal, the Jawaharnagar police of the Rachakonda commissionerate booked the case.

"Kapra tahsildar K. Goutham Kumar, without giving any notice or orders of the court, came with a group of persons stating that they were from the revenue department and forcibly removed part of the fence of a property in survey number 152 of Kapra village in March. The driver of the JCB even attempted to kill my client J. Nagaraju," alleged the complainant Mekala Srinivas Yadav.

Though the complainant had served a copy of the

Alleging that Kapra tahsildar Goutham Kumar and MLA Subhas Reddy tampered and created fabricated revenue records, and reports, complainant Mekala Srinivas Yadav approached the court.

High Court orders to Goutham Kumar, the tahsildar threatened and verbally abused him, Srinivas Yadav said.

Later in the same evening on March 16, Goutham Kumar and Subhas Reddy called the complainant and his clients to settle the matter in a hotel and again threatened with dire consequences.

Five days after the incident, on March 21, while Srinivas Yadav was in the Jawaharnagar area, he alleged that some miscreants surrounded him and threatened him with firearms to settle the matter.

Page 2: Court directed police to file case

TWITTER SERVED POLICE NOTICE OVER 'TOOLKIT'

New Delhi, May 24: The Delhi Police's Special Cell on Monday served a notice to Twitter India in connection with the probe into the alleged 'Covid toolkit' matter, with two teams descending on its offices in Delhi and Gurgaon.

"The Delhi police team went to the Twitter office to serve a notice to Twitter, as part of a routine process. This was necessitated as we wanted to ascertain who is the right person to serve a notice, as replies by Twitter India MD have been very ambiguous," Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswal said.

Earlier, sources said that two teams of Special Cell had raided the Twitter India offices located in Delhi's Lado Sarai and in Gurgaon in connection with the probe into the 'toolkit' matter.

The Special Cell has sought a clarification from the microblogging site for classifying a related tweet by BJP leader Sambit Patra as "manipulative", an official said. "It appears that Twitter has some information that is not known to the police. This information is relevant to the inquiry," he said. — PTI

SOCIAL | BEHAVIOUR

Aviation regulator ticks off chartered flight's staff for violation; orders them off the roster

Wedding party flies high to skirt social distancing norms

G BABU JAYAKUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 24

A caper pulled off by a Madurai couple to have their wedding mid-air as a strict lockdown was in place on the ground on Sunday has landed the crew of the SpiceJet aircraft, used for the marriage with a crowd of friends and relatives around, in a soup.

With the video of the ceremony in the sky going viral, several questions were raised since the guests onboard the Boeing

737 flight were not wearing facemasks and not maintaining social distancing, as mandated by aviation rules.

Soon after the video came out, there was also a debate as to which police officer should crack down on the errant crowd. Is it the responsibility of the police district under whose jurisdiction the Madurai airport falls, from where the plane had taken off, or that of the district covering the Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple, over

Initial enquiries revealed that the flight was booked by a travel agent and that it was presumed to be a jolly ride for the guests post-wedding.

All the guests produced negative RT-PCR test certificates for Covid-19, as per the aviation norms, before boarding the flight.

which the aircraft is said to have hovered when the nuptial ceremony was held?

Though such discussions raged only on social media, where someone even identified the couple as Rakesh and Dakshina, Indian civil

aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) cracked the whip on the airline, demanding a report and also taking the crew on board off the roster.

Initial enquiries revealed that the flight was booked

by a travel agent and that it was presumed to be a jolly ride for the guests post-wedding. All the guests produced negative RT-PCR test certificates for Covid-19, as per the aviation norms, before boarding the flight.

According to sources, the passengers were clearly told about the prevailing guidelines on Covid-19 prevention. When the flight was airborne, however, the guests threw all caution to the winds and gathered around the couple, who

took to the aisle to tie the *thali*. The guests were even teasing the couple as it happens in a regular wedding.

Not only the bride but even the guests were also bedecked in glittering jewellery and draped in shimmering silk with jasmine adorning their locks — a scene straight out of any marriage hall during the normal times. And there were also television cameramen and professional photographers jostling amidst the crowd on the

aisle to capture the moment for posterity.

However, the leaking of a video clip on social media led to people talking about it and the airline authorities claiming that the marriage party hoodwinked them in following both the aviation and Covid-19 restrictions for flight passengers.

Since the DGCA prime facie felt that the crew had failed to stop the marriage party from violating the norms, it has ordered for taking them off the roster.

IN BRIEF

COURT DIRECTED
POLICE TO
REGISTER CASE

From Page 1

Alleging that Goutham Kumar and Subhas Reddy tampered and created fabricated revenue records, reports, and court documents purporting the lands to be government lands, the complainant approached the local court.

After examining the documents, the local court directed the police to book a case against the accused and investigate the matter.

Subsequently, the Jawaharnagar police registered a case under Indian Penal Code sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 166-A (public servant disobeying direction of law), 167 (public servant framing incorrect document), 168 (public servant unlawfully engaging in trade), 170 (personation of public servant), 171 (wearing garb or carrying token used by public servant with fraudulent intent), 447 (punishment for criminal trespass), 468 (forgery for the purpose of cheating), 471 (whoever fraudulently or dishonestly uses as genuine any document to be a forged document), 307 (attempt to murder), 506 IPC (criminal intimidation) and further investigation is underway.

ISOLATION CENTRES
IN VILLAGES WITH
MORE THAN 10 CASESDC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 24

Coronavirus cases are rising in mandals of Khammam district, which share border with other states. As a result, Telangana government is serious about not allowing people from neighbouring states to enter Telangana.

Sattupalli assembly segment has nine check posts on the border with Andhra Pradesh, including Bharainpadu, Duddepudi, V-Venkatapuram and KC Mallela.

Many people from neighbouring AP come to these areas in Telangana to buy liquor during curfew relaxation hours.

It is feared it is these people who are spreading Covid-19 in mandals of Khammam bordering Andhra Pradesh. More than five Covid-19 cases have been reported in 45 villages on a single day in Khammam district. Most of these villages are located along the border with other states.

Khammam collector R. V. Karnan said the state government has decided to open isolation centres in villages where more than 10 Covid-19 cases are reported. He maintained that there is no dearth of Remdesivir and oxygen stocks in any government hospital.

He pointed out that 49 private hospitals in the district have been given permission to treat Covid-19 patients. "Stern action will be taken against these hospitals if they violate guidelines of the government, including the amount of fee to be charged," the collector warned.

● **SATTUPALLI ASSEMBLY** segment has nine check posts on the border with Andhra Pradesh, including Bharainpadu, Duddepudi, V-Venkatapuram and KC Mallela. Many people from neighbouring AP come to these areas in Telangana to buy liquor during curfew relaxation hours. It is feared it is these people who are spreading Covid-19 in mandals of Khammam bordering Andhra Pradesh.

KCR to open TS purse
strings to stop Covid

CM says no other priority but contain pandemic

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao said that the state government was ready to spend any amount to contain coronavirus in the state and there is no constraint of funds.

Stating that there is no other priority except for controlling Covid-19, he asked finance minister T. Harish Rao to increase budgetary allocation for health and police departments by decreasing the budget of other departments.

He instructed Harish Rao to identify departments that incur less expenditure and divert those funds to police and health departments, which are

● **RAO HELD** a high-level meeting at Pragathi Bhavan to review the Coronavirus situation in the state on Monday with senior officials.

● **RAO ASKED** officials to implement a 'dual pronged strategy' to check the spread of virus. He said that Coronaviru tests should be increased substantially while at the same time there was a need to intensify the ongoing door-to-door fever survey.

incurring heavy expenditure in the fight against Covid-19.

Rao held a high-level meeting at Pragathi Bhavan to review the Coronavirus situation in the state on Monday. Senior officials from health, police and other departments were present.

Rao asked officials to implement a 'dual pronged strategy' to check the spread of virus. He said that Coronaviru tests

should be increased substantially while at the same time there was a need to intensify the ongoing door-to-door fever survey. Those showing symptoms should be provided with medical kits, he said.

He sought purchase of 50 lakh rapid antigen test kits in order to increase corona tests.

The Chief Minister instructed corona task force chairman K.T.

Rama Rao to talk to vaccine manufacturers for supply of the quantity needed for the second dose.

Rao said that around 160 beds in Gandhi hospital and 200 in Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital should be earmarked separately for black fungus patients.

He said the bed strength for black fungus patients should be increased to 1,500 in the State with 1,100 of them earmarked for Hyderabad.

"People from the neighboring States are coming here for treatment of Covid and black fungus."

It appears that we cannot escape from giving treatment to people from other states," Rao said.

Drinking water problem in villages
adding to Covid crisis in old AdilabadDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 24

The problem of drinking water is worse than the Covid crisis at some villages in tribal and rural areas in the Adilabad district this summer. Some villages in Komaram Bheem Asifabad district are also facing serious water problems.

Women are waiting for hours to fetch water from borewells and many of them walk long distances under the scorching Sun to get water for their household needs.

Mission Bhagiratha of the Telangana govern-

● **Mission Bhagiratha** of the Telangana government has not reached many villages and there is irregular water supply in these areas. As a result, women with empty pots were seen making a beeline to the lone bore well to fetch water in Gattepelli in Indravelli mandal.

ment has not reached many villages and there is irregular water supply in these areas. As a result, women with empty pots were seen making a beeline to the lone bore well to fetch water in Gattepelli in

Indravelli mandal. The same is the case with the Sungapoor, Chorgoan villages in Narnoor mandal.

Villagers in Chilatiguda are facing an acute drinking water problem due to irregular supply of Mission Bhagiratha water. There are frequent power cuts affecting water supply, and there exists the problem of defunct borewells too, in Dodanda gram panchayat in Indravelli mandal.

Villagers in Chilatiguda areas are collecting drinking water from the old well.

Drinking water problems are acute in areas where Mission Bhagiratha water is not reaching. Many areas where its water is reaching are having irregular supplies.

Drinking water problem is acute in Gadiguda, Narnoor, Indravelli and Utnoor mandals in the Adilabad district.

There are allegations that Mission Bhagiratha officials and Rural Water Scheme (RWS) staff are not visiting villages to monitor the water supply in view of the Covid second wave and the lockdown.

KCR CREATING
ETALA, HARISH
RIFT: MAHASABHADC CORESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 24

Javvaji Kumaraswamy, the president of Mudiraj Mahasabha in Huzurabad constituency, alleged on Monday that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is trying to create a rift between former health minister Etala Rajendar and finance minister T. Harish Rao.

The leaders of the Mudiraj Mahasabha staged a dharna alleging that the TRS is trying to spoil the image of Rajendar by making "false" allegations of land-grab in Ellanthakunta mandal of Huzurabad assembly constituency. Kumaraswamy recalled that the CM had often stated that Rajendar and Harish Rao were with him from the time of the TRS's inception and they faced a lot of hardships for achieving statehood.

Now Chandrashekar Rao is trying to create a wedge between "true friends". Many leaders along with Harish Rao were facing "injustice" in the party, like Rajendar, with the intake of new leaders from outside.

BJP sets off on farm protest

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar charged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao was ruling like Kaala Yama and alleged that his family assets were increasing by the day while farmers were being pushed into debts.

Participating in Rythu Gosa - BJP Poru Deeksha - against the state government's failure in purchasing paddy, he said that Rao visited Gandhi and MGM hospital because of pressure mounted by BJP in the form of protests and agitations. He slammed Rao for not honouring his free urea and seeds promises. He said that farmers were struggling at IKP purchase centres.

The BJP leader alleged that farmers were not being paid for the produce that had been purchased. He demanded the Chief Minister to review the situation and purchase the entire paddy crop.

Party national vice-president D.K. Aruna alleged that the state government had failed to procure paddy even after the Union Government had made certain exemptions. She said that the produce that was to be purchased by April-end remains unsold. She said that the situation was so bad that farmers are yet to be given the required number of gunny bags. Arrangements should be made to procure and transport paddy from villages, she said.

Former MP Vijayashanti said that the promises made by Rao during his Warangal tour and those made earlier remain unfulfilled. She said that the Chief Minister had timed his Warangal tour during corona time as in normal circumstances people would have daringly come out and questioned his administrative lapses.

Senior leaders Muralidhar Rao, Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy, former MLAs and other leaders participated in the protest from their residences.

● **THE BJP leader** alleged that farmers were not being paid for the produce that had been purchased. He demanded the Chief Minister to review the situation and purchase the entire paddy crop.



BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi before taking part in the Telangana Raithu Gosa - BJP Poru Deeksha, a protest on farmer issues, at the party office at Nampally.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

COMPLETE PADDY PROCUREMENT
IMMEDIATELY, DEMANDS RAO PADMADC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 5

BJP Warangal Urban District President Rao Padma observed the Telangana Rythu Gosa - Deeksha at her residence in Hammakonda on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Padma said farmers are going through untold troubles because of the lapses in the procurement of paddy by the state government.

Farmers who take the grain to the agricultural markets are forced to wait for 10 to 15 days before it is purchased. Because of the unseasonal rains, the grain brought by the farmers is getting damp.

"The state government has so far not even procured 40 per cent of the grain. In fact, the purchase of grains should have been completed by the end of April but so far the farmers have not even been supplied with gunny bags. The situation of the farmers

● **FURTHER ADDING**, "It is a pity that minimum facilities are not provided to the farmers at the purchasing centers. Some buying centers are neglecting to pay money for grain purchased. Only 10 per cent to 35 per cent of the payments were made in some centers."

is further worrisome as the lock down regulations are tightened," she said.

Further adding, "It is a pity that minimum facilities are not provided to the farmers at the purchasing centers."

Some buying centers are neglecting to pay money for grain purchased. Only 10 per cent to 35 per cent of the payments were made in some centers."

Rao Padma demanded the state government to focus on paddy procurement and expedite grain purchases on a war footing.

BJP MP, SOYAM BAPURAO OBSERVED
Rythu Poru Deeksha in Adilabad

Adilabad: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders on Monday observed one-day Poru deeksha on farmers' problems and demanded the state govt to purchase Paddy, Jowar and other crops from farmers.

Adilabad BJP MP Soyam Bapurao criticized the state government and Chief Minister K.Chandrasekhar Rao for its failure to purchase the crops from the farmers

after asked the farmers to cultivate a selected crops.

He said reminded that a farmer committed suicide by disappointing over the government not purchasing jowar crop in Boath.

Adilabad BJP MP Soyam Bapurao and party district president Payal Shankar and district vice-president Dinesh Matolia and others sat on one-day Poru deeksha at MP office.

BJP observes Rythu Gosa protests

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 24

BJP leaders staged demonstrations in Nizamabad district on Monday to highlight farmers' problems. As asked by the BJP state leadership, they observed Telangana Rythu Gosa protests at the BJP offices and at their homes.

The deeksha was held from 10am to 1 pm. In view of the Covid19 pandemic and lockdown, limited numbers of leaders took part.

Nizamabad MP Dharmapuri Arvind observed deeksha at his residence in Hyderabad on Monday. In a video clip, he said farmers are worried over the fate of paddy procurement. The Monsoon is approaching, but the state government has failed to complete even 50 per cent of the

procurement. The TRS government conspired with rice millers and the farming community is incurring losses, he alleged.

The MP said turmeric farmers are getting a Rs 3,000 benefit at the initiative of the BJP government. "If the Telangana government writes a letter, the central government would declare a bonus for turmeric farmers under the MI scheme," he said.

Arvind said the TRS government is denying several existing benefits to farmers on the pretext of its introduction of the Rythu Bandhu scheme.

The BJP Bodhan assembly constituency in-charge Medapati Prakash Reddy observed Rythu Gosa deeksha at his residence in Hyderabad. He said the government should procure the

paddy on a war footing. The paddy was lying in the open and unseasonal rainfall would damaged the paddy. The BJP would intensify the agitations on farmers' issues soon, he said.

BJP state executive committee member Dhanpal Suryanarayana Gupta has called for purchase of damaged paddy from farmers. The paddy was lying in market yards for the last 15 days. Officials failed to purchase it, and rain will damage it, he said.

Gupta along with municipal corporators Master Shankar, Nagolla Laxminarayana, Bykan Madhu observed Rythu Gosa deeksha at his residence. BJP state vice president, former MLA Endala Laxminarayana observed deeksha at the BJP office in Nizamabad.



Luxettipet police drop the two girl students in Utnoor of Adilabad district.

LUXETTIPET COPS ARRANGE VEHICLE TO DROP TWO GIRL STUDENTS
WAITING AT BUS STOP TO REACH UTNOOR IN LOCKDOWNDC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY. 24

The Luxettipet police helped out to Engineering girl students who held up in Luxettipet bus stand and not finding buses or autos to go to Utnoor early in the morning on Monday.

The two girls were coming

to Utnoor from Hyderabad but they did not get the direct bus to Utnoor and they got down at Luxettipet in Mancherla district.

Along with their luggage, both the girls were waiting for the vehicles to go to Utnoor.

Luxettipet SI Chandrasekhar and Trainee

SI Haimavathi who were present there had arranged the police patrolling vehicle for the girls to drop them in the Utnoor.

The two girls thanked the police for arranging their vehicle for their transportation to reach Utnoor in Adilabad district.

YAAS | IMPACT

AP government says officers are busy gearing up for cyclone

KRMB meet put off, AP for new office

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The Krishna River Management Board (KRMB) meeting scheduled to be held on Tuesday to discuss water allocations to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for the new water year set to begin on June 1, has been postponed at the last minute.

The KRMB on Monday announced the meeting was postponed following the request of the Andhra Pradesh government and

the fresh date would be notified later.

It said that the AP government sought postponement of the meeting on the grounds of officials being engaged in Yaas cyclone relief measures and Polavaram project works due to which they could not attend the meeting. The meeting will be held in virtual mode in view of Covid second wave and lockdown in both the states.

The KRMB last met on March 9 in virtual mode but the meeting ended

● **THE KRISHNA RIVER** Management Board office is likely to be shifted from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam.

abruptly due to technical glitches in video conferencing. Official sources said the KRMB had included the issue of AP and TS not releasing funds to the board in time to meet its administrative costs in the agenda of the meeting.

As per the agreement, both the states have to bear the expenditure

equally. The amount will be utilised for payment of salaries to staff, installing telemetry devices at irrigation projects to gauge the consumption of water by both the states accurately to avoid disputes over water sharing besides meeting day-to-day administrative expenses.

The board wants to seek Rs 18 crore for the new water year. Last year, the board sought Rs 8 crore, but only the Telangana government released its share of ₹4 crore. Sources

said the AP government owed dues for the last two years. The KRMB office is likely to be shifted from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam. As per AP Reorganisation Act, 2014, the office of Godavari River Management Board (GRMB) should be located in Telangana and KRMB in AP. However, the KRMB continues to function from Hyderabad so far and the AP government is strongly demanding to shift the KRMB office to Visakhapatnam immediately.

OTHER STORIES

HOUSEWIFE AND LOVER ARRESTED FOR BURGLARY

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KHAMMAM, MAY 24

Police arrested a housewife and her friend for burgling her own house in Karepalli on Monday.

Archana Darak, wife of pawn-broker Sivaprakash Darak, and her friend Bathula Venkata Krishna Prasad were taken into custody and jewellery weighing 1,330 grams, 2,330 grams silver and a laptop, worth ₹63 lakh, were seized from their possession. Sivaprakash and Archana Darak were married in 2008 and they have three children.

His customers were mostly farmers, who mortgaged jewellery and took loans.

Following disputes, Archana moved to her parents' place in Guntur. Police said that she developed extra-marital relations with one Bathula Venkata Krishna Prasad (27), resident of Gannavaram, and decided to marry him.

She went to Karepalli following her mother-in-law's demise. She hatched a plan to decamp with the jewelry from Siva Prakash's house and called Venkata Krishna to come to Karepalli.

While the family members were busy, Archana took the keys of the locker from the pocket of her husband. She opened the locker and took the jewelry and silver from it.

She asked Venkata Krishna, who was waiting for her call in Karepalli railway station, to come to the village. She handed over the stolen ornaments and asked him to sell them.

Siva Prakash, who found that the jewelry was missing from his locker, lodged a complaint in Karepalli police station.

The police on getting a lead took Venkata Krishna into custody and recovered the loot. He and Archana pleaded guilty.

WOMEN ARRESTED FOR HARASSING LOVER'S WIFE

DC CORRESPONDENT
 HYDERABAD MAY 24

A 33-year-old woman who fell in love with a married person and started black-mailing his spouse was arrested by Rachakonda cybercrime police on Monday. Police said the accused, Alluri Neha, a team leader at a multinational company, lost her job due the pandemic.

Police alleged that Neha met a person at a gym in Nagole fell in love with him. On coming to know that he was married, she created multiple fake social media accounts, purchased new mobile numbers and started sending vulgar and abusive messages to the victim and her family members, claiming to be having an extra-marital affair with the man.

She demanded ransom to stop her from further defaming the man, the police said. She even registered an allegedly false case with the LB Nagar police against the victim's husband.

Upon receiving the complaint, the Rachakonda cybercrime police started investigation, traced Neha and took her into custody.

FOLLOW | RULES

How can leaders be allowed to violate Covid-19 norms, ask people

Leaders flout rules, public cries foul

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KARIMNAGAR, MAY 24

With elected representatives of people themselves resorting to violation of lockdown rules, the police, government officials and common public seem to be at their wits' end in the undivided Karimnagar district.

Not only people's representatives, but also their relatives are throwing cautions to the wind and are going against the Covid norms, causing troubles to officials of police department who are discharging their duties risking their lives in the pandemic situation.

As per the orders issued by the state government, police officials are implementing the lockdown rules strictly without spar-

ing anyone who are violating the norms. They are imposing fines and seizing vehicles of those who are venturing out of homes without valid reasons.

At Dubbapally checkpoint in Sultanabad mandal of Peddapalli district on Sunday, the police stopped a vehicle which belongs to one of the relatives of Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) Peddapalli MLA, Dasari Manohar Reddy, after the lockdown relaxation hours and asked him the reason why he came out at odd hours of lockdown.

The person who introduced himself as Dasari Anji Reddy, a relative of Peddapalli MLA, informed the police first that he was a farmer and was going to sell the produce and when questioned about the pro-

duce and about e-pass, he said he was returning from a wedding ceremony. When asked about the wedding invitation card, he could not show it to the police.

Anji Reddy then asked the police to impose a fine which he would pay and then leave, warning them not to stop him saying that he did not have patience to wait until they completed their procedures.

Apart from that, he indulged in heated arguments with the police officials and started abusing them and threatened that he would use his political influence against them.

Meanwhile, the higher officials who reached the spot asked the policemen on duty to note the number and later let him go as he

was creating a ruckus on the road.

In another incident of lockdown rules violation, Backward Class Welfare minister Gangula Kamalakhar held a press meet after the relaxation hours at about 12.30 pm in a hotel, that too without following the Covid rules.

More than 20 leaders sat at one place to hold the press meet without maintaining physical distance. The press meet was not meant to convey a message in the best interest of the public but was related to the party's internal issue.

Recently, Choppadandi MLA Sunke Ravi Shankar held a mass gathering to distribute Kalyana Lakshmi and Chief Minister Relief Fund cheques to beneficiaries

violating the Covid rules.

The Congress leaders even lodged a complaint in the police station against the MLA, urging to register the case under Contagious Disease Act and Disaster Management Act for violating rules.

People alleged that when the leaders who must create awareness among the public about taking precautionary steps to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, themselves were violating the rules, then how could they ask the common people to follow them.

A rule is rule for all, the government must take some initiative and should issue strict orders to take action against such leaders also, they demanded.

STORY OF HOPE



Minister Satyavathi Rathod inaugurates the Covid ward in government hospital of Mahbubabad on Monday. ZP chairperson Angoth Bindu, MLA Shankar Nayak, municipal chairman Rammohan Reddy, collector V.P. Gautam and other officials were present on the occasion.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

NRI couple donate equipment to set up Covid ward in Mahbubabad

DC CORRESPONDENT
 WARANGAL, MAY 24

An NRI couple Premchandra Vedekke Vattoli and Poornima Menon from Sydney, Australia helped set up a 40 – bedded Covid ward in the government hospital in Mahbubabad. They donated the required equipment worth ₹20,86,442 to the hospital in a bid to help the nation fight against the Covid pandemic. The ward was inaugurated by higher officials, on Monday.

Retired IAS officer Ramachandru Tejavath, who helped the couple direct their funds towards the dire requirement, said, “As a collector from local Thanda person I am happy that I could make it till here, Thanda, district has a part in my success journey I am very thankful to Premchandra who wanted to extend their help during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

He further added, “When Premchandra himself called me with his intentions to help government asked for my sugges-



Premchandra Vedekke Vattoli and Poornima Menon

tion, I tried to direct them to donate Remdesivir injections to the Telangana state but that could not because of some reasons. At that stage, my wife suggested to do something for our native Mahabubabad, which is still backward in health services. When I contacted Dr B Jagadheswar, a civil Surgeon he informed that they badly are in need of Covid Beds. After going through the proper channels I was able to guide Premchandra to make the donation for the Covid ward.”

Minister for tribal welfare Satyavathi Rathod, who inaugurated the ward at the hospital thanked NRI couple for their generosity and appealed to

more donors to come forward and help the people in this covid-19 crisis.

“The building was intended for the Radiology Lab constructed at a cost of ₹68 lakh. However, under the present circumstances, it is being used as a Covid ward with oxygen and state-of-the-art equipment. People need not be afraid when Covid is infected. The government is providing all the facilities,” she said.

ZP Chairperson Angoth Bindu, MLA Shankar Nayak, Municipal Chairman Rammohan Reddy, Collector VP Gautam, Additional Collector Abhilasha Abhinav were present among others.

Govt accused of giving false Covid death details

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KHAMMAM, MAY 24

Statistics about Covid-19 deaths being released by the State government every day are wrong, all over. CPI (ML) New Democracy state deputy secretary Potu Ranga Rao, providing evidence on the ill-conceived details, said, “The State government released a Covid-19 bulletin by saying that about 19 persons died due to the virus in Telangana. The fact is that about 22 persons succumbed to the virus in erstwhile Khammam district on that day. We have details of all those who died of Covid on that particular day.”

Ranga Rao wanted to know why the government was giving wrong details pertaining to Covid-19 and why it was showing a lesser death toll.

“Why is the government showing vacant beds and availability of oxygen

● “WHY IS the government showing vacant beds and availability of oxygen cylinders when people are failing to get a bed and oxygen? It is proven that the government is misleading people.

cylinders when people are failing to get a bed and oxygen? It is proven that the government is misleading people. The situation is alarming and the government is merely trying to cover up its failure in handling the spread”, he said.

Giving the details with regard to Khammam and Bhadradri districts, he said the dead included three each in Yellandu and Tekulapalli mandals, two each in Sattupalli, Gundala and Kallur, one each in Karakagudem, Penuballi, Karepalli, Mudigonda, Bonakal, Ch a n d r u g o n d a, Aswapuram, Pinapaka, Thirumalayapalem and Kusumanchi mandals.

Covid-19 positivity rate drops in Nizamabad dist

Out of 1,227 tests conducted, 120 persons (9.77 %) tested +ve

DC CORRESPONDENT
 NIZAMABAD, MAY 24

For the first time, the Covid-19 positivity rate has reduced to single-digit in Nizamabad district on Monday. Of the 1,227 tests including 62 RT PCR tests, a total 120 persons (9.77 per cent) tested positive. For the last two months, Covid19 positivity rate for the district was in double digit and ranged from 10 to 25 per cent.

Precautions taken by the people and the decrease in tests have resulted in the low positivity rate. The single digit positivity rate is a good sign – that the spread is under substantive check.

The district administration conducted 3.51 lakh tests so far in which 34,195 persons tested positive. The national average remained at 12.66 on Monday.

Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, GGH critical care head Dr Kiran Madala said that as per WHO guidelines, a below 5 per cent positivity rate signified an “under control” situation. The central government has also declared that the above-10 per cent positive districts are in the red.

Household survey and strict lockdown may reduce the positivity rate, he said.

Dr Kiran Madala said

TPTF: OFFER ₹50L EXGRATIA FOR STAFF INFECTED WHILE POLL DUTY

DC CORRESPONDENT
 NIZAMABAD, MAY 24

Telangana progressive teachers' federation state president K. Ramana, associate president Y. Ashok Kumar, additional general secretary N. Tirupati, general secretary Maisa Srinivasulu demanded ₹50 lakh ex-gratia for teachers and employees who infected with Covid-19 during election duty and succumbed.

Ignoring the suggestions of unions and parties, byelections were conducted in Nagarjunasagar, Warangal, Khammam districts, they said.

Few teachers and employees were infected with Covid-19 and died while undergoing treatment, they said.

State government should list out the deceased families and declare ₹50 lakh ex-gratia and also reimburse for the medical bills who are under going Covid-19 treatment, they demanded.

● IGNORING THE suggestions of unions and parties, byelections were conducted in Nagarjunasagar, Warangal, Khammam districts, they said.

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KARIMNAGAR, MAY 24

Karimnagar collector K. Shashanka on Monday said four additional Covid care centres are being set up in the district for isolating Corona positive patients and looking after them. Participating in a tele-conference with health officials and nodal officers of Karimnagar district, he said these centres are being set up in Chigurumamidi, Ganneruvaram, Manakondaur and Choppadandi mandals. Shashanka wanted adequate medical officers

some 50 per cent of the beds are currently vacant and the oxygen demand too reduced by 30 per cent due to the decrease in Covid19 cases. There is also a drop in critical cases and people are taking precautions.

He said that the average Covid-19 positivity rate in Nizamabad district during the first and second waves was steady at 8 per cent.

Meanwhile, Covid-19 spread was brought under

and ANMs to be posted at these centres for taking care of Coronavirus patients. Apart from treatment, nutritious food will also be made available to the patients, he stated.

The collector ordered panchayat secretaries and village staff to monitor sanitation facilities at primary health centres and isolation centres every day to ensure proper hygiene and protect Covid patients from any infections.

Depending on the requirement, he said isolation centres could also be opened in zilla parishad high schools of major vil-

lage panchayats.

Shashanka said arrangements must be made to ensure oxygen supply at various Covid hospitals. Covid guidelines should also be implemented throughout the district, including not permitting more than 40 guests at wedding functions.

Additional collector Shyam Prasad Lal, city commissioner Valluri Kranti, district medical and health officer Dr. Juvieria, district Government Main Hospital superintendent Dr. Ratnamala were among those who participated in the tele conference.

Prof. Mallesham takes charge as Satavahana University V-C

DC CORRESPONDENT
 KARIMNAGAR, MAY 24

The newly appointed Vice-chancellor of Satavahana University Prof. Sankasala Mallesham took charge at the administrative building of the university in Karimnagar district on Monday.

After six years, the University got a regular VC. To get identity from NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) the newly appointed VC Prof. Mallesham need to focus on improvement of the standards of education along with providing necessary infrastructure in various branches.

To upgrade the university and to get funds from RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan) for developing the University, there is a need to include new professional courses which are highly beneficial for the students and recruitment of permanent teaching and non-teaching staff in the university.



(Left) Prof. Sankasala Mallesham takes charge as Vice-chancellor for Satavahana University in Karimnagar, and (Right) Prof. D. Ravinder for Telangana University of Nizamabad.

TU V-C: TOP PRIORITY FOR SCI, TECH RESEARCH

DC CORRESPONDENT
 NIZAMABAD, MAY 24

Prof D. Ravinder took

charge as vice chancellor for Telangana University in Dichpally on Monday. D. Ravinder said that top priority will be given for research in science and technology. “We will try to get a top position in research in Telangana state”, he said. “I will encourage the faculty and researchers to get opportunities at the

International level in research of science and technology stream”, he explained.

He interacted with teaching faculty and administrative staff. Speaking to newsmen, the new vice chancellor, Ravinder said that he visited US, UK, Canada, Sweden, Ireland, Japan, Singapore on research and his experience in International academics will help the researchers here.

CONSTABLE INJURED IN ROAD MISHAP

Hyderabad: A constable heading home to celebrate his marriage anniversary met with an accident at Punjagutta on Monday and is in coma at a hospital.

Police said N. Venu Babu, 36, working with the Mirchowk police, was heading home. He lost control of his bike at about 10 am near Amerpet.


Police said Babu sustained grave injuries. The Punjagutta police rushed him to a nearby private hospital where the doctors determined that he had gone into coma.


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E-Tender Notice No : CO-M-L206-4-E42550-TN dated 25/05/2021
 Konkan Railway Corporation Limited invites open tender electronically through website www.ireps.gov.in for the following works : **General Upkeep, Maintenance, Services including provision of subsidized meals at Ratnagiri Running room on Contract basis for a period of Two years. Estimated Cost: ₹ 2.14 Crore exclusive of GST. EMD: NIL. Last Date & Time of Submitting Tender in Website : 17/06/2021 up to 15:00 Hrs. Date & Time of Opening of Tender: 15:30 hrs. 17/06/2021.** Other details may be viewed on the website www.ireps.gov.in


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 Email: mails@muthootgroup.com. Website: www.muthootfinance.com.
 All our esteemed customers are hereby informed that the online auction of various accounts of the following branches that was scheduled on 25.05.2021 through Shriram Automall India Ltd. (SAMIL) on their online platform <https://gold.samil.in> is postponed to 17.06.2021 between 12:30 PM to 03:30 PM on the same portal due to technical reasons. All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.
 ADILABAD-DWARAKA NAGAR(2244)- ADILABAD-M G ROAD(2243)- BANSWADA-(AP)(12299)- BANSWADA-NIZAMBAD ROAD(3986)- BHAINSA - (AP)(3662)- BODHAN (AP)(3948)- KAMAREDDY - VIVEKANANDA COLONY(3414)- METPALLY-(AP)(2468)- NANDIPET - (TE)(4738)- NIRMAL - (AP)(3248)- NIZAMABAD - VINAYAKA NAGAR(4774)- NIZAMABAD -KANTESHWAR(2116)- NIZAMABAD(0886)- NIZAMABAD-ARMOOR(2840)- NIZAMABAD-HYDERABAD ROAD(2730)- NIZAMABAD-BODAN ROAD(2392)- SIRICILLA-(AP)(2383)-
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 Date : 25.05.2021

SHORT TAKES

SC SEEKS REPLY ON PLEA FOR COMPENSATION

New Delhi, May 24: The Supreme Court on Monday sought the Centre's reply on pleas seeking ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh to the families of those who have died from Covid-19 and said that there should be a uniform policy for issuing death certificates to those succumbing to the deadly virus.

A vacation bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M.R. Shah also asked the Centre to place before it the ICMR guidelines on death certificates for Covid-19 victims, saying there should be uniform policy for issuing such documents.

The apex court was hearing two separate pleas seeking directions to the Centre and states to provide ₹4 lakh compensation to the families of Coronavirus victims as provisioned under the Disaster Management Act of 2005, and a uniform policy for issuing death certificates.

The bench said unless there was a uniform policy for issuance of any official document or death certificate stating that the cause of death was Covid, the kin of the victims would not be able to claim benefits of any compensation scheme, if given.

Justice Shah asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for Centre in the matter, whether there is any uniform policy on death certificates as there are many situations of death, where reason is not given as Covid.

MAHA PROMISES FREE TREATMENT FOR BLACK FUNGUS

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MAY 24

The Maharashtra government told the Aurangabad bench of the Bombay High Court on Monday that fungal ailment mucormycosis was now covered under the Mahatma Jyotiroa Phule Jan Aarogya Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana. Citizens will receive free treatment for mucormycosis at pre-identified hospitals and nursing homes across Maharashtra under those schemes.

The Maharashtra government told a bench of Justice R.V. Ghuge and Justice B.U. Debadwar that 1,000 more hospitals would be empanelled for treating mucormycosis under the above two schemes soon.

The government also said that not only anti-fungal medicines, required for treating mucormycosis, will be provided free of cost to patients admitted in these hospitals, but also private hospitals will be restrained from raising astronomical bills. The government said it was also working on capping the cost of the treatment for mucormycosis at private hospitals in the state.

The bench was also informed that citizens, even those who did not hold cards for the insurance schemes mentioned above, could avail the treatment for mucormycosis at the 130 hospitals identified by it across the state for free of cost.

SC: EXPEDITE REGISTRATION OF GUEST WORKERS

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 24

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre and the states to expedite the registration of guest workers and those working in the unorganised sectors so that the benefits of the schemes framed to mitigate their sufferings in the wake of Covid pandemic actually reach them.

"Every state has social security scheme but our anxiety is that the benefits of the schemes are not reaching the targeted section", said a bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice M.R. Shah while hearing a matter relating to the 'problems and miseries of guest workers' in the wake of Covid pandemic taken up by the court on its own motion.

Directing the registration of all the guest workers including those in unorganised sector, the court directed all the states and Union Territories to make operational the community kitchen for the stranded guest workers wherever they may be situated.

It further ordered that the guest workers stranded anywhere in the country should be provided the dry ration under the Atma-Nirbhar Scheme or any other suitable scheme.

AIIMS chief says recovered patients need longer care

Says Covid-19 patients are suffering from cough, breathlessness, brain fogging

VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 24

AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria on Monday said that recovered patients need longer care as several of them will experience symptoms such as coughing, breathlessness, brain fogging, chest pain, anxiety, increased pulse rate and heart beat, joint pain, body ache, insomnia, fatigue etc and they need to be treated for these.

"If the symptoms are seen for 4-12 weeks, it is called ongoing symptomatic Covid or post-acute Covid syndrome. If symptoms are seen for more than 12 weeks, it is called post-Covid syndrome," Dr Guleria said.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 positivity rate is steadily declining and is 12.66 per cent at present as the country recorded 2.22 lakh fresh cases on Monday. However, toll still remains a cause of concern. In the last 24 hours, 4,454 new fatalities were recorded.

The National Mortality Rate currently stands at 1.14 per cent and 10 states account for 79.52 per cent of the deaths in the last 24 hours out of which Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties followed by Karnataka.

Covid recovered patients are now outnumbering fresh detections and 3.02 lakh patients were discharged from medical supervision in the last 24 hours.

However, the rising cases of Mucormycosis (Black

Lockdown extended in Raj, Haryana, Bihar, U'khand

New Delhi, May 24: Lockdown was extended in Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Puducherry, with many states already imposing Covid-induced restrictions till May-end to rein in the spread of infection and the mounting deaths which crossed the three lakh mark.

The Rajasthan government, which extended the Coronavirus lockdown by 15 days till June 8, also said the state may allow some relaxations in commercial activities from June 1 in districts where the Covid-19 situation will show significant improvement.

Extending the lockdown till May 31, the Haryana government said the positivity and fatality rates have to be brought down further, though it did allow some relaxations in the curbs. Haryana state chief secretary Vijai Vardhan, in an order, said the lockdown, which was earlier imposed till May

24, has been extended till May 31. However, certain relaxations were given like standalone shops have been allowed to function during the day. The other shops, except in malls, are allowed to open from 7 am to 12 pm on an odd-even basis.

Lockdown was also extended in Bihar and Himachal Pradesh till May end while Uttarakhand too decided to continue with the Covid-induced curfew, as several states said that the restrictions have led to an improvement in the pandemic situation.

The Nitish Kumar government extended till June 1 the lockdown that has been in force for nearly a month in Bihar: "The lockdown has had a good impact and there has been a decline in the corona contagion. Hence, a decision has been taken to continue with the lockdown till June 1", Chief Minister Nitish Kumar tweeted after chairing a high-level meeting con-

vened to review the pandemic situation in the state.

The Uttarakhand government extended the Covid-19 related curfew period, which was to end on Tuesday morning, till June 1.

Himachal Pradesh government has extended the corona curfew in the state till May 31, an official spokesperson said. The decision to extend the curfew till six am on May 31 was taken in the state cabinet meeting chaired by the Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur here on Monday, he added.

Among the southern states, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Telangana have extended their lockdown this month, while Andhra Pradesh will continue to have curfew. The Puducherry government on Sunday announced the extension of the ongoing lockdown till May 31 as Covid-19 cases continue to soar in the Union Territory. — PTI

only for government Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs) presently. This feature is not available for private CVCs presently and they have to publish their vaccination schedules with slots for online appointments.

The walk-in vaccination will be available only if there are vaccines left unused in case those who have registered online do not turn up on the day of the vaccination.

"Even though CoWIN provides for features such as registration of up to four beneficiaries with a mobile number... those without access to the internet or smart phones or mobile phones may still have limited access for vaccination. Therefore, the feature for on-site registration and appointment is now being enabled for the 18-44 years age group on CoWIN," Union health ministry said.

The Centre has left states/UTs to decide on opening of on-site registrations for the 18-44 years age group based on the local context, officials added. Union health ministry has advised states and UTs that abundant caution should be exercised and extreme due care should be taken while opening up on-site registration and appointment for 18-44 years age group, in order to avoid overcrowding at vaccination centres.

With states struggling to meet the growing demand for vaccines, the nationwide vaccination drive will suffer further delays.



A police officer marks a shop with 'O' for 'Odd' for relaxation in the opening of shops during the lockdown in Gurugram on Monday. — PTI

MP relaxes curfew norms in 5 districts

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAY 24

Graded unlocking of Madhya Pradesh which has been under 'corona curfew' or lockdown since April 24, began on Monday with the state government ordering relaxations in curbs in five districts.

The five districts where relaxation of lockdown was made were Jhabua, Alirajpur, Khandwa, Burhanpur and Bhind. Accordingly, functioning of government offices with cent per cent officers and 25 per cent employees has been allowed in these districts, while shops dealing with groceries have been permitted to open during the day.

Construction activities have also been allowed with Covid-19 protocol in these districts.

The decision to lift curbs in these districts was taken in the wake of sharp drop in fresh Coronavirus positive cases and fatalities in the past couple of weeks.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has earli-

er dropped hints that unlocking of the state would be done in a phased manner considering improvement of pandemic situation in particular districts.

Madhya Pradesh has recorded sharp fall in active cases in the past one week.

The number of Coronavirus active cases which had crossed one lakh mark eight days ago came down to 53,653 on Monday. The state on Monday reported 2,963 fresh cases taking the tally of cases to 7,67,274.

The state has recorded 60 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the death toll to 7,618.

Meanwhile, the state government has started preparations to face the challenge of a possible third wave of pandemic in the state.

The state government has set up two dedicated children Covid care centres in Bhopal and Indore following warning by experts that children may be hit more in the upcoming third wave of pandemic that may hit the country by December.

Safety first



People wait in their cars for a Covid-19 vaccine shot at a drive-in centre in Noida on Monday. — PTI



A BMC health worker screens passengers for Covid-19 at a railway station in Mumbai on Monday. — PTI



Police officers check the commuters for e-pass during the lockdown in Coimbatore on Monday. Tamil Nadu recorded 34,867 new cases and 404 deaths in the last 24 hours. — PTI

TOUGH TIMES People are unable to shake off memories of their hospital stay leading to worries about PTSD

Patients recovering from Covid see a long road ahead

New Delhi, May 24: Crowded wards with scarcely a doctor or an attendant in sight, patients holding on to each other to go to washrooms so filthy they gagged and, most agonising, people around them dying. For Covid patients now back home, harrowing images from their hospital stay are the hurdles on their road to recovery.

Over a year after the pandemic began and deeper into the second, deadlier wave, many of those who have been to Covid hell and back are unable to shake off the memories of their days in hospitals, leading to worries about PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and other anxiety related problems, including insomnia.

It's a "numbing experience" for many Covid-19 survivors who come out from hospital, observed Dr Samir Parikh, director, Department of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Fortis Healthcare, Gurgaon.

Their days in hospital are seared into the memories of Covid patients who seem to be healing but maybe only from the outside.

"Hardly any doctor attended to us for the first two days. There were six of us — women and men — in the same Covid-19 ward. We had to throw empty plastic bottles out of the door to catch the staff's attention. I watched at least three people die on the bed right across from mine," a Delhi homemaker said, requesting anonymi-

ty. The 57-year-old, who is slowly regaining her strength, spent five days at a government hospital in the city.

Cases were spiking in the national capital and hospital beds were hard to come by when she was taken ill last month. With oxygen saturation levels falling, high fever and deteriorating HRCT chest values, she needed urgent hospitalisation and the family managed that with some difficulty. She recalled her hospital stay with a shudder.

"There was no one to take us to the washroom and

we, the patients, would hold each other's hands and go to that very unhygienic toilet, which was down the hall and unisex.

The attendants, overburdened, exhausted and frustrated themselves, were often unhelpful.

"When the old man right across from my bed would take off his oxygen mask repeatedly, the ward boy would shout at him and say 'Uncle ji, this won't affect us. So you can keep doing this'," she recalled.

Almost a month later, she still wonders what happened to the woman who was on the bed next to hers.

As cases continue to rise and hospitals stay overburdened, sociologist Sanjay Srivastava said this is a pandemic that seems

to have no answers, causing a general rise in social anxiety, distrust and psychological instability.

There has also been a realisation about the fragile nature of what in India was always believed to be a strong idea, the state, the London-based academic added. "There is also a feeling of extreme psychological distress due to the seemingly mysterious nature of the virus, a mystery that none of the usual authorities — doctors, hospitals, the government — has any answers for," Srivastava said.

The stories of continuing patient distress are many. Several patients said they couldn't bathe for days in hospital because there was no water or use toilets that

were clogged and dirty.

Siva Shakthi, a student in Puducherry, sought an early discharge for her 57-year-old mother Alamelu from the Puducherry-based Indira Gandhi Medical College because of its unhygienic conditions. Her mother has co-morbidities such as heart issues and high blood pressure and she didn't want to take a chance.

"The hygiene was pretty bad. That's why she had to come back in just three-four days. Both men and women had to use the same toilet. It was very disturbing, Shakthi said.

"Medication was given but drips weren't. You had to take care of yourself which is the case with a lot of hospitals in the country today," she added.

According to Parikh, the patient may experience a range of emotions while in treatment for multiple complications that may arise. "They are isolated so they might feel loneliness, being around sick people and perhaps seeing death around, anguish, pain, grief their family may also go through the same," he explained. Some of these patients can get PTSD, Parikh said.

What can be done is to have a support system in place and ask them to express themselves openly every time they get worried. Be connected with people through messages, calls and video calls. When you're back, don't rush to work, or be over busy. Give time to self care," he added. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

U.S. JOURNALIST
DETAINED IN
MYANMAR

Yangon: An American editor of a Myanmar-based news outlet was detained by authorities in Yangon as he attempted to board a flight out of the country on Monday, his employers said.

United States citizen and managing editor of Frontier Myanmar Danny Fenster "was detained at Yangon International Airport this morning," his employers said in a statement on their verified Twitter account.

"We do not know why Danny was detained and have not been able to contact him since this morning. We are concerned for his wellbeing and call for his immediate release," it added.

Myanmar has been in uproar since the February 1 coup, with near-daily protests and a nationwide civil disobedience movement.

ANA TURNS INTO
A POST-TROPICAL
CYCLONE

Miami (US): Ana weakened into a post-tropical cyclone late Sunday as it moved away from Bermuda after bringing rain and wind to the island in the Atlantic Ocean, forecasters said.

Ana was located about 680 miles (1,095 km) northeast of Bermuda with maximum sustained winds of 40 mph (65 kph), the National Hurricane Centre in Miami said in an 11 pm advisory. It was moving northeast at 28 mph (44 kph). Ana formed as a subtropical storm early Saturday, then transitioned to a tropical storm on Sunday. It then weakened to a depression later in the day.

The hurricane center said it would dissipate on Monday. No watches or warnings were in effect for the storm. It posed no threat to land. Ana was the first named storm in the Atlantic this year, though hurricane season doesn't officially start until June 1. Meteorologists expect the 2021 season to be busy, but not to the level of last year's the record-breaking season.

TURKEY DETAILS
I.S. BOMB EXPERT
WANTED BY U.S.

Istanbul: Turkish intelligence officers have arrested an Egyptian-born terror suspect wanted by Washington who was a top explosives expert for the Islamic State group, state media reported on Monday.

The suspect, identified as Mustafa Abdulwahab Mahmud and born in 1999, was detained with three others on the outskirts of Istanbul after fleeing Syria, the reports said.

The indictment said he joined the IS group in Syria, where he specialised in making suicide belts and various explosive devices.

The Istanbul prosecutor's office is seeking 22.5 years in prison on charges of membership of a terror group.

He was detained on a tip from US intelligence services, who have been tracking his movements, the media reports said, adding that he is believed to have been plotting attacks inside Turkey, including against US interests.

Once accused of letting jihadists pass freely through its territory, Turkey has stepped up its fight against the IS group.

OMAN SEES RARE
PROTESTS OVER
JOB LAYOFFS

Dubai: Scattered protests in Oman over layoffs and poor economic conditions drew a massive police presence on Monday in at least one city in the sultanate, with protesters throwing stones at one point and police firing tear gas.

Videos posted to social media show several dozen Omanis in the city of Sohar trailed by a long line of riot police vehicles. Other images appear to show a line of police in riot gear near a government labour office in the city, some 200 kilometers (125 miles) northwest of the capital, Muscat.

Other images appear to show Omanis fleeing and others being arrested. The images correspond to known landmarks around Sohar, the first major city people enter in the sultanate after coming over the border from the neighbouring United Arab Emirates.

Similar scattered protests on Sunday brought another mass police presence, activists said online. That demonstration was acknowledged by Oman's Labor Ministry in a tweet, which said it was aware of people gathering there to try to find new job vacancies.

3 Wuhan virology lab staff
ill before Covid disclosed

Undisclosed US intelligence may renew calls for probe into origins of virus

Beijing/Washington, May 24: Three researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology sought hospital care in November 2019, weeks before Beijing disclosed the Covid-19 pandemic, a US media report said, citing a previously undisclosed American intelligence document that could add weight to growing calls for a full scale probe of whether the Coronavirus may have escaped from China's top bio lab.

The details of the reporting go beyond a State Department fact sheet, issued during the final days of the Trump administration, which said that several researchers at the Wuhan lab, a centre for the study of Coronavirus and other pathogens, became sick in autumn 2019 "with symptoms consistent with both Covid-19 and common seasonal illness," the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

The origins of the Covid-19 remain a widely debated topic, with some scientists and politicians maintaining that the possibility of a lab leak of the deadly virus exists. The Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) is near the outbreak's known epicentre of Huanan Seafood Market in central China's Wuhan city, where the virus first emerged in late 2019 and became a pandemic.

Former US president Donald Trump was among those who supported the theory that the virus might have escaped from a bio lab in China.

"Three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick enough in November 2019 that they sought hospital care," the paper said.

The disclosure of the number of Chinese researchers, the timing of their illnesses and their hospital visits come on the eve of a meeting of the World Health Organisation's decision-making body, which is expected to discuss the next phase of an investigation into Covid-19's origins.

The paper said that current and former officials familiar with the intelligence about the lab researchers expressed differing views about the strength of the supporting evidence, with one person saying it was provided by an international partner and was potentially significant but still in need of further investigation and additional corroboration.

China, however, denied the WSJ report on Monday, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian saying the WIV released a statement on March 23 that made it clear that there were zero Covid-19 infections at the institute. — PTI



NHS staff directs public as they arrive by car to an NHS Test and Trace mobile Coronavirus testing unit in Hayes, Hillingdon in west London on Monday. Additional Covid testing was set to begin on May 24 in west London boroughs, including Hillingdon, after the identification of the variant first identified in India.

— AFP

EU takes on Astra for its
failure to give vax on time

Brussels, May 24: At logheads for months with the Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical company it accuses of failing to deliver the promised number of Covid-19 vaccine doses, the European Union's executive branch will try to persuade a Brussels court on Wednesday that the case is urgent enough to justify ordering the company to make an immediate delivery of the missing shots.

AstraZeneca's contract signed with the Commission on behalf of EU member states foresaw an initial 300 million doses for distribution among all 27 countries, with an option for a further 100 million. The doses were expected to be delivered throughout 2021. But only 30 million were sent during the first quarter.

Deliveries have increased slightly since then but, according to the

Commission, the company is set to provide only 70 million doses in the second quarter. It had promised 180 million.

While the EU insists AstraZeneca has breached its contractual obligations, the company says it has fully complied with the agreement, arguing that vaccines are difficult to manufacture and it made its best effort to deliver on time.

— AP

INDIAN HIGH
COMMISSION SAYS
OFFICIAL'S WIFE
TESTED -VE IN PAK

Islamabad, May 24: The Indian High Commission in Islamabad on Monday clarified that an official's spouse, who was reported by the Pakistani media to have been tested positive for the Coronavirus, has tested "negative" for Covid on RT-PCR conducted on arrival here and in Lahore.

"In response to media reports that the spouse of an official of the Indian High Commission tested positive for Covid on RAT, it is clarified that said individual has tested 'Negative' for Covid on RT-PCR, conducted on arrival in Islamabad. RT-PCR in Lahore, as per reports, was also 'Negative', the Indian High Commission tweeted.

Earlier, Pakistan asked 12 officials of the Indian High Commission (IHC) in Islamabad to quarantine, along with their family members and drivers, after one of them reportedly tested positive for the Coronavirus since their arrival from India last week, the Foreign Office said.

A group of 12 officials and their family members crossed over to Pakistan through the Wagah Border on May 22, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said on Sunday. — PTI

BRAZIL CONFIRMS
1ST CASE OF STRAIN
FOUND IN INDIA

Brasilia (Brazil), May 24: Brazil's health minister said that the government is concerned about the Coronavirus variant first identified in India after the first cases of it were confirmed in the South American country.

Marcelo Queiroga denied, however, that there was community transmission of the variant, which was first identified in Brazil in the northeastern state of Maranhao, where 100 people are being monitored. A case was also confirmed Saturday in Ceara state. — AP

UK confident to lift
virus curbs by June

London, May 24: British health officials expressed optimism on Sunday that the Coronavirus restrictions remaining in England can be lifted in June after an official study found that the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines offer effective protection against the variant first identified in India.

Authorities in Britain on have expressed concern in recent weeks that increasing cases of the Indian variant could jeopardise the UK's so far successful plan to reopen its economy. More than 2,880 cases of the Indian variant have

been recorded in England, figures show.

The government has said the variant appears to be more transmissible, but there was still uncertainty about how concerning this was. Jenny Harries, chief executive of the UK Health Security Agency, said officials in England are on track to proceed with the final stage of unlocking the country from June 21 if the public remains cautious. — AP

Trained dogs could sniff out Covid: Study

London, May 24: People who are infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 have a distinct odour that can be detected by trained dogs with a high degree of accuracy, according to new research in the UK.

In what has been described as the most complete study of its kind to date, combining dog trial, odour

analysis and modelling, the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) led collaborative research with the charity Medical Detection Dogs and Durham University to find that specially trained dogs can rapidly and non-invasively detect the disease with up to 94.3 per cent sensitivity and up to 92 per cent specificity.

The dogs were able to detect odour from individuals who were asymptomatic, as well as those with two different strains of Covid-19, and with both high and low viral loads, the study revealed last week said.

With the threat of new variants entering the country, the need for testing means we face potential

continued disruption for some time to come. That's where these amazing dogs could play a role, said Professor James Logan, Head of the Department of Disease Control at LSHTM, who led the project.

"Further research is needed to see if the dogs can replicate these results in a real-world setting, but these findings are hugely

encouraging. The advantage of using this method is being able to detect Covid-19 with incredible speed and good accuracy among large groups of people, even in asymptomatic cases," he said.

The dogs were trained by the team at Medical Detection Dogs to identify Covid using body odour samples. — PTI

Shaking building puts traders in tizzy

Shenzhen, China, May 24: Business owners face uncertain prospects after being shut out of a skyscraper in southern China that started to shake unexpectedly last week and sent passersby running in panic.

The 300-metre (1,000-foot) SEG Plaza in the city of Shenzhen near Hong Kong began shaking last Tuesday, prompting the evacuation of the occupants and causing pedestrians to flee for safety. Emergency management officials quickly ruled out a quake as the cause of the wobble in the tech hub's Futian district, and a probe is ongoing into the cause.

One business owner



People walk past the temporarily closed of 300-metre (1,000-ft.) SEG Plaza (C) in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen, in Guangdong province on Monday. — AFP

said that he was on the fifty-third floor last week when the building started swaying. "I saw something moved, (and) when

I got up I saw everything moved," said Arman Hasanpour, an Iranian businessman based in the building. "After that we

came out very fast." He said there has been 'a few shakes' since the initial wobbling of the building, which was built in 2000. "Now, we don't know how to make business and how to cope with it... everything is not clear."

The SEG Building on Monday was sealed off with red tape covering the entrances.

But a handful of business owners from the electronics market on the ground floor were rolling trolleys packed with taped-up goods out of the shuttered tower. Across the road, an electronics trader surnamed Wang said that he had heard people complain before that the skyscraper had swayed. — AFP

Merkel, Macron
favour WHO
improvement

Geneva, May 24: French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday were among leaders rallying around efforts to strengthen the World Health Organisation and the world's ability to prepare for and defend against pandemics.

It came as the UN health agency opened its annual assembly, with a draft resolution in the works that acknowledges missteps in the response to Covid-19.

The sweeping proposal would seek to boost pandemic response, stabilise WHO's funding and ensure greater access to health care including to vaccines, tests and treatments linked to the Coronavirus.

The European Union and Vanuatu were behind the resolution, which was to be considered during the eight-day assembly.

It would create a working group on strengthening WHO's readiness and response to health emergencies.

We have to have institutions that are up to the task, that meet our ambitions, Macron said by video during the mostly virtual meeting. WHO, he said, must be robust and

COVID SHADOW
HANGS OVER
W.H.O. MEETING

Geneva, May 24: Calls for World Health Organisation reform and steps to avert future pandemics feature high on the agenda as the UN agency kicks off its annual member states' meeting on Monday.

With the Covid-19 crisis still raging and wealthy nations continuing to hoard most doses of life-saving vaccines, the WHO's main decision-making body has plenty to discuss.

The 74th World Health Assembly (WHA) begins Monday with statements from national leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, health ministers and other high-level representatives of the WHO's 194 member states.

— AFP

flexible in times of emergency and crisis. And it must be completely transparent to make sure that people trust the organisation. — AP

Suu Kyi appears for
first time in court

Bangkok, May 24: Myanmar's ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, appeared in court in person on Monday for the first time since the military arrested her when it seized power on February 1. One of her lawyers, Min Min Soe, said over phone that Suu Kyi was able to meet with her defence team for about 30 minutes before the hearing began at a special court set up inside the city council building in Naypyitaw, the capital.

The lawyers also met with Win Myint, who was president of the government Suu Kyi led as state counsellor and faces some of the same charges. Suu Kyi's only previous court appearances have been by video link and she had not



Aung San Suu Kyi

been allowed to meet in person with any of her lawyers.

Min Min Soe said Suu Kyi wanted to tell Myanmar's people that her National League for Democracy party will stand by them. She said that "since the NLD was founded for the people, the NLD will exist as long as the people exist," Min Min Soe said after the hearing. — AP

BBC to probe into
Diana's interview

London, May 24: The BBC said on Monday it will review its editorial policies and governance after an independent report found one of its journalists used deception to secure a landmark interview with Princess Diana.

The British broadcaster's board said that the internal probe would be conducted by a group of non-executive directors led by Nick Serota, its senior independent director, and report back by September. "We must not just assume that mistakes of the past cannot be repeated today — we must make sure that this is the case," the board of governors said in a lengthy statement. "We think it is right that



Princess Diana

we review the effectiveness of the BBC's editorial policies and governance in detail," it added.

An investigation by retired judge John Dyson concluded last Thursday that journalist Martin Bashir had tricked Diana's brother Charles Spencer into helping to arrange the 1995 interview. — AFP

CORRIGENDUM



Muthoot Finance Ltd. - Gold Auction Notice
GST : 36AABCT0343B1ZZ

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Gold Auction dates of the following auction centers of Muthoot Finance Ltd. have been Postponed due to some technical reasons. New dates of the auction with concerned auction centers are shown below:-

2 nd Auction Date:- New Auction:- Auction Centre:-	26.05.2021, 12:00 PM 17.06.2021, 12:00 PM Muthoot Finance Ltd., H.No.5-11-24, 1st Floor, Shop No.5, Datta Sai Complex, Mr. Mohan Electronics, Old Bus Stand, Nirmal (Nirmal District)
2 nd Auction Date:- New Auction:- Auction Centre:-	26.05.2021, 10:00 AM 17.06.2021, 11:00 AM Muthoot Finance Ltd., # 1-12-123/5/1, Sri Nagar Colony, Opp: Prashanthi Homes, Vinayakanagar, Nizamabad (Nizamabad District)
2 nd Auction Date:- New Auction:- Auction Centre:-	27.05.2021, 05:00 PM 17.06.2021, 05:00 PM Muthoot Finance Ltd., #2-5-259, First Floor, Rambazar Road, Jagtial (Jagtial District)
2 nd Auction Date:- New Auction:- Auction Centre:-	26.05.2021, 04:00 PM 17.06.2021, 04:00 PM Muthoot Finance Ltd., Bldg. No.6-6-11/3/14/1, 1st Floor, B.Ramulu Complex, Ambedkar Chowk, M.G. Road, Adilabad (Adilabad District)

Place : Nizamabad
Date : 25.05.2021

For Muthoot Finance Ltd,
M/S. SSR & Co., Law Associates,
1-19-72/1/2, Rukminipuri Colony,
Behind Spencers, ECIL Post, Hyderabad - 62

DECCAN Chronicle

25 MAY 2021

CBSE's Class 12 exams: Choose dates prudently

The consensus among states consulted about the conduct of CBSE's Class 12 examination for the academic year 2020-21 appears to be in favour of the board's proposal for a shortened format. Facing a very tricky decision on holding the qualifying exam for higher studies in the time of the pandemic, the Centre has gone in for an exhaustive consultation process. Opinion largely favours the conduct of the exams since they are crucial in defining what courses students will take as they graduate to college. Imposing the loss of a whole year on lakhs of school-leaving students is an inconceivable penalty though students and parents may nurse different opinions. The focus has to be on the greater good.

Any risk versus benefit calculation would show that to hold the exam sometime after the second wave of the Coronavirus is forecast to dip, say in August-September, would be beneficial though it will not come without risks. The Class 12 exam is a life-defining crossroads and requires detailed planning in view of the safety of the students and their exam supervisors. States insisting on students as well supervisory staff being vaccinated is a fair call and must be heeded in the current circumstances. There are ethical boundaries to cross in vaccinating the young but since a majority of those taking the exam are likely to be as old as 17, vaccinating them will help protect them against any severe forms of the disease.

The shorter format wherein tests in one language and three elective major subjects will be spread over 45 days and held in their own schools, with marks for other subjects to be judged proportionally, seems the better option as it would also limit the exposure of students. The trickiest part would, however, be in choosing the timing of the exams. The proposition would work better the later the exams are held in the year and the new college term can be adjusted to begin accordingly, perhaps at the start of 2022. The idea of holding the exams in the same schools that they used to go to when in-person classes were held last is worth considering because the familiarity of the environment might help assuage the fears of exams in the time of the pandemic.

All this, of course, assumes that a consensus would emerge among the states on holding the Class 12 board exams and that any student suffering from Covid-19 at that time would get another opportunity. The cancellation of Class 10 exams was a prudent decision but one that was relatively easy to take. To keep politics out of the decision making will also be challenging and it will still be the Centre's call on the feasibility of holding the exams in the safest manner possible with adequate precautions against such congregations of students becoming super spreader events. We need no reminder that the current dominant virus strain in India is affecting a greater proportion of young people and it is understandable if an element of fear should enter the decision-making process. It is not only their studies and careers that are at risk but their lives.

Act against those trashing docs

Since Covid-19 gripped the world last year and caused devastation worldwide, including in India, our doctors — who practise allopathic medicine, the core of scientifically validated therapeutics — and nurses have been in the forefront of the war against the pandemic. Much more than three lakh people may have died in India if it weren't for their dedication.

And yet yoga teacher Ramdev thought it fit to traduce allopathy and by extension its practitioners, more than a thousand of whom died fighting the virus. He called allopathy "a stupid science", a "tamasha" (farce). In doing so, he mocked the national effort to fight the disease, which continues to claim thousands of victims daily. Perhaps the "Baba" is miffed that Coronil, made by the drug manufacturing units of his vast commercial empire, didn't pass the test of science and the false claims around it were exposed.

The Indian Medical Association has demanded action against Ramdev under the law for demoralising the medical community and weakening the national fightback against the disease. Options can be considered under the Epidemiology Act or Disaster Management Act. Is the government up to it? While promoting the ancient Indian discipline of ayurveda, the government regrettably ended up promoting quacks and superstition peddlers hiding behind the rubric "Hindu civilisation". It may not be easy for it to move against those publicly downgrading science.

It may be recalled that Bhopal BJP MP Pragya Thakur, once allegedly associated with a bomb blast in a minority community locality and for embarrassing the government by praising Mahatma Gandhi's assassin, has claimed she is safe from Covid as she drinks cow urine, which she touted as a cure. As a public servant, she sought to discount modern medicine and science, and backed a wholly untested belief among some Hindus about the medicinal virtues of cow urine — including for Covid — since the cow is an animal they revere. Does the Centre, the BJP or the Madhya Pradesh government propose to act against her?

The MP government, however, appears energetic about booking former CM Kamal Nath for making a reference to the "Indian" variant of Covid, now a subject of discussion in the global scientific community, including here. Mr Nath is accused of weakening the national effort in the anti-Covid fight.

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Subhani



Israel & Gaza: Use truce to find a lasting solution



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

America's President Joe Biden did well to stress that while the United States remains committed to Israel's security, only the promised two-state formula can really solve the Arab-Israeli conflict in the long run. That might atone to some extent for what Arabs call the "Nakba", or literally "disaster", in which the Zionists destroyed over 600 Palestinian villages and forced their inhabitants into exile.

Nothing is to be gained by fawning on Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi tends to do. History, once written, cannot be erased, as I told the last Arab mayor of Jerusalem when he claimed that Israel was doomed because even the Crusaders' kingdom did not last more than 80 years. In fact, Mr Biden would have done even better to emphasise that there can be no more effective guarantee of Israel's security than a sovereign Palestinian state as envisaged in the 1991 Madrid Conference.

The ceasefire between Israel and the radical Hamas movement, which rules the Gaza Strip, ended 11 days of bitter fighting that killed about 250 people, mostly Palestinian civilians. Although both adversaries accomplished their immediate political goals, the fragile peace can collapse any moment. It is in their interest, therefore, as well as of the entire Middle Eastern region and the world at large to take advantage of this respite from violence to lay the foundations of a lasting settlement.

Such plain-speaking would certainly have denied the US President the thanks that Mr

Netanyahu tweeted to some 25 governments, but would have ensured some respect for American diplomacy. India is not of course among the 25 recipients, but it would be a mistake to gloat over the seemingly fulsome thanks of Israeli and Palestinian diplomats for the speech by India's United Nations representative, T.S. Tirumurti, at the Security Council debate.

All that their praise meant was that South Block once again passed off opportunism as diplomacy, a skill India's leaders have raised to an art form during the long years of nonalignment, which the Americans called "neutralism". New Delhi was at pains then to claim equidistance from Washington and Moscow.

Not that India, with limited resources and the geopolitical handicap of location, could have taken a lead role even if it had wanted to. An impoverished and grossly overpopulated Third World nation at odds with its western and northern neighbours, struggling to battle the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, should not even pretend to global authority. Even before events reduced his stature, Mr Modi was no Jawaharlal Nehru to be listened to when he spoke on global matters. Nothing in his background or career indicated any grasp of international affairs. Moreover, his bombastic style — demanding applause for saving "humanity from a big disaster by containing the coronavirus effectively" — hardly commands respect.

India's rulers have always taken an ad hoc attitude to Israel. Only Jawaharlal Nehru's disgust with Egypt's King Farouk, then heading the Arab League, prompted

him to recognise Israel almost as tit for tat. Morarji Desai probably wanted to develop closer ties but dared not. P.V. Narasimha Rao finally did so under American influence. India wanted Israeli weapons but would not admit it. Israeli diplomats contemptuously attributed India's pro-Arab stance to the Muslim vote at home.

Not that American policy was or is any more principled. When President Harry S. Truman reneged on Franklin D. Roosevelt's commitment to the Arabs, his frank excuse was that his supporters included influential American Jews who were anxious for the success of the Zionist state. He did not have to placate a similar Palestinian lobby.

Such calculations also operate in West Asia. In the lead-up to Hamas' rocket barrage, Prime Minister Netanyahu pursued a series of flagrantly reckless policies. Many believe that he deliberately provoked Hamas in order to prevent his domestic opponents from uniting against him and establishing a governing coalition. Israel has had four elections in the last two years, and if the Prime Minister fails to hold on to power, he might have to face corruption charges and a prison term. Yet, the war that he unleashed was more of a gift to Hamas than he bargained for. Hamas, too, needed a crisis to compensate for its declining reputation in the Gaza Strip, alienation from the Palestinian Authority under President Mahmoud Abbas, and the political confinement

imposed by 14 years of the land, air, and sea blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt. Systematically weakened and humiliated by Israel, President Abbas could do nothing about the unlawful eviction of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem or the Israeli military's attack on the Al-Aqsa mosque, which precipitated the conflict. Hamas exploited the two incidents as well as the leadership vacuum, in the process neutralising the blockade by demonstrating that it would not stand by while Palestinians suffered aggression.

For once Israel's armed forces found themselves simultaneously engaged in Gaza, East Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and — what probably worries Mr Netanyahu the most — in Israel's ethnically "mixed cities". The Israeli police stood by as well-organised Jewish militias attacked the Palestinians who retaliated against Jews and their synagogues. Not only did the violence revive painful memories of the killing of 13 Palestinian protesters in October 2000, it also intensified the community's sense of disenfranchisement and discrimination that goes back to the Deir Yassin massacre of the Palestinians on April 9, 1948.

A mere ceasefire cannot address deep-seated grievances that are rooted in history. But atonement can be made for some evils of the past. Israel's withdrawal to the borders that it enjoyed in 1967 and independence for the West Bank and Gaza, as specified in the Oslo accords, might achieve that. The United States can help to ensure that it happens. But instead of the Palestinians promising to respect Israel's security, it's the Israelis who must now undertake not to seize any more Palestinian territory or indulge in any other hostilities against the Palestinian state.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

A mere ceasefire cannot address deep-seated grievances that are rooted in history. Israel's withdrawal to the borders that it enjoyed in 1967 and independence for the West Bank and Gaza, might achieve that.

LETTERS

CLASS XII EXAMS

It would be prudent to formulate a national policy for vaccinating Class XII students along with their teachers and staff in Oct-Dec at their respective schools (*CBSE CI-12 exam likely in July-Sept, May 24*). These students are grown up enough to be inoculated. It will enable boards to conduct classes from January to March 2022 and the final exams in April 2022.

Vineet Chaturvedi
Secunderabad

CELEBRITY ARROGANCE

A little name, fame and money brings out the arrogance and ignorance of a few people. Baba Ramdev utters reckless statements and Olympian Sushil Kumar gets involved in a brawl and murder case. They seem to lack class, decency, humility or integrity. We put them on a pedestal and they get carried away.

N. Prabhakar
Hyderabad

E-PASS RULE

The sudden imposition of the e-pass rule at the TS-AP border is not justified (*State e-pass rule creates ruckus at TS-AP border, DC, May 24*). Even though it is a welcome action, TS should note connections between people in both states. Hyderabad is also common capital for another four years.

S.S. Rama Chandra Murthy
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

India will take all steps to ensure its security: PM

NEW DELHI, MAY 24. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, today warned that if the world failed to recognise the threat to peace to the India-Pakistan, sub-continent caused by the massive influx of refugees into India from East Bengal, India would be constrained to take all necessary measures to ensure its security and preservation.

In a strongly worded statement in the Lok Sabha on the problems created by the refugee influx, Mrs. Gandhi said that unless conditions were created for the early return of the refugees under credible guarantee, for their safety and well-being there could be no lasting stability or peace in the sub-continent.

Aakar Patel



Why Twitter's action on BJP 'manipulation' is rattling govt

Twitter has marked tweets by Bharatiya Janata Party figures, including its spokesman Sambit Patra, as "manipulated media". The BJP leaders had publicised what it said was a Congress toolkit to defame India. But the fact checking website Alt News showed that this content that the BJP was showing was fake.

The BJP said on its letterhead that the All-India Congress Committee had distributed instructions to Congress workers, volunteers and supporters to use the term "super spreader Kumbh", "not comment on Eid gatherings", "use dramatic pictures of funerals and dead bodies which is already being done by the foreign media". This turned out to be bogus and even the letterhead was forged, as Alt News quickly showed.

Twitter believed the fact-checking website, which is based in Ahmedabad, more than it did the Government of India, and branded the content fake. The BJP is upset and has sent another threatening note to Twitter saying that it should remove the "manipulated media" tag because the govern-

ment was investigating the matter. The problem of course is that the government first defamed the Congress, then it got caught peddling a lie and now it claims it is checking its own claim — amplified by all its ministers through their official accounts — to see if it is true. That is why a small news operation has more credibility today than the government of the Republic of India.

Twitter has a transparency centre where it puts up the data on takedown and information requests. These are legal notices from the Government of India asking Twitter to either block an account, take down some content which the government does not like or reveal the identity of a particular user.

From January 2012 to June 2014, it rarely received requests from the Indian government except for one or two. In the second half of 2016 it received 151 requests. This doubled to 306 between January and June 2018. It doubled again to 662 between July and December 2019. Between January and June 2020, the latest period for which the data is available, the Narendra Modi

government sent 2,367 requests, including those to reveal identities, those it wanted blocked and those whose content it did not like and wanted to be taken down.

The question is why is the government now sending thousands of "requests" to Twitter to comply? The answer is that the social media is reflecting a reality that the BJP does not want communicated. More people are saying things on the social media that are upsetting the government.

One way to deal with this would be to ignore it, which is what the various governments of India did in the past, which is why the number of takedown notices Twitter received were few. But if a government is sensitive to what is said about it, and sensitive to such an extent that it finds any criticism intolerable, then it will do what is going on in the India social media today.

Twitter is slightly different from Facebook and pretends to have more independence and pretends to be a guardian of free speech. Facebook is just a cutthroat corporate company that will go to bed

with authoritarian governments and do whatever they want in terms of blocking users and content and promoting the government's material even if it incites violence. Twitter says that it stands for freedom of its users, that it is "committed to the open exchange of information", and that it is why it publishes this transparency report from which the data above has been taken.

India is not the only democracy which makes such requests of Twitter. In the United States, the Secret Service which protects the President is obliged to assess every threat made against the President even if these are made casually. But this is not censorship of views. What is happening in India is that criticism of the government is not being allowed. And the deliberate vilification of the Opposition by the government is being pushed, and when it is caught it resists accountability.

India is going the way of China, where the social media has to be in full compliance with the government's desire to control the messaging and to carry out mass sur-

veillance. It is nobody's case and certainly not mine that India was ever some haven of free speech before the Narendra Modi government. It was not. Few democracies have the full force of government backing the blocking of free speech of citizens as is the case in India. We have jail terms for free speech under laws like sedition, criminal defamation, criminal contempt and laws which criminalise things communicated in words or even without words. This has always been the case.

But the criticism of the government was not intolerable as it has become now. This government insists on only one narrative and is willing and enthusiastic about stopping the other side from expressing itself. And it is also, as the toolkit fiasco shows, willing to fabricate material to invalidate what anyone else says. This is what the Emergency must have been like, and those who lived through it might not be feeling very different nowadays.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,651.90	0.22
Nifty 50	15,197.70	0.15
S&P 500*	4,199.50	1.05
Dollar (₹)	72.96	-0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.14	0.37
Euro (₹)	89.08	-0.02
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,015.95	0.19
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.14	2.56
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.972	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.611	-0.021

* As of 8:30 PM IST

FDI jumps 19% to \$59.64 bn in 2020-21: Govt

Foreign direct investments (FDI) into the country grew 19 per cent to \$59.64 billion during 2020-21, the commerce and industry ministry said. Total FDI, including equity, re-invested earnings and capital, rose 10 per cent to the "highest ever" of \$81.72 billion during 2020-21 against \$74.39 billion in 2019-20. "FDI equity inflow grew by 19 per cent in 2020-21 (\$59.64 billion), compared to 2019-20 (\$49.98 billion)."

Jaypee CoC defers voting, may consider NBCC bid



Jaypee Infratech's financial creditors deferred the voting process on Suraksha Group's offer to acquire the realty firm and will decide later this week whether bids of Suraksha group as well as NBCC should be considered agreed. The Committee of Creditors on Monday decided to conduct voting on May 27-28 on whether offers from both the contenders— Suraksha group and NBCC—should be allowed.

Bank credit up 6.02%; deposits grow 9.87%

Bank credit grew by 6.02 per cent to Rs 108.69 lakh crore and deposits increased by 9.87 per cent to Rs 152.17 lakh crore in the fortnight ended May 7, 2021, RBI data showed. In the fortnight ended May 8, 2020, bank advances stood at Rs 102.52 lakh crore and deposits at Rs 138.50 lakh crore, according to RBI's Scheduled Banks' Statement of Position in India as on May 07, 2021, released on Monday.

MFIs credit costs may be in 3-6% range in FY22

With their collection efficiency getting impacted amid disruptions caused by the Covid second wave, microfinance institutions (MFIs) may see their credit cost in the 3-6 per cent range in the current fiscal, India Ratings and Research said. It said collections of micro lenders and small finance banks are likely to have declined 3-5 per cent MoM in April 2021 and additional 5-7 per cent in May 2021 (first fortnight of the month).



■Apex court may direct plea to RBI SC unlikely to grant another moratorium

KFALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 24

The Supreme Court on Monday indicated that it would not be able to grant relief in terms of an interest-free loan moratorium for another period of six months or till the Covid-19 situation improves. The apex court observed that this is a policy decision and the court cannot decide to pass such directions. The court said that a representation can be allowed to be made to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The court will hear the matter again on June 11.

In the light of the Covid second wave and the consequent lockdowns, a plea has been filed afresh by Advocate Vishal Tiwari before the Supreme Court this month seeking directions for relief to borrowers in the form of a fresh loan moratorium on term loans. Tiwari urged the court to direct that no bank or financial institution would take action for auction in respect of any property of any citizen or party or any corporate for a period of six months for non-payment of loans. The petition stated that the central government and its concerned ministries along with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have failed to bring in any sound relief in this present situation for stressed sectors and individuals for whom sustenance and existence have become difficult.



A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M. R. Shah made an observation while waiting for the video connection of Advocate Tiwari to be established. Justice Bhushan asked Justice Shah, "Have you seen the prayers, brother?" To this, Justice Shah said, "Yes. We cannot grant it. A representation can be allowed to be made to the RBI." The court then deferred the hearing to June 11. In a statement, Harsh Vardhan Patodia, president, Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (Credai), appreciated the Supreme Court's stance. "We appreciate the view of Hon'ble Supreme Court for guiding the matter of extension of loan moratorium for a period of six months this year to the Reserve Bank of India. In line with the representation made to the apex court, we feel due relief for borrowers is an absolute necessity considering the prolonged impact of the second wave of the pandemic, and consequent financial stress borne by individuals and businesses due to loss of employment and business opportunities. With the real estate sector being more severely impacted in 2021 as compared to 2020, as the apex industry body, Credai has already made separate representations to RBI and the Government of India on the matter." The petition said, "No such monetary relief and packages has been declared by the sovereign in this stressed time and people are under tremendous pressure to maintain the EMIs and are always under the threat of accounts being declared NPA. With no salary, revenue for individuals it has turned out to be a hopeless situation for individuals. The RBI on 6-5-2021 has issued a circular for resolution plan 2.0, which cannot be said to be adequate relief to all in the present circumstances..."

ECONOMISTS SEE BEST US GROWTH IN 37 YEARS

Washington, May 24: The nation's business economists have grown much more optimistic about the US economy this year, with a majority predicting that increased vaccinations, stronger job gains and further government aid will accelerate growth to its fastest pace in nearly four decades. A survey being released on Monday by the National Association for Business Economics found that its panel expects the economy to expand 6.5 per cent this year. That would be the sharpest such increase since 1984, when the nation was also emerging from a deep recession. The NABE's findings, based on the responses of 49 forecasters earlier this month, sketched a far brighter picture of the economy than its previous such survey, released in March, did. In that survey, the economists had collectively envisioned growth of just 4.8 per cent this year. The economy has been showing surprising strength and resilience in its recovery from the devastating recession. —AP

TATA CARS GET LOCAL LANGUAGE VOICE ASSISTANT

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, MAY 24

The Kolkata-based vernacular voice interface platform start-up Mihup Communication has partnered with audio electronics major Harman International to provide voice-controlled conversation agents in Tata Motors cars. The new solution will bring in Indian dialect and regional language support, something that was missing in the earlier in-vehicle voice assistant. Mihim's AVA Auto device allows the driver to get voice-based control for car functions and control -AC, volume, AM/FM and music system. The solution now supports Hinglish language.

POSTPAID-PREPAID SWITCH THROUGH OTP ON THE CARDS

New Delhi, May 24: Mobile phone subscribers may soon be allowed to switch from a postpaid connection to prepaid and vice versa by using an OTP-based authentication and without a need to change SIM card, according to an official DoT note.

Industry body Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) has proposed the mechanism to the Department of Telecom (DoT) and the DoT has asked telecom operators to carry out proof of concept (PoC) on the same.

The final decision on allowing the change in the account will depend on the outcome of PoC, according to the DoT note.

"The PoC for conversion from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa may be carried out by the telecom service providers as per the procedure...The decision regarding implementation of the procedure shall be taken after the assessment of the outcome of the PoC," DoT ADG Suresh Kumar said in a May 21 note.

The COAI, whose members include Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, had requested the department on April 9 for permission to allow mobile customers to migrate from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa without undertaking fresh KYC procedure and by using OTP (one-time password) based authentication.

—PTI

It's a \$3 trillion stock market now

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 24



Indian stock market's capitalisation crossed the \$3 trillion mark for the first time on Monday on a closing basis, with the help of a big surge in mid-cap and small-cap companies' stock prices along with the rally in the shares of large companies.

Since market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty-50 peaked in February post-the Union Budget, the broader market has seen even a bigger rally than large-caps from the pandemic lows and this helped the market cap to rise to over \$3 trillion mark. The market-cap had briefly crossed the \$3-trillion mark on Friday in intraday trade.

The market capitalisation of the BSE, which has the largest number of listed companies on board, stood at Rs 218,94,202.30 lakh crore or \$3,00,085.00 lakh crore at Monday's USD-INR exchange rate of around Rs 72.96. One lakh crore is

equivalent to 1 trillion.

With a \$3-trillion market cap, the BSE is now among the top seven stock exchanges in the world. Only the New York Stock Exchange, Nasdaq, Shanghai Stock Exchange, Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Euronext and London Stock Exchange are now ahead of the BSE in terms of m-cap.

Though the benchmark Sensex reached an all-time high of 52,516.76 points on February 16 due to the rally in the large-cap companies, it is the broader market that has taken the BSE's market cap to \$3 trillion. From the April lows, the

BSE Mid-cap Index has rallied 103.48 per cent and the BSE Small-cap index 141.53 per cent compared to the 71.67 per cent rally in the Sensex. This clearly shows the broader market rally since March 2021 was responsible for the big surge in the stock market capitalisation.

On Monday too the broader market outperformed with BSE Mid-cap up 0.86 per cent and BSE Small-cap 0.70 per cent compared to the Sensex gaining 0.22 per cent.

A total of 4,722 companies are listed on the BSE and a majority of them fall in the mid-cap and small-cap categories. "Market capitalization of equities of listed companies on BSE reached \$3 trillion for the first time ever," said Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD and CEO, BSE.

The market's capitalisation had hit \$2.5 trillion on December 16, 2020. It took only 159 days for the market to gain \$500 billion to touched \$3 trillion in valuation on Monday.

Zeta raises \$250 mn from SoftBank Vision

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 24

Banking software platform Zeta on Monday announced it has raised \$250 million in funding, led by Japan's SoftBank, valuing the firm at \$1.45 billion. This is one of the largest single investments in a banking tech startup globally.

Zeta, founded by serial entrepreneur Bhavin Turakhia and Ramki Gaddipati was last valued

at \$300 million when it raised \$60 million from Sodexo—also Zeta's largest customer currently.

Zeta is the 14th company this year to cross the \$1 billion valuation mark after Meesox, Cred, Pharmeasy, ShareChat, Moglix and others. The proceeds of this funding round will be used to accelerate Zeta's growth in the United States, Europe and India, including scaling its operations, team, and platform to meet the demands of its

expanding customer base.

Zeta counts amongst its customers over 10 Banks and 25 fintechs, across eight countries, including Sodexo, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank, Yes Bank, RBL Bank, SBM Bank India and others.

A recent Aite Group study found 61 per cent financial institution executives believe investment in newer technologies will improve their customer experience.

Roche Antibody Cocktail launched at ₹59,750/dose

New Delhi, May 24: Drug majors Roche India and Cipla on Monday announced launch of Roche's Antibody Cocktail in India priced at Rs 59,750 per dose for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid-19 in patients who are at high risk.

"The first batch of the Antibody Cocktail (Casirivimab and Imdevimab) is now available in India while a second batch will be made available by mid-June. In total they can potentially benefit 2,00,000 patients as each of the 1,00,000 packs that will be available in India offers treatment for two patients," Cipla and Roche said in a joint statement.

Cipla will distribute the product, it added. The price for each patient dose [a combined dose of 1,200 mg (600 mg of Casirivimab and 600 mg of Imdevimab)] will be Rs 59,750 inclusive of all taxes. The maximum retail price for the multi dose pack (each pack can treat two patients) is Rs 1,19,500, inclusive of all taxes.

As per the statement, the drug will be available through leading hospitals

and Covid treatment centers.

The Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation had recently provided an emergency use authorisation (EUA) for the Antibody Cocktail (Casirivimab and Imdevimab) in India. It has also received a EUA in the US and several EU countries.

We are optimistic that the availability of Antibody Cocktail in India can help in minimising hospitalisation...play a key role in treatment of high risk patients before their condition worsens, said V. Simpson Emmanuelle, MD and CEO, Roche Pharma India. Umang Vohra, MD and Global CEO of Cipla said we look forward to leveraging our solid marketing and distribution strengths in India to provide broader, equitable access to this innovative treatment option in the country.

The cocktail is to be administered for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid in adults and children (above 12 years weighing at least 40 kg) who are confirmed to be infected with Sars-Cov2.

—PTI

GUPTA'S LIBERTY STEEL TO SELL UK PLANT TO PAY BACK DEBT

ADITI KHANNA LONDON, MAY 24

Liberty Steel, the company led by British Indian businessman Sanjeev Gupta, on Monday announced very constructive and productive meetings as part of its ongoing restructuring plans, which will result in the sale of its Stocksbridge plant in south-east England to help pay back lender Credit Suisse.

Gupta, who heads the wider Gupta Family Group (GFG) Alliance, and his newly formed Restructuring and Transformation Committee held advanced discussions with Credit Suisse Asset Management (CS) in Dubai over the weekend to reach a formal standstill agreement on its Liberty Primary Metals Australia business while refinancing is completed that will repay Credit Suisse out in full.

The investment bank has, meanwhile, agreed to pause court proceedings against Gupta's empire while the sale of Stocksbridge is conducted. Both parties also made significant progress in agreeing a framework to resolve GFG Alliance's remaining exposure with CS, Liberty Steel, the UK's third largest steel maker, said.

This work includes identifying a positive solution which will allow Liberty to complete the restructuring and refinancing of its UK operations, protecting thousands of jobs and supporting the fulfilment of its vision to be a leader in the decarbonisation of the UK steel industry, it added.

A formal sale process for the aerospace and special alloys steel business at Stocksbridge and its downstream plants, the narrow strip mill at Brinsworth and Performance Steels at West Bromwich will be launched shortly, according to a statement by Liberty Steel.

The company has been working on a refinancing plan since its main lender Greensill Capital collapsed earlier this year. This sale will allow it to focus on developing its Rotherham plant. —PTI

SF90i | STRADALE The hybrid car is for the masses, with no production limit set

Ferrari pitches \$5,00,000 supercar for daily driving

HANNAH ELLIOTT MAY 24

The main thing Ferrari will tell you about the 2021 Ferrari SF90 Stradale is how much of a bargain it is.

The arithmetic requires some squinting around the edges of elitism and a healthy injection of relative logic. It goes like this: The two-door coupe is the second hybrid from Modena, Italy's crown jewel, the first being the La Ferrari of 2013. That car, which had 950 horsepower, cost more than 1 million (\$1.2 million) when it debuted, and examples today sell for \$4 million (and an additional million for the convertible version). The new SF90



Stradale, with 986 horsepower, starts at the breezy bargain basement price of \$507,300. (One fine distinction: The SF90 is a plug-in hybrid, while the LaFerrari does not plug-in.)

And while the La Ferrari was limited to 499 units sold, plus one auctioned for charity, the SF90 is a veritable car for the masses, with no production limit set at all. So, see? Big

deal! Huge.

Well. A test drive of Ferrari's new hybrid across Los Angeles on May 19 did not convince me that this half-million-dollar machine spells a new era of budget-friendliness at the 81-year-old brand. But with an on-the-road dynamism born of the most advanced integration I've ever experienced with electric or conventional power, it does

convince me that the future of the brand is in good hands. Those who can afford the price tag have much to anticipate.

This car is extreme in every way, so of course that's reflected in its styling. Eat this: With 1000cv and at a dry weight of 3,461 pounds, it has a weight-to-power ratio of 1.57 kg/cv and produces 390 kg of downforce at 250 km/h-which, for the first time ever at Ferrari, puts a V8 engine, not a V12, at the most powerful and fastest of the production model range. It adds an eighth gear to the dual-clutch automatic transmission and adds 20 per cent torque over its predecessor, but the gearbox still weighs 10kg less. It

has brand-new actuation hydraulics that cut clutch times to 200 ms. (Compare that to the 488 Pista's 300 ms.)

A high-performance Lion battery provides power to all three motors and guarantees a 25 km (16 miles) range in all-electric mode, using just the front axle. Top speed is 211mph; it can go to 62mph in 2.5 seconds. The push to such great speeds feels instant; thank the electric motor gods for that.

The split nose and upturned grin of the hood, the dorsal fin on the roof, the unique placement of the rear air vents, and the big lip on the rear assist its spaceship-like speeds.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

No spin, Shival plays straight

Hyderabad: Former BCCI interim president and Hyderabad Cricket Association secretary N. Shival Yadav distanced himself from the spat involving HCA president Mohammed Azharuddin saying there was no animosity between them.

Both former Test cricketers are locked in a tussle to represent the HCA at the BCCI's Special General Meeting scheduled this Saturday.

"I have absolutely no issues with Azharuddin. If the BCCI accepts his candidature, good luck to him. If they allow me to, I will attend, since the HCA General Body has nominated me," Shival said on Monday. Shival reiterated he was not against Azhar in any way. "I want to make it very clear that it's not personal and I am not trying to suppress Azhar and make it to the BCCI Special General Meeting," he said.

BCCI to donate in Covid relief work

New Delhi: The Indian cricket board on Monday said it will distribute 2,000 oxygen concentrators of 10 litres each to various medical organisations, ramping up the country's overwhelmed healthcare infrastructure in its fight against the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

The deadly second wave of the pandemic has caused unprecedented health crisis with thousands losing their lives. Last month, the national capital region emerged as the worst sufferer due to oxygen crisis, leading to fatalities in multiple hospitals. "The Board of Control for Cricket in India on Monday announced that it will contribute 10-Litre 2,000 Oxygen concentrators to boost India's efforts in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic," the BCCI said in a release. — *PTI*

Hurt Shapovalov out of French Open

Paris: Canada's world number 15 Denis Shapovalov withdrew from Roland Garros due to a shoulder injury on Sunday. "I am saddened to share that after consulting with my medical team I have made the difficult decision to withdraw from Roland Garros," the 22-year-old wrote on Instagram.

"Unfortunately, my shoulder has been bothering me over the last few weeks and, while all medical tests look good, it is for the best to play it safe and rest," Shapovalov was runner-up to Casper Ruud in the Geneva clay court final on Saturday. At the Rome Masters last week, he had two match points in the third round against Rafael Nadal before the 13-time Roland Garros champion recovered to win. — *AFP*

Mickelson oldest to win golf major

Kiawah Island, USA: Phil Mickelson has delivered so many thrills and spills over 30 years of pure theater that no one ever knows what he will do next. His latest act was a real stunner: A major champion at age 50. Mickelson captured his sixth major and by far the most surprising Sunday at the PGA Championship. He made two early birdies and let a cast of contenders fall too far behind to catch him in the shifting wind of Kiawah Island.

He closed with a 1-over 73, building a five-shot lead and not making any critical mistakes that kept him from his place in history. Julius Boros for 53 years held the distinction of golf's oldest major champion. He was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship in San Antonio. — *AP*

Booker shines as Suns sink Lakers

Los Angeles: Devin Booker scored 34 points as the second-seeded Phoenix Suns outplayed the Los Angeles Lakers in their Western Conference playoff series opener with a hardfought 99-90 victory on Sunday.

Booker — playing in the first NBA playoff game of his career — spearheaded a deserved win over the reigning NBA champions, rallying his team after an injury to Chris Paul restricted the Phoenix veteran's influence. — *AFP*

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LILLE BLOSSOM

Galtier's men pip powerhouse PSG to win French league

Paris, May 24: Lille won the Ligue 1 title on Sunday thanks to a 2-1 victory at Angers which ensured they were crowned French champions for the first time since 2011 on the final day of the season.

An early Jonathan David strike and Burak Yilmaz's penalty in first-half stoppage time ensured that Christophe Galtier's Lille finished one point ahead of second-placed Paris Saint-Germain, who won 2-0 at Brest.

Angelo Fulgini pulled one back in added time at the end of the match, but the hosts couldn't stop Lille becoming champions for the fourth time in their history.

The match was played behind closed doors due to Covid-19 restrictions but fans poured into the streets of Lille to celebrate at the final whistle.

Supporters lit flares and chanted songs in the northern city's central Place Charles de Gaulle in jubilation at a historic triumph against far wealthier opposition.

"This is exceptional. It's been a long day and a lot of pressure. To beat Paris Saint-Germain to the league title is something exceptional," a jubilant Galtier said to *Canal+*.

"The players were amazing... The credit goes to the players, they are the heroes," he added.

The title win came after another away success for Lille, who finish the season unbeaten on the road since November, and ends a three-year league winning streak for PSG.

It was fitting that it was David and Yilmaz who scored the crucial goals at Angers, as both have been key to an improbable run to the title that has also held significant pressure from Monaco.

Mauricio Pochettino's PSG will have to settle for the French Cup in a disappointing season for the mega-rich club. They lost eight times — a record since they were taken over by Qatar Sports Investments in 2011.

— *AFP*



Lille players celebrate after defeating Angers to claim the French top division football league title at The Raymond-Kopa Stadium in Angers, north-western France, on Sunday.

— *AFP*

Aguero ends City career in style

Manchester (United Kingdom), May 24: Sergio Aguero signed off for Manchester City in style on Sunday, scoring twice in a 5-0 romp for the Premier League champions against Everton before lifting the trophy for the fifth time in his Etihad career.

City's record goalscorer, who is leaving the club after next week's Champions League final, hit a quickfire double after coming off the bench with 25 minutes remaining.

His efforts added to earlier strikes from Kevin De

● **Manchester City's record goalscorer Sergio Aguero, who is leaving the club after next week's Champions League final, hit a quickfire double after coming off the bench with 25 minutes remaining.**

Bruyne, Gabriel Jesus and Phil Foden as City showed no sign of letting up ahead of the showpiece clash against Chelsea in Porto.

"When I came here the first title for me was the most important, for the club and for me, that Man City started to win more titles so I'm so happy because it's not easy to be 10 years at one club, for

me it's an honour," he told Sky Sports.

"Before the game I felt so strange, the sensation is not good. I prefer to think about the good moments," added the Argentine, who said he hoped to feature in the Champions League final.

Manager Pep Guardiola was in tears after the final whistle in Manchester, describing Aguero as a

"special person for all of us".

"He helped me a lot," the City boss said as fans celebrated in the stands. "We cannot replace him."

'SERGIO CLOSE TO BARCELONA DEAL'

Aguero is close to agreeing a move to Barcelona that would unite him with fellow Argentine superstar Lionel Messi, according to Pep Guardiola.

"Maybe I reveal a secret," Guardiola told the BBC. "Maybe he is close to agreeing a deal for the club of my heart — for Barcelona." — *AFP*

RAMOS OUT OF SPAIN'S SQUAD FOR EURO 2020

Madrid, May 24: Sergio Ramos was left off Spain's squad for the European Championship on Monday following a season plagued by injuries. Spain coach Luis Enrique said Ramos' lack of play recently made it difficult for the Real Madrid defender to be included in the Euro 2020 squad.

The 35-year-old Ramos missed most of the second half of the season after a series of muscle injuries and a knee problem that required surgery.

He would enter Euro 2020 with a chance to break the record for most appearances for a national team. The veteran Spain captain already holds the European record with 180 appearances. The world record of 184 is held by Egypt player Ahmed Hassan.

— *AP*

ASIAN | BOXING

Hussamuddin gives India winning start

Dubai, May 24: India were off to a confident start at the Asian Boxing Championships with Commonwealth Games bronze-winner Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg) beating Kazakhstan's Makhmud Sabyrkhan in his opening bout to enter the quarterfinals, here on Monday.

Hussamuddin prevailed 5-0 against the 19-year-old two-time Asian youth champion.

The Indian has a real tough one next up as he will meet reigning World and Asian Games champion Mirzazibek Mirzahalilov. Mirzahalilov is the top seed in the draw and is the defending champion as well.

The score-line might suggest otherwise, but Hussamuddin was locked in a gruelling battle with the youngster.

The exchange of blows was fierce as the two boxers put up an entertaining show. The Indian, however, proved to be a better defender than the Kazakh, who relied just too heavily on counter-attacks.

On Tuesday, Olympic-bound Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Sakshi (54kg), Jasmine (57kg) and Sanjeet (91kg) will fight their respective last-8 stage bouts at the event which is



Mohammad Hussamuddin (56kg) celebrates after winning his bout on Monday.

being jointly hosted by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) and the UAE Boxing Federation.

The continental showpiece features 150 pugilists from 17 countries this year including strong boxing nations such as Uzbekistan, Philippines and Kazakhstan.

India's best-ever show at the Asian Championship was in the 2019 edition in Bangkok where the country secured an unprecedented 13 medals including two gold, four silver and seven bronze. — *PTI*

KOCHI TUSKERS STILL OWE 35% MONEY TO PLAYERS

Melbourne, May 24: Former Australia batsman Brad Hodge on Monday cheekily enquired if BCCI has been able to "locate" the money that the now defunct Kochi Tuskers Kerala owed him for representing them in the 2010 edition of Indian Premier League.

The 46-year-old had played 14 games for KTK, scoring 285 runs at an average of 35.63. He was bought by Kochi Tuskers for \$425,000 at the 2010 auction.

"Players are still owed 35% of their money earned from ten years ago from the @IPL representing Kochi tuskers. Any chance @BCCI could locate that money?," Hodge tweeted.

As per Hodge's tweet, it seems that Kochi Tuskers still owe the Australian more than \$127,000.

He was reacting to a report published in the *Telegraph* about Indian women's team not receiving their share of \$50,000 ICC prize money from the BCCI.

It must be noted that Kochi Tuskers were expelled after just one season for defaulting on an annual payment of ₹55.3 crores in 2011.

Players such as Rahul Dravid, S. Sreesanth and Mahela Jayawardene had represented the franchise, which was bought for a whopping ₹1550 crore. It had finished eighth in the 10-team tournament.

KTK had failed to pay the bank guarantee per year, which led to their termination from the cash-rich league. — *PTI*

WORLD TEST | CHAMPIONSHIP

Gill says India well prepared for final

New Delhi, May 24: India opener Shubman Gill feels the team can't be better prepared for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand but underlined the importance of playing session by session in English conditions.

Gill is undergoing a 14-day quarantine in Mumbai along with the rest of the squad. It will be his first tour of England with the senior team having made his debut in Australia in December last year.

He did not have the best of times in the home series against England and he is looking to make amends starting with the WTC final against New Zealand from June 18.

"We did well in Australia. We have been playing well overseas and I feel we can't be better prepared for this final. As an opener, I feel you should be able to play session by session not just in England, overseas in general," Gill told *India TV*.

"It is very important to play session by session. In England whenever there is cloud around, the ball swings more and when the sun is out, it gets easier to bat. It is important to assess those conditions as an opener," he said.

Talking about the quarantine protocols in Covid times, he said: "It is very hard, you are in a room for 14 days there is not much to do. We are given workout schedules, we do that. We try to keep ourselves busy watching movies and spend some time on the I-pad but it is very hard," said Gill, who has played seven Tests so far.



It is very important to play session by session. In England whenever there is cloud around, the ball swings more and when the sun is out, it gets easier to bat. It is important to assess those conditions as an opener.

— **SHUBMAN GILL**
Indian opener

Gill has been with the Test squad since 2019 but got his big break with the Boxing Day Test at the MCG in December.

Asked about time spent in the team and interactions with skipper Virat Kohli and opener partner Rohit Sharma, he added: "Virat bhai tells me to play fearlessly whenever we speak about the game. He speaks about mindset a lot, that you have to be in good frame of mind when you go out to bat and shares his experiences."

"And when I am batting with Rohit bhai, we usually discuss where the bowlers will bowl, what the situation is like, depending on that, when to take risk or not." — *PTI*

Juve, AC Milan qualify for CL

Milan, May 24: Juventus qualified for the Champions League on the final day of the season on Sunday with a 4-1 win at Bologna and were joined by AC Milan who beat Atalanta 2-0.

Napoli had to settle for a Europa League spot, finishing fifth, one point behind Juventus, after a 1-1 draw at home against Hellas Verona.

A pair of Franck Kessie penalties at the end of either half ensured AC Milan finished the season second — 12 points behind city rivals Inter Milan — and return to the Champions League for the first time since the 2013-2014 season.

"We deserved the Champions League as well as second place," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli, whose side had missed the chance to seal their berth last weekend against Cagliari.

"We went through the whole championship at



Juventus' Alvaro Morata scores against Bologna on Sunday. — *AFP*

the top, unfortunately we had thrown away the match point last Sunday.

"I'm really excited, happy, I have to thank the club because they made us work in a spectacular way."

Atalanta had already

ensured a third consecutive season of Champions League football but missed out on a first second-place Serie A finish days after losing out in the Coppa Italia final to Juventus.

Cristiano Ronaldo was

left on the bench by Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo, who opted for an attacking line-up of Paulo Dybala and Alvaro Morata flanked by Federico Chiesa and Dejan Kulusevski.

"It was a shared choice, Ronaldo was tired after the fatigue on Wednesday," said Pirlo.

"He made himself available to the team but I chose to have another player named Morata play, who is not the latest arrival. I have a quality team, with many choices available."

A Morata brace along with goals from Chiesa and Adrien Rabiot prevented Juventus missing out on the elite European competition for the first time since 2012.

In Naples, Amir Rrahmani scored for Napoli after an hour against his former club, which would have been enough to secure a berth at the top table. — *AFP*

City girls make it to sailing worlds

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Hyderabad sailors Jhansipriya Laveti and Vaishnavi Veeravamsham have been selected for the World Championships at Lake Riva Del Garda, Italy, starting from July.

This is a first ever for Telangana that two girls have been selected for the World Championships in the sub juniors category in the same year. The Under 16 Worlds will be attended by 264 sailors from across more than 60 countries making it the most deeply competitive regatta for youth.

Vishvanath Padidala another sailor from Hyderabad who learned the ropes at the Yacht

Club has also been selected for the Italy Worlds taking the tally of Telangana sailors to three.

Vishvanath was selected from The Yacht Club to represent the Navy Sailing Team in 2016 and is currently seeded at 3 in India. His father rides an autorikshaw and often works on construction labour sites in Hyderabad.

Jhansipriya's mother is single and works as part of the housekeeping team at a city hospital. She is all excited about her daughter going for her fourth international after the 2019 Oman Asians and the Atlantic Week at Portugal and Spain.

Vaishnavi's mother works as domestic help at various houses in



Jhansipriya and Vaishnavi pose with coach Suheim Sheikh at the Yacht Club.

Marredpally and cannot believe that her daughter is India No.2 and will be carrying the tricolour to Italy for a World Championship.

Both Jhansi and Vaishnavi, students of Udbhav School at

Rasoolpura, joined sailing in 2018 and rapidly rose to the top of the Indian fleet.

"We are both looking to move up the ladder to the Olympic and Asian Games Class, the Laser, and participate in the forthcoming Asian Trials to be held in Hyderabad in August given that this is our last year in the under 16 category," said a jubilant Vaishnavi who is eagerly looking to migrate to the Lasers and the 29er.

"Garda is a lake and is known for heavy weather and hopefully our experience with Hussain Sagar monsoons will help a great deal," Jhansi added confidently.

"Jhansipriya is India No.1 and Vaishnavi India

No.2 and we are proud that she was selected and we shall leave no stone unturned in their participation at the Worlds," said Lt Gen. K.S. Rao, president of the Telangana Sailing Association.

"Both girls are training hard and I do hope that Covid related visa issues and quarantine issues do not spoil the party. Fingers crossed," said Suheim Sheikh an alumni of IIT Madras, their coach and also the president of the YCH Foundation, a charitable sports organisation at Hussain Sagar with the tagline "Dignity Through Sports" and works only with marginalised children taking them to international levels of sailing.