

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | WEDNESDAY | 26 MAY 2021



WORLD | 5

Iran bars Rouhani allies from Prez poll



SPORTS | 8

IPL set for September in UAE

TABLOID

Pegan Diet is the new nutritional plan on the block



WEATHER

Max: 38.0°C
Min: 30.2°C
RH: 44%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 38/30 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Purnima till 4.44 pm
Star: Anuradha till 1.15 am (Thursday)
Varjyam: 11.47 am to 12.39 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.47 am to 12.39 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Shawwal 13,1442 AH
PRAYERS (SHAHI MASJID)
Fajar: 4.21 am
Zohar: 12.07 pm
Asar: 4.39 pm
Maghrib: 6.34 pm
Isha: 7.53 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.33 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.40 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 6.35 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 6.15 AM

COUNTER POINT



Covid vaccines and medicines? You are late... the mafia has taken them all!

SHORT TAKES

CISF'S SUBODH KUMAR IS NEW CBI DIRECTOR

New Delhi: Senior IPS officer Subodh Kumar Jaiswal was on Tuesday appointed as the new CBI chief for two years, according to a personnel ministry order.

A 1985-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Maharashtra cadre, Jaiswal is currently the director general of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

A Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led three-member selection committee had on Monday shortlisted his name for the post.

Jaiswal has been appointed as the director, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for a period of two years, the ministry order said.

He has also served as Maharashtra's director general of police in the past.

Daily Covid nos dip to below 2L

New Delhi: The daily fresh Covid-19 cases, for the first time in 40 days, fell below two lakhs on Tuesday, with the Union health ministry terming this as an "encouraging sign" as new cases were 1.96 lakh along with 3,511 deaths. The active caseload too has fallen to 25.86 lakhs and the daily positivity rate has come down to 9.54 per cent. In the last 24 hours, close to 3.27 lakh recoveries were registered.

No bail for fear of death, says SC

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed directions issued by the Allahabad High Court, which had granted anticipatory bail to an accused in a cheating case observing that apprehension of death due to Covid infection can be a valid ground for granting the relief. It said that courts shall not consider the directions issued by the High Court on May 10 for grant of anticipatory bail to accused in other cases.

Fugitive Mehul Choksi goes missing in Antigua

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, MAY 25

Fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi, who was wanted in a ₹13,500 crore loan fraud in Punjab National Bank, has reportedly gone missing in Antigua where he has been staying since January 2018.

According to reports, Mr Choksi, who had taken citizenship of the Caribbean island nation of Antigua and Barbuda, was seen driving in the southern area of the island on Sunday. Later, his vehicle was found but there was no trace of him.

A local news agency in Barbuda quoted commissioner of police Atlee Rodney as saying that the police are "following up on the whereabouts of Indian businessman Mehul Choksi", who is "rumoured" to be missing.

Choksi and his nephew Nirav Modi are wanted for allegedly siphoning off ₹13,500 crore of public money from the state-run Punjab National Bank (PNB), using letters of undertaking. The CBI, which is probing the PNB scam, on Tuesday contacted the Antigua embassy in India following reports



● According to reports, Mr Choksi, who had taken citizenship of the Caribbean island nation of Antigua and Barbuda, was seen driving in the southern area of the island on Sunday. Later, his vehicle was found but there was no trace of him.

alleging that Choksi was missing.

While Nirav Modi is in a London prison and is contesting extradition to India, Mr Choksi took the citizenship of Antigua in 2017 using the Citizenship by Investment programme, before fleeing India in January 2018.

Antigua Prime Minister Gaston Browne has said he has "no reliable information till date" that Choksi has fled the country and it was very likely that he was still in Antigua and Barbuda.

In a statement to the

Parliament of Antigua and Barbuda, Browne said authorities were "collaborating" with the Indian government, neighbouring countries and international police organisation to try and locate Choksi.

"Someone from his household indicated that he is missing. Since then Royal Police Force of Antigua and Barbuda put out a statement to that effect. That statement will be shared with the Interpol," he said.

Browne said Choksi has two cases against him in courts of Antigua and Barbuda — extradition and revocation of citizenship — for which he has brought in a celebrated lawyer from the United Kingdom to represent him and this showed his willingness to stay and contest the cases.

"I do not believe that law enforcement or anyone would have contemplated Mr Choksi would have fled the country. In any case we do not have any reliable information to date that he has fled the country. It is likely he may be still here and law enforcement is utilising all the efforts including all intelligence to try and locate Choksi," he said.



Thick smoke billows from one of the crude processing units of HPCL's Visakh Refinery following a fire mishap at Malkapuram in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

8 drown as 2 boats capsize in Sileru reservior on AO border

DC CORRESPONDENT VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 25

Tragedy struck the agency tracts when eight persons, including children and women, all guest workers from Odisha, drowned after two country boats capsized in Sileru reservoir along the AP-Odisha Border on Monday.

The incident took place when 35 members of

migrant families were trying to sneak into the Odisha border at night, fearing lockdown clampdown. Ten persons managed to swim ashore, while eight others drowned in the river.

The police said 35 members of guest workers from Guntawada and Konduguda villages under Malkangiri district in Odisha reached Sileru from

Hyderabad as they lost their livelihoods due to the Covid curfew. After crossing the Sileru in a vehicle, they reached Jonnalamamidi on foot and decided to take a boat ride to reach their hometowns as they feared they may be stopped at the border by Odisha officials.

■ Page 3: Odisha, AP teams begin search operations

Flag other ministers, Congress to Twitter

DC CORRESPONDENTS NEW DELHI, MAY 25

The Delhi Police on Tuesday served notices on two Congress leaders in connection with the probe into a complaint about the alleged "Congress toolkit" matter even as the Congress once again wrote to Twitter asking them to flag tweets by 11 Union ministers referring to the alleged "Congress toolkit" as "manipulated media".

The letter, written to Jim Baker, Twitter's deputy general counsel and vice-president (legal), and Vijaya Gadde, lead for

legal, policy and trust and safety, by Congress' communications chief and general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala says, "The subject matter of the forged Toolkit document was created by certain BJP leaders to gain undue and wrongful political advantage by spreading potentially dangerous, false and fabricated material through their Twitter handles against the Indian National Congress and its leaders". The letter carried the URLs of the specific tweets which the Congress demanded to be marked.

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

Registration of properties has been affected for the last few days following technical glitches in the central server. This has had an adverse fallout on the daily revenue collections across the state.

Nearly 294 sub-registrar offices dealing with the registration of properties and various documents have not been functioning properly since May 21, causing a lot of inconvenience to the people. The official reason is that they are facing technical snags

13L evacuated in WB, Odisha before landfall

Cyclone Yaas slightly changed course; landfall at Dhamra

RAJIB CHOWDHURI AND AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC KOLKATA/BALASORE, MAY 25

A day before the "very severe" Cyclone "Yaas" makes its landfall and strikes mainly two states in eastern India, a tornado hit two districts of West Bengal on Tuesday, leaving two persons dead due to electrocution and injured several others, while damaging several houses. Eleven lakh people were evacuated to safer places in West Bengal, while in Odisha at least two lakh people were evacuated.

It was also found Cyclone Yaas had slightly changed its course; and will now have its landfall at Dhamra, in Odisha's Bhadrak district, at 5.30 am on Wednesday, instead of Balasore. Heavy downpours and squally winds lashed the coastal districts both states. In the midst of a raging pandemic, those who are Covid-positive are being placed in separate cyclone shelters.

In Kolkata, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has stationed herself at the control room at Nabanna, the state secretariat, for the next two days to lead her government's relief and rescue operations.

The Indian Army has deployed 17 relief columns of soldiers in 10 districts of the state.

The tornado struck two districts — Hooghly and North 24 Parganas — located on both sides of the Hooghly river on Tuesday afternoon. The two victims — Swapan Das Baul (40) and Kamal Majhi (21) — are from Pandua in Hooghly districts. They were out of their homes then.

The director-general of the India Meteorological Department, Dr Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, said: "The storm will further intensify in the next 12 hours and turn into a very severe cyclonic storm. It will have its landfall near Dhamra in Odisha's Bhadrak district. The



Strong waves at the Puri beach, ahead of the landfall of Cyclone Yaas, in Puri, on Tuesday.

— PTI

Jagan puts dist collectors on high alert over storm

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday directed district collectors and other officials to be on high alert and follow the updates of meteorological department and act accordingly in the Yaas cyclonic conditions.

Addressing a review meeting with the district collectors of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam on the measures to be taken in the wake of Cyclone Yaas, he directed them to monitor the situation closely and help the needy without fail.

Chief Secretary Adityanath Das attended the review meeting from Srikakulam through video conference and explained

the situation in the three districts.

He said there was no major impact at present in Srikakulam district except little rain and added that all the higher officials were stationed in Srikakulam.

He said all measures were taken ensuring no Covid patient was present in temporary buildings. Also, to ensure no shortage of oxygen, they arranged generators and diesel readily in case of interruption in power supply.

Srikakulam district collector E. Nivas said they were coordinating with Odisha officials and special teams were placed in Ichapuram so that if any problem arose in transportation of oxygen tankers, it can be immediately addressed.

Vizianagaram district collector Jawahar said no impact of the cyclone was seen in the district so far and they are well-prepared to deal with any event. He said all generators were arranged at 28 Covid hospitals in the district and added that enough diesel was available for four days.

He said they even arranged gas cylinders in Covid care centers to ensure no shortage to food. Poles and transformers were also readily kept in case of any problem in power supply and added IMD alerts are being shared with mandal-level officers.

■ Page 2: Situation normal in Vizag, says official

windspeed at the time of landfall will most likely be 155-165 kmph, gusting up to 185 kmph." Dr Mohapatra also said the

cyclone would be accompanied by high tidal surges ranging from to 4-5 metres in Dhamra and two metres in Kendrapara and

inundate coastal areas. Several trains that were to run in the cyclone-prone areas have been cancelled by Railways.

CM releases crop insurance money

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

As many as 15.15 lakh farmers got ₹1,829.23 crore as crop insurance in the state. Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy noted that the government has taken the responsibility of supporting the farmers at all hard times and thus brought in the free crop insurance scheme, without levying the burden of

premium on them. The Chief Minister on Tuesday credited ₹1,820.23 crore under YSR Free Crop Insurance scheme to the bank accounts of 15.15 lakh farmers who lost their crop during the 2020 kharif.

He said that unlike the previous regime, under which forced a farmer was forced to pay his share and both state and central governments equally bore the

premium amount to avail insurance, the YSRC government revamped the scheme and was paying the entire insurance premium on its own, ensuring that all the farmers who enrolled themselves on e-crop platform got their share of insurance directly with no middlemen.

The Chief Minister said that a total of ₹3,788.25 crore was spent on the crop insurance scheme in

the last 23 months, including the pending dues of ₹715.84 crore left by the previous Telugu Desam government.

Besides these, the state government had spent ₹83,000 crore towards farmer welfare in the last 23 months. For Rythu Bharosa alone, an amount of ₹17,029 crore was spent.

■ Page 2: Jagan swears by farmers' interests

BIG | HIT

Work hit at nearly 294 sub-registrar offices in AP

Tech snags hit prop registrations

● As more people started accessing encumbrance certificates and other data put on the public domain, it might have affected the functioning of the central server.

● Officials said technical issue was getting rectified and sounded confident that they could resume normal work shortly.

In the central server and admit that it is resulting in no scanning of documents and their upload to the web portal.

As the state government

has imposed partial lockdown from May 5 onwards to fight Covid-19 spread and relaxed curfew from 6 am to 12 noon, the sub-registrar offices are working from 8 am to 11.30 am. Given limited business hours, a large number of people are rushing to the offices to register their properties and documents. However, they are unable to get their properties registered.

Department sources said that as they were taking up data migration from the old systems to the efficient new systems and as more people started accessing

encumbrance certificates and other data put on the public domain, it might have affected the functioning of the central server.

Meanwhile, the registration authorities said the technical issue was getting rectified and sounded confident that they could resume normal work shortly.

The revenue earned by the department up to April 30 this fiscal was ₹60,672 lakh. In May so far, around ₹16,470 lakh was collected. Total amount collected so far was ₹77,142 lakh and the number of documents registered was 1,91,696.

JUNIOR DOCTOR ATTACKED FOR POST-MORTEM

DC CORRESPONDENT VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

A junior doctor was assaulted, causing bleeding injuries on his face, by a gang of youngsters, who found fault with him for conducting post-mortem on the body of a man in a medico-legal case, at the mortuary at KGH in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday. Dr C. Dutta Prasad Reddy, studying forensic medicine at AMC, conducted post-mortem on the body of a man who was related to them.

■ Full report on Page 3

IN BRIEF

NAIDU DEMANDS
RELEASE OF PARTY
LEADERS IN KURNOOLDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

Telugu Desam chief N. Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday wrote a letter to the AP Director General of Police (DGP), taking strong objection to the 'illegal cases and arrests' of former TD MLA B.C. Janardhan Reddy and other leaders in Kurnool district. He demanded that the DGP withdraw the cases and release the TD leaders unconditionally. He alleged that false cases were filed by the police of Banaganapalli police station against Janardhan Reddy and his supporters. He further alleged that it was the complainant and his henchmen who went to attack the house of Janardhan Reddy and when the TD leader and his supporters resisted their attack, the complainant in turn filed a false case and within no time arrests were made during the midnight of the same day on May 23.

Naidu told the DGP that many TD leaders and activists were arrested but only Janardhan Reddy, Murali and Ramana were produced before the court within 24 hours.

He stated that another six TD activists, whose names were mentioned in the FIR, were produced in the court even after 24 hours of their detention.

He demanded that the DGP take action against the guilty officials responsible for the illegal detention of TD activists. He further demanded that the DGP also take steps to unconditionally release all the illegally detained TD activists and restrain the police from foisting false cases and making illegal arrests.

LOKESH ASKS SHAH
TO STOP CLASS X,
XI EXAMS IN APDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

Telugu Desam MLC Nara Lokesh on Tuesday wrote a letter to Union Home Minister Amit Shah, urging his intervention to impress upon the Andhra Pradesh government to cancel the Classes 10 and 11 examinations in view of the continuing threat from the pandemic. He reminded Amit Shah that the national consultation organised by the union ministry of education had stressed the need to cancel the Class 10 exams even as over 14 states and two national boards (ICSE and CBSE) cancelled the 10th class exams.

Lokesh deplored that the AP government was going ahead with 10th class exams for 6.7 lakh students from June 7 and was also bent on holding the Class 11 exams for 5 lakh students soon. Expressing concern over the AP government's stubborn attitude, he appealed to Shah to use his good offices to make good sense prevail upon the AP government.

He asserted that the central intervention was needed the most, given that over 11.7 lakh students were facing the risk of infections.

He expressed concern that the situation was still precarious in AP with the Covid positivity rate still staying above 20 per cent.

REBEL MP'S CASE:
SC NOTICE TO CENTRE
ON CBI PROBE PLEAPARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 25

The Supreme Court on Tuesday issued a notice to the Centre on a plea by K. Bharath, son of YSR Congress MP Kanumuri Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, seeking CBI probe into the 'custodial torture' of his father by the Andhra Pradesh police which had arrested Raju on charges of sedition.

A vacation bench comprising Justice Vineet Saran and Justice B.R. Gavai rejected the AP objection that the plea for CBI probe in a matter concerning the state could not be advanced before the court without making the state a party in the matter. It directed the petitioner to implead the CBI as a party respondent in the case. Senior counsel Mukul Rohatgi appearing for the petitioner sought the deletion of Andhra Pradesh as party respondent which the court allowed at the petitioner's own risk. Senior counsel Dushyant Dave objected to Andhra Pradesh not being made a respondent in the matter, but the court told him that nothing was going to happen as the matter was posted after six weeks.



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy releases the YSR Free Crop Insurance to farmers from his camp office in Tadepalli on Tuesday. Ministers Botsa Satyanarayana (right), Kurasala Kannababu, Special CS (agriculture) Poonam Malakondaiah and other officials are seen.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

Farmers delighted as
crop insurance paid

The government is fully paying the premium on their behalf

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 25

The farmers in East Godavari district expressed their happiness over the YSR Crop Insurance scheme as the government is offering it, without putting any burden on the farmers. The government is fully paying the premium on their behalf.

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy launched 'Dr YSR Vuchitha Pantalabhima Padhakam' to the extent 388.98 crore to the accounts of 2,50,866 farmers in East and West Godavari districts on Tuesday.

As many as 1,47,726 farmers benefited from the payment of ₹219.26 crores in East Godavari and 1,02,140 farmers got direct benefits worth ₹169.72 crore in West Godavari district.

The CM released the amounts through a virtual mode. A farmer Marella Venkata Ramana from Yamandamuru in Karapa Mandal East Godavari district said at the event that he was very surprised to know he got the insurance even though he had not paid the premium.

He said the Jagan Mohan Reddy government introduced Rythu Bharosa scheme, input subsidy, crop insurance scheme and others, helping farmers do away with very high interest loans. East Godavari district collector D. Muralidhar Reddy said that the scheme is a cent per cent state scheme, helping all those who took up agriculture and horticulture crops notified by the government.

The scheme was being implemented from 2020 kharif onwards. It applies to all those whose details are registered in the e-crop online. No separate

enrollment is required. BC welfare minister Ch. Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna said the farmers were breathing easy following launch of a slew of schemes. Kakinada MP Vanga

SITUATION IS
NORMAL IN VIZAG,
SAYS OFFICIAL

From Page 1

Visakhapatnam collector Vinay Chand said the situation was normal in the district and they were fully prepared to deal with the cyclone. He said measures were being taken to ensure an uninterrupted power supply to oxygen plants and cylinder filling plants. All precautionary measures were taken at 80 hospitals where Covid patients were being treated. Alternative preparations were also in place if power was disrupted, he added.

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister Botsa Satyanarayana, Agriculture Minister Kurasala Kannababu, Agriculture Mission Vice-Chairman M.V.S. Nagi Reddy, Agriculture Special Chief Secretary Poonam Malakondaiah, Agriculture Commissioner H. Aruna Kumar and other officials were present.

Jagan swears by
farmers' interests

From Page 1

The CM said that his government was working to safeguard the interests of the farmers. It established 10,778 Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) and integrated them with village secretariats to benefit the farmers. He said that the loss in kharif 2020 was being compensated by the onset of next kharif, ensuring that no farmer suffers from losses. Taking transparency in governance to the next level, all these details, compensation for the crop loss etc, will be displayed at RBKs for social audit and those missing out from the list can get enrolled at RBK itself. Not just from seeds to marketing, RBKs also double up as crop purchase centres, he said.

The Chief Minister said that the state government had credited ₹1,038 crore as input subsidy for those farmers who lost their crops in natural calamities, with no delays ensuring that every farmer gets compensated in the same season. He mentioned that besides these, the government had spent ₹18,342 crore for procuring paddy and ₹4761 crore towards purchasing other crops and support the farmers.

In order to provide free nine-hour electricity to farmers during daytime,

enrollment is required. BC welfare minister Ch. Srinivasa Venugopala Krishna said the farmers were breathing easy following launch of a slew of schemes. Kakinada MP Vanga

CS reviews steps to face Yaas fury

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRIKAKULAM, MAY 25

Chief Secretary Adityanath Das held a review meeting with senior officials on the preparedness for the impending Cyclone Yaas here on Tuesday. Collector J. Niwas, Superintendent of Police Amit Bardar and senior revenue officials attended the meeting. Adityanath Das asked the officials to shift people to

cyclone centres in Tekkali division mandals and move paddy and fodder to safe places. He said food should be ready at the cyclone shelters and the vehicles should be linked with the petrol bunks to prevent shortage during the emergency time.

Collector Niwas explained the measures taken so far to mitigate the situation in the event of heavy rains and high velocity winds.

In a bizarre incident, senior government officials from departments of factories, labour and boilers are made salesmen of mist fans and a chemical of a private firm in Andhra Pradesh, all in the name of warding off Coronavirus!

According to highly placed sources, people close to minister for labour and employment G. Jayaram directed district

₹17,430 crore was spent. He further mentioned that additionally, the government had cleared ₹960 crore paddy procurement arrears and ₹384 crore seed procurement arrears left by the previous government.

Jagan Mohan Reddy said thus, "Supporting the farmer community, the government set up agriculture advisory committees at village, zonal, district and state levels in connection with the RBKs to guide the farmers in crop planning. In order to benefit dairy farmers, the state signed an MoU with Amul to give a better price with an additional of ₹5-15 per liter to the farmers. Taking another step forward for the farmers, the government is setting up multi-purpose centers under each RBK, with a total outlay of ₹14,000 crore. Under the YSR Jala Kala scheme, the government had provided over two lakh bore wells at a cost of ₹4,932 crore, besides providing motors to poor farmers. The government has kept every promise made during elections and strictly implemented the election manifesto." Ministers K. Kannababu, Special Chief Secretary Poonam Malakondaiah, AP Agri Mission Vice Chairman M.V.S. Nagi Reddy and other officials participated in the programme.

During kharif last year, they suffered heavy losses due to unseasonal rains to cotton, groundnut, paddy, corn, and Bengal gram in an extent of 4,71,746 acres. As they got a compensation for which they paid no premium, they thanked the benevolence of the government. Praising it, Lakshmi Kanth Reddy of Chilla Banda in Kodumuru Mandal said heavy rains washed away Bengal gram in 5 acres and cotton in 7 acres, for which he spent ₹30,000 per acre for cotton crop and ₹5,000 per acre for Bengal gram crop. Jagan Mohan Reddy government was the only government in India that was coming to the rescue of beyond their imagination, he said.

Mohan Reddy, a farmer from Lakshmiapuram in Kallur Mandal, said he cultivated maize, cotton, and red gram in 9 acres. He spent ₹30,000 per acre on maize crop ₹25,000 on cotton crop, and ₹20,000 on other crops. His entire crop was washed away.

Gita said that previously the farmers did not know when they would get the insurance claims.

But, now, they are getting the claims within a stipulated time.

FARMERS HAIL
CM FOR INSURING
THEIR CROPSDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL/NELLORE,
MAY 25

Kurnool farmers on Tuesday were elated following the release of free crop insurance by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

As many as 1,85,744 beneficiaries had a total amount of ₹181.12 crores directly credited into their accounts. On the occasion, they felt the scheme was a shield against the vagaries of nature.

During kharif last year, they suffered heavy losses due to unseasonal rains to cotton, groundnut, paddy, corn, and Bengal gram in an extent of 4,71,746 acres. As they got a compensation for which they paid no premium, they thanked the benevolence of the government. Praising it, Lakshmi Kanth Reddy of Chilla Banda in Kodumuru Mandal said heavy rains washed away Bengal gram in 5 acres and cotton in 7 acres, for which he spent ₹30,000 per acre for cotton crop and ₹5,000 per acre for Bengal gram crop. Jagan Mohan Reddy government was the only government in India that was coming to the rescue of beyond their imagination, he said.

Mohan Reddy, a farmer from Lakshmiapuram in Kallur Mandal, said he cultivated maize, cotton, and red gram in 9 acres. He spent ₹30,000 per acre on maize crop ₹25,000 on cotton crop, and ₹20,000 on other crops. His entire crop was washed away.

Meanwhile Sarvepalli YSR Congress legislator Kakani Govardhan Reddy dismissed speculations over the confinement of Anandaiah. Speaking to this newspaper, he said they kept Anandaiah at a guesthouse at Krishnapatnam port as people were thronging his village and pressuring him for the medicine. He stated that a study was being taken up by TTD-run S.V. Ayurvedic College and a team from the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) was studying the medicine. "We have requested the Chief Minister to hasten the studies and give clearance for the distribution of medicine at the earliest," he said.

SP Bardar said he had asked the police personnel to alert the people in Donkuru in Ichapuram Mandal and Idduvanipalem in Kaviti Mandal which are likely to be affected by the cyclone. Teams from SDRF reached these two mandals on Tuesday evening. They carried torch lights, dragon lights, ropes and life jackets along with them.

officials learnt to have been pulled up for failing to meet targets. Though a section of officials is on the job to please their bosses and people close to the minister to get favour in the form of transfer, promotion and other benefits, a majority of officials have a different take on the issue.

Some of them said when they were busy in making arrangements to face the Covid-19 pandemic by overseeing a series of works dealing with medical

places requiring fast, safe and quick virus elimination. The mist fan will have a water tank of 2.5 or 1.8 litres capacity to fill it up with 25/20 ml sodium hypochlorite or hypochlorous acid to disinfect the given area. Each fan costs along with the chemical, ₹30,000 on an average. Sources said the people close to the minister had even given targets on sale promotion. Periodical review is also being held to find out whether the targets are fulfilled with some

Twitterati demands state
protection for AnandaiahDC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI/NELLORE, MAY 25

With authorities indefinitely stalling the distribution of Bonigi Anandaiah's herbal concoction till its efficacy is scientifically established, there is an outrage on social media, with tweets/posts going viral with the hashtag of #SaveAnadayya, making it one of the top social media trends.

A self-proclaimed Ayurvedic practitioner, Anandaiah of Krishnapatnam village in Nellore district, has become popular following reports in the media a few days ago that the concoction he prepared could cure Covid-19 patients. As the news spread like wildfire, thousands of people started rushing to the village to take the concoction, which was distributed at free of cost.

With massive crowds violating Covid protocols gaining attention, the Lokayukta sought a report on the matter, following which the district administration halted the distribution until its efficacy was tested at lab. Though it was resumed last Friday, thousands of people again thronged the village, forcing the state government to order for a comprehensive study on scientific authenticity of the concoction by the ICMR and Ayush department. Until then the distribution was put on hold.

In the meantime, reacting to the authorities' decision to temporarily halt the distribution and alleged disappearance of Anandaiah, Ayurveda experts, common public and his supporters took to the social media under the hashtag #SaveAnadayya; #SaveAyurveda, emphasising the need to protect him. Some posts are even demanding that the government declare Anandaiah as a national treasure.

A Twitter user going by the name Prashanth Chikatala tweeted: "If Govts don't approve Anandayya's medicine, they completely lose people's trust. If these incidents continue, people turn against Govts & it may lead to social chaos. It's primary duty of Govts to maintain safety, security & health of people. #supportanandayya #saveanandayya."

Similarly, another user Chavan Rakesh tweeted: "I request Hon. CM @ysjagan garu to protect Anandayya garu and support Ayurveda, and do not let greedy corporate vultures destroy Ayurvedic Legacy. Ayurveda is the medicine that doesn't give side effects." He even tagged PM Narendra Modi, Sadhguru and Ramdev Baba to the post.

Meanwhile Sarvepalli YSR Congress legislator Kakani Govardhan Reddy dismissed speculations over the confinement of Anandaiah. Speaking to this newspaper, he said they kept Anandaiah at a guesthouse at Krishnapatnam port as people were thronging his village and pressuring him for the medicine. He stated that a study was being taken up by TTD-run S.V. Ayurvedic College and a team from the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) was studying the medicine. "We have requested the Chief Minister to hasten the studies and give clearance for the distribution of medicine at the earliest," he said.

Some of them said when they were busy in making arrangements to face the Covid-19 pandemic by overseeing a series of works dealing with medical

oxygen supply, oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators and other activities along with taking care of their regular departmental works with reduced staff, it was unfair to force them to work as 'salesmen' to promote a private firm to benefit the minister and his family and not the state or the government.

Sources said that there was a good response in Visakhapatnam as some officials were on the job and promoted sale of some



Screen grab of a meme posted on Instagram by 'unprofessional_gang2'.

Pro-Anandaiah
comic memes a big
hit on social mediaAVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, MAY 25

With online protesters demanding protection for Bonigi Anandaiah, a self-proclaimed Ayurvedic practitioner from Nellore's Krishnapatnam village — who claimed to have prepared a cure for Covid-19, members are fuelling his ever-increasing popularity among the netizens through their well-made memes, putting images and videos from Telugu movies to evoke laughter, on the social media.

For the past few years, Telugu members, who try to keep their followers engaged by posting content about politics, movies and trending topics in an organised manner, have been dominating the social media space, particularly Facebook and Instagram. There are hundreds of meme pages, whose primary agenda is to entertain followers.

When authorities ordered for a comprehensive study on the scientific authenticity of Anandaiah's concoction by the ICMR and Ayush department and temporarily halted the distribution of the

herbal medicine, members got active and began poking fun at China and other corporate hospitals.

Among the top trending memes, an account on Instagram — 'unprofessional_gang2', which have over 66.5K followers, posted an image from Godzilla vs Kong movie, tagging the Godzilla as remdesivir and King Kong as Covaxin/Covishield. On the bottom of the image, actor-MLA Balakrishna, who was tagged as Krishnapatnam medicine, is seen chasing Godzilla and Kong with a wooden stick. Another account — 'oops_memes', which has over 8K followers, posted a meme — poking fun at private hospitals.

With an image from a Telugu movie, a reporter tagged as a private hospital is seen asking a person (tagged as people) 'Covaxin or Covishield', for which an answer was posted below as 'Krishnapatnam Ayurvedic Medicine'.

Surprisingly, a page from a book — claimed to be 159 years old, in which the herbs currently used by Anandaiah and their details were mentioned, is also widely circulating on social media.

TD: Restore supply of
Anandaiah's concoctionDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 25

Senior Telugu Desam leaders led by Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy, who is battling for restoring the distribution of Bonigi Anandaiah's concoction to the Covid patients, had an opportunity to witness the effectiveness of medicine during their visit to Krishnapatnam village on Tuesday.

Volunteers assisting Anandaiah administered eye drops and medicine to a youth, Prakash, who was infected by Covid-19 and was struggling even to walk or talk. Prakash belonging to Peddapalli in Telangana was taken to Krishnapatnam by his mother Malleswari with a hope to save his life. Despite police objections, the duo managed to enter the village with the help of an autorickshaw driver.

On noticing his condition, Anandaiah's assistants applied eye drops to him and he reportedly recovered within 40 minutes. Comparing Anandaiah to god, Prakash said he would be indebted to him.

TD politburo member

Chandramohan Reddy, MLC Beeda Ravichandra, former NUDA Chairman Kotamreddy Srinivasulu Reddy and TD Doctors Cell president Dr Z. Siva Prasad who watched the incident lauded the volunteers.

In the absence of Anandaiah, the TD team felicitated his wife and the volunteers for their outstanding service to save lives.

Speaking to this newspaper, Chandramohan Reddy demanded that the government starts distributing the medicine immediately, citing the rush of patients, including those in critical conditions, to the village. "Release Anandaiah from confinement and restore distribution of his medicine if you have any humanity left," he demanded. He alleged that some vested interests kept Anandaiah at a secret place and were forcing him to produce the medicine. "It is being supplied to their relatives apart from ruling party legislators and leaders even as people in critical condition were going from pillar to post for the medicine," he charged.

Comparing Anandaiah to god, Prakash said he would be indebted to him. TD politburo member

officials learnt to have been pulled up for failing to meet targets. Though a section of officials is on the job to please their bosses and people close to the minister to get favour in the form of transfer, promotion and other benefits, a majority of officials have a different take on the issue.

Some of them said when they were busy in making arrangements to face the Covid-19 pandemic by overseeing a series of works dealing with medical

oxygen supply, oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators and other activities along with taking care of their regular departmental works with reduced staff, it was unfair to force them to work as 'salesmen' to promote a private firm to benefit the minister and his family and not the state or the government.

Sources said that there was a good response in Visakhapatnam as some officials were on the job and promoted sale of some

SHORT TAKES

ODISHA, AP
TEAMS BEGIN
SEARCH OPS

FROM PAGE 1

In the first trip, 17 people set off in two country boats and crossed over to Odisha. In the second trip, 18 persons set sail in the same country boats. When the first country boat capsized allegedly due to the overload or the boat hitting a pole underneath the water, the panic-stricken occupants jumped into the other boat to save their lives. But it too gave in and sank in the river.

Chintapalle ASP Vidya Sagar Naidu said that a team of Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force with the support of AP police and other departments launched a search and rescue operation to trace the missing eight persons. They recovered six bodies so far from the river and the search is on to trace the remaining two bodies.

The police said that seven among the eight victims were children and women. The bodies were shifted to a local hospital in Odisha for post-mortem. A 13-month-old baby also died in the incident.

Meanwhile, AP minister for health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas asked the Visakhapatnam district authorities to take up rescue operations. He also asked them to ensure proper treatment to the people who managed to swim ashore.

₹15L AID TO KIN
OF STAFF WHO
DIED ON DUTY

Tirupati: Deputy Chief Minister K. Narayana Swamy and Chittoor MP N. Reddeppa on Tuesday handed over a financial assistance of ₹15 lakh to the kin of a government surveyor, who died of a massive heart attack while on election duty.

The deceased was identified as E. Bala Raju, who worked as a surveyor at Satyavedu mandal. He was posted on election duty at the Government Polytechnic College in Satyavedu, where he suffered the heart attack when he was involved in the distribution of EVMs ahead of the polling for Tirupati Lok Sabha by-election.

The Deputy CM and the MP also assured his family that the state government would extend necessary help to the family.

The cheque was handed in the presence of Collector M. Harinarayanan, who assured that a government job would be provided to an eligible family member under the scheme of compassionate appointment.

AP continues to register dip
in fresh Covid-19 infections

State sees 15,284 new cases and 106 deaths; total cases at 16,09,105

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

Andhra Pradesh continues to register dip in fresh Coronavirus infections for the last few days. It saw 15,284 new cases and 106 deaths in the 24 hours ended Tuesday morning.

The state witnessed the highest-day caseload of over 24,000 recently since the outbreak of the second wave of pandemic.

The medical and health department bulletin said that out of the 72,979 samples tested, 15,284 persons were found infected with the confirmed Coronavirus. Out of a total number of 1,87,49,201 samples tested so far in the state, 16,09,105 persons tested positive. Of them 14,00,754 recovered after treatment and 1,98,023 are

still active. In the daily cases, East Godavari reported the highest number at 2,663, followed by 1,970 in Chittoor, 1,840 in Visakhapatnam, 1,412 in West Godavari, 1,387 in Kurnool, 1,034 in Anantapur, 991 in Srikakulam, 978 in Prakasam, 802 in Guntur, 648 in Nellore, 568 in Krishna, 555 in Vizianagaram and 436 in Kadapa.

East Godavari continues to top the state list with regard to the highest number of cumulative active cases at 33,371, followed by 23,239 in Prakasam, 22,205 in Chittoor, 19,277 in Visakhapatnam, 15,807 in Nellore, 15,679 in West Godavari, 14,326 in Guntur, 12,763 in Srikakulam, 11,239 in Krishna, 8,111 in Vizianagaram, 8,006 in

Kurnool, 7,984 in Anantapur and 6,016 in Kadapa.

In the case of deaths, Chittoor reported the highest at 15, followed by 10 each in Prakasam and West Godavari, nine each in Anantapur, East Godavari, Nellore and Visakhapatnam, eight each in Kurnool and Vizianagaram, seven in Srikakulam, five each in Guntur and Krishna and one in Kadapa. With this, the total death toll rose to 10,328 in the state.

The authorities discharged 20,917 Covid patients after recovery from various hospitals in the state during the last 24 hours.

Meanwhile P. Rosaiah, 50, under going Covid-19 treatment committed suicide and the incident took place at Siddhartha Covid Care hospital.

2ND DOSE OF COVID JAB TODAY, TOMORROW

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

The AP government has targeted to inoculate 90,000 persons by administering the second dose of Covaxin for two days from May 26 to 27.

Principal secretary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal told media persons here on Tuesday that directions were issued to district collectors to administer the second dose of Covaxin on Wednesday and Thursday and added that they received 1.17 lakh doses of Covaxin from the Centre and 78,000 doses more are due to arrive.

He said that 4.35 lakh doses of Covishield were received from the Centre while the state govern-

ment purchased 12.74 lakh doses and added that those aged above 45 years and were having touch with the general public in the course of work, to be given the first dose of the jab.

Speaking of the black fungus cases in the state, the health official said that so far 252 cases were reported and out of them, no case of death was reported. The government supplied 3,000 Amphotericin B vials to the hospitals across AP.

On the Krishnapatnam concoction for treating Covid-19 patients, the official said they were waiting for analysis reports from various labs, and that the state government would take a final decision in three to four days.

VIT & JUNIPER
SIGN MoU FOR
NOVEL COURSESDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has been reached between Juniper Networks Cloud & Automation Academy (JNCAA) and School of Computer Science and Engineering, VIT-AP University, to provide dream jobs in the IT field.

Dr S.V. Kota Reddy, Vice-Chancellor, VIT-AP University, said that the collaboration will help VIT faculty and students to get Juniper Training & Certification and bag their dream jobs with hefty packages.

He explained that this collaboration can bring forth 10 industry-oriented courses with lots of research and career opportunities in the cloud and the networking space. Most importantly, VIT-AP University Juniper Program certified students would be given additional priority by the Juniper team during its recruitment.

Major fire breaks
out at oil refineryDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 25

A major fire broke out in one of the crude processing distillation units CD3 in Visakh Refinery of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation, located in Malkapuram area of Visakhapatnam on Tuesday afternoon. The incident took place at about 3 pm and the in-house firefighting system brought the fire under control in one hour. There was no loss of life or injuries to the workers present there.

Regional fire officer of GVMC Niranjan Reddy, who rushed there along with a team of firefighting officials, said that soon after the fire started, the technical staff cut off the supply line and allowed the leftover crude to burn. The cooling process was immediately initiated, he said.

District Fire Officer Ram Prakash said it was a mechanical failure that took place at a height of 30 metres of the pipeline.

"Preliminary reports said the pipeline was worn out which led to leak and subsequently caught fire as the crude oil was heated at 120°C. However, a full technical report on the incident would be available after two weeks," Ram Prakash told this correspondent.

He said the in-house firefighting system tackled the fire and brought the fire under control effectively. The fire tenders of PSUs, Navy and district fire service were partially used. The fire was put out in one hour, he added.

Joint chief inspector of factories Siva Sankar Reddy said his department conducted a safety audit in October last year and found everything was in order. The HPCL itself conducts safety checks every year. He also said as per initial reports, a mechanical failure led to the mishap.

An official release from HPCL in the evening said the fire incident occurred in one of the crude processing units of HPCL.

Jr doctor assaulted
over post-mortemDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 25

A junior doctor was assaulted, causing bleeding injuries on his face, by a gang of youngsters who found fault with him for conducting post-mortem on the dead body of a man in a medico-legal case, at the mortuary at KGH in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday.

Dr C. Dutta Prasad Reddy, studying PG second year

forensic medicine at Andhra Medical College, conducted post-mortem on the body of a man who was related to them. Angered at it, a group of drunken youth entered the mortuary even as he was conducting post-mortem on another dead body, abused and attacked him with a sharp device, causing severe injuries on his nose, contusions on right shoulder and left chest.

MOTHER, TWO KIDS FOUND DEAD

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MAY 25

Three dead bodies, including a woman and two children, were found floating in a water tank in C. Ramapuram village in Ramachandrapuram mandal in Chittoor district on Tuesday morning.

According to the police, the bodies were found in Gandhi Cheruvu tank near a local quarry around 6.30 am. Also, a two-wheeler was found nearby. The deceased were identified as 28-year-old Neeraja, who was work-

ing as a nurse at SVIMS, and her 4-year-old son and 2-year-old daughter. They belong to Gundyalapalli village in Penumuru mandal.

Earlier, a missing case was registered for them at Penumuru police station on Sunday.

Police suspect she might have committed suicide along with children. The bodies were shifted to the government hospital for autopsy. Ramachandrapuram mandal SI Jayaswamulu registered a case and further investigation is underway.

Feed the needy



Homeless people wait in a queue for food at Ratham centre organised by Hare Krishna Movement India in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

Orphan succumbs to black fungus

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MAY 25

The 51-year-old, who died of black fungus at the Government General Hospital (GGH), was cremated at the Muslims burial ground in Drivers Colony here on Tuesday. Muthavali Shakil Shafi

and social activist Md. Jakir took the initiative to perform the last rites when the victim's relatives refused to take the body from the mortuary.

K. Sadiq Vail of Market Street from Uravakonda town was admitted in the Covid-19 ward a few days ago due to post-Covid

complications. He contracted black fungus and was being treated at a separate ward.

While none of his attendants or relatives came forward to claim the body, hospital authorities gave an appeal following which Shafi and Jakir stepped in to give a

decent farewell to the deceased. Although around 130 victims of Covid were buried in that place, this was the first instance of a black fungus victim. The body was to be carried at least half-a-kilometre distance from the main gate of the burial ground.

60% Covid cases from
villages: Vzm collectorDC CORRESPONDENT
VIZIANAGARAM, MAY 25

More and more Covid-19 cases were being reported from the villages in Vizianagaram district, said district collector Dr M. Hari Jawahar Lal while reviewing the situation with the senior health officials on Tuesday.

In a virtual meeting held with the health officials, MPDOs, tahsildars and senior revenue officials, the collector told them to create village level isolation to contain the spread of the virus. A list of such

isolation centres should be prepared by Wednesday and put into action.

He said around 60 per cent of the total cases in the district are being reported from villages and all the affected persons need to be isolated immediately to prevent spreading.

He said the patients have no home isolation facility and spending with the family members in the same dwelling spreading the virus to all the family members. The patients were also not aware of the basic precautions needed

to be taken after being infected with the virus.

He said there was no need for isolation centres if Covid Care Centres were operating close to the villages. In other places, schools, hostels and other government places should be converted into isolation centres which would be managed by the village sarpanch, Asha workers and ANMs. He said there was no need for waiting for testing people showing primary symptoms of Covid-19. They can be straightaway shifted to the isolation centres and tested later.

Clashes erupt after
man elopes with girlDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, MAY 25

An irate mob of villagers threw chili powder in the eyes of Jonnagiri sub-inspector Suresh for his indifference in taking action against a youth who had eloped with a girl.

The incident occurred at Pagidirayi village in Tuggali mandal of Kurnool district late Monday evening.

The villagers in retaliation ransacked and damaged houses belonging to SC community a member of the community had eloped with a girl from the BC community. About 500 BC families live in

Pagidirayi village and most of them are into sub-contract works with Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC).

Pathikonda circle inspector Narayana Reddy said that the girl was married to her relative some 10 days back and the newlyweds did not stay together for more than three days.

The SC youth, who lured her out of her wedlock, took her to Vijayawada and stayed with friends.

The BC community mounted pressure on the parents of the boy to produce them in the village. Meanwhile, the boy sent vulgar pictures with the

girl on WhatsApp to villagers.

Enraged by the blatant provocation, around 200 villagers went to the police station to represent their case. But when the SI did not respond properly, they targeted properties belonging to SCs and started pulling down their houses. At least three houses were completely damaged while some were partially damaged, said Narayana Reddy.

When the SI went to the spot to control the mob, BC women threw chili powder in his eyes.

Following the incident, the revenue divisional officer and DSP visited the village.

EASTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF A.P. LTD
Corporate Office, P&T Colony, Seethammadhara, Visakhapatnam-13.

TENDER NOTICE
Open tenders are invited through e-Procurement for 3 Nos. works: 1. "Fixing of agency for the work of 'Extension of HT Supply to M/s. IREL India Limited, at Sy.No.371,349 and 374, within BARC premises, in Alchuturam Mandal of Visakhapatnam Circle', work under Partial Turnkey in APEPDL of AP", Bid No. CSM/O&CS/APEPDL/ASP/CMO/10/2021-22. 2. "Fixing of agency for the work, extension of HT supply for a CMD of 8800KW in favour of the MD&CEO, GVSCCL at Sy.No.376, Narava STP, Sewage Treatment Plant, Pendurthy, Visakhapatnam at 33KV potential in APEPDL of AP", Bid No.CSM/O&CS/APEPDL/VSP/CMO/11/2021-22. 3. Construction of RCD Retaining wall at District Stores, Bommaru of Rajamahendravaram Circle. Further details can be viewed in www.epdc.org.in.

Contact Ph: 0891-2582200, 94408 12567.
Advt-31

Chief General Manager/O&CS
APEPDL: Visakhapatnam

ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED
REGD. OFFICE: Sri Sai Towers, Door No: 10-152/1, 4th & 5th Floor, Ashoknagar, Beside Sire Company, Bandar Road, Kanuru, Vijayawada -520 007.

Ln.No.: PDS/P21263/BRF/2020-21 Dated: 25.05.2021

SHORT TENDER NOTICE
EMPANELMENT OF SUPPLIERS THROUGH AP e-Procurement e-Reverse AUCTION PLATFORM FOR SUPPLY OF 1500 MTS OF FORTIFIED RICE KERNELS (FRKS) WITH THREE (3) MICRO NUTRIENTS (IRON, FOLIC ACID AND VITAMIN B12) IN 20KG BAG TO APSCSCL FOR FORTIFICATION OF BOILED RICE TO BE DELIVERED TO FCI.

Andhra Pradesh State Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd., invites tenders for appointment of Manufacturers/Suppliers for supply of 1500 Mts of Fortified Rice Kernels (FRK) for boiled rice. For registration, interested Manufacturers/Suppliers of FRKs from all over India may visit <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> or www.apscscl.in to view and download tender documents at free of cost.

The details and procedure for obtaining Digital Signature Certificates are mentioned in website <https://tender.approcurement.gov.in> or contact the help desk of procurement portal, Phone numbers: 08645-246370/71/72/73/74.

Last date for online registration and completion of Formalities for the e-Reverse auction shall be up to 5.00 pm of 01.06.2021 and the tentative date of online e-auction through e-procurement auction platform would be on 03.06.2021.

Sd/- VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR

CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION VACANT GENERAL

REQ. SUPERVISOR
(Graduate) & Field Asst. (Minimum 12th Pass) for Betamcherla (AP) knowing English, Hindi & Telugu. Having two wheeler/ motorcycle would be preferred. Send Resume at Whatsapp: 91 9971664141 or email mrgroup914@gmail.com (W/2122/AT000168)

EDUCATIONAL

CAREER/ENTRANCE COURSES

ONE-SITTING / Fast track:-
Graduations (All), Post-Graduations (All), PG Diplomas, Polytechnic Diplomas, Secondary (10th)

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

S. JANARDHAN REDDY
(One of the PIONEERS of Granite Quarries in South India)

FOUNDER:

Pallava Granites, Tindivanam (T.N.)
Chola Granites, Tindivanam (T.N.)
Cheran Granites Tindivanam (T.N.)
Rustum Mica Mines & other Mica Mines in Gudur Belt (A.P.)
Jaya Mineral Exports, Chimakurti, Ongole (A.P.)
Dharmakarta to Alagananda Swamy Temple, Gudur for 4 years president, Reddy ASSN, Gudur (A.P.)

UTHARA KIRIYALU
Ceremony will be held at Gudur (A.P.) on 26, 27, May' 2021
KINDLY TREAT THIS AS AN INDIVIDUAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO ALL THOSE WHO HAVE CONDOLED.

S. Indrasena Reddy (Wife)
S.V. Sudhir Reddy (Son)
S. Pranathi Reddy (Daughter-in-Law)
S. Sreshtha Reddy (Grand Daughter)
K. Subba Reddy & Family (Brother-in-Law)
K. Dhananjaya Reddy & Family (Brother-in-Law)
Swargeeya K. Narothama Reddy's Family (Brother-in-Law)

SHORT TAKES

TN TEACHER HELD FOR SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Chennai, May 25: A teacher of a well-known CBSE school here was arrested on Tuesday following a complaint, after allegations of sexual harassment of girl students surfaced against him in the social media, police said.

After the allegations became public, police officers of the crime against women and children wing conducted enquiries and a complaint was received against the 59-year old teacher, city police said.

Investigation revealed that the commerce-accountancy teacher had sexually harassed girls by sending lewd messages, a police release said.

Also, a girl student of the same school was sexually harassed a few years ago by the same teacher and the parents had already complained to school authorities against the teacher for sending obscene messages and videos to students through WhatsApp, the release added.

“The teacher was taken into custody for questioning and he was arrested. He was produced before a magistrate on Tuesday and remanded to judicial custody. He is lodged in Puzhal Central Prison. A case has been registered against him under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and also the Information Technology Act,” a police officer said. School authorities have also been questioned in the matter, he added.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights said it has taken a serious view of the matter and asked the state police to take strict action against the teacher.

MALAYALAM ACTOR HELD FOR WIFE'S SUICIDE

Thiruvananthapuram, May 25: Actor Unni Dev, son of popular Malayalam actor and late Rajan P. Dev, was arrested on Tuesday over the death of his wife Priyanka, police said here.

A physical education teacher in a local school, Priyanka was found hanging in the bedroom of her home at Vembayam near here on May 12, a day after she filed a police complaint of domestic violence against her actor-husband.

The *Aadu* actor was taken into custody from his home in Ernakulam district on Tuesday morning after ensuring that he has turned Covid negative.

A team of police personnel under Nedumangadu DYSP later brought Dev here as the case was registered in the capital district. “As he was Covid positive, we were waiting for him to recover from the disease. We went to his home and took him in an ambulance to the hospital concerned and ensured that he turned negative for the virus infection. A medical certificate was also collected in this regard,” a senior police officer said.

Besides the deceased, the 26-year-old woman's family also lodged a complaint against Dev for alleged domestic violence and harassing her physically and mentally demanding more dowry.

JAISHANKAR SET TO MEET BLINKEN

New York, May 25: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar has expressed confidence that India will continue to shape the big debates of our times as he interacted with Permanent Representative Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti and other officials and diplomats from India to the United Nations.

Jaishankar arrived in New York on Sunday evening on his first visit to the US after India entered the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member in January this year and will meet UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

A productive strategy session with @ambtstirumurti and our UN team in New York @IndiaUNNewYork. Confident that India will continue to shape the big debates of our times, Jaishankar tweeted on Monday after his meeting with Tirumurti, Deputy Permanent Representative Ambassador K Nagaraj Naidu and diplomats from the Permanent Mission of India to the UN.

Grateful to EAM @DrSJaishankar for guidance in focussing our efforts in @UN and in Security Council for 2021-22, Tirumurti tweeted.

From New York, Jaishankar will travel to Washington where he is expected to meet US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.



Rough sea in the Bay of Bengal ahead of cyclone Yaas landfall at Digha in East Midnapore district on Tuesday. The Indian Army has deployed 17 integrated relief columns, comprising specialised personnel with necessary equipment and inflatable boats, in West Bengal as cyclone approaches the country's eastern coast. — PTI

JHARKHAND ALSO SOUNDS ‘YAAS’ ALERT

Bhubaneswar Ranchi, May 25: West Bengal and Odisha have evacuated lakhs of people from vulnerable areas to safety as severe cyclonic storm ‘Yaas’ is nearing the coast and is expected to make landfall on Wednesday morning.

Neighbouring Jharkhand has also sounded an alert and is preparing for the cyclone's impact.

The Odisha government said it has moved over 2 lakh people from vulnerable areas in coastal districts to safety. Special Relief Commissioner of Odisha, P.K. Jena, said that over 2.10 lakh people residing in kutcha houses in low-lying areas have been moved to cyclone shelters. The highest number of evacuees are from Balasore district (74,132), followed by Bhadrak (73,103).

Evacuation of people is also underway in Cuttack, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Khurda, Jagatinghpur, Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Gajapati, Ganjam, Mayurbhanj, Nayagarh, Puri and Angul districts, he said.

Around 5,000 pregnant women expecting delivery by June 1 have been admitted to hospitals, a health official said.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has rushed Odisha's Minister of State for Home, D.S. Mishra to Balasore to monitor the situation in the northern parts of the state. Jena said large-scale destruction is anticipated in the coastal region. — PTI

Tornado hits Bengal ahead of cyclone, leaves 2 dead

11 lakh people evacuated; Mamata says high tide remains a concern

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MAY 25

A day before very severe cyclone Yaas makes its landfall and strikes mainly two states in eastern parts of the country, a ‘tornado’ hit two districts of West Bengal leaving two persons dead due to electrocution and injured others while damaging several houses.

Meanwhile, chief minister Mamata Banerjee stationed herself at the state secretariat for two days to lead her government's relief and rescue operations for the natural disaster with the Indian Army deploying 17 relief columns of soldiers in 10 districts. The tornado struck two districts Hooghly and North 24 Parganas, located on both sides of Hooghly, on Tuesday afternoon.

The two victims Swapan Das Baul (40) and Kamal Majhi (21) are from Pandua in Hooghly.

In the evening briefing the Chief Minister said, “A tornado is happening in some pockets as a prelude to the cyclone. It lasted for around a minute but damaged 40 houses partly in Halishahar and Bijpur. Four-five persons suffered minor injuries. The tornado hit Chinsurah in Hooghly also. The two persons who lost their lives at Pandua were electrocuted. Around 11 lakh people have been evacuated so far

● **THE TORNADO** struck two districts Hooghly and North 24 Parganas, located on both sides of Hooghly, on Tuesday afternoon.

to our relief centres of around 4,000 units at the block, panchayat and state level.”

Earlier the Trinamul Congress supremo, who spent whole day and night at Nabanna during Cyclone Amphan's strike on the state on May 20 last year, said, “All of us will stay at the state secretariat tonight and tomorrow to monitor the landfall which is likely to happen by 12 pm on Wednesday and act accordingly. Do not worry. We are guarding you.”

On her government's measures, Ms Banerjee elaborated, “The rise in water level due to high tide is however our main concern because it may cause floods.” She informed that a workforce of nearly three lakh personnel drawing from all the state and central government agencies has been pressed into service.

“It includes around two lakh police and emergency services personnel like disaster management and 74,000 officers and staff. Cyclone Amphan taught us a big lesson from which we learnt a lot to make these decisions.”

Eastern Command

spokesperson Wing Commander Mandeep Huda said, “The Indian Army is spearheading the Army Relief Effort in West Bengal for preparations for Yaas, which is scheduled to make landfall in the general area bordering West Bengal on May 26, on requisition and in close coordination with the state government of West Bengal.”

“A total of 17 Cyclone Relief Columns, comprising specialised army personnel with associated equipment and inflatable boats, have been deployed to the state. Columns have been positioned in Purulia, Jhargram, Birbhum, Burdwan, West Midnapur, Howrah, Hooghly, Nadia, North and South 24 Parganas. Nine Cyclone Relief columns have been kept standby at Kolkata, for redeployment as necessary in West Bengal, at short notice. These teams are equipped to undertake casualty evacuation of stranded/marooned civilians, road clearing/ tree cutting operations, and distribution of relief material, as would be required by the local district administration,” he added.

Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar visited the state secretariat in a first ever move and met the Chief Minister before monitoring the government's preparedness alongwith her from a ‘war-room.’

Rlys moves 680 tonnes of oxygen from Odisha, WB

New Delhi, May 25: Indian Railways moved 680 tonnes of oxygen from Odisha, West Bengal, and Jharkhand in the last 12 hours in anticipation of cyclone Yaas which is likely to hit the region soon, the national transporter said on Tuesday.

Severe cyclonic storm Yaas is likely to make landfall near Dhamra Port in Odisha's Bhadrak district early Wednesday morning, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

Oxygen Expresses moved 680 tonnes of oxygen relief from Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand in the last 12 hours before the cyclone gets stronger. Eight Oxygen Expresses have moved from the region, a statement from the Railways said.

The country's major liquid medical oxygen (LMO) generation plants are based in this region and are now proving to be the source of the life-saving gas for other states for supply to hospitals during

the Covid-19 pandemic.

So far, the Railways has delivered more than 17,239 tonnes of LMO in more than 1,042 tankers to 14 states since it started operations last month.

Providing relief to oxygen starved states, so far, 263 Oxygen Express trains have completed their journey while two more loaded trains with more than 134 tonnes of LMO in eight tankers are currently on the run.

Amongst the southern states, delivery of LMO to Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana crossed 1,000 tonnes each via the Oxygen Express trains.

Oxygen relief by Oxygen Express trains reached out to 14 states - Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Assam.

Till the time of this release, 614 tonnes of oxygen has been offloaded in Maharashtra. — PTI

TOUGH WORDS

SC told S-G to either withdraw the plea or it would pass order

Narada case: CBI withdraws plea in SC

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 25

After assailing the conduct of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banarjee for staging dharna outside the CBI office located at Nizam Palace in Kolkata and the presence of state law minister Moloy Ghatak in the special CBI court where four TMC leaders arrested in Narada sting tape case were produced, the investigating agency on Tuesday withdrew its petition that it had filed in the top court after Calcutta High Court had placed the arrested leaders under house arrest.

Allowing the request of the CBI to withdraw the petition, a vacation bench comprising Justice Vineet Saran and Justice B.R.Gavai gave the investigating agency and all other parties to raise all issues before the five-judge bench hearing the

plea for the grant of interim bail to four TMC leaders. The court in its order said that it has not expressed any view on the merit of the case and said that it was open to all the parties including CBI to raise their the contentions before the five-judge constitution bench of Calcutta High Court hearing the matter.

The CBI had on May 17 arrested two West Bengal Ministers Subrata Mukherjee and Firhad Hakim, Trinamul Congress MLA Madan Mitra and former Kolkata mayor Sovan Chatterjee in connection with the Narada case.

The CBI withdrew the petition after the court told the Solicitor General to either withdraw it or they will pass an order on merit. All through the hearing that lasted nearly one hour, the court repeatedly asked as to what the investigating agency

● **THE COURT** in its order said that it has not expressed any view on the merit of the case and said that it was open to all the parties including CBI to raise their the contentions before the five-judge constitution bench of Calcutta High Court hearing the matter.

wanted from the court.

“We want to know, what you want from us”, Justice Saran asked Solicitor General in a poser as to what was the prayer of the CBI before the top court.

Sensing the mood of the court, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta urged the court to adjourn that matter and take it up on Friday (May 28).

After giving an opportunity to Solicitor General to consult his team, the court in the resumed hearing after dealing with the pass-over matter gave two options to him – either to

withdraw or court will pass order after considering the matter on merit.

The court said that after the matter is considered by a five-judge bench, they will have the benefit of the views of five learned judges of Calcutta High Court.

As the Solicitor General focused on dharna by Mamata Banerjee outside the CBI office and the presence of Law Minister at the Special CBI court during the course of his arguments spread over 45 minutes, Justice Saran told him that you have two set of people – one who are accused and the other who are not – and you can't interfere with the liberty of accused people merely on the acts of others.

Telling the Solicitor General that CBI was a powerful entity and can proceed against the people by whose acts it is aggrieved.

“You can take action

against those who you feel subverted the law”, the court told Solicitor General further pointing out “We don't want to mix the liberty of a citizen (arrested TMC leaders) with the acts of other persons (Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Law Minister).”

As the Solicitor General wanted the case to be transferred outside West Bengal, the court said that it did not want to demoralize the High court which is seized of the matter.

At the outset of the hearing senior counsel Vikas Singh appearing for West Bengal government raised a preliminary objection to the CBI's plea against an interlocutory order of the High court. He said that the guidelines for the admission of matters during vacations clearly exclude any petition against interim orders of the High court.

CISF’s Jaiswal is new CBI chief

New Delhi, May 25: CISF chief Subodh Kumar Jaiswal was on Tuesday appointed as the new CBI director for two years, according to a Personnel Ministry order.

Jaiswal is a 1985-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Maharashtra cadre. He has also served as Maharashtra's director general of police in the past.

The Central Bureau of Investigation was working without a regular chief for over three months after Rishi Kumar Shukla completed his two-year tenure on February 3.

CBI Additional Director Praveen Sinha, a 1988-batch IPS officer of Gujarat cadre, was appointed the acting chief of the agency after Shukla completed his tenure.

Jaiswal has been



Subodh Kumar Jaiswal

appointed as the director of CBI for a period of two years, the ministry order said.

A three-member selection committee led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Monday shortlisted Jaiswal's name. Chief Justice of India N. V. Ramana and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury are the two members of the panel.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

BAD DREAM STOPS GUIDE FROM CLIMBING EVEREST

Kathmandu, May 25: A record-holding Sherpa climber halted his attempt to scale Mount Everest for a 26th time because of a bad dream but plans to try again next year.

Kami Rita already reached the summit of the world's highest mountain for a record 25th time earlier this month but stopped his most recent climb more than halfway to the top. He was making (the 26th) attempt and had reached up to Camp Three "but the weather turned bad and I had a really bad dream," Rita said on return to Kathmandu on a helicopter from the mountain on Tuesday. "The gods were telling me not to go and because I really believe in God, I decided to return," he said but would not elaborate on the dream. Sherpas believe Everest to be a goddess and have a religious ceremony before stepping on the mountain to make their climbs.

TWO CHILDREN AMONG 18 KILLED IN PERU

Lima, May 25: Two children and 16 adults were shot dead in a remote coca-growing area of Peru, the armed forces said Monday, blaming the attack on members of the Shining Path guerrilla group.

The killings late Sunday risk inflaming tensions amid a polarized campaign for the presidency between leftist Pedro Castillo and his rival from the right, Keiko Fujimori. The villagers were mowed down at San Miguel del Ene in a coca-growing valley where members of the Maoist Shining Path group operate, according to the joint command of the armed forces. The head of the police counter-terrorism unit, General Oscar Arriola, said the dead included 10 men, six women and two children.

The armed forces command blamed the attack on fighters led by guerrilla leader Victor Quispe Palomino, or Comrade Jose. A specialised terrorism unit has been tasked with investigating the killings.

GUAM CAN PURSUE \$160M DUMP CLEANUP LAWSUIT

Washington, May 25: The Supreme Court says the US territory of Guam can pursue a \$160 million lawsuit against the federal government over the cost of cleaning up a landfill on the island.

The justices on Monday unanimously overturned a lower court decision that had said Guam had waited too long to pursue the claim. The case before the justices involves a long-running dispute over the Ordot Dump on Guam. The lawsuit says the Navy built the dump during the 1940s and then deposited toxic military waste there before turning over control to Guam in 1950.

Guam operated the dump for decades. The US has said Guam "vastly expanded" it and "failed to provide even rudimentary environmental safeguards." In 2002, the government sued Guam over pollution from the dump. Guam ultimately agreed in 2004 to close the dump and take steps to stop pollution from the dump, among other things. In 2017, Guam sued the United States, arguing that it's responsible for some of the costs of the cleanup.

POPE PRAYS FOR ITALY CABLE CAR MISHAP SURVIVOR

Rome, May 25: Pope Francis offered prayers Tuesday for "little Eitan", the lone survivor of the cable car disaster in northern Italy that left 14 people dead when the cabin plunged to the ground after the lead cable snapped and the emergency brake failed to engage.

Francis sent a telegram to the local bishop offering his condolences to the families of the dead who, he said were "tragically lost while immersed in the marvels of creation".

Prosecutors have said they are investigating why the lead cable of the Stresa funicular snapped Sunday while it was bringing sightseers up to the Mortarone peak overlooking Lake Maggiore in Italy's Piedmont region. They have said the emergency brake on the supporting cable didn't engage, events that sent the cabin reeling back down the line until it pulled off, crashed to the ground and rolled over down the mountainside until it came to rest against some trees.

Five-year-old Eitan Biran, an Israeli citizen living in Italy, was the lone survivor and was hospitalized in Turin with several broken bones. Pope Francis offered particular thoughts for Eitan.

Mali's ex-coup leader dismisses Prez, PM

EU leaders condemn kidnapping of civilian leadership

Bamako, May 25: Mali's former coup leader Assimi Goita fired the president and prime minister of the transitional government Tuesday but promises to still hold new elections next year.

The move came a day after the two leaders were arrested by the military following their announcement of a cabinet reshuffle. Goita said the president and prime minister had acted without consulting him.

President Bah N'daw and Prime Minister Moustapha Ouedraogo lead an interim government that was installed under the threat of regional sanctions following a putsch in August, and the detentions on Monday raised fears of a second coup.

Two senior officials, who declined to be named, said that soldiers had taken N'daw and Ouedraogo to the Kati military camp on the outskirts of the capital Bamako. Their detentions followed a sensitive government reshuffle earlier on Monday that was designed to respond to growing criticism of the interim government.

The military kept the strategic portfolios it controlled during the previous administration in the reshuffle. But two coup leaders — ex-defence minister Sadio Camara and ex-



In this file photo taken on September 22, 2020, Colonel Assimi Goita (C), President of CNSP (National Committee for the Salvation of People) addresses the press during the ceremony of the 60th anniversary of Mali's independence in Bamako, one day after announcing that the transitional presidency would be assigned to a retired colonel, Bah N'daw, 70 years, ephemeral Minister of Defence in 2014.

security minister Colonel Modibo Kone — were replaced. Coup leaders and army officers have wielded significant influence over the government, casting doubts on a pledge to hold elections by early next year.

The reshuffle came at a time of growing political challenges in the capital Bamako and pressure to stick to the deadline for promised reforms.

Speculation of a coup swirled around Bamako late on Monday, but the city remained relatively calm. Briefly reached by phone before the line cut, Prime Minister Ouedraogo said that soldiers "came to get him". EU leaders condemned what they called the "kidnapping" of Mali's civilian leadership, said council president Charles Michel. "What happened was grave and serious and

we are ready to consider necessary measures," he told reporters after a summit of the bloc's 27 leaders, describing events as "the kidnapping of the president and the prime minister". Earlier, a joint statement by the United Nations, African Union, Economic Community of West African States, the European Union and the United States condemned the arrests.

Biden, Putin to meet June 16

Washington, May 25: President Joe Biden will hold a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin next month in Geneva, a face-to-face meeting between the two leaders that comes amid escalating tensions between the US and Russia in the first months of the Biden administration.

The White House confirmed details of the summit on Tuesday. The two leaders' meeting, set for June 16, is being tacked on to the end of Biden's first international trip as president next month when he visits Britain for a meeting of Group of Seven leaders and Brussels for the Nato summit.

"The leaders will discuss the full range of pressing issues, as we seek to restore predictability and stability to the US-Russia relationship," White House press secretary Jen Psaki said in a statement announcing the summit.

Biden first proposed a summit in a call with

Putin in April as his administration prepared to levy sanctions against Russian officials for the second time during the first three months of his presidency. White House officials said earlier this week that they were ironing out details for the summit. National security adviser Jake Sullivan discussed details of the meeting when he met with his Russian counterpart, Nikolay Patrushev.

The Kremlin, in its own statement announcing the meeting, said that the presidents will discuss "the current state and prospects of the Russian-US relations, strategic stability issues and the acute problems on the international agenda, including interaction in dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and settlement of regional conflicts." The White House has repeatedly said it is seeking a "stable and predictable" relationship with the Russians. — AP

Lanka cargo fire: India sends help

Colombo, May 25: India has dispatched two Coast Guard vessels and an aircraft to help the Sri Lankan Navy douse the flames on a container ship that caught fire off the coast of Colombo last week, amid intensified efforts by the coastal command to extinguish the fiery wreckage.

The 25 crew members — of Philippine, Chinese, Indian and Russian nationality — on the ship have been rescued. Official sources said at least five Indians were among the crew rescued. The cargo vessel, 'X-PRESS PEARL', was

carrying a consignment of chemicals and raw materials for cosmetics from Hazira in Gujarat to Colombo Port. It caught fire 9.5 nautical miles from the coast here where it was anchored outside the port of Colombo on May 20.

The Indian High Commission in a tweet on Tuesday said, "Help on way! Responding promptly as ever to the request by Sri Lanka, India dispatches ICG Vaibhav, ICG Dornier and Tug Water Lilly for fighting the fire". A major operation was launched to

extinguish the flames of the ship.

A special team of the Sri Lankan Navy, Sri Lanka Ports Authority and Marine Environment Protection Authority reached the fire-hit container ship on May 21.

Officials said a loud explosion was heard on Tuesday morning, possibly the fire remains in the sub sections of the vessel where a load of nitric acid is stored.

The Navy, in a statement released on Tuesday, confirmed the forthcoming Indian assistance. The fire

Iran Prez vote okays 7 but bars Rouhani allies

Dubai, May 25: Iran named the hard-line cleric running its judiciary and six others Tuesday as approved candidates in its June 18 presidential election, barring prominent candidates allied to its current president amid tensions with the West over its tattered nuclear deal.

The announcement carried by state television puts judiciary chief Ebrahim Raisi, who is linked to mass executions in 1988, in the dominant position for the upcoming vote. He's the most-known candidate of the seven hopefuls, with opinion polling previously showing his anti-corruption campaign drew Iranian support.

He's also believed to be a favorite of Iran's 82-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. But perhaps most notable was who Iran's Guardian Cou-

ncil barred from running. Chief among them was former parliament speaker Ali Larijani, a conservative who allied with Rouhani in recent year. Larijani had been positioning himself as a pragmatic candidate who would back Rouhani's signature 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. That accord is now in tatters as diplomats in Vienna try to negotiate a return of both Iran and the US to the agreement. Larijani seemingly signalled he wouldn't fight the decision.

"I have done my duty before God and the dear nation, and I am satisfied," Larijani wrote on Twitter. "Thank you to all those who expressed their gratitude and I hope you will participate in the elections for the promotion of an Islamic Iran."

Also barred was former

hard-line President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Rouhani's senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, a reformist. Ahmadinejad ignored a warning from Khamenei in 2017 and registered, only to be rejected then as well by the Guardian Council, a 12-member panel under Khamenei. During an earlier session of parliament Tuesday, lawmaker Ahmad Alirezaei described Ahmadinejad's home as being "under siege" by security forces since the day before.

He also warned that the decision would suppress turnout. Iran's theocracy since its 1979 Islamic Revolution has based its legitimacy in part on turnout in elections. State TV quoted Abbas Ali Kadkhodaei, the spokesman of the Guardian Council, as saying "only seven" had been approved. — AP

FLIGHTS AVOID BELARUS AIRSPACE, EU MULLS CURBS

Moscow, May 25: Belarus' isolation deepened Tuesday as commercial planes avoided its airspace, the European Union worked up new sanctions, and a senior UN official said he was concerned for the welfare of an opposition journalist arrested in Minsk after his plane was diverted there, apparently on the orders of the country's longtime strongman.

After his detention, Raman Pratasevich was seen in a brief video clip shown on Belarusian state television late Monday, speaking rapidly to say that he was confessing to some of the charges authorities have levelled against him. The spokesperson for the UN's human rights office, Rupert Colville, said Pratasevich's appearance was likely not voluntary and that he seemed to have bruising to his face, though it was difficult to tell from the footage. The 26-year-old journalist and activist was arrested Sunday after Belarusian flight controllers told the crew of a Ryanair jetliner he was aboard that there was a bomb threat against the flight and ordered it to land. A Belarusian MiG-29 fighter jet was scrambled to escort the plane in a brazen move by President Alexander Lukashenko, who has ruled the country with an iron fist for over a quarter-century. The diversion and arrest elicited widespread shock and fury, and EU leaders took unusually swift action in response at a summit Monday.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (C) talks with Israeli Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, upon arrival at Tel Aviv Ben Gurion Airport, on Tuesday.

Blinken: US will aid Gaza without helping Hamas

Jerusalem, May 25: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed Tuesday to rally international support to aid Gaza following a devastating war there while keeping any assistance out of the hands of its militant Hamas rulers, as he began a regional tour to shore up last week's cease-fire.

The 11-day war between Israel and Hamas killed more than 250 people, mostly Palestinians, and caused widespread destruction in the impoverished coastal territory. The truce that came into effect Friday has so far held, but it did not address any of the underlying issues in the conflict, something Blinken acknowledged after meeting Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu. "We know that to prevent a return to violence, we have to use the space created to address a larger set of underlying issues and challenges. And that begins with tackling the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and starting to rebuild," he said.

"The US will work to rally international support

US TO UPGRADE RELATIONS WITH PALESTINE

Jerusalem, May 25: Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced Tuesday that the US would reopen its Consulate General in Jerusalem — a move that restores ties with Palestinians that had been downgraded by the Trump administration. The consulate long served as an autonomous office in charge of diplomatic relations with the Palestinians. But former US President Donald Trump downgraded its operations and placed them under the authority of his ambassador to Israel when he moved the embassy to Jerusalem. — AP

around that effort while also making our own significant contributions. He added that the US would work with its partners to ensure that Hamas does not benefit from the reconstruction aid." — AP

US security aid to Pak still suspended

Washington/Islamabad, May 25: US President Joe Biden has continued his predecessor Donald Trump's policy on suspending security assistance to Pakistan and there is no clarity if the administration will change its stance in the future, the Pentagon has said.

Former US president Trump suspended all security assistance to Pakistan in January 2018, arguing that he was not satisfied with Islamabad's cooperation and role in the fight against terrorism.

"At this time, the US security assistance to Pakistan is still suspended. I will not get into speculating one way or another about if or whether that will change going forward," Pentagon Press Secretary John Kirby said at a news conference on Monday. He was responding to a question on if the new Biden administration has reviewed the policy of the previous Trump administration and if there are any changes in it or if this issue was on the table during talks with the Pakistani leadership.

Earlier in the day, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with Pakistan Army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa to discuss shared regional interests and objectives, Kirby said. "During the call, the secretary reiterated his appreciation for Pakistan's support to the Afghanistan peace negotiations and expressed his desire to continue to build on the United States-Pakistan bilateral relationship," he said.

"I reiterated my appreciation for the US-Pakistan relationship and my desire to continue to work together to further regional security and stability," Austin said in a tweet. A day earlier, US National Security Advisor Jek Sullivan met his Pakistani counterpart Moed Yusuf in Geneva. "Both sides discussed a range of bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest, and ways to advance practical cooperation. They agreed to continue with the conversation," spokesperson of the National Security Council Emily Horne said. — PTI

LIMITED SUCCESS

Debate causes sharp divisions in a New Hampshire town

Push to review 2020 US ballots spreads

Atlanta, May 25: Six months after Donald Trump's loss, conspiracy theorists and Trump backers are continuing their push for repeated examinations of ballots and finding limited successes. A Georgia judge last week awarded a group the chance to review mail ballots in a large Georgia county that includes Atlanta.

Officials in a rural Michigan county have expressed interest in a review of their voting machines. A similar debate has caused

sharp divisions in a New Hampshire town. In some cases, the efforts have been inspired by an audit of the votes in Arizona's Maricopa County, an elaborate exercise engineered by the GOP-led state Senate. The efforts are unlikely to yield any new revelations about President Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election. The votes have been counted — and often recounted — and certified by local officials.

Still, the lingering debate and legal wrangling

have propelled suspicions and advanced debunked theories. And their sometimes misleading conclusions have been amplified by Trump, whose false allegations of election fraud sparked the push.

The profusion of audits alarms election experts, who note that the Arizona audit has set a troubling new precedent of third-party, partisan review of the ballots, long after elections are over.

"This is bad enough to see it happen once," said

Eddie Perez, an expert on voting systems at the OSET Institute, said of Arizona, but seeing it elsewhere in the country is "dangerous for democracy." The audits are serving a clear political purpose in firing up the Republican Party's base. At a rally outside Phoenix last week featuring GOP Reps. Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor Greene, references to Arizona audit drew much more enthusiastic applause than even immigration, normally the top hot-but-

ton issue on the right in the border state.

In a statement Monday night, Trump criticised Republican Party leaders for not doing more about "what went on" in November. He cited the ballot reviews underway and promised "more to follow". The Arizona audit has been cited as a template for the others, although each is distinct. In Arizona, the Republican-controlled state Senate subpoenaed more than 2 million ballots. — AP

quick
BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,637.53	-0.03
Nifty 50	15,208.50	0.07
S&P 500*	4,195.16	-0.05
Dollar (₹)	72.78	0.26
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.19	-0.04
Euro (₹)	89.19	0.12
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,025▼102	0.21
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.62	0.23
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.972	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.579	-0.029

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Grain output to
rise 2.66% to
record 305.43 mt

Foodgrain production is estimated to rise 2.66 per cent to a new record of 305.43 million tonnes in the current crop year 2020-21 (July-June) from 297.5 mt last crop year, on better output of rice, wheat and pulses, the agriculture ministry said in its third advance estimates. Rice production is pegged at a record 121.46 mt against 118.87 mt last year. Wheat production is to increase to a record 108.75 mt from 107.86 million tonnes.

BB's US partner
submits Covaxin
Master File to FDA



Ocugen, Bharat Biotech's US partner for Covaxin, has submitted a "Master File" to the US FDA prior to seeking an emergency use authorisation in that country. The company is currently evaluating the clinical and regulatory path for Covaxin in the US, including obtaining Emergency Use Authorization from the US FDA, Ocugen said in a recent regulatory filing. Ocugen has submitted key information and data to date.

Clarios sells 10%
stake in Amara
Raja Batteries

Clarios ARBL Holding LP offloaded a 10 per cent stake in Amara Raja Batteries for a little over Rs 1,276.34 crore, through an open market transaction. The shares were sold at an average price of Rs 747.22. Clarios held a 24 percent stake in Amara Raja, as of March 2021. Morgan Stanley Asia, Integrated Core, and Ghisallo Master Fund LP picked up the shares. After the bulk deal, Amara Raja shares plunged 6.43 per cent.

Triumph drives
in Bonneville
Bobber at ₹11.75 L

British premium motorcycle brand Triumph Motorcycles has launched the updated version of Bonneville Bobber in India priced at Rs 11.75 lakh (ex-show-room). The 2021 Bonneville Bobber comes with enhanced engine performance, technology and equipment. "The Triumph Bobber has always had a demand among Indian customers and due to this we decided to bring the Bobber back after a gap of one year.



RBI may step in as rupee outdoes peers
Re makes strong
comeback in May

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MAY 25

After tumbling in April, the rupee has rebounded this month to become Asia's top-performing currency on positive global cues and fall in daily Covid cases with several states planning to ease restrictions in June, which would help revive economic activities.

The rupee has climbed 1.5 per cent against the dollar in May to beat all its regional peers as the country's daily infections declined rapidly after touching a record high. However, experts said they expect the central bank to step in to limit the rupee's gains, as a strong rupee hurts exporters at a time when the Covid pandemic has hit the economy hard.

The rupee on Tuesday appreciated 19 paise against the dollar to settle at 72.77, as the appetite for riskier assets improved after US Federal Reserve officials attempted to soothe concern over high inflation. Foreign banks may continue to sell the US dollar on account of foreign fund inflows for MSCI's rebalancing of domestic stocks, which is expected to fetch about \$1.35 billion by the end of this week.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the domestic unit opened at 72.85 against the dollar and registered an intraday high of 72.75. It witnessed a low of 72.87. The



rupee finally closed at 72.77 against the American currency, registering a rise of 19 paise over its previous close. The dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.23 per cent to 89.632.

Abhishek Goenka, founder and chief executive officer at India Forex Advisors, said, "The rupee is slightly on a stronger note but we don't expect it to appreciate a lot as the central bank and the government will not be very comfortable with a strong rupee that hurts exports."

"The RBI has not been so active on the buy dollar side because there is enough liquidity in the system and it cannot infuse more liquidity in the system to buy dollars. Also, the RBI cannot do a sell-buy swap and push the dollar purchases forward since the forward premiums are already very high at 5.4 per cent," Goenka added. "Time

and again the communication by the US Fed that the inflation will be transitory and reassurance that they will not increase the interest rate soon has also weakened the dollar globally which is also impacting the dollar-rupee. The real effective exchange rate is close to 120 which is normally seen as upper band. On the downside, we don't expect the rupee to go below 72.5 and on the upside we don't expect it to go above 74.5-75 in the next three months.

The rupee also has the benefit of offering Asia's highest carry returns. The rupee had tumbled to the lowest in nine months in April as daily coronavirus infections surged above 3 lakh, triggering the unwinding of up to \$50 billion in carry trades, according to Bloomberg.

However on Tuesday, the daily count of Covid-19 cases in the country fell below the 2-lakh mark after about 40 days, according to the government data.

E-COM PLAYERS
ONCE AGAIN IN
HIRING MODE

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 25

With most of the key cities going into lockdown, e-commerce players are once again in a hiring mode.

In the past three months, over March-May 2021, Flipkart has hired 23,000 people across the country in various capacities.

"The growing demand for e-commerce services across the country as people continue to remain indoors to fight the virus has necessitated a ramp-up of our supply chain, creating thousands of employment opportunities. All new hires will be covered with our health-care and wellness initiatives," said Hemant Badri, senior vice-president, supply chain at Flipkart.

Rituparna Chakraborty, co-founder and executive vice president,

Teamlease Services, said, "Most of the e-commerce companies, especially e-grocers and those delivering essential products, have been hiring for the past couple of months. This is the sector which is still fully operational during the lockdown. They do need more people for delivering, packaging and managing warehouses with increased demand. More-over, when existing staff fall ill, they need people to get the job done."

Most of the hiring has been happening for last-mile delivery and warehouses.

Centre mulls stimulus
package to aid growth

SIDDHARTHA SINGH
MAY 25

India is preparing a stimulus package for sectors worst affected by a deadly coronavirus wave, aiming to support an economy struggling with a slew of localised lockdowns, people familiar with the matter said.

The finance ministry is working on proposals to bolster the tourism, aviation and hospitality industries, along with small and medium-sized companies, the people said, asking not to be identified as the deliberations are private. The discussions are at an early stage and no timeline for an announcement has been decided, they said. A finance ministry spokesman declined to comment.

The latest wave of Covid-19 infections has made

India the global hotspot for the pandemic and has decimated travel since the second wave picked up in March even though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has refused to implement a strict nationwide lockdown

The finance ministry is working on proposals to bolster the tourism, aviation and hospitality industries, along with SMEs

like last year's. With nearly 200,000 cases daily many local governments - including Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, India's most industrialised states - have imposed curbs against the spread of the virus.

That has prompted many economists to cut their forecasts for the financial year that began April 1, as rising unemployment and dwindling savings among consumers dim the chances for double-digit growth.

Flagging growth prospects put the onus on policy makers to support activity, especially once the virus caseload eases. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who said last month she's monitoring the economy in a "very detailed fashion," has held discussions with economists in recent days about a stimulus package, the people said.

In April, the finance ministry eased rules for capital expenditure by government departments to try to boost spending in the economy.

— Bloomberg

BPCL may sell part stake in IGL, Petronet

AMMAR ZAIDI
NEW DELHI, MAY 25

Privatisation-bound Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL) may sell a part of its stake in Petronet LNG and Indraprastha Gas (IGL) to shed its promoter status to obviate the need for its new owner to make open offers for the two gas companies, sources said.

BPCL holds 12.5 per cent stake in Petronet, India's largest LNG importer, and a 22.5 per cent stake in city gas retailer IGL. It is a promoter of both the listed companies and holds board positions.

As per the legal position evaluated by the Depart-

ment of Investment and Public Asset Management (Dipam), which is running the process for sale of government's entire 52.98 per cent stake in BPCL, the acquirer of BPCL will have to make an open offer to the minority shareholders of Petronet and IGL for acquiring 26 per cent shares, three sources said.

This is because BPCL is a promoter of the two companies and since there is a change in ownership of the promoter firm, an open offer is triggered under Sebi (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2011.

A way out could be for BPCL to sell a part of its

shareholding in the two firms and shed the promoter status, thereby, obviating the need for open offers, sources said.

BPCL, however, is not in favour of selling the stake, as giving up the promoter status and directorships will mean substantial value erosion for the company.

But the thinking in the government is that the open offers for Petronet and IGL may deter bidders who are mostly eyeing BPCL's oil refining assets and 22 per cent share of the fuel marketing business it commands, sources said.

BPCL spokesperson refused to comment.—PTI

Commodity surge threatens earnings

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 25

Rising commodity costs could affect India Inc's earnings profile and put an end to the benign interest rate regime from early next year.

"There will be adverse impact on auto, consumer goods, consumer durables margins. However, higher commodity price could also lead to earnings uptick in the metals, cement, oil & gas sectors. The IT sector would broadly remain insulated from commodity inflation.

"Earnings in the non-

commodity basket may be adversely impacted given the weak demand backdrop in the economy due to widespread lockdowns," said a report by Motilal Oswal.

The rise in prices comes amid the Covid second wave that restricted economic activity. With uncertainty in the demand environment, it would be challenging for companies to pass on the rising commodity costs.

"In a constrained demand environment, due to broad based lockdowns and macro uncertainty, corporates would be reluctant to pass on the higher

input prices to consumers and would first exercise other P&L levers to manage margins," the report said.

The construction sector is already feeling the pinch. The rise in prices of steel bars along with cement has added fuel to the construction budget crisis. Also the prices for plastics, man-made polymers and resins, used in everything from piping to insulation, have been rising rapidly over the past few months.

"The rise in raw material prices over the past few months is due to a combination of factors, includ-

ing unprecedented demand, multiple acts of force majeure, and the inevitable interruption of supply chains caused by the Covid-19 pandemic," said Jayesh Rathod, ED, The Guardians Real Estate Advisory.

"In the last three months the iron prices have increased by Rs 20,000 per tonne, which is almost a 50 per cent increase in the iron prices. Apart from this, copper and aluminium prices have also increased which has impacted the construction cost," said Ashok Mohanani, president, Naredco Maharashtra.

Jaypee Associates wants CoC to consider its offer

New Delhi, May 25: Jaiprakash Associates Ltd, the erstwhile promoter of bankrupt Jaypee Infratech, has said its settlement proposal without any "haircuts" should be considered by the creditors' panel, which is set to take a call on two existing resolution plans for the company this week.

Currently, state-owned NBCC and Suraksha Group are in the race to acquire Jaypee Infratech

Ltd (JIL), which went into insolvency proceedings in August 2017.

In a letter to JIL's interim resolution professional (IRP) Anuj Jain, the chairman of Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) Manoj Gaur has urged him to consider JAL's settlement offer, which was submitted before the Supreme Court in 2019.

Asserting that JIL has more assets than liabilities, Gaur has also claimed

that lenders would not be entitled to exercise their rights on loan guarantors if the realty firm is sold at a "throw away price".

The committee of creditors (CoC) and homebuyers are scheduled to meet this week to discuss whether more time should be given to NBCC and Suraksha to submit their revised and final bids for JIL.

Urging that JAL's offer should be placed before the CoC, Gaur said the settle-

ment of total liability of Rs 9,783 crore to secured financial creditors is proposed to be done by way of upfront payment, land swap and long terms debentures with a total value of about Rs 12,500 crore.

For homebuyers, he said that JAL would deploy funds for home construction to the tune of Rs 1,650 crore, out of which Rs 400 crore would be upfront.

—PTI

RAISING | REVENUE

Tax could cover auto, paper, cement, power & petchem sectors

Indonesia may tax the rich, top polluters

GRACE SIHOMBING &
ARYS ADITYA
MAY 25

Indonesia seeks to cast a wider net to tax more high-income individuals and top polluters in a bid to replenish its state coffers.

The finance ministry presented the proposals, which could be part of key reforms this year, to a parliamentary commission this week. The government needs to collect more revenue to sustain spending while keeping its vow to bring budget deficit back within the 3 per cent of GDP legal limit, from 6 per cent last year.

"The goal of this tax

reform is not just revenue collection but the sustainability of the state budget," said finance minister Sri Mulyani Indrawati. "The whole world is also accelerating its revenue collection in the midst of soaring budget deficits and debt ratios. This is a response that must be done with caution."

Here are the tax changes under study:

Carbon tax: Taxing carbon emissions will help Indonesia curb greenhouse gases while green state investments and social welfare programs, Indrawati said. The government could use existing taxes such as excise,



motor vehicle and fuel taxes to enforce it, or it could create an entirely new levy through a carbon tax.

The tax could apply to emission sources like fossil fuels, motor vehicles and factories, as well as carbon-intensive activities such as those in the pulp and paper, cement, power generation and petrochemical industries.

Income tax: Indonesia

could add a new 35 per cent income tax bracket for individuals earning more than 5 billion rupiah (\$349,000) year. Taxpayers are currently grouped into four brackets, with rates ranging from 5-30 per cent. The country is poised to see the world's fastest growth in ultra-high net worth individuals in the next five years.

Digital tax: Indonesia is finalising the formula to tax digital companies and impose levies on electronic transactions. The government has issued a law stating that taxes could be imposed on companies with significant economic presence in the country, but it hasn't set out regula-

tions for the tariff or how it would impose and calculate it.

Tax amnesty: Indonesia could take another stab at a tax amnesty programme, following a 2016 programme that uncovered 4.813 trillion rupiah (\$336 billion) in undeclared assets. Taxpayers who have undisclosed assets as of the 2019 tax year might be able to settle their past obligations at current income tax rates without any sanctions. However, those who failed to disclose their assets during the first tax amnesty period in 2016 will have to pay income tax above the highest tax amnesty rate.

— Bloomberg

GOVT URGED TO
SELL SUBSIDISED
EDIBLE OIL
THROUGH PDS

New Delhi, May 25: Trade body SEA has counselled the government to distribute edible oils at subsidised prices through the public distribution system (PDS), in a bid to give relief to the poor from the rising edible oil prices.

The Solvent Extractors Association of India (SEA) has also suggested the government to curb speculative trading of oilseeds and edible oils on the commodity bourses and insist on compulsory delivery contracts.

That apart, the Mumbai-based trade body said the Centre should freeze tariffs at lower levels, reduce agri-cess on imports and revisit customs duty reduction measures.

In a letter to food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey, SEA president Atul Chaturvedi said: "Last few months we have witnessed unprecedented price increase not only in edible oils but in practically all commodities across the world. Reasons for the unprecedented increase have been discussed umpteen times."

Chinese buying, stimulus money, la Nina weather problems in palm and soya producing areas, labour problems in Malaysia due to Covid-19, aggressive bio-diesel thrust in Indonesia and renewable fuel from soybean oil in the USA and Brazil, etc, are some of the major reasons, he said.

To tackle the price rise in the short-term, the SEA president said the government should "subsidise" edible oils by Rs 30-40 per kg through PDS. The port-based refineries have adequate spare capacity across the coastline of India for this purpose."

The central government distributes only foodgrains at subsidised rate of Rs 1-3 per kg via PDS to over 80 crore beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act.

The SEA also recommended a freeze of tariff value on edible oils at lower levels. "Our back of envelope calculation says \$200 per tonne reduction in tariff value would give relief of around Rs 5,000 per tonne."

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Govt to open 143 Khelo India spots

New Delhi: The Sports Ministry has decided to set up 143 Khelo India centres across seven states with a total budget of ₹14.30 crore in its bid to nurture talent at the grassroot level. These centres will be set up in Maharashtra, Mizoram, Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Each centre will be entrusted with one sports discipline. The Khelo India centres have been launched by the Sports Ministry in partnership with state governments to ensure the availability of grassroot-level infrastructure across the country. "It is our endeavour to make India one among the top 10 countries in the 2028 Olympics. To fulfil this goal we need to identify and nurture a large number of talented sportspersons from an early age," Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a statement. — PTI

Pep is England's Manager of Year

London: Manchester City's Pep Guardiola has been named manager of the year by England's League Managers' Association, it was announced on Monday. Guardiola steered City to the Premier League title and League Cup this season and this Saturday the Spaniard's side will bid to be crowned kings of Europe for the first time when they face English rivals Chelsea in the Champions League final in Porto. Former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager Guardiola topped a poll where the other leading contenders were Leeds' Marcelo Bielsa, Norwich's Daniel Farke, Chelsea women's manager Emma Hayes, West Ham's David Moyes and Leicester's Brendan Rodgers. — AFP

Flick to replace Loew after Euro

Berlin: Outgoing Bayern Munich coach Hansi Flick will succeed his former boss Joachim Loew in the Germany dugout after Euro 2020, the German Football Association (DFB) announced on Tuesday. "It's all gone surprisingly quickly, but I am very happy to be Germany coach from the autumn," said Flick, 56, after signing a three-year contract to succeed Loew. "I am hugely excited, because I see the class of players, and especially young players, which we have in Germany." Flick, who was assistant coach to Loew when Germany won the 2014 World Cup, has long been the favourite to take over from Loew, who will leave the job after 15 years in charge later this year. — AFP

Honda ready for Mugello challenge

Italy: The MotoGP World Championship returns to the Autodromo Internazionale del Mugello for round six of the 2021 season, Marc Marquez and Pol Espargaro ready for their next challenges. With a wet and wild French GP behind them, the Repsol Honda Team have regrouped and are ready to do it all again at the Italian Grand Prix. Having been unable to race in Mugello in 2020 due to the global pandemic, 2021 marks a welcome return to the iconic Italian circuit. 2019 produced a thrilling battle with Marquez taking second by just 0.043s after an intense race with Danilo Petrucci and Andrea Dovizioso. Marquez arrives in Italy buoyed by his showing in France, leading the race and lapping faster than the leaders despite suffering a fall.

Bucks bash up Miami Heat

Los Angeles: The Milwaukee Bucks produced an exhibition of three-point shooting to crush the Miami Heat as the Denver Nuggets bounced back to level their NBA first round playoff series with victory over Portland on Monday. Bryn Forbes erupted for five threes in the first half and Giannis Antetokounmpo finished with 31 points to give the Bucks a resounding 132-98 win over last year's NBA Finals runners-up. — AFP

IPL BACK TO GULF

League likely to start on Sept. 18 with 10 double-headers in 3 weeks

New Delhi, May 25: The postponed Indian Premier League will resume tentatively on September 18 or 19 in the UAE with as many as 10 double-headers expected to be played during a three-week window, a senior BCCI official said on Tuesday.

The final might be held on October 9 or 10. The three-week window will be enough for the league to complete its remaining 31 games for the season, a win-win scenario for all the primary stakeholders including the BCCI, franchises and broadcasters.

The IPL was postponed on May 4 after multiple Covid-19 cases inside its bio-bubble came to light.

"The BCCI has spoken to all the stakeholders and the likely start could be between September 18th to 20th. Since September 18 is a Saturday and 19 a Sunday, it is more likely that you would want to re-start it on a weekend date," the official said on conditions of anonymity. "Similarly, October 9th or 10th will be the final as it's a weekend. We are finalising the itinerary and there will be 10 double headers and seven evening matches along with four main games (two qualifiers, one eliminator and the final), which completes the list of 31 matches," the source added.

The Indian team's last Test match against England is set to finish on September 14 at Manchester and on the next day, the whole team (save Hanuma Vihari and Abhimanyu Easwaran) will be flown to UAE in a chartered flight for a "bubble to bubble" transfer.

"The Indian team and the English players who will be available will fly in the same charter flight from Manchester to Dubai. Similarly, the West Indies players will also fly in after completing the Caribbean Premier League engagements. There will be three-day quarantine for players arriving from Britain and

NASEEM OUT OF PSL FOR BREACH OF COVID RULES

Karachi, May 25: The Pakistan Cricket Board has barred fast bowler Naseem Shah from playing in the remaining matches of Pakistan Super League in Abu Dhabi for breach of Covid-19 protocols before departure from the country.

The Board has released Shah of Quetta Gladiators from isolation in Lahore after arrival at the designated hotel with a non-compliant RT-PCR test result.

"As such, the fast bowler will not be travelling to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 26 May and is now out of the competition," the PCB said in a statement.

The 19-year-old Shah has appeared in nine Tests.

The PCB had asked all the players travelling in chartered flights from Karachi and Lahore to assemble at the team hotels on May 24 with negative reports of RT-PCR tests taken not more than 48 hours prior to their arrival. — PTI

US virus travel warning won't hurt Games

Tokyo, May 25: A new US travel warning for Japan over virus risks will not affect this summer's pandemic-postponed Olympic Games, the Japanese government and Tokyo 2020 organisers said Tuesday.

The US State Department advisory released on Monday urges citizens to avoid travel to Japan, where the borders are already closed to almost all foreigners.

It cites government health advice, as well as "secondary factors such as commercial flight availability, restrictions on US



the Caribbean."

INDIA'S T20 SERIES VS S. AFRICA CANCELLED

The BCCI has decided to cancel India's T20 series against South Africa scheduled in September, which was a build-up to the side's World T20 preparations.

"The series can't be held and in any case there can't be any better preparation for the T20 World Cup than playing a high intensity tournament like IPL. Since the T20 World Cup will start within a week or 10 days after completion of the IPL, the SA series can only be held at a later date.

"There is a chance that India might play extra games when they tour South Africa early next year," the source said.

The India home season also had a two Test series against New Zealand in November and the dates of which could be shifted depending upon when the T20 World Cup ends.

— PTI

Covid-recovered Seifert all praise for 'safe' IPL bubble

Auckland, May 25: New Zealand cricketer Tim Seifert's world stopped for a moment and heart sank when he tested positive for Covid-19 during the now suspended IPL but the wicket-keeper said he never felt vulnerable inside the tournament's bio-bubble.

Seifert, however, insisted that his Covid-19 ordeal will not deter him from travelling to India again for future assignments, including the T20 World Cup to be held later this year.

"I got pulled aside and told I'd tested positive and my heart sank straight away when everyone left. I was the only overseas player basically still left in India out of the whole tournament.

That's when things got a little bit real," an emotional Seifert told the *New Zealand Herald*.

"The world stops a little bit, I just couldn't really think what was next and that's the scary part of it — you hear about things, and I thought that was

going to happen to me." Seifert was all praise for the IPL bubble though.

"Talking to some of the English boys that were over there before the IPL ... everything that they were saying was doing well. You only kind of heard good things, the structures, all the plans that have been put in place," Seifert added.

"That was a good point of view for a player to go over there, and to be honest the whole time while

I was over there (in India), the bubble felt good... Felt safe."

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI



Tim Seifert

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Seifert, who was part of the Kolkata Knight Riders team, is presently undergoing his 14-day mandatory quarantine here following his return to New Zealand after recovering from the deadly virus. He had to stay back in India even after the suspension of the league as he contracted the virus just 24 hours before he was to fly back home — PTI

Sushil may lose WFI contract

New Delhi, May 25: Arrested in a murder case, double Olympic-medallist Sushil Kumar is set to be dropped from the Wrestling Federation of India's annual contracts list along with Pooja Dhandu on account of non-performance when the body holds a review meeting next month.

The meeting between the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) and sponsors Tata Motors was to be held in 2020 but was put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic.

A WFI source said the decision to drop Sushil is purely based on performance and has nothing to do with his arrest for his alleged involvement in the murder of a fellow wrestler, Sagar Dhankad, at the Chhatrasal stadium.

"It is clear that Sushil and Pooja have not done anything notable since they were offered contracts. They will not make the cut when the review meeting is held next month," a WFI source said.

The WFI had taken a leaf out of BCCI's book to offer central contracts to its players in 2019. About 150 wrestlers had got one-year contracts which are subject to review.

Sushil was promoted to ₹30 lakh Grade A contract after initially being placed in Grade B that gave the

● **Sushil Kumar was promoted to ₹30 lakh Grade 'A' contract after initially being placed in Grade 'B' that gave the wrestlers an annual remuneration of ₹20 lakh.**

wrestlers an annual remuneration of ₹20 lakh. Pooja was also placed in Grade A. Sushil could not win any medal in the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta and also bowed out of the 2019 World Championship with a close first-round defeat. He has not competed since then.

The 2018 World Championship bronze-medallist Pooja too has lost her place in the 57kg category. She did not compete in 2020 and her last medal-winning performance came in July 2019 when she won a silver at the Grand Prix of Spain.

When contacted, WFI Assistant Secretary Vinod Tomar did not confirm exclusion of the two wrestlers but hinted such a step cannot be ruled out either. "All decisions will be made at the meeting only. But one thing is sure that sponsors' money will not be distributed for nothing. We have to utilise the money wisely," Tomar said. — PTI

HOCKEY STADIUM NAMED AFTER BALBIR SINGH SR

Chandigarh, May 25: The Mohali International Hockey Stadium was on Tuesday officially renamed after the legendary Balbir Singh Sr on the occasion of his first death anniversary.

The renaming was officially announced at a tribute ceremony held here to remember the three-time Olympic gold medallist, who died at the age of 96 on May 25 last year.

One of the country's most accomplished athletes, the iconic centre-forward was the only Indian among 16 legends chosen by the International Olympic Committee across modern Olympic history during the 2012 London Games.

"The Mohali International Hockey Stadium has been dedicated to the memory of Padma Shri Balbir Singh Sr in a formal ceremony at the hockey stadium on Tuesday on the first death anniversary of the legendary sportsperson," Punjab Sports Minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi said.

Sodhi said from now on the stadium would be known as "Olympian Balbir Singh Senior International Hockey Stadium." — PTI

Thapa secures 5th successive medal

ASIAN | BOXING

● **Shiva Thapa prevailed in a lopsided clash to set up a showdown with defending champion and top seed Bakhodur Usmonov of Tajikistan.**

Games bronze-winner Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg) went down to Uzbekistan's reigning world champion Mirazizbek Mirzahalilov in a fiercely-fought quarterfinal.

The Indian boxer lost 1-4 after giving the top-seeded defending champion quite a fight.

Mirzahalilov, who is also the Asian Games champion, was caught off guard by Hussamuddin's powerful counter-attacks on more than one occasion.

However, the Uzbek's assured footwork and precisely-placed straights for a majority of the bout, helped him seal it in the end. — PTI

COVID-19 POSITIVE MILKHA SINGH CLINICALLY STABLE

Chandigarh, May 25: Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh is "clinically stable with decreasing oxygen requirement" as he fights Covid pneumonia, the hospital where he is being treated said on Tuesday.

Milkha was on Monday admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of Fortis hospital in Mohali. The 91-year-old tested positive for the virus last Wednesday.

"Mr Milkha Singh is clinically stable with decreasing oxygen requirement," the hospital update read.

He was diagnosed with "Covid pneumonia" on Monday after his admission.

Earlier Milkha's golfer son Jeev had said that the decision to hospitalise him was a precautionary measure. Milkha is suspected to have contracted the infection from house helps who had tested positive for the virus. — PTI