

THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI SUNDAY 23 MAY 2021



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Nadda moots welfare programme for children orphaned by Covid-19



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Bengal BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari's father, brother get Y+ security

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Rakul Preet Singh is grateful for getting contrasting roles

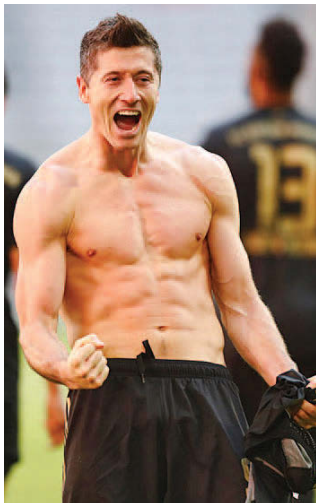


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WINDOWS



Bayern's Robert Lewandowski celebrates after scoring fifth goal during the Bundesliga soccer match between Bayern Munich and FC Augsburg in, Munich, Germany on Saturday.

— AP

Music director Raamlaxman dies at 79 in Nagpur

Mumbai: Veteran music director Raamlaxman, best known for his work on Rajshri Productions' blockbuster movies — "Maine Pyar Kiya", "Hum Aapke Hain Koun..!" and "Hum Saath Saath Hain" — died due to a cardiac arrest. He was 78. The composer, whose real name was Vijay Patil, passed away at his residence in Nagpur in the early hours of Saturday, his son Amar said. — PTI



Canada extends flight ban from India, Pak

Ottawa: Canada has extended the ban on direct flights from India and Pakistan by one more month until June 21 in a bid to arrest the spread of new variants of the COVID-19, according to an official announcement. The ban on flights from India and Pakistan was extended as the previous 30-day ban, first imposed on April 22, was set to expire on Saturday. — PTI

ONGC employee freed by Ufa-l

Guwahati: Kidnapped ONGC employee Ritul Saikia was released by Ufa(l) militants on Saturday morning in Myanmar near its border with India's Nagaland, police said. — PTI

COUNTERPOINT



Unused medicines? Don't throw them away... Let's try them on Covid patients!

WEATHER



Max: 36°C
Min: 25°C
RH: 41%
Rain: 14%

Forecast: Mostly sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha Ekadasi till 6.41 am
Star: Hasta till 12.08 pm
Variyam: 7.21 pm to 8.47 pm
Durmuhurtam: 4.57 pm to 5.48 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
SUNSET TODAY 7.13 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.26 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.51 PM
MOONSET TODAY 3.07 AM

Cases fall in Maha, Delhi, but rise in TN, K'taka and Kerala

Several states extend lockdown

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

The Centre said on Saturday that even though the Covid-19 pandemic is stabilising in large parts of the country, there is still a long way to go to battle this particular wave as the positivity rate is still over 10 per cent in 382 districts. Addressing a press conference, Niti Aayog member (Health) V.K. Paul said India was able to come this far in controlling this pandemic through restrictions on social and economic activities and containment and care measures.

"In large parts of the country, the pandemic is stabilising, the positivity rate and active cases are reducing and recovery rate is rising (but) it is also being seen that there's an increase in other states... we have a long way to go to handle this wave... As the situation improves we need to keep ensuring that the chain of transmission remains broken," he said.

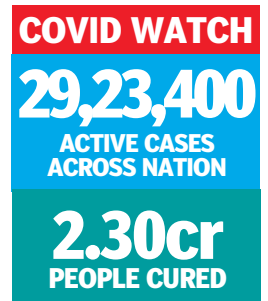
For the sixth consecutive day the daily new cases remained under three lakh and recoveries outnumbered fresh cases for the ninth consecutive day. Over 3.57 lakh people bounced back from Covid in the last 24 hours and India's daily positivity

Vaccination for 18-44 age group to be halted: Kejri

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday that vaccination centres for those in the 18-44 years age group are being closed due to shortage of doses. He appealed to the Centre to provide more vaccines, saying all vaccination centres for youth will be closed from Sunday as stocks have run out.

■ More on Page 2



rate declined to 12.45 per cent.

The active cases further reduced to 29,23,400 comprising 11.12 per cent of the total infections, while the national Covid

■ Turn to Page 4

'Over 8 lakh migrants left Delhi in 4 weeks of lockdown amid 2nd wave'

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Over eight lakh migrant workers left the national capital in the four weeks of the lockdown imposed to contain the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, according to a report from the Delhi transport department.

Between April 19 and May 14, a total of 8,07,032 migrant workers left Delhi for their home states in buses, out of which 3,79,604 left during the first week of the lockdown itself. The number started declining from

thereon as 2,12,448 left in the second week, 1,22,490 in the third week and 92,490 in the fourth week.

"The timely coordination with transport authorities of neighbouring states, especially Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand by the Government of NCT of Delhi has helped about eight lakhs migrant workers to reach their destination without any difficulty," read the report. "There were 21,879 interstate bus trips during the four weeks of the lockdown," it added.

■ More on Page 2

After Bihar, MP reports white fungus infection

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, MAY 22

After Bihar, Madhya Pradesh has reported a case of white fungus infection. A 55-year-old man, who recovered from Covid-19 earlier this month, was on Saturday detected to have contracted white fungus infection in the government-run Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College and Hospital in Jabalpur.

"This was the first case of white fungus infection in Madhya Pradesh. The fungus was removed in a surgery and the patient is doing absolutely fine," a doctor at the hospital said.

New cases of white fungus have been found in Patna, Bihar, and this infection is more dangerous than black fungus. It can affect not just the lungs but also other parts of the body including "nails, skin, stomach, kidney, brain, private parts and mouth".

■ More on Page 3

Indian Navy ships and aircraft on standby 'Yaas' may intensify into a severe cyclonic storm

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO
with agency inputs
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 22

A low pressure area formed over east-central Bay of Bengal on Saturday, which is likely to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm and move towards West Bengal, north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts around May 26 morning, the met department said.

Wind speed is expected to reach 90-100 km per hour gusting to 110 kmph from May 26 forenoon along and off West Bengal, north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts, and increase thereafter till evening.

The very severe cyclonic storm, which has been named 'Yaas', will hit the coast with a wind speed of 120-160 kilometre per hour (kmph) gusting up to 185 kmph and heavy downpours, the IMD said.

The Indian Navy has kept on standby ships and aircraft to render assistance in the most-affected areas, a defence spokesperson said.



A police person announces cyclone related warnings at a beach in Puri on Saturday.

— AP

Fishermen have been advised to stay away from the central Bay of Bengal between May 23 and 27 and the Railway authorities have cancelled a total 74 trains passing through East Coast Railway (ECoR) jurisdiction.

In New Delhi, the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC) headed by Cabinet Secretary Rajiv Gauba met on Saturday to review preparedness

for the impending Cyclone Yaas, with the top bureaucrat of the country directing various agencies to ensure safety of Covid-19 patients, hospitals and oxygen generation plants.

"Mr Gauba also stressed that safety of Covid-19 infected patients be ensured and disruption of functioning of Covid hospitals and centres be avoided," a source said.

Sena demands petro mantri's resignation

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, MAY 22

After Congress and NCP, the Shiv Sena too has demanded the resignation of Union petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan, holding him responsible for deaths of people on board barge P305 that sank off the Mumbai coast during Cyclone Tauktae. Seventy-five workers have died, of whom 49 bodies have been found and 26 are still missing. The Uddhav Thackeray-led party slammed Mr Pradhan saying he was conspicuous by his absence during the tragedy. "Will Dharmendra Pradhan quit owning moral responsibility for the death of innocent people?" the Sena asked.

■ More on Page 4



Family members prepare to cremate a Covid victim at Nigambodh Ghat cremation ground in New Delhi on Saturday.

— PTI

High-level meeting today on 12 Board, entrance exams

Meeting to be chaired by Rajnath Singh

New Delhi, May 22: The ministry of education (MOE) has called a crucial meeting on Sunday to decide on pending Class 12 board exams and subsequent entrance examinations that were postponed due to the second wave of Covid, Union minister Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' said.

The high-level meeting will be chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh. Union women and child development minister Smriti Irani as well as Minister for Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar will be among those present. Education ministers and secretaries of all states and union territories have been asked to attend the meeting.

Mr Pokhriyal also sought inputs from all the stakeholders students, parents, teachers and others through social media on Saturday.

"A high-level virtual meeting will be convened tomorrow (Sunday) with all states and union territories' education ministers, education secretaries and chairpersons of state examination boards and stakeholders to discuss the proposals for the conduct of exams for Class 12 and entrance examinations for professional courses," he said.

"I recently held a meeting with the state education secretaries in this regard. The consultative process will be further strengthened through the high-level meeting. This virtual meeting will take place at 11.30 am," he added.

In a letter to the states and UTs, the education minister has said that his ministry's Department of School Education and the CBSE were exploring options regarding the conduct of the examinations, keeping in mind the safety and security of both students and teachers.

— PTI

Gujarat's 'love jihad' bill gets gov's go-ahead

Ahmedabad, May 22: Gujarat governor Acharya Devvrat has given his assent to an amendment bill which provides for a prison sentence of up to 10 years for fraudulent or forcible conversion by marriage, a state minister said on Saturday.

The Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which was passed by the state Legislative Assembly on April 1 this year, has been approved by the governor along with seven other Bills, state legislative and parliamentary affairs minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama said in a statement.

As per the amended Freedom of Religion Bill, a forcible "conversion by marriage, or by getting a person married, or by aiding a person to get married" shall invite imprisonment of three to five years and a fine of up to ₹2 lakh.

If the victim is a minor,

— AFP

US Prez vows to help organise efforts to rebuild Gaza 2-state solution only answer to Israel-Palestine conflict: Biden

Washington, May 22:

President Joe Biden on Friday pledged to help organize efforts to rebuild Gaza and said creating a Palestinian state alongside Israel is the "only answer" to the conflict. President Biden also said he had told the Israelis to stop "intercommunal fighting" in the flashpoint city of Jerusalem.

However he stressed "there is no shift in my commitment, commitment to the security of Israel" and added that until the region "unequivocally" acknowledges Israel's existence "there will be no peace."

The idea of a two-state solution — with a sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel and Jerusalem as their shared capital — has been the cornerstone of decades of international diplomacy aimed at ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

US policy under Donald Trump was criticized as



An aerial view of a destroyed building after it was hit last week by Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City on Saturday.

— AP

being blatantly pro-Israel and ignoring the Palestinians.

A Mideast peace plan devised by Trump's adviser and son in law Jared Kushner was billed as providing for a two-state solution. But that blueprint envisioned a Palestinian state with only limited sovereignty and Israel maintaining security over that state.

The plan was rejected

out of hand by Palestinian leaders.

Mr Biden on Friday insisted on a full-blown two state remedy.

"There is no shift in my commitment to the security of Israel, period, no shift, not at all," he said.

"But I tell you what there is a shift in. The shift is that we still need a two-state solution. It is the only answer, the only answer," Biden stated.

SHORT TAKES

2 held for trying to kill man to avenge murder

New Delhi: A 22-year-old man and his associate were arrested for allegedly attempting to kill a person to avenge his cousin's murder in West Delhi's Mangolpuri, the police said on Saturday. The two have been identified as Nitin, the main accused, and Mohit (20). Both of them are residents of I-Block in Mangolpuri. The police said a call was received around 7.30 pm on Friday at the Mangolpuri police station regarding an incident of firing at I-Block. It was also told that a person was injured in the incident and was rushed to the Sanjay Gandhi Hospital. The police reached the hospital where Mohammad Zafar Azad (30), also a resident of Mangolpuri, was admitted. He had sustained two gunshot injuries—one near the neck and another at his lower back—and stab injuries in the stomach, a senior police officer said. During enquiry, it was revealed that Shah Nawaz, the brother of injured Azad, along with eight others had allegedly killed one Piyush (18), a resident of I-Block in Mangolpuri, in November 2020. In that case, nine accused people, including two juveniles, were apprehended, the officer said. It has also been learnt that accused Nitin, the cousin of Piyush, along with three to four men, attempted to kill Azad to avenge the alleged murder, the police said, adding that a case under relevant sections of the IPC and Arms Act has been registered at the Mangolpuri police station. "During investigation two accused persons, Nitin and Mohit, have been arrested. The weapons of offense — a country-made pistol and a knife — have been recovered at their instances," police said. The police said that Nitin nurtured a grudge against Shah Nawaz as he killed his cousin Piyush. The accused persons are being interrogated to get the details of their associates. Further investigation is in progress, the police added. — PTI

Case filed against Sharjeel over derogatory tweets

New Delhi: The Delhi Police has registered a case against former Aligarh Muslim University student leader Sharjeel Usmani over his alleged objectionable tweets, officials said on Saturday. A senior police officer said the case was filed under IPC section 505 based on a complaint by a BJP leader. On May 20, police in Maharashtra's Jalna district had registered an FIR against the former student leader for allegedly posting some objectionable content on social media. The complainant, Ambadas Ambhore, who hails from Ambad in Jalna and works with the Hindu Jagran Manch, had alleged that Usmani used disrespectful words for Lord Ram in some of his recent posts on Twitter and hurt religious sentiments. Earlier this year, the Pune police had also registered a case against Usmani under IPC section 153 (A) (promoting enmity between different groups on the ground of religion, etc) over his speech made during the Elgar Parishad conclave held there on January 30. — PTI

Class 12 exams: Sisodia consults school principals, students ahead of MoE meet

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia on Saturday held interactions with school principals, teachers and students to deliberate on options that can be explored by the central government to arrive at a decision regarding pending Class 12 board exams. The two virtual interactions by Sisodia came a day before the Ministry of Education's crucial meeting on Sunday to decide on fate of board exams which were postponed in view of the second wave of Covid-19. "The consensus that emerged from all the meetings with these key stakeholders was that in the absence of vaccines to children, conducting any kind of examinations will only make our students and teachers more vulnerable to the virus. With the surge of Covid-19 cases, teachers and



Manish Sisodia

principals stated that the most appropriate decision about Class 12 board exams would be to completely cancel them," a senior government official said. "The school principals were of the opinion that obsession with examination will not serve any purpose and will only create more problems for students. Also almost all families have suffered some form of Covid-related trauma and taking any kind of exams at this stage would just add to the already challenging situation.

"Hence, relating the sentiment of many students and parents across the nation, all the stakeholders were of the opinion that safety and security in this time of crisis is of utmost importance," the official added. Sisodia, who is also

Delhi's Education Minister, took the feedback of the students and teachers about possible options during the interactions.

Alternative assessment options, including taking into account marks of Class 10 and pre-board exams and internal exams, were among the suggestions received during the interactions. The ministry of education has invited suggestions from various stakeholders that will be taken up at the meeting scheduled to be chaired by Union Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday.

Union ministers Smriti Irani and Prakash Javadekar besides Education ministers and secretaries from all states and union territories are also expected to attend the meeting. The CBSE had on April 14 announced the cancellation of Class 10 exams and postponement of Class 12 exams in view of the surge in Covid-19 cases.

■ Lockdown may be extended by 1 more week in Delhi, say officials

Vaccination for 18+ group stopped from today: Kejri

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA NEW DELHI, MAY 22

At a time when Delhi is battling to contain the spread of Covid-19, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Saturday that vaccination centres for those in the 18-44 years age group are being closed due to shortage of doses in the national capital. He appealed to the Centre to provide more vaccines, saying all vaccination centres for youth will be closed from Sunday as stocks have run out.

The chief minister extended four-point suggestions to the Centre to enhance vaccine availability in the country. Firstly, some countries have stored more vaccines than what they need; Centre should request them to give those vaccines to India. Secondly, foreign companies should be allowed to produce vaccines in India, said Kejriwal.

Thirdly, Centre should buy Covid-19 vaccines from foreign countries within 24 hours and distribute these among states and lastly Centre should order all companies to make vaccines as

Bharat Biotech has agreed to share Covaxin's formula with other firms.

From Sunday, all vaccination centres for youths in Delhi will be closed as stocks have run out, he said in a press conference.

Delhi requires 80 lakh doses a month to vaccinate its youth. But it only received 16 lakh doses in May. The Centre has further decreased Delhi's quota in June to 8 lakh doses, Kejriwal said.

The national capital needs 2.5 crore doses to vaccinate all adults, he said, urging the Centre to raise the quota and supply to the city. Kejriwal said that the speed of spread of the coronavirus has significantly slowed down in Delhi. In the past 24 hours, around 2,200 cases were reported and the positivity rate is 3.5 per cent, he said.

Meanwhile the Delhi government might extend the ongoing lockdown by another week, although the Covid situation is improving in the city with less number of cases and declining positivity rate in the past few days, official sources said on Saturday.



Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal meets a family member of Dr. Anas Mujahid in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

₹1 crore help for family of Covid warrior GTB doctor

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday provided financial assistance of ₹1 crore to the family of late "corona warrior" Dr Anas Mujahid.

Mujahid, a junior resident doctor at the department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Delhi's GTB hospital, succumbed to Covid-19 on May 9 — just a day after

he contracted the virus.

"Late Dr Anas was hardworking and serving the people of Delhi at GTB hospital since the time Corona emerged in Delhi. Many Corona warriors like Dr Anas are on the front-line helping the people of Delhi, and it is because of people like Anas that we are able to save lives and the Delhi government is able to fight the Corona pandemic," said Kejriwal in a statement.



Notice saying 'No vaccine available for people below 45 years' pasted after Delhi government announced to halt vaccination for 18-44 age group on Saturday. — PTI

IWPC stands in solidarity with survivor in Tarun Tejpal case

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 22

The Indian Women's Press Corp (IWPC) said on Saturday that it is disappointed with the acquittal of Tarun Tejpal, former editor of Tehelka, on charges of rape and sexual harassment by a Goa sessions court and stands in solidarity with the survivor.

In a statement issued by the women journalist body, it said that "the acquittal of Tarun Tejpal — a powerful editor who himself admitted to 'the shameful lapse of judgement that led me to attempt a sexual liaison with you on two occasions on 7 November and 8 November 2013, despite

your clear reluctance that you did not want such attention from me' — has made the fight for justice harder for women."

The IWPC statement noted that "it took great courage for the young woman journalist to come out against her editor and fight tirelessly for eight years in a system that is skewed in favour of men" and added that the way the case proceeded is a "symptom of power imbalance where all too often women complainants don't get a fair hearing".

"It is never easy for women to speak out against sexual harassment at work places and that is a reflection of a skewed power structure,

of a culture of sexualising women at work places and of the economic, professional disadvantage of reporting sexual harassment. The IWPC stands fully behind the survivor and her version of events. It welcomes the Goa government's decision to appeal against the session court's judgment," it said.

The IWPC called on all media organisations to inculcate a work culture that doesn't permit any form of sexual harassment, and hoped that when such incidents are reported, organisations will take immediate, meaningful action to address them in a fair and just manner which brings some relief to the complainant.

15 hospitals treating black fungus cases in Delhi: Jain

Small intestine infected by black fungus found in patients at city hospital, docs say cases 'rare'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Amid escalating cases of black fungus in the national capital, Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Saturday asked people to be watchful and not resort to self-medication, particularly steroids, and said that about 15 hospitals in the city are treating mucormycosis patients.

Black fungus or mucormycosis is a fungal infection that affects the nose, eyes, and the sinuses among patients who are recovering or have recovered from Covid-19.

Interacting with reporters, he also said there was a scarcity of drugs needed for its treatment in Delhi and the rest of the country.

There were 197 cases of black fungus in hospitals across the city till Wednesday night, including non-residents who have come to the city for treatment, he reiterated.

"Earlier, 30-50 cases would get reported in a year but this time the number has gone up quite high. It is being found a lot in post-Covid cases this time, so we have to be watchful as a large number of people have tested positive in



Satyendar Jain

Delhi, several of them put on steroids, and many are diabetic in which the sugar level is not maintained, it flares up," Mr Jain said.

Two patients at a leading private facility here, both of whom had tested positive for Covid-19, were diagnosed with Mucormycosis in the small intestine, which the doctors termed as "rare" cases.

Mucormycosis or black fungus, most commonly involves rhino-orbital-cerebral system or the lungs. Intestinal or GI mucormycosis is very "rare disease", and most commonly involves stomach or large intestine, according to doctors at the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here.

A 56-year-old Delhi resident, who had lost three of his family members including his wife to COVID, had barely completed the last rites of his wife when he experienced pain in his abdomen. He had tested positive for coronavirus along with his wife and had been experiencing mild

symptoms initially, the hospital said in a statement.

His abdominal pain was considered gastritis or stress-related and self-medication for acidity was done, which delayed proper treatment by three days, it said.

He was finally evaluated in the Covid emergency of Sir Ganga Ram Hospital by Dr Ushast Dhir, senior consultant in the department of Gastroenterology and Liver Transplantation, it said.

The CT scan revealed that the first part of his small intestine or jejunum had perforated. His COVID ailment also had worsened by now requiring ventilator support. The patient was admitted and taken up urgently for surgery, hospital authorities said.

"Ulceration of jejunum in the patient raised my suspicion of fungal disease, and the patient was immediately started on anti-fungal treatment. We sent the portion of removed intestine for biopsy," the doctor said.

In another case, a 68-year-old man, who was happy to know that his father had recovered from Covid-19, started having mild abdominal pain. He was a diabetic and had received steroids for treatment of Covid.

Delhi court rejects cops' plea again to interrogate Kalra

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 22

The plea seeking five more days of custodial interrogation of Khan Chacha owner Navneet Kalra, in a case alleging hoarding of oxygen concentrators, by Delhi Police was rejected by Delhi Court on Saturday.

While denying further police custody, Metropolitan Magistrate Vasundhara Azad noted that as per the facts and circumstances involved in the case, police custody was not warranted. "In my considered opinion, police custody remand is not warranted. Application is dismissed," said Metropolitan Magistrate Vasundhara Azad. This is the second time the court has rejected the police remand application.

During a recent raid, 524 oxygen concentrators were recovered from Khan Chacha, Town Hall, and Nege & Ju restaurants owned by Kalra. The businessman was arrested from Gurugram on May 16 night and formally arrested the next day. He was, thereafter, remanded to three days' police custody. A case was filed under Sections 3 and 7 of the Essential Commodities Act, among other provisions of law against Kalra, after the Delhi Police recovered oxygen concentrators from "Khan Chacha" and other restaurants owned by him.

The police claimed that the imported concentrators were being sold in the black market amid the Covid-19 crisis. During the proceedings, Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) Atul Navneet Shrivastav, Kalra appearing for the Delhi



Navneet Shrivastav, Kalra appearing for the Delhi

police, sought Kalra's custody on the grounds that he needs to be confronted with mobile phone data and bank account details which have become available.

"Right from the very beginning, we have been asking for a PC remand to confront the accused with mobile details. Some of the WhatsApp screenshots are available with us, asking for refunds because the concentrators supplied were not working," said Atul Shrivastav.

Advocate Vineet Malhotra, appearing for Kalra, opposed the argument stating that the defendant does not manufacture or import any oxygen concentrators. He got 700 of them from the producer, Matrix, and the same were stored in his premises for distribution to some friends, relatives and customers. He also submitted that Kalra himself had given his bank account details to the police before the arrest.

Kalra, who was present for hearing via video conference from jail, was permitted to speak during the hearing in the matter. Kalra said he is not the manufacturer or importer of these machines.

Baba Ramdev calls allopathy 'stupid science', DMA files FIR

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Baba Ramdev in retaliation to the blistering attack made by yoga guru and FMCG ayurveda businessman Baba Ramdev, who called modern medicine a "stupid science" vis-a-vis "tamasha", the Delhi Medical Association on Saturday evening filed an FIR in New Delhi.

In a complaint stated by Delhi Medical Association to deputy commissioner of police, Daryaganj, New Delhi, the letter citing a video circulating on social media, the DMA said Ramdev has claimed that "allopathy is a stupid science" and "tamasha" and medicines such as Remdesivir, Faviflu, and other drugs approved by the Drugs Controller General of India have failed to treat Covid-19 patients. "Lakhs of patients have died after taking allopathic medicines", the association said, quoting the yoga guru.

The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Saturday said that the Union health ministry should take action against yoga guru Ramdev as he has misled people by making "unlearned" statements against allopathy and defamed scientific medicine.

In a statement, the resident doctors' association of AIIMS said it "vehemently condemns" the statements given by Ramdev. "On behalf of the medical fraternity, and all healthcare and frontline workers we demand strongly that strictest steps be taken against his inappropriate conduct at the earliest to prevent unrest amongst doctors and anxiety amongst the affected patients and their family," the AIIMS RDA said.

The RDA of Safdarjung Hospital said Ramdev's statement must be considered as "hate speech". "We demand an unconditional public apology from Ramdev to allopathy and its practitioners," it said in a statement.

Later, Ramdev's firm, Patanjali, released a statement saying, "Yoga guru Ramdev has no ill-will against modern science or its practitioners." The statement further said, "What is being attributed to him (Ramdev) is false and nugatory".

8 lakh migrants left Delhi during 1st 4 weeks of lockdown: Report

AGE CORRESPONDENT With agency inputs NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Over eight lakh migrant workers left the national capital in the first four weeks of the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a report from the Delhi transport department.

Between April 19 and May 14, a total of 8,07,032 migrant workers left Delhi for their home states in buses, out of which 3,79,604 left during the first week of the lockdown itself. The number started declining from thereon, 2,12,448 left in the second week, 1,22,490 in the third week and 92, 490 in the fourth week.

"The timely coordination with transport authorities



Migrant workers arrive at New Delhi Railway Station to catch a train during the lockdown in New Delhi. — PTI

of neighbouring states, especially Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand by the Government of NCT of Delhi has helped about eight lakhs migrant workers to reach their destination without any difficulty," read the report. There were 21,879 interstate bus

trips during the four weeks of the lockdown, it added.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had first imposed a lockdown on April 19 which was later extended multiple times, lastly on May 16. Learning from the past experience of the first surge of pandemic in

March 2020 when the city experienced heavy movement of migrant workers to their native places, the state

Transport Department this time had deputed an adequate number of buses to facilitate migrant workers to reach their destination.

"Transport department, Govt. of NCT of Delhi prepared a plan for deployment of 500 cluster buses on interstate routes under emergency. There was no complaint of overcharging as the interstate buses were owned and operated by state governments," the report said.

It also mentioned that "train travel" was a preferred mode by migrants in the current lockdown as trains were operational unlike the last year's coronavirus-induced lockdown in March.

SHORT TAKES

Assam Rifles jawan killed in encounter

Itanagar: An Assam Rifles jawan was killed while two others were injured in an encounter with suspected militants of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (KYA) near the Indo-Myanmar border in Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, a police source said. A column of the Assam Rifles was carrying out an operation at an area around 8-9 km from Longvi village under Nampong circle when they came under heavy firing, police said. Rifleman Avatar Chakma was killed in the encounter. "The injured — Rifleman Bablu and Rifleman Baldev — have been airlifted and taken to a hospital," the source said. Changlang SP Mihin Gambo confirmed the incident. The Centre last month extended the ceasefire agreements with three insurgent groups of Nagaland NSCN(NIK), NSCN(R) and NSCN(K-Khango) — for one more year. — PTI

IPS officer accuses DGP of caste bias

Ambala: A Haryana-cadre IPS officer has accused state police chief Manoj Yadava of trying to humiliate and harass him on caste basis, seeking the registration of a criminal case against him under the stringent SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. IGP Y. Puran Kumar lodged the complaint against the Haryana DGP with Ambala senior superintendent of police Hamid Akhtar on May 19. In his complaint, he has sought the registration of an FIR against Yadava under the stringent SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities Act), 1989, saying the DGP has some personal grudge against him due to him belonging to a scheduled caste. DGP Yadava has been trying to harass, humiliate, insult, threaten and intimidate him in one or other way with discriminatory conduct, said Mr Kumar in his complaint. — PTI

Kerala to conduct black fungus audit

Thiruvananthapuram: The Kerala government decided to conduct a medical audit of black fungus after reports emerged about the presence of the fungal disease in the state over the last one week. The decision was taken as some states have started notifying black fungus as an epidemic. "A medical audit will be conducted on black fungus. The availability of medicine will be ensured. Medicines that do not have side effects are recommended to be given to the patients even if they are expensive", Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan told a press conference here. He said many unscientific and frightening messages related to black fungus or mucormycosis are being spread in the state. — PTI

COPS BEAT TEEN FOR VIOLATING CURFEW, DIES

Unnao, UP: A 17-year-old boy died Friday after he was allegedly beaten up by the police here for "violating" the ongoing corona curfew in the state, his family claimed, following which a constable was suspended and a homeguard jawan sacked. The incident took place in Bhatpuri locality in Bangarmau area when the boy was selling vegetable outside his house. The police said in a statement that an FIR will be registered against the policemen involved and the entire matter probed. His family alleged that the boy was caught by a constable for allegedly violating 'corona curfew' and thrashed with a stick. He was later taken to a police station, where he was again thrashed following which his condition deteriorated and he was rushed to the Community Health Centre, where he was declared dead, the family alleged. Agitated with the police action, the locals created a jam at Lucknow road crossing, demanding action against the guilty, a government job and compensation for the victim's family. Later, the police said in a statement, "Constable Vijay Chodhury has been suspended with immediate effect in the matter and services of homeguard Satyaprakash have been terminated. The entire matter will be probed and an FIR will be registered against the policemen." — PTI

More than 23,000 adverse events were reported through Co-WIN platform from 684 districts, claims govt
'No mechanism to report jab reaction, most go unreported'VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

The Centre had recently released a report on the Adverse Effect From Immunisation (AEFI) detected so far from the population that has been vaccinated from Covishield.

The government has claimed that since the Covid-19 vaccination drive was initiated more than 23,000 adverse events were reported through the Co-WIN platform from 684 districts of the country. Of these, 700 cases were reported to be serious and severe. The AEFI committee's in-depth case review of 498 serious and severe events found 26 cases to be potential thromboembolic (formation of a clot in a blood vessel that might also break loose and carried by the bloodstream to plug another vessel) events following the administration of Covishield vaccine — with a reporting rate of 0.61 cases/ million doses.

However, in the absence of a proper reporting mechanism and proactive approach of authorities to trace vaccinated people after they leave the vaccination site, such a claim may not be reflecting the true picture and full magnitude of AEFI and it is possible several cases of AEFI may be going unreported or undetected.

Mine is the first-hand

story of the struggle to get AEFI recorded in India's Capital city Delhi. It took me five days and a huge effort to shake up the system from slumber and get the AEFI recorded for my 21-year-old son who was vaccinated for Covishield on May 13.

My son was vaccinated on May 13 at EDMC PS Trilokpuri Site 1 (East Delhi) at around 11.15 am with Covishield. He was kept for 30 minutes at the site to check for AEFI during which he had no other problem other than the pain in the arm. Back home, my son developed 101-degree fever at 6.30 pm on May 13 and complained of very sharp shooting pain in the vaccinated arm. I gave him Dolo 650 for fever, as advised by the doctors. He again had fever the next morning. But it was the fever on the evening of May 14 at 5.30, that alarmed me. My son reported high fever and numbness in his hand. His hand was getting cold and fingernails started turning blue.

We called some doctors and they suggested we rush him to emergency in a hospital as this was possible a reaction to the vaccine. However, a doctor friend saw him through video call and checked his tongue, eyes, palm and hands. He said none of them were blue and only fingernails were getting blue. My son's pulse at this



A health worker inoculates a man with a dose of the Covid-19 vaccine at SDMC urban public health centre in Daryaganj, Delhi, Saturday. — PTI

point was 73, BP 120/80, Oxygen saturation was 95 and fever 102. The doctor asked us to give lots of fluid to the boy and wait for some time before going to the hospital while he figured where to get him admitted since hospitals were not easily accessible due to the high volume of Covid cases. Thankfully, in about 30 minutes, his nails started turning pink again. His hands and feet were warm, there was no numbness and the sensation was back.

This was the first time we had experienced such a thing. So I thought of

reporting it as AEFI. The real struggle began now. None of the helpline numbers given by the government — 1075, 191, +911123978046, 0120-4473222 — were functional or reachable. There are no emails, no phone numbers of doctors available on any government site to report AEFI. No provision on CoWin or Aarogya Setu app.

After my son stabilised I went back to the vaccination centre, a school, which was shut after 5 pm and got the number of the doctor on duty. He directed me to a nodal officer, who

said he can only treat but has no role in recording AEFI. In the meanwhile, I had tagged ICMR, Union health ministry, Drugs Controller General of India, Serum Institute of India asking for contact details to report AEFI. There was no response. I also tagged Mr Adar Poonawala who heads SII to guide me to report AEFI for his vaccine. He too has not responded so far.

Finally, I had to write in the group of health journalists after which my colleagues got active and with the intervention of some senior bureaucrats, I

could manage to finally "report" AEFI of Covishield. This was four days of the AEFI.

After registering my AEFI report the district immunisation officer called to take my son for a cardiological checkup. There was a fear of thrombosis. I rushed. His ECG and blood tests were conducted, which thankfully were normal. But what if I had not made so much noise? What if my boy actually had thrombosis or some other severe side effect from the vaccine Covishield? I would have lost four crucial days.

I have been hearing horror stories of people dying of cardiac arrest or other complications after vaccination. Two days back my sanitation staff came to me saying she will not get her son vaccinated because someone died in her neighbourhood soon after the vaccine dose. And all such things go unreported.

In my son's case, the nodal official said he developed allergy to the vaccine. AEFI is exactly that. But we hate recording such data. If this is the condition in Delhi where the educated are struggling imagine what would be happening among the general population in other areas.

It is important for the government to take AEFI tracking more seriously and aggressively as it is

doing for vaccination.

The health ministry said AEFI data in India showed that there is a very miniscule but definitive risk of thromboembolic events. The health ministry has issued advisories to healthcare workers and vaccine beneficiaries to encourage people to be aware of suspected thromboembolic symptoms occurring within 20 days after receiving any Covid-19 vaccine (particularly Covishield) and report preferably to the health facility where the vaccine was administered.

People have to watch out for breathlessness, pain in the chest, pain in limbs/pain on pressing limbs or swelling in limbs (arm or calf), multiple, pinhead size red spots or bruising of skin in an area beyond the injection site, persistent abdominal pain with or without vomiting, seizures in the absence of the previous history of seizures with or without vomiting, severe and persistent headache with or without, weakness/paralysis of limbs or any particular side or part of the body, persistent vomiting without any obvious reason, blurred vision or pain in eyes or having double vision, change in mental status or having confusion or depressed level of consciousness, any other symptom or health condition which is of concern to the recipient or the family.

Nadda asks CMs to launch scheme for orphaned children

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

The BJP on Saturday asked chief ministers of party ruled states not to hold any celebratory event to mark the seventh anniversary of Narendra Modi led NDA government on May 30 instead prepare a programme for the welfare of children orphaned by the global pandemic for which directions "will be issued shortly".

In a letter to chief ministers of the BJP ruled states, party president J.P. Nadda said that no celebratory event will be held to mark the anniversary due to the circumstances caused by the pandemic and added that various welfare programmes will be instead held. He has asked the chief ministers and party workers to continue reaching out to people with help and assistance as part of the 'Seva hi Sangathan' initiative.

Noting that the world has not witnessed such a pandemic in the last 100 years and the global pandemic has caused deep wounds on the nation and society with many chil-



J.P. Nadda

dren losing both parents to the disease, the BJP chief minister has asked chief ministers of party ruled states that "it is now our responsibility to care for their future and take solid steps in this regard." Mr Nadda has asked them to prepare a scheme keeping in mind the needs and situation of their states and added that they will also be soon shared directives to help such children and their families.

The BJP currently has 12 chief ministers in its ranks. The BJP had refrained from organising any major event to celebrate the Modi government's anniversary even last year due to the Covid outbreak and various restrictions in place due to lockdown.

AGE CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 22

No shops, including vegetable and grocery vends — will be allowed to open for one week from Monday, when the state will be under a total lockdown, permitting the continuation of just a handful of essential services and preventing people from step-

ping out of their homes.

However, to prepare the people for the lockdown and enable them to stock up on essential goods, all shops would be open till 9 pm on Saturday and from 6 am to 9 pm on Sunday, when outstation buses would also be operated, chief minister M.K. Stalin announced on Saturday through a statement.

After the chief minister's meeting with officers and medical experts, the statement said vegetables and fruits will be supplied through vehicles operated by the horticulture department in Chennai city. In the districts they would be supplied at the homes in association with the local bodies, it said.

Pharmacies, including

that of indigenous medicine and veterinary sciences, would be open as usual and daily distribution of milk, water and newspapers be allowed during the total lockdown, the statement said.

Only essential departments in the Secretariat and district administrations will function, while banks, insurance compa-

nies and IT firms have been asked to allow their employees work from home. Malls too will not be allowed to open.

Restaurants, as usual, can provide takeaway service from 6 am to 10 am, 12 noon to 3 pm and 6 pm to 9 pm and e-commerce food delivery can also function only during those hours.

BJP targets Sonia for silence on Nath's 'Indian Covid' jibe

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

Questioning the "silence" of Congress president Sonia Gandhi over her party leader and former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath's statements calling the Covid-19 variant-B.1.617 as "Indian Corona" and "hamari pehchan, mera Bharat Covid," senior BJP leader and I&B minister Prakash Javadekar on Saturday alleged that ever since the pandemic hit the country, the Opposition party and its leaders have been indulging in weakening the fight against it and insulting the country.

Slamming the Congress for doing "negative politics" over the pandemic, Mr Javadekar also replied to Mrs Gandhi's letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying India has brought medicines from abroad also and is providing states with adequate supply. The Congress president, in her letter, has asked the PM to ensure the assured supply of essential medicines for the treatment of mucormycosis (black fungus) and cost-free care to those affected.

"Kamal Nath used the term 'Indian corona' ...when even the World Health Organisation

(WHO) has clarified that any variant is not named after any country... He (Nath) did not stop there and said 'hamari pahchan, mera Bharat covid'... This is an insult to India. Many Congress leaders are making such statements. Many leaders said this is an Indian variant," said the Union minister.

Accusing Opposition leaders of spreading doubts and fear among people, Mr Javadekar said they had done it when Covaxin, an indigenous vaccine against Covid-19, was launched by calling it "BJP vaccine", which has "turned out to be most efficacious".

West Bengal reports first death due to black fungus

Kolkata, May 22: A 32-year-old woman died of mucormycosis, commonly known as black fungus infection, becoming the first death due to the disease in West Bengal, a state health department official said on Saturday.

Shampa Chakraborty, a resident of the southern part of the city's Haridevpur area, was admitted to the Sambhunath Pandit Hospital with Covid-19. She was later diagnosed with mucormycosis, he said. The patient, who was highly diabetic and was on insulin, died on Friday.

At present, five patients are undergoing treatment for the disease in the state and all of them are from neighbouring Bihar and Jharkhand, the official said. Besides constituting an expert committee to deal with black fungus cases, the state health department has formulated an advisory, titled 'Mucormycosis — if uncared for — may turn fatal', for the common people. — PTI



A doctor treats a patient infected with Black Fungus at NSCB medical college and hospital in Jabalpur. — PTI

four patients in Patna Medical College Hospital on May 19.

According to the experts, black fungus infection spreads to lungs and other vital organs through blood and may prove fatal if there is a delay in treatment. White fungus infection remains localised for quite some time before spreading to other organs.

The 55-year-old man of Jabalpur, who contracted white fungus infection, had tested positive for coronavirus in April and was discharged from hospital in the first week of May following his recovery. He was admitted to

After Bihar, MP reports white fungus infection

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, MAY 22

After Bihar, Madhya Pradesh has reported the case of white fungus infection.

A 55-year-old man, who has recovered from Covid-19 earlier this month, was on Saturday detected to have contracted white fungus infection in the government-run Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College and Hospital in Jabalpur. "This was the first case of white fungus infection in Madhya Pradesh. The fungus was removed after surgery and the patient is doing absolutely fine after the surgery," Dr Kavita Sachdev, head of the department, ENT, in the medical college hospital said.

The case was diagnosed as Aspergillosis, commonly known as white fungus infection, after culture of the fungus in the virology lab of the college, she said.

She however said the white fungus infection detected in the patient at the hospital was different from that found in

IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of rail passengers that the Railways have decided to cancel the following Special Trains keeping in view the impending cyclone YAAS, as per the following details:-

CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

Train No. & Name	Dates of Cancellation
02801 Puri-New Delhi Purushottam Express Special	24, 25 & 26.05.2021
02802 New Delhi-Puri Special Purushottam Express Special	23, 24 & 25.05.2021
02814 Anand Vihar Terminal-Bhubaneswar Express Special	24.05.2021
02816 Anand Vihar Terminal-Puri Nandan Kanan Exp. Spl.	24.05.2021 & 26.05.2021
02815 Puri-Anand Vihar Terminal Nandan Kanan Exp. Spl.	26.05.2021 & 27.05.2021
02823 Bhubaneswar-New Delhi Special	25.05.2021
02826 New Delhi-Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Express Special	24.05.2021
02875/02876 Puri-Anand Vihar Terminal-Puri Neelachal Express Special	25.05.2021
08477 Puri-Yog Nagri Rishikesh Express Special	25, 26 & 27.05.2021
08478 Yog Nagri Rishikesh-Puri Express Special	24, 25 & 26.05.2021
02209 Bhubaneswar-New Delhi Duroto Express Special	26.05.2021
02819 Bhubaneswar-Anand Vihar(T) Sampark Kranti Exp. Spl.	26.05.2021
02820 Anand Vihar(T)-Bhubaneswar Sampark Kranti Exp. Spl.	25.05.2021
02824 New Delhi-Bhubaneswar Rajdhani Express Special	26.05.2021

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

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www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

SHORT TAKES

BODO TRIBAL LEADER NAMED ASSAM SPEAKER

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, MAY 22

In what may be called the beginning of inclusive politics in Assam, ruling BJP nominated and elected 50-year-old Bodo tribal leader Biswajit Daimary as 21st speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly. Mr Daimary, son of a farmer and a mahout, who washed glasses in a tea stall to help the family in his school days has come a long way by starting his career as a student leader and being one of the architects of peace in Western Assam, the Bodo heartland. Mr Daimary, himself a trained elephant mahout, wanted to become a teacher from an early age, thus he joined the Assam Rashtrabhasha Prasara Samiti in Class-5 and appeared for Hindi examination passing Visharad when he was in Class 11 only. A former MLA from 2001 to 2006, Mr Daimary represented the state in Parliament as a BPF Rajya Sabha MP from 2008 to 2014 and then from 2014 to 2020 and was re-elected as BJP MP in the upper house in 2021. He resigned from Rajya Sabha to contest Assembly election on a BJP ticket from Paneri, which he won. Even political opponent of Mr Daimary and former chief of Bodoland Territorial Council Hagrama Mohilary thanked the BJP for honouring a tribal legislature. He in a social media post said, "Profound thanks to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for honouring a tribal legislator Biswajit Daimary as the speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly, the first Bodo in this dignified stature. Looking forward to more undiscriminating initiatives by the government for the welfare of tribals."

AAP URGES PM TO RESUME TALKS WITH FARMERS

Chandigarh: The Aam Aadmi Party on Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to accept with humility farmers' invitation of talks over the Centre's agriculture laws and resolve the issue. In a letter to the PM, AAP MP Bhagwan Mann and the party's Punjab affairs co-incharge Raghav Chadha also claimed that 470 have died during the course of the agitation, which is unfortunate and painful. The government has not made any attempt to negotiate with farmers since January 22, which is not in the interest of farmers and the entire nation, they added. As farmer leaders have once again urged for talks, the prime minister should accept the invitation with humility and resume talks over the issue, resolving it permanently, they said. The leaders said farmers are the backbone of the country and they had to protest for their demands at the cost of their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic. Concerned about their future, the country's farmers, including elderly, children and women, have left their homes and settled at Delhi borders, which is also against human rights, they added. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha Friday had written to the prime minister, urging for the resumption of talks over the Centre's farm laws, against which they are agitating at the Delhi borders since November last year. — PTI

Cong's Satheesan to be LoP in Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram: After suffering a mauling in the Assembly election from Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF in Kerala, the Congress on Saturday appointed five-time MLA V.D. Satheesan as new Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly. The party's high command's decision nominating the 56-year-old Satheesan as new Opposition leader was announced by KPCC president Mullappally Ramachandran here. He replaced Ramesh Chennithala, who was also re-elected as MLA from his seat Haripad in Alappuzha district. Satheesan, elected from Paravur Assembly seat in Ernakulam district, will lead a 41-member Congress-led UDF in the state Assembly against the CPI(M)-led LDF, which retained power in the recent Assembly polls by winning 99 seats, bucking the trend of alternating between two coalitions. — PTI

Raut slams gov for delay in appointments, BJP backs him Sena, BJP at odds over MLC seats

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, MAY 22

A day after the Bombay high court sought a response from the Maharashtra government and secretary to governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari regarding the decision on the nomination of members to Maharashtra Legislative Council (MLCs), the Shiv Sena and BJP are at loggerhead over the delay in the appointments. The Sena said that it is a violation of the Constitution. While the BJP said that there is no time limit given to the governor for nomination of MLCs, hence, the governor has been working within the framework of law.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, which is an alliance of the NCP, Shiv Sena and Congress in Maharashtra, had submitted a list of 12 names for the state Legislative

Council on November 6, 2020, after taking approval from the state Cabinet. However, even after six months, the Maharashtra governor has not taken any decision on it. According to the sources, the government had also reminded the governor office twice about the nominations.

Sena spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut said that since the governor did not nominate 12 persons in the Legislative Council, it is infringement of the rights of these people. "12 persons are bound to take oath as members of the Legislative Council within a stipulated period and their retirement is also fixed. Even after a year, the governor is not ready to look into the nomination of 12 persons," Mr. Raut said. These 12 persons are not just reputed members of the society but

also are social activists, artists and litterateurs among others, he added. The Sena leader also alleged that the governor is disrespecting the government's recommendation by overlooking the recommendations for nominations of 12 persons in the Council.

Meanwhile, former Cabinet minister and senior BJP leader Ashish Shelar said that as far as he knew the law, there is no mention of time frame for nomination. "... I read the law and it is not mentioned that the governor should decide the nomination within so many

days," Mr. Shelar said. "It is not right to infer that the governor is not considering the proposal of the state government. "Therefore, we think that the governor is working within the framework of statutes," the BJP leader said.

The list of 12 persons includes the names of BJP-turned-NCP leader Eknath Khadse, farmer leader Raju Shetti, playback Anand Shinde, Yashwant Dingare from NCP quota, Congress party spokesperson and general secretary Sachin Sawant, MPCC working president Muzaffar Hussain, former Rajya Sabha member Rajni Patil, and singer Aniruddha-Vankara from the Congress's quota. While Urmila Matondkar, Chandra Kant Raghuvanshi, Vijay Karanjkar, Nitin Bangude Patil are from Shiv Sena's quota in the list.

Won't be able to live without Didi: BJP neta

Kolkata, May 22: Former TMC MLA Sonali Guha, who switched over to the BJP ahead of the elections, on Saturday wrote to chief minister Mamata Banerjee, apologising to her for leaving the party and urging her to take her back.

In the letter, which was shared by Ms Guha on social media, she said that she left the party after being emotional.

"I am writing this with a broken heart that I took the wrong decision of joining another party after being emotional. I could not get accustomed there," she said. "The way a fish cannot stay out of the water, I will not be able to live without you.

'Didi', I seek your forgiveness and if you don't forgive me, I won't be able to live. Please allow me to come back, and spend the rest of my life in your affection," she added. — PTI

ONGC employee freed by Ulfa a mth after abduction

MANOJ ANAND
GUWAHATI, MAY 22

In what has brighten the prospect of engaging the elusive Ulfa-I commander-in-chief Paresh Baruah in peace-process, the outlawed Ulfa-I honouring the appeal of Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma released abducted ONGC employee Ritul Saikia at Longwa village in Mon district of Nagaland at about 7am on Saturday.

Confirming the release of the abducted employee, security sources said, "A team of Assam Rifles personnel escorted Ritul Saikia and handed him over to Assam Police. He will be reaching his family at his home (Borhola in Sivasagar district) by this evening."

In a brief interview to the media waiting at the Assam-Nagaland border, Mr Saikia said, "I am fit and healthy but a little tired...after walking for three days."



Security personnel escort ONGC employee Ritul Saikia after he was released by Ulfa-I at India-Myanmar border on Saturday.

— PTI

Mr Saikia and two other ONGC employees were abducted by Ulfa-I rebels on April 21 from a rig site at Lakwa in Charaideo district. Assam Police and security forces rescued the other two persons following an encounter in Mon district of Nagaland three days later, but the militants got away along with Mr Saikia in their captivity. The Ulfa-I chief initially denied having Mr Saikia in its captivity but

later admitted holding him captive in one of their hideouts in Myanmar bordering Nagaland.

The Ulfa-I agreed to release the abducted ONGC employees on Thursday after the chief minister who visited the family of abducted ONGC employee made an appeal to Baruah to release Mr Saikia to create a congenial atmosphere for a peace process to start.

Maha BJYM secy held for post on Pawars

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, MAY 22

The cyber cell of the Mumbai police on Saturday arrested Bhartiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) Secretary Pradip Gavade for his "objectionable posts" on social media against NCP president Sharad Pawar and his grandnephew Rohit Pawar on Twitter. However, the BJYM leader said that his arrest was politically motivated and he did not make any

unparliamentary comment.

Bandra cyber cell police arrested Mr Gavade from his Pune residence on Saturday morning. A case has been registered against him under sections 295A, 500 and 505/2 of the IPC as well as IT Act 67.

On Friday, May 21, Mr Gavade in a live chat with his followers said he was expecting a reaction from the state government after he filed a case against 54 people associated with the

the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. Mr Gavade alleged a political conspiracy behind the arrest. "My arrest is a political conspiracy. Big people are involved. I should have given 421 notice," he said.

Senior BJP leader Pravin Darekar said that the MVA Government is trying to suppress the opposition's voice by using police force. The BJYM will stage demonstrations across the state to protest this, he added.

The BJP has called the arrest politically motivated and accused the police of acting at the behest of

the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government. Mr Gavade alleged a political conspiracy behind the arrest. "My arrest is a political conspiracy. Big people are involved. I should have given 421 notice," he said.

Senior BJP leader Pravin Darekar said that the MVA Government is trying to suppress the opposition's voice by using police force. The BJYM will stage demonstrations across the state to protest this, he added.

Cases in Maha Delhi fall

■ Continued from Page 1
recovery rate improved to 87.76 per cent.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease in the country surged to 2,30,70,365, while the case fatality rate stood at 1.12 per cent, the data stated.

"There are only seven states that are reporting more than 10,000 cases and six states with 5,000-10,000 cases. Six states are reporting a high number of deaths. These are Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, UP, Punjab and Delhi. There are more than 93 districts where declining case positivity is being noted," said Lav Agarwal, joint secretary in the Union health ministry.

For the second day in a row Delhi's positivity rate remained below 5 per cent with 2,260 fresh cases of Covid-19 detected in the last 24 hours. The death figures too in the national capital showed a decline with 182 fatalities in the last 24 hours. The national figures too are showing a decline as 2.57 lakh fresh cases were detected and 4,194 fatalities recorded out of the 20.66 lakh tests conducted in the last 24 hours.

Maharashtra and Delhi are no longer the top two places reporting highest cases. Tamil Nadu is now reporting the highest daily new cases followed by Karnataka and Kerala. Several states have extended lockdowns and restrictions in view of high cases.

"Triple lockdown will continue in Malappuram dis-

trict. Restrictions will be tightened as test positivity rate is high. We will conduct tests among 75,000 people on Monday and Tuesday. More police force will be deployed, directing them to take strict action against violators," Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan said. The state has suspended all professional and education entrance exams as of now. Tamil Nadu too extended its lockdown for another week.

In J&K, "Corona Curfew" has been extended in all 20 districts till May 31. Curfew will be strict except for a few essential services and district collectors have been given limited flexibility to ensure economic activities do not suffer.

States are pressurising the Centre for increasing vaccine supply. "In today's situation where vaccine supply is very limited, the option of private hospitals wherein they charge exorbitant price is unacceptable. I request you to look into this and dispense with private hospitals so that entire stock is available to State and Centre," Andhra Pradesh CM Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy said in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath said the state is planning to vaccinate parents whose children are under 10 years of age before the third wave.

Union health ministry has written to states, UTs saying family members of employees too can be vaccinated at their workplace.

Mamata hold high-level meet, to stay at control room to monitor situation

Bengal govt all set to tackle Cyclone Yaas

Kolkata, May 22: The West Bengal government has taken all precautionary measures to deal with Cyclone Yaas, likely to hit the state on May 26, and chief minister Mamata Banerjee will stay at a control room set up for the purpose to monitor the situation, officials said on Saturday.

Ms Banerjee, who held a high-level meeting at the state Secretariat during the day, said that relief materials were dispatched to vulnerable areas, while officials were directed for early evacuation of people

from coastal and riverine areas. "I have extensively reviewed the Disaster Management preparedness with regards to the impending Yaas cyclone today afternoon with all senior officers of relevant Central & State agencies along with DMS & SPs," Ms Banerjee tweeted.

"All officials have been advised integrated command, advance planning & early evacuation from coastal & riverine areas to rescue shelters including cyclone & flood shelters, and to conduct relief and rehabilitation opera-



Mamata Banerjee

tions at the earliest," she added.

The state government has set a control room to monitor the situation at the state secretariat Nabanna, which will work round the clock. The phone numbers of

the control room are 1070 and 033-22143526, Ms Banerjee said.

"All agencies have been asked to spring into action. Relief materials have been dispatched & Quick Response Teams are mobilised. I request all to stay alert," she said in the Twitter post.

Besides the centralised control room, the state government has opened several smaller control rooms in coastal areas of the state, an official said.

"The CM will remain present at the control room in Nabanna on the days when the cyclone is

about to hit the coastal areas of the state. She will be accompanied by other senior officers of the government," he said.

All precautionary measures have been taken by the administration, the officer added.

A low pressure area formed over east-central Bay of Bengal is likely to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm by May 25. The storm, named Cyclone Yaas, may move towards West Bengal, Odisha and Bangladesh around May 26 morning, the Met department said. — PTI

Suvendu's father Sisir, brother get Y+ cover

Centre move may escalate tension with TMC govt

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

In a move that could further escalate tension between Centre and West Bengal government, the home ministry has now decided to provide Y-category security cover to Sisir Kumar Adhikari and Dibyendu Adhikari, both are Lok Sabha MPs, and are father and brother of Suvendu Adhikari, who defeated Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram during the recent Assembly elections in Bengal.

The entire Adhikari family, which has considerable political influence, in the Nandigram region was earlier part of the Trinamul Congress before switching sides to the BJP.

The move to provide security cover to Sisir and Dibyendu comes close on the heels of the home ministry earlier providing Central security cover to



Sisir Kumar Adhikari

Dibyendu Adhikari

all the newly elected 77 BJP MLAs in West Bengal.

The Adhikaris and most BJP MLAs now have a Y+ category security under the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). This means they will be protected by a personal security officer along with 11 armed policemen, including commandos. Some other MLAs have been given security by CISF also.

Home ministry sources said the decision to extend security cover to the Adhikari family was taken after a detailed

report prepared by Central security agencies following inputs received from the high-level team of officers, which was headed by a home ministry additional secretary, that visited the state in the aftermath of the post-poll violence there.

There has been considerable tension between the Mamata Banerjee-led state government and the Centre ever since she was voted back to power on May 2 after a thumping majority. This also saw large-scale violence in Bengal in which BJP claimed 12 of its part cadre were killed by alleged TMC workers.

Ms Banerjee has also claimed that Centre was interfering in the functioning of the state government as central forces have no power inside the Assembly premises so the BJP MLAs cannot be given security cover by the Central forces.

Sena says people were left to drown, asks Pradhan to quit

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, MAY 22

After Congress and NCP, the Shiv Sena too has demanded the resignation of Union petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan holding him responsible for deaths of people on board barge P305 that sank off the Mumbai coast during the cyclone Tauktae.

"People were left to drown in Mumbai Sea and this act amounts to culpable homicide. The Tauktae cyclone cannot be held responsible for this. But who remained asleep despite getting the cyclone warning are criminals," said the Sena in an editorial in its mouthpiece 'Saamana' on Saturday.

Barge P-305, which housed personnel engaged in maintenance work of an offshore oil drilling platform of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), sank on Monday evening during the cyclone. The official death toll in the tragedy has reached 60. However, the Sena said that 75 workers have died, of which 49 bodies have been found and 26 are still missing.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led party slammed Mr Pradhan saying he was conspicuous by his absence during the tragedy. "Will Dharmendra Pradhan quit owning moral responsibility for the death of innocent people? Do petroleum minister, ONGC



Dharmendra Pradhan

chairman, its board of directors have any responsibility or not?" it asked.

It was a case of culpable homicide as ONGC did not take the cyclone warnings seriously and recall the 700 workers on the barge. The callous approach of ONGC administration is surprising. Hence a culpable homicide case should be filed against it for its negligence, the Sena said.

Had the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard not launched search and rescue operations, all the 700 people would have drowned in the sea. These workers may be employees of a private company, but they were doing oil rigging for ONGC. Hence, it was the duty of the ONGC administration to protect them, said the Sena, which heads the MVA Government in Maharashtra.

Earlier, the Congress and NCP – the other two constituents of the MVA – had demanded the resignation of Mr Pradhan holding him responsible for the mishap. — PTI

66 dead and 20 from barge P305 still missing

Mumbai, May 22: With no trace of nine personnel from barge P305 and 11 from tugboat Varapada six days after Cyclone Tauktae fury rendered the vessels adrift, the Navy on Saturday undertook an underwater search for the wreckage of the two vessels. The death toll on P305 rose to 66 with the recovery of six more bodies during the day, a Navy spokesperson said.

The Navy also deployed specialised diving teams to boost the search and rescue operations (SAR) for the barge and the tugboat off the Mumbai coast.

So far, 66 mortal remains have been recovered. The SAR ops are continuing through the night. Underwater search for wrecks of barge P305 and tug Varapada using specialised teams and equipment is in progress.

To augment the SAR ops for the missing crew of Barge P305 and Tug Varapada, specialised diving teams onboard INS Makar with side-scan sonar and INS Tarasa sailed out early morning today from Mumbai, the spokesperson tweeted. — PTI

Patnaik to officials: Saving human lives is top priority

Bhubaneswar, May 22: With Odisha bracing for cyclonic storm Yaas, chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Saturday reviewed the state's preparedness and asked officials to evacuate people from low-lying areas.

Noting that saving human lives is the top-most priority of his government, Mr Patnaik asked collectors and SPs of coastal districts to ensure that not a single person is left in the vulnerable situation before the onset of the cyclonic storm.

The state government has placed 14 districts, including Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur, on alert.

Evacuating people to safe places is most essential, Patnaik said, adding that special care should be given to children, pregnant women and elderly persons.

He directed chief secretary S.C. Mahapatra to monitor the preparedness of the district administrations daily and suggest measures to them. — PTI



Boats anchored at a beach in Puri on Saturday. Cyclone Yaas is likely to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm and cross the Odisha and the West Bengal coasts on May 26.

— PTI

THE ASIAN AGE

23 MAY 2021



Shailaja Khanna

Off the beaten track

Old-world musicians need a helping hand

Eight-year-old Partho struggles to overcome sleep as he is gently woken up as usual at 5 am to start his daily practice of vocal scales for 30 minutes. Up and down, concentrating hard to get the correct pitch, it's a chore he completes, as he has been told time and time again that he is blessed to have inherited the family music genes. His mother, lying in bed, listens resentfully; her baby practising to prepare for a professional career in music seems a total waste of time. Her husband, acknowledged as one of the finest harmonium players in the country hasn't had a paid concert in months. Once, an eagerly sought after accompanist whose concert diary was booked 20 days in a month, Anirban (name changed) has had to break four precious saved FDs to keep the family stove lit. Hospitalisation of his sister due to Covid complications added to the already stretched budget. Things don't look to be improving in the near future, with predictions of a Third Wave destroying the hope that in 2021 his life would "normalise".

Twenty-three-year-old Imtiaz lives in a small house, shared with eight other family members, behind the Jama Masjid area in old Delhi. He has trained for 18 years to be a singer. His uncle was a very erudite vocalist; with over 100 disciples. All his life he had heard his uncle say, music is a sacred art, handed down to us through the generations, whose ultimate goal is "ruh ko maalik se jorrna". To "connect" to a Raga, and to achieve the correct usage of notes, one needs to withdraw from the outside world and to go inwards, introspect, constantly repeat and practise, then finally, the Raga emerges. It takes a long time; one must be single minded. Today, with no expectation of any concerts or income, Imtiaz queries "we are told today, use technology to connect to a new audience; you can reach the whole world! But where did we have the time to acquire these skills, useful to a performer of today? Like handling technology, knowing



Girija Devi singing in the intimate baithak style at Sankat Mochan temple, Banaras. — RAKESH SINHA

how to record oneself, public relations... we were told to stay away from all this and to focus on the music. Concerts would follow; organisations are there whose job is to showcase your talent. Become worthy of them. *Bas hamme to ye sikhaaya gaya tha...*" he trails off.

Things are no better for the established, seasoned performers. A disconsolate senior vocalist shared, "Right now, teaching online classes is how most of us spend our time. But it's a compromise. Our traditions are not meant to be passed on like this. It's distorting the whole point of it all. Learning music, you need the eye contact to see the Guru's expressions, to copy the exact nuance. Hearing it through a device is not the same. Yet, I need to ensure that the training continues, the students continue their practice; one can't let long gaps come in, and they need to connect at least weekly with me. I really pray this doesn't last long."

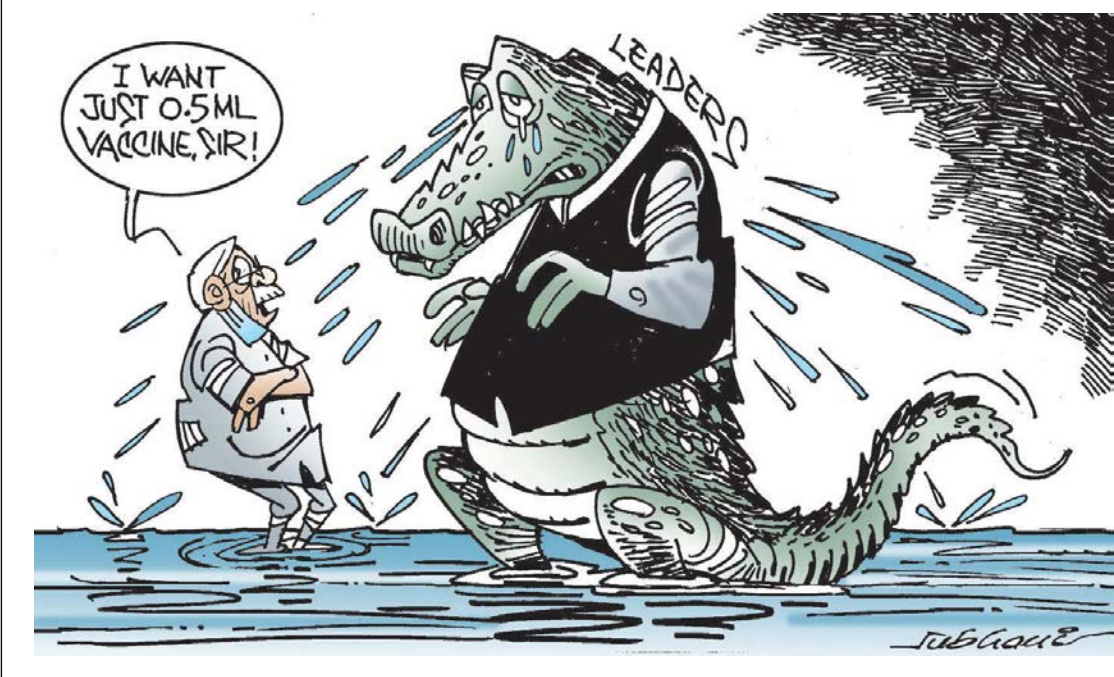
But some of the problems in the world of the arts are self-inflicted, and not linked only to the present crisis. A senior sarod exponent said, "My generation has not tried to create a new audience; or even nurture an existing audience, specially in the smaller towns and cities. The classical arts are meant for a niche audience; they can never be for mass entertainment. But exposure to the music of masters results in acquiring a taste for the art, which then needs to be fuelled by periodic concerts. That's how, in the past, we have had great centres of music like Banaras, Patna, Lucknow, Tanjore. Nowadays, only needy artists, who may not be great performers, agree to perform in places where the fees are not good enough. Over the last 30 years, this has affected the audience size, which has really shrunk. Many major music festivals are free as only a limited handful of artists have the drawing power to sell tickets. A handful of popular artists have slowly, steadily, hiked up their fees over the years, even though they are aware that the tickets sales don't justify their fees."

The passing away of several senior musicians due to the virus is another cause of depression in the community. Sixty-four-year-old Pt Sajan Mishra, younger of the famed Mishra duo, rues the unexpected passing away of his elder brother Rajan Mishra due to Covid complications. "It's been 54 years since we have sung together; I can't imagine the concert stage without him. He went so fast; *jab tak soch paayen, sab kuch khatam ho gaya tha. Hamne 2-3 din bahut haath pairr maare*. We tried so many hospitals — Medanta, Fortis... by the time we were offered a ventilator bed at AIIMS, it was too late, he had had a heart attack in the morning and it was considered dangerous to move him. It's God's will; the new DRDO 750-bed hospital in Banaras is named after him, but he is no more. In our country we really need to focus on and spend on education and healthcare; other things can wait."

Who knows what the future holds? An economic recovery would surely help, but perhaps the solution lies in encouraging a shift to new mores — from those mindless do's and don'ts that go against the grain of initiative and artistic freedom, and keep away younger audiences.

Shailaja Khanna writes on music, musicians and matters of music

Subhani



War of the chips



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

One of the less analyzed reasons for the Chinese aggression in Eastern Ladakh since the April of 2020 is access to fresh water sources. Though there has been some discussion and dissection of this train of thinking in the rarefied echelons of strategic policy deliberations the issue has never really travelled into wider setting of public dialogues. It has something to do with semiconductors or the ubiquitous chip that powers our daily existence.

A chip or microchip is a semiconductor wafer usually manufactured from silicon that combines an assortment of electronic circuits, incorporating resistors, transistors, capacitors and diodes that interlock to perform a required task. A single integrated circuit can comprise of thousands to millions of such electronic circuits contingent upon the computing power required.

Semiconductors rule the world today. Optimising and producing speedier, thinner and more formidable semiconductors will be seminal in defining the outcome of numerous economic and geopolitical conflicts of our times. As it has been prophesized by Steve Bank the mentor of the Lean Start up movement "to get hold of the semiconductors may be the 21st century equivalent of getting hold of the oil supply in the 20th century". This is the strategic resource that all emerging and great powers of the world are in a race to both secure and control.

The omnipotent and captivatingly nomenclatured Silicon Shield is what safeguards Taiwan. The Taiwan Semi Conductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is the world's largest third party chip manufacturer. It exercises dominance to the extent of 55 per cent if not more over the global market share insofar it pertains to

the production of microchips. These semiconductors do not just power cellphones and laptops, they are central to the functioning of virtually everything from automobiles to weapon systems.

The factum that TSMC produces the microchips that run the electronics of the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II stealth multi-role combat aircraft, the latest jewel of the US Air Force, is a sterling example of the extent of strategic importance of the both the resource and its supply chain. Were the semiconductor industry of Taiwan to collapse it would not only constitute a national security threat to the US but also for the entire hub and spoke security architecture crafted by the United States globally. That is how the Silicon Shield of Taiwan is in itself a weapon of deterrence for Taiwan, especially against an ever expansionist China in the 21st century.

Both the US and China are trying to be autonomous when it comes to manufacturing of semiconductor chips. If the US were for some reason be deprived of access to the foundries of Taiwan, the US defence and consumer electronics industries would be set back at least half a decade if not more.

As China is investing heavily in setting up its own chip foundries, it could become the world leader in this technology in the next decade or so. That's why, one of the early decisions made by the Biden administration was an executive order, promulgated in early 2021, to address both chip shortage and the gaps in its supply chain to the US. This deficiency is critical for the US as its global share in chip manufacturing stands at just 12 per cent. A large part of the US government's sanctions against Huawei are singularly

The semiconductor industry requires two key resources sand and fresh water... Chinese water systems like the Yangtze, Huang Ho and Mekong rivers are full of effluents. That is how Kashmir, Aksai Chin and Ladakh became crucial for China.

focused on inhibiting the company's access to the world's most modern chip manufacturing technology — Taiwan's TSMC.

China had the foresight that its initial success as the world's low-cost factory was going to run its course and other countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh, to name a few, would soon occupy that space. As a result, China needed to build more advanced and sophisticated products to be on par with the United States. However, most of these products required custom chips — and China lacks the domestic manufacturing capability to produce them. China uses 61 per cent of the world's chips in products for both its domestic and export markets, importing around \$310 billion worth in 2018 alone. China was quick enough to appreciate that its incapacity to fabricate these sophisticated chips could well turn out to be the proverbial chink in its armour.

Beijing has always had mega motivations to build its own homegrown capacity. A total of 1.4 trillion dollars have been earmarked in the 2021 budget alone for the development of the semiconductor industry. By 2025 the objective being that 70 per cent of chips used in China would be Made in China under the National Integrated Circuit Plan. Over 70 projects have been commenced utilising capital outlays in the past few years alone. Chinese semiconductor industry has gone from making zero to 16 per cent of the world's chips.

But how does all of this mesh with the larger geopolitical conflicts between India and China? There is a growing realisa-

tion that the battle between the US and China to acquire leadership in semiconductor manufacturing is going to divide the world into microchip manufacturing haves and have not's. That is where India fits into the Chinese plans. The semiconductor industry requires two key resources sand and fresh water. They are the basic raw materials. 10,000 litres of fresh water is needed to manufacture one 30-cm silicon wafer.

China's Achilles heel is this availability of fresh water. Key Chinese water systems like the Yangtze, Huang Ho and Mekong rivers are full of effluents. That is how Kashmir, Aksai Chin and Ladakh became crucial for China. The Taklamakan desert (located in Aksai Chin) not only provides abundant sand but huge reservoirs of fresh water from Himalayan rivers and glaciers. The Shaksam valley alone is home to 242 glaciers that can serve as the grand reservoir of fresh water for Chinese chip manufacturing. It, therefore, becomes imperative to view the Sino-Indian standoff through this technological lens also.

From 2011 onwards the UPA government had made chip manufacturing a priority. In September 2013 two consortiums, including IBM and ST Microelectronics, had proposed building semiconductor wafer plants in India with an outlay of USD 8 billion. However the proposals died after the NDA/BJP government assumed office in 2014. Finally in the June of 2020 the government finally announced a Performance Linked Incentive for Promotion of Electronic Components and Semiconductors and Electronics Manufacturing Clusters. However, as it is with the current dispensation, it is always a case of too little too late.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

GAZA'S DEADLY EID

It is heartening that there is a pause in fighting between Israel and Hamas in Gaza after eleven days of bitter hostilities that claimed hundreds of lives, damaged critical infrastructure and flattened thousands of homes. The fighting meant many Palestinians in Gaza could not mark the Eid al-Fitr festival at Ramadan's conclusion. The truce, mediated by Egypt with the backing of the US, helped halt the violence which erupted on May 10, triggered by Palestinians' anger at several police raids on the Aqsa mosque, one of the holiest sites in Islam.

N.J. Ravi Chander
Bengaluru

RETIRE MIGS

INDIAN AIR FORCE squadron leader Abhinav Choudhary was killed after his MiG-21 jet crashed near Moga in Punjab on Friday. The incident took place around 1 am. The IAF aircraft was on a routine training sortie. The pilot's body was found about two kilometres from the crash site, barely 200 metres from a couple of big havelis. This is the third crash of a MiG-21 aircraft this year. In March, a Group Captain of the IAF was killed in an accident involving a MiG-21 Bison aircraft and the other accident took place when an aircraft was taking off on a combat training mission. Group Captain A. Gupta was killed. With this, all the old and outdated MiG-21 aircraft must be removed to save the lives of the our brave pilots.

Bhagwan Thadani
Mumbai

TASMAC SPREADER

TAMIL NADU chief minister M.K. Stalin's announcement of total lockdown in the state for a week from May 24 is welcome. Taking into account the escalation in Covid cases since the inception of his term, he has taken the right decision. But while he was in the Opposition last year, he was critical of such actions by the previous government. Now he would have realised that it was imperative. Hopefully, even after lifting the lockdown, he should be wise to keep the Tasmac shops closed as they are the biggest spreader of the coronavirus.

Capt. N. Viswanathan
Coimbatore

POOR KEJRIWAL

POOR ARVIND Kejriwal. He wanted to contain the coronavirus and he advised the government to ban travel from Singapore. Little did he realise that the famous Mustafa Centre would take offence and complain to the Indian government. And the external affairs minister would go on to state that India is not Kejriwal. Poor Mr Kejriwal has another problem. An IAS officer in Mumbai, Iqbal Chahal, was compared to the ex-IRS officer and CM and the latter turned up in bad light. Mr Chahal said that his city had planned in advance which is why it did not face the horrors of Delhi. Mr Kejriwal has to face music from all sides.

M.R. Jayanthi
Coimbatore

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Gautam Moorthy



An 'out of the box' solution to end Israel, Palestine row

As the entire world heaved a sigh of relief, even if with fingers crossed, as the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire came into effect at 2 am local time on Friday, May 21, ending the devastating 11-day conflict that saw over 240 fatalities, most of them civilian, the question uppermost on everyone's mind is if this respite is ensure a permanent truce and an end to the conflict. The conundrum and the antagonism that led to this dispute is the unshakeable belief by both the Israelis and the Palestinians that they are the rightful owners of the land for which they are fighting.

Without going deeply into the genesis of the dispute, it is worth recollecting that much headway has been made on the path to peace, keeping in mind the situation in 1948. Starting with the first Camp David Accord in 1978 between Israel and Egypt, which resulted in Egypt granting full recognition to the State of Israel in return for the Sinai Peninsula, to the Abraham Accords of 2020, much water has flown under the bridge. In between, the Oslo Accord of 1993, leading to the much-publicised Camp

David Accord of 1993, promised a two-state solution which at the last minute failed mainly as Israel refused the right to return of all displaced Palestinians.

With most Arab countries grudgingly accepting the existence of the State of Israel (with back-channel diplomacy active to get Saudi Arabia too on board), the main parties in the dispute, besides Israelis and Palestinians, are the Iranians. Iran is implacably hostile to Israel and to a large extent to Saudi Arabia as well. Iran is known to fund and support Hamas in the same way as it funds and supports Hezbollah in Lebanon. Violence has been the rule rather than the exception since the first "intifada" of 1987, with brief lulls in between. Therefore, is there any possible solution to end this never-ending cycle of violence? There possibly is, and it is perhaps as "out of the box" as it can get.

Briefly, before the 1967 war, the West Bank was a part of the Kingdom of Jordan from 1948 onwards. Jordan eventually relinquished all claims on the West Bank in 1988 and even deprived the Palestinians of their

Jordanian citizenship. The Gaza Strip has had a more convoluted history and was occupied by Egypt till 1967, when it was captured along with the Sinai Peninsula by Israel. Subsequently, as a result of the Israel-Egypt peace accord, Egypt relinquished all claims on Gaza, agreed to keep the Sinai Peninsula demilitarised and created a small buffer zone between it and the southern border of Gaza. In 1994, as a result of the Oslo Accords, Gaza came under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Since 2007, however, it has been completely under control of Hamas, which views the Palestinian Authority, now called Fatah, with contempt and is implacably opposed to it. In 2005, Israel withdrew unilaterally from Gaza: its military as well as its settlements. After ousting Fatah, Hamas took complete control of the territory in 2007.

The situation today is that the Palestinians remain hopeful of regaining the West Bank without Israeli settlements, and of a restoration of peace in the Gaza Strip, with the ultimate aim of the establishment of a full-fledged independent

Palestinian state. For this to happen, with of course Israel's grudging acceptance, a new paradigm needs to evolve. Having the same belligerents talking to each other again through well-meaning intermediaries is not going to yield any new result. All that will come of it will be more of the same.

Hence, as a forerunner to any eventual Palestinian state, given the current impasse, and to forestall any further bloodshed, there exists a strong case for Jordan to reclaim the West Bank and for Egypt to reclaim the Gaza Strip, of course with Palestinian consent. Both Jordan and Egypt have good diplomatic relations with Israel. Both have the trust of the Palestinians. If they are sovereign owners of the land, their locus standi improves vastly compared to them being just honest brokers. Their ownership and control of the territories will bestow upon them the necessary authority to deal with Israel on equal terms and not as mere supplicants, as is happening now with Fatah. Once these lands become their sovereign territories, the issue of settlements on the West Bank can be taken up in due

course. It must be reiterated that Israel has to withdraw all its settlements in Gaza. The issue of settlements in the West Bank is not set in stone. In this way, Hamas can be defanged on the Gaza Strip.

Such a proposal, it is felt, would have the backing of all Arab countries. Iran too can be brought on board. Without Iran's support, Hamas cannot be the disruptive force that it is today. Subsequently, after peace is established, both Jordan and Egypt can relinquish their claims on the West Bank and Gaza respectively to pave the way for the establishment of a full-fledged sovereign Palestinian state. This idea may seem hare-brained at first. It is however predicated on the fact that the belligerents want a just and durable peace with an end to violence and the desire for wanting peace is not as hare-brained as remaining in a perpetual state of conflict and suffering.

The writer is a retired lieutenant-general and a former member of the Armed Forces Tribunal and a former director-general of ordnance services

SHORT TAKES

OZ ACADEMIC TO
FACE SPYING
TRIAL IN CHINA

Sydney, May 22: Chinese-born Australian academic and author Yang Jun will go on trial in China on espionage charges next week, after spending more than two years in detention, Canberra's foreign minister has confirmed. Yang is one of two high-profile Australians detained in China on spying allegations amid escalating tensions between Canberra and Beijing. The trial for Yang, who also goes by his pen name Yang Hengjun, will begin on Thursday, Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne said.

"Despite repeated requests by Australian officials, Chinese authorities have not provided any explanation or evidence for the charges facing Dr Yang," Payne said.

THREE KILLED, 27
HURT IN SERIES
OF CHINA QUAKE

Beijing, May 22: At least 3 people were killed and 27 others injured after a series of earthquakes that jolted Yangbi Yi Autonomous County in China's Yunnan Province on Friday, local authorities said. The quake was felt in all 12 counties and cities of the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, with Yangbi being the worst hit, Yang Guozong, the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) chief of the prefecture, said.

Two deaths were reported in Yangbi county and one in Yongping County. Three people were severely injured and 24 others had minor injuries, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. About 72,317 residents in 20,192 households were affected by the quakes.

CHINA'S 'FATHER
OF HYBRID
RICE' DIES

Shanghai, May 22: An agronomist hailed as a Chinese national hero for helping develop hybrid rice and easing hunger for millions worldwide died on Saturday at the age of 90, state-run Xinhua news agency said.

Yuan Longping, known in China as the "father of hybrid rice", is credited with cultivating the world's first high-yield hybrid rice strain in 1973.

Yuan died in a hospital in Changsha, capital of Hunan province, Xinhua said. It said he had suffered from an unspecified illness.

Hybrid rice, which can yield 20 percent above conventional varieties according to experts, was subsequently widely planted in China.

FIVE STABBED IN
AMSTERDAM,
SUSPECT NABBED

Amsterdam, May 22: One person was killed and four injured in a stabbing late Friday night in Amsterdam and police said they arrested a suspect nearby. Four victims were taken to a hospital for treatment, police said. Their condition was not immediately known. There was no immediate word on the possible motive.

We have arrested a suspect. We are investigating what exactly happened and why, Amsterdam Police spokeswoman Marijke Stor said.

The stabbings happened in a neighborhood with many bars and restaurants, but they were closed at the time of the incident because of coronavirus lockdown restrictions.

Further details were not immediately available.

'That '70s Show'
actor Masterson
faces rape trial

Los Angeles, May 22: US actor and Scientologist Danny Masterson must stand trial for the alleged rape of three women at his home in the Hollywood Hills, a Los Angeles judge ruled Friday.

"That '70s Show" star Masterson denies the accusations made by the women, who were previously also members of the secretive California-based group and said they did not come forward earlier for fear of reprisals from its hierarchy.

"I found all three witnesses to be credible and the evidence sufficient to support the charges," said Judge Charlaine Olmedo, ordering Masterson to be formally arraigned on June 7 and to hand over his passport by that time.

Masterson, 45, allegedly raped the women, all in their twenties at the time, "by force or fear" in separate incidents between 2001 and 2003.

He faces a maximum sentence of 45 years to life in prison if convicted on all charges. He is currently free on \$3.3 million bail.

Nepal President
dissolves Parl

Bhandari announces mid-term polls in Nov.

Oppn for legal,
political steps

Kathmandu, May 22: Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari has dissolved the House of Representatives and announced mid-term polls on November 12 and 19 after she determined that both embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and the Opposition alliance were not in a position to form a government. Bhandari's announcement came after Prime Minister Oli recommended dissolution of the 275-member House following an emergency midnight Cabinet meeting.

A press statement issued by the Office of President said the Parliament was dissolved and dates of mid-term polls were announced in line with Article 76 (7) of the Constitution of Nepal. The council of ministers has recommended conducting the first phase of the poll on November 12 and the second phase on November 19.

The move followed a notice from the Office of the President which said that it could appoint neither K.P. Sharma Oli, the incumbent prime minister, nor Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepali Congress president, as claims made by both to form a new government were insufficient.

With four lawmakers in the 275-member House of Representatives dismissed by their party after they chose to be part of another party, a prime ministerial candidate requires support of at least 136 lawmakers in Parliament to form a new government. Interestingly, both Oli and Deuba had claimed the support of some lawmakers, whose names were included in the list of both of them, according to Nepalese media reports. This is the second time President Bhandari has dissolved Parliament on the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli following a political crisis.

Last year on December 20, President Bhandari had dissolved Parliament but later it was reinstated by the Supreme Court in February. Nepal's political crisis had taken a dramatic turn on Friday as Prime Minister Oli and

The leaders of Nepal's Opposition alliance on Saturday decided to take all legal and political means to counter Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and President Bidya Devi Bhandari's "unconstitutional and undemocratic" move of dissolving the House of Representatives.

President Bhandari on Saturday dissolved the House of Representatives and announced mid-term polls on November 12 and 19 after she determined that both embattled Prime Minister Oli and the Opposition alliance's candidate Sher Bahadur Deuba were not in a position to form a government.

Bhandari's announcement

came after PM Oli recommended the dissolution of the 275-member House following an emergency midnight Cabinet meeting. In a joint statement issued at the end of a meeting called to discuss the matter, the Opposition leaders expressed their commitment to unitedly defend the constitutional rights of Nepali citizens achieved at the end of years of political struggle.

They appealed to all political and civil forces to condemn and stand against the Oli-Bhandari duo's regressive, autocratic intentions. They condemned their move as "unconstitutional, undemocratic and arbitrary."

— PTI

The Opposition parties staked separate claims for the formation of a new government by submitting letters of support from lawmakers to the President. Prime Minister Oli had reached the President's Office Shital Niwas and presented his list, a couple of minutes ahead of the Opposition leaders.

Oli was the first to declare that he had the support of 153 lawmakers of the House of Representatives, citing that he does not have adequate support to go through another floor or test.

The letter he submitted had his signature along with the signatures of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal chair Mahanta Thakur and the party's parliamentary party leader Rajendra Mahato. Likewise, Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba along with other leaders of the Opposition alliance reached Shital Niwas with signatures of 149 lawmakers including 27 lawmakers from the Khanal-Nepal faction of the CPN-UML.

— PTI

BIDEN, SOUTH
KOREA'S MOON
"DEEPLY CON-

Biden, South Korea's Moon "deeply concerned" about NKorea

Washington, May 22 (AP) President Joe Biden on Friday said he and South Korean President Moon Jae-in remain "deeply concerned" about the situation with North Korea, and announced he will deploy a new special envoy to the region to help refocus efforts on pressing Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Moon, meanwhile, welcomed "America's return" to the world stage and said both leaders pledged to work closely toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Biden said he was dispatching career diplomat Sung Kim, who previously served as ambassador to South Korea, to serve as the special envoy to the

region to help refocus efforts on pressing Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Moon, meanwhile, welcomed "America's return" to the world stage and said both leaders pledged to work closely toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Biden said he was dispatching career diplomat Sung Kim, who previously served as ambassador to South Korea, to serve as the special envoy to the

Kent, Auschwitz
survivor, dies

Berlin, May 22: International Auschwitz Committee President Roman Kent, who survived the horrors of the Nazi death camp as a teenager, has died in New York after a short illness, his organization announced Friday.

In late 1939, after Nazi Germany invaded Poland, members of his Kniker family were sent to a ghetto, where Roman's father died of malnutrition in 1943.

The rest of the family were sent to the

Auschwitz-Birkenau camp in 1944 where Roman was separated from his mother and sisters.

With his brother Leon, he was sent to other concentration camps before being liberated by US troops while on his way to Dachau at the age of 16.

The brothers emigrated to the United States after the war.

In 2011 Kent became the head of the International Auschwitz Committee.

— AFP

ENSURE FAIR,
FRAUD-FREE
POLLS: OLI

Kathmandu, May 22: Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on Saturday asked the Election Commission to initiate necessary preparations for the upcoming elections for the dissolved House of Representatives and ensure fair and fraud-free polls in November.

In a meeting with the commissioners of the poll body, Oli said that the parliamentary elections were inevitable.

The prime minister directed the election commission to expedite its preparations to hold the elections on the stipulated dates," according to Surya Thapa, a press aide to Oli.

CPN-UML Chief Whip Vishal Bhattarai said Oli stressed for holding a fair and fraud-free election, according to

The Rising Nepal. — PTI

'Antarctic iceberg could
drift in ocean for years'

Paris, May 22: A vast iceberg that broke off Antarctica earlier this month could drift through the ocean for several years before it breaks up and melts away, a scientist from the European Space Agency said Friday.

The iceberg, dubbed A-76, is more than 40 times the size of Paris, or about 73 times as big as Manhattan, making it the largest currently afloat.

It was first spotted by scientists at the British Antarctic Survey and confirmed by the U.S. National Ice Center using images taken by the European Space Agency's Sentinel 1A satellite.

Mark Drinkwater, a senior scientist at the space agency, said that while icebergs regularly calve from Antarctic ice shelves, the region where A-76 broke off had seen relatively little change in recent decades.

"It's become a poster child, obviously, and there'll be a lot of atten-

tion on it," he said of the 4,320 square-kilometer floating island of ice.

A-76 will eventually escape from the Weddell Sea around Antarctica and drift into the South Atlantic, but that journey could take years, Drinkwater said.

"We've seen icebergs that can last up to 18 years that have been tracked around Antarctica if they remain in relatively cold waters," he said. "But it's likely that once this thing gets ejected from the Weddell Sea out into the South Atlantic, it'll disintegrate fairly quickly."

The even larger iceberg A-68 that calved from Antarctica's Larsen C ice shelf in 2017 disappeared by early this year.

Drinkwater said satellites have helped scientists keep track of the changes happening on the vast but largely uninhabited continent that would otherwise go unnoticed.

— AP

Ready to sail



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (centre) is greeted by Commanding Officer Captain Angus Essenhigh (left) and Commodore Stephen Moorhouse, Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, during her visit to the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth in Portsmouth, England, on Saturday, ahead of its maiden operational deployment to the Philippine Sea. The aircraft carrier will embark on her first operational deployment on Sunday, leading the UK Carrier Strike Group in engagements with 40 nations, including India, Japan, Republic of Korea and Singapore.

— AFP

Covid crisis in India a sign that
worst may be yet to come: IMFIMF proposes
\$50 bn vax plan

Washington, May 22: Observing that the ongoing "catastrophic" second wave of Covid-19 in India is a sign that the worst may be yet to come, the IMF has said that the situation in the country is a warning of the possible events in low- and middle-income nations that have seemingly escaped the pandemic till now.

A report co-authored by International Monetary Fund (IMF) economist Ruchir Agarwal and its Chief Economist Gita Gopinath said that under the business-as-usual scenario, the vaccine coverage in India is expected to remain under 35 per cent of the population in 2021.

The second wave in India, following a terrible wave in Brazil, is a sign the worst may be yet to come in the developing world, it said. While India's health system held up fairly well in the first wave, this time its health system is so overwhelmed that many people are dying because of a lack of oxygen, hospital beds, and medical care, it said.

"India is a warning of possible events in other low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) that so far have seemingly escaped the pandemic, including in Africa, it said.

For India, the report said, current bilateral purchases of vaccine plus coverage from COVAX will cover about 25 per cent of its population by the first half of 2022.

To get to 60 per cent coverage, India will need to immediately place sufficient vaccine orders of about 1 billion doses through contracts.

— PTI

Diana interview: Ex-BBC head quits

London, May 22: Tony Hall, who was director of BBC news and current affairs at the time of the public broadcaster's explosive 1995 interview with Princess Diana, resigned Saturday as board chairman of Britain's National Gallery. Hall, who subsequently rose to the top job at the BBC, was heavily criticised in a report this week for a botched inquiry into how journalist Martin Bashir obtained the blockbuster interview.

In a statement, the 70-

year-old said his continued presence at the gallery would be a "distraction to an institution I care deeply about". "As I said two days ago, I am very sorry for the events of 25 years ago and I believe leadership means taking responsibility," said Hall, who served as the BBC's director-general from 2013 until 2020. John Kingman, the deputy chair of the National Gallery's board of trustees, will assume Hall's role for the time being.

He said the gallery is

quencies under current rules. From Sunday, airlines and others will only be able to transport German citizens and residents from Britain.

Under rules, all people arriving from "virus variant areas" — which also include India itself and Brazil — must spend 14 days in quarantine at home after their arrival. They cannot cut that period short by testing negative. People arriving from "risk areas" can avoid a 10-day quarantine.

— AP

"extremely sorry" to lose Hall but that "we entirely understand and respect his decision".

The 126-page report by retired Judge John Dyson, published Thursday, found the internal BBC investigation had covered up "deceitful behaviour" by Bashir, who was little-known as a journalist when he interviewed Diana. The BBC also has faced questions about why Bashir was rehired in 2016 as the broadcaster's religious affairs correspondent.

— AP

LABRADOR
RETRIEVERS JOIN
THAI VIRUS FIGHT

Bangkok, May 22: Thailand has started deploying a canine virus-detecting squad in hopes of quickly identifying people with Covid-19.

Angel, Bobby and Bravo are among six Labrador retrievers that have been trained by researchers at the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University to sniff out a unique odour that people with Covid produce in their sweat.

— AP

CANADA EXTENDS
FLIGHT BAN FROM
INDIA, PAKISTAN

Ottawa, May 22: Canada has extended the ban on direct flights from India and Pakistan by one more month until June 21 in a bid to arrest the spread of new variants of the Covid-19, according to an official announcement.

The ban on flights from India and Pakistan was extended as the previous 30-day ban, first imposed on April 22, was set to expire on Saturday, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) News reported. Cargo flights, however, will be permitted to maintain shipments of essential supplies, such as vaccines and personal protective equipment.

— PTI

First-ever powered flight by Nasa's Perseverance on Mars

SPACE | MISSION

China's rover roaming the Red Planet

Shanghai, May 22: China's Mars rover drove from its landing platform and began exploring the surface on Saturday, state-run Xinhua news agency said, making the country only the second nation to land and operate a rover on the Red Planet. The launch last July of the Tianwen-1 Mars probe, which carried the Zhurong rover, marked a major milestone in China's space programme.

Tianwen-1 touched down on a vast northern lava plain known as the Utopia Planitia a week ago and

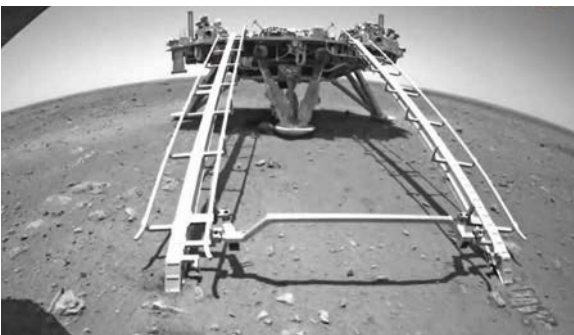
beamed back its first photos of the surface a few days later. The Mars probe and rover are expected to spend around three months taking photos, harvesting geographical data, and collecting and analysing rock samples. The six-wheeled, solar-powered, 240-kilogramme Zhurong is named after a Chinese mythical fire god.

China has now sent astronauts into space, powered probes to the Moon and landed a rover on Mars — the most prestigious of all prizes in the competition

for dominion of space.

The US and Russia are the only other countries to have reached Mars, and only the former has operated a rover on the surface. Several US, Russian and European attempts to land rovers on Mars have failed in the past.

In February, US space agency Nasa landed its rover Perseverance, which has been exploring the planet. The rover launched a small robotic helicopter on Mars which was the first-ever powered flight on another planet.



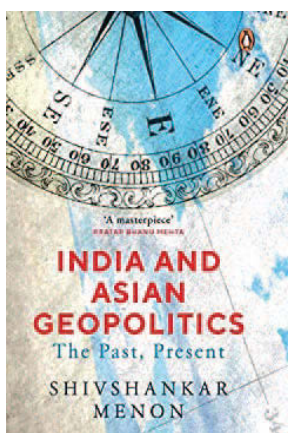
In this image released by the China National Space Administration on Saturday, a landing platform and the surface of Mars are seen from a camera on the Chinese Mars rover Zhurong.

— AP/PTI

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

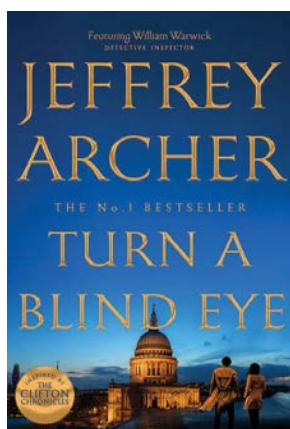
NON-FICTION

- 1 **INDIA AND ASIAN GEOPOLITICS: THE PAST, PRESENT**
Shiv Shankar Menon
Penguin, ₹699
- 2 **KARMA: A YOGI'S GUIDE TO CRAFTING YOUR DESTINY**
Sadhguru
Penguin, ₹299
- 3 **INDIA'S POWER ELITE**
Sanjaya Baru
Penguin, ₹699
- 4 **BORN A MUSLIM: SOME TRUTHS ABOUT ISLAM IN INDIA**
Ghazala Wahab
Aleph, ₹999
- 5 **GHALIB: A WILDERNESS AT MY DOORSTEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY**
Mehr Afshan Farooqi
Allen Lane, ₹799
- 6 **REPUBLIC OF HINDUTVA**
Badri Narayan
Penguin Viking, ₹499
- 7 **ALL ROADS LEAD NORTH — NEPAL'S TURN TO CHINA**
Amish Raj Mulmi
Context Westland, ₹799
- 8 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 9 **THE MYSTERY OF THE PARSEE LAWYER**
Shrabani Basu
Bloomsbury, ₹699
- 10 **INDUS BASIN UNINTERRUPTED**
Uttam Kumar Sinha
Penguin Vintage, ₹799



FICTION

- 1 **TURN A BLIND EYE**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- 2 **WHEREABOUTS**
Jhumpa Lahiri
Penguin, ₹499
- 3 **THE LAST QUEEN**
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 4 **SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499
- 5 **TAKEDOWN**
Brad Thor
Emily Bestler Books—Atria, ₹599
- 6 **THE BEGUM AND THE DASTAN**
Tarana Husain Khan
Tranquebar, ₹499
- 7 **KLARA AND THE SUN**
Kazuo Ishiguro
Faber & Faber, ₹699
- 8 **MURDER AT THE MUSHAIRA**
Raza Mir
Aleph, ₹799
- 9 **CLUB YOU TO DEATH**
Anuja Chauhan
Picador, ₹499
- 10 **A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton, ₹699



Bahrison, New Delhi

If only our netas read Gandhi, instead of making him a deity



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

review

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi told Richard Symonds, the Quaker relief worker, that his books sold more copies than Jawaharlal Nehru's. Symonds thought that was because of Pyarelal's translations. But the sparkling prose of *Restless as Mercury: My Life as a Young Man* leaves readers in no doubt that the future Mahatma needed no translator to brush up his language.

I was not at all surprised, therefore, to gather from the text that the book's catchy title is Gandhi's own description of his personality. It may have been originally coined by his sister, as the jacket blurb claims, but Raliyat Gandhi, who does not appear in the story, would have used a Gujarati version of the phrase. Four lines after admitting "I used to be restless as mercury, not sitting still even for a little while", Gandhi stresses how "revolting" he found the spectacle of "cows freely eating human faeces". He says "the feeling has persisted to this day".

If India's leaders had read Gandhi instead of elevating him to a deity and worshipping the deity for their own political purposes, people would not have been deluded today into believing that cow

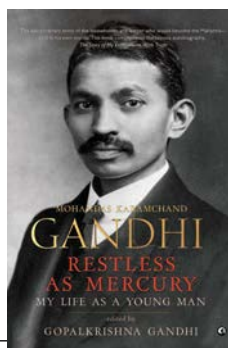
dung and urine cure coronavirus. They might then have been spared the agony of mucormycosis, the aggressive "black fungus", among Covid-19 patients. Of course, by his own admission, Gandhi, too, was a slave to quackery, insisting when his wife was ill in South Africa that she give up salt and pulses. Typically, he responded to her protests not by scientifically explaining the benefits of this sacrifice but with the emotional coin of himself also giving up salt and pulses.

The childhood encounter with cows is one of many episodes in this engrossing book that recall the wisdom those old sayings "morning shows the day" and "the child is father of the man". Gandhi can say with the Alexandrian poet, Constantine Cavafy (quoting from memory after fifty years), "Under the passions of my youth/ Were being formed the patterns of my poetry/ The province of my art was being planned." In a sense he was shaped in the crucible of South Africa. Continuing the analogy, it can be said of the enigmatic and intriguing man who shook the mighty British empire, (as E.M. Forster said of Cavafy) that he stood "at a slight angle to the universe".

Gandhi might have thought

it was the universe whose position needed slight adjustment. Some might say such grandiosity came later when the acclaimed Mahatma parleyed on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor. They would be wrong. One episode in this book explains that the self-esteem was always there. A letter from his son Harilal, with whom relations were strained, prompted Gandhi to ask himself if he had "failed to take sons' interests into account". His answer was a resounding and uncompromising "No". As he explains, "I did consider their interests, too, according to my own lights." His own lights! It was all that mattered.

There is nothing to beat



RESTLESS AS MERCURY: MY LIFE AS A YOUNG MAN
By **MOHANDAS KARAMCHAND GANDHI**
Edited by **GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI**
Aleph, ₹999

WAR FICTION WHICH RESEMBLES FACT



Anil Bhat

review

The novel is about the life of a young army officer Lieutenant Bharat involved in operations against militants in Manipur following the period 1987-89. Bharat gets baptised by gunfire while on his first patrol when he is able to kill a militant. But his ever-cautious commanding officer still has apprehensions about his capabilities. Other day to day operations are also interestingly described till his unit moves to Sri Lanka.

The story of induction into Sri Lanka and coping up with the fears of mines is narrated through conversations. On reaching Batticaloa the protagonist participates in a raid on a Tamil Tiger camp in a hurriedly planned operation, which almost turned into a failure. The success is further exploited by leaving a small stay behind party led by Bharat. Next day when he is heavily outnumbered by the Tamil Tigers, he repels them with mines, firearms and guile.

The novel brings out the paradox that

the Tamil Tigers whom the Indian Army was fighting, were trained by the members of the same army. The soldiers also question the wisdom of the government who at times is seen to be in secret talks with the Tamil Tigers. Also depicted is the pain of losing men in combat and its after-effects on the minds of the tactical leaders.

Details about excellent training, tenacity, dedication and endurance of the Tamil Tigers is narrated through the interrogation of an apprehended cadre. In one incident the Tamil Tigers almost lure the protagonist into a trap, but an incident of indiscipline saves the day.

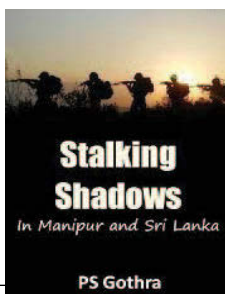
Bharat gets to command a group of ill-disciplined men. With his dedication and hard work is able to keep them motivated for the operations. A number of challenges of man management crop up which he is able to handle with maturity. An incident also describes the loss of fourteen soldiers in an IED (improvised explosive device) blast because of the mistake of a senior commander.

On de-induction, Bharat gets to know that

his girlfriend has deserted him. Yet, he stoically takes that in his stride.

Although the author calls it fiction, the situations which he has penned could and probably are based on true and honest account of incidents which happened on ground. A fast paced, absorbing and unputdownable novel, it avoids lengthy descriptions and military jargon, but keeps the reader hooked with the interesting plain and honest conversations narrated.

After the Galwan incident on 15 June 2020, super-surprise occupation of the Kailash Range on August 29-30, 2020, and the Sino-Indian military standoff in Eastern Ladakh, it has become amply clear that the tactical leadership, meticulous planning, coordination and teamwork are the ingredients for success. Also, these incidents and some others earlier ones like the surgical strikes, the bull's eye bombing at Balakot and the capture and repatriation of an Indian Air Force officer have resulted in increased respect for the Armed Forces by the Indian public. All



STALKING SHADOWS IN MANIPUR AND SRI LANKA
By **P.S. GOTHRA**
Kindle Direct Publishing, ₹115

this is certainly going to the novel more attractive

While the book is an interesting read for everyone from mid-teens onwards, it will also be inspiring to young military and corporate leaders alike and even young readers, who may learn some lessons on leadership.

Published only on Kindle, the modestly priced novel is free for the Kindle Unlimited subscribers and well supported by reader-friendly info-tech apps.

The author is a senior army officer, with a vast experience in the counter terrorist operations in Manipur, Sri Lanka and Jammu & Kashmir. He has also handled intelligence and information warfare assignments. Educated and brought up in various parts of the country, he is a post-graduate in History and Defence Studies. Hailing from a family of soldiers the author is the fourth generation serving in the Army. He published a novel in 2018 called *Soldiering a Life on the Edge* which narrates the life of a captain in counter-infiltration and counter-terrorist roles. While another novel by him called *Lies and Deceit of Pulwama to Balakot* could not be published, he frequently writes short stories related to army life.

The reviewer, a strategic analyst and former defence ministry and Indian Army spokesperson, can be contacted at wordsword02@gmail.com

Warm, fuzzy resumé of pets of royal heroes



Rupa Gulab

review

While poring over dusty tomes of ancient Indian history, Nandini Sengupta discovered marvellous stories about the special relationships certain kings and queens had with animals: this includes everything from gigantic elephants to little birds. The more they loved them, the more they pampered them. And no, they weren't just given little snack treats or toys as tokens of love, but were treated like royalty too.

Take Samand Manik, Mughal king Akbar the Great's favourite cheetah. As head of the cheetah platoon, Samand Manik wore jewelled collars, was carried on palanquins, had personal liveried servants, and was frequently invited to court to impress foreign dignitaries and diplomats.

Then there was King Jayakesi whose favourite pet was a talking parrot who could recite the Vedas and discuss Chanakya Niti. Every evening, the king would let the parrot out of its golden cage and have animated conversations with it while he had his dinner.

While some animals were merely household pets,

others like dogs, horses, and elephants accompanied their masters to the battlefield. A few of them merely as lucky mascots (Shivaji insisted that his dog Waghya was always at his side), others as fighting partners who wore armour as protection, and carried weapons as well. Elephants, for example, had lethal daggers attached to their tusks in order to cause maximum damage to enemy troops. Elephants and horses were also at their terrifying best on the battlefield because they were made to drink vast quantities of intoxicating substances.

Some of these beloved animals eventually died on the battlefield like Alexander the Great's favourite horse Bucephalus and his fierce bear-like dog Peritas. Both were deeply mourned, given memorials fit for kings, and two cities along the banks of the Jhelum and Ravi rivers were named after them.

Chetak was another heroic horse who succumbed to his battle wounds—but only after he carried his master, Maharana Pratap of Mewar, to safety. He was honoured by poets and artists and there's even a memorial to him (Chetak Chabutra) in Rajasthan.

In some cases, the bonds between pets and masters were so strong that even death could not separate them. In this book you will discover a pet who leapt into his master's funeral pyre, and a master who climbed into his pet's funeral pyre.

There's nothing ordinary about this book. The stories make you feel warm, fuzzy (and occasionally weepy), Sengupta's lively sense of humour adds a sprinkling of sparkle, and the cherry on the cake is this: She gets into each animal's head, speaks in their voices, gives them interesting personalities and human emotions like love, anger and jealousy. History purists won't be disappointed either, because each story has a historical source and context mentioned at the end, which makes it easy to separate fact from fiction.

Rupa Gulab is a freelance writer and the author of Girl Alone, Chip of the Old Blockhead and The Great Depression of the 40s



THE BLUE HORSE AND OTHER AMAZING ANIMALS FROM INDIAN HISTORY
By **NANDINI SENGUPTA**
Hachette India, ₹299

PAUL PICKERING'S LOVE STORY WITH AN INDIAN CONNECTION



The elephant culturally symbolises India more than any other country and British novelist Paul Pickering says the pachyderm in his new novel has her roots in India. According to the author, his book *Elephant* is an affirmation of "I am my voice". "And my voice is as big as an elephant, which in turn is as big as creation. In the love story between Natasha and the man in Paris, the novel explores the interface between fact and fiction; the man in Paris uses the story of the elephant to get Natasha to go back to her first love, her voice, poetry," he says.

In a country house in England, a precocious teenage exile from revolutionary Russia sets down his adventures on paper, beginning with his first ball

in St. Petersburg and how he frees a huge African elephant from a cruel circus. But a hundred years later, an American academic feels the boy may have invented the elephant as the only kind and uplifting being in dark times.

"This fast moving story is on the side of the individual and against nationalism, authoritarianism, scapegoating, fake news and the cancel culture that seeks to obliterate the boy at the heart of the story from history and that is why he commits it to paper," Pickering told PTI. Enfolded the love story and the journey is the *Elephant*, which Natasha realises is the raw power of the universe; yet always looking for a good outcome in line with the survival of the planet. The book, published by Salt Publishing, spans two historical periods. — PTI

Monograph studies the tone of mridangam



B. Vijayalakshmi

review

Legendary mridangam exponent Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman, who has completed 75 years of his musical career, has authored the book, *Musical Excellence of Mridangam*, jointly with eminent scientists T. Ramasami and M.D. Nareish (formerly associated with Central Leather Research Institute in Chennai) to study the tonal properties of the instrument.

Mridangam, also called Naadha Vadiyam and king of percussion instruments, has evolved over centuries and is the key accompanying instrument in Carnatic music. The instrument not only provides tonal beauty but also embellishes the music by adding to harmony.

The book, or the monograph as the authors prefer to call it, starts with a conversation with

Sivaraman, an active researcher on the construction of mridangam. The octogenarian maestro elaborates his philosophy of the instrument towards musical excellence. He then goes into the weight and shape of mridangam and lays stress on the need for researchers to make the black patch (the main component of the instrument in producing the naadham) durable for longer periods of time. According to him, the art of mridangam lies in extolling the perfection and beauty of *naadham* (tone) and should demonstrate the tone of Naadha Vadiyam.

The book has a detailed chapter on Nobel Laureate C.V. Raman's pioneering scientific investigations into the harmonics of mridangam sound. Raman's work published in the 1920s on acoustic

properties of the instrument demonstrated that unlike other percussion instruments of western origin, mridangam produced harmonic vibrations. He explored

the origin of harmonics and the role of black patch in the creation of harmonics.

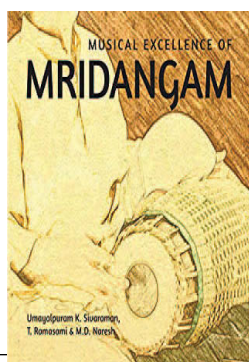
The last chapter on synthetic mridangam (built using fiberglass shell and synthetic drum heads instead of animal hide) analyses if the instrument can evoke similar harmonics.

The authors have drawn the attention of both art and scientific communities for making collaborative efforts on Indian musical instruments as subjects for research by presenting the case of mridangam as an example.

The book not only tries to understand the acoustical properties of the instrument but also explores the applications of scientific methods for the construction of the instrument better.

The research findings documented for the benefit of the posterity will definitely help further scientific research on Indian instruments.

Overall, *Musical Excellence of Mridangam* seeks greater synergy between modern science and art forms, and endeavours to perfect the art of playing and crafting mridangam.



MUSICAL EXCELLENCE OF MRIDANGAM
By **UMAYALPURAM K. SIVARAMAN, T. RAMASAMI and M. D. NARESH**
Academic Foundation, New Delhi, ₹1,995

SHORT TAKES

Batra elected FIH chief for 2nd term

New Delhi: Incumbent Narinder Batra of India was on Saturday re-elected as the International Hockey Federation (FIH) president for a second term after beating Marc Coudron of Belgium by a slender margin of just two votes during the world body's virtual 47th Congress. Considered the favourite from the beginning, Batra, who is the also the President of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, barely managed to pip Coudron, who is the chief of Belgium Hockey Federation and sits on the country's Olympic panel. Batra secured 63 votes as against his rival's 61 to emerge winner during the online voting process, in which 124 member associations participated. — *PTI*

Tanwar tests +ve, dropped from team

New Delhi: South Asian Games gold-medallist Vinod Tanwar (49kg) has been withdrawn from the Indian men's boxing team for the Asian Championships in Dubai after he tested positive for Covid-19. Tanwar, who had travelled for a tournament in Russia's St. Petersburg last month, had gone home for a break after he came back to the country. The 23-year-old returned positive for the virus when he was tested in isolation on his return to Patiala earlier this week, ruling him out from what would have been his maiden appearance at the continental showpiece. "Vinod Tanwar's name was withdrawn from the squad as he was tested positive for Covid-19," the Boxing Federation of India said. — *PTI*

148 athletes get first dose of vax

New Delhi: As many as 148 athletes across all sports, including those who have qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Games, have already received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccination, according to the Indian Olympic Association. Out of these 148 athletes, 17 have got both the doses and 131 have received their first shot, IOA president Narinder Batra said. These 148 include potential athletes who can make it to the Tokyo Olympics which is opening on July 23. Besides this, 13 Tokyo Paralympic-bound athletes have got their first vaccine shot while two have received both doses. The Tokyo Paralympics opens on August 24. The total number of athletes (including para-athletes), who have got at least their first dose till May 20, is 163. — *PTI*

India football team kick off training

New Delhi: All the players and support staff of the Indian football team have tested negative for Covid-19 after arrival in Qatar and have also started training ahead of the joint Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup next month. The team, which arrived in Doha on Wednesday evening, was under compulsory quarantine and waiting for the results of their RT-PCR tests before starting their preparatory camp. "Yes, all the 28 players and support staff tested positive in the tests done after their arrival." All India Football Federation General Secretary Kushal Das said. The team, bolstered by the return of Sunil Chhetri, will have a preparatory camp inside a bio-bubble here before its first match on June 3 against hosts Qatar. — *PTI*

Tsitsipas enters Lyon title clash

Lyon: World No. 5 Stefanos Tsitsipas came from a set down to beat Lorenzo Musetti 4-6, 6-3, 6-0 on Saturday and reach the final of the ATP event in Lyon. In Sunday's final, the 22-year-old Greek will face Britain's Cameron Norrie, who raced beat Khachanov 6-1, 6-1 in the semi-final. Norrie, 25, had already played on Saturday morning having beaten French hope Arthur Rinderknech 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in a quarter-final suspended overnight with the last set still to play. — *AFP*

Never-ending Saha

Wriddhiman's journey comes full circle to be understudy again

Kolkata, May 22: It's a circle of life that has put Wriddhiman Saha in the same position that he was a decade back when he came to England in 2011 as skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's understudy.

The script was repeated in 2014 with Saha seen dutifully carrying the bats, towels and drinks for his teammates and in 2021, he is again expected to watch Rishabh Pant's pyrotechnics from the dressing room, something that has solely missed from his style of batsmanship despite being decent at his craft.

"Obviously, there would be criticism when you don't do well. I always try to deliver the way I've learnt over the years," Saha said ahead of joining the team's bio-bubble in Mumbai on Monday. Despite being steady with the bat, somehow Saha's willow wielding hasn't exactly inspired the highest confidence. "If people are saying my batting is not up there, maybe that's the case... But, I don't think I need to change anything — mental approach or technique. I just try to keep my focus and work hard," he said.

IPL BUBBLE NOT FOOLPROOF: SAHA

Saha has indicated that the bio-bubble for IPL-14 was not as foolproof as the one in UAE last year, becoming the first India player to publicly question the tightness of the controlled environment. "It's the job of the stakeholders to assess it, but the only thing I would say is that there was not a single individual during our training in UAE, not even a ground staff. Here there would be people, kids peeping from nearby walls. I don't want to comment much but we saw how the IPL went off smoothly in UAE," Saha said. — *PTI*



A file photo of India's wicket-keeper batsman Wriddhiman Saha.

Varun still feels weak & dizzy

Chennai, May 22: Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy is still not fit for intense training after his recovery from Covid-19 as he is still feeling "weakness and dizziness".

Chakravarthy was the first player in IPL to test Covid-19 positive and within a couple of days, the tournament was suspended because of multiple cases inside the bio-bubble across franchises. The 29-year-old Chakravarthy recovered on May 11 and is currently recuperating at his Chennai residence.

I'm now doing well and recovering at home. I still haven't been able to resume training full tilt because of post-Covid-19 symptoms. Although I don't have cough or fever, there is weakness and dizziness.

— **VARUN CHAKRAVARTHY**
Kolkata Knight Riders spinner

"I'm now doing well and recovering at home. I still haven't been able to resume training full tilt because of post-Covid-19 symptoms. Although I don't have cough or fever, there is weakness and dizziness," Chakravarthy told *ESPNCricinfo*. "The loss of smell and taste is still intermittent,

but I'm confident of being able to resume training soon."

Having experienced the effect of the dreaded virus first hand, Chakravarthy's advice to all athletes is to give their bodies at least two weeks of complete rest after recovery before resuming any training.

"The thing I've learnt and would like to tell other athletes and individuals recovering from Covid-19 is to give your body at least two weeks to fully recover after you test negative.

"Also, even after people test negative, my advice is for them to continue to mask up so that you keep others around you safe."

With India facing a health crisis after the second wave of the pandemic hit the country, it's a mental battle for anybody who tested positive for Covid-19. — *PTI*

LECLERC TAKES POLE DESPITE CAR DAMAGE

Monaco, May 22: Charles Leclerc will start on pole for his home Monaco Grand Prix after setting the fastest time in qualifying on Saturday despite ending the session with crash-damage to his Ferrari.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen will set off alongside him on the front row of Formula One's iconic street race with world champion Lewis Hamilton in unfamiliar territory back on the fourth row.

Qualifying was red flagged at the end, depriving Hamilton and Verstappen of a late chance to better Leclerc's time with a flying lap.

With overtaking difficult on Monaco's tight and twisting circuit, Hamilton's chances of moving up to 99 grand prix wins look compromised.

After winning three out of four races this season the seven-time world champion leads Verstappen by 14 points in the drivers' world championship.

Leclerc secured his eighth career pole but first at Monaco despite his big crash into a wall which ripped off his car's front wing. — *AFP*

WRESTLER | MURDER CASE

Sushil held in Punjab: Report

New Delhi, May 22: India's two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar, who was on the run for over a fortnight for alleged links with the murder of former international wrestler Sagar Dhankar, was arrested by Delhi Police in Punjab on Saturday, according to a source.

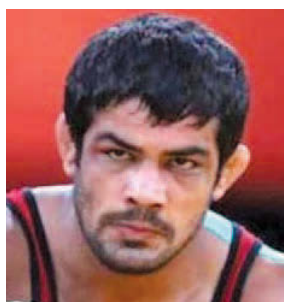
"Kumar has been arrested near Jalandhar. His associate Ajay Kumar, accused in the case, has also been arrested," a source told a news agency.

On May 18, Kumar had moved an anticipatory bail in New Delhi's Rohini court, but the court rejected his bail plea.

Last week, Delhi Police had announced a cash award of ₹1 lakh for feedback on the celebrated wrestler who was absconding since May 4.

On May 4, two groups of wrestlers clashed with each other at Chhatrasal Stadium leading to the death of 23-year-old Dhankar due to injuries he sustained during the brawl.

The Delhi court had also issued a non-bailable war-



Sushil Kumar

rant (NBW) against Kumar. Delhi Police issued a lookout notice for Kumar.

"A lookout notice has been issued for Kumar," Dr Gurqbal Singh Sidhu, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (North West Delhi) had said.

Kumar, employed with the Indian Railways, is posted as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at Chhatrasal Stadium, where the brawl allegedly took place.

Kumar won bronze in 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and silver in 2012 London Olympic Games in 66 kg category. — *Agencies*

FIFA TO CONSIDER HOLDING WORLD CUP EVERY 2 YEARS

Lausanne, May 22: Fifa on Friday launched an overhaul of the international football calendar beyond 2024, saying it is open to "everything" including the organisation of a World Cup every two years, despite opposition from wilting players and fears over a devalued product. The 71st Fifa Congress voted by a large majority to carry out "a feasibility study on the consequences of the organisation" of World Cups for men and women "every two years".

No deadline has been set for such a controversial reform to the sport's crown jewel, the main income generator for Fifa since its creation in 1928, and which has been contested every four years since 1930 for men and 1991 for women.

Fifa's football development chief Arsene Wenger suggested in March that the World Cup, the European Championship and other international tournaments be held every two years. It was an idea dubbed "unrealistic" by European Leagues, a body which groups 37 leagues and club associations in Europe. — *AFP*

Games on track, insists IOC chief

New Delhi, May 22: International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach on Saturday asserted that the Tokyo Olympics will go on as scheduled despite opposition from the majority of Japanese population amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

The IOC president said hosting the Olympics, already postponed by a year in 2020 due to the unprecedented health crisis, will send a strong message that there is still "light at the end of the tunnel."

Bach made the statement during his address at the 47th International Hockey Federation (FIH) Congress held virtually.

"With Tokyo (Olympics) finally on the horizon, the final countdown has begun. During this difficult times, we need to send a strong message of resilience, unity and our diversity. Tokyo will show light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

Bach's remarks came close on the heels of IOC vice president John Coates' views that the Tokyo Games will go ahead even if the city is under a state of emergency due to the pandemic.

The IOC's stance under-



Thomas Bach

scores the challenges to host the Games in a Covid-hit world.

While most Japanese are not in favour of hosting the Games due to the strain it is expected to put on the country's medical infrastructure in the wake of the pandemic, the IOC remained adamant.

Bach exuded confidence that together with the local organisers, the IOC would be able to deliver a safe Games, which was postponed last year because of the pandemic.

"The safety and security of our everyone is utmost priority. But together with our Japanese colleagues we will have to ensure that our athletes came together and compete in a safe environment.

"Over 70 per cent athletes and officials have already been vaccinated and this number will grow with time," he said. — *PTI*

Atletico crowned La Liga champs

Madrid, May 22: Atletico Madrid edged city rivals Real Madrid to the La Liga title in dramatic fashion after coming from behind to beat Real Valladolid 2-1 in the final game.

Diego Simeone's side trailed to Oscar Plano's strike but turned the match around in the second half through goals from Angel Correa and Luis Suarez.

Real scored twice late on to beat Villarreal 2-1 but

came up short as they needed Atletico to drop points. The results mean Atletico end the season on 86 points, two ahead of second-placed Madrid and seven above third-placed Barcelona.

It's the eleventh time that Atletico have been crowned champions of Spain, with just three of them coming in the last 40 years, in 1996, 2014 and now 2021.

It was a highly satisfactory triumph for Los

Colchoneros as they finished just two points ahead of defending champions Real, who end the season without silverware.

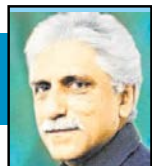
Someone has now won two La Liga titles, a Copa del Rey and a Supercopa Espana in a decade in charge, as well as two Europa League successes and two UEFA Super Cups. Atletico have been title favourites for much of the season, leading the league table since

December 5 when they went top with a 2-0 win, also over Valladolid.

Barcelona — playing without skipper Lionel Messi, who was resting before the summer's Copa America — won 1-0 at Eibar through Antoine Griezmann's acrobatic strike and clinched third place ahead of Sevilla.

Julen Lopetegui's side play their final game on Sunday against Alaves but will finish fourth with a win. — *Agencies*

BCCI has its work cut out in scheduling IPL phase 2

**Ayaz Memon**
Over The Top

Faced with a whopping ₹2,500 crore loss if IPL2021 is not completed, the BCCI is leaving no stone unturned to resume the suspended tournament. With barely seven months remaining in the year, which also includes the T20 World Cup in a packed international itinerary, all

avenues are being explored, including squeezing in the remaining half of the league in the English season.

According to former captain Michael Atherton writing in the London *Times*, the BCCI has been in talks with the England Cricket Board (ECB) to see if there is a window of

opportunity in the six-week gap between the World Test Championship final (India versus New Zealand, ending June 22) and the first India-England Test which starts on August 4.

After Atherton broke the story, the ECB put out a statement that there has been no official request from the BCCI for playing the IPL in England. But that seems to be a technicality, dictated by power-play in the upper echelons of the sport, and not a rebuttal that such move has indeed been made.

It is hardly likely that

BCCI, the richest and most influential cricket board, will risk a certified request at this stage for fear of it being spurned. The process has to begin with sending 'feelers' and seeing how the other party responds before taking the next step. What's amply clear is that informal talks between the BCCI and ECB have taken place.

With New Zealand already in England, many Kiwi players engaged in the IPL would be readily available if the tournament resumes in say July. Those from the Caribbean can also be depended on.

Ditto South Africans. Along with English players who play in the League, this adds up to quite a number of overseas players that can be tapped.

The problem would of getting Aussie players — who make up quite a number — to travel across several seas to be in England, always a threat in these Covid times, though sources within the BCCI aver that this issue can be licked with some cajoling, as also the attraction for players — for money and limelight — of playing in the IPL.

How matters proceed

from here is dependent on several factors, not the least a complicated home season for England which could become the biggest stumbling block for IPL 2021 to be played in that country.

This is the inaugural season of 'The Hundred', a coveted tournament which the ECB would be loath to lose.

Unless the quid pro quo with the BCCI is hugely beneficial (e.g. allowing Indian players in The Hundred which would boost the brand equity of the tournament), the ECB is unlikely to make a major

shift in its current itinerary. Apart from The Hundred, remember, there's the Test series against India which is very lucrative for counties where the matches will be held.

Apart from these hassles, squeezing in the tournament in July has other issues. What happens, for instance, to India's second-string team's projected tour of Sri Lanka for white ball series?

If players like Shikhar Dhawan, Bhuvneshwar, Kuleep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal are unavailable, this tour is kaput.