

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | 1 JUNE 2021



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China goes for three-child policy



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Pooja punches gold at Asian boxing

TABLOID
Juhi Chawla's war against 5G radiation



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WEATHER



Max: 38.4°C
Min: 27°C
RH: 47%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy. Rain likely. Max/Min temp. 39/279C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Titthi: Vaishakha Bahula Saptami till 12.49 am (Thursday)
Star: Dhanishta till 4.12 pm
Variyam: 11.39 pm to 1.19 am (Thursday)

Durmuhurtam: 8.20 am to 9.12 am; 11.07 pm to 11.51 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

HJRI CALENDAR
Shawwal 19,1442 AH

PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.32 am
Zohar: 12.24 pm
Asar: 4.49 pm
Maghrib: 6.53 pm
Isha: 8.09 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.47 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.41 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 11.47 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 10.25 AM

COUNTER POINT



Yes! I found it. That relief package is from this tiny island in Antarctic Ocean!

SHORT TAKES

Class XII decision in 2 days, SC told

New Delhi: The government will take a final decision within the next two days on whether to conduct Class XII board exams amidst the Pandemic, the Supreme Court was informed on Monday. Attorney General K.K. Venuopal told this to a bench of Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and Dinesh Maheshwari which said if the Centre decides to depart from the last year's policy, then it must give tangible reasons for it.

Deadline for GST filing extended

New Delhi: The government on Monday said the deadline for filing monthly GST sales returns for May has been extended by 15 days till June 26. The GST Council, chaired by the Union finance minister and comprising state counterparts, on May 28 had decided to extend certain compliance relaxations on account of Covid-19 pandemic.

EPFO allows 2nd Covid advance

New Delhi: Retirement fund body EPFO has allowed its over five crore subscribers to avail the second Covid-19 advance in view of the second wave of the coronavirus infections in the country. Earlier last year, the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) had allowed its members to withdraw COVID-19 advance to meet exigencies due to the pandemic.

HC: TWITTER HAS TO COMPLY WITH I.T. RULES FOR DIGITAL MEDIA

New Delhi, May 31: Twitter has to comply with the new Information Technology Rules for digital media if they have not been stayed, the Delhi High Court said on Monday. Justice Rekha Palli issued notice to the Centre and social media platform Twitter seeking their stand on a plea by a lawyer, Amit Acharya, claiming non-compliance of the rules by it.

While Twitter claimed before the court that it has complied with the rules and appointed a resident grievance officer, the Central government standing counsel Ripudaman Singh Bhardwaj told the court that Twitter has not complied with the rules. — *PTI*

WB CS RETIRES, MADE CHIEF ADVISER FOR THREE YEARS

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MAY 31

In a dramatic twist to the tug-of-war between the Centre and the state over the state Chief Secretary, the 1987-batch IAS officer Alapan Bandyopadhyay on Monday took retirement and was immediately appointed chief adviser to chief minister Mamata Banerjee for three years.

H.K. Dwiwedi, who was the state home secretary, has become the new state Chief Secretary while B.P. Gopalika has been appointed as the state home secretary.

Mr Bandyopadhyay, who had got a three-month extension last week but was summoned for deputation by the Centre four days later, was due to retire on Monday. The top state bureaucrat's decision came to light after he attended a meeting chaired by Ms Banerjee on the devastation by Cyclone Yaas and Covid-19 pandemic at the state secretariat Nabanna following her refusal to release him in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The TMC chief's tough stand prompted the Centre to explore its options to initiate departmental proceedings against Mr Bandyopadhyay for defying its order to report at North Block in New Delhi.

Shoppers return gradually



Vendors set up shops at Charminar anticipating customers on Monday. However, they did not report any big sales as people wait for the second wave of Covid-19 to subside.

— *P. SURENDRA*

SC asks Centre to revise its vaccination policy

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The Supreme Court Monday posed searching questions to the Centre on its Covid-19 vaccine pricing, procurement policy and need for mandatory registration on the CoWIN app for people to get vaccinated without keeping in mind the real “digital India” situation.

Observing that policy makers must have an ear to the ground, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, heading a special bench also comprising Justice L. Nageswara Rao and Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, said that the current vaccination policy is urban-

centric that does not address the needs of the rural population and flagged various other “flaws” in the inoculation drive, including differential pricing and shortage of doses.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, replied that registration is mandatory as a person needs to be traced for a second dose and as far as rural areas are concerned, there are community centres where a person can get registered for vaccination.

At the outset of the hearing that lasted two hours, the court asked the Centre about its vaccine procurement policy

by referring to the fact that states like Punjab and Delhi are in the process of issuing global tenders to procure foreign vaccines.

The hearing saw the top court asking a number of pointed questions to Mr Mehta on vaccine availability and as to why for people above the age of 45 years the Centre was procuring vaccines but for the larger chunk of population between the age group of 18 to 45 years, the burden has been put on the states.

The SC asked the Centre to relook at its Covid policy on vaccine pricing and vaccination drive, adding that the policy should be flexible.

SC FOR REVIEW OF SEDITION LAW'S LIMITS

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The Supreme Court on Monday put on hold Andhra Pradesh government's action against two TV channels and issued a notice to the state government asserting, “It's time we define limits of sedition.”

“The Andhra Pradesh government should not take any coercive steps against Telugu news channels,” the Supreme Court said.

“The Andhra Pradesh government's act of filing sedition cases against the channels is muffling channels. It is time the court defined sedition,” said Justice D.Y. Chandrachud.

The court also said, “We are of the view that provisions of 124A and 153 of the IPC (Indian Penal Code) require interpretation, particularly on the issue of rights of press and free speech.” Section 124 A deals with sedition and 153 with provocation for riots.

Etala meets Nadda, may join BJP

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Former minister Etala Rajender met BJP national president J.P. Nadda on Monday at the latter's Delhi residence in the presence of state party affairs in-charge Tarun Chugh, state unit president Bandi Sanjay Kumar and former MP Vivek Venkataswamy, along with former MLA Yenugu Ravinder Reddy.

According to BJP sources, the leaders first met Chugh at his residence. He inquired about Rajendar's political history and also asked the reasons behind him being targeted by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao. Rajendar is understood to have explained why he and his family had been targeted. After the half-an-hour, meeting, the disgruntled leaders, led by Tarun Chugh and Bandi Sanjay, went to meet Nadda. Sources said Chugh went inside Nadda's chamber and explained about Rajendar's political background for 20 minutes and Nadda called Rajendar and Reddy inside.

■ **Page 2: Nadda welcomes Rajendar to join BJP**

7 state med colleges by next year

₹700 cr to be spent on each college

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The state government has readied a blueprint to fast-track the setting up of seven government medical colleges in the districts within a year.

The Cabinet on Sunday had approved the establishing of medical colleges in N a g a r k u r n o o l, Wanaparthy, Mancherial, Jagtial, Sangareddy, Mahbubnagar and Kothagudem.

According to the blueprint, the government will spend ₹700 crore to set up each medical college. Accordingly, the government has decided to sanction a total budget of ₹5,000 crore this year for the seven medical colleges. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao will lay foundations for these colleges in July.

The government ordered the Directorate of Medical Education to submit applications to National Medical

Commission (NMC) seeking approvals for starting medical colleges from the 2022-23 academic year. The government aims to secure approval for 200 MBBS seats in each college.

In-charge ministers and collectors of respective districts were directed to identify suitable land parcels immediately for setting up the medical colleges. The government has set a deadline of July 2022 to complete construction of the college buildings with all facilities required to get NMC approval. The government at present operates nine medical colleges with 1,640 seats. This apart, two more medical colleges — AIIMS Bibinagar and ESI, Sanathnagar — are under the Central government.

With the addition of seven medical colleges, the total state government colleges in the state will increase to 16.

■ **Page 2: Four med colleges set up after TS formation**

Economy grows at 1.6% in Q4

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 31

India's economy grew 1.6 per cent in the January-March quarter, continuing its recovery phase after the first wave of the Covid-19. The economy had grown 0.5 per cent in the October-December quarter.

According to data released by the National

Statistical Office (NSO) on Monday, “GDP at Constant (2011-12) prices in Q4 of 2020-21 is estimated at ₹38.96 lakh crore, as against ₹38.33 lakh crore in Q4 of 2019-20, showing a growth of 1.6 per cent.”

In the fourth quarter, data suggests that there was a 43 per cent growth in sale of commercial vehicles, 27 per cent growth in private vehi-

cles, cargo handled at major seaports rose by 6.8 per cent and net tonne-km (freight) handled by railways increased by 16.9 per cent. It also claimed that steel consumption grew 25.2 per cent in fourth quarter, while cement production was up by 5.2 per cent.

■ **Page 4: Rural demand is resilient: CEA**

PLEASE | ALL

Shiv Sena says battle will be fought in Delhi as Centre has powers

Maha gives Marathas 10% EWS quota

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 31

In a major decision, the Maharashtra Government has announced a 10 per cent reservation to the Maratha community in educational institutions and government jobs under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category.

The move is seen as an attempt to placate the dominant Maratha community, which has been fuming over being denied reserva-

tion by the Supreme Court. According to the government resolution (GR) issued by the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government on Monday, the Maratha students and candidates in the state will now be able to avail 10 per cent reservation in educational institutions as well as in direct service recruitment.

The Supreme Court on May 5 had struck down the 13 per cent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the

Maratha community brought in by the Maharashtra government in 2018, saying it exceeded the 50 per cent cap imposed earlier.

Maharashtra government's fresh move to provide EWS reservation to the Maratha community is based on the Centre's decision in 2019 to give 10 per cent reservation in education and jobs to the EWS people in the general category. The norms for seeking the EWS reservation are that the candidate's

annual family income should not be less than ₹8 lakh and his/her family must not own more than five acres of agriculture land. After the SC verdict, there has been pressure on the MVA government to provide relief to the community with the BJP MP Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje giving a warning that if the state government does not approve the demands of the Maratha community by June 6, he would launch an agitation from Raigad Fort

and demanded that a two-day Assembly session should be called over this matter.

However, Maharashtra's ruling party Shiv Sena has said that the battle will be fought in Delhi. “The SC has scrapped the reservation given by Maharashtra government saying only the Centre has the powers to make such an act. Hence, a decision on this should be taken by the PM and President,” said the Sena in ‘Saamana.’

SANJEEVANI

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*TEC APPY

SHORT TAKES

FAKE DOCTOR
DETAINED
UNDER PD ACTDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

A fake medical practitioner who was allegedly responsible for the death of two persons has been booked under the Preventive Detention Act.

According to the police, Sai Kumar had passed only the intermediate in 2004 but was pretending to be a doctor. Between 2006 and 2011 he worked as an assistant at an operation theatre at a hospital at Santoshnagar.

Subsequently, for eight years, he was run a clinic in Meerpet police limits, besides working in some hospitals, treating patients and prescribing drugs during the Covid-19 pandemic.

A man and a woman who were given medicines by Sai Kumar died at a hospital in LB Nagar. He was booked and arrested by the Rachakonda police. After he was released on bail, Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat invoked the PD Act against the accused as he might put the lives of patients at risk.

Amid GHMC squabble,
more Hyd floods likely

Ahead of rains civic body hasn't got drain plan in order

MADHY DEEKSHITH | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

With Indian Meteorological Department forecasting the monsoon rains within a couple of days, it is very likely that low-lying areas within the city will again be inundated this year as little work has been done on the much tom-tommed Strategic Nala Development Programme (SNDP).

Key wings of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) are blaming one another, even though the government has allocated ₹697.36 crore for the SNDP. The corporation has managed to spend only ₹128 crore of this on 38 works, with the GHMC's maintenance wing managing to clear just four bottlenecks since at risk.

● **THE GOVERNMENT** has allocated ₹697.36 crore for the Strategic Nala Development Programme (SNDP).

October last.

The GHMC, in coordination with zonal commissioners, engineering and lake wings, is yet to prepare a detailed project report; though the monsoon is almost on the horizon.

A senior GHMC official, requesting anonymity, told *Deccan Chronicle* that SNDP is yet to submit a detailed project report (DPR) to invite tenders for the nala project. As a result, the corporation has decided to take up only emergency works during the monsoon.

This means the city is at risk since the bunds of over 30 lakes within the

twin cities are extremely weak. Flash floods will be inevitable if these works are not attended to immediately. "Despite several reminders, the lakes wing has turned a blind eye to the issue," the official said.

The SNDP, without coordinating with zonal commissioners and engineering department, had sought from the government ₹950 crore for nala widening and remodelling of drains. In their preliminary report, SNDP officials explained that ₹300 crore will be spent on remodelling of nalas, ₹250 crore on construction of retaining walls, and ₹400 crore on constructing bridges and culverts.

The government rubbished the SNDP's idea, asking it to prepare a more realistic and practical model. Further, the

government asked the GHMC to complete the project within ₹858 crore and released ₹697.36 crore to SNDP for carrying out 126 works.

Amid all this, the civic body's engineering and SNDP wings are blaming their town planning counterpart for the delay in land acquisition. In turn, town planning officials are accusing the engineering department of neglecting the project despite getting administrative sanction from the government. Town planners maintain that neither the engineering nor the SNDP wing has asked them to acquire land since October. Following this, the "strategic project" has not moved an inch since October, leaving residents of low-lying areas of the city to their own fate.



Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar distributes fruits and masks to police personnel at the Gandhi Hospital on Monday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Cooperate with police,
Anjani urges citizensDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar inspected the Gandhi Hospital police checkpoint on Monday and distributed masks, sanitisers and fruits to the personnel on duty there. Gandhi Hospital is a designated Covid centre.

Anjani Kumar said, "During the second wave of Covid-19, many police

● **DURING THE** second wave of Covid-19, many police personnel have been infected with the Coronavirus, the commissioner said.

personnel have been infected with the Coronavirus. However, more than 250 policemen are on duty here (at the Gandhi Hospital) with great courage." He congratulated everyone on

duty at Gandhi Hospital.

Anjani Kumar stressed that the police must use sanitisers and masks properly wherever they are. "Police are on duty in the frontlines for the welfare of the people," he said. The commissioner urged the people to cooperate with the police during the lockdown.

"People should reach their destinations within time as per government instructions," he said.

NADDA WELCOMES
ETALA RAJENDAR
TO JOIN BJP

From Page 1

It is also said that Nadda welcomed Rajendar and Ravinder Reddy into the BJP and assured that their seniority would be respected if they joined the party.

Nadda inquired about cases against him and harassment by Chandrashekar Rao, sources said, adding that Nadda suggested that Rajendar could fight in the courts for justice and work for the BJP in a dedicated manner so that the party could use his services wherever required.

Sources said Nadda had asked Etala Rajendar to resign from his position as member of the Legislative Assembly and join the BJP. Sources in Rajendar's camp said the Huzurabad MLA may announce his resignation after reaching Hyderabad and having discussion with his followers. It is expected that Rajendar is likely to resign on June 2 or June 6 from his post of MLA and the TRS.

● **SOURCES IN** Rajendar's camp said the Huzurabad MLA may announce his resignation after reaching Hyderabad.

Prices of Covid
drugs not hiked,
Centre tells HCDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) submitted to the High Court that the prices of drugs for treatment of Covid-19 and black fungus infection were under a price ceiling and therefore the manufacturers cannot hike prices as per their will. It submitted that the manufacturing of drugs for black fungus and Covid has been ramped up to the highest level.

The NPPA said the price of drug used for treatment of black fungus - amphotericin B (Liposomal) is fixed at ₹7,484 per 50 grams, excluding Goods and Services Tax (GST). Amphotericin B in its powdered form is fixed at ₹310 per 50 grams.

Rajesh Kumar T, deputy director of the NPPA, filed a memo before the High Court and said that the Authority and the department of pharmaceuticals of the Union ministry for chemical and fertilisers were monitoring management of supply of medicines during the peak pandemic period.

The memo was filed on the directions of the division bench of the Telangana High Court.

On May 17, the bench headed by Chief Justice Hima Kohli had issued notices to the NPPA and sought to know its contentions, as there was a shortfall of life-saving drugs for Covid-19 in Telangana state.

The NPPA director submitted that the ceiling prices of all scheduled formulation medicines were normally fixed by it as per the provisions of Drugs (Price Control) Order 2013.

For non-scheduled formulation medicines, the manufacturers have the liberty to fix the prices provided there should not be an increase more than 10 per cent per year.

Favipiravir, remdesivir and others fall under non-scheduled medicines, and their maximum price was ₹5,400 per vial. With the intervention of the government, it was reduced to ₹3,500, Rajesh Kumar submitted.

FOUR MEDICAL COLLEGES SET UP
AFTER FORMATION OF TELANGANA

From Page 1

Of these, four medical colleges in Mahbubnagar, Siddipet, Suryapet and Nalgonda were set up after the formation of Telangana state in 2014.

Another 23 medical colleges are under the private sector, taking the total to 41. If the state government secures

approval for 1,400 seats in seven new medical colleges, the overall MBBS seats in government colleges will increase significantly to 3,040 and will make medical education accessible to students from poorer and middle classes, who cannot afford huge fees and donations in private medical colleges.



Drivers and conductors of the RTC maintain discipline and wait for their turn to take Covid-19 vaccine in Hyderabad on Monday. — DC

RTC employees turn role
models for job seekersDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Setting up an example for those who squashed at Covid vaccination centres, throwing all cautions to the wind to get the job before others, employees of the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC), stuck to their time slot, kept physical distance and followed all norms while getting the jabs done during the three-day drive that concluded on Monday.

Drivers and conductors who fall under the category of super-spreaders, maintained discipline and all norms of the Covid-19 protocol during the drive. All these, while vaccination centres set up by the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation

(GHMC) witnessed chaos.

The authorities gave credit for this restraint to traffic controllers, who used all their skills of managing bus traffic, which turned out to be excellent.

A total of RTC 5,000 staff got the vaccine administered during the three-day vaccination drive. The camps were conducted in 14 different locations of RTC, that included Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station, Bus Bhavan, RTC Hospital, Jubilee Bus Station, Rathifile Bus Station, Kukatapally Bus Station and other important bus stations under the GHMC limits.

There are 17,000 conductors and drivers working with the corporation, among them many have already been vaccinated

before the drive began. With a total strength of 47,000 employees, the authorities will soon request the government to vaccinate the security staff, office administration staff and garage staff.

Surya Kiran, chief personnel manager, said "Traffic controllers planned everything with the help of depot managers. Time slots were allotted in accordance with the time taken for shot and the observation period."

"A total of 5,000 were vaccinated in this mega drive under GHMC limits, and the authorities are planning to send a proposal to the government to vaccinate security staff, office administration staff and garage employees," he said.

3 held for sale of black fungus drug

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The Special Operations Team (SOT) of the LB Nagar police busted a gang that was illegally selling amphotericin B vials used in the treatment of black fungus on Monday. Police said the accused pur-

chased the 50-mg vials at at ₹305 a piece and sold them for ₹30,000-₹40,000.

According to the police, the brothers Boyapati Balu and Boyapati Yogan colluded with one Deepak Gupta to sell the drug in the black market.

Balu, a reporter with a Telugu news channel, used

● **ACCORDING TO** the police, the brothers Boyapati Balu and Boyapati Yogan colluded with one Deepak Gupta to sell the drug.

his contacts with medical representatives to procure the medicine and black

market it.

"On Monday morning, while they waited for a customer to hand over five vials near Uppal Metro Rail station, SOT and Uppal police personnel caught them and seized the medicine," said LB Nagar SOT inspector T. Ravi Kumar.

WELCOME | MOVE

Many places remain empty though relaxation hours have been extended

Ease in lockdown brings city back to normal

SANJAY SAMUEL
PAUL | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The city woke up to a normal dawn on Monday after 19 days of unusual haste and chaos on the streets, thanks to the seven-hour lockdown relief announced by the government. In the wake of a surge in cases of Coronavirus in the state, the government announced the lockdown from May 12 to 30 with a relaxation period of four hours from 6 am to 10 am during which market places were crowded and social distancing norms were flouted.

The state Cabinet which met on Sunday further

extended the lockdown till May 9. It has decided to ease the relaxation time, from 6 am to 1 pm against 6 am to 10 am earlier, along with a grace period of one hour. This decision was appreciated by many people in the state as the lockdown has brought down Covid-19 cases.

The famed Monda Market in Secunderabad, which was crowded all these days during the morning hours, wore a deserted look on Monday with fewer customers and less rush. Fish, chicken and mutton markets and general shops also had lesser customers.

Customers were in a relaxed mood when they came shopping as they had

more time for buying their stuff. Bakeries which had barely any customers had good sales on Monday.

Many commercial establishments such as the automobile garages and spare parts shops, hardware and paint shops also had a relaxed day. Even supermarkets and vegetable markets had lesser gatherings. Begum Bazaar in the old city which is some of the busiest areas witnessed less crowds.

Many hotels which were restricted to cloud-kitchen sales via app aggregators, are now opening up parcel services for regular customers till 1 pm. Push-cart vendors were seen selling their goods on the streets till 1 pm.

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

There was a sigh of relief among citizens and businessmen on Monday as they had sufficient time for shopping. Markets in Old City are closer to normal after extension in relaxation period.

It was observed that many shopkeepers, who were voluntarily observing complete lockdown,

● **MANY HOTELIERS** opened their shutters and started serving breakfast. Unlike previous days, people were in no hurry.

opened their shops for the first time in 19 days. Many gold and jewellery shops also opened on Monday. The number of hawkers around Charminar also increased. Many hoteliers opened their shutters and

started serving breakfast. Unlike previous days, people were in no hurry. The traffic flow was also streamlined. Syed Sadiq Ali, who works in a car showroom, said "now I have enough time to return home after attending duty."

Employers may not feel that they are paying without work. Jagan, a kirana store keeper in Nampally, said now he has sufficient time to go for purchases.

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SHORT TAKES

RPO TO RESUME SERVICES FROM TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The Regional Passport Office (RPO) here on Monday announced that it will resume services at the Passport Seva Kendras (PSK), Passport Seva Laghu Kendra, and the RPO at Secunderabad from June 1.

The services are being resumed as the state government extended the Covid-19 lockdown relaxation hours from 6 am to 1 pm, Dasari Balaiah, Regional Passport Officer, Hyderabad, said.

Services will be resumed operations from June 1 at three Passport Seva Kendras at Begumpet, Ameerpet and Tolichowki and at Nizamabad, the Passport Seva Laghu Kendra at Karimnagar, and the public enquiry centres at Regional Passport Office, Secunderabad, and the counter providing attestation/apostille services in the ministry of external affairs branch secretariat in the RPO Secunderabad.

These units would function between 9 am and 1 pm on all working days during the lockdown period.

POLICE BOOK 6,350 LOCKDOWN VIOLATORS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The Hyderabad police booked 6,350 lockdown violation cases and seized 3,574 vehicles for being found on the roads without proper reason, on Monday.

A total of 4,501 cases were booked for violating the lockdown, 1,529 for not wearing a mask or wearing one improperly, 251 for not maintaining social distancing, 22 for being part of large gatherings, 47 for consumption of tobacco products in public. Besides, the Hyderabad police went the extra mile to help distressed persons. When a 61-year-old woman was begging for money to buy juice for her 25-year-old son was admitted at the MNJ Cancer Hospital, Asifnagar inspector Ravinder, after inquiring with her, gave her ₹2,000 and dropped her in a police vehicle at the hospital.

Besides, two constables of the Hussaini Alam police traced a seven-year-old girl who did not return after her tuition classes. Her father Masiyar Rahman gave an oral complaint at the Hussaini Alam police who traced the girl.

METRO TIMING REVISED: LAST TRAIN AT 1 PM

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar on Monday directed Hyderabad Metro Rail officials to extend the services by one more hour during the lockdown period until June 9.

Accordingly, the last train in each direction will now leave the terminal station at 1 pm instead of 11.45 am, and reach the destination station at 2 pm from Tuesday.

There is no change in the starting time and the first train will start from the terminal stations at 7 am.

The CS complimented HMRL officials for providing good service while maintaining safety protocols amid the pandemic.

He travelled in a Metro Rail from the Khairatabad station to Ameerpet to oversee the safety arrangements put in place at the stations. He was accompanied by HMRL managing director N.V.S. Reddy, L&T HMRL managing director K.V.B. Reddy and other officials. During the trip, Somesh Kumar interacted with passengers and enquired about the services and Covid-19 safety measures. The commuters appreciated the facilities and arrangements. They requested the Chief Secretary to extend the Metro Rail timings so that they can reach their destinations comfortably after the closure of their offices and business establishments.

● **THERE IS** no change in the starting time and the first train will start from the terminal stations at 7 am.

● **THE CHIEF SECRETARY** complimented HMRL officials for providing good service while maintaining safety protocols amid the pandemic.

Gated communities face scarcity of Covid vaccine

Many societies have established rules; focus on vulnerable groups

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Only a few doses are being made available for Covid-19 vaccinations being carried out in gated communities of Kondapur, Gachibowli, Kompally, Yaprall, Trimulgherry, Nacharam and other areas on outskirts of the city.

As a result, priority groups are being vaccinated first. For example, in Secunderabad, Trimulgherry and Kompally,

senior citizens are being given preference. In gated communities of Nacharam, preference is being given to those who venture out, like shopkeepers, traders and company employees.

Mohammed Mustafa, a shopkeeper says, "We decided to vaccinate young people first, as they are the ones venturing out. Once the lockdown is lifted, there will be business commitments, which will force us to travel. We can get

● **A LOT** of members, however, prefer getting vaccinated at local public health centres, as they feel those are safe with regard to the quality of vaccination.

vaccinated at that time." A lot of members, however, prefer getting vaccinated at local public health centres, as they feel those are safe with regard to the quality of vaccination. At

other places, they may get duped with something else being given in the name of vaccination. C. Shanker of Neredmet says, "For vaccination, we want to visit only government centres as they are safe. If government sets up camps in residential societies, a lot more people can get vaccinated at the earliest."

Meanwhile, societies have formulated guidelines for implementing the vaccination process.

They are focusing on the most vulnerable groups like senior citizens and those with co-morbid conditions.

Dr Harish Rao, senior general physician, says, "There are people coming up with lots of requests. Many are keeping their social and economic background in mind before opting for the vaccine. There are also Covid-19-recovered patients, who will have to wait for three months before they can take the vaccine."

Lockdown spell brings down Covid cases in TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The state is registering fewer Covid-19 cases every day due to the lockdown but experts are waiting and watching to see if the longer relaxation of eight hours given by the government could cause more cases to erupt.

Experts state that whatever has been achieved is due to the lockdown and it is very important for the government to strictly implement masks and social distancing norms.

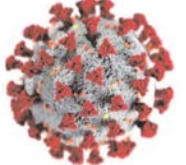
People who roam around relentlessly are also the superspreaders stated doctors. People on bikes without masks, shopkeepers not wearing masks properly and also the vegetable, fish and fruit markets are huge hubs where crowd monitoring is required.

Dr Narsinga Reddy, senior member of Indian Medical Association in Telangana, said, "We have to see how the graph of new cases is during this relaxation time. Till

the vaccination system is improved and large number of people are vaccinated, the risk continues for everyone."

Small private hospitals in districts are not being allotted vaccines according to their demand. A senior hospital manager in Warangal and Karimnagar said, "We got only 1,000 doses of vaccine and they were over in three days. Now the government is not supplying as they don't have. These gaps in vaccination are becoming a challenge. People are anxious and they are coming out of homes for vaccines. As they are not maintaining proper safety precautions there are cases of infection too."

People coming to hospitals at random and demanding vaccines has also been noted in the districts. Improper messages, availability of vaccines in a particular area or hospital is leading to gathering of people which is also leading to crowding and super spreader events.

DAILY COVID BULLETIN DATA		Update: Cases Deaths	
		May 31, 2021	
Fresh Cases		2,524	
Deaths		18	
Tests Done		87,110	
Active Cases		34,084	
Total Cases		5,78,827	
Total Deaths		3,281	
Highest New Cases		Lowest New Cases	
GHMC (Hyderabad)	307	Adilabad	9
Ranga Reddy	142	Nirmal	12
Khammam	134	Kamareddy	16
Bhadradi-Kothagudem	128	Narayanpet	17
Medchal-Malkajgiri	114	Sangareddy	22

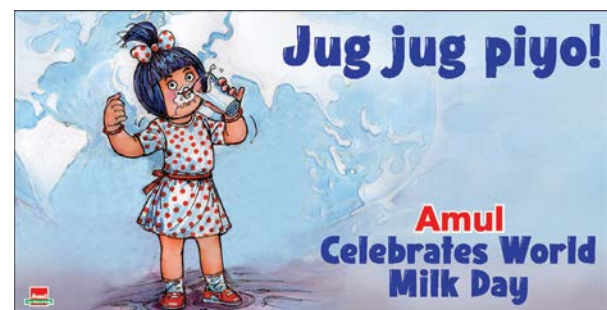
Relaxation blues



1. Additional Commissioner of Police Shikha Goel with East Zone DCP M. Ramesh Reddy check vehicles at Dilsukhnagar, during lockdown relaxation, on Monday
— P. SURENDRA

2. Motorists throw the barricades and drive. Police personnel had placed them to stop entry in a lane in Secunderabad.
— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

3. Traffic slows down as the time for relaxation of lockdown nears in Hyderabad on Monday.
— DC



Apollo Hospitals get JCI accreditation

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Adopting the best clinical practices and patient safety measures have earned the Apollo Hospitals Hyderabad the Joint Commission International Accreditation for a record sixth time.

The JCI is an internationally acknowledged gold standard and renewed triennially and the accreditation is given to a select few reputed healthcare institutions globally.

JCI Accreditation involves a rigorous process including evaluation of performance by an internationally reputed team of experts in areas like medical expertise, facilities management, staff qualification, organisational leadership and efforts to improve safety and quality of services.

This distinctive accreditation reiterates Apollo Hospitals' commitment and constant endeavour to offer highest quality care and ensures utmost safety for patients, the group said. "JCI accreditation is a tes-



Dr Sangita Reddy

timony to Apollo's dedication and commitment to deliver the best possible care to patients. Apollo's patient-centric approach and care on par with the best globally, enabled it to conform with JCI's strenuous parameters. Kudos to the team and the expert clinicians for their tireless initiative and commitment to highest quality standards spanning over the last eighteen years," said Dr Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group.

Woman, kids become homeless due to virus

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 31

Those who are familiar with in-laws' cruelty only in pulp series on television, here is a tear-jerking story in real. A woman in Rajanna Sircilla district was first made to infest with deadly Coronavirus and then thrown out of her mother-in-law's house in an act of utmost inhumanity.

The victim, a resident of Thimmapur village of Yellareddy mandal in the district, got married to a native of Nemaligutta thanda of Somaripet village in Machareddy mandal in Kamareddy district three years ago.

Her husband went to Odisha in search of a job seven months ago and was working as a tractor driver there. They have one son and a daughter. Last week, her mother-in-law contracted Coronavirus and was staying in home quarantine as she was undergoing treatment for the pandemic. Upset over being kept away from others in a separate room, the mother-in-

law developed hatred against the woman. She allegedly forcefully hugged the woman and even her small children in an attempt to make sure they also contracted the virus. She was successful and the woman tested positive three days ago.

Having learnt about the test result of the woman, her in-laws threw her and her children out of the house. They did not even listen to the locals who requested them to take them back to the house.

Coming to know about the incident, the woman's sister who resides at Racharla village of Gollapalli mandal brought the victim to her house and is keeping her in home quarantine and providing treatment.

Meanwhile, the woman's sister, along with the locals, demanded that the police officials take immediate action against the in-laws of the woman who were responsible for spreading Coronavirus and for harassing and behaving rudely with the woman and children.

Black fungus stays put, city doctors on toes

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Though the state has witnessed a slight reduction in the number of new admissions of black fungus patients, it does not mean there is a respite, opined ENT specialists in the city. The number of Covid-19 recovered patients suffering from black fungus continues to be high and admissions in city hospitals are mostly from districts.

The patients are from the age-group of 30 to 50 years and the maximum of those

who are suffering from the disease are males.

Dr Janardhan Rao Jagini, head of the department and consultant ENT surgeon at the Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences (KIMS) Hospital, Secunderabad, says, "Patients are still coming with pain in the cheek, discoloration of the eyeballs and also invasion in the palate. We now have to give them amphotericin B in hospital setup only according to the new rules. For this reason, the stay of the patient is 15 days and they have to be

monitored for reactions of medicines."

Apart from surgical interventions, amphotericin B and Posaconazole are being administered via injections only for better outcomes. Serious patients require monitoring of kidney, liver and heart functions also.

The Government ENT Hospital has completed a total of 370 surgeries of which 198 were on male patients and 172 females. Most of the patients had involvement in the eyes, nose and jaws region.

There are a total of 281 in-patients and there were 32 new admissions on Monday. Doctors say that there are admissions late at night also as some patients who are coming from far flung districts are reaching after 6 pm to the hospital. The night shelter outside the hospital has been set up for that reason.

There are also doctors from the emergency section to attend to those who come late at night, said senior doctors at the ENT Hospital. There are 250 patients in Gandhi

Hospital of which 100 have undergone surgeries in the last one week.

Meanwhile, the Central government has allotted 1,200 vials of amphotericin B to the state. There is a need to judiciously use these medicines, stated senior health officials, adding that the dispensation is only to hospitals based on reports of the patient.

A senior ENT doctor in a multi-specialty hospital says, "I have 30 patients and require 150 vials per day. It is tedious but there is no option right now for

us and the patients' attendants. There are also alternative injections used in hospitals set up after the first line of treatment is completed."

Amphotericin B Emulsion will be available in the market by next week, according to Celon Laboratories Private Limited. The drug will be supplied to hospitals and is being priced at ₹4,000 to ₹4,500 per vial.

Experts state that they will see a rush of black fungus cases till June as more and more patients recover from Covid-19.

PERMIT | REVOKED The govt has received 166 complaints against 105 hospitals in the state 6 more hosps lose permit for Covid care

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Permission for treating Covid-19 patients was revoked for six more private hospitals on Monday. A total of 16 hospitals have faced action by the government so far for excess and irrelevant charges, mismanagement and lack of proper attention in patient care.

The six hospitals whose permissions were revoked were: Padmaja Hospital at Medchal, Life Line Medicure Hospital at

Alwal, Max Care Hospital at Hanamkonda in Warangal Urban, TX Hospital at Uppal, Lalitha Hospital at Warangal Urban and Sri Sai Ram Hospital at Sangareddy.

The government has received 166 complaints against 105 hospitals in the state. The government has issued 105 showcause notices and the grievances of the patients have been sent to them.

Many of them have complained that compared to the billing charges listed out by the government, the

● **MANY** OF them have complained that compared to the billing charges listed out by the government, the private hospitals charged more.

● **THEY ALSO** complained about the lack of care and that there was no one to give them updates on the status of the patient.

private hospitals charged more. They also complained about the lack of care and that there was no one to give them updates

on the status of the patient. The relatives of patients in a critical condition have alleged that they were clueless till the last minute. They were not given information on the condition of the patient, the relatives alleged in their complaints.

The action has been initiated by the office of the Director of Public Health.

Reacting to the government action, Telangana Hospital and Nursing Homes Association president Dr Kishan Rao said, "The billing criteria is a

challenge as the government has not taken into account the procurement price. When the price of oxygen cylinder and medicines is four to five times more than the normal cost, how is the hospital to treat the patient? We are asking the public health department to revise the rates. It is not possible to work at the rates offered by the government."

Issues regarding to patient care as well as updating their relatives on the medical status has been a challenge not only

in private hospitals but also in government establishments.

A senior pulmonologist at a private hospital on condition of anonymity said, "Covid-19 is a very unpredictable disease. We find that the patient is improving and responding well and after a few hours there is a sudden collapse. People have been fine for three days and turned critical in the next five days and died. It is very difficult for us to give a proper picture to the relatives even if we want to."

CITY RECORDS THREE SUICIDES IN A DAY

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Three persons, including two sexagenarians, died by suicide in different incidents in the city.

A 68-year-old retired senior assistant, K. Satyanarayana Murthy, who was suffering from bone cancer, died by jumping from a building. Police said he used to suffer the after-effects of chemotherapy and often told his family that he would rather die. In a second case, 60-year-old Anjamma, who lived with her relatives in Medipally, had a quarrel with them and went out. On Monday she was found dead in a water tank. Medipally police suspect that she died by suicide and booked a case.

A 40-year-old watchman, Akbar Khan, after an argument with his wife, climbed a transformer in an inebriated condition and came in contact with the live high tension wires. He was electrocuted and fell down. He sustained severe head injuries and died on the spot in Akbarbagh of Saidabad. Police booked a case and further investigation is underway.

IN BRIEF

CHILKUR BALAJI
TEMPLE TO
REMAIN SHUTDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The Chilkur Balaji temple will not be opening its doors for devotees till further notice, chief priest C.S. Soundararajan has said.

On Monday afternoon, Soundararajan had posted a video on social media stating that the temple will be opened for devotees from Tuesdays between 6 am and 1 pm during the lockdown relaxation period. Following this, the police approached Soundararajan and urged him to postpone the opening of temple for devotees, as the restrictions are still on with regard to opening of religious institutions.

Soundararajan posted another video stating that the temple will not be opened till further notice. Though temple will remain closed for devotees, "abhishekam" and requisite poojas of the deity are going on every day.

RURAL DEMAND
IS RESILIENT,
SAYS CEA

FROM PAGE 1

The manufacturing sector grew 5.8 per cent during the period.

Reacting to the Q4 GDP numbers, Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) Krishnamurthy Subramanian said there had been a marginal improvement in the Financial Year-21 GDP.

"The demand in rural India has been resilient. Earlier last year, rural India continued to aid the economy while urban India fought the initial wave of covid-19. The agriculture sector has been a silver lining, clocking consecutive growth," Subramanian said.

"After the quarter one numbers were released, we had said things will get better from here and had predicted growth. It is heartening to know those projections have held. Annual numbers signify a revival in demand. The second wave is likely to have hit some of the recoveries, and it will have some impact on the economy," the CEA added.

Separately, higher tax collections helped arrest fiscal deficit (excess of government expenditure over revenue) at 9.3 per cent of the GDP in FY21 as against 9.5 per cent projected previously and 3.5 per cent estimated when the Budget was presented in February 2020.

● **AFTER THE quarter one numbers were released, we had said things will get better from here and had predicted growth. It is heartening to know those projections have held. Annual numbers signify a revival in demand, Chief Economic Adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian said.**

U.S. DOCS LAUNCH
WEBSITE TO HELP
HEALTH STAFFDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

A group of doctors and professionals from the USA has launched an initiative to provide virtual time-sensitive information to healthcare workers who are operating in rural areas of the Telugu states. This team, dubbed 'Project Madad', has come up with a website, which acts as a virtual dashboard of medical facilities that are available.

It also seeks to provide proper education and training to local healthcare workers and registered medical practitioners (RMPs) which the members of the project consider will be vital in controlling Covid-19 in rural India.

The team hopes that its model will be extended to other areas and assist healthcare workers to recognise Covid-19 symptoms, treat mild cases at homes and provide advice on vaccination, dangers of overmedication and other best practices.

"When the Covid-19 crisis started, we noticed that rural India was not getting attention at all. So, we took it upon ourselves to provide the healthcare workers with requisite information," said project lead Raja Karthikeya who is based in New York.

Minneapolis-based Dr Subbarao Inampudi, an diagnostic radiology specialist, said, "We emphasised to RMPs that 80 per cent of people who contract Covid will do well. What you really want to do is decrease panic, and convert fear into carefulness," he said.

Banks merger hits farmers

Farmers have not submitted new IFSC, may lose Rythu Bandhu funds

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY I
DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The merger of some public sector banks (PSU) banks in April 2020 has created troubles for farmers availing Rythu Bandhu benefits across Telangana. The state government has decided to deposit Rythu Bandhu amount for kharif season from June 15 to 25.

The state government has been crediting Rythu Bandhu amount of ₹5,000 per acre directly into the bank accounts of farmers since December 2018. For this, farmers have to

provide IFSC codes of their bank branches to the agriculture department.

However, farmers having accounts in Andhra Bank, Corporation Bank, Syndicate Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce, Dena Bank and Vijaya Bank, which were merged into other banks, failed to provide new IFSC to the agriculture department. Following the merger, the IFSC codes of all these bank branches changed in April 2020.

Despite this, farmers did not face any trouble for the past one year and

● **FARMERS, MOSTLY from rural and interior areas, were not aware of banking and IFSC and the state's Rythu Bandhu Samitis constituted from the village level upwards must take the initiative to educate farmers and ensure they submit revised bank details to agriculture department before June 10.**

received Rythu Badhu even after the merger because the banks had allowed old IFSC codes until March 31 this year. Officials of the agricul-

ture department stated that if farmers fail to provide revised bank details before June 10, they will lose Rythu Bandhu benefit as online money transfer will not be possible with old IFSC codes.

They say farmers, who are mostly from rural and interior areas, were not aware of banking and IFSC codes due to illiteracy and Rythu Bandhu Samitis constituted by state government from village level to state level should take the initiative to educate farmers and ensure they submit revised bank

details to agriculture department before June 10.

It was found that most of the farmers have accounts in Andhra Bank, Syndicate Bank and Vijaya Bank, who now stare at losing Rythu Bandhu benefits.

Officials asked farmers to submit a copy of their Aadhaar card, new bank's passbook, agriculture land passbook immediately to agriculture officers or agriculture extension officers of respective mandals failing which they will lose out on Rythu Bandhu benefits.



Etala Rajendar, accompanied by BJP leaders Bandi Sanjay, V. Vivek and Tarun Chugh leave after a meeting with BJP president JP Nadda in New Delhi on Monday.

— D. Kamraj

TRS cadre tracks Ravinder moves

DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 31

The TRS cadre in the composite Nizamabad district is curious about the political future of former Yellareddy MLA Yenugu Ravinder Reddy. It is believed that Ravinder Reddy is all

set to leave the party soon. He has been sailing with former minister Etala Rajendar and presently is in New Delhi to meet the BJP leadership.

Ravindra Reddy is a founder-member of the TRS and is a four-time MLA from Yellareddy

Assembly constituency. A defeat in 2018 Assembly elections and entry of Yellareddy Congress MLA Jajala Surrender into the TRS, changed the political equations in the constituency. Ravinder Reddy feels that the party high command

has been ignoring him for the past few months. He has strong cadre support in the constituency and some of his supporters advised him to join BJP. It is believed that Reddy and Etala will decide on joining BJP or gloating a new political party.

DASOJU: HIRE
ALL REMAINING
893 NURSESDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

AICC spokesperson Dasoju Shraavan said that unemployed youth were suffering due to the mistakes committed by TS Public Service Commission.

After interacting with newly selected staff nurses, he said that it was in November 2017 that the government gave a notification for 3,311 staff nurse placements. While 21,319 applicants appeared for the exam, 2,418 were appointed but the fate of the remaining 893 was kept hanging as a result of which many were subject to mental tensions. He requested the TSPSC chairman to place them immediately.

Cong. attacks KCR on
farm purchases, CovidDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Congress MLC T Jeevan Reddy came down heavily against the government for 'blatantly lying' that grain procurement was progressing at a fast pace. He alleged that the government was extorting five kgs from every quintal of grain while millers were looting them of ₹2,500 to ₹5,000 which the government is giving under Rythu Bandhu scheme.

At a press meet here, he recalled that earlier governments had exempted ₹11 meant for hamali charges at purchasing centres but the TRS government



Ponnala Lakshmaiah

had not been doing so. He said that the government has failed in controlling the millers, and demanded that the produce should be procured on electronic wave breeze receipt.

Speaking separately, former PCC chief Ponnala Lakshmaiah lashed out at Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao for not

recognising the importance of saving precious lives. He said Rao was instigating junior doctors with his adamant attitude.

Lakshmaiah said that the Centre had failed in controlling Covid-19 and a country like Kenya was in a position to help India.

He said it was unfortunate that GST was being levied even on life-saving drugs and urged the government to take suggestions from Opposition parties instead of counter-attacking it.

Meanwhile, former MP, V Hanumantha Rao said it was painful to see a strong leader like Etala Rajendar joining the BJP.

AP HC allows use of K'patnam
concoction on Covid patientsDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 31

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has permitted use of ayurvedic preparations for Covid patients with an exception for eye drops and directed the state government not to interfere but ensure compliance with Covid guidelines in relation to their use.

A vacation bench comprising Justice K. Vijaya Lakshmi and Justice D. Ramesh heard the petitions filed by traditional medical practitioner B. Anandaiah of Krishnapatnam in Nellore district who recently came up with some cures, and others, here on Monday.

Special government pleader Ch Suman submitted to the court that Anandaiah was administering five types of Ayurvedic preparations known as P, F, L, K and eye drops. The samples of P, F and L were sent for analysis and they were found to be satisfactory, the court was told.

The government pleader informed the court that the state government does not have any

Teacher who backed
formula succumbsDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE MAY 31

Retired headmaster Bina Kotaiah, 68, of Thinnelapudi village in Kota mandal, who was in the news for backing the ayurvedic concoction of Krishnapatnam's B. Anandaiah, died while undergoing treatment at the Government General Hospital in Nellore on Monday. He had tested negative for Covid at the time of admission.

Kotaiah shot to fame after the release of a video clip in he praised the Anandaiah concoction. He had stated that he could recover from

breathing issues after taking Anandaiah's herbal eye drops.

The retired headmaster was admitted to the GGH on May 23 with serious lung infection besides cough and breathlessness. In view of the buzz surrounding him, authorities had deputed a team of doctors including a pulmonologist, a physician and other experts to save him.

Speaking to the media here on Monday, medical officer Dr Sophia said the CT scan score of Kotaiah was 22/25 and both his lungs were damaged to the extent of 90 per cent by May 28.

He submitted that the K sample would be drawn as and when available from Anandaiah and would be sent for analysis. Its report would be submitted by June 3.

With regard to the eye drops, it would take two

YSRC REBEL MP
MOVES NHRCDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 31

YSR Congress rebel MP K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju called on National Human Rights Commission chairman, Justice P.C. Pant, in New Delhi on Monday. He complained to Justice Pant that while in custody of the AP CID, he had been tortured, which is a violation of his human rights.

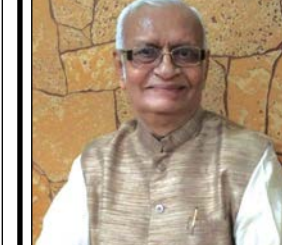
Sources said the NHRC chairman assured him that he would order a probe into the complaint.

7th DEATH ANNIVERSARY
IN LOVING MEMORY OFRAJENDER MOHAN
JOHN SANGHA

DoB: 02.07.1953 DoD: 01.06.2014
Seven years have rolled away but your memories are still as fresh... the warmth in your smile and tone are ever remembered.

In grief: Minni Shashikala (wife), Shirley, Rachel & Carol (daughters), Sai (son-in-law), Aria (granddaughter) and friends.

SHRADDANJALI



Shri Rajnikant L. Mehta.

D.O.D: 31.05.2021
Inserted by:
Dipti & Bakul Mehta.
Anita & Dr. Ajeet Ekbote.
Nita & Rajendra Dattary.
Minakshi & Rajinder Verma.

(CA-3632)

OBITUARY



SIRISTA ABBI

With sorrow, we have to share The passing away of SIRISTA ABBI on May 30th, 2021. We are mourning. The loss of a Wife, a Mother, Nanima, Dadi, a Sister and a Aunt. We love you always. "Your body is away from me, but there is window open from my heart to yours." -- RUMI

(A/2122/D00014)

OBITUARY

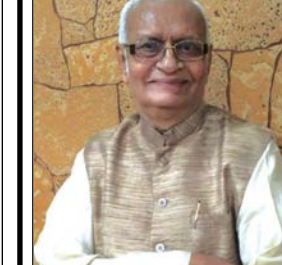


Ranga Kashinath

DoD: 31/05/2021.
We sadly inform the demise of our beloved father(BABA) Ranga Kashinath
Funeral at Amberpet shamshanavatika
Deeply mourned by: RANGA family
Son's, Daughter's, Grand son's, Grand daughter's and Great grand daughter's.
Contact:9849567724,9505967816.

(CA-3631)

OBITUARY



Shri Rajnikant L. Mehta.

D.O.D: 31.05.2021
Inserted by:
Nirav & Niyati Mehta.
Prajay Mehta.
Dhara Mehta.

(CA-3631)

Kishan Reddy calls for
joint fight against KCRDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy called on leaders from across the spectrum to come together to bring down the 'dictatorial' governance of K. Chandrashekar Rao. He was reacting to a question on former minister Etala Rajendar's political moves.

Kishan Reddy stated the leadership was strengthening the BJP to counter the dictatorship of Chandrashekar Rao. He said that everyone, including senior leaders, welcomed Rajendar's decision. He said that dissatisfaction is natural in any party and refused to react to comments of BJP leader E. Peddi Reddy.

At another press meet, Kishan Reddy said that consultants have been called for the Regional Ring Road DPR. He said that it has been announced that tenders will open on Tuesday. He said he was confident that the Regional Ring Road (RRR) will be a game-changer for Telangana.

Kishan Reddy stated that the 340-km regional ring road is to be set up at a cost of ₹17,000 crore. He informed that the Centre has allocated ₹18,492 crore for the construction of 1.272 km highways and expansion of other roads in Telangana. He said the Centre has allotted AP about 872 km of road construction at a cost of ₹14,630 crore in the 2021-22 Budget.

SAD DEMISE
Our Beloved
Sri. Rajnikant L. Mehta
(Expired On 31 May 2021)
You will always be Remembered
In Profound Grief
Sri Mukund L. Mehta & Family
Prakash Lights
Illuminating Ideas

OBITUARY

Shri Rajnikant L. Mehta.
D.O.D: 31.05.2021
Inserted by:
Light Craft - Sec-bad.
Prakash Tyre.
Prakash Tyre House.
Prakash Tyre Agencies.

(CA-3631)

MY GUARDIAN ANGEL

Smt. SUMATHI RAVI KUMAR
D/o. Judson Kavoori
D.O.D: 01-05-2021
It is quite disturbing and distressing to lose you forever. Unable to reconcile that you can not be seen again ever. Your beloved Sisters, Brothers and their Families. Join me in wishing you a Happy Birthday Rest in peace till we meet again.
K. Ravi Kumar (Husband)

(S/2122/D00264)

I have fought my good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept my faith...
I Timothy 4:7
With profound grief we wish to inform the demise of

Dr. Alice Juliana Chellapa
on 31st May 2021
D/o Kanamaja Albert Jonathann
(01-11-1946 - 31-05-2021)
Dr. Paul S Chellapa
on 24th May 2021
S/o Iyadurai Solomon
(18-02-1946 - 24-05-2021)
Inserted by Family Members 9849206816 9849937780

(CA-3632)

12th DAY CEREMONY
On 01-06-2021

Smt. MADURI RAMADEVI
D.O.D: 21-05-2021
W/o Mr. Lakshman Rao
With Love: Sons, Daughter, Son-in-law
Daughter-in-law & Grand Children
Contact: 9908480108

(S/2122/D00265)

OBITUARY

REV. B. P. JEEVARATHNAM
Senior Pastor, MB Church
"Chennaram, Nagerkurnool"
Date of Birth: 15-06-1940
Date of Death: 30-05-2021
Inserted by:
Wife, Sons, Daughter-in-Law
And Grand daughters.
Johnson B.J. 630-442-4885
Vijay Kumar 944-045-4302

(CA-3632)

OBITUARY

Shri Rajnikant L. Mehta.
D.O.D: 31.05.2021
Your memory will eternally permeate our lives and manifest as blessings!
Fondly remembered by:
Madhu Ben Mehta.
Trupti & Dharmesh Mehta.
Ratna & Chandresh Mehta.
Darshana & Kumar Mehta.

(CA-3631)

OBITUARY

Shri Rajnikant L. Mehta.
D.O.D: 31.05.2021
Your memory will eternally permeate our lives and manifest as blessings!
Fondly remembered by:
Madhu Ben Mehta.
Trupti & Dharmesh Mehta.
Ratna & Chandresh Mehta.
Darshana & Kumar Mehta.

(CA-3631)

IN LOVING MEMORY

Smt. Minati Sen
14.02.1928 - 30.05.2021
Beloved Mother, Grandmother, Friend
INSERTED BY:
The Sen Family
Sumit & Rina, Sunee & Tripti,
Subid & Abha, Suhita & Apurba Chaudhuri
Suparba, Sunayana, Shubhanjan, Sukriti,
Romit, Veeresh, Ishani & Friends

(CA-3631)

8th DEATH ANNIVERSARY
The Lord gave, and the Lord taken away
blessed be the name of the lord. Job 1:21

GANTA VIKRAM PRASHANT KUMAR
S/o. Late G. Premnath Archibald
DOB: 01-07-1974 DOD: 01-06-2013
Inserted by:
Wife, Son & Daughter
Sisters - Brothers-in law
Nephews - Nieces

(S/2122/D00263)

SHORT TAKES



The duo was caught accepting a bribe from a woman for a sweeper's job. — DC

2 GHMC OFFICIALS CAUGHT TAKING BRIBE, ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) nabbed a GHMC deputy executive engineer and a field assistant for taking a bribe. They were caught red-handed by the agency.

The accused were identified as P. Mahalakshmi, the deputy executive engineer, and sanitary field assistant Y. Vijay Kumar of GHMC-Kapra.

According to the ACB, the accused demanded ₹20,000 from one A. Salamma to appoint her as sweeper in the place of her husband on compassionate grounds after he died.

Based on a complaint about the demand, ACB officials nabbed the GHMC staffers when they were accepting the bribe amount at Mallapur crossroads at Nacharam at around 6.45 am, from the complainant A. Srinivas, son of Salamma. The money was recovered from the possession of the two GHMC personnel, the ACB said.

They were arrested and produced before the ACB court. Further investigation is underway.

NO TOBACCO DAY OBSERVATIONS AT MANUU

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The National Service Scheme Cell (NSS) of the Maulana Azad National Urdu University (Manuu) observed the World No Tobacco Day under the direction of the Union health ministry.

Prof. S.M. Rahmatullah, Vice-Chancellor, administered the pledge online to the students and staff against the use of any kind of tobacco products. He said the use of tobacco causes lung damage and other diseases.

Prof. Siddiqui Mohd Mahmood, registrar, said tobacco products especially gutka increase the chances of oral cancer. Prof. Mohammad Fariyad, NSS coordinator, arranged the meeting. Prof. Abdul Wahid, Dean, School of Technology; Dr. Mohd Yousuf Khan, Principal, Polytechnic Hyderabad, were also present.

● **PROF. S.M. RAHMATULLAH**, Vice-Chancellor, administered the pledge online to the students and staff against the use of any kind of tobacco products.

VACATIONS UNTIL JUNE 15 FOR INSTITUTIONS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Sri Devasena, Commissioner and Director of School Education, on Monday extended the summer holidays for schools and DIET colleges till June 15.

Orders were issued to close all educational institutions and regional joint directors of school education, Hyderabad and Warangal, and district educational officers and all DIET principals were directed to take action accordingly.

Earlier, a delegation of the Progressive Recognised Teachers Union representatives led by Legislative Council members K. Janardhan Reddy and K. Raghotham Reddy and former MLC P. Ravinder called on education minister Sabitha Indra Reddy and submitted a representation requesting that the number of holidays be increased in the wake of the pandemic.

● **ORDERS WERE ISSUED** to close all educational institutions and regional joint directors of school education, Hyderabad and Warangal, and district educational officers and all DIET principals were directed to take action accordingly.

SCB fire station work delayed due to Covid

Labour crunch causing issues with construction

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The construction works of the first fire station in the Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) limits too have been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. In all probability, the station, which was expected to be operational in three months' time, will be delayed further.

The officials are having a tough time, when it comes to finding labourers to construct the station, owing to the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

● **"THIS STATION** would be a normal station, but the fire tenders would have all the capabilities, like being a snorkel station or one with a telescopic ladder," said district fire officer, Madhusudhan Rao.

"It might take close to four months for the station to come into existence. Keeping the pandemic in mind, we are expecting the station to be fully constructed in four months," said a senior official of the Telangana State Disaster

Response and Fire Services Department.

This fire station, which has been a pending request since 2017, will be located near Teachers Colony in Trimulgherry. Currently, the closest fire station is the one at Paradise.

"This station would be a normal station, but the fire tenders would have all the capabilities, like being a snorkel station or one with a telescopic ladder," said district fire officer, Madhusudhan Rao.

It might be recalled that this project was part of the state government's

plan to provide each Assembly constituency with at least one fire station. The then chief executive officer (CEO) Sujatha Gutpa was approached by MLA G Sayanna asking the former to part with land for the fire station.

The fire station now plays an important role as there are several vulnerable buildings within its limits, which can turn into a fire hazard. With nearly 320 colonies and over 10,000 commercial establishments in its limits, having a fire station is of paramount importance to the SCB.

RACHAKONDA POLICE CHIEF: SHUT SHOPS BY 12.30 PM

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh M. Bhagwat reviewed the enforcement of the lockdown following its extension by the government.

So far, the Rachakonda police has booked about 62,000 cases against lockdown violators for varied reasons which include not wearing or improper wearing of face masks, wandering on the roads during the lockdown period for improper reasons, large public gatherings. About 16,000 vehicles have been seized.

Speaking to the media, Bhagwat said, "People have been given more relaxation time as the state has witnessed a considerable decline in the growth of positive cases in the past few days."

He urged the people to utilise the relaxation period well, and not to step out during the lockdown. He cautioned e-pass holders not to misuse their permissions.

He stated that traffic monitoring will be continued strictly at the 47 checkpoints and at the five National Highway divergence points in the commissionerate limits. He said that only emergency vehicles and staff of essential services would get a chance to cross the barricades.

He said all shops and establishments should be closed by 12.30 pm in the commissionerate limits, and the lockdown will come into force from 1 pm. A grace period of an hour will be given to the public to reach their homes. To meet the deadline, business establishments would shut early.



Encroachments being demolished adjacent Kali Kaman near Charminar in the Old City of Hyderabad on Monday — GANDHI

GHMC rids Charminar kamans of enroachments

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) on Monday completely removed encroachments attached to Kali Kaman, one of the four arches on the roads leading to the historic Charminar.

Restoration of the interior slabs of the Kali Kaman, Char Kaman and the Machli Kaman has been completed, the GHMC said.

The corporation had taken up the task to remove the encroachments located close to the four arches which are considered as the gateway to Charminar and restore its glory. The



Machli Kaman, one of the four arches surrounding Charminar, wear a deserted look on Monday. — DC

Charkaman has been previously partially restored.

GHMC Executive engineer D. Suresh said with an estimate of ₹1.48 crore, restoration

works have been sanctioned and 42 properties were affected for restoration of these arches. External plastering works will start soon.

Desperate times



Hundreds of migrants are forced to take shelter outside Secunderabad railway station owing to delay in train timings. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Students can enrol online, says Intermediate Board

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Students wanting admission in intermediate first year course run by government junior colleges in Telangana will have to first self-enrol online in view of Coronavirus pandemic.

Online self-enrolment forms will be available on official website of Telangana State Board of Intermediate Education (TSBIE) — www.tsbie.cgg.gov.in from June 1 onwards. Apart from details, students will also need to mention their aggregate percentage of marks.

The government's move to first enrol students online is for preventing students or their parents from physically going to colleges for collecting admission forms.

TSBIE came up with the idea of online enrolment after it was found that post declaration of SSC results, students and their parents have been approaching private and government colleges physically during lockdown relaxation hours seeking admission forms. It has also been found that



Students flock the admission office of Falaknura college with no regard for Covid norms. — P. SURENDRA

while admission forms are being collected on a day, they are being submitted on another day. This poses a risk for students and parents. To avoid any threat from the disease, the state government has opted for online mode of submitting forms.

Private colleges have also been asked to create online facility, including for payment of fee.

Many junior colleges are also allowing monthly payment of fee, as Covid-induced economic distress has been high among people.

Dr R. Raghu, manager of a private junior college in Habsguda, says, "We have created two types of forms — one where full fee of the year is paid with a discount of 10 per cent; the other in monthly instalments. Maximum parents have opted for the instalment option. The 10 percent discount has attracted only a few," he stated. Annual fee will be in the range of ₹50,000 to ₹60,000 per year. Owing to financial distress, most parents are finding it difficult to pay such an amount at one go.

WATER BOARD GIVES NOD FOR SUNKESULA PROJECT

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB) on Monday issued the work order for executing the Sunkesula project to draw water for the state capital from Krishna River basin. Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL) has bagged this order.

Drawing Krishna water from Nagarjunasagar through Sunkesula project will enable the government to ensure sufficient drinking water supply for the twin cities till 2050. Of the total project cost of ₹1,450 crore, ₹725 crore has been sanctioned in the Budget.

Krishna Drinking Water Supply Project envisages tapping 16.5 TMC ft of water from the Krishna amounting to 270 million gallons a day (MGD) in three phases. Each phase involves drawing 5.5 TMC ft of water from the Krishna, thereby adding 90 MGD of treated water to the water supply system of the Hyderabad Metropolitan area.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?

We have it for you

DECCAN CHRONICLE

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE No. 11/2021
Dated 28-05-2021

The undersigned on behalf of the President of India invites E-tenders through IREPS only for supply of following item:

Description in brief : Supply, installation and commissioning of Liquid Oxygen Gas Plant and supply of Liquid Medical Oxygen. (Qty-01). Tender No. 65215003A

Tender Due on upto 14:00 hrs. of 07-06-2021

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Principal Chief Materials Manager
PUB/61/AAS/PRBS/SWR/2021-22
Hubballi

NORTHERN RAILWAY
INVITATION OF TENDERS THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

Tender Notice No. 83215119 Date : 31.05.2021

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items :-

S.N	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01	83215119	C-Arm imaging system	01 No.	22.06.2021

NOTE -1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details.

2. No Manual offer will be entertained. 1166/21

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

Department of Atomic Energy
Hyderabad Regional Purchase Unit

Corrigendum to e-TENDER NOTICE

Last Date for Submission of Online Bid against NIT No.: **DPS/HRPU/NFC/E-6754/E-PT/ENG/17108** is extended upto **17/06/2021 up to 2:00 PM**.

Visit <https://etenders.dpsdae.gov.in> for details.

[DPS/HRPU/NFC/2122/03C1]

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY

Follow us on [@SCRailwayIndia](https://twitter.com/SCRailwayIndia). Details of the Tender Notices of S.C. Railway can be seen on our website: www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

Notice Inviting Expression of Interest for providing COVID testing facility centers at Railway Stations
Notice No.02/2021 (EOI)

EOI (Expression of Interest) is called from interested Laboratories approved by 'NABL' and Hospitals who have the Lab facility approved by 'NABL' (National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories) to setup COVID testing centre at important Railway stations over Guntur Division.

Details of the notice are also available on www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in. Last date of submission of applications by 12:00 hours of 07-06-2021. For any further information, can email on srdcmgmt@gmail.com.

A0516 Senior Divisional Commercial Manager, Guntur.

Government of India, Department of Atomic Energy, Nuclear Fuel Complex, Civil Maintenance Section, New CMS Building, ECIL Post, Hyderabad-500062.

CORRIGENDUM

Dates for Tender Notice No. M/488/2021 for the work "Housekeeping and sanitation services for upkeep of office buildings at various plants of NFC, Hyderabad." are extended: Tender request : up to 03/06/2021, Online Submission : 17/06/2021, Tender Opening - 25/06/2021.

All other conditions remain unaltered. Detailed NIT available in www.tenderwizard.com/DAE

Sd/- अजीश्वर आग्निवा (सि.एम्.एन. एवं ई.एम्.एस.) / Superintending Engineer (CMS&EMS) राधुपति की ओर से और के लिए / For and on behalf of the President of India

ACTION | PLAN Better water quality would help in conserving biodiversity, say officials

Draft plan to clean lakes: PCB

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

The team of officials set up to ascertain the water quality in city lakes, on Monday, directed the state government to come up with a proper action plan to clean up the water bodies.

The team comprised of officials from the Telangana State Pollution Control Board (TSPCB) and the National Green Tribunal (NGT), issued its order

after inspecting 19 water bodies in and around Hyderabad including Ameenpur Pedda Cheruvu.

Following the inspection to ascertain water quality and the source of contamination, the committee said, "It is seen that there are a lot of improvements to be done for increasing water quality in the water bodies. It has been time and again reiterated that the water bodies will have to be protected

against encroachment and pollution. They have to be properly maintained as they play a great role as a water storing reservoir during the rainy season and it can be used for several purposes if it is properly treated. It will help conserve aquatic biodiversity and also attract birds."

It has directed local bodies, the Lake Protection Committee and the TSPCB to come with a proper action plan as to

how they were going to protect water bodies including the maintenance of inlets and outlets to make them alive. The action plan should be spelled out within a shorter timeline within which they can be implemented to protect the water bodies as has been committed under Article 48 (A) of Constitution of India.

The tribunal has also directed the departments concerned to file

their independent statements and also a common action plan on or before June 29. The chief secretary and the concerned principal secretary are also directed to file their status report regarding the implementation of the decisions taken in the lower level for the purpose of protecting the water bodies before the next hearing date by e-mail immediately so as to enable them to comply with the direction.

DECCAN Chronicle

1 JUNE 2021

Propaganda fails in face of Covid crisis

In the aftermath of the suffering caused by the second wave of Covid, Prime Minister Narendra Modi might have been expected to apply balm in his monthly 'Mann ki baat' radio programme last Sunday even as he exhorted the nation to put fight together against the deadly virus. Instead, he chose to be propagandistic, as usual bombastic, diversionary, and for the most part irrelevant to the context of the present day. He was anything but contrite. In this respect, the PM's approach was fundamentally at odds with the propaganda ploy that RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat laid out for him in order to win the trust of the country in these most trying of circumstances.

The RSS leader had commenced his address, winding up the four-day long "Positivity Unbounded" sessions promoted by his outfit, with words that expressed sorrow at the nation-wide tragedy that unfolded before us. He then held the "people" responsible (presumably for being careless about Covid protocols), and also the administration and "the government". Only after pointing fingers did Mr Bhagwat speak of the need for "collective effort" to overcome the crisis. After this pep talk, it was evident that the RSS-BJP cadres across the country would fan out to apply the healing touch and engage in "sewa" or service. BJP president J. P. Nadda directed his party "not to celebrate" two years of the second Modi government but to throw themselves into the field to help those in need. Such exhortation is important when the "sewa" is meant to yield future electoral and political benefits. But the leader of the government did little more than self-promotion in his nationwide address last Sunday.

Showing scant sense of occasion, Mr Modi spoke of rural electricity connections, infrastructure, financial inclusion, availability of domestic water connections, "new confidence of peace and development" from the northeast to J&K, better farm yields in the year. He spoke of giving a "befitting reply(sic) to those who conspire against us" and not compromising on national security. This in fact appears out of line as even now Chinese soldiers remain parked deep inside our side of our perceived boundary. As distinct from Mr. Bhagwat and Mr Nadda, he was clearly grandstanding on the second anniversary of his second term. Few governments in a democracy might venture to do that.

In the backdrop of the severe shortage of medical oxygen which brought forth unprecedented scenes of suffering on a magnified national scale, eliciting the pity of the world, the PM boasted that India was now producing ten times the oxygen than it does in normal times. He did not pause to reflect that the grave crisis was self-inflicted as official recommendations regarding enhancing oxygen supply were consistently disregarded for more than a year. The PM cited offering free food grains to 800 million poor people as a signal achievement. For May and June this year, the additional amount of five kilograms per month — made necessary by utter economic dislocation and job losses — amounts to roughly ₹32/ per head- and there are no pulses in this pack, only rice or wheat. This alas is the real measure of Modi's India. Is there much to write home about?

Tejpal case: Don't judge victims

The Goa government's decision to appeal against a palpably poor judgment acquitting Tarun Tejpal of rape and pressing for an early hearing in the Bombay high court is to be welcomed. The verdict, delivered by a woman judge, was shockingly stereotypical of warped thinking that it went beyond being just bad in law. This was a clear instance of victim shaming as the complainant was described in the judgment as "smiling and looked happy, normal, in good mood," in photographs taken shortly after the alleged assault. The tone was accusatory as the judge recorded - "She did not look disturbed, reserved, terrified or traumatised in any way even though this was immediately after she claims to have been sexually assaulted."

The investigation itself may have been shoddy, too long drawn and the prosecution apparently not competent in arguing against a defence typically loaded against victims and exonerating those accused of rape. In the aftermath of the Nirbhaya gang rape, the laws were rewritten in 2013 to specify that failure to physically resist was not evidence of consent. What does not get ready recognition is that sexual harassment, which can work at various levels, can go beyond physical molestation and that a woman could be at the mercy of the power and domination of a man who is her superior at work.

In a male-dominated society misogynistic rulings are not rare. But this verdict went well beyond misogyny, straying often as it did into slander. There have been any number of rulings by the top court stating clearly that assumptions or facts about a woman's sexual history or character are not relevant. The standard of proof needed in a rape case, with the burden of proof devolving mostly upon the victim, is extremely high, which is why many may be getting away. The day a sexual harasser is punished for his intention as revealed in circumstantial evidence will represent true emancipation of women who are invariably at the receiving end. And that is when more victims will come forward to complain against sexual assaults.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

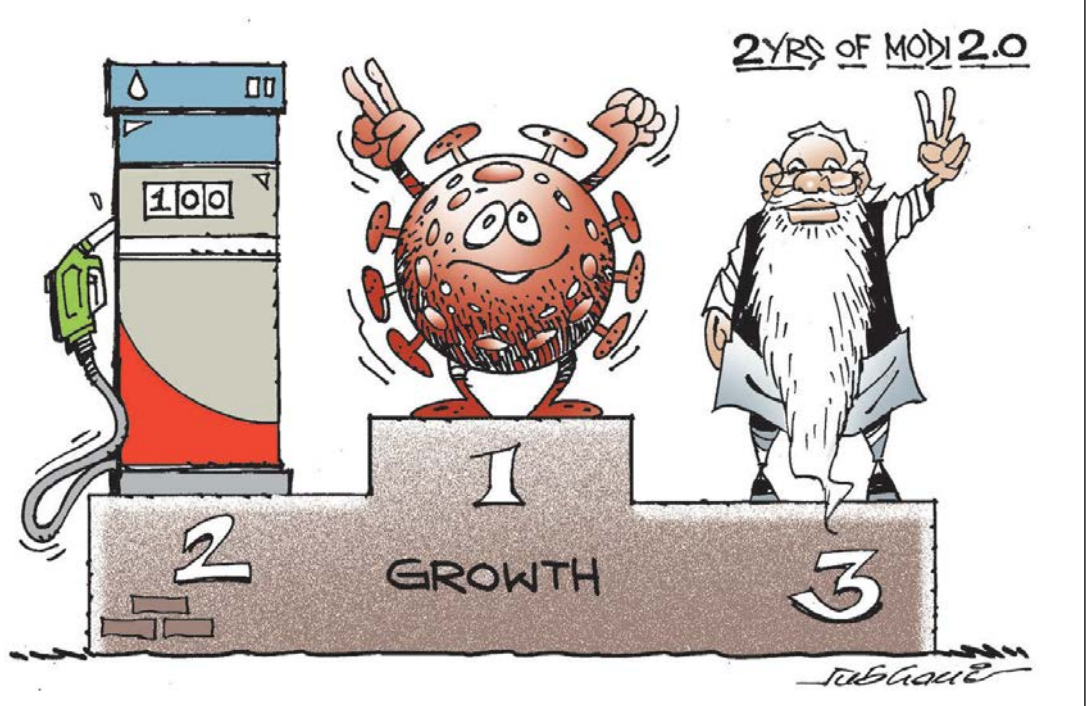
KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

K. SUBHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

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Chennai: SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325
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Subhani



To improve India's image, govt needs a reality check



K.C. Singh

External affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar's five-day visit to the United States needs closer examination, not for what was publicly articulated but their real intentions. In the middle of the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, the considerations must have been really weighty.

US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken tweeted that the two leaders had a productive discussion on "regional security and economic priorities to include Covid-19 relief efforts, the India-China border situation and our support for Afghanistan". The tweet ended by saying that as friends the two nations will address these "areas of shared concern". US national security adviser Jake Sullivan, who also met Mr Jaishankar, emphasised people-to-people contacts and shared values as the foundation of the US-India partnership, and finally listed three issues: "pandemic elimination, leading on climate change and support for an open and free Indo-Pacific". The emphasis on Covid-19 by both close advisers to President Joe Biden assumes significance. The rest are only a reiteration of the usual subjects on the US agenda, including China.

President Biden's foreign policy priorities, as adumbrated from the start of his presidency, are: China, climate change, US withdrawal from Afghanistan despite a paltry face-saver and reaffirmation of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Now, the Israel-Palestine standoff has got added due to the sudden outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East. Mr Blinken not even being in Washington for much of Mr Jaishankar's stay in the US capital underscores the sudden importance of the Mideast crisis. They met literally on the last day of Mr Jaishankar's visit.

Mr Jaishankar in turn

described his meeting with Mr Blinken as having "further solidified our strategic partnership and enlarged our agenda of cooperation". Ignoring the usual hyperbole, it's unclear how the agenda has "enlarged" when all the issues are old. India has been cautious to prioritise, keeping in mind the need not to provoke China, while working with the US and its partners in the four-nation Quad and carefully balancing India's traditional ties with Russia with closer US engagement. Mr Jaishankar also met the defence secretary, US trade representative and congressional leaders, while there was no contact with either President Biden, who has been known to "drop by" when key ministers are at the White House to meet the NSA, or Indian-origin vice-president Kamala Devi Harris, with whom Mr Jaishankar has had differences during the Trump presidency over India's handling of Kashmir.

What then was the real purpose behind the visit, as indeed its timing? Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government have been on the backfoot since the BJP's embarrassing defeat in West Bengal and the Covid-19 second wave, which the government clearly did not foresee or simply ignored despite warnings. To Mr Modi's consternation, he has also lost face internationally, damaging his carefully nursed post-Godhra image as a statesman. The government seriously erred in resting its Covid handling strategy on the premise that neither the Kumbh Mela nor the endless election rallies would exacerbate the lingering pandemic. The vaccination strategy was tailored to this assumption, with increased vaccine supply, treble the current production capacity of the two indigenous manufacturers, becoming available only after August. The aim was to

ratchet up the daily vaccination rate in the period September-December to 10 million jabs a day, to in theory vaccinate the entire 45-plus and bulk of the over-18 population before the Uttar Pradesh election in February next year.

This tendency to have even our health policy bend to electoral priorities rather than medical science has proven disastrous. A C-Voter survey indicates that for the first time since the PM assumed office seven years ago those dissatisfied with his performance exceed those who are satisfied. With pictures of overflowing cremation grounds and even bodies dumped in the Ganga or buried along its banks, and the international media carrying those pictures on their front pages, the government's immediate need was twofold — get an emergency supply of vaccines to bridge the gap till September and mend the Prime Minister's shattered image.

Mr Jaishankar began his visit to address these two issues in particular. But instead of facing the editorial boards of major newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, he chose the easier option of a calibrated chat at a think tank to answer the critics of his government. Unlike someone like late PM Atal Behari Vajpayee who would have allowed an urbane Jaswant Singh leeway to meet the media halfway to allay their concerns, Mr Jaishankar simply dug in stubbornly.

He went on the offensive on the Modi government being portrayed in a "certain way". In a tweet I asked if the minister understood whether this "way" was actually the media simply speaking truth to power? Which is their right, if not their

duty, in a democracy. The US state department released its 2020 Report on Religious Freedom on May 12, as the BJP-appointed administrator of Lakshadweep was busy imposing the Hindutva agenda on the Muslim-majority islands.

The minister may pummel the Indian media all he wants, but such actions bring international focus back on whether India under today's BJP any longer shares "values" with the US?

Mr Jaishankar's other agenda item was the emergency procurement of vaccines, out of the 80 million doses the US promised to release for international use. Two hurdles are in the way.

One, some AstraZeneca stock is feared contaminated during production and thus needs an audit. Two, the US may not divert the bulk to one nation, to maintain equity and its image. Interestingly, not a word was heard about the US pressing for a waiver at the World Trade Organisation on intellectual property.

In the coming days, America's willingness to bail out India will be known. *Global Times*, the Chinese government's English mouthpiece, is taunting that Mr Jaishankar's US visit was just "fanfare" and "blank checks". The US will help but may extract greater alignment with its interests in the Indo-Pacific against China, on climate change and trade.

It may also force India to curtail its Russian arms purchases, especially the S-400 missile system. The US would also want India to not rock the boat in Afghanistan and meet Pakistan halfway on Kashmir. Meanwhile, the US is silent on restoring the Generalised System of Preferences, revoked by President Trump. Thus, the vaccines may come at a strategic cost, as global hegemony don't run charities. Mr Modi's image is another matter, to recover which he needs more than aggressive wolf ministers. He needs a reality check.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

LOCKDOWN RELIEF

We are relieved to get seven hours of relaxation window in lockdown (7S lockdown for 10 more days, relaxation till 1 pm, DC, May 31). Extra one-hour grace period to enable people reach home is leniency during lockdown. However, the common man having to bear the brunt for 10 more days without relief from the state is unwarranted.

Adnan Ahmed Khan
Hyderabad

VACCINATION FOR ALL

Jabs for all Indians by year-end is easier said than done. Why do the ministers not say how many got one jab and how many two out of the 1.4 billion population? Let the Union health minister who is stoically silent make such claims.

Thomas K.E.
Hyderabad

It is sad that after nearly five months, the government has vaccinated only a tiny section of the population. It is important the government seek support of private hospitals. When RWAs and corporates are tying up with hospitals, why is the government barring hotels from offering a vaccine package?

N. Nagarajan
Hyderabad

SALE OF PRIME LANDS

Drastic times call for drastic measures. The decision of the state government to auction certain prime lands for funding welfare schemes is indeed brave. The inability of the Centre to disburse adequate funds to states is strange. Hence, self-help is the best help for the state in the given circumstances.

P.H. Hema Sagar

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Australian wheat for India

NEW DELHI, MAY 31.

Australia has given India 65,000 metric tons of wheat worth Rs. 2.85 crores. The rupee value of the wheat will be applied to the financing of development projects mutually agreed to by the two Governments.

This was formalised today in an exchange of letters between the Australian High Commissioner: Patrick Shaw, and the Secretary of the Department of Economic Affairs I.G. Patel.

The wheat has already been shipped to India.

Pervez Hoodbhoy



Why are Arabs powerless? It's not guns; ideas rule the world

FOR a terrible 11 days in May, the world watched hellfire rain upon the world's largest open-air prison camp, otherwise known as Gaza. The dazed, bleeding survivors crawling out of the rubble of collapsed buildings have experienced this before. Everyone knows this tragedy will repeat. In faraway Arab cities, people glumly watched the unhindered, televised bombing by Israeli jets. But the most they could manage was a few toothless resolutions and a few impotent slogan-chanting demonstrations trampling upon the Israeli flag.

What makes Israel with nine million people a Goliath of biblical proportions? Equally, notwithstanding their fabulous oil wealth, why are 427 million Arabs the pygmies of international politics? Before Israel — which has almost zero natural resources — the Arab kings and sheikhs can only bow their heads.

Blame the West if you want and, in particular, America. Indeed, from 2000-2019 armaments supplied to Israel by the Western powers (US, UK, France, Spain, Germany) are documented at a

hefty \$9.6 billion. But within that 20-year period the same document shows this amount is dwarfed by arms sold by the same suppliers to Saudi Arabia (\$29.3bn), UAE (\$20.1bn), Egypt (\$17.5bn), Iraq (\$9.1bn), and Qatar (\$6bn). And yet these expensive weapons will provide little protection if Israel ever chooses to attack the Arab lands again. While the nine-country Saudi-led coalition has created a humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, it is failing dismally against the ragtag Iran-supported Houthis forces.

Okay, so then let's blame Palestine's ill-fortune upon Arab disunity. There's truth in this: Arabs are indeed bitterly divided. But when were they not? From about AD-634 to AD-750 is the only period in history when they stood together. Then, after Nasser won the Suez War against Britain, Arabs united again for a brief, euphoric moment. But this unity did nothing to avert their crushing defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, that which forever changed borders. And while friends and activists for Palestine would love to see Patah and Hamas patch up their differences, doing so will not change things funda-

mentally. The secret of Israel's strength is not hidden in its weaponry. Instead, this still-expanding and still-colonising apartheid settler state uses the same magic that enabled just a handful of 18th-century Englishmen to colonise the entire Indian subcontinent.

That weapon was a system of organised thought based upon a rational and secular approach to life, a modern system of justice, and a new set of social relations. This was sustained and enhanced by Enlightenment-era education that de-emphasised rote learning of the scriptures, was this-worldly and future-oriented, and which focused upon problem-solving skills using systematic, scientific thinking.

In a nutshell, imperialist conquests showed that brains would rule over brawn: a stark truth that got still starker with time. But where are brains produced? Obviously in the womb but it's in schools, colleges and universities where minds are shaped and sharpened. Hence, these days everyone and their uncle rush to one single conclusion: fix education and this will level the playing field, greatly diminishing or perhaps ending the inequalities of

power. That's so much easier said than done. To have buildings and classrooms with teachers is one thing but to coax the potential out of a student is altogether different. With their vast wealth, Arab countries have built impressive university campuses with well-equipped laboratories and well-stocked libraries. They have even imported professors from America and Europe. Yet, the needle has barely flickered so far. That's because attitudes towards learning take forever to change; and only if they are somehow forced to change. Pakistan follows the Arab model as best as it can, and no university has a bookshop, a centre for students that hums with open debate and discussion, or a theatre where classic movies are screened. Looking for a philosopher or a high-grade pure mathematician will be in vain. For 20 years, papers and PhDs have been churned out at a frantic rate. But I suspect many of the country's "distinguished national professors" with hundreds of research publications would be judged unfit to teach in a high-end Israeli high school for lack of scholarship.

The problem is not genetics — Arabs

have a brilliant past and may be just as smart as Ashkenazi Israelis. But the two groups have different attitudes towards success and different role models. The Ashkenazi child wants to be Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, John von Neumann, George Wald, Paul Samuelson, Gertrude Elion, Ralph Lauren, George Soros, or a thousand other such names that fill textbooks on physics, philosophy, technology, medicine, and business. Compare this with the Arab boy who wants to be Salahuiddin Ayubi. We live in a cruel world which, of course, we must try our best to make less cruel and more humane. But making a socially just world requires much more than condemning oppressors and crying with the oppressed. Instead, the weak must be made stronger. That strength does not derive from oil or nuclear bombs. Instead, it springs from the human brain, but only when that superb gift of nature is appropriately tutored and trained within a system of secular values that cherishes and rewards logical thinking, questioning and creativity.

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

SIX MORE BODIES FOUND FLOATING IN GANGA

Fatehpur (UP), May 31: Six more bodies of suspected Covid-19 victims were found floating in the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh, an official said on Monday.

Fatehpur Sadar Tehsil Sub-Collector (SDM) Pramod Jha said he was informed about the bodies floating in the river on Sunday morning, following which a search operation was launched.

Six decomposed bodies were recovered from the river, he said.

Later in the day, a team of doctors performed the last rites at Bhitara Ganga Ghat as per the Covid guidelines, the SDM said.

The bodies could not be identified as they were highly decomposed, the SDM said, adding that they appear to have come floating from far-off places.

Earlier this month, at least 52 bodies were seen floating at the Ujiyar, Kulhadia and Bharauli ghats in Ballia's Narahi area.

However, the district authorities did not tell the exact number of bodies found there.

PRIEST HELD FOR VIOLATING COVID-19 NORMS

Kochi, May 31: A Catholic priest and 21 others were arrested on Monday for allegedly organising the first holy communion for children at a church in Ernakulam district, violating Covid-19 protocol, police said.

The vicar of St Joseph Church, Poovathussery, Fr George Palamattom and 21 others, including the parents of three children and relatives, were arrested for organising the function violating lockdown rules and charged under relevant sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act.

They were later released on station bail, police said.

A Church official said some of the parents had come to India from abroad to attend the function and wanted to return as their leave had ended. So it was organised on Monday after twice being postponed earlier due to lockdown restrictions, he said.

He said the arrests were made when the first holy communion, one of the most important occasions in a Roman Catholic's life, was being organised for the three children.

The Kerala government on Saturday announced one more week extension of the statewide lockdown till June 9, to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

COVID SURVIVOR ENDS LIFE OVER FEAR OF FUNGUS

Ahmedabad, May 31: An 80-year-old man from Ahmedabad who had recovered from Covid-19 allegedly committed suicide out of fear of contracting the mucormycosis infection, police said on Monday.

Mucormycosis, also known as the black fungus, is a serious infection which has been found in several Covid-19 patients in various states.

According to police, the victim used to live with his wife at the Aman Apartments in Paldi area of the city.

He allegedly consumed a pesticide on the terrace of his apartment on Thursday and died at a private hospital on Saturday, police said.

The man contracted Covid-19 some time back and had recovered. He was not diagnosed with mucormycosis, but he developed a fear for it after he got mouth sores, he said.

The victim also left behind a suicide note in which he mentioned the reason behind his extreme step and expressed fear that he may suffer due to mucormycosis as he had just recovered from Covid-19 and also had diabetes.

"The man was scared as he learnt that the black fungus mostly targets those who had contracted Covid and people having diabetes. He also mentioned (in the suicide note) that the treatment may not yield any result and he would suffer due to that infection in future," Solanki said, based on the suicide note and statements of his family members.

The victim was from a well-off family and his fear was more psychological than about his financial condition and the ability to pay for the treatment, the official said.

"Since he had developed some mouth sores, he was under the notion that he had contracted mucormycosis and may not recover from it," the official said.



A shopkeeper cleans his shop that was opened after partial relaxation in the ongoing lockdown by the J&K government in Jammu on Monday. — PTI



Guest workers wait for trains to reach their work destinations amid the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic outside Hatia railway station in Ranchi of Jharkhand on Monday. — PTI

Delhi unlock: New woes for factories

Owners face shortage of workers, raw material, and fear losses due to slump in production

New Delhi, May 31: As the Covid lockdown restrictions were eased in Delhi, factory owners on Monday opened their establishments after six weeks with many grappling with shortage of labourers and raw materials, and fearing losses due to slump in production.

After a strict lockdown for six weeks since April 19, the Delhi government allowed industrial manufacturing and construction work in the city from Monday as part of its phased unlock process.

However, since the majority of the workforce had left for their native places fearing the unprecedented second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic, and the markets yet to open for supply of raw material, the industrialists said they can only calculate their losses.

"We have only been able to enter the factory and that is it. There is no way we can start work," said Neeraj Sehgal, owner of Sehgal Doors in the Mayapuri industrial area.

"Only 20 per cent workers are here and there is no raw material because the government has not allowed the industrial use of oxygen, which is essential to make steel doors," said Sehgal, who makes fire-rated doors and steel doors.

And since the rules deny the use of oxygen for industries, the price for raw material has skyrocketed.

"What we were buying earlier for ₹55 per kg is now available at ₹90 per kg. An increase of 65 per cent, can you believe this," lamented Sehgal, who is also the general secretary of Mayapuri industrial area welfare association.

The pending electricity and water bills have only added to his woes.

As per an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on May 29, the workers and employees at manufacturing units and construction sites will be required to carry e-passes for movement during the ongoing lockdown that has been extended to June 7.

Another industrialist, Ashok Gupta of Jugmug Shoes in Udyog Nagar, Peeragarhi, was bogged



A worker busy at a factory in the Wazirpur Industrial area as the unlocking process of Covid-19 lockdown begins in New Delhi on Monday. — PTI

down by not being able to get e-passes for his workers.

"The workers have been calling from their home in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar asking if we have arranged e-passes. But the system does not work. We are not able to get any passes. The entire operation has been shut," Gupta said.

Gupta, who manufactures shoes for other market players, has also incurred huge losses as he could not deliver the orders.

"We had six orders from Dubai, but now they are buying from China. If this goes on we will have to scale down significantly. There is also a loan of ₹10-12 crore, how do we pay that without any work," Gupta said.

The unlock guidelines also allowed resumption of construction activities with staggered work hours, proper social distancing among workers, adequate gaps between shifts, and staggered lunch breaks of staff.

NBCC (India) Limited chairman and managing director P.K. Gupta said labour contractors have been told to bring back labourers who were working at projects prior to the lockdown. — PTI

Lockdown extended in Bihar, Odisha, Ch'garh; K'taka to decide on June 4

DC CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs
PATNA, MAY 31

The Bihar government has extended the lockdown till June 8 to stop the surge in Covid-19 cases in the state. However, the state government has also announced some relaxation to boost business activities. The decision was taken during a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday.

"In view of Covid infection, it has been decided to extend the lockdown for one week — till June 8. But some relaxation is also being given to boost business activities in the state. People are requested to wear masks and maintain social distancing", Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said in a tweet after he met with the crisis management group on Monday.

Officials said that the revised home department guidelines would come into effect from June 2 onwards. According to the

state administration, essential services like general provision stores and shops dealing with dairy products will be allowed to open from 6 am to 2 pm.

Meanwhile, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Monday said the decision on the future of lockdown was likely on June 4 or 5, after discussion with experts and depending on the situation in the state. The state is currently under lockdown till June 7.

"After June 4 or 5, I will discuss with them (experts), also looking at how the (Covid) situation improves by then, we will take a decision," Yediyurappa told reporters. Earlier in the day, state health minister K. Sudhakar had said a decision on the future of lockdown has to be taken on a scientific basis as it is aimed at saving lives and that the Chief Minister will take a final call after examining the report from experts and discussing with cabinet colleagues.

The Odisha government also extended the lockdown by 16 more days till June 17 to further stem the spread of Covid-19. The second phase of the lockdown was to end at 5 am on June 1. It will now continue till 5 am of June 17.

The Uttar Pradesh government, meanwhile, extended the relaxations announced in the Coronavirus curfew to six more districts from June 1, allowing shops and markets outside the containment zones to open for five days a week. The relaxations will be applicable to a total of 61 districts from Tuesday, while 14 districts with an active Covid-19 caseload of over 600 have been kept outside the purview of the order for the time being.

The Chandigarh administration on Monday extended the Covid-induced restrictions till the morning of June 9, but allowed more relaxations such as reopening of barbers and salons. It also extended the shop opening time by an

hour. All shops will now be allowed to open from 9 am till 4 pm, from earlier till 3 pm. "After detailed discussions, it was decided to continue the existing restrictions until 6 am on June 9," according to an official release.

The Lakshadweep administration on Monday announced extension of the complete shutdown for seven more days, beginning May 31, considering the rising number of cases in the islands.

On the other hand, after a month-long lockdown imposed due to a surge in cases, markets reopened in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday as the process of partial unlock started in the UT, officials said.

According to new guidelines imposed by authorities on Sunday, shops have been allowed to open on alternate days. The public transport was allowed to ply at 50 per cent of the seating capacity in the Orange category districts, it remained shut in the Red category districts.

ODISHA GOVT PREPARES FOR THIRD WAVE

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 31

The Odisha government has started its preparation to avoid any kind of eventualities during the much apprehended third wave of Covid-19.

According to state additional chief secretary (ACS) Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra, the state government was emphasising on strengthening medical facilities and ramping up tests to deal with the pandemic.

"Some experts have opined about the possible third wave of the pandemic. The state government is fully prepared for the situation. On an urgent basis, Oxygen PSA and liquid oxygen plants will be set up in all the district headquarters hospitals and medical colleges in the next two and half months. We will also set up more paediatric beds in the hospitals as children may be more vulnerable to the disease," Mohapatra informed on Monday.

The state government has also set a target to set up RT-PCR laboratories in each district headquarters hospitals to ramp up testing in next two months.

"The Odisha government has placed an order for 5,000 sachets of 2-DG (2-deoxy-D-glucose) anti-Covid drugs for the treatment of hospitalised Covid-19 patients. The anti-Covid medicine is claimed to help faster recovery of hospitalised patients and reduce Oxygen dependence. Hopefully the medicines will be delivered to the state on June 7-10," said Mohapatra.

He added that as many as 25 black fungus infected patients had been identified from the state so far. "Three of them have died. However, their death could be attributed to other reasons," he said.

The ACS informed that the test positivity rate in the state is currently at 14 per cent and hopefully the situation will improve in next 10 days as the peak of the second surge of the pandemic is already over.

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

France set to double Covid-related support to India

India, France set up 'oxygen bridge'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

France and India have "set up an oxygen bridge across the Indian Ocean to bring several rotations of liquid oxygen donated by French multinational Air Liquide", the French Embassy announced on Monday, adding that France is doubling the Covid-related support to India following a phone call between French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week on May 26.

France said it was carrying out the largest solidarity operation undertaken by it so far since the beginning of the pandemic which "reflects the longstanding, two-way solidarity between France and



A shipment of 184 oxygen concentrators from Ukraine arrives in India. — PTI

India, which lies at the heart of our strategic partnership".

France also declared it would deliver at least twice as many oxygen generators plants as the eight already delivered earlier this month and that a special cargo flight with 10 such units would reach

India mid-June and that another flight would follow after that. The French Embassy pointed out that each of these French-made, high capacity plants produces 24,000 litres of oxygen per hour non-stop and can make a 250-bed Indian hospital oxygen self-reliant for a dozen

years. In a statement, the French Embassy in New Delhi said that on the directions of President Emmanuel Macron, France is bringing in additional support to India to continue fighting the second wave together. "France and India have set up an oxygen bridge across the Indian Ocean to bring several rotations of liquid oxygen donated by French multinational Air Liquide. The containers are filled in Qatar, shipped to India by the Indian Navy, and then brought back empty by the Indian Air Force for refilling. In the last three weeks, 180 tonnes of liquid oxygen has already reached Indian hospitals through this bridge. The rotations are now being extended until the end of June,

which will enable the delivery of several hundred tons of oxygen in total." It added that several hundred Oxygen concentrators as well as high-grade ventilators would reach India in the coming days.

French Ambassador to India Emmanuel Lenain, said, "as discussed between President Macron and Prime Minister Modi in their May 26 call, France is doubling its support to India against the pandemic. It shows the solidarity of the French people, who have not forgotten that India helped us when France faced its first wave. There cannot be global victory against the virus without India. Together, we can show the way of international cooperation against the pandemic and the need for a multilateral response."

SHORT TAKES

JUDO TRAINER
HELD FOR SEXUAL
HARASSMENT

Chennai, May 31: A 41-year old martial arts trainer has been arrested in connection with sexual harassment of his student seven years ago, police said on Monday.

Police identified the arrested as Kebiraj, who was running a martial arts school at Anna Nagar here.

He was arrested on Sunday, based on the complaint from a 26-year old woman who alleged that he had sexually harassed her while returning in a car from a judo competition in Namakkal district in 2014, a city police release said.

ALIGARH HOCH
TRAGEDY: DEATH
TOLL RISES TO 36

Aligarh (UP), May 31: The toll in the Aligarh hooch tragedy climbed to 36 on Monday with 11 more deaths being confirmed by the district authorities amid apprehension that it may rise further.

Viscera samples of 35 other people, who are suspected to have died after consuming spurious liquor, have been sent for examination to confirm the cause of death, Chief Medical Officer Dr Bhanu Pratap Kalyani said.

Former Samajwadi Party MLA from Aligarh Zameerullah Khan produced before the media the families of 12 people who he claimed died over the past three days after consuming the spurious liquor and whose post-mortem was not conducted. He demanded that the state government provide compensation to all such families.

'TOBACCO KILLS
OVER 1.3 MN
EVERY YEAR'

New Delhi, May 31: Smokers face a 40-50 per cent higher risk of severe diseases and death from Covid-19, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Monday highlighting that over 1.3 million fatalities are attributable to tobacco use every year in India, which is an avoidable socio-economic burden impacting the country's development.

These remarks were made by Vardhan as he chaired an event to mark the World No Tobacco Day and led the pledge by everyone present to abstain from tobacco, a health ministry statement said.

According to the WHO study titled Economic Costs of Diseases and Deaths Attributable to Tobacco Use in India, it has been estimated that the economic burden of diseases and deaths attributable to tobacco use of tobacco in India was as high as ₹1.77 lakh crore.

KARNI SENA
OBJECTS TO TITLE
'PRITHIVIRAJ'

Jaipur/Mumbai, May 31: The Shree Rajput Karni Sena, which had organised protests over the release of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Padmaavat* citing distortion of facts, has focused its attention on the upcoming Akshay Kumar starrer *Prithviraj* and is demanding that the title be changed.

The organisation, a fringe group that takes up issues related to the Rajput community, wants that the title of the Yash Raj Films historical drama should reflect the greatness of the last Hindu emperor Prithviraj Chauhan. Just naming it Prithviraj does injustice with his glory, it said while warning of protests over the issue.

The filmmakers have made the film on the great king Prithviraj Chauhan who was the last Hindu emperor and a great Rajput king. How can the name of the film be kept just Prithviraj? The title should have the full name, *Mahipal Singh Makrana*, said national president of the Shree Rajput Karni Sena.

He said the Karni Sena's Mumbai team, led by Dilip Singh, had filed a complaint with the Mumbai Police last week, raising objections over the title, but no FIR had been registered yet.

There was no response from the production house when reached for a comment.

In March last year, Karni Sena members, led by Makrana, had disrupted the shooting of *Prithviraj* on the outskirts of Jaipur.

According to Makrana, filmmakers should give due respect to historic personalities when they make biopics.

Security matters



Commandos of the Urban Commando Wing under the Anti-Terrorist Squad practice hostage rescue operation drill in Kochi on Monday.

— PTI

India no longer to import
single-engine helicopters

Centre issues a list of 108 items which will not be imported anymore

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The defence ministry under Rajnath Singh on Monday notified second negative list (now called as Second

Positive Indigenisation List) of 108 weapons and equipment which will not be imported by defence forces as part of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' endeavour of the Modi government.

This second list is planned to be implemented progressively with effect from December 2021 to December 2025.

The first negative list notified in August last had barred import of 101 defence items from specified dates, starting December 2020.

"Great news for Indian Defence Industry. With 101 items notified in August 2020 and 108 items notified now, 209 items not to be imported by Armed Forces from specified dates," (sic) tweeted defence secretary Ajay Kumar.

The second list has 108 items including single engine helicopters, Next Generation Corvettes, Air Borne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) systems, Tank Engines, Medium Power Radar for Mountains, and Medium Range Surface to Air

Missile Weapon Systems among others.

The defence ministry said that the notification of the second list will give further boost to indigenisation with active participation of public and private sector for fulfilling the twin objectives of achieving self-reliance and promoting defence exports.

All the 108 items will now be procured from indigenous sources as per provisions given in Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020.

India is one of the world's largest arms importer.

To give a push to Make-in-India in the defence sector, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman last year had announced hiking FDI in defence manufacturing to 74 per cent from 49 per cent under automatic route to encourage major foreign defence companies to set up factories in the country.

The defence ministry has also bifurcated the capital procurement budget between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes.

The second list lays special focus on weapons and systems which are currently under development or trial and are likely to translate into firm orders

Lt-Gen Pande to helm
Eastern Army Command

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

India's only tri-service military theatre command Andaman and Nicobar Command has got a new commander, Lt Gen Ajai Singh who will take over the charge on Tuesday.

The incumbent Lieutenant General Manoj Pande will take over the Eastern Command of Indian Army, which is a crucial command due to tensions with China. Lt. Gen. Anil Chauhan, the current

GOC-in-C, Eastern Command on Monday relinquished the command on superannuation after 40 years of service in the Indian Army.

Lt. Gen. Pande will be the senior most officer in the Army when Army

● **LT. GEN. PANDE** will be the senior most officer in the Army when Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane retires next year.

Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane retires next year. The Andaman and Nicobar Command is the only tri-services theatre command of the country and is a harbinger of the larger similarly planned

theaterisation of Navy and Air Force capabilities.

Under the Lieutenant General Pande's command, during this last one year, the ANC significantly enhanced its operational preparedness and successfully conducted a number of major tri-service operational exercises, BrahMos missile firing

and joint exercises with foreign navies.

The Command also conducted a unique joint operational exercise during the visit of President Ram Nath Kovind in March.

Lt.Gen. Singh, the new commander of ANC is a fifth generation army officer, with family service of over 162 years since September 13, 1858.

He is pursuing a PhD on "Emerging Trends in China-Pak Relations with reference to CPEC and its implications for India". He has also authored three key studies including, the initial draft of the Army's "Land Warfare Doctrine, 2018", the "Army HQ Reorganisation Study, 2019" and an important Operational Study conducted in 2020.

in the future. Like the first list, import substitution of ammunition which is a recurring requirement has been given special focus.

The defence ministry said that not only does the

list recognise the potential of local defence industry, but it will also invigorate impetus to domestic research and development by attracting fresh investment into technology and manufacturing capabilities.

ties, it may be noted that the second list has been prepared by defence ministry after several rounds of consultations with government and private manufacturing industry confederations.

AIADMK clears air on Sasi return

G BABU JAYAKUMAR
& D SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 31

Can V K Sasikala, the erstwhile confidante of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, recapture the AIADMK as it is widely speculated after the audio of a telephonic conversation she had with a follower was leaked in social media?

While this question looms large over the



V.K. Sasikala

state's political landscape, the AIADMK's deputy coordinator K P Munusamy clarified that the reported conversation

SC sets June 3
deadline to Centre
on CBSE exams

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The Supreme Court on Monday gave the Centre time till June 3 to take a call on the fate of class XII board examination conducted by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Council for Indian School Certificate Examination (ICSE) making it clear that if it chooses to go ahead with the examination then it will have to give tangible reasons.

Adjourning the matter for Thursday on a request by Attorney General K.K.Venugopal, Justice A.M.Khanwilkar heading a bench also comprising Justice Dinesh Maheshwari said that if decide to depart from your last year's decision when the board examinations of class XII were cancelled then you will have to give reasons that can be gone into.

Venugopal told the court that the decision will be taken by Wednesday. The court also underlined that the Covid situation this year is same as the last year.

"You are free to take whatever decision. But there is a hope expressed by the petitioner that the policy adopted last year can be followed," the bench said adding that "if government is departing from last year's decision, then give tangible reasons."

The court was hearing a petition by a top court lawyer Mamta Sharma, seeking cancellation of Class XII board exams amid the Covid pandemic as was done last year. She has said that the CBSE has already cancelled Class X exam on this ground.

The government had earlier announced to take the decision by June 1 on the basis of the suggestions by the state governments.

Meanwhile, with the Centre to take a call on conducting Class 12 board exams within two days, an RSS-affiliated body on education on Monday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to ensure that the exams are held and suggested various options including changing the pattern to objective and allowing students to solve question papers at home or take exams of only 2-3 subjects.

The organisational secretary of Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas (SSUN), Atul Kothari, in a letter to both Modi and Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, favoured a old

MAHA: CLASS 12
EXAM MORE
IMPORTANT
THAN CLASS 10

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MAY 31

Justifying its decision to cancel class 10 exam of state board, the Maharashtra government on Monday told Bombay High Court that the class 10 was not as important a milestone for students in their careers as Class 12.

The state government, in an affidavit, said SSC exams for this year were cancelled amid the Coronavirus outbreak after considering the safety of students, teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

The affidavit has been filed by the state's School Education and Sports department deputy secretary Rajendra Pawar in response to a PIL filed by a professor, Dhananjay Kulkarni, challenging the April 19 decision of the state government to cancel Class 10 exams this year.

The HC, on May 20, had asked the government as to why the state government was holding Class 12 exams.

Replying to this, the state in its affidavit said Class 12 exams are postponed presently and a final decision on it would be taken after the Centre makes a move on the national level.

The reason stated in the affidavit for not cancelling the 12th standard board exam is that, "It was thought fit that 12th standard board examinations were a relatively more important milestone in the education of the students as their future careers depend upon the same as compared to the 10th standard examination."

ing of exams in the respective schools in different shifts with teachers coming from outside.

Underlining that the studies of a large number of students have been impacted due to Covid, he said they should be allowed a gap year or exams can be conducted twice. Emphasising the importance of Class 12, Kothari said, "While keeping the future of students in mind, Class 12 board exams should be held. Some options may be given to students due to the unforeseen circumstances."

was between Sasikala and a cadre of the AMMK, the breakaway faction headed by her nephew T T V Dhinakaran. Munusamy told the media in his native Krishnagiri district on Monday that no AIADMK cadre had sought out Sasikala and it was she who had called the particular 'cadre' and spoken to him.

However, it is learnt that Sasikala is getting letters at her home in Chennai

from 'Jayalalithaa loyalists' who invite her to lead the party. Sasikala, too, is said to have called up about 500 persons both in the AMMK and AIADMK and assured them that she would come to 'save' Jayalalithaa's party.

Also there is reported to be a feeling among a section of AIADMK members that Sasikala could possibly bring in the much needed cohesion in the AIADMK.

POLITICAL | PLAY

Kerala is first state to come up with a resolution to support the people of the Union Territory

Kerala passes resolution for recall of Ldweep administrator

Thiruvananthapuram, May 31: Expressing solidarity with the people of Lakshadweep, the Kerala Legislative Assembly on Monday unanimously passed a resolution demanding the recall of island administrator Praful Khoda Patel and requesting the immediate intervention of the Centre to protect the lives and livelihood of the islanders.

With this, Kerala has become the first state in the country to come up with a resolution to support the people of the union territory over the recent developments.

An archipelago located

in the Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep is witnessing protests by local people for some days over the recent actions and administrative reforms being implemented by Patel.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan moved the government resolution, the first such motion in the 15th state Assembly, reminiscing the historic and cultural bond between Kerala and Lakshadweep and criticising the Centre for allegedly trying to destroy the natural democracy there.

Stating that the future of Lakshadweep is a matter of concern, he said any

● **CHIEF MINISTER** Pinarayi Vijayan moved the government resolution, the first such motion in the 15th state Assembly, reminiscing the historic and cultural bond between Kerala and Lakshadweep and criticising the Centre for allegedly trying to destroy the natural democracy there.

attempt to undermine its unique culture and indigenous lifestyle is unacceptable. Anyone who upholds Constitutional values should register a strong disagreement against the actions of the administra-

tor of Lakshadweep, the Chief Minister urged.

Setting aside their political differences, members of the ruling CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front and the Congress-headed United Democratic Front unanimously backed the resolution, except some amendments suggested by the latter.

The hard-hitting resolution alleged that attempts were being made to impose "safron agendas" and "corporate interests" by destroying the unique way of life of Lakshadweep people.

The implementation of the agenda, rolled out in

the name of reforms, began with the painting of coconut trees with saffron colour and it has now grown to the level of destroying the traditional habitat, life and natural relationships of the island dwellers, it alleged.

Steps have been taken to bring in the Goonda Act in the island where the crime rate is exceptionally low, it said.

Pointing out that the authorities also aimed at destroying their traditional livelihood of fishing, the resolution said tents, where the fishermen's boats and nets are kept, have been rampantly

destroyed.

Through the attempt to exclude beef, which is part of the natural diet of the people of the territory, the Sangh Parivar agenda of banning cow slaughter was being implemented through the backdoor, it alleged.

Thus, the administrator has taken the lead in annihilating the indigenous life and culture of the people of a territory inch by inch, the brief resolution further charged.

Criticising the Centre's act of giving the administrator special powers to intervene into the affairs of various government

departments, Vijayan said it amounted to undermining the island's natural democracy by deploying officials of their choice.

"The recent developments in Lakshadweep should be seen as a laboratory of the Sangh Parivar agenda. They are attempting to change the culture, language, lifestyle and food habits of people of the country in tune with their ideology," the Chief Minister alleged.

Strong resistance should be raised against this bid to enslave people of a territory to "corporate interests and Hindutva politics", he said.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

OVERLOADED JEEP
PLUNGES INTO
PAK RIVER, 9 DIE

Peshawar, May 31: Nine people have drowned after their overloaded jeep fell into the Yarkhoon River in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, according to a media report on Monday. The accident occurred on the Onauch Suspension Bridge, near Yarkhoon Valley, on Sunday, the Dawn newspaper reported.

The jeep began its journey with 11 people aboard, including the driver, from Chitral city to the Yarkhoon Valley.

Assistant Commissioner, Mastuj tehsil, Shah Adnan told the newspaper that the vehicle was overloaded with cargo tied to the roof, which could have caused the vehicle to lose balance on the bridge and break through its railing.

Of the 11 travellers in total, 10 persons died, while one managed to swim to safety.

Rescue teams are trying to retrieve the bodies from the sunk vehicle.

OZ MIN DROPS
DEFAMATION SUIT
OVER RAPE CLAIM

Canberra, May 31: An Australian government minister dropped his defamation lawsuit against *Australian Broadcasting Corp.* on Monday and committed to contest the next election as the state broadcaster acknowledged a 33-year-old rape allegation against him could not be substantiated.

Christian Porter, minister for industry, science and technology, and the *ABC* said the case had been settled under confidential terms without any damages being paid. Porter said he did not decide to sue to make money. The hurt and harm that the reporting of this matter has caused to my reputation, to my family, is beyond any form of compensation, Porter said.

Porter said he would absolutely run for re-election at general elections to be held within a year.

NZ, OZ PLAY
DOWN CHINA
DIFFERENCES

Wellington, May 31: New Zealand and Australia downplayed policy differences on China Monday, with Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern denying Wellington was taking a soft stance on human rights to avoid offending its largest trading partner.

Ardern's government has taken flak over its meek criticisms of China's rights record, while Australia's more outspoken position has drawn punitive trade measures from Beijing. The centre-left New Zealand and leader insisted the trans-Tasman allies were lock-step on attitudes towards China after holding talks with her Australian counterpart Scott Morrison in the South Island mountain retreat of Queens-town.

The pair issued a joint statement expressing "deep concern" at the erosion of freedoms in Hong Kong and the treatment of the Uyghur Muslim minority in China's Xinjiang province.

"You'll see that Australia and New Zealand have broadly been positioned in exactly the same place on these issues consistently," Ardern said. "So I really push back on any suggestion that we are not taking a strong stance on these incredibly important issues."

39 DEAD IN TWO
ATTACKS IN
DR CONGO

Bunia, DR Congo, May 31: At least 39 people have been killed in two new attacks in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, monitors said Monday, as a local official blamed a notorious group linked to the Islamic State group.

"At least 20 civilians were killed overnight in the village of Boga and at least 19 in the village of Tchabi," in Ituru territory in Ituri province, the Kivu Security Tracker (KST) group said.

A local civil society leader attributed the attacks to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) — a historically Ugandan Islamist group blamed for a string of massacres in the past 18 months.

Two local officials reached in Boga by *AFP* said the assailants attacked a camp for displaced people.

They said 36 bodies had been found so far in Boga, a figure that had yet to be independently confirmed.

The two villages are located about 10 kilometres (six miles) apart on the border between North Kivu province and Ituri, an area that has long had a reputation for ADF attacks and ethnic friction.

Jet's emergency
landing after
bomb 'threat'

Warsaw, May 31: Polish police said Monday they were investigating a fake bomb threat that forced a Ryanair passenger plane travelling from Dublin to Krakow to make an emergency landing in Berlin.

"We were notified by the Krakow airport that an airport employee received a phone call saying an explosive device had been planted on the plane," said regional police spokesman, Sebastian Glen.

"German police checked and there was no device, no bomb threat at all. So we know this was a false alarm," he said. "The perpetrator has not been detained, but we are doing everything possible to establish their identity," he added, saying the person

faces eight years in jail.

With 160 people on board, the flight arrived at the Berlin-Brandenburg airport shortly after 8:00 pm (1800 GMT) Sunday. The passengers were later transferred onto another plane which took off early Monday morning.

German police said that officers had completed their security checks "without any danger being detected". The flight was emptied with the baggage also searched, German media reported.

"The Ryanair plane that made an emergency landing reported an air emergency and was therefore immediately given a landing permit at BER," airport spokesman Jan-Peter Haack said. — *AFP*

TURKEY NABS
U.S.-BASED
CLERIC'S KIN

Ankara, May 31: Turkish agents have captured a nephew of US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen in an overseas operation and have brought him to Turkey where he faces prosecution, Turkey's state-run news agency said Monday.

Selahaddin Gulen, who was wanted in Turkey on charges of membership in a terror organisation, was seized in an operation by Turkey's national spy agency MIT, the *Anadolu Agency* reported. The report did not say where he was seized or when he was returned to Turkey.

Gulen's nephew however, was believed to be residing in Kenya. His case is the latest in a series of forced repatriation of people affiliated with Gulen's movement, which the Turkish government blames for a failed coup attempt in 2016.

Gulen, a former ally of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who now lives in exile in Pennsylvania, has rejected the accusations of involvement in the coup attempt.

Turkey has designated his network a terrorist group, which it has named the Fethullahist Terror Organization, or FETO.

— *AP*

Chinese trio for 3-month
stay in new space station

Beijing, May 31: China on Monday announced plans to send three male astronauts to its space station next month for a three-month stay, a day after the successful docking of a cargo spacecraft with it, hoping to achieve yet another milestone in its ambitious space programme.

The country launched cargo spacecraft Tianzhou-2 on Saturday, carrying supplies, equipment and propellant which had successfully docked with the space station core module Tianhe, according to the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA).

Combined with Tianhe, Tianzhou-2 will replenish Tianhe's propellant, it said. China, which launched its space station core

module Tianhe on April 29, now plans to complete the verification of key technologies and the in-orbit construction of the space station through multiple launches within two years, state-run *Xinhua* news agency reported.

Yang Liwei, director of the China Manned Space Engineering Office and the country's first astronaut, said that the three astronauts are getting ready to travel by manned spacecraft Shenzhou-12 in June to dock with Tianhe and stay there for three months. Yang, who went into space in the Shenzhou-5 craft on October 15, 2003, told the state-run *China Central Television (CCTV)* during the weekend that the three astro-

Ageing society: China allows
couples to have a third child

Leaders: Need to raise retirement age to keep more people in workforce

Beijing, May 31: China's ruling Communist Party said Monday it will ease birth limits to allow all couples to have three children instead of two in hopes of slowing the rapid ageing of its population, which is adding to strains on the economy and society.

The ruling party has enforced birth limits since 1980 to restrain population growth but worries the number of working-age people is falling too fast while the share over age 65 is rising. That threatens to disrupt its ambitions to transform China into a prosperous consumer society and global technology leader.

A ruling party meeting led by President Xi Jinping decided to

introduce "measures to actively deal with the aging population", the official *Xinhua* News Agency said. It said leaders agreed "implementing the policy of one couple can have three children and supporting measures are conducive to improving China's population structure."

Leaders also agreed China needs to raise its retirement age to keep more people in the workforce and improve pension and health services for the elderly, *Xinhua* said.

Restrictions that limited most couples to one child were eased in 2015 to allow two, but the total number of births fell further, suggesting rule changes on their own have little im-

● **RESTRICTIONS THAT limited most couples to one child were eased in 2015 to allow two, but the total number of births fell further.**

pact on the trend.

Couples say they are put off by high costs of raising a child, disruption to their jobs and the need to look after elderly parents.

Comments on social media Monday complained the change does nothing to help young parents with medical bills, low incomes and grueling work schedules known popularly as "996", or 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. six days a week.

"Every stage of the problem hasn't been solved," said a post on the popular Sina Weibo blog service signed Tchaikovsky. "Who will raise the baby? Do you have time? I go out early and get back late. Kids don't know what their parents look like."

Another, signed Hyeong-mok, joked bitterly: "Don't worry about aging. Our generation won't live long." China, along with Thailand and some other Asian economies, faces what economists call the challenge of whether they can get rich before they get old.

The Chinese population of 1.4 billion already was expected to peak later this decade and start to

decline. Census data released May 11 suggest that is happening faster than expected, adding to burdens on underfunded pension and health systems and cutting the number of future workers available to support a growing retiree group.

The share of working-age people 15 to 59 in the population fell to 63.3% last year from 70.1% a decade earlier. The group aged 65 and older grew to 13.5% from 8.9%.

The 12 million births reported last year was down nearly one-fifth from 2019. About 40% were second children, down from 50% in 2017, according to Ning Jizhe, a statistics official. — *AP*



In this photo released by Chris Allen, a car is abandoned in flooded waters in Ashburton Forks near Christchurch. Several hundred people were evacuated from their homes while others recounted helicopter rescues as heavy rain caused widespread flooding in the Canterbury region. — *Chris Allen via AP*

NZ floods: Hundreds evacuated

Wellington, May 31: Several hundred people in New Zealand were evacuated from their homes Monday with some recounting dramatic helicopter rescues as heavy rain caused widespread flooding in the Canterbury region.

Authorities declared a state of emergency after some places received as much as 40 centimetres (16 inches) of rain over the weekend and into Monday.

Forecasters warned of possible heavy rain through Monday evening before conditions improved. The military helped evacuate more than 50 people, including several overnight in an NH-90 military helicopter.

One man was clinging to a tree near the town of Darfield when he jumped into floodwaters and tried to swim to safety but was swept away, the military said. Helicopter crews scoured the water for 30 minutes before finding the man and plucking him to safety. The military helicopter also rescued an elderly couple from the roof of their car.

"Seeing the community overnight pull together and support the displaced residents who were evacuated from their homes has been heartening," said Army Liaison Officer Cpt. Jake Faber. Another man was rescued by a civilian

helicopter pilot Sunday after he was swept from his farm as he tried to move his stock to safety. Paul Adams told news organisation *Stuff* he thinks he got hit by a wall of water he didn't see coming. He was swept down the raging Ashburton River before managing to drag himself onto a fence and then into a tree.

Another farmer spotted his headlamp and organised a rescue mission. "The rescuers are fantastic," Adams told *Stuff*, adding that he was now back on his farm and "good as gold". He said that so far he'd only found about 100 of his herd of 250 animals

alive. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, who was visiting New Zealand, told reporters that he was thinking of those caught up in the floods. "Australia is no stranger to floods," Morrison said.

"Or fires, or cyclones, or, indeed, even mouse plagues. We have, both countries, endured a large amount of challenge over the course, particularly, of these last few years."

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern planned to travel to Christchurch later Monday to be briefed on the situation firsthand. — *AP*

Man accused of plotting
Walmart attack arrested

Kerrville (Texas), May 31: Authorities in Texas arrested a man accused of plotting to carry out a mass shooting at a Walmart, and a search of the suspect's home turned up firearms, ammunition and materials officials described as radical ideology paraphernalia.

Coleman Thomas Blevins, 28, was arrested Friday in Kerrville and has been charged with making a terroristic threat to

create public fear of serious bodily injury, the Kerr County Sheriff's Office said in a news release.

Investigators said they intercepted a message from Blevins on Thursday indicating he was preparing to proceed with a mass shooting, and that the threat included Walmart. Blevins was taken into custody the next day.

Authorities searched his home and, according to the release, firearms,

ammunition, electronic evidence, concentrated THC, and radical ideology paraphernalia, including books, flags, and handwritten documents were seized.

Blevins is on felony probation and was not supposed to have guns, the release said. He was booked into the Kerr County Jail in Kerrville, a city about 70 miles (113 kilometers) northwest of San Antonio. — *AP*

RACIST | VIOLENCE

Some churches recognise 13 congregations that operated in Greenwood
Pastors honour 'ground' 100 yrs after massacre

Tulsa (US), May 31: When white attackers destroyed the prosperous PoC neighbourhood of Greenwood 100 years ago, they bypassed the original sanctuary of the First Baptist Church of North Tulsa.

By the church's own account, the attackers thought the brick veneer structure was too fine for a PoC-owned church. The mob destroyed at least a half-dozen other churches while burning and levelling a 35-square-block neighbourhood in one of the nation's deadliest spasms of racist violence. Estimates of the death toll range from dozens to 300.

On Sunday, First Baptist's current sanctuary throbbed with a high-decibel service as six congregations gathered to mark the centennial of the massacre and to honour the persistence of the PoC church tradition in Greenwood, as shown in the pulsing worship, call-and-response preaching and heavy emphasis on social justice.

Greenwood is holy ground, said the Rev. John Faison of Nashville, Tennessee, who preached at the service and is assistant to the bishop of social action for the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship.

He said the centennial both honours the victims of the massacre and celebrates the resilience and the resurgence of an amazing people of God. Similar commemorations took place at many houses of worship throughout Tulsa and across Oklahoma on Sunday, a day ahead of the

official centennial dates. More civic activities are planned for Monday and Tuesday, including a candlelight vigil and a visit by President Joe Biden.

The commission that organised the centennial designated Sunday as Unity Faith Day and provided a suggested worship guide that each congregation could adapt, including scriptures, prayers and the singing of *Amazing Grace*.

Particularly at historically PoC churches, speakers emphasised a call for financial reparations both for the few centenarian survivors of the massacre and for the wider, economically struggling North Tulsa area, where the city's PoC population is largely concentrated.

The main problem is that our nation is always trying to have reconciliation without doing justice, Faison said. Until repentance and repair are seen as inseparable, any attempt to reconcile will fail miserably.

The Rev Robert Turner, pastor of nearby Vernon

African Methodist Episcopal Church, which also traces its roots to before the massacre, echoed that sentiment in an interview before his own church's service.

It's not a tragedy that's left in 1921. It's a tragedy that continues to live each day that lacks justice, said Turner, who protests weekly outside Tulsa City Hall, calling both for reparations and for a posthumous criminal investigation of the massacre's perpetrators. — *AP*

LANKA QUIZZES
BURNING CARGO
SHIP CREW

Negombo, Sri Lanka, May 31: Sri Lanka's criminal investigators began questioning the crew of a burning cargo ship Monday, as the Singapore-registered carrier smouldered for a 12th straight day in one of the island's worst-ever marine ecological disasters.

A fire broke out aboard the MV X-Press Pearl, which was carrying 25 tonnes of nitric acid and a huge amount of plastic raw materials, as it was about to enter Colombo harbour on May 20.

The intense flames, still burning at the rear of the 186-metre (610-foot) vessel, have destroyed much of the cargo, some of which has fallen into the Indian Ocean.

Tonnes of microplastic granules from the ship and its nearly 1,500 containers have inundated Sri Lanka's famed beaches, forcing a fishing ban and sparking fears of ecological devastation.

The Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) chief Dharmshani Lahandapura said they were still assessing the ecological damage, but believed it was the "worst ever in my lifetime". — *AP*

SHORT TAKES

FRENCH POLICE
DETAIN FUGITIVE
EX-SOLDIER

Paris, May 31: French police on Monday detained in south-west France a former soldier who fled into a forest after firing on the security forces in an incident that sparked a massive manhunt, officials said.

The government's top official in the Dordogne region, Frederic Perissat, told a press conference in Le Lardin-Saint-Lazare that the suspect was shot and wounded by police, and had been taken into custody. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Twitter that the man had been "neutralised" and praised the security forces for their actions.

48-KG ATLANTIC
CROAKER SOLD FOR
Rs 72 LAKH IN PAK

Islamabad, May 31: A Pakistani fisherman has sold a rare 48-kg Atlantic croaker fish for a whopping Rs 72-lakh (\$46,706), in one of the costliest seafood transactions in the country, according to a media report on Monday. Boatman Sajid Haji Ababakar caught fish off the coast of Gwadar in Balochistan province on Sunday, the *Dawn* newspaper reported. An auction was held and the highest bid was settled at Rs 86.4 lakh. "However, we settled for Rs 72 lakh following our tradition of discounts," Ababakar said. Deputy Director for Fisheries, Gwadar, Ahmed Nadeem said he had never seen a fish fetch a such a high price. The fish is in great demand in Europe and China for its meat and use of skin and bones in medical sciences.

"Some fish are expensive because of their meat. But this species (large croaker fish) has a high demand because parts of it are known for their use in medicine and surgery," said Abdul Rahim Baloch, marine biologist and Assistant Director, Environment Development Authority, Gwadar.

INVESTIGATORS
PROBE GHOSN IN
LEBANON

Beirut, May 31: French investigators started interrogating former Renault-Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn Monday in Lebanon, where he has sought refuge since a dramatic escape from Japan, a court source said. The source said that Ghosn, his defence team, a Lebanese prosecutor sitting in on the hearing and the visiting French judges entered the hall at the Court of Cassation where the interrogation over alleged fraudulent activities got under way.

A separate Lebanese judicial source said Ghosn would be interrogated for five days, every day from 10:00am (0700 GMT) until 6:00pm (1500 GMT) with a lunch break.

The 67-year-old faces scrutiny from French investigators centring on alleged improper financial interactions with Renault-Nissan's distributor in Oman, payments by a Dutch subsidiary to consultants and parties organised at the Versailles Palace.

Ghosn — who holds French, Lebanese and Brazilian passports — was arrested in Japan in 2018 on suspicion of financial misconduct.

GUNMEN ABDUCT
STUDENTS IN
NIGERIA

Lagos, May 31: A large number of students were abducted Sunday and one person was killed at a school in Nigeria's north central Niger State, a police spokesman said.

Nigerian media, including the independent Channels TV, said about 200 students were abducted at the Salihu Tanko Islamic School in Tegina in the local government area of Rafi.

Wasiu Abiodun, the Niger state police spokesman, confirmed the incident, though without giving a number for those abducted. He said the abduction was carried out by armed bandits on board motorcycles in their numbers. The gunmen fired indiscriminately and abducted a yet to be ascertained number of children, he said, adding that the gunmen shot one person dead in the process.

All tactical teams have been mobilised to rescue the victims and the police will ensure that the children are rescued unhurt, he said. The incident is the latest in a series of mass abductions in Nigerian schools by gangs who collect money for ransom. The worst incident this year occurred at the Government Girls Secondary School Jangebe in February, when 279 girls were abducted and later released.

Many schools have been forced to close due to the frequent incidents.

Regional bloc
suspends Mali

Accra, May 31: West African leaders suspended Mali from their regional bloc Sunday over what they said amounted to a coup last week, Ghana's foreign minister said after an emergency meeting to address the political crisis in Mali.

The bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, "is worried about the security implications for West Africa because of the continued insecurity brought about by the political upheavals in that country," Foreign Minister Shirley Attorkor Botchwey said.

At the end of their summit, the heads of state of the ECOWAS member nations demanded that Malian authorities immediately release former transitional President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane, who are being kept under house arrest. In their statement, the leaders condemned the arrests by Mali's military, which they said violated mediation steps agreed to last September, a month after a coup d'etat led by the same man who has now again taken power in Mali, Col. Assimi Goita. ECOWAS also

called for a new civilian prime minister to be nominated immediately, a new inclusive government to be formed and the 18-month transition of power leading to February 2022 elections to be carried out, saying a monitoring mechanism will be put in place to assure this.

In addition, the statement said, the head of the transition government, the vice president and the prime minister should not under any circumstances be candidates in the planned February 27 presidential election.

ECOWAS urged all international partners, including the African Union, the United Nations, and the European Union, to continue to support the successful implementation of the transition in Mali. The heads of state expressed "strong and deep concerns over the present crisis in Mali, which is coming halfway to the end of the agreed transition period, in the context of the security challenges related to incessant terrorist attacks and the Covid-19 pandemic with its dire socio-economic impacts," the statement said. — AP

Cyprus: Far-right
party gains big

Nicosia, May 31: The far-right ELAM party and a centrist splinter group made big gains in Cyprus' parliamentary election on Sunday as a sizeable chunk of supporters appeared to have turned their back on the top three parties amid voter disenchantment with traditional power centres.

With 100 per cent of votes counted, ELAM garnered 6.78 per cent of the vote — a 3 per cent increase from the previous election in 2016 — to edge out the socialist EDEK party by the razor-thin margin of around 200 votes. The centrist DIPA — made up of key figures from the centre-right DIKO party which has traditionally been the third biggest party — gained 6.1 per cent of the vote.

The centre-right DISY emerged in first place with 27.77 per cent of the

vote, 5.4 per cent more than second-place, communist-rooted AKEL.

But the parties respectively lost 2.9 per cent and 3.3 per cent of their support from the previous election.

"The result isn't what we expected," AKEL General-Secretary Andros Kyprianou told a party rally. "We respect it and we'll examine it carefully to draw conclusions, but we can now say that we failed to convince (our supporters)."

Analyst Christoforos Christoforou said the results indicate a "very big failure" on the part of both DISY and AKEL to rally more supporters by convincing them of the benefits of their policies.

A last-ditch appeal by the DISY leadership limited a projected 5 per cent voter loss to 3 per cent. — AP

Envoy to return
after wife hits 2

Seoul, May 31: Belgium will bring home its ambassador to South Korea amid public anger over his wife's alleged assault of two employees at a shop in Seoul.

The Belgium Embassy said the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sophie Wilmes, decided it was in the best interest of bilateral relations to end Ambassador Peter Lescouhier's tenure this summer. He has been the envoy in Seoul for three years.

The embassy didn't provide a specific date on when Lescouhier's term will end or name a replacement. While Lescouhier served his country with dedication, "the current situation doesn't allow him to further carry out his role in a serene way," the embassy said.

The Belgian government also waived the diplo-

matic immunity of Lescouhier's wife, Xiang Xueqiu, so that she could be investigated by South Korean police, the embassy said in a Facebook post.

However, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said her immunity was only partially waived and she still had protection from criminal trials or punishment.

Lescouhier earlier this month issued an apology on behalf of his wife, saying in an Instagram video that she "might have had her reasons to be angry at the way she was treated in that shop but committing physical violence is totally unacceptable."

The embassy said Xiang has privately apologised to the employees. Xiang reacted angrily when an employee asked about the jacket she was wearing, suspecting that it could have been stolen. — AP

UK in early stages of third
wave, warns PLO scientist

Prof. Gupta urges PM Boris to delay the June 21 reopening of the country

London, May 31: An eminent Indian-origin scientist advising the British government has warned that there are signs that the UK is in the early stages of a third wave of Coronavirus infections and urged Prime Minister Boris Johnson to delay the planned June 21 reopening of the country by a few weeks, according to a media report on Monday.

Professor Ravi Gupta of the University of Cambridge, who is a member of the government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag), said although new cases were "relatively low" the B.1.617 variant of the Covid-19 had fuelled "exponential growth", the BBC reported.

On Sunday, the UK reported more than 3,000 new Covid infections for a fifth day in a row. Prior to this, the UK had not surpassed that number since April 12. Gupta also called on Prime Minister Johnson to delay the planned June 21 reopening of the country by "a few weeks".

The UK's overall Covid-19 caseload and death toll currently stood at 4,499,939 and 128,043, respectively. Prof. Gupta said the UK was already in a third wave of infections and at least three-quarters of cases were the new variant first discovered in India. "Of course the numbers of cases are relatively low at the moment — all waves start with low numbers of cases that grumble in the background and then become explosive, so the key here is that what we are seeing here is the signs of an early wave," he said. — PTI

TRAVEL CURBS
ARE BACK IN
CHINA PROVINCE

Beijing, May 31: China on Monday re-imposed anti-Coronavirus travel controls on its southern province of Guangdong, announcing anyone leaving the populous region must be tested for the virus following a spike in infections that has alarmed authorities.

Guangdong, which borders Hong Kong, recorded 20 new confirmed cases, all contracted locally, in the 24 hours through midnight Sunday. Guangdong's numbers are low compared with many places in the world, but the rise has rattled Chinese leaders.

People leaving Guangdong by plane, train, bus or private car after 10 p.m. on Monday must present results of a nucleic acid test. — AP



People queue for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine during the first mega Covid-19 vaccination at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday.

— AFP

S'pore PM: Virus to keep
infecting people for years

Singapore, May 31: Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Monday the deadly Coronavirus will not disappear completely and will keep infecting people for years to come, urging citizens to carry on with their lives in this "new normal" while promising to reopen the country's borders.

Addressing the nation on the government's Covid-19 plan, Lee said the pandemic will remain with the humankind and become endemic.

"One day this global pandemic will subside. But I do not expect Covid-19 to disappear. It will remain with humankind, and become endemic. The virus will continue to circulate in pockets of the global population for years to come. This also means we will see small outbreaks of

the disease from time to time in Singapore as well," he said.

"In this new normal, we will have to learn to carry on with our lives even with the virus in our midst. Our aim must be to keep the community as a whole safe, while accepting that some people may get infected every now and then. Just as we do with the common flu or dengue fever, which we now manage through public health measures and personal precautions. And in the case of the flu, with regular vaccinations too," he said.

Lee said many countries were still struggling to fully bring the pandemic under control or, much less, eliminate it. "Even as we tackle our Covid-19 situation, the pandemic rages on around us," said Lee.

India has suffered a huge surge of new cases, although their numbers are now coming down while in Southeast Asia, many countries have not started vaccinations in a big way, and may see more spikes in the next few months, he said.

Malaysian cases have been rising, and they are just entering a nationwide full lockdown. Even places that have kept Covid-19 well under control, like Taiwan, Australia and Vietnam, have recently experienced outbreaks, Lee said. "Covid-19 vaccinations will not entirely prevent you from getting Covid-19. But the vaccination makes this much less likely. And, if you do get sick despite being vaccinated, you are less likely to become very ill," he said. — PTI

Virus spreads to nursing
homes in Melbourne

Melbourne, May 31: Authorities say a Covid-19 cluster in Australia's second-largest city has spread to nursing homes.

Victoria state began a seven-day lockdown on Friday due to a cluster in its capital Melbourne.

State health authorities on Monday announced 11 new cases. A second staff member and a 90-year-old

resident of the Arcare Maidstone Aged Care facility in Melbourne were among the new infections. The first infected staff member was reported on Sunday.

The second staff member had also worked at the BlueCross Western Gardens nursing home in Melbourne last week and had not been vaccinated. The

BlueCross facility has gone into lockdown after the news.

Health Minister Martin Foley described the cluster spreading into aged care homes as a "very great concern to the Victorian government." The vast majority of Victoria's 820 Coronavirus deaths have been in nursing homes. — AP

Record virus cases in Thailand

Bangkok, May 31: Thailand reported a record number of new Coronavirus cases on Monday as the governor of Bangkok announced an easing of some restrictions in effect for more than a month including people visiting parks for exercise.

Thailand has been fighting to deal with a virus

surge that began in early April in a group of nightclubs in Bangkok and has since spread around the country. The Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration reported a record 5,485 new cases, of which 1,953 were in prisons.

Confirmed deaths increased by 19 to bring the total to 1,031 since the pan-

demie began last year.

The total number of confirmed cases has now risen to 159,792, of which 82% occurred during the latest surge. Many of the cases are concentrated in prisons, housing for construction workers, factories, slums and low-income housing areas.

Officials have in some

cases been criticised for allowing companies to isolate and quarantine workers inside factories.

Bangkok, which has been a hot spot, reported 1,356 of the cases on Monday. CCSA deputy spokeswoman Apisamai Srirangsan said the capital currently has 45 clusters to deal with. — AP

VIETNAM TO TEST
ALL NINE MILLION
IN HO CHI MINH

Hanoi, May 31: Vietnam plans to test all 9 million people in its largest city for the Coronavirus and imposed more restrictions Monday to deal with a growing Covid-19 outbreak.

People in Ho Chi Minh city are only allowed to leave home for necessary activities and public gatherings of more than 10 people are banned for the next two weeks, the government announced. Prior to the order, the city, also Vietnam's economic hub, shut down non-essential business last Thursday when cases started to increase.

State newspaper *Vietnam News* said the city authority is planning to test its entire population with a testing capacity of 100,000 samples a day. The newspaper also said police had filed a case Sunday against the couple who head a Protestant church mission for "spreading dangerous infectious diseases," citing poor health protocols applied at the premises. — AP

FRANCE OPENS
COVID JABS FOR
ALL ADULTS

Paris, May 31: France on Monday opened up Covid-19 vaccines to all adults, a week before Germany, as Europe races to avoid another wave of infections caused by new virus variants.

Until now, French authorities gave priority to people over 50, people in "priority professions" or younger adults with underlying health problems. So far, 25.4 million people have received a first shot of a vaccine, representing about 38 percent of the population and nearly one in two adults.

A Cevipof poll conducted in early May showed that 65 percent of adults planned to get vaccinated, up from 48 percent in February. — AFP

STAY | AWAY

The EU poured 3 billion euros into security tech research following refugee crisis in 2015-16

Post pandemic, Europe migrants to face digital fortress

Peplo (Greece) May 31: As the world begins to travel again, Europe is sending migrants a loud message: Stay away!

Greek border police are firing bursts of deafening noise from an armoured truck over the frontier into Turkey. Mounted on the vehicle, the long-range acoustic device, or "sound cannon," is the size of a small TV set but can match the volume of a jet engine. It's part of a vast array of physical and experimental new digital barriers being installed

and tested during the quiet months of the coronavirus pandemic at the 200-kilometre (125-mile) Greek border with Turkey to stop people entering the European Union illegally.

A new steel wall, similar to recent construction on the US-Mexico border, blocks commonly-used crossing points along the Evros River that separates the two countries. Nearby observation towers are being fitted with long-range cameras, night vision, and multiple sensors.

The data will be sent to

control centres to flag suspicious movement using artificial intelligence analysis. "We will have a clear pre-border picture of what's happening," Police Maj. Dimonsthenis Kamargios, head of the region's border guard authority, told the *Associated Press*.

The EU has poured 3 billion euros (\$3.7 billion) into security tech research following the refugee crisis in 2015-16, when more than 1 million people — many escaping wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan — fled to Greece and on to

other EU countries.

The automated surveillance network being built on the Greek-Turkish border is aimed at detecting migrants early and deterring them from crossing, with river and land patrols using searchlights and long-range acoustic devices. Key elements of the network will be launched by the end of the year, Kamargios said.

"Our task is to prevent migrants from entering the country illegally. We need modern equipment and tools to do that," Res-

earchers at universities around Europe, working with private firms, have developed futuristic surveillance and verification technology, and tested more than a dozen projects at Greek borders.

AI-powered lie detectors and virtual border-guard interview bots have been piloted, as well as efforts to integrate satellite data with footage from drones on land, air, sea and underwater.

Palm scanners record the unique vein pattern in a person's hand to use as a

biometric identifier, and the makers of live camera reconstruction technology promise to erase foliage virtually, exposing people hiding near border areas. Testing has also been conducted in Hungary, Latvia and elsewhere along the eastern EU perimeter.

The more aggressive migration strategy has been advanced by European policymakers over the past five years, funding deals with Mediterranean countries outside the bloc to hold migrants back and transforming the EU border

protection agency, Frontex, from a coordination mechanism to a full-fledged multinational security force. But regional migration deals have left the EU exposed to political pressure from neighbours.

Earlier this month, several thousand migrants crossed from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in a single day, prompting Spain to deploy the army. A similar crisis unfolded on the Greek-Turkish border and lasted three weeks last year. — AP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,937.44	1.00
Nifty 50	15,582.80	0.95
S&P 500*	4,204.11	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.62	0.24
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.93	0.18
Euro (₹)	88.49	0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,860.318	0.66
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.22	0.73
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.022	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.581	0.00

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Global tax deal unlikely till Oct, says OECD official

A full global deal to overhaul taxation rules and make multinationals pay more in countries where they operate may not be achieved until October, the chief of the OECD said on Monday. Speaking in Paris, Angel Gurria said a “180-degree change in the position of the United States” has accelerated the talks, making an outline of a deal possible at a meeting of G20 finance officials in July.

BMW drives in X7 M50d Dark Shadow edition



BMW Group India on Monday said it has launched X7 M50d 'Dark Shadow' Edition in the country priced at ₹2.02 crore (ex-showroom). The model comes to India as a completely built-up unit and only be available for booking at the company's website. “The BMW X7 is a statement of the luxury class. It opens up a brand-new dimension in luxurious driving pleasure,” said BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah.

Monetisation to gather pace in road sector: Crisil

Asset monetisation in the roads sector will see an acceleration as EPC companies in this space pursue growth and is also aided by various government initiatives, domestic rating agency Crisil said on Monday. It said that the healthy order book position of the road EPC companies, which stands at over three times revenue at present, is expected to improve further supported by new project awarding momen-

Cognizant set to expand vaccine centres for staff

Cognizant on Monday said that it will spend \$8.5 million for Covid relief funding to vaccinate more than 6.5 lakh associates, their families, support teams. The company said its vaccination drive for associates and families, which was launched in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Gurgaon, has been expanded to 100 vaccination centres across 40 cities. The company said it will cover the costs of vaccines.

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Control on expenses beat Covid blues Listed firms post superlative profits

SANGEETHA G.
CHENNAI, MAY 31

Listed companies, which have already published their results, have registered more than a 200 per cent growth in profits in the March 2021 quarter following a tighter control on expenditure. This would be the third consecutive quarter of superlative profits, according to CMIE.

The companies grew their top-line by 14.7 per cent in the March 2021 quarter against the same quarter last year. But net profits expanded by 212.4 per cent. In the March 2021 quarter, 935 companies have booked a profit of ₹1.58 lakh crore.

The companies managed to book superlative profits because of higher growth in profit margin. Compared to a 0.2 per cent profit margin in the March 2020 quarter, the companies managed to clock a 10.8 per cent margin in the March 2021 quarter, the highest rise in recent years.

In the March 2021 quarter, financial services companies saw a 2.1 per cent increase in the topline and a 2.1 per cent fall in total expenses as a result, net profits expanded by 65 per cent.

In the same quarter, non-finance companies saw topline expand by 18.6 per cent and total expenses grow by a much lower 8.9 per cent. As a result, net profits grew by 295 per cent. The share of non-



finance companies in total profits of the corporate sector increased from 73 per cent in the quarter ended September 2020 to 78 per cent in the quarter ended March 2021.

Further, the companies controlled expenses in spite of a significant increase in raw material costs. In the March 2021 quarter, non-finance companies saw their topline grow well. But, this growth was accompanied by an increase in raw material costs. However, a tighter control on other costs delivered high profits during the quarter.

Manufacturing companies recorded a 22.9 per cent increase in net sales during the quarter ended March 2021. Growth in raw material expenses was close at 18.6 per cent. But the companies kept other expenses in much greater control. Wages grew by 10.3 per cent and

other expenses shrunk by 1.8 per cent. Overall operating costs of manufacturing companies grew by 11.9 per cent although raw material expenses grew by 18.6 per cent. Further, interest costs declined by 20.2 per cent. The much lower growth in or shrinking of costs of manufacturing companies helped them see a 610 per cent increase in profits.

“Nearly three-fourths of the listed companies are yet to declare their financial performance during the March 2021 quarter. These companies collectively made profits of about ₹25,000 crore in the September and the December 2020 quarter each. Assuming similar orders of magnitude to continue, total profits by listed companies could touch ₹1.8 trillion in the March 2021 quarter,” said Mahesh Vyas, the chief executive officer of CMIE.

EPFO allows 2nd PF advance now

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Keeping in view the raging second wave of the pandemic, the labour ministry on Monday said that the members of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) can now avail a second non-refundable advance from their EPF accounts. Earlier, there was only a one-time advance available for the EPF members.

The decision comes at a time when the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has made the financial position of many employees precarious and more difficult than the first wave.

“In such trying times, EPFO endeavours to lend a helping hand to its members by meeting their financial needs. The members, who have already availed of the first Covid-19 advance, can now opt for a second advance also. The provision and process for the withdrawal of the second Covid-19 advance are the same as in the case of the first advance,” the ministry said in a statement.

“Under this provision, non-refundable withdrawal to the extent of the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to member's credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, is provided,” EPFO said.

“Under this provision, non-refundable withdrawal to the extent of the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to member's credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, is provided. The members can apply for a lesser amount also,” it added.

“The Covid-19 advance has been a great help to the EPF members during the pandemic, especially for those having monthly wages of less than Rs 15,000. As on date, EPFO has settled more than 76.31 lakh Covid-19 advance claims thereby disbursing a total of ₹18,698.15 crore,” it added.

Bulls take Nifty to all-time high

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 31

Upward market momentum continued for the seventh consecutive session taking the Nifty-50 index to a new all-time high, even as post-market hour economic data showed that the economy has contracted by 7.3 per cent in FY 2020-21.

The Nifty-50 index gained 147.15 points or 0.95 per cent to close at a new all-time high of 15,582.80, while the Sensex gained 514.56 points or one per cent to close at 51,937.44.

The forward-looking equity market is more focused on brightening prospects of economic recovery as fresh Covid cases have fallen consistently after crossing over four lakh cases in early

Since we are in an uncharted territory, there is no historic level to consider as a next resistance, but taking a few ratios into consideration, there is no major level visible before the magical figure of 16,000 for the Nifty-50

— **SAMEET CHAVAN**
Analyst, Angel Broking

May to over 1.52 lakh cases last Sunday, according to equity market analysts.

“The Nifty rose for the seventh consecutive session reaching and closing at fresh record highs. It has closed the month of May with a 6.5 per cent gain almost matching the February gains. The con-

tribution to this rise was broad-based on May 31,” said Deepak Jasani, head-Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

The top five gainers on the Nifty-50 were JSW Steel (3.25 per cent), ICICI Bank (3.00 per cent), Reliance Industries (2.80 per cent), Bharti Airtel (2.36 per cent), and Tata Steel (2.13 per cent).

On Monday, the last day of the month of May, foreign portfolio investors turned net buyers by ₹2,412 crore, while the domestic institutions also purchased shares worth Rs 179.78 crore.

Overall FPIs were net sellers in May but the latter half of the month saw an aggressive buying as the dramatic rise in Covid during the first half was followed by a

steep decline. “Bulls discarded the myth ‘Sell in May and go away,’” said Angel Broking.

“Since we are in an uncharted territory, there is no historic level to consider as a next resistance, but taking a few ratios into consideration, there is no major level visible before the magical figure of 16,000 for the Nifty-50,” said Sameet Chavan, analyst, technical and derivatives at Angel Broking.

PNB Housing Finance board approved a capital raise proposal of ₹4,000 crore led by the international private equity firm Carlyle and as the exchanges were informed, the PNB Housing Finance stock hit the 20 per cent upper circuit and closed up 19.99 per cent.

Real estate sector's size to hit \$1 trillion by 2030: Official

New Delhi, May 31: The size of real estate sector is projected to cross \$1 trillion by 2030, housing and urban affairs secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said on Monday.

“In 2019-20, real estate sector contributed nearly seven per cent to our GDP. Its total contribution was to the tune of \$200 billion to our GDP... And projections are that by 2030 this number is going to cross \$1 trillion,” Mishra said.

He also noted that real estate is an important sector for the economy with around 11 per share in the total employment numbers.

The secretary was speaking at a virtual event to launch Housing Price Index, created by realty portal Housing.com and Indian School of Business (ISB) in association with industry body NAREDCO.

“By 2030, when we are projecting our economy to go up to \$10 trillion, nearly 10 per cent of that will come from the real estate sector itself,” he added.

Mishra said the sector is also very important from the point of view of employment and high-



lighted that out of 50 crore jobs, real estate provides 5.5 crore employment opportunities.

The secretary said the real estate sector has transformed in the last seven years and implementation of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, popularly known as RERA, has played an important part in making a paradigm change.

He said the central law has already been implemented across all states/UTs, except West Bengal and Nagaland.

Mishra said a large number of real estate projects and property brokers are registered under RERA.

The government has taken various measures in the Budget of last seven years to spur growth in the real estate sector, he added.

“Every Budget has some announcement for real estate sector.”

The secretary emphasised on having robust digital platforms for smooth and transparent real estate buying-selling process.

Mishra said he had asked CREDAI and NAREDCO, the two major associations for real estate, to create a digital platform for real estate, similar to Amazon, and some progress has been made in this regard. — PTI

Core sectors grow 56% in April over low base effect

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

On the back of a low-base effect, eight core sector industries in the country registered a 56 per cent growth in April 2021, according to the government official data released on Monday.

The eight infrastructure sectors — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity had contracted by 37.9 per cent because of the national lockdown imposed by the government in April 2020.



The data, however, showed that the sequential decline in core sector output stood at 15 per cent in April on account of the second wave of the virus.

“This high growth rate in April 2021 is largely due to low index base in April 2020 consequent to the low industrial production across all sectors caused

by the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19 last year. The month-over-month production of eight core industries, as captured by ICI, declined by 15.1 per cent (P) in April 2021 compared to March 2021(P) due to the emergence of the second wave of infectious Covid-19,” the official data said.

The RBI in its annual report also acknowledged the impact of the second wave on the economic recovery process. However, it said that the impact may not be as harsh as in the first wave.

NEW | WORLD

Work-from-home and study-from-home spiked gadget demand

Chip shortage to ease in two years, says Intel CEO

New Delhi, May 31:

Global chip maker Intel on Monday said it could take a couple of years to address the supply shortage in the semiconductor ecosystem that is witnessing huge demand for tech products, accelerated by the Covid pandemic.

Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger noted that the work and study-from-home trends during the Covid-19 pandemic have led to a “cycle of explosive growth in semiconductors” that has placed huge strain on global supply chains around the world.

“We have been working diligently with our partners... to address constraints and increase output to meet demand, and we are acting to help



ensure capacity to meet the world's needs for this new era... But, while the industry has taken steps to address near-term constraints, it could still take a couple of years for the ecosystem to address shortages of foundry capacity, substrates and components,” he said at a

virtual session at the Computex event.

He stated that the company has doubled its internal wafer capacity in the past four years, and that it is driving a collaborative approach to help the supply chain.

Semiconductors play a crucial role in every-

thing, right from computers to appliances, communication devices, transportation systems to critical infrastructure.

“We've already announced more than \$20 billion of new investment in our foundry capability. This includes large scale capacity expansion in Arizona, in support for advanced semiconductor manufacturing technologies in New Mexico. We plan to expand to other locations in the US and Europe, ensuring a sustainable and secure semiconductor supply chain for the world,” Gelsinger said.

Intel Corporate Vice President and General Manager CCG Sales Steve Long announced the

launch of two new 11th generation Intel core SKUs that will help the company deliver performance and extend its leadership in the thin and light notebook category.

The company is also launching the Intel 5G solution 5000, its first 5G product for the next-generation of PC experiences.

“This is Intel's first 5G product coming out from our previously announced collaboration with MediaTek with global certification. Acer, Asus and HP are expected to bring these 5G-enabled PCs to market this year and the momentum continues in 2022, with over 29 designs expected,” Long said. — PTI

CAPGEMINI TO USE ERICSSON'S SOLUTIONS FOR 5G LAB IN INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Capgemini on Monday said that it has tied up with Ericsson to accelerate the deployment of 5G solutions.

As part of this collaboration, the company has deployed Ericsson's 5G Industry Connect solution at its 5G Lab in Mumbai which will enable industry innovation, experimentation and deployment of 5G and Edge technologies for clients across industries.

According to Ashwin Yardi, CEO, India, at Capgemini: “The Capgemini 5G Lab offers a “ready to use” platform for our customers to ideate, innovate and deploy use cases as they adopt new technologies which will enable them to accelerate their digital transformation journey towards Intelligent Industry.”

SHORT TAKES

Zidane criticises
Real in open letter

Madrid: Zinedine Zidane resigned as Real Madrid coach because he felt the Spanish club no longer had any confidence in him, he wrote in an open letter on Monday. "I'm leaving because I feel the club no longer has the faith in me I need, and doesn't offer me the support to build something in the medium or long term," the Frenchman wrote in the letter published in the daily AS. "I am a born winner and I was here to win trophies, but beyond this there are human beings, emotions, life and I have the feeling that these things have not been valued, that it has not been understood that this is also how the dynamic of a great club is maintained. But everything I built on a daily basis, what I brought to the relationship with the players... Has been forgotten," he said. — *AFP*

Barca sign up
Aguero from City

Barcelona: Barcelona announced on Monday that they had agreed to sign Sergio Aguero on a deal until 2023, after the Argentina forward quit Manchester City following a decade at the Premier League club. In a statement, Barca said that Aguero will become their player once his contract with Manchester City expires at the end of next month, adding that there is a buy-out clause "set at 100 million euros (\$122 million)". The 32-year-old's signing for Barca comes two days after he missed out on winning the Champions League with City, Pep Guardiola's side losing this season's final to Chelsea. His final appearance for City was as a substitute for Raheem Sterling late in the final in Porto as the newly-crowned Premier League champions tried in vain to win Europe's top prize for the first time. — *AFP*

Draw vs Qatar not
my best: Sandhu

Doha: India goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu says the memorable goalless draw against Asian champions Qatar, in the FIFA World Cup qualifier in September 2019, is not his greatest performance till date. According to him, he has performed his best, surprisingly, in a 0-4 loss to Iran in a 2018 World Cup qualifier at a packed Azadi Stadium in Tehran, and during a match against China in China. "Almost everyone I speak to always makes me remember about the Qatar match. But if you ask me, that isn't my best performance so far. I understand that in the Qatar match, we got a result — and hence, it will always stay a highlight," Gurpreet told the All India Football Federation. — *PTI*

Gopi, Sindhu bat
for youth health

Hyderabad: National badminton coach Pullela Gopichand and world champion P. V. Sindhu pledged to protect the youth of the country from the menace of tobacco products on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day on Monday. "Tobacco use not only harms our health but it is also a threat to the health of our friends and family. Additionally, tobacco users also have a greater risk of developing severe cases of Covid-19. I want all of you to break free from dependence on tobacco and stay healthy. Commit to quit," Sindhu said. "Let us all take a pledge to ensure that we stop the usage of tobacco for a healthy living," Gopi added.

Suns bounce back
to level series

Los Angeles: Chris Paul overcame an injured shoulder and Jae Crowder busted out of a playoff slump on Sunday as the Phoenix Suns took a 100-92 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers, who lost Anthony Davis to another injury. Paul had 18 points and nine assists, while Crowder delivered 17 points as half a dozen players finished in double figures for the Suns, who clawed their way level at 2-2 in the Western Conference playoff series against the reigning NBA champions. — *AFP*

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PLAN FOR FUTURE

T20 World Cup, FTP cycle to come up for discussion at ICC board meet

New Delhi, May 31: The BCCI will ask for one month's extension to decide on hosting the T20 World Cup in India amid the looming Covid-19 threat when the all-powerful ICC Board holds a virtual meeting on Tuesday to discuss a host of other issues as well.

While earlier, it was decided that BCCI president Sourav Ganguly will attend the meet in person, it is learnt that now he will be present virtually and will only leave for the UAE on Wednesday to have discussions on the organisation of IPL with Emirates Cricket Board.

There are no concrete outcomes expected at the meeting and after July 1, the BCCI will hold another SGM. The ICC is likely to make a formal announcement of its final decision during its annual conference that starts on July 18.

While the remainder of the IPL has been shifted to the United Arab Emirates between September 15 to October 15, the Indian cricket board doesn't want to let go the opportunity of hosting the global T20 event, which also has Emirates as back-up hosts.

"The Covid-19 cases are reducing but obviously it is still not a situation where we can firmly commit to hosting the World T20. Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah are right in asking for one month's time to decide," a senior BCCI source privy to developments said on conditions of anonymity.

FTP CYCLE 2023-31

The Futures Tours & Programme Cycle for the next eight years between 2023 to 2031 will also be discussed with provision for the flagship ICC events apart from the bilateral series.

"Obviously due to the pandemic, every cricket board has lost money and the bilateral events are the way forward to recover the costs. In any case, currently rested ICC CEO Manu Sawhney's proposal of a marquee ICC event every year was red flagged by the 'Big Three' much earlier.

"They need to look after the financial health of their boards," the official further added.

Also the future of the World Test Championship will also be discussed. — *PTI*



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly (left) and secretary Jay Shah in this file photo. — *BCCI*

IPL-returned Aussies are home

Sydney, May 31: Amid hugs, tears of joy and relief, Australia's jumbo IPL contingent comprising players, support staff and commentators on Monday reunited with their family members after serving a 14-day hotel quarantine here.

The 38-member Australians landed in the country two weeks ago after a stopover in Maldives due to travel ban from Covid-ravaged India.

The highlight of the day was premier fast bowler Pat Cummins exiting the hotel and reuniting with his pregnant partner Becky Boston, a video of which was uploaded on Twitter by well-known Australian sports journalist Chloe-Amanda Bailey.

"Video of the day! After eight weeks away from the IPL, Pat Cummins finally leaves hotel quarantine and reunites with his pregnant partner Becky. All the feels!" Bailey tweeted alongside the video.

OZ PLAYERS AVAILABILITY IN
IPL YET TO BE DISCUSSED: CA

Melbourne, May 31: Cricket Australia on Monday said it's yet to start discussions on whether Australian cricketers would compete in the IPL when the T20 league re-commences in the UAE in September.

Nick Hockley, who was confirmed as CA chief executive on Monday after performing the duties in an interim role, said a decision on IPL can wait as Australian players were just reunited with their families after completing a two-week hotel quarantine.

"Once we get back together as a group that (IPL) is something we'll obviously need to discuss," Hockley was quoted as saying by *ESPNCricinfo*.

"Our players returning from the IPL have only today come out of quarantine, so our first priority is to make sure they are reunited with their families. We have a tour to prepare for in the West Indies," he added.

Hockley said the players will regroup at the National Cricket Centre (in Brisbane) in a couple of weeks before the West Indies tour and that would be the time to refocus. — *PTI*

Besides Cummins, batting maestro Steve Smith, big-hitting all-rounder Glenn Maxwell and the swashbuckling opener Dave Warner were among those who finally embraced their loved ones after nearly eight weeks away from home. Most of them had not seen their families since

heading into the Indian Premier League in early April. They were flown home via a charter flight after the IPL was postponed owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cricket Australia's newly-appointed chief executive officer Nick Hockley said the feeling among the players about going home to be with their families could not be understated.

"We've been texting, and I've spoken to a couple of the broader group, not just the players but there's commentators, match officials and physios," Hockley said.

"They are clearly quite shaken from the experience, very appreciative to be home back here in Australia."

The BCCI paid for the charter flights and accommodation of the Australians in the Maldives and Sydney, and Hockley thanked the Indian board for the manner in which it helped them after the abrupt suspension of the IPL. — *PTI*

OSAKA COULD
BE BANNED FOR
MEDIA BOYCOTT

Paris, May 31: Japanese superstar Naomi Osaka was on Sunday threatened with disqualification from the French Open if she persists with her controversial media boycott, officials said.

"We have advised Naomi Osaka that should she continue to ignore her media obligations, she would be exposing herself to possible further code of conduct infringement consequences," said a statement from the four Grand Slam tournaments after the world number two was fined \$15,000.

"Repeat violations attract tougher sanctions including default from the tournament and the trigger of a major offence investigation that could lead to more substantial fines and future Grand Slam suspensions."

Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam title winner and sport's highest-earning female athlete, was sanctioned for refusing to hold a press conference after her opening 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) win over Romanian Patricia Maria Tig.

The 23-year-old had said on the eve of the tournament that she would not carry out any media obligations, claiming news conferences are detrimental to her mental health.

She likened traditional post-match inquests to "kicking people when they're down".

French Tennis Federation president Gilles Moretton had described Osaka's vow of silence as "a phenomenal error". — *AFP*

ASIAN | BOXING

Pooja strikes gold,
silver for Panghal

Dubai, May 31: Defending champion Pooja Rani (75kg) was the lone Indian woman boxer to strike gold at the Asian Championships while defending champion Amit Panghal (52kg) and Shiva Thapa (64kg) lost gruelling and close final bouts to fetch silver medals here on Monday with the country seeking a review of the former's defeat.

The Olympic-bound Pooja (75 kg), who was competing in her first bout of the tournament after getting a bye and a walkover earlier, dismantled Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan with a clinical performance.

She also earned \$10,000 for her marvellous one-bout show in which Movlonova was simply out of sorts, unable to keep pace with the Indian's intensity.

Panghal lost 2-3 to known nemesis Shakhobidin Zoirov of Uzbekistan in what was a repeat of the 2019 world championship final, which had also ended in Zoirov's favour.

India sought a review of the second round of the bout which Panghal won on a split count but looked to have dominated completely. The result of the review will be known later.

"I dedicate this silver medal to my coach Anil Dhanker. I wish he was here with in Dubai," Panghal tweeted referring to his personal coach.

Thapa (64kg) also lost by the same margin to Mongolia's Baatarsukh Chinzorig, the reigning Asian Games silver-medalist. This was Thapa's fifth successive podium finish at the showpiece and second silver.

Both the contests had the Indian boxers doing most things right but not getting the judges' nod.



Pooja Rani (75 kg) celebrates her 5-0 win against Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan at the Asian Championships in Dubai.

The Panghal-Zoirov clash lived up to the hype with both the Olympic-bound boxers engaged in a fast exchange of punches from the very first round.

Zoirov claimed the opening round. But in the second round, Panghal raised his game by a notch, evading Zoirov's range with his pace and landing his left straights precisely. Zoirov, on the other hand, struggled to connect.

The two went all out in the third round but it was Panghal who was more impressive with his body shots despite an injured eye.

He even had the judges' verdict in his favour for the round but it was not enough to alter the final scoreline. — *PTI*

PADDLERS DIYA, SWASTIKA
END RUNNERS-UP IN TUNIS

New Delhi, May 31: Young Indian paddlers Diya Chitale and Swastika Ghosh's splendid run at the WTT Youth Star Contender ended with a runners-up finish following their 3-11, 6-11, 7-11 defeat against Russia's Natalia Malinina and Elizabet Abraamian in the U-19 girls doubles final in Tunis, Tunisia.

Earlier, the Indian pair made its way into the final, defeating Czech Republic's Linda Zaderova and Croatia's Hana Arapovic in the semifinals.

Diya and Swastika were also impressive in the U-19 singles as both finished their campaigns in the semifinals after suffering identical 2-3 defeats in hard-fought encounters.

Diya made life tougher for Russian paddler Vlada Voronina before losing the thrilling contest 8-11, 11-7, 11-6, 8-11, 7-11. The current junior national champion Swastika too lost to Turkey's Ece Harac 11-8, 4-11, 11-9, 3-11, 6-11 in an intense decider.

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, it was the first international youth event where Indian players were seen in action. — *PTI*

VIRUS | EFFECT

Copa America
moved to Brazil

Asuncion, May 31: South America's largest football tournament, the Copa America, was moved Monday to Brazil after a Covid-19 surge in Argentina and social unrest in Colombia saw the co-hosts stripped of the right to host the event.

With two weeks to kick-off, South America's CONMEBOL football federation tweeted that "The CONMEBOL Copa America 2021 will be played in Brazil!" and the June 13-July 10 dates were maintained.

CONMEBOL is expected to announce the venues and dates of matches in the coming hours.

Brazil hosted the last Copa America, in 2019. Originally scheduled for last year, the Copa was postponed by 12 months due to the coronavirus epidemic.

New host Brazil is one of the countries in the world worst affected by the outbreak, with the second-highest death toll of over 460,000 so far and more than 16.5 million cases.

It was to have been the first time in its history that the tournament would be co-hosted by two countries, Argentina and Colombia. — *AFP*

WC QUALIFIERS
SHIFTED FROM
CHINA TO DUBAI

Shanghai, May 31: Several World Cup football qualifiers scheduled to be played in China were moved to Dubai on Monday over coronavirus infections in the Syria and Maldives teams, the Chinese Football Association said.

Seven Group A fixtures involving China, Syria, Maldives, the Philippines and Guam are affected.

"In view of the recent epidemic infections in the Maldives and Syrian national football teams... They must be strictly quarantined upon entry and cannot participate in the games as scheduled," a CFA statement said.

"According to recommendations from the AFC (Asian Football Confederation), the Chinese FA agreed that the remaining qualifying matches... Will not be held in Suzhou and will be transferred to Dubai and held there," it added. — *AFP*



Poland's Iga Swiatek returns to Kaja Juvan of Slovenia in their French Open first round match in Paris on Monday. — *AFP*

Swiatek starts title defence with win

Paris, May 31: Reigning women's champion Iga Swiatek made a winning start to her French Open title defence with a straight-sets victory over Kaja Juvan on Monday, while men's second seed Daniil Medvedev finally reached round two for the first time at Roland Garros.

Poland's Swiatek, celebrating her 20th birthday, saw off her good friend Juvan 6-0, 7-5 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Medvedev, who had lost in the first round in all of his four previous appearances in the tournament, put his poor clay-court form behind him by beating the dangerous Alexander Bublik 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.

The 23-time Grand Slam

THE RESULTS

Men's first round: Cameron Norrie (GBR) bt Bjorn Fratangelo (USA) 7-5, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2; Jannik Sinner (ITA x18) bt Pierre-Hugues Herbert (FRA) 6-1, 4-6, 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-4; Gianluca Mager (ITA) bt Peter Gojowczyk (GER) 6-2, 3-6, 6-4, 7-5; Federico Delbonis (ARG) bt Radu Albot (MDA) 6-1, 2-6, 6-0, 6-1; Filip Krajinovic (SRB) bt Maximilian Marterer (GER) 6-4, 6-1, 7-6 (7/3); John Isner (USA x31) bt Sam Querrey (USA) 7-6 (7/2), 6-3, 6-4; Thiago Monteiro (BRA) bt Francisco Cerundolo (ARG) 6-3, 6-4, 6-3; Steve Johnson (USA) bt Frances Tiafoe (USA) 6-7 (5/7), 3-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-1; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x2) bt Alexander Bublik (KAZ) 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.

Women's first round: Hailey Baptiste (USA) bt Anna Blinkova (RUS) 6-1, 6-4; Zarina Diyas (KAZ) bt Heather Watson (GBR) 6-4, 7-5; Elise Mertens (BEL x14) bt Storm Sanders (AUS) 6-4, 6-1; Rebecca Peterson (SWE) bt Shelby Rogers (USA) 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (10/8), 6-2; Iga Swiatek (POL x8) bt Kaja Juvan (SLO) 6-0, 7-5; Madison Brengle (USA) bt Maria Camila Osorio (COL) 7-5, 6-4; Polona Herczeg (SLO) bt Kiki Bertens (NED x16) 6-1, 3-6, 6-4; Harmony Tan (FRA) bt Alize Cornet (FRA) 6-4, 6-4; Marketa Vondrousova (CZE x20) bt Kaia Kanepi (EST) 4-6, 6-3, 6-0.

champion's match against Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania will be played behind closed doors, though, due to a 9pm Covid-19 curfew imposed by the French government.

Swiatek, who became the first major singles champion from Poland last October, hit 22 winners in an impressive opening to her bid for a

second straight Roland Garros triumph.

MEDVEDEV ENDS
MISERABLE RUN

It is not just in Paris that Medvedev has struggled on clay.

The Russian had lost eight of his previous nine matches on the surface dating back to 2019.

But the two-time Grand Slam runner-up was too strong for Kazakh Bublik, setting up a second-round tie against either Australian wildcard Christopher O'Connell or US player Tommy Paul.

"It was a good match and I've been training really well," said the 25-year-old Medvedev, who lost the Australian Open final to Novak Djokovic in February. — *AFP*