

COIMBATORE | MONDAY 24 | MAY 2021

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OTHER STORIES

Shoppers complain about rising veggie prices

From P1

While fruits & veggies were the principal items sold on Sunday, the meat markets, especially fish markets of Chennai, were teeming with buyers hoarding food for at least a week. Roads and streets with retail markets were witness to heavy movement of people and vehicles as the hoarding mentality took over. The daily wage earners were the ones feeling left out as their livelihood too will be affected by this lockdown for the second coronavirus wave.

A spate of weddings was a feature of Sunday all over the state as several families brought forward wedding dates to beat the lockdown with spaces outside temples turning out to be impromptu venues for the young tying the knot during the pandemic.

There were complaints from consumers who were hunting for essentials over the weekend that the prices of vegetables had sky-rocketed in Chennai and parts of Tamil Nadu, particularly on Sunday, a day after the extension to the wide lockdown was announced. Social media was filled with complaints of price gouging by traders though the association of traders did clarify that prices had gone up for a while on Sunday only until the lorries started unloading their goods in the Koyambedu market.

Innovative food offers from luxury hotel

Chennai: ITC Hotels' tradition of culinary excellence is reflected in its well-researched cuisine concepts that underline the brand's objective to showcase the best of Indian culinary offerings.

The hospitality industry has been forced to innovate in the course of the pandemic with even luxury hotels tying up with hospitals to offer Covid-19 recovery menus. The ITC Grand Chola in Chennai has gone a step further to offer citizens choice food from its kitchens through the strict lockdown too by using food delivery apps like Swiggy, Zomato etc.

In keeping with the current lockdown, as the country and its citizens stay home to stay safe, ITC Grand Chola launched an ultimate kitchen lockdown solution with 'Kitchen Takeover', which are subscription meals ranging from one meal to all three, from one day to 30 days. A thoughtfully curated vegetarian breakfast, lunch and dinner subscription meals that are comforting and nutritious, include a 'Morning Marathon' breakfast Subscription (6 days), a 'Noonish' Lunch Subscription (6 days) and a 'Sunset' Dinner Subscription (6 days), besides combo offers like 'Dawn to Dusk' Subscription (6 days) and 'Trial Offer D2D' Subscription (1 day) Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner and a monthly 'Zoom Box' subscription of Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner. The packaging, after a study of factors such as temperature, distance travelled, mode of transport, re-heating norms, is done in environment friendly corrugated paper boxes enabling all 'no contact' deliveries. To place an order, call at 044 4906 5271/9599049580



Hundreds of people at Kothavalchavadi market.

— DC



Buyers crowd the fish market near the Lighthouse.

— DC



People waiting for local bus at Thiruvamiyur bus depot.

— DC

20,000 cops to enforce lockdown from today

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 23

All shops were allowed to open for the last couple of days resulting in a mad rush by customers to markets and shopping centres, but the City will witness a stricter lockdown from Monday.

According to the City police, the sector wise lockdown measures will be re-enforced to make sure no violation of Covid-19 protocol takes place. A total of 20,000 police personnel and additional strength from the Tamil Nadu Special Police and special units of the city police will be deployed across the city to enforce the lockdown strictly.

"We have suggested to the civic body to introduce push carts for selling essential items including vegetables, provision, bread and eggs, in their respective zones. They can

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also start a help desk to find out the contact number of the person selling it in their locality. This will be of great help to the public," said city Police Commissioner Shankar Jiwal.

In Chennai there are 12 police districts and 13 check posts have been set

Intensify measures to combat Covid-19 during intense lockdown week, Stalin tells collectors

Chennai, May 23: Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin on Sunday directed District Collectors to intensify measures like door to door survey to detect people with Covid-19 symptoms during the week long intense lockdown commencing on May 24.

Conducting medical camps for early detection of infected people, increasing testing and continuation of the vaccination drive without slackness were among the measures the Chief Minister underscored.

Addressing Collectors,

and those with valid reasons were allowed to pass with valid supporting doc-

Conducting medical camps for early detection of infected people, increasing testing and continuation of the vaccination drive without slackness were among the measures the CM underscored

police superintendents and medical authorities through video conferencing from the Secretariat here, Stalin said steps should be taken to ensure supply of vegetables, fruits, milk and drinking water during the intense lockdown.

Monitoring availability

police station's jurisdiction were set up. These points were barricades

of oxygen and life saving drugs and bringing down disease transmission in their respective districts should be the goal of collectors, he said.

While taking efforts to see that people complied with lockdown norms to break the chain of virus transmission, it should also be ensured that exempted activities like transportation of farm produce were not affected.

Supply of quality food, milk and water for in-patients in government hospitals must be ensured. Also, there

and those with valid reasons were allowed to pass with valid supporting doc-

should be no difficulty in taking people with symptoms or those who test positive to hospitals.

The Chief Minister exuded confidence that when district administrations, elected representatives and voluntary organisations worked in tandem with the general public on tackling Covid-19, the effort would succeed.

A two-week lockdown commenced on May 10 in Tamil Nadu and the government on Saturday announced extension of curbs for one more week from May 24.

— PTI

have been critical of the government decision to allow all shops to open in the last couple of days in the middle of raging pandemic. These relaxations will only help to spoil the efforts to fight against virus.

"In T.Nagar there was a mad rush by shoppers, many of whom parked their vehicles in the roadside. This also a reason for the spreading of the virus in the area. I don't know why government allows all shops to open in these two days. It will only help to make situation more complicated," said V.S. Jayaraman, a T. Nagar resident.

The police have registered over 4,000 cases for violation of lockdown norms and seized over 3,446 vehicles. A total of 55 shops were closed for violating lockdown norms and fines of Rs. 8.97 lakh slapped on them.

FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS

CSR funds come pouring into disaster response fund

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 23

The CM Relief Fund for mitigating Covid-19 and assuaging the calamities it has already caused is being filled with the corporate world coming forward to help. The use of CSR funds to boost the kitty has been a great welfare route and the Tamil Nadu industrial, business and education sectors have risen to the challenge while being generous.

While news filtered through that the chief minister had inaugurated 200 oxygen-supported beds in Thoppur, near Madurai, what had been left unsaid was realtors had gathered their mite to make the Covid centre possible.

The facility in Madurai which offers free treatment as set up jointly by G Square Realtors, a Chennai-based real estate company along with

Karur Vysya Bank donates

The Karur Vysya Bank has handed over cheque for Rs 1 crore to Minister of Electricity, Prohibition & Excise, V Senthil Balaji. The bank has also installed an oxygen generator unit at the Coimbatore General Hospital at a cost of ₹15.00 lakh.

Orders for supply of 20 oxygen concentrators, 20 Multi parameter monitors and 100 Oximeters for the Karur Government Medical College Hospital to provide medical care to Covid-19 patients requiring medical oxygen have also been placed. The bank has also donated ten ambulances at a cost of ₹1.77 crores. Of this eight ambulances would be used in hilly regions in the State.

MD and CEO, B. Ramesh Babu, said, "Karur Vysya Bank is committed to support the initiatives of the Central and State Governments in their fight during this pandemic. Our branches continue to function and our employees determinedly provide service, as always, to customers during these difficult times."

Megha Engineering and CREDAI acting in concert with the department of

rural development. The facility came up in just three days.

TAFE to give tractors rent-free

Tractors and Farm Equipment Limited (TAFE), a member of the Amalgamations Group, announced a free tractor rental scheme to support small farmers of Tamil Nadu during this critical cropping season. This free tractor rental scheme is in addition to its earlier contribution of oxygen con-

centrators, procurement of oxygen cylinders and support to the planned mass immunisation program. The total outlay towards all of TAFE's contributions to Covid relief is ₹15 crores. The free tractor rental scheme would cover approximately 1.20 lakh acres and will benefit around 50,000 farmers and available from May

through July across TN. TAFE will offer its 16,500 Massey Ferguson and Eicher tractors and 26,800 to small farmers owning 2 acres or less. Farmers can rent or hire tractors or farm implements using TAFE's digital platform on the TN Govt's Uzhavan app or the toll-free helpline 1800-4200-100. The scheme will be implement-

ed with the support of the Agriculture Department of Tamil Nadu and their district officials. TAFE's CMD Mallika Srinivasan said, "TAFE will offer its Massey Ferguson and Eicher tractors along with farm implements to support the small and marginal farmers through this critical time and crucial cropping season."

Murugappa group contributes

The Murugappa Group donated Rs 6 crore. The group's managing director Arun Murugappan handed over the cheque to CM. Muthu Murugappan, VP and Head, Strategy and Parry Nutraceuticals was also present on the occasion.

MATRIMONY.COM DONATES

Matrimony.com founder and CEO Murugavel Janakiraman handed over a cheque of Rs. 50 lakh for Covid-19 relief. The company has also contributed Rs. 20 lakhs for Covid relief activities including to the Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority and Rotary Club for a hospital to buy non-invasive ventilators.

Hyundai contributes

The Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF) handed over a cheque for Rs 5 crores to CM, MK Stalin. The company has also proposed to distribute emergency medicare equipment worth ₹5 crores.

The medical equipment comprises High Flow Nasal Oxygen machines, Bipap machines, Oxygen concentrators and two oxygen plants to be set-up at government hospitals in Tondiarpet and Tambaram. The firm also plans to issue medical

consumables to front line workers of various hospitals.

Mr. SS Kim, MD and CEO, Hyundai Motor India Ltd. said, "This contribution is an expression of our solidarity with the people of the state that has been the Home of Hyundai in India for over two decades. In line with our global vision - 'Progress for Humanity', Hyundai is committed to undertake every effort to help India overcome this unprecedented calamity."

Covid-19 hit by waves of political correctness



R. Mohan

Namma Chennai Diary

They used to call it the 'Indian Rope Trick' and we used to be somewhat proud of it even though it suggested sleight of hand or magic as a rope danced by the side of a semi-dressed Indian. Can we go back in time and erase it because it is not seen as politically correct to give even legerdemain such a distinct geographical indication? We take pride in several GI tags but an 'Indian variant' of the coronavirus Covid-19 seems offensive. A super sensitive government has gone to the extent of trying to rub out the tag given to B.1.617.2 and is calling upon social media to use the eraser to extinguish any posts that call it so.

Very few may have had a good word for the World Health Organization in the entire time of the pandemic

because it was seen acting in a biased manner in favour of the Chinese when this virus leaked out, either from a Wuhan biological laboratory or the Wuhan wet market. However, WHO didn't call it the "China Virus" but many American politicians freely did so, starting with Donald Trump, who is being sued now by a Chinese-American civil rights group. To its credit, WHO does not call it the "India Virus." They use generic terms for the coronavirus and its various strains, as do the medical fraternity and health experts. But then a geographical tag is so much easier to remember than an alphanumeric string.

The world is not always politically correct and individuals see no need to follow

any rules about using such terms. Of course, as a neta, Arvind Kejriwal had to be politically correct about it but the eternal anarchist and habitual protester that he is, he wasn't expected to worry about being politically correct. Maybe, he was just plain ignorant in imagining there was a particular Singapore strain that was causing young people to fall ill. AK may not have known that it is B.1.617 that is causing havoc in the island nation, which was one of the pioneers in taking precautions against the first wave of the "China Virus". Oops! We stray again into political incorrectness or "PIC", if we are allowed to invent a tag for it.

Several strains or mutants of variants that cropped up around the world were named informally after the country in which they were first identified. So we had Kent, Brazilian and South African variants named after the region or country they were first identified in. No one was super sensitive about it. The 'India Variant' seemed a natural enough moniker because,

The good news

■ Two Shots Of Covid vaccines effective against variant found In India, says a study by Public Health England



■ Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was 88% effective against the coronavirus variant first found in India as compared to 93% effectiveness against the B.1.1.7 "Kent" strain which is Britain's dominant Covid variant

■ Two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine (sold as Covishield in India) were 60% effective against symptomatic disease from the "Indian" variant compared with 66% effectiveness against the "Kent" variant

truth to tell, this variant has been running amok through our people and ravaging our healthcare infra in the second wave. Science has it that the longer the run that

the virus has in a community, the greater the damage it can do as it mutates and adapts to foil the body's defences.

When Peter Sellers

mocked Indians in The Party with the words - 'In India we do not think who we are, we know who we are' in a fake Indian accent - we had a mighty good

laugh about it. The age of "political correctness" may, however, not have been upon us yet. Much earlier, Winston Churchill had called Mahatma Gandhi "a half naked fakir" and we didn't take offence enough about such a cynical take on a great man. But at that point in time we were a servile colony, proud of various GI tags like India Rubber, India Ink, Indian Spice, etc. handed out by Britain's colonial masters in praise of things in their Indian Empire.

This particular coronavirus has been the great leveller. It has not respected international boundaries nor allowed geography to dictate where it can or cannot go. Like a Chinese whisper, it has spread far and wide and without anyone really knowing from where it sprang and where all it will go. As many as 222 countries are listed as affected by it and those not seared by it or have recovered fully from it are less than a handful. While fears over not knowing whose life it will claim next are real, there is no need to hype up

these "scariants" as Kejrival did in calling for a halt to flights from Singapore.

Regardless of what you call it, the B.1.617 along with its numerical extensions has felled us like never before, making May the deadliest month so far as deaths of Indians are concerned. And then there is the 'Black Fungus', named for its colour rather than origin, that is rising its head along with the hydra-headed Covid-19 and its variants. The fact remains that we Indians have fared worse than many in tackling the virus. We can't rub that out of history, however politically incorrect it may sound that they are Indians who are succumbing so fast as to send some bodies floating in river waters or lying in forest pits, unhonoured, unsung. And political correctness can take a walk when we are talking of something as certain as death.

(R. Mohan is the Resident Editor of Chennai and Coimbatore editions of Deccan Chronicle)

OTHER STORIES



Senior DC journalist no more

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 23

Senior journalist Auspin Baylis, who was with the Chennai editorial desk of the Deccan Chronicle, passed away on Sunday. The 57 years old Assistant Editor was admitted to hospital in Madurai a few days earlier after he developed breathing trouble and he passed away without responding to treatment, according to family sources.

In a journalistic career spanning three decades, Auspin Baylis had worked in several publications like The Hindu, The Times of India and The New Indian Express before joining the Deccan Chronicle a few years back.

A soft-spoken friendly person, he leaves behind two young sons and wife, besides scores of former colleagues and friends who remember him endearingly for his affable nature.

Kauvery Hospitals donates ₹1 cr to CM relief fund

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, MAY 23

In order to support the Tamil Nadu government's initiatives to tackle the pandemic, the Kauvery Hospitals group has donated ₹1 crore towards the Chief Minister's Relief Fund.

A hospital release said that Dr S. Chandrakumar, the hospitals founder and executive chairman, accompanied by Dr S. Manivannan, managing director, and Dr S. Aravindan, executive director, met Chief Minister M.K. Stalin and handed over the cheque. They said the Kauvery Hospitals team is committed to support the Covid-19 relief efforts of the state government and fight this pandemic together.

18 test positive at Innambur

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, MAY 23

A total of 18 persons tested positive for Corona at Innambur village near Kumbakonam. They were sent to the Corona care centre at Kolivilachery in Kumbakonam. Following this, the village was isolated by putting up check-posts at all entry points. Sanitisers were used and the village was cleaned. There are 24 containment zones in Kumbakonam town.

Only +2 marks to be taken for admission to medical college

TN reiterates firm stand against Neet

D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 23

Tamil Nadu's higher education minister Ponnudi stressed that his State would not accept Neet as the entrance examination for seats in Tamil Nadu medical colleges. Admissions to TN medical colleges will only be on the basis of Plus-2 marks of students, which is what he said in the course of the national meeting between Central and State ministers chaired by defence minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday to decide whether and when to hold the national CBSE exams.

The minister was reiter-



Ponnudi

ating the stand of Tamil Nadu that the ruling DMK has taken consistently even while it was in the Opposition. Now that the State is ruled by DMK under M.K. Stalin, it has



Anbil Mahesh

become clear that Tamil Nadu is quite prepared to go on a collision course with the Centre regarding Neet. The Centre should be well aware of the situation, particularly as TN's

stand has been spelt out clearly at a national conference on education now.

On the subject of the conduct of CBSE exams, Education Minister for Schools, Anbil Mahesh, informed the Union ministers at the virtual meeting that was called to take a decision on holding the exams in the midst of the pandemic that he would be consulting chief minister Stalin before Tamil Nadu takes a decision on the conduct of Class 12 examinations. He said that the Covid-19 situation would be assessed before the State decides on whether exams can be held.



Overcrowded Katpadi vegetable market on Sunday.

— K. Senthil Nathan

TN sees drop in new Covid cases, fatalities for 2nd day

Chennai, May 23: Tamil Nadu reported 35,483 new Covid cases and 422 deaths — a decline seen for the second day on Sunday. With this the case-load is 18,42,344 and the death toll 20,468 till date.

It was on Friday (May 21) the State reported an all-time high of 36,184 new infections besides adding 467 fatalities on a single day. According to a medical bulletin today, seven who were among the infected were returnees from various destinations, while a 27-year-old man from

Thanjavur succumbed to the virus without any pre-existing illness.

The number discharged were 25,196, taking the overall tally to 15,27,733, leaving 2,94,143 active infections. The State capital too witnessed a decline in the total infections, accounting for 5,169 cases totalling 4,78,710 till date. The metropolis leads in the number of fatalities also with 6,379 deaths.

Coming behind Chennai in the infection count were Coimbatore with 3,944 cases, Chengalpet 1,982, Tiruvallur 1,259,

Tiruchirappalli 1,407 and Kanyakumari 1,160. Kancheepuram clocked 897, Krishnagiri 818, Tuticorin 843 cases, Cuddalore, Ranipet reported in excess of 700 cases each, while the rest were scattered across other districts.

A total of 1.76 lakh samples were tested today, taking the cumulative number of specimens examined so far to 2,63,01,572. Among the 422 fatalities, 114 people, who did not have any pre-existing illness, succumbed to the virus, the bulletin said.

— PTI

2,477 Covid cases in Nilgiris in a week

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, MAY 23

The Covid-19 positive count continued to surge last week with the Nilgiris recording 2,477 cases, the highest tally during a week in the hills in a year. The Sunday relaxation of lockdown saw people crowding the markets.

The virus is spreading across the hills, especially in rural Nilgiris, posing a tough challenge for the officials. As the virus spread is more rapid in the villages and tribal hamlets in the jungle zones, the district administration in Nilgiris is focusing on villages.

The health and local body administration have organised special camps in the tribal villages to vaccinate the tribal folks. Despite the stringent lockdown and curfew, the Nilgiris registered 387 Corona positive cases on Saturday. As many as 1,293 persons were discharged from hospitals last week. There were also nine deaths due to Covid-19 in the same period.

J. Innocent Divya, the Collector of Nilgiris, stated that farmers can contact the help desk over phone number (0423)2449760 in case they face any hindrance to the transport of vegetables and other farm produce. The hill residents can also contact this number if they need any help in supply of vegetables and fruits to their localities, she added.

CM Stalin urges Centre to trace missing fishermen

Chennai, May 23: Tamil Nadu CM M.K. Stalin on Sunday requested the Centre to take immediate steps to rescue 16 fishermen from Tamil Nadu and West Bengal who went missing following cyclone Tauktae. While 12 of them belonged to Tamil Nadu's Kanyakumari district, four were from West Bengal and they had set sail for fishing on May 5 in a Kerala registered vessel, he said.

They went to the Mangalore coastline in Karnataka from the Beypore fishing harbour, off Kozhikode in Kerala, Stalin said in a letter to Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Following the storm's landfall and on receipt of information that the 16 fishermen 'could not be contacted and were missing,' the Coast Guard authorities were alerted and a search mission was launched it was on.

However, since there was no information on them yet, it has caused grief among their families and the fishing com-

Ministers, MLAs garland Muthiraiyar statue

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, MAY 23

Urban development minister K.N. Nehru, sports and youth affairs minister Siva. V. Meyyanathan, Tiruchy collector S. Sivarasu, AIADMK MLAs and others garlanded a statue of King Perumbidugu Muthiraiyar on the occasion of his 1,346th birth anniversary at Tiruchy on Sunday.

Former AIADMK ministers M. Paranjothi, K.U.P.A. Krishnan, Valarmathi and Vellamandi Natrajan also garlanded the statue.

Representatives of various Muthiraiyar's associations also paid homage.

community. Hence, immediate steps should be taken to locate and rescue them, the CM urged.

— PTI

2 women killed as their car turns turtle

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, MAY 23

Two women were killed on the spot and four others injured when the car in which they were travelling capsized on the roadside at Mathur on the Trichy-Pudukkottai national highway near here on Sunday.

The deceased were identified as Arokia Mazarvizhi, 38, and her relative Inigo Marry, 38.

The injured Aruldas, husband of Arokia, and their daughters Telisha and Debela and their relative Shobia were admitted to Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Government Hospital, Tiruchy, police said. Police said the occupants of the car hailed from Karukkakaadu in Pudukkottai district and were on their way to attend a relative's marriage at Tiruchy when the tragedy occurred.

Mathur police registered a case and sent the bodies to MGMGH for post-mortem, police said.

SR delivers 1,024.18 MT of oxygen to Tamil Nadu

OP ARULN | DC
DC, CHENNAI, MAY 23

In an effort to support the Tamil Nadu government and help the Covid-19 patients requiring medical oxygen, the Southern Railway (SR) has delivered more than 1,000 MT of liquefied medical oxygen to the state so far through 18 oxygen express trains.

A railway release on Sunday stated that the SR delivered four rakes and the total oxygen supplied to Tamil Nadu now stands at 1024.18 MT. The fifteenth and sixteenth oxygen express with 6 tankers (86.98 MT) and four containers with 84.1 MT respectively from Rourkela reached Tondiarpet. The seventeenth oxygen express, also from Rourkela, with 64.3 MT in three containers arrived at Tondiarpet on Sunday. The eighteenth oxygen train with 3 tankers (19.54 MT) from Rourkela arrived at Madukkarai near Coimbatore on Sunday.

S Rly has sent an oxygen express carrying six oxygen containers (117.9 MT) to Kerala. The train, which left Kalinganagar in Odisha last Sunday, reached Vallarpadam Container Terminal in

S Rly has sent an oxygen express carrying six oxygen containers (117.9 MT) to Kerala. The train, which left Kalinganagar in Odisha last Sunday, reached Vallarpadam Container Terminal in Kochi

Kochi. The second oxygen express from Rourkela carrying 128.66 MT in seven containers reached Kochi on Saturday. With this the total oxygen delivered to Kerala stood at 246.56 MT through two trains.

The release stated that the Indian Railway delivered more than 15,284 MT of LMO in 936 tankers to various states across the country. Maharashtra received 614 MT, Uttar Pradesh 3,609 MT, Madhya Pradesh 566 MT, Delhi 4,300 MT, Haryana 1,759 MT, Rajasthan 98 MT, Karnataka 1,063 MT, Uttarakhand 320 MT, Tamil Nadu 1024.18 MT, Andhra Pradesh 642 MT, Punjab 153 MT, Kerala 246.56 MT, Telangana 976 MT and Assam 80 MT so far.

TN ports hoist signal over low pressure

DC CORRESPONDENT
NAGAPATTINAM, MAY 23

The port authorities have hoisted the distant cautionary signal-1 at all ports, including Nagapattinam, in Tamil Nadu on Sunday, following the low pressure centred between central east Bay

of Bengal and north Andaman and Nicobar Island.

Official sources said this low pressure, which is still in a deep position, may convert as a storm and will move in a northwest direction to cross the Odisha and West Bengal shores on May 26.

The new season of Family Man trailer crosses 37 Mn views

Makers reiterate their love and respect for all; promise well-balanced portrayal of all parties concerned

Amazon Prime Video dropped the trailer of the much-awaited new season of its original series, *The Family Man*, on May 19. After season 1, released back in 2019, fans have been eagerly waiting for the next season, as season 1 ended on a cliffhanger. With the trailer trending on #1 on YouTube for three days straight, it was evident that fans from all over the world have poured their love for new season of *The Family Man*. The trailer has already garnered a whopping 37 million views. Going by the fantastic response to the trailer, it is evident that the creators have brought their A-game and are all set to wow viewers with this multi-lingual new season. Given the thunderous response on the trailer, the creator-duo of the show — Raj and DK, spoke up about the show:

QWhat can you tell us about *The Family Man*, for which fans have been eagerly waiting all over the world?

Raj & DK: We have created this series with all our heart. Years of work, especially through the pandemic, has been poured into creating this 9-part espionage drama series, which we are excited to share with our viewers.

This season continues to build on the beloved Srikanth Tiwari's (Portrayed by Manoj Bajpayee) internal conflict of being a middle-class father and husband while being a world-class spy, working for a fictional agency. The challenges that Srikanth faces now are more complex, and he steps up his game.



amazon prime video

We believe that this season will truly represent the linguistic and cultural diversity of India. It is genuinely a pan-India show which also marks Samantha Akkineni's digital debut, who will be essaying a brave role.

QWhat makes this season so special?

Raj & DK: The new season of *The Family Man* brings North and South together. Building on the roster of an amazing cast from season one, the new season features some popular faces from Tamil Nadu's theatre circuit too. With intense action sequences and songs, the new season portrays divergent views and complex characters very sensitively.

This new season has the plot set in Mumbai, Tamil Nadu, London and

France, with a defining story arc. We have worked with several subject-matter experts to build the finer nuances of the story. This brings to life our relentless pursuit of inclusivity and endeavours to showcase India's richness through our stories.

The show has been strengthened by the commitment of the cast and crew — veteran actor Manoj Bajpayee immersed himself into preparing for the character. Samantha took dialect refining classes, learnt martial arts, and performed every stunt herself.

QWas the new season more challenging than your other projects?

Raj & DK: We are humbled by the love and appreciation that we received for season 1. Fortunately, we completed the script for the next season, started shooting it even before we released season 1. That saved us from the pressure of getting overwhelmed by audience expectations. However, we listened intently to audience feedback and fine-tuned the show to address



“We have put in years of hard work into this show, and we have taken great pains to bring to our audiences a sensitive, balanced, and riveting story — much like we did in season 1 of the show. We request everyone to wait and watch the show when it releases

viewers' interests while staying true to the nature of the show, characters, and storyline. We have attempted to enhance the viewing experience for the audiences by making the scale bigger and stakes higher and have upped the ante on the action.

QAlong with this excitement of the show coming up, there have been

certain voices who have reacted to the trailer about how the portrayal of Samantha's character, 'Raji', could hurt their sentiments.

Raj & DK: Some assumptions and impressions have been made based on just a couple of shots in the trailer. Many of our lead cast members, as well as key members of the creative & writing team, are Tamilians. We are very cognizant of the sentiments of the Tamil people and Tamil culture and have nothing but the utmost love and respect towards our Tamil people.

The new season of *The Family Man* will start streaming exclusively on Amazon Prime Video.

(Advertorial)

IN BRIEF

12-year-old raped in Agra, two held

Agra: A 12-year-old girl here was allegedly raped by two youths, who also made a video of the incident, police said on Sunday. Police have arrested the accused. The girl was alone at her home when her neighbour Sonu (20) turned up there and took her to his home by making an excuse, said police. At Sonu's residence, the other accused, identified as Krishna (19), was present and they raped her, said police. The accused also made a video of the incident, pressuring the girl not to reveal it to her family members, said police. However, the girl narrated the entire episode to her family, after which a case was lodged. Circle Officer (CO) Sadar Rajeev Kumar said the accused have been arrested. The accused had sent the video clipping to another mobile, Kumar said.

C'garh CM sacks district collector for assaulting lockdown violator

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC RAIPUR, MAY 23

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Sunday ordered the removal of Surajpur district collector Ranbir Sharma after a video showing him slapping a youth in public for violating Coronavirus restrictions went viral on social media.

The collector was seen in the video clip slapping the youth, smashing his mobile phone and then encouraging the policemen accompanying him to assault him.

In the video clip, the youth was seen showing the collector a piece of paper and something on his mobile phone. The collector, however, was seen smashing the phone.

The incident took place in the north Chhattisgarh town of Surajpur on Saturday. It went viral on social media inviting flak from several quarters for the collector's 'brazen' and highhanded act.

The Chief Minister has strongly disapproved of the incident.

"The matter came to my notice through social media. I condemn it. Such acts will not be tolerated in Chhattisgarh. I have ordered removal of the collector", a twitter post by Baghel said.

Baghel said such behaviour by a government officer was unacceptable and ordered that a new mobile phone be provided to the youth. The collector meanwhile has tendered an apology for his act.

1ST KERALA WOMAN COMMERCIAL PILOT HAILED BY PINARAYI

Thiruvananthapuram, May 23: A day after Jeni Jerome, a 23-year-old commercial pilot hailing from a coastal hamlet here flew her maiden flight to the hometown, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Sunday lavished praise on the young woman for her achievement.

In his Facebook page, Vijayan said the life of Jeni, who fought against circumstances and realise her dreams, is a great inspiration to women and ordinary people.

Hailing from Kochuthura, a coastal hamlet located over 25 kms away from here, the woman was the co-pilot of Air Arabia flight scheduled from Sharjah to Thiruvananthapuram last night, which also happened to be her maiden flight.

Daughter of Jerome and Beatrice, Jeni is considered to be the first commercial pilot hailing from the coastal region of the southern state.

"The family that supported Jeni's dreams and wishes is also a role model for the society. The entire society should be prepared to adopt that model of extending support to girls. I sincerely wish that Jeni could reach even greater heights," the Chief Minister added.

Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor also hailed the young Keralite woman's feat.

As her father is employed as a fabrication manager in a private company in Ajman in the Middle East, she and her family have been settled there for years.

After completing her 12th grade, Jeni had joined an aviation academy to give wings to her childhood dream, said her brother Jeby, a chartered accountant who reached the state recently and now staying back at Kochuthura because of lockdown.

Navy on standby to help WB, Odisha**IAF keeps one C-17 Globemaster, three C-130J Super Hercules ready among other measures**

From Page 1

During landfall, the cyclone will be accompanied by squally winds with a velocity of 120 kmph to 165 kmph, gusting up to 185 kmph. It implies that "Yaas" will cause no less damage than "Amphan", which had hit the Odisha and West Bengal coasts on May 2, 2020, with a wind speed of 155-165 kmph and gusting up to 185 kmph.

The IMD has warned of "extremely heavy rainfall" in parts of seven West Bengal districts, including Kolkata, and "heavy to very heavy rainfall" at a few places in five districts on May 26 due to the cyclone.

The Indian Air Force said it has kept one C-17 Globemaster, one IL-76, three C-130J Super Hercules, four Antonov-32s and two Dornier transport aircraft on readiness. "Additionally, 11 Mi-17V5 helicopters, two Chetaks and three Cheetah helicopters, two Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopters and seven Mi17 helicopters are also on alert for any eventuality," it said.

During the day, the IAF airlifted 21 tonnes of disaster relief equipment and 334 National Disaster Response Force personnel from Patna and Varanasi to Kolkata, and from Arakkonam to Port Blair, utilising five C-130J aircraft. "This is in preparation for the approaching Cyclone Yaas, and the operations are ongoing since May 21. Till date, the IAF has airlifted 606 personnel and 57 tons of NDRF material for this purpose," it added.

In view of the weather forecast, the Mamata Banerjee government has relaxed its lockdown norms in some sectors for the protection of stock and other measures.

It said: "All activities relating to agricultural, horticulture and floriculture, including transport, storage and sale of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and agri-machines/equipment shall be allowed. Rural development work, including emergency flood control and pre-



Trains remain parked at Hatia Railway Station, amid ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, in Ranchi on Sunday. Maximum trains bound for Odisha and West Bengal were cancelled due to Yaas cyclone.

— PTI

monsoon essential work, shall be allowed."

The Odisha government on Sunday dispatched 18 NDRF teams to the coastal districts that are most likely to be affected by the cyclonic storm.

Special relief commissioner P.K. Jena said seven NDRF teams were sent to Balasore district, four to Bhadrak, three to Kendrapara, two to Jajpur and one each to Jagatsinghpur and Mayurbhanj districts. Mr Jena himself went to the coastal districts to oversee cyclone preparedness by the local administration.

"Due to the cyclonic effect, north coastal districts of Odisha are likely to receive heavy to extremely heavy rainfall. The districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapara and Mayurbhanj will be most affected. Similarly, the districts like Jajpur, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda and Puri district will most probably receive heavy rainfall during the period," IMD director-general Mrutyunjay Mohapatra said on Sunday.

PM reviews preparedness for 'Yaas', asks for timely evacuation of people

New Delhi, May 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday called for timely evacuation of those involved in off-shore activities as he chaired a high-level meeting to review the preparedness of states and central government agencies to deal with the situation arising out of cyclone Yaas.

He asked officials to work in close coordination with states to ensure safe evacuation of people from high-risk areas, and to ensure that time duration of outages of power supply and communication network are minimum and restored swiftly, a PMO statement said.

Modi also asked officials to ensure proper coordination and planning with state governments to ensure that no disruption is caused to Covid-19 treat-

ment and vaccination in hospitals.

He called for involving various stakeholders like coastal communities and industries and directly reaching out to them and sensitising them, the PMO said.

The IMD has also warned of storm surge in coastal areas of West Bengal and Odisha.

The IMD has been issuing regular bulletins with latest forecast to all states concerned, the PMO noted.

The ministry of home affairs is reviewing the situation and is in touch with the state governments, Union Territories and the central agencies concerned.

It has already released the first instalment of SDRF in advance to all states, and the National Disaster Response Force

has pre-positioned 46 teams which are equipped with boats, tree-cutters, telecom equipments in five states and UT. In addition, 13 teams are being airlifted on Sunday for deployment and 10 teams have been kept on standby, the PMO noted.

Home minister Amit Shah, other ministers and senior officials attended the meeting.

In a tweet, Modi said he emphasised on timely evacuation as well as ensuring that power and communications networks are not disrupted. "Also emphasised on ensuring Covid-19 treatment of patients in affected areas does not suffer due to the cyclone. Praying for everyone's safety and well-being," he said.

Highlighting the efforts being made by other min-

istries, the PMO said the Petroleum & Natural Gas ministry has taken measures to secure all oil installations in the sea and to bring back their shipping vessels to safe harbour.

The ministry of power has activated emergency response systems and is keeping in readiness transformers, DG sets and other equipment for immediate restoration of electricity.

The ministry of telecom is keeping all telecom towers and exchanges under constant watch and is fully geared to restore telecom networks while the Union health ministry has issued advisory to states and UTs concerned for health sector preparedness and response to Covid-19 in affected areas, it added.

— PTI

Assam: 6 Dimasa militants gunned down, 2 critically hurt in encounter

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MAY 23

In a major breakthrough, the Assam police on Sunday shot dead six militants of the Dimasa National Liberation Army (DNLA), a fledgling rebel outfit, in an encounter in central Assam's Karbi Anglong district.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters the Assam police had killed the entire top leadership of the outfit in an encounter. He said at least six militants were killed and two others were critically injured in the encounter.

The police said the cadres were killed in Karbi Anglong district early on Sunday and a

● **CHIEF MINISTER** Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters the Assam police had killed the entire top leadership of the outfit in an encounter. He said at least six militants were killed and two others were critically injured in the encounter.

large cache of arms and ammunition was recovered from them.

Special DGP G.P. Singh, who is tackling all the operations against insurgent groups, said in a social media post: "In an early morning operation by the Assam police and Assam Rifles, six DNLA terrorists were neutralised in Dhansiri area of Karbi Anglong. A large

cache of arms and ammunition was also recovered."

The outfit was engaged in various extortion activities and recently shot dead a businessman in an extortion incident.

Four AK-47 rifles and several rounds of ammunition were found in the possession of the slain militants.

A priest was also killed recently by the militants, triggering chaos in the region.

Teams from Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao district police were involved in the operation. The DNLA was formed in 2019 after earlier rebel outfits like two factions of Dima Halam Daogah Nunsia and Garlosa signed a settlement with

the Centre and disbanded the organisations.

Another outfit, Dima Jati Naiso Army, came into being in 2012, which is no longer active.

The DNLA was seeking a "sovereign, independent Dimasa nation", while the earlier outfits were seeking a separate state of Dimaraji by including all areas in the Northeast covering parts of Nagaon district of Assam and Dimaapur in Nagaland that are inhabited by the Dimasa tribes.

Naisodao Dimasa is the chairman of the outfit and Kharmindao Dimasa is the "home secretary". The DNLA has established a "government-in-exile" called the "Dimasa People's Supreme Council".

Punjab: 2 Khalistan Tiger Force men held

Chandigarh, May 23: Two operatives of radical Khalistan Tiger Force, also involved in several heinous crimes, including murder, have been arrested, the Punjab police said on Sunday.

Working on instructions of outfit's Canada-based chief Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the two KTF operatives, Lovepreet Singh alias Ravi and Ram Singh alias Sonu, were also involved in killing a Dera follower and firing at and critically injuring a priest in January this year, the police added.

The two were arrested on Saturday night from behind a senior secondary school near the Mehna railway crossing in Moga district and were found in the possession of four pistols and 48 rounds

of live cartridges, besides two magazines, police said.

With their arrest, their plan to kill a Dera follower, who they had been targeting on Nijjar's instructions for his alleged involvement in the 2015 sacrilege case of the Guru Granth Sahib, police said.

Nijjar's name had figured in the list of Khalistani operatives handed over by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during the latter's visit to India in 2018, said Punjab DGP Dinkar Gupta.

Besides Nijjar, three of their other KTF's co-conspirators, identified as Arshdip, Ramandip and Charanjit, are hiding in Surrey in Canada. — PTI

OPPN EXTENDS SUPPORT TO FARMERS STIR ON MAY 26

New Delhi, May 23: Twelve major opposition parties, including the Congress, Trinamul Congress, Left parties, SP, NCP and DMK on Sunday extended their support to a country-wide protest call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha on May 26, marking six months of the farmers protest against the Centre's farm laws.

Farmers from various parts of the country are protesting at Delhi borders against the three farm laws brought by the Centre, alleging that the legislations will hamper farming.

In a joint statement issued here by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, former prime minister H.D. Devegowda, NCP chief Sharad Pawar and Chief Ministers Mamata Banerjee, Uddhav Thackeray, M.K. Stalin and Hemant Soren said the Centre must stop being obdurate and immediately resume talks with farmer leaders and repeal the three farm laws. Other signatories to the joint statement include former chief ministers Farooq Abdullah (JKPA) and Akhilesh Yadav (SP) besides Tejashwi Yadav (RJD), D. Raja (CPI) and Sitaram Yechury (CPI-M). "We extend our support to the call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) to observe a countrywide protest day on May 26 marking the completion of six months of the heroic peaceful Kisan struggle," the statement said. "The Central government must stop being obdurate and immediately resume talks with SKM on these lines," it said. — PTI

NCP ALLEGES MODI GETTING 'EMOTIONAL' A PLANNED ACT

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 23

The NCP has alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi becoming 'emotional' while paying condolences to those who lost their lives during the Coronavirus pandemic was a 'planned act'.

"While talking to Chief Ministers via video conferencing from his own cabin earlier, Modi had put on gamchha and mask, but both were not seen on that day. It means him getting emotional was a planned act," said NCP leader Nawab Malik on Sunday.

Modi had got emotional during an online interaction with health-care workers in his constituency Varanasi on Friday last week. The effect of Covid has been so vast that despite all efforts, numerous lives were lost, he had said in a voice choked with emotion. Commenting on it, Malik said, "Why didn't Modi wear gamchha and mask on that day? Did he really get emotional or was it deliberate?"

NEW | FINDINGS**Bacteria is resistant to at least 35 types of antibiotics, can spread infectious diseases in future****New multi drug-resistant bacteria found in scat of vine snake**

Pune, May 23: A group of researchers from Pune and Chandigarh have discovered two new "multi drug-resistant" bacteria from the scat of 'vine snake', a mildly venomous reptile, commonly found in Northern Western Ghats.

According to the team, the newly-isolated bacteria from the scat of vine snake are resistant to at least 35 types of antibiotics and as it could spread infectious diseases in future, it is better to conduct research in that direction to make some antibiotic medicines.

This collaborative research work, published in 'Springer Nature' journal, is carried out by researchers from Shri Shiv Chhatrapati College,

● **THIS COLLABORATIVE** research work, published in 'Springer Nature' journal, is carried out by researchers from Shri Shiv Chhatrapati College, Junnar; National Centre for Microbial Resource; National Centre for Cell Science, Pune; Microbial Type Culture Collection, and CSIR-Institute of Microbial Technology, Chandigarh.

Junnar; National Centre for Microbial Resource; National Centre for Cell Science, Pune; Microbial Type Culture Collection, and CSIR-Institute of Microbial Technology, Chandigarh.

Dr Ravindra Chaudhari, one of the researchers, said the micro-organisms present in scats of animals very easily come in contact with human beings and other animals through water flow during rainy season and also through

air.

"The bacteria reported here comes under family Planococcaceae and some species of this family are pathogenic (causing or capable of causing disease) in nature, so it is important to identify the bacteria in snakes because they can cause infectious diseases. There is a possibility that there could be an infectious disease caused due to these newly-discovered bacteria," he said.

He said that generally, antibiotics are used to treat any infection, but the bacteria found in the snake are resistant to 35 types of antibiotics.

"Recently, it has been observed that the Chinese krait and the Chinese cobra may be the original source of Coronavirus that has triggered an outbreak of a deadly infectious respiratory illness. When the researchers performed a more detailed bioinformatics analysis of the sequence of 2019-nCoV, it suggests that this Coronavirus might have come from snakes," he claimed.

He added that the World Health Organisation (WHO) recently claimed that 70 per cent of infectious diseases will cause

due to micro-organisms from wildlife.

"So it is better we start a research into that direction and make some antibiotic medicines, which will be helpful for humans," he added.

Dr Yogesh Shouche, another researcher from the NCCS, said that many bacteria, including those which are multi drug-resistant in snakes, lead to wound infection after the snake bites.

"In some serious cases, patients may suffer from cellulitis, tissues necrosis, finger or toe gangrene, and/or extensive necrotizing fasciitis. To avoid such type of infections, antibiotic therapy is the only way. However, these newly-isolated bacteria are resistant to antibiotic

drugs, which is a cause of serious concern," he said.

He further added that a few species and strains of Planococcus have been demonstrated to be pathogenic to other animals. Some species lead to an outbreak of necrotic hepatitis in chickens. Some of the species and strains of Planococcus are found in bronchial biopsy in a child with cystic fibrosis.

"We are focusing on the study of the pathogenicity of these bacteria in relation to humans as well as other animals," said Shouche.

He added that the human microbiome's (a community of microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi and viruses) contributions range from helping to pro-

vide nutrition and aiding growth, development, and behavior to protect against pathogens and toxic compounds.

Dr Shrikant Pawar, a member of the team, said that the gut microbiome plays a major role in maintenance of human health. The gut microbiome is involved in the progress and development of human diseases. These include metabolic and inflammatory disorders, cancer, depression, as well as infant health, and longevity.

Other researchers who contributed to the research include Vikas Patil, Yogita Lugani, Prachi Karodi, Pramod Mane, Priyam Mehrotra, and Venkata Vemuluri. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

TROPICAL STORM ANA MOVES AWAY FROM BERMUDA

Miami, May 23: Tropical Storm Ana was moving away from Bermuda early Sunday after bringing rain and wind to the island in the Atlantic Ocean, forecasters said.

Ana was located about 340 miles (545 kilometres) northeast of Bermuda with maximum sustained winds of 45 mph (75 kph), the National Hurricane Center in Miami said in a 5 am advisory. It was moving northeast at 12 mph (19 kph).

Ana formed as a subtropical storm early Saturday, then transitioned to a tropical storm on Sunday, forecasters said. The hurricane center said it would weaken over the next 24 hours before dissipating on Monday.

No watches or warnings were in effect for the storm. It posed no threat to land. Ana was the first named storm in the Atlantic this year, though hurricane season doesn't officially start until June 1.

U.S.' TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR HAITIANS

Washington, May 23: The Biden administration is allowing eligible Haitian nationals residing in the US to apply for a new 18-month designation for temporary protected status, reversing a Trump administration effort that had sought to end the special consideration.

In a statement Saturday, Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas cited security concerns, social unrest, an increase in human rights abuses, crippling poverty and other problems in Haiti for the decision. After careful consideration, we determined that we must do what we can to support Haitian nationals in the United States until conditions in Haiti improve so they may safely return home," Mayorkas said. DHS initially designated Haiti for TPS in January 2010 in the aftermath of the 7.0-magnitude earthquake that devastated the country.

The designation was extended several times until the Trump administration announced in January 2018 that Haiti's TPS designation would end effective July 22, 2019. Several lawsuits challenging the termination have allowed the designation to remain in effect.

DHS said Saturday that the new TPS designation enables Haitian nationals residing in the US as of Friday as well as individuals without nationality who last resided in Haiti to file initial applications for TPS, so long as they meet eligibility requirements.



Rescuers work by the wreckage of a cable car after it collapsed near the summit of the Stresa-Mottarone line in the Piedmont region, northern Italy, Sunday.

— AP

NINE KILLED IN ITALIAN CABLE CAR ACCIDENT

Rome, May 23: A mountain-top cable car plunged to the ground in northern Italy on Sunday, killing at least nine people and sending two children to the hospital, authorities said.

A photo of the wreckage taken by Italy's fire squad showed the crushed and crumpled remains of the cable car in a clearing of a thick patch of pine trees near the summit of the Mottarone peak overlooking Lake Maggiore.

At that location, the cables of the ski lift were particularly high off the ground, said Walter Milan, spokesman for the Alpine rescue service. The cause has not been determined. Milan noted that the cable line had been renovated in 2016 and had only recently reopened after coronavirus lockdowns forced the closures of ski lifts across

Italy. Mottarone reaches a height of 1,491 metres (4,900 feet) and overlooks the picturesque lake and the surrounding Alps of Italy's Piedmont region. The mountain features a small amusement park, Alpyland, that has a children's rollercoaster offering 360-degree views of the scenery. Many Italian ski areas feature mountain bike paths and hiking trails that are popular in spring and summer.

US-style digital visas in Britain

London, May 23: UK Home Secretary Priti Patel is set to unveil a new US-style digital visa regime at the country's borders in order to measure immigration levels in and out of the country, according to UK media reports on Sunday. The senior Indian-origin Cabinet minister is to confirm the so-called "streamlining" changes to the UK's immigration policy to "streamline" the way in which people come into the country on Monday.

The post-Brexit changes will include the border

being managed digitally, which the government says will be easier to navigate for businesses and allow for the first time to accurately count people in and out of the UK. "Our new fully digital border will provide the ability to count people in and out of the country, giving us control over who comes to the UK," Patel was quoted as saying in the *Observer*.

"Our new approach will make it easier to identify potential threats before they reach the border. The British people will have

confidence that the strongest controls are in place to keep them safe," she said. The UK Home Office hopes to make entry to the UK fully digital by the end of 2025.

It means people wanting to come into the UK without a visa or immigration status will have to apply for an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA), similar to the US system, with 30 million applications expected to be processed every year. As well as launching her latest immigration plans, Patel will

also focus on failings in the asylum system and the need to crack down on people smugglers.

Earlier in the week, she was filmed accompanying police as they arrested suspected ringleaders of a people smuggling gang that used minicab and lorry drivers to move migrants in and out of the UK. The British government has said that in the past 10 days, more than 140 foreign criminals have been removed from the UK, totalling more than 700 so far this year. — *PTI*



Palestinian volunteers clear the rubble in the Al-Remal commercial district in Gaza City, recently targeted by Israeli air strikes, on Sunday.

— AFP

Israeli police allow Jews to visit flashpoint Jerusalem site

Jerusalem, May 23: Israeli police on Sunday escorted around 50 Jewish visitors to a flashpoint holy site in Jerusalem where police actions in recent weeks had ignited protests and violence that triggered war in Gaza, according to the Islamic authority overseeing the site. The Waqf said police cleared young Palestinians out of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and barred entry to Muslims under the age of 45.

Muslims who entered were required to leave their IDs with police at the entrance. It said three Muslims were arrested, including a guard. Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said the site was open for "regular visits" and that police had secured the area to prevent "incidents", without elaborating. Israeli police had briefly clashed with Palestinian protesters after Friday prayers in an early test for the truce, which had taken effect hours earlier. The Waqf said Sunday it was the first time Jews had been allowed to visit the site since May 4, a week before the war broke out. The Al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam. It sits on a sprawling hilltop in Jerusalem's Old City that is revered by Jews as their holiest site because it was the location of the biblical temples.

The site has often been the scene of Israeli-Palestinian violence and was the epicentre of the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising. Israeli police repeatedly clashed with Palestinian protesters in the days leading up to May 10, when Gaza's militant Hamas rulers fired rockets at Jerusalem. — *AP*

Hamas defiant with military parade, top leader's appearance

Gaza City, May 23: Hundreds of masked Hamas fighters brandishing assault rifles paraded in Gaza City and the group's top leader made his first public appearance on Saturday, in a defiant show of strength after the militants' 11-day war with Israel. Saturday marked the first full day of a cease-fire, and Egyptian mediators held talks to firm up the truce which ended the four-year Israel-Hamas war in just over a decade.

In the fighting, Israel unleashed hundreds of airstrikes against militant tar-

gets in Gaza, while Hamas and other militants fired more than 4,000 rockets toward Israel. More than 250 people were killed, the vast majority of them Palestinians. In Gaza City, residents began assessing damage. One of Gaza City's busiest commercial areas, Omar al-Mukhtar Street, was covered in debris, smashed cars and twisted metal after a 13-floor building in its centre was flattened in an Israeli airstrike. Merchandise was covered in soot and strewn inside smashed stores and on the pavement.

Municipal workers swept broken glass and twisted metal from streets and sidewalks. "We really didn't expect this amount of damage," said Ashour Subeih, who sells baby clothes. "We thought the strike was a bit further from us. But as you can see not an area of the shop is intact."

Having been in business for one year, Subeih estimated his losses were double what he has made so far. Drone video and photos showed some city blocks reduced to rubble, in between homes and businesses left standing. — *AP*

B'desh keeps ban on Israel travel

Dhaka/Jerusalem, May 23: Bangladesh on Sunday made it clear that it has dropped the phrase "all countries except Israel" from passport to maintain international standards of the document and there was no change in its decades-long policy of travel ban to the Jewish state. Bangladeshi passports earlier had a clause written on them that said "This Passport is valid for all countries of the world except Israel", but the government on Saturday decided to remove "except Israel" from it.

Israel welcomed Bangladesh's decision and called upon Dhaka to establish

diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv for the benefit of the people of the two countries. "Great news! #Bangladesh has removed the travel ban to Israel. This is a welcome step & I call on the Bangladeshi government to move forward and establish diplomatic ties with #Israel so both our peoples could benefit & prosper," Deputy Director General at Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Gilad Cohen tweeted. Hours later Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr A K Abdul Momen said that it "does not mean that there has been a change in Bangladesh's position" regarding Israel. — *PTI*

1 HELD IN ATTACK ON JEWISH MEN IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles, May 23: Los Angeles police on Saturday announced the arrest of a suspect in an alleged attack by a pro-Palestinian group on Jewish men outside a restaurant earlier in the week.

A police statement, which did not identify the man, said he was arrested on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon late Friday at a residence outside the city of Los Angeles with assistance from a US Marshals Service task force. Increased bail was requested "due to the crime being motivated by hatred. The male is one of the primary suspects in the assault," it said. — *AP*

Nepal's Oppn to file writ petition

To protest dissolution of House by Prez

Kathmandu, May 23: Nepal's Opposition alliance on Sunday postponed the registration of a writ petition in the Supreme Court and will file it on Monday against the "unconstitutional" dissolution of the House of Representatives by the President. The Opposition parties, which had planned to register the writ on Sunday, put off the procedure until Monday, citing lack of adequate time.

According to a CPN-Maoist Centre leader, the petition will be filed at 10:00 am on Monday, *The Himalayan Times* reported. Leaders of the alliance on Sunday were engaged in conducting meetings and collecting signatures of the lawmakers from the Maoist Centre, the Nepali Congress, the Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal, Rastriya Janamorchha and Madhav Nepal faction of the ruling CPN-UML, it said. Although the signature collection campaign has not ended, more than enough people have signed up to prove a majority, the report quoted a Maoist Centre leader.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House of Representatives on Saturday for the second time in five months and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19 on the advice of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, heading a minority government. She rejected the bids of both embattled Prime Minister Oli and the Opposition alliance's claims to form a government. Oli and Opposition leader Sher Bahadur Deuba had staked separate claims to the premiership.

The announcement came after Oli in his last deal-sealing move on Friday midnight recommend-

Hold polls in one phase, EC to Oli

Kathmandu, May 23: Nepal's Election Commission has advised the government led by embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli to conduct the mid-term elections slated for November 12 and 19 in a single phase to prevent the further spread of Coronavirus infections during electioneering. After a meeting with Prime Minister K.P. Oli on MSaturday, Chief Election Commissioner Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya said it is Election Commission's constitutional duty to successfully conduct polls

once the date has been announced.

"We have abundant time for preparation and have suggested to the government to conduct the election in a single phase," Thapaliya was quoted as saying in a report in *My Republica*. In the meeting, the representatives of the Election Commission also suggested to the government to create a favourable political environment for elections, maintain peace and security, and prevent the spread of Covid-19 infections among others, it said. — *PTI*

ed the Office of the President to dissolve the House and announce dates for early elections. Alarmed by the President's step to dissolve the House yet again, the leaders of Nepal's Opposition alliance on Saturday decided to take all legal and political means to counter Oli and Bhandari's "unconstitutional, undemocratic and regressive" move.

The Opposition alliance blamed the President for making an assault on the Constitution and democracy in partnership with the PM, who had lost a trust vote in the House. The authorities in Nepal on Sunday tightened security around the Supreme Court building and government offices in view of the Opposition's decision to move the apex court on dissolution of the House.

In a joint statement issued at the end of their meeting on Saturday, the

Opposition leaders said the President did not follow her constitutional responsibility of appointing a new prime minister based on the constitutional claim as per Article 76 (5) of the constitution with signatures of majority lawmakers. Instead, she sided with Oli with malafide intentions and dissolved Parliament in an attack on the Constitution and democracy.

"This regressive move has pushed the country towards new political polarisation and complexity," they said in a joint statement. It was signed by Nepali Congress President Deuba, CPN-Maoist Centre Chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, Chairperson of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal Upendra Yadav and Vice-Chair of the Rastriya Janamorchha Durga Paudel. — *PTI*

Social media photos show Dubai princess at malls

London, May 23: Photos on social media appear to show a missing Dubai princess who months earlier described herself in a video as being held against her will out at two major malls in the city-state.

Images published by a woman identified in British media as former Royal Navy member Sioned Taylor show Sheikhha Latifa bint Mohammed Al Maktoum at the Mall of the Emirates at a movie theatre there, as well as at a restaurant at Dubai Mall near the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building.

The photos corresponded to those locations, with the Mall of the Emirates image likely taken in May due to the film being advertised in it. Taylor did not respond to a request for comment. The government's Dubai Media Office did not acknowledge the release of the images. The photos' pedestrian captions belie the fact that United Nations experts and human rights activists had called on Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, to provide information on his daughter.

Sheikha Latifa, 35, had

tried to flee the country in 2018 only to be detained by commandos in a boat off India. Videos released in February by the *BBC* had Sheikhha Latifa describing herself as being in a villa that "has been converted into a jail". "I don't know when I'll be released and what the conditions will be like when I'm released," she says in one of the videos. "Every day I am worried about my safety and my life." The dramatic would-be sea escape and its aftermath intruded into the carefully controlled image.

— AP

Diana interview: Shamed Bashir says sorry to princes

London, May 23: Martin Bashir, the *BBC* journalist who tricked princess Diana into giving an explosive interview, on Sunday apologised to Princes William and Harry but said claims linking his actions to her death were "unreasonable".

A report by retired senior judge John Dyson published on Thursday found that Bashir commissioned faked bank statements

that falsely suggested some of Diana's closest aides were being paid by the security services to keep tabs on her.

Bashir, 58, then showed them to Diana's brother Charles Spencer in a successful bid to convince him to arrange a meeting between himself and Diana and earn her trust.

Bashir told the *Sunday Times* he was "deeply sorry" to Diana's sons Pri-

nce William and Prince Harry. "I never wanted to harm Diana in any way and I don't believe we did," he told the paper.

But William said Bashir's actions and the interview had made "a major contribution" to the demise of his parents' relationship and "contributed significantly to her fear, paranoia and isolation" in her final years. — *AFP*

PAYING TRIBUTES

Dangerous Woman tour crew also got tattoos of worker bees — the city's symbol

Ariana Grande remembers Manchester bombing victims

Los Angeles, May 23: Pop star Ariana Grande has paid tributes to the victims of the 2017's Manchester Arena bombing, which claimed the lives of 22 people.

The suicide bomber detonated an explosive device in the lobby of the arena on May 22, 2017, shortly after a concert by Grande. Over 800 people were wounded in the attack. Grande posted a message on her Instagram story, writing that the victims of the attack were always in

her thoughts and that the "anniversary will never be an easy one". "Although

grief is ever present and our relationship to it is constantly evolving and expressing itself in different ways every day, year round... I know that this anniversary will never be an easy one. Please know that I am thinking of you today. Manchester, my heart is with you today and always," she wrote.

The 27-year-old singer also shared an image with the names of the 22 people who were killed in the bombing. Since 2017, Grande has honoured the

bombing victims in numerous ways, including hosting a benefit concert two weeks later in June 2017, with proceeds going toward the British Red Cross and the support of victims and their families.

On an episode of her YouTube docuseries "Dangerous Woman Diaries", she shared a letter she wrote to fans after the attack. The singer and her Dangerous Woman tour crew also got tattoos of worker bees — the city's symbol. *PTI*



Flowers for victims of the bombings.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

24 MAY 2021

Contain the 2nd wave, prepare for the third

There is good news from the field in the fight against Covid-19 — only 382 of the 718 districts in India have a test positivity rate of 10 or above. Considering that these numbers were disquieting in the beginning of the month, when 301 districts had a positivity rate of 20 per cent or higher, one must come to the understanding that the measures taken of late by most states have started delivering results. Several states are in lockdown, which have practically paralysed normal life and ground the economy to almost a halt. Certain states have no immediate plans to relax the lockdown norms. Tamil Nadu, for example, is going to tighten them, ordering the closure of even groceries and vegetable vends. The state wants its people to remain at home and step out only when it is absolutely necessary.

The daily caseload is also easing with the daily reports talk of three lakh infections or less, which is almost 25 per cent less than the figures at the beginning of the month. The death toll due to the pandemic, however, has shown no signs of easing: it has been hovering around 4,000 for the last two weeks and refuses to come down. Most experts and independent assessments doubt even these figures which say it could be easily three times the reported figures or more. It's a sad commentary on the priorities of India as a nation that has very little means to keep a tab on the deaths in such a way that the world believes us.

The governments at the Centre and in the states need to do a lot of prioritising if they were to contain the virus spread in the second wave and limit the impact of a third wave which experts say is in the offing. The higher death toll indicates that healthcare does not reach the needy in a sufficient way, and the government must stretch itself to the maximum now. Every resource at its command and at the private sector must be put to use to ensure that none dies due to lack of care. India's defence forces are already in the field in a limited way in the fight against the virus and their services must be made available to more people. Temporary and field hospitals must be set up in the villages and semi-urban areas where the lack of such facilities has a telling impact.

The nation must gear up for a third wave, and the best way to do it is to vaccinate as many people as possible. The government must roll out a universal vaccination programme and instead of waiting for the people to come forward and be part of it, it must deploy teams all across the nation to approach them and administer the vaccine. It must also retain whatever healthcare facilities it creates now, do a quick analysis on how to fill up the gaps and follow it up meticulously. The first wave was unexpected and hence the slips; but a repeat of the pathetic response to the second wave has no justification when the third one lands on us.

Too soon to call Nepal polls?

With the decision of Nepal President Bidya Debi Bhandari to dissolve the Pratinidhi Sabha or the House of Representatives on a fresh recommendation of embattled Prime Minister K.P. Oli on Saturday, and to order fresh elections in six months, our Himalayan neighbour is likely to be plunged in uncertainty at a time when the Covid pandemic is raging.

All things considered, in such a context, India's northern neighbour China, which has come to wield considerably more influence in Nepal under PM Oli than it did earlier, may be expected to be further emboldened to increase its leverage in Kathmandu.

With the military situation in eastern Ladakh far from resolved in spite of the disengagement in the Pangong Lake area which appears to have left India with the short end of the stick, and the Oli government having recently created a land boundary dispute with India at the tri-junction of Tibet, Nepal and India, the balance of advantage does seem to lie with China in eastern Ladakh which abuts Tibet.

PM Oli, on losing support in a confidence motion only very recently, was called by President Bhandari to try and put together a majority in four weeks time, but he chose not to try. Meanwhile, when political activities heated up and Nepali Congress leader and former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba submitted a list of supporting MPs drawn from different parties, he was not given a chance. Instead, Mr Oli was evidently encouraged to submit a list, too. With some names being common on the two lists, the President dissolved Parliament on the PM's recommendation and called for fresh polls.

The constitutionality of the move will be tested in the Supreme Court. But politically speaking, it would appear that the Opposition was not given a fair and transparent chance at government making after PM Oli threw in the towel. This could possibly lead to eruptions on the streets at a time when the spread of Covid is a matter of serious concern.

Not long ago, the top court had struck down the first dissolution of the House by the PM as unconstitutional. Will it accept a similar recommendation by him a second time after he has manifestly shown he no longer has a majority? The hurry

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Subhani

Two years of Modi 2.0: Challenges & response



Ram Madhav

The 2014 mandate that catapulted Narendra Modi into the prime ministership of the world's largest democracy was essentially due to three factors — Mr Modi's personal charisma, the united grassroots efforts of the BJP and the Sangh Parivar cadre and the failures of the previous UPA-2 government headed by Dr Manmohan Singh. When the general election took place five years later, in 2019, the third factor was no longer there. Yet, the mandate that Mr Modi secured in the 2019 general election was even bigger than the 2014 mandate.

Mr Modi's charisma continued to be a factor. Under Amit Shah's leadership, the party organisation had also grown in strength and expanse. But the most important factor for the favorable mandate in 2019 was the five-year performance track record of the Narendra Modi government. Two qualities that distinguished Mr Modi's government in its first term were "decisive" and "hands on". Unlike his predecessors who largely stayed dormant, Mr Modi led from the front. He not only demonstrated courage in taking strong and decisive action, but also clearly showed that he was the boss.

As he began his second term after the landslide in 2019, the decisive and hands-on approach continued. The bill for the abrogation of triple talaq was introduced and passed in July. And in early August came the historic abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution. Towards the end of the year, another big step was taken by passing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). In November the same year, the Supreme Court had delivered its final verdict on the Ram Jannabhoomi dispute allowing for the construction of a temple at the

site under question. Mr Modi did not waste any time in constituting a trust led by people not only dedicated to the cause but also involved in the temple movement for decades.

Speaking on the completion of the first 100 days of his Modi 2.0 government last year, Prime Minister Modi said that development, trust and big changes mark the performance during the period. That people have trusted the Prime Minister massively is beyond dispute. The country has overwhelmingly supported Mr Modi on all these issues. In the eyes of his core supporters, Mr Modi has acquired the stature of a supreme leader.

However, there are four areas in which the government faces major challenges.

Covid-19 pandemic: At a time when the government was preparing to embark on a major development drive with \$5 trillion GDP as the target, the country and the rest of the world were hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. The strict measures like lockdowns together with the Prime Minister's continuous monitoring and engagement with the masses had helped in India successfully overcoming the deadly impact of the first wave of Covid-19. India also led in the manufacture of vaccines and their supply to many countries.

However, the deadly second wave has caught the country off guard. One important lesson that the coronavirus crisis has taught was the need for empowering grassroots institutions. The way forward is not hyper-centralisation, but "cooperative federalism".

Economy: As the government entered the second term, it moved fast on the reforms front. New and broad-based reforms in the agriculture and banking sectors, together with the

push to disperse with the public sector bulge, indicate the government's commitment to further liberalise the economy. The bold push for encouraging market forces to take the lead in the agriculture sector has led to some resistance from a section of farmers. For the long-term benefit of India's agriculture sector, these reforms are going to be a turning point for the farmers of the country.

At a time when the Indian economy was all set to take off, the pandemic struck, significantly crippling it. The second wave is going to further delay the recovery. However, the determination shown by Modi 2.0 to forge ahead with policies for greater liberalisation can certainly help in the process of economic recovery.

Security and foreign policy: One important area where Modi 1.0 came out with flying colours was security and foreign policy. On the foreign policy front, the first four years of Modi 1.0 had been a runaway success for the country, with Prime Minister Modi's and India's stature going up in the world.

However, Modi 2.0 started with mounting security and foreign policy challenges. While the Narendra Modi government has a strong and stable military security apparatus in place and is able to counter its recalcitrant neighbours like Pakistan and China effectively, its diplomatic endeavours need further sharpening. Indian diplomacy, right from the time of the nation's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, has had two undeclared priority commitments. These are Asian pre-eminence and non-alliance. Indian diplomacy

must pursue these twin commitments vigorously. While India's relations with the United States have improved substantially under Mr Modi's government, it is imperative for India to pursue a policy of being a frontline state in its Asian neighbourhood.

Perception: The greatest challenge that the Modi 2.0 government faces is the perception challenge. Modi 1.0 saw Mr Modi himself aggressively pushing for a major image makeover for India through various initiatives. His initiatives at the UN, bilateral engagements with senior world leaders, the hosting of Bimstec and the African Leaders Summit have all helped in creating a positive perception about Mr Modi. There was a time when he was projected by many international magazines as an important global statesman.

However, in the last couple of years, the perception-related challenge has certainly become serious for the Indian leadership. Some interest groups like the radical left-liberal cabal, are in the forefront in the campaign of misinformation. The Indian response varied from "who-cares" smugness to innuendo-filled angry outbursts. Neither will help India address this perception challenge. India must step up its efforts to engage with global public and civilian institutions in a more proactive and constructive way in order to be able to address this perception challenge.

Despite these challenges, Prime Minister Modi continues to be popular with the masses primarily because of his direct connect with them and also because they see in him a leader genuinely and selflessly committed to the welfare and well-being of the country. In order to overcome all the challenges that lie ahead, Modi 2.0 needs to put greater focus on decentralism and cooperative federalism domestically and proactive engagement globally.

The writer has served as the national general secretary of the BJP and is a member of the national executive of the RSS

At a time when the government was preparing to embark on a major development drive with \$5 trillion GDP as the target, the country and the rest of the world were hit by the Covid-19 pandemic

LETTERS

MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE

The acquittal of Tehelka founder Tarun Tejpal by a session's court in Goa in the sexual assault case is a miscarriage of justice not only to the victim but also entire womanhood. When the accused had himself admitted to the crime and tendered his apology, how come the court has acquitted him of all the charges? What happened to the clinching evidence submitted by the Goa government against the culprit? The verdict, which has caused widespread disappointment, is sure to discourage women from filing sexual assault cases. In fact, such judgments will only embolden men of Tejpal's ilk.

P.G. Menon, Chennai

INTENSE LOCKDOWN

As expected, the Tamil Nadu government has clamped an intense lockdown for a week from May 24. One hopes that the government follows the measures to the letter, as people endure the problems of a lockdown such as no mobility, no work, less or no salary and so on in the general interest of the society. The last lockdown (for a fortnight) in the state was a damp squib. Though the shops and establishments were closed, people were moving around on their two-wheelers or four-wheelers at will making a mockery of the lockdown. Surprise checks by the men in uniform would have brought some thousands of rupees to the government kitty. But the infections of the deadly pandemic have been rising in geometric proportions. Needless to say, people should provide unstinted support to the government in its earnest battle against the Covid-19 and stamp out the disease from the State.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

TAKE ACTION ON DM

We just saw a shocking incident going viral on social media and electronic media, of a DM in Chattisgarh slapping a young man for apparently not following proper Covid protocols in stepping out of his home. Worse still, after slapping the individual, the DM snatches and throws the person's mobile phone on the road and is also seen instructing some policemen to beat him up with lathis. Recently, we also saw another appalling incident of rude and uncivilised behaviour by a DM in Tripura who reportedly rudely 'raided' a marriage ceremony which was going on and physically handled some people, despite the fact that formal permission had already been given by the authorities for holding the ceremony. No doubt strict departmental action as per rules needs to be taken against repulsively arrogant bureaucrats who often forget that they are here to serve the people, not to dominate by misusing their powers.

A. Mohan, Chennai

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



BBC on the mat for Di interview... Is Shakespeare getting cancelled?

Decolonising Shakespeare? Well, it was only a matter of time before the Bard was going to be re-examined for racism. The Globe theatre has launched a series of seminars exploring whether there was racism underlying his plays. But as many of us already know from a reading of Othello ("the Moor") and others, that Shakespeare was writing for his times. Some speakers at the seminar did conclude that in many Shakespeare's plays White reflected beauty and goodness, while Black meant the opposite.

But rather than cancel Shakespeare, or break his statues, or rewrite him, the way forward could be to give a health warning before staging his plays. This is a time of churn: and just about all major writers of the past (including Enid Blyton) are being checked for political correctness. All-White characters are no longer acceptable either, in literature, theatre, cinema or even television news!

Undoubtedly, these kinds of seminars create a fresh understanding — but the jury is out there whether we censor the Bard or simply rewrite the bits that offend us

today. A discerning audience may now critically examine what we have taken for granted all this time. And since we have been so influenced by him, it might be worth looking at the language and the characters once again.

As the US begins to open its theatres and cinema halls, the UK has opened its pubs — a sign of better things to come, and of a successful vaccination drive. We cannot wait for the third week of June when at last the lockdown will be relaxed. But given that the last lockdown ended prematurely, there is a lot of betting on whether we may be wrong again. Because the one thing we can count on is that this virus will keep mutating and it will carry on attacking us while we fight back with fresh vaccines and medication. The war may not be over, ever, but in this round we are on the winning side, as the graph of the cases and deaths is plunging dramatically. We need to become grasshoppers and not ants — just rejoice for today because tomorrow will see a new lockdown.

The experts are still divided on

the likelihood of a third wave. Last time it was the local home-grown Kent variant of Covid which scuppered our plans to re-open. (In Kent they don't mind that label, as it will be better to know the origin of the mutation, whenever the history of this virus is written.) This time it is the "Indian" variant and, by the way, we are not supposed to call it that. Far too many of us have been bombarded with emails and articles stating that it is unfair to call it the "Indian" variant. But to paraphrase Shakespeare — what's in a name? A virus by any name would kill as cruelly. The taming of the virus is what we are hoping for this summer.

But seriously, London life will be normal only when our famed cultural life — including pubs, cinema, cricket — will return. One more summer of home isolation would be unbearable — and like in the US, many are clamouring for the masks to be removed for those who are fully vaccinated.

That said let us get to the really important thing that matter to the locals: money. The Sunday Times list of the wealthiest

has just come out with fifty names. This is an annual announcement to read and gossip about as it makes you feel you know them. And of course — here too, we look out for the Indian variant, or the new normal, whichever you prefer.

Near the top are the Mittals and Hinduja Family (no surprises there). But among the ten names of the wealthiest is another that can truly stoke our pride — Kiran Mazumdar Shaw.

Of course, Covid has also helped to make fortunes for people who have found profits in difficulties. One couple is on the list because they were able to re-develop the old pyjamas for lounging around all day during the lockdown. And the man who was the fiftieth had an interesting story. Alan Mills had left school without success (as many billionaires have done — Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg are dropouts from undergraduate colleges). He later took part in the famous TV show, *The Apprentice*, and had got a thumbs down. But he did not feel discouraged and went into insurance and is a billionaire in his 30s.

Diana, the Princess of Wales who died in 1997, continues to rule the front pages. Most of us remember the iconic TV interview she gave in 1995 to BBC correspondent Martin Bashir, which ultimately led to her divorce from Prince Charles, years later. It was one of the most-watched show, ever, for the BBC. Now it turns out that Martin Bashir had tricked her into giving the interview. He had shown allegedly fraudulent bank statements to Diana's brother, the Earl Spencer, claiming that pay-offs had been made for briefings against her, and thus the interview was arranged.

Her two sons William (Duke of Cambridge) and Harry (Duke of Sussex) have denounced the BBC for causing her death. BBC has also been placed on the mat, and its reputation has never taken such a hit. Who could have ever imagined this?

Kishwar Desai's latest book, The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times of Devika Rani, has just been published and she is the Chair of the Trust that set up the world's first Partition Museum in Amritsar

SHORT TAKES

21 die in China ultramarathon

Beijing: Twenty-one people running a mountain ultramarathon have died in the northwestern China after hail, freezing rain and gale-force winds hit the high-altitude race, a media reported on Sunday. After an all-night rescue operation in freezing temperatures involving more than 700 personnel, rescuers were able to confirm that 151 people were safe, out of a total of 172 participants. Twenty-one had died, according to the official *Xinhua* News Agency, which said the runners suffered from physical discomfort and the sudden drop in temperature. The runners were racing on an extremely narrow mountain path at an altitude reaching 2,000-3,000 meters (6,500-9,800 feet). The 100-kilometer (60-mile) race was held on Saturday in the Yellow River Stone Forest tourist site in Baiyin city. — *AP*

Crucial test awaits Indian pugilists

Dubai: A crucial test of preparations for Olympic-bound boxers, the Asian Championships get underway here on Monday with India aiming to better their record-shattering medal haul in the event's previous edition. A total of 19 Indian boxers — nine men and 10 women — will stake their claim for the top honours, which will also come with an unprecedented bonus of prize money this time. The boxers reached here on Saturday after a tumultuous few hours, which included a delayed landing and some confusion over approval paperwork. In addition, the team had to withdraw South Asian Games gold-medallist Vinod Tanwar's (49kg) name after he tested positive for Covid-19. — *PTI*

Tsitsipas blasts to title in Lyon

Lyon: World No.5 Stefanos Tsitsipas swept to the Lyon ATP clay court title on Sunday with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over Briton Cameron Norrie. With a week to go before the prestige Roland Garros tournament the 22-year-old Tsitsipas lifted his seventh career title and his second red surface win this year. Tsitsipas lost in the Barcelona final to Rafael Nadal but landed the Monte Carlo ATP with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Russian Andrey Rublev. Playing with confidence and power Tsitsipas rampaged around the court with his shoulder length hair kept under a headband and lost just a single set all week, in the semis against Lorenzo Musetti. "I kept my objectives in mind and it worked," said Tsitsipas. "I'm going to rest up and get back to training for Roland Garros. It's the Grand Slam I adore the most," he said. — *AFP*

Biles makes an historic vault

Los Angeles: US gymnastics superstar Simone Biles returned to competition with a bang on Saturday, completing an historic vault to launch her final run to the Tokyo Olympics. The five-time Olympic gold medalist, who hadn't competed since winning five golds, including a fifth all-around title, at the 2019 World Championships, delivered on the vault she's been preparing — a Yurchenko double pike — at the US Classic in Indianapolis, Indiana. The vault, featuring a roundoff onto the springboard and back hand-spring into a piked double backflip, had never before been done in women's competition. — *AFP*

Middleton lifts Bucks past Heat

Los Angeles: Khris Middleton nailed a clutch two-pointer with less than one second remaining as the Milwaukee Bucks snatched a thrilling 109-107 overtime victory against the Miami Heat in their NBA Eastern Conference playoff opener on Saturday. Middleton kept his composure superbly to drain the decisive jump shot from 18 feet with just 0.5 seconds on the clock, handing the Bucks a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven first round series. In other series openers, the Brooklyn Nets rallied from a 12-point second-quarter deficit to beat the Boston Celtics. — *AFP*

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FALL FROM GRACE

Sports fraternity reacts to Sushil's arrest with shock & disappointment

New Delhi, May 23: There was lingering disbelief and considerable disappointment as the country's sports fraternity came to terms with Sushil Kumar's monumental fall from being one of India's greatest Olympians to an arrestee in a murder case.

The stockily-built man, who used to be wrapped in the Tri-colour after winning medals for the nation, had his face masked by a towel and both hands held by Delhi Police's special cell officers on Sunday after being on the run for past many days.

Ironically, all this unfolded on World Wrestling Day.

He was evading a Non-Bailable Warrant for his alleged involvement in the death of a 23-year-old wrestler Sagar Dhankar during a brawl at the Chhatrasal Stadium, considered the cradle of Indian wrestling, made most famous by Sushil — India's only sportsperson with two individual Olympic medals.

Dhankar was the son of a Delhi Police constable and trained at the stadium before he died on May 5 because of the injuries he sustained in the brawl.

The chain of events has left the Indian sports fraternity shocked even though respect for Sushil's achievements remains intact. The 37-year-old is, to this date, India's only world champion in wrestling and a three-time Commonwealth Games gold-winner.

"What he has done for Indian sports is something that can never be taken away from him. That's all I want to say at this point. Let things be clearer. I don't want to comment more," boxing star Vijender Singh, who has been to two Olympic Games with Sushil, said.

Both Vijender and

What he has done for Indian sports is something that can never be taken away from him. That's all I want to say at this point. Let things be clearer. I don't want to comment more.

— VIJENDER SINGH
Indian boxing star

Sushil won historic bronze medals at the 2008 Beijing Games. Vijender remains India's sole male Olympic medallist in boxing.

IMAGE WILL TAKE A HIT, SAYS SHARATH

Seasoned table tennis player A. Sharath Kamal, who is gearing up for his fourth Olympic appearance, conceded that Indian sport's image will take a hit. Kamal's limited interactions with Sushil have taken place during events as Olympians.

"If this has actually happened, it is unfortunate and reflects badly on Indian sport, not just wrestling," he said.

"He is one of the best athletes we have had. People look up to him. So if he has done what he has done, it will negatively impact not just wrestlers but athletes from other sports also."

UNFORTUNATE & SHAMEFUL: AJITPAL

Former hockey captain Ajitpal Singh, an Indian Olympic Association observer at the 2008 Olympics, recalled interacting with Sushil at the Games and said he still can't understand what exactly went wrong with the "polite" man.

"...it is very shameful and unfortunate. Being a role model Sushil should have led by example and never indulged in such a brawl. The sport gave him everything, money, fame," he said. — *Agencies*



Wrestler Sushil Kumar (left) is escorted by police in New Delhi on Sunday. — *PTI*

FOOTBALLER SOREN TO GET FINANCIAL AID

New Delhi, May 23: Sports Minister Kiren Rijju on Sunday said his department will soon provide financial help to footballer Sangeeta Soren, who received a national call-up last year before the Covid-19 pandemic forced her to work as a daily wage labourer to support her family.

Sangeeta, who has represented India in U-18 and U-19 tournaments in Bhutan and Thailand before being

called for the senior women's team, has been working at a brick kiln in Dhanbad's Basamudi village.

The sports minister took note her of her struggle for survival, not long after representing the country.

"I've been informed about footballer Sangeeta Soren, who has represented India in international competitions, and is in a financial crisis in this pandemic.

"My office has contacted her & financial help will be extended soon. Ensuring a dignified life for athletes is our priority," Rijju tweeted.

Sangeeta received the Indian team call-up after impressing in the age-group tournaments but before her dream to play for the senior national side could take flight, the pandemic struck leading to a nationwide lockdown. — *PTI*

BANGLADESH PIP LANKA IN COVID-HIT ODI

Dhaka, May 23: Spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz claimed four wickets as Bangladesh beat Sri Lanka by 33 runs in the first one-day international in Dhaka after a coronavirus scare on Sunday.

The ODI started on time after the news of three Sri Lankan team members — fast bowler Isuru Udana, all-rounder Shiran Fernando and bowling coach Chaminda Vaas — testing positive for Covid-19 cast a shadow over the game.

Udana and Vaas returned a negative result in a second test following initial positive results, but Fernando tested positive again and was put in isolation immediately.

Mehidy returned figures of 4-30 from 10 overs of his off spin to help bowl out Sri Lanka for 224 in the tourists' chase of 258. Number eight Wanindu Hasaranga hit a valiant 74 off 60 balls.

Mustafizur Rahman took three wickets with fellow fast bowler Mohammad Saifuddin claiming two.

Earlier Mushfiqur Rahim (84) and Mahmudullah Riyad (54) put on 109 runs for the fifth wicket to guide Bangladesh to 257-6 after they opted to bat at the start of the three-match series. — *AFP*

WORLD | T20

India women yet to get prize share

New Delhi, May 23: The Indian women cricketers, who made the final of last year's World T20 in Australia, will receive their share from the \$500,000 prize money by the end of this week, a senior BCCI official said on Sunday after it came to light that they are yet to be paid.

A report in the UK's *Telegraph* newspaper quoted an official from the Federation of International Cricketers Association (FICA) as saying that the BCCI is yet to disburse the runner-up prize money of the global event, which was held in February-March last year.

India were led by Harmanpreet Kaur at the marquee event, where they lost to Australia in the final.

"The members of the Indian women's cricket team will be getting the share of their prize money by the end of this week. The transactions have been processed and I am expecting that they will receive their share very soon," the senior board functionary said.

Asked about the delay, he said: "We received the prize money amount late last year."

The processing of players' payments in BCCI does take around three to four months for all teams (across age groups).

Reacting to a UK newspaper report, the BCCI said women's team will receive their share from the \$500,000 prize money by the end of this week.

However, since last year, the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai have remained shut due to the Covid-19 situation across the country leading to delay in payments all across.

"It's not just one payment for women. Whether it's the central contract of the men's team, international match fees, domestic fees of men and women, everything is taking a bit of time because of the prevailing situation," a former BCCI office-bearer, still associated with a state unit, said.

He further informed: "Even before the Covid situation worsened, the domestic season would end in March and the complete payments were only cleared by September."

"So, in this case you need to check when did BCCI receive the payments. If they received just after the tournament, then it's a delay but processing does take some time. And to the best of my knowledge, it's the same for both men and women." — *PTI*

INDIA LIKELY TO STRUGGLE IN WTC FINAL, SAYS MONTY

New Delhi, May 23: Former England spinner Monty Panesar feels New Zealand will hold the edge over India in the World Test Championship final if conditions favour the pacers at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton. It is rainy and cold in the UK at the moment and if it stays that way for the WTC final starting from June 18, then it will be advantage New Zealand, feels Panesar.

"At the moment there is a lot of rain around. If the weather stays like this then it will be an interesting battle between the Indian and New Zealand seamers. The New Zealand batsman also play the moving ball better than Indian batsmen.

"So, that, that would be quite interesting to see if the ball is swinging and moving at some stage during the Test match, how the Indian batsmen, stand up to it compared to the New Zealand," Panesar said.

Panesar also expects the ICC to prepare a neutral wicket and not a green top as the WTC is supposed to be a good advert for the five-day game. — *PTI*



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates after winning the Monaco Grand Prix on Sunday. — *AFP*

Monaco victory puts Max on top

Monaco, May 23: Max Verstappen capitalised on Ferrari pole-sitter Charles Leclerc's cruel last-minute withdrawal to win Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix and go top of the drivers' world championship for the first time.

Carlos Sainz for Ferrari took second with Lando Norris for McLaren completing the podium.

Red Bull's Verstappen displaced Lewis Hamilton at the top of the 2021 standings after the Mercedes world champion finished in seventh.

The Dutch driver pitched up in the Principality trailing Hamilton by 14 points, and leaves it four points ahead.

"It's so special to win. The first time for me on the podium here. It was all about looking after the

tyres. I was pretty much in control," said Verstappen after taking the chequered flag waved by tennis superstar Serena Williams.

Hamilton had a low key weekend, qualifying in seventh and finishing in seventh. His teammate Valtteri Bottas was in contention to pounce on any mistake by Verstappen.

But then his race came to an embarrassing end when a routine pitstop took a disastrous turn as a wheel refused to come off.

The Finn's frustration will have been nothing to the heartache Leclerc suffered just before the start when he reported a gearbox problem on his Ferrari. For the locally-born Leclerc it was a cruel end to his dream of winning his home grand prix. — *AFP*

Triumph over adversity



Atletico Madrid's Luis Suarez celebrates with fans after winning the La Liga. — *AP*

Suarez was in tears after his goal helped Atletico Madrid clinch the Liga title, thanking the club for rescuing him.

THANKS FOR OPENING DOORS: SUAREZ

The Uruguayan, who moved to Madrid from Barcelona in August, thanked "Atletico for opening their doors to me."

"I am filled with emo-

tions," the 34-year-old Uruguayan striker said after scoring in Atletico's 2-1 victory in Valladolid. He offered veiled criticism of his former club, who finished the season in third place.

"I had to live through a difficult situation, starting the season being under-appreciated and Atletico opened the door to give me the chance to show that I could still be a

force," Suarez said.

"That's why I'm always going to be grateful to this great club for trusting me," Suarez said through his tears.

"Many people have suffered with me, my wife, my children, every day," he said.

"I've been in football for so many years and I think this is the year they have endured the most." — *AFP*

Liverpool, Chelsea secure CL spots

London, May 23: Liverpool and Chelsea seized the final two Champions League places in a dramatic end to the Premier League season on Sunday, leaving Leicester heartbroken for the second consecutive campaign.

With Manchester City already guaranteed a third title in four years and Manchester United certain to finish second, the focus was on the battle for the final two places in

the top four. Heading into the 38th and last round of fixtures, just one point separated Chelsea in third place from Leicester in fifth.

Two Sadio Mane goals gave Liverpool a 2-0 win at home to Crystal Palace while Thomas Tuchel's side were indebted to a late Leicester collapse against Tottenham at the King Power Stadium.

Chelsea lost 2-1 at Aston Villa but were saved by the 4-2 defeat for Brendan

Rodgers' FA Cup winners. Jamie Vardy ramped up the pressure on deposed champions Liverpool and Chelsea early on a see-saw afternoon, putting Leicester ahead from the penalty spot.

That meant, as it stood, Liverpool, playing in front of the biggest crowd at Anfield since they became English champions least season, dropped out of the Champions League qualification places.

But after an uncertain

start, Mane calmed nerves in the 36th minute and minutes later Harry Kane, possibly playing his final game for Spurs, levelled for the visitors at the King Power.

The key action took place at the King Power, where a Kasper Schmeichel own goal and two late Gareth Bale strikes turned the game around.

Leicester, forced to settle for a Europa League spot, also missed out on the top

four of the final day of last season when they were beaten by Manchester United.

West Ham also secured a Europa League spot by beating Southampton 3-0 while Fulham, West Brom and Sheffield United had already been relegated.

Argentinian Sergio Aguero scored two goals on his final appearance for Manchester City in their 5-0 romp against Everton.

— *AFP*