

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | 29 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 36.5°C
Min: 24.9°C
RH: 46%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Partly cloudy. Thundershower likely. Max/Min temp. 38/26°C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula Tadiya till 6.34 am, then Chavithi till 4.04 am (Sunday)

Star: Poorvashadha till 6.08 am
Varjyanam: Sesha Varjyanam till 6.22 am and 1.41 pm to 3.11 pm

Durmuhuram: 5.44 am to 7.28 am

Rahuakalam: 9 am to 10.30 am

HIJRI CALENDAR

Shawwal 16, 1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajr: 4.32 am
Zohar: 12.23 pm
Asar: 4.48 pm
Magrib: 6.51 pm
Isha: 8.05 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.45 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.41 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 10.03 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 8.19 AM

COUNTER POINT



Now we can tweet only emojis, right?

SHORT TAKES

Monsoon to hit Kerala tomorrow

New Delhi: The southwest monsoon has advanced further in more parts of southwest and eastcentral Bay of Bengal and conditions are favourable for its onset over Kerala around May 31, the India Meteorological Department said on Thursday. The Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal witnessed two cyclones over the two weeks. Several parts of the country have witnessed rainfall due to these two circulations.

Choksi gets legal reprieve

New Delhi: A court in Dominica has "restrained" authorities from removing fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi from the Caribbean island country till further orders, local media reported. The order came on a petition filed by the lawyers of Choksi, who was detained in Dominica for "illegal entry". "The legal team has highlighted deprivation of access to Mehul Choksi," Choksi's lawyer Vijay Aggarwal said.

BJP MLA backs Ramdev's stand

Ballia (UP): Uttar Pradesh BJP MLA Surendra Singh has joined the row between Yoga guru Baba Ramdev and the medical fraternity represented by the Indian Medical Association, saying the comments against the yoga guru are condemnable. The Baira MLA took to Facebook on Thursday to back Ramdev for his remarks against allopathy, and termed him a flag bearer of the Indian medicine system.

No int'l flights till June 30

New Delhi: The coronavirus-induced suspension of scheduled international passenger flights has been extended till June 30, aviation regulator DGCA said on Friday. "However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-to-case basis," the DGCA added. Scheduled international passenger services have been suspended in India since March 23, 2020.



WORLD | 9

Germany admits Namibia genocide



SPORTS | 12

Saina, Srikanth's Olympic hopes dashed

TABLOID

The no-cruelty and no-lactose milk



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West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee takes a stock of damages due to the landfall of Cyclone Yaas in Digha on Friday. — PTI

Didi seeks ₹20,000 crore Cyclone Yaas relief fund

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 28

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee demanded a special relief package of ₹20,000 crore from Prime Minister Narendra Modi while briefing him separately on Friday on the damage caused in the state due to "very severe" Cyclone Yaas following his arrival at the Kalaikunda Air Force Station in West Midnapore after doing an aerial survey of the devestation here while flying from the neighbouring affected state Odisha.

Submitting a preliminary report to Modi, the Trinamul Congress supremo, however,

skipped the review meeting chaired by the PM, apparently due to the presence of her protege turned adversary Suvendu Adhikari of the BJP, the new Leader of the Opposition in the state.

The CM, who later flew to Digha, the state's famous beach town in East Midnapore which was ravaged by the cyclone, said: "I, accompanied by state chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, handed over a report of the damage and losses to the PM at Kalaikunda. I told Mr Modi: 'This is our report. Now do whatever you think is best. So far we have ascertained a loss of

₹20,000 crore.'" She added: "There are two good schemes in our report to the PM. One is a package of ₹10,000 crores for Digha's development. Another is a package of ₹10,000 crores for Sundarbans' development. Though we may not get anything, I told the PM: 'I came here to meet you since you wanted to after traveling such a long distance. I also needed to visit Digha as per my schedule.' Taking his permission, I then left."

According to state government sources, the separate meeting by the CM with Modi took place only after the PMO accepted a request for it.

11 DEAD AFTER DRINKING ILLICIT LIQUOR IN U.P.

kAligarh (UP), May 28: Eleven people died on Friday and some more were taken ill after allegedly consuming spurious liquor sold by a licensed vendor here, a senior official said.

The authorities ordered a magisterial probe and suspended five excise officials while four people, including the liquor vend owner, were arrested. The inquiry will be conducted by an additional district magistrate-rank officer, DM Chandra Bhushan Singh said.

The administration is likely to invoke the stringent National Security Act (NSA) against those found guilty, he said. Confirming the 11 deaths, the DM said information about other people who drank liquor bought from the same vendor is trickling in. DIG Dipak Kumar said the Lodha police station was informed about the death of two in the morning. The victims were truck drivers who gathered at a gas depot on the Aligarh-Tapaa highway for work. — PTI

Dowry abuse: SC cautions courts

PARMOD KUMAR
NEW DELHI, MAY 28

The Supreme Court on Friday stressed on the need to ensure speedy trial in dowry death cases and also prevent abuse of the dowry law provisions to harass innocent family members.

referred to the guidelines relating to the trial under Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in dowry deaths.

The guidelines note that the trial courts often record the statements of the accused in a very casual and cursory manner without eliciting his/her defence.

The court said examination of an accused under Section 313 of CrPC cannot be treated as a mere procedural formality as it concerns the fundamental principle of fairness and incorporates the valuable principle of natural justice.

The guidelines mandate the court to put incriminating circumstances before the accused and seek his response.

They say a duty also lies on counsel of the accused to prepare his defence since the inception of the trial with due caution.

The trial courts should use discretion to record an order of acquittal if it finds no evidence that the accused committed the offence.

Having asked the trial courts to ensure speedy trial in dowry death cases and not to harass innocent family members, the top court today

referred to the guidelines relating to the trial under Section 304-B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in dowry deaths. The guidelines note that the trial courts often record the statements of the accused in a very casual and cursory manner without eliciting his/her defence.

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■ REPORT ON PAGE 3

SUSHANT SINGH FLATMATE HELD IN HYDERABAD

Hyderabad: Late actor Sushant Singh Rajput's housemate Siddharth Pithani was arrested from his house in Kushtaguda near ECIL, Hyderabad on Friday by Mumbai's Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

■ REPORT ON PAGE 3

HOODA REMOVED AS UN BODY ENVOY FOR MAYA 'JOKE'

Mumbai: Actor Randeep Hooda was removed as envoy of United Nations' environmental treaty, for his derogatory comments against Mayawati.

■ REPORT ON PAGE 7

RELIEF | PLAN

Top court directs all states to provide relief

Help out Covid orphans, says SC

New Delhi, May 28: Observing that it cannot even imagine how many children in India have got orphaned due to the devastating Covid-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court Friday directed the state authorities to immediately identify them and provide relief.

The top court asked state governments to understand the agony of children starving on the streets and directed the district authorities that they be immediately taken care of without waiting for any further orders from the courts.

A vacation bench of

Justices L.N. Rao and Aniruddha Bose directed district administrations to identify the orphans in their areas and upload their data on the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) website by Saturday evening.

The top court's direction came on an application filed by amicus curiae Gaurav Agrawal in the pending suo motu case seeking identification of orphaned children due to Covid-19 or otherwise and providing them immediate relief by the state governments.

The bench said state

governments must inform of the position of these children and the steps they have taken to provide them immediate relief.

We are of the opinion that Centre and State shall get the latest information on the identification of children, who have lost their one or both the parents due to pandemic and the steps taken to attend to their basic needs, it said, and listed the matter on June 1.

At the outset, Agrawal said that he has filed the application as there are numerous children, who have lost one or both the

parents or guardians due to the Covid and they need to be immediately taken care of by the state governments.

He said there are two categories of children adversely affected due to the Covid-19 — the ones who lost both parents/guardians and those who have lost the earning parent/guardian of the family since March 2020.

Agrawal said another issue of concern is that there are increased instances of child trafficking, especially of girl child.

— PTI

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parents or guardians due to the Covid and they need to be immediately taken care of by the state governments.

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No cut in GST on Covid essentials

GST Council sets up panel to decide on rates

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO | FC
NEW DELHI, MAY 28

State minister K.T. Rama Rao said on Friday that the Central government was doing injustice to the people here by allowing vaccine export to other countries.

While inaugurating a 100-bed area hospital at Thippapur village near the temple town of Vemulawada in Rajanna Sircilla district, the minister alleged that the Centre was also doing an injustice to states by imposing restrictions on allotment of vaccine.

"Everyone knows that Hyderabad is the vaccine capital of the world and has the capacity to manufacture vaccines required for the entire world," he said and added that the Centre, however, centralised the vaccine supply. "It took 85 per cent of the production under its control and gave only 15 per cent of what was produced here to the state and private hospitals."

"There is no foresight on the part of the Central government led by Narendra Modi. Without thinking about the future needs of the people of this country, it exported vaccines to other countries and supplied limited doses to states. Companies producing the vaccines are fixing different prices for the Centre and the states," he said.

However, he said steps will be taken for increasing the process of vaccination in the district. Global tenders were invited. The target is to vaccinate all people in TS by end of this year.

Briefing the media after the GST Council meeting late evening on Friday, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that the issue of Covid-related items was one item in the agenda that saw a detailed discussion. "The decision over tax rates on Covid vaccines was referred to a Group of Ministers (GoM), which will be announced by June 8," she said, adding that a GoM has been formed to submit a report on the reduction of rates on Covid-related items.

The finance minister further said that amphotericin B (the drug used to treat black fungus) has also been included in the exemption



Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman chairs the 43rd GST Council meeting in New Delhi. — DC

TS slams 'backdoor' GST levy on alcohol

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

The state government has strongly opposed the Centre's attempt to impose 'backdoor GST' on liquor in the name of 'extra neutral ENA'. Harish Rao questioned what the states would get if the Centre took 35 per cent of liquor cost under GST. He said the Centre's move was nothing but imposing GST on liquor through 'backdoor methods'.

Harish Rao also sought waiver of GST on medicines and equipment being used for Covid-19 treatment and said if waiver was not possible, the Centre should at least consider reduction of GST from 12 per cent to 5 per cent.

■ Page 2: Harish Rao for hike in FRBM limits

ingredient that is distilled. ENA accounts for nearly 35 per cent of the total liquor production cost.

Harish Rao questioned what the states would get if the Centre took 35 per cent of the total liquor production cost under GST.

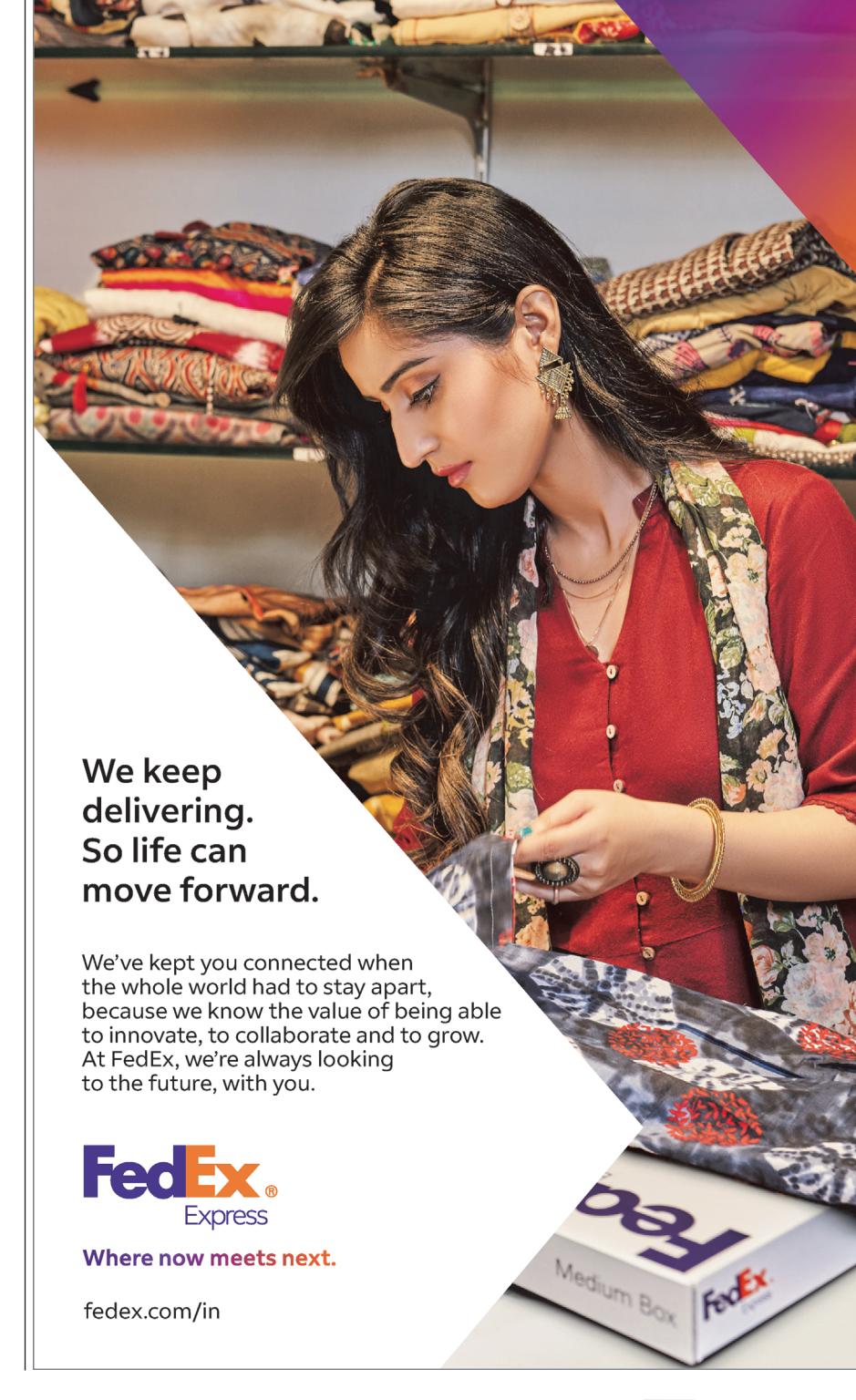
Finance minister T. Harish Rao who participated in the GST Council meeting chaired by Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman through video conferencing on Friday, raised strong objection over Centre's proposal of including GST alcohol's single most crucial and expensive raw material — extra neutral alcohol or ENA — the

list for import tax.

Economic affairs secretary Tarun Bajaj clarified that the ad-hoc exemption was already available on Covid-related items acquired free has been

extended till August 31, 2021. "The exemption will depend on the items you're importing," he said.

■ Page 4: Amnesty for small, medium taxpayers



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LAND

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High risk people queue up at the Musheerabad government school in Hyderabad on Friday for the Covid-19 vaccination as part of the special vaccination drive in the GHMC area.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Many lament they had not been given identification slips</h

SHORT TAKES

HYD COPS BOOK
9,552 LOCKDOWN
VIOLATORSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Hyderabad city police booked 9,552 cases against lockdown violators on Friday, including 8,016 during the four-hour relaxation period. City police commissioner Anjani Kumar inspected Mehdipatnam rythu bazaar and spoke to the vendors and reviewed lockdown restrictions in the city.

Police report said that 1,088 cases were booked against those who were not wearing a mask/wearing improper masks and 367 booked against those not maintaining social distance.

"Around 55 cases were booked for gathering in large numbers and 26 for consumption of alcohol and tobacco products in public areas. Officials also seized 6,514 vehicles," the report said.

"It is good that 99.99 per cent of the people in the twin cities are following lockdown rules and action is being taken against those who are flouting them," he said.

LOCKDOWN: DGP
HAPPY WITH
PUBLIC RESPONSEDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Director General of Police M. Mahendar Reddy visited several check-posts on the Vijayawada-Hyderabad National Highway under Rachakonda police commissionership on Friday.

He said that all vehicles that have been seized for violation of the lockdown would be returned to their owners post-lockdown.

Speaking to the media, DGP Reddy said, "Lockdown is being implemented strictly, although violators have become a hurdle."

He visited checkposts at Hayatnagar, Kothaguda, Pedda Ambarpet and Panama and took stock of the situation.

He stated that police are permitting movements of staff of essential and emergency services, doctors and other paramedical staff on producing valid identity proofs.

Reddy commended the work of Rachakonda police for working on the ground tirelessly. Rachakonda police commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat, Additional CP Sudhir Babu, DCP LB Nagar Sunpreet Singh and other officers were present.

STATE RECORDS
3,527 NEW COVID
CASES, 19 DEATHSDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Covid-19 appears reluctant to let go of its grip on Telangana, with the state reporting a marginal drop in new cases on Friday. As many as 3,527 new infections were reported in the day's medical bulletin, down from 3,614 on Thursday.

The number of those dead from Covid-19 as per the list provided by the state health department went up further to 19, taking the toll to 3,226. The caseload stands at 57,1044.

The slow drop in cases was reflected in the GHMC area, which had 519 cases — up from 504 on Thursday. Eleven of the 33 districts reported marginal increases in cases. The next highest number of cases, 218, was reported from Nalgonda, followed by 215 in Khammam.

Karimnagar district recorded 178 cases, Bhadradri-Kothagudem 154, Suryapet 152, Peddapalli 144, Warangal Urban 130, Mahabubnagar 124, Mahabubabad 119 and Siddipet district 115. The department said as 3,982 people were declared recovered on Friday, taking the total number of the recovered to 53,025, even as the state had 37,793 active cases under treatment.

THE SLOW drop in cases was reflected in the GHMC area, which had 519 cases — up from 504 on Thursday. Eleven of the 33 districts reported marginal increases in cases. The next highest number of cases, 218, was reported from Nalgonda, followed by 215 in Khammam.

Over 1K black fungus patients in city hosps

Scarcity of amphotericin B poses major challenge

ENT hospital marks 115 fungus surgeries

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

More than 1,000 black fungus patients are undergoing treatment in government and private hospitals here while the health department has advised doctors to use posaconazole injections to treat them.

In a break-up of the patient numbers, Gandhi Hospital has 250, Government ENT Hospital 300 and Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital six persons under treatment. A 200-bed facility is to be created at Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital to shift patients who have undergone surgery in the ENT Hospital, for further medical recovery in the eye hospital.

Private hospitals in Hyderabad have more than 500 patients and the situation there is being monitored by the government-appointed nodal center. The main challenge in treatment continues to be scarcity of amphotericin B liposomal, which is the first line of medicine for treatment.

Director of health Dr G. Srinivas Rao had a meeting with ENT doctors from private hospitals on Friday. He told them that amphotericin B liposomal injections were scarce and they must instead administer posaconazole injections to black fungus patients. Posaconazole is available in the market.

Amphotericin is available but it is highly toxic and doctors are not keen on using it on patients.

An ENT specialist says,

"There is a trinity at work in black fungus cases — uncontrolled diabetes,

Covid-19, and excessive and improper use of steroids. This trio is creating havoc in the body."

If we use lower grade medicines, the liver and kidney functioning may be affected. This will have to be monitored for the next three to six months in these patients. "They have to control their sugar

A total of 115 surgeries for black fungus were carried out in the Government ENT Hospital from May 24 to May 28. Twenty-five patients have been discharged from the hospital, reports said.

The ENT Hospital has 286 patients; 28 patients were admitted on Friday.

After the visit of Chief

Secretary Somesh Kumar and health principal secretary S.M. Rizvi it was decided that the surgeries will be scaled up.

Doctors are now working in two shifts and 10 surgeries have been performed in each shift.

Doctors state that they want to clear the debridement and opt for medical recovery so that these patients can be discharged fast.

levels and the functioning of these two organs have to be tested to avoid complications."

Due to the toxicity of the medicines, many doctors are in a dilemma. They have to cure the patients and they also have to save the patients' life.

Another ENT doctor said, "We can opt for treating with posaconazole in patients who have black fungus infection in nose, cheeks and the facial region. Those who have invasion in their eyes will require amphotericin. We have to use medicines judiciously."

The government supply

DIRECTOR OF health Dr G. Srinivas Rao had a meeting with ENT doctors from private hospitals on Friday. He told them that amphotericin B liposomal injections were scarce and they must instead administer posaconazole injections to black fungus patients. Posaconazole is available in the market.

is five vials per patient per day. The rules are not changing even as a minimum of 20 patients are reporting to different hospitals with black fungus complaints every day. A relief is that the paperwork has been simplified and private hospitals will only have to list the name of the patient and their status.

Another ENT doctor said: "We are going to see patients till June end as those suffering from Covid and recovering will be coming to hospitals with black fungus complaints. The good thing is that there is awareness and this is bringing patients early to hospitals. This will help patients. Till the nose region, this can be managed well."

Experts say those who have taken steroids must check their sugar levels and work towards building cell immunity to protect themselves from black fungus.

Man orders black fungus drug online, gets duped

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

THE FRAUDSTER assured delivery of medicine in Hyderabad through courier within three to four hours and demanded ₹8.3 lakh for 60 injections and provided bank account details.

A man who tried to buy medicine online for black fungus disease was cheated of ₹8 lakh. This is just one of several such cases where the public are being cheated by cyber fraudsters.

Fraudsters are posting bogus advertisements on various websites and social media platforms in the name of providing medicine for black fungus and Covid-19. They are deceiving the public by giving fake assurances of delivering drugs within hours of ordering.

In one such case, a resident of Gachibowli searched online to purchase injections to treat black fungus disease and found one. He contacted the number provided in

seller but all his calls went unanswered. Then, he realised that he was cheated.

"Believing fake advertisements, people are transferring money to those cheats' accounts. In some instances, fraudsters are managing to get sensitive information such as card details and OTPs and cheating them to the tune of lakhs of rupees," said the police.

The Cyberabad police appealed to the public not to believe in any advertisement on social media platforms and send money to them without verification. The police urged the public to contact the director of medical education, Telangana state on email dme@telangana.gov.in for various drugs related to Covid and related diseases.

LAB TECHNICIAN ARRESTED FOR GIVING FAKE RT-PCR REPORTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

A 26-year-old lab technician, Seeli Kiran Kumar, who cheated a family by issuing fake RT-PCR tests was arrested by the Jawaharnagar police. Investigation revealed that he had not sent the samples to any lab, but gave the reports by editing an old document.

The victim, Dhami Reddy Sunil Kumar and some of his family members showed symptoms of Covid-19 and he contacted Kiran Kumar.

"Kiran collected the swab samples and charged ₹1,000 for each. Two days later, Kiran forwarded the reports and informed that Reddy and all his family members had tested negative," said police.

The victim's wife Naga Laxmi and daughter Yashvi showed Covid-19 symptoms and again called Kiran for a second time. This time, Kiran collected the samples and sent reports that they had tested positive.

Meanwhile, Naga Lakshmi complained of stomach pain and Reddy called up Kiran, who brought two doctors to his house and collected blood samples. He charged ₹7,500.

On completion of home quarantine, when Reddy enquired with the path lab, he was told that his samples were not tested by them. He realised that he was cheated and lodged a complaint.

THE VICTIM'S wife Naga Laxmi and daughter Yashvi showed Covid-19 symptoms and again called Kiran for a second time. This time, Kiran collected the samples and sent reports that they had tested positive.

5 hospitals lose permit to treat Covid patients

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

issued to Virinchi did not elicit any answer.

The patient died on May 22 but relatives vandalised the hospital on May 28. This caused a lot of distress to 150 patients who were undergoing treatment in the hospital. Virinchi Hospitals did not respond despite repeated attempts to reach it.

The Indian Medical Association Telangana chapter strongly objected to the vandalising of Virinchi Hospital. Chapter president Dr Lav Kumar Reddy said, "Attacking is not the solution. There is a procedure the relatives must follow."

The health director said explanation sought by state government from these hospitals was found unsatisfactory.

It is stated, Virinchi Hospitals did not carry out treatment as per Covid-19 protocols. This led to the death of a patient, whose relatives complained to the department. A showcause notice

NIN e-surveys impact of food during Covid-19

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

pandemic.

The Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Nutrition (ICMR-NIN) has launched an e-survey to assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, as also the impact of the top trending information on food-related topics on one's perception, knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP).

The survey is available online and NIN solicits all regular internet users above the age of 18 years to take part. It can be accessed at: <https://info.nin.res.in>

Violators on the move



Top: City police seize vehicles of those violating the Covid-19 lockdown norms in Mehidipatnam, Hyderabad, on Friday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE



Left: Motorists rushing home at the end of the lockdown relaxation get stuck in a traffic jam near Paradise junction after 10 am on Friday. — S. SURENDER REDDY

MANHUNT | SUCCESS

Narcotics bureau has 33-page chargesheet on Pithani

Actor Sushant's roomie Pithani held

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

A team of NCB officials take Siddharth Pithani into custody from Kushaiguda in Hyderabad on Friday.

who nabbed Pithani with assistance from the Central agency comes almost two weeks ahead of the late actor's first death anniversary. The Bollywood actor was found dead at his residence on June 14, 2020.

A team led by NCB's zonal director Sameer Wankhede had launched a manhunt for Pithani and tracked him down in Hyderabad. Officials,

informed prior to the arrest. According to sources, Pithani has been presented before the Killa Court in Mumbai for further custody. He will be in NCB's custody for five days till June 2. Officials of the bureau said despite repeated summons, Pithani did not appear before them for questioning. "We have issued notices to him but he refused to turn up at the NCB office and remained absconding. As Pithani's alleged role in drug procurement came to light, notices under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act were issued to him earlier, asking him to join the investigation, but he did not respond," the NCB official said.

Pithani was trying to make a career in

Bollywood and had been staying for almost a year with Rajput, before the latter allegedly committed suicide.

Pithani had been interrogated several times by both the Mumbai Police and CBI to get more clarity on the death of the actor after allegations of foul play had emerged. Reportedly, the chargesheet also contained statements of 200 witnesses and explained how narcotic substances were procured and distributed across Mumbai.

As soon as the news of Pithani's arrest broke, Twitter started flooding with reactions. Netizens took a dig at Jimmy Wales, Wikipedia founder, asking him to change the cause of SSR's death from "suicide by hanging" to "murdered".

This is for information that the Active Pharma Ingredients (Bulk drugs and intermediates) manufacturing unit M/s. Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Limited, Unit II (CTO II), Survey No.172, 172/C, 81 & 84, Plot No. 1, 75A, 75B, 105, 110, 111 & 112, S.V.Coopetitive Industrial Estate, IDA Bollarum, Jinnaram (M), Sangareddy District, has been accorded Environment, a clearance by State Level Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIA) vide notification S.O.1533 Dated with 14th September 2006.

Copy of said Environment clearance is available with Telangana State Pollution Control Board.

Sd/- (Authorised Signatory)
Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Limited, Unit II (CTO II)
Hyderabad

The National Institute of Health and Family Welfare
Baba Gangath Marg, Munirka,
New Delhi - 110067
www.nihfw.org

Admission notice for Post-Graduate Diploma in Public Health Management (PGDPHM) Residential Course, Approved by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India for the Session 2021-22 for Self Sponsored Candidates (Duration: One Year)

Duly completed application form should reach the Director, The National Institute of Health and Family Welfare, Baba Gangath Marg, Munirka, New Delhi - 110067 latest by 30th June, 2021. For further details, including Hindi version of this advertisement, please visit Institute's website: www.nihfw.org

davp 17153/11/0005/2122

SHORT TAKES

AMNESTY FOR SMALL, MEDIUM TAXPAYERS

From Page 1

For small and medium taxpayers, Normala Sitharaman said an amnesty scheme has been recommended for reducing late fee payable by small taxpayers and medium-sized taxpayers. "Taxpayers can now file their pending returns and avail the benefits of this amnesty scheme with reduced late fees," she said.

"This scheme is likely to benefit around 89 per cent of those who pay GST," she said, adding that the issue about extending the GST Compensation period, which was widely expected to dominate the discussions, will be taken up at another meeting.

Sitharaman also reiterated that the Centre will also adopt the same old GST compensation formula as last year. "As per a rough estimate, the government will need to borrow ₹1.58 lakh crore and pass it on to states," the finance minister said.

JAGADISH SETS JUNE 15 FOR LI SCHEMES DPRS

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Energy minister G. Jagadish Reddy, who is also in-charge minister for undivided Nalgonda district, on Friday directed irrigation officials to prepare detailed project reports (DPRs) of new lift irrigation schemes proposed in the district by June 15. Reddy on Friday reviewed the progress of irrigation projects in Nalgonda district with irrigation officials at Jala Soudha here.

The minister set December-end deadline for completing the construction of lift irrigation projects announced by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao.

He also directed officials to submit work estimates for modernisation of SRSP canal Nos. 69, 70 and 71 respectively within three days.

The minister has set July 31 deadline for Kaleshwaram waters to reach Basavpur reservoir.

He asked officials to expedite construction of Bunadigani canal, Dharmareddy canal and Pillaipalli canals.

Reddy directed officials to call for tenders for construction of lift irrigation schemes soon after DPRs are ready by June 15.

THE MINISTER set
December-end deadline for completing the construction of lift irrigation projects announced by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao.

HE ALSO directed officials to submit work estimates for modernisation of SRSP canal Nos. 69, 70 and 71 respectively within three days.

FLESH TRADE: BANGLA WOMAN DENIED BAIL

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Justice K. Lakshman of the Telangana High Court declined to grant bail to a Bangladeshi citizen, Shuili Khatun alias Sheela Justin, who has been in jail for one year after she was arrested on allegations of trafficking women from Bangladesh to Hyderabad and forcing them into the flesh trade.

The FIR was registered by the Hyderabad police and later the case was handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

The judge agreed to have the final hearing of the bail petition and adjourned the case to June 1. Shuili Khatun was only a cook in the house, her counsel stated, and was not concerned with human trafficking or running a brothel in Hyderabad.

Counsel said Shuili Khatun was made an accused only based on the statements of some persons.

Suryakan Reddy, senior counsel appearing for National Investigation Agency, submitted that the probe revealed that the accused was involved in women trafficking from Bangladesh to Hyderabad and other parts of the city.

A chargesheet and supplementary chargesheets had been filed before the special court designated to deal with the cases registered by the premier investigating agency and she may move to Bangladesh or any other place, if the bail was granted to her, the counsel submitted.

Feeding the hungry



Archbishop of Hyderabad Dr Poola Anthony distributes groceries at the St. Mary's Basilica in Secunderabad on Friday.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

Millers don't pay up, get away scot-free

About 90 errant millers using political clout as shield

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Rice millers in the state have evaded custom-milled rice (CMR) worth ₹350 crore to the state government in the Rabi paddy procurement season (2019-20), according to sources in the TS Civil Supplies Corporation.

Despite this, the corporation has failed to initiate any action against the nearly 90 errant millers allegedly due to political pressure exerted by the ruling party leaders. The strong rice millers lobby in the state enjoys political clout and moves closely with ministers, MLAs, MLCs and MPs of the ruling party.

During every food grain procurement season, the government procures paddy from farmers for minimum

support price (MSP). This has been the norm even in the undivided state prior to 2014.

As per norms, defaulting rice millers should be blacklisted and should not be allotted paddy for milling in subsequent procurement seasons. But the corporation did not even blacklist them under political pressure, it is said. Defaulting millers continue to get paddy quotas for milling again from the government for the upcoming kharif season with the recommendations of ruling party leaders.

Official sources said the millers had defaulted on rice stocks amounting to one lakh metric tonnes even after one year of rabi season

2019-20. Worse still is that the corporation has not even issued notices to rice millers. Rice millers are liable for a penalty amounting to one and a half times worth the quantity of rice defaulted but no penalty was imposed.

When CV Anand was civil supplies commissioner between 2016 and 2018, there were instances of booking cases under the stringent Preventive Detention (PD) Act against the rice millers and he invoked Revenue Recovery Act for recovery of rice. Rice millers had fallen in line to some extent then but the situation is back to square one after he left the department.

Kishan: PM okayed O2 plants in 19 TS hospitals, 23 in AP

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy said that the Union government has taken measures to permanently reduce the shortage of liquid medical oxygen.

Addressed a virtual press conference from Delhi on Friday, he said that the daily oxygen production has been increased from 5,700 metric tonnes to 10,000 metric tonnes. He said that lakhs of oxygen concentrators are being set up in all government hospitals in the country through PM-Cares funds and to alleviate the shortage of tankers used for transporting oxygen, they have been imported on a large-scale.

The minister stated that currently 1,681 oxygen tankers are available, with a total transport capacity of 23,056 metric tonnes. He said that medical oxygen cylinders (11.19 lakh) have been made available. He said the number of ventilators installed in government hospitals in the last 74 years was less than 20,000 while the Modi administration has installed 51,000 across the country.

Reddy said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given the nod for establishing such plants in 19 major government hospitals in Telangana and in 23 major government hospitals in AP.

The minister said that oxygen production has already started in some hospitals and it is meeting the immediate needs without any problem.

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The minister stated that currently 1,681 oxygen tankers are available,

TD leaders in BJP worry about their political future

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Senior leaders from the Telugu Desam who switched loyalties and joined the BJP are a worried lot. From being in influential positions and calling the shots at varying levels, they are today unsure about their political future given the raw deal they are getting from their new party.

Among the disgruntled lot are former Rajya Sabha member Garikapati Mohan Rao and former ministers Motkupalli Narasimulu and Enugula Peddi Reddy.

It is believed that they are dissatisfied with the

party's central and state leadership as neither is making use of their experience and clout even as the general elections are due in less than two years' time.

Each has been discussing this sense of uncertainty with their respective followers and well-wishers, particularly because they could play a big role in the BJP's bid to come to power in Telangana state.

Mohan Rao joined the party after the Lok Sabha elections but has not been given any position. He feels let down that his services are not being recognised. He expected the party ticket for the Huzurnagar Assembly by-elections. Similar is the case with Kadari Anjaiah, who expected nomination

for the Nagarjunasagar by-election. Neither was considered.

Six-time legislator Narasimulu is also unhappy that the BJP has not been recognising his immense utility value. He expected a role at the national level but those hopes were dashed. His followers assert that his ideas and strategies could come in handy when the BJP launches an all-out attack against TRS boss, Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao.

Like others from TD who joined BJP expecting a bright political future, even he feels suffocated and is worried about his political future.

DASOJU SLAMS TS, COPS FOR BIAS AGAINST OPPN.

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 28

AICC spokesperson Dr Dasoju Sravan slammed the state government for booking cases against Congress leaders and unleashing vendetta policies, while they were raising public issues during a health calamity. He came down heavily against the TRS top leadership and Telangana police for filing cases against Congress leaders, citing latter's recent visit to urban primary health centre (UPHC) at Khairatabad violated Covid-19 regulations.

Addressing a press meet at Gandhi Bhavan on Friday, he said the government and police were neither doing their duty nor tolerating opposition for doing its duty.

OBITUARY

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Tim 4:7



Smt. PADMA GAGLANI
W/O Sri Praudee Gaglan
Passed away on 25th May 2021

Foundly remembered by
Hyderabad Kings
Round Table 249

OBITUARY

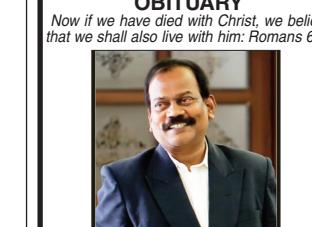
"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12



JOSEPHINE MAT NOGUEIRO
W/o Late C.B. Nogueiro
Date of birth: 10/04/1929
Date of death: 28/05/2021
Was laid to rest at All India Hindu Cemetery on 28/05/2021
On behalf of grieving: Children, Grandchildren and Family members.

OBITUARY

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Romans 6:8



Smt. Myadam Anuradha
With profound grief we inform the sad demise of

Shri. Boda Veera Prathar Kumar
(Retd. Deputy Collector)
on 25th May 2021. The funeral service will be held on Saturday, 29th May 2021 from 06:00 pm at Family Residence, Umroor (Hometown).
In Grief.

Wife (Mrs. K. D. Sukumari), Children (Dr. B. Spoorithi and Mrs. B. Spuram Kumar), Son-in-law and Daughter-in-law and Grand Daughter.

A loving mother and extremely joyous grandmother.

The days spent with you will be remembered forever.



E.SUMITRA DEVI
DOB: 19.03.1935 • DOD: 28.05.2021

Eyunni Ranga Kumar and family, Srilekhya Nambakam and family, Padma Rallapali and family.

3RD DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR LOVING MOTHER



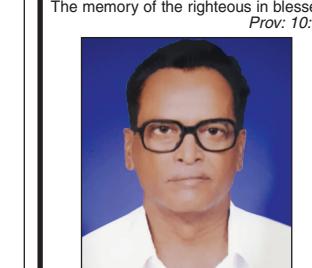
Marie Clarice Warren
DOB 04.09.1931 — DOD 29.05.2018

Death brings pain that only time can heal.
No words could ease what we truly feel;
But with God her joy is eternally sealed and
cherish her memories that death can't steal.

Inserted By: Jennifer Warren & Loved Ones

18TH ANNIVERSARY

The memory of the righteous in blessed Prov: 10:07



MOPARTY RATNAM
Called to glory on 29.05.2003
By ever loving Children & Grand Children
Ph: 9642961659 / 040-23513987

(A/2122/D00012)

SHRADHANJALI



THAKUR MADAN MOHAN SINGH
S/o Late THAKUR JAG MOHAN SINGH

DOB: 30.09.1962 DOD: 17.05.2021

House no 3-3-959, Kutiguda Hyderabad.

13th Day Ceremony will be held

today 29.05.2021

at B.N. Reddy Nagar, Hyderabad.

You may be gone from our sight but you are never far from our hearts, may your soul Rest in Peace.

Deeply missed and fondly Remembered

By Sandhya Singh (Wife), Thakur Vaibhav Singh & Thakur Vidyut Singh,

630522307, 6303270953

SHRADHANJALI



Late Mrs. DASARI BLANDINA
W/o late Mr UNDINTY SUKUMAR

DOD: 20/05/2021

YOUR MEMORIES WILL REMAIN IN OUR HEARTS FOREVER

Inserted by

Mother: U Grace Leela

Brothers: Ravinder & Michael

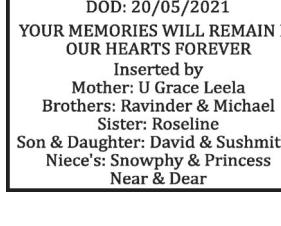
Sister: Roseline

Son & Daughter: David & Sushmitha

Niece's: Snowphy & Princess

Near & Dear

SHRADHANJALI



M. RAMESH BABU
DOB: 18-12-1957 DOD: 19-04-2021

WE MISS YOU ANNA

FAMILY & Relatives Ph: 9849078514

PARLOUR FRIENDS



Sri. MADIREDDY RANGANADHA RAO
Inserted by:

Dr. Gharinath Rao

DECCAN Chronicle

29 MAY 2021

Only Centre can resolve vaccine mess, not states

The Central government's attempts to wash its hands of the serious crisis facing the vaccination programme against pandemic Covid-19 are despicable and the arguments contained in the statement of the chairperson of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration for Covid-19 seeking to "dust the myths around vaccination" defy facts, logic, law and ground realities. The statement basically seeks to refute the allegation that the Centre had abdicated its responsibility towards the states by saying health is a state subject and the liberalised vaccine policy was a result of the incessant requests being made by the states to give them more power. It may be remembered that the Centre had on March 14, 2020, declared the pandemic as a national disaster under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Act defines disaster management as "the continuous and integrated process of planning, organising, coordinating and implementing measures... for, inter alia, prevention of danger or threat of any disaster and mitigation or reduction of risk of any disaster or its severity or consequences". All the measures the Centre took and the guidelines the Union home ministry issued till now were based on the DM Act, and vaccination falls within that category.

A perusal of the Disaster Management Act would convince anyone that a national plan for vaccination is the responsibility of the Union government, and not the states. The position that the Centre made 50 per cent of the vaccine produced within the country accessible to the states has little merit as it only made the entire programme messier, not easier. The statement makes its own argument that "states are entitled to approach foreign manufacturers directly" weak when it goes on to state that the global tenders have given no results because vaccines are in short supply and it is not easy to procure them at short notice. At the same time, the statement conveniently omits the stand of several manufacturers that they will deal only with national governments and none else. The issue is of vaccine availability, and the statement skirts that issue. It says the administration of vaccines by the states leaves a lot to be desired but does not give specifics. On the contrary, field reports say several states have shut down their vaccination centres due to shortage of vaccine, and for nothing else.

The statement dismisses that compulsory licensing is not the "formula" to increase vaccine production but then says the government has ensured active partnership between Bharat Biotech and three other entities to enhance production of Covaxin. The government must get more such companies on board and make the facilities such as the Integrated Vaccine Complex in Tamil Nadu functional instead of getting into the technicalities. Inadvertently, the statement refers to the games vaccine manufacturers play and the priorities they have; the criticism against the government has been that it was nowhere to be seen when several other national governments and companies were making their moves last year. It's time the government stopped engaging in the exercise of finding excuses and does whatever it takes to enhance the supply of vaccines. For, it alone can do it.

Build storm-proof infra

It is the recurring nature of tropical storms that makes them pose frequent threats to peninsular India, with its long coastline, is most vulnerable to nature's fury. Experience gained over the last two decades seems to have worked well for the country, in particular for the eastern states of Odisha and West Bengal, that have made evacuation of a whole mass of people an annual exercise. How painful this is for the poorest is one of the great tragedies of our national life, more so in the two years of the pandemic in which such gatherings of people poses an additional hazard as spreading of the coronavirus is facilitated. The loss of dwellings for uprooted people makes Yaas as catastrophic to Odisha now as Amphan had proved last year to West Bengal.

The silver lining even as cyclones blow hot seasonally is we have at least learnt to minimise the loss of life by moving and securing the most vulnerable section of coastal people. Odisha made the point forcefully that greater planning is needed to mitigate cyclone problems by providing disaster resilient power systems and improving infrastructure to tackle storm surges. This may be easier said than done considering how a modern power grid like the one in Texas was knocked out by a cold snap. But a start must be made if the coastal power infrastructure is to be made storm-proof and storm shelters expanded in view of what crowding can do in pandemic times.

The greater loss of lives as Tauktae raged on the western coast may be to there being no rigorous discipline in securing vulnerable sections living by the sea in contrast to what the east coast states do in preparation to facing Bay of Bengal storms. Of course, the technical weaknesses of oil exploration support barges anchored mid-sea made the disaster many times worse, the blame obviously to be pinpointed on petroleum companies running offshore operations. Response to natural calamities cannot be confined to announcement of compensation for loss of life and dealing with after-effects on livelihoods but by how much the states can, between storms, invest in improving coastal infrastructure.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

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Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



"If all the world's a stage
Then most of us are bit part players
Very few the Homeric sage
Even fewer the dragon slayers.

Exits, entrances, seven ages
With no audience for our drama
The script scribbled on destiny's
Pages
The vale of sorrow's panorama..."

— From **Innocent Ney Ignorant**
by Bachchoo

Does UK have 'institutional racism'? The debate still on

Some attitudes here become platitudes and breed enquiries to look into them. Months ago, the UK government received the report on "institutional racism" throughout the British body politic. It concluded that there was room for reform in attitudes and workings of certain sectors but there was no organ of the State that could be labelled as institutionally racist.

Commentators who claimed that non-white people were subject to systematic discrimination called the report a "whitewash", even though almost all its authors were either black or Asian.

In October 2020, the Equality and Human Rights Commission published a report on anti-Semitism in

the Labour Party, focusing on the period of the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. It concluded that there was endemic anti-Semitism and Keir Starmer, who succeeded Mr Corbyn as the party leader, apologised for it and promised to stamp it out.

This week, following a relentless pursuit of the allegation by a former chairman of the Conservative Party, Baroness Warsi, a government-commissioned report on Islamophobia in the party has been published. It was Sajid Javid, who as the home secretary debating Michael Gove and Boris Johnson on television in the party's last leadership election, had bounced the other candidates into agreeing to such an investigation. They couldn't very well publicly object.

The report, commissioned last July, was headed by Prof. Swaran Singh, a former Equality and Human Rights Commissioner. It concluded that there was no "institutional racism" in the party but there were incidents of councils, formal bodies and individual members manifesting some form of prejudice against Muslims.

The headline-catchers in the reports were the strictures against Boris Johnson himself and against another prominent Tory, Zac Goldsmith.

BoJo was sanctioned for columns he wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* likening Muslim ladies wearing burqas to letter boxes with round tops and slits below and then to Balacava bank robbers. He has since apologised not for what he regarded as a callous joke, but for "any offence it may have caused".

Zac Goldsmith, who stood as the Tory candidate for mayor of London against Labour's Sadiq Khan, made oblique allusions to Sadiq being a possible sympathiser of the Islamist who had carried out terror attacks in London. These allusions were clear in their snide implications, though carefully delivered and of a nudge-nudge-wink-wink composition, so as not to incur heavy libel charges. Zac lost, but Prof. Singh's report treated this aspect of his campaign as evidence of Islamophobia at the top of the Tory Party. BoJo was rewarded not because of but in spite of his callous insult with the leadership of the party and consequently the keys to what his fiancé, "Carey Antoinette", regards as the shabby dwelling at No. 10. Zac Goldsmith, for no tangible achievement, was promoted to the Lords.

The report has been labelled a "whitewash" — the word is very popular in the UK — by Baroness

Sayeeda Warsi and by leaders of several Muslim organisations.

Lady Warsi said that the party's "processes, attitudes and behaviour" were at fault from its leadership to its grassroots... "On each of those counts it satisfies the definition of institutional racism... the way I see it, if it looks like institutional racism, feels like institutional racism, fits the definition of institutional racism, then I'm afraid it is institutional racism." With these views, why does this daughter of a Pakistani immigrant family remain in the Tory Party and occupy prestigious positions within it? Perhaps she wants to remain inside and fight passionately for Tory policies on immigration, taxation, cuts to foreign aid, bungles over Covid-19 lockdowns, which have caused the deaths of more per capita than any other country etc. These Tory policies and acts may cause discrimination, devastation, disease, desperation and death, but so what? She'll stick with the Tories and be a baroness and fight with all her might against ill-thought-out, frivolous "jokes" about burqas and post-boxes.

Though I haven't read Prof. Singh's report, none of the commentary I have read on it mentions that it

Subhani



Why govt's fudging of figures fools nobody...

Shobhaa De

Brand India getting tarnished due to the "hostile" coverage in the international media... hello! The smart thing to do is FIX the brand first! And the coverage will take of itself. Why shoot the messenger? Are any of the reports fabricated? Are all those disturbing photographs really morphed or photoshopped? And dear loyalists, the entire propaganda machinery is in the hands of the government. Why not get Prasoon Joshi to write a lengthy poem — create a slo-mo video roping in all the BJP's Bollywood favourites, bombard social media with the same... and wait for the deaths to disappear by magic! How's that for a quick image fix?

Nobody, but nobody... has the time for any organised "India Bashing" at a sensitive time like this. Conversely, nobody has the time for b***s*** either. Deceiving your own people is deception at its lowest. Besides, such a strategy always backfires. If we are craving for global approval and want to improve our dismal ratings, it's time to do something more convincing than resorting to cheap slogans. Co-opting sympathetic industrialists to tweet about India getting unfairly trashed/bashed is a smart move but getting a reputed banker like Uday Kotak to say it like it is, works far better. Uday opened up in a recent interview and put it bluntly when he was asked whether we could have planned better for

A friend from Kolkata looking out of her window last week commented cryptically: "I can see eight to 10 hearses parked outside one of Kolkata's top hospitals, waiting to take Covid bodies to the crematorium. We are forced to say: 'You arrive at the hospital in your own fancy car as a patient — and leave in a hearse as a corpse'." This scene is being repeated across the cities of India. Let's not even get to what's happening in our villages — no hearse there to cart the dead. Just handcarts, cycles, and makeshift bamboo stretchers. I didn't have the stomach to look at the television clips of government-appointed volunteers, hastily removing temporary poles and saffron cloth left behind by thousands of mourners to mark the shallow, sandy graves of their loved ones, along the banks of India's holiest river: the Ganga. The optics were hastily altered — but did that alter the grim truth? Sweeping evidence under a carpet of sand — how awful!

As for those loyalists blabbing on about

the second wave. Said Mr Kotak: "You are driving the car. So, look at the windshield and not the rearview mirror." His suggestions for the way forward were practical and candid. He urged the government to pay a "fair price" for the vaccination, plus "maximise production and distribution". We need to listen to more such voices from our other billionaires, but most have kept their mouths shut so far.

Yes, "Brand India" has taken a major hit. Other countries and their leaders have also gone through this and more (BoJo and Britain, for example). It is important to deal with criticism and dissent in an upfront manner. It is even more important to pay attention to sound advice and to implement it. Our leaders change the texture of their skin as and when it suits them — from acquiring a rhino's thick hide to behaving like fragile porcelain dolls, these cunning chameleons have played around with our sentiments for far too long

Instagram handle:
@ShobhaaDe; Twitter:
@DeShobhaa

LETTERS

7 YEARS OF PM MODI

The article '7 yrs of PM Modi: Can he lead us out of the abyss?' (May 28) echoes the views of the middle class intelligentsia's apprehension and the consequences of his leadership and decision-making over the remaining three years of his term. We can only hope that he proves us wrong.

Ramakrishna
Secunderabad

TAMING SOCIAL MEDIA

The police action was unwarranted ('Tech giant terms it police intimidation', DC, May 28). The world's opinion that India is the largest democracy can change. After suppressing the media, the Centre is now targeting social media. The BJP wants its IT cell to troll anybody writing against the government, but restrict all posts against the PM or the Centre.

P.R. Ravinder
Hyderabad

BLACK FUNGUS DRUGS

The Delhi High Court allowed duty free import of amphotericin used for treating black fungus. The medicine is essential to save the lives of the patients. The Centre should completely waive duty so that it can be imported with ease.

Dr Syed Mohiuddin Alvi
Hyderabad

LOCKDOWN FORMAT

I concur with the view of a letter writer in these columns on the four-hour relaxation window. The government could increase it to 12 hours — from 6 am to 6 pm.

Sreedhar Rao Kamlekar
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Pak troops open new fronts

SHILLONG, May 28. Aggressive Pakistani troops this evening opened up new fronts on the international boundary along Assam's Goalpara district when they started shelling Chhattrasal area opposite East Bengal's Sonahat area, Assam Government sources said tonight.

Exchange of fire between Pakistani troops and Indian Security Forces was continuing even at late night, but details were not available.



SHORT TAKES

HOODA REMOVED AS AMBASSADOR OF UN BODY

Mumbai, May 28: Actor Randeep Hooda has been removed as the ambassador of Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), United Nation's environmental treaty, following the controversy over his derogatory comments against Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati.

Hooda has been under fire since Wednesday when a nine-year-old video of him making a "joke", which social media users termed casteist and sexist, went viral online.

The 43-second-clip from an event organised by a media house in 2012 resurfaced when a Twitter user shared it. The video has Hooda cracking a joke and then laughing along with the audience.

In a statement posted on its website, CMS said the organisation finds the comments in the video to be "offensive" and Hooda will no longer serve as the ambassador for them.

The actor was appointed as the CMS Ambassador for Migratory Species in 2020 for three years.

YOUTUBER HELD FOR 'HARMING' RUPANI'S IMAGE

Porbandar, May 28: A 22-year-old man from a village in Porbandar has been arrested for allegedly trying to harm Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani's reputation by creating and uploading a "doctored video", using a part of the latter's recent speech, police said on Friday.

Vivek Parmar, a resident of Gorsar village, was on Thursday arrested under IPC section 469, which deals with forgery for the purpose of harming reputation, sub-inspector A.S. Agrawal of Madhavpur police said.

Investigations have revealed that Parmar, a Commerce graduate, shared funny videos at regular intervals on his YouTube and Facebook accounts, he said. The police recently came across a "doctored video" of the CM, which the accused had shared on his Facebook account, he said.

"Parmar is accused of creating and circulating an indecent doctored video clip, using some portion of the CM's original speech, with an intention to harm the latter's reputation and position," the official said, quoting the FIR.

BHOPAL: YOUTH 'EATEN' BY PIGS NEAR RIVER BANK

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, MAY 28

In a gory incident, a youth was found to be eaten by a group of pigs here.

Body of the youth, identified as Mohan Meena (25), was recovered while being 'eaten' by the pigs on the bank of Kolar river in the city on Friday, police said.

Locals spotted the body being eaten by the pigs and informed the police.

Police rushed to the spot and recovered the body after chasing the marauding animals away. Kolar police station in-charge Chandrabhan Patel said.

The face and lower part of the body were completely eaten by the pigs, police said.

According to the police, the deceased fled home on Thursday night.

LAKSHADWEEP: KERALA HC SEEKS CENTRE'S RESPONSE

Kochi, May 28: The Kerala High Court on Friday sought the response of the Central government on a PIL challenging the Lakshadweep administration's move to introduce Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation 2021 (LDAR) and the Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Act (PASA) in the islands.

Considering the PIL, the court declined to stay the operation of LDAR and PASA but directed the Centre to file a response in two weeks.

The PIL was filed by Congress leader K.P. Noushad Ali.

In his plea, Ali alleged illegal interference with the social, political and cultural realities in Lakshadweep by the Administrator.

He submitted that the residents of islands are opposed to the LDAR and the creation of a Lakshadweep Development Authority issued by the administration as it gives powers to the administration to remove the small holding for property owned by the islanders belonging to the Scheduled Tribes.

The petitioner also alleged that the newly introduced PASA gives powers to the administration to detain a person without any public disclosure for a period of up to one year. — PTI

JABS FOR ALL INDIANS BY DEC. END, SAYS JAVADEKAR

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 28

India will be fully vaccinated against Covid-19 by the end of 2021, Union minister Prakash Javadekar declared on Friday, as the government hit back at Congress MP Rahul Gandhi for pointing out that less than three per cent of the country's 130 crore people had received both doses of a vaccine till now.

"India's vaccination will be completed before 2021. The health ministry has given a blueprint 108 crore people—with 216 crore doses—will be vaccinated by December. Ranulji... if you're concerned about vaccination then pay attention to Congress ruled states. There is a mess. They are not taking the quota given to them for 18-44 years old beneficiaries from May 1," Mr Javadekar said.

Meanwhile, Union health ministry said every month, 50 per cent of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be procured by the Centre and would continue to make these doses available to the states free of cost as was being done earlier.

The legal team has filed a habeas corpus petition in Dominica for Mehl Choksi and have also highlighted deprivation of access to Mehl Choksi and deprivation of constitutional rights to legal assistance," Choksi's lawyer Vijay Aggarwal said.

The High Court of Justice in Dominica restrained the authorities from removing fugitive businessman Mehl Choksi from the Caribbean island country till further orders, local media reported.

The order came on a petition filed by the lawyers of Choksi, who was detained in Dominica for "illegal entry".

"The legal team has filed a habeas corpus petition in Dominica for Mehl Choksi and have also highlighted deprivation of access to Mehl Choksi and deprivation of constitutional rights to legal assistance," Choksi's lawyer Vijay Aggarwal said.

On Thursday, Aggarwal had raised doubts about the way



Mehl Choksi

Choksi had gone missing from Antigua and Barbuda only to be detained in Dominica, about 100 nautical miles away for illegal entry.

Choksi's lawyer in Dominica, Wayne Marsh, had told a radio show that in a brief interaction with his client, allowed by authorities after a lot of efforts, the diamantaire had claimed that he was picked up at Jolly Harbour in Antigua and Barbuda by men looking like Indian and Antiguan policemen and was put in a vessel.

Marsh had said he saw marks on the body of Choksi who had swollen eyes and feared for his life. — PTI

NEW HOPE

The number of tiger cubs in reserve forests may cross 220: Officers

RABINDRA NATH CHOWDHURY | DC
Bhopal, May 28

Tiger reserves in Madhya Pradesh are currently witnessing a baby boom, literally.

Tiger cubs trailing their mothers have almost become a common sight in the majority of the six tiger reserves in the state.

"More than 125 tiger cubs have been spotted in tiger reserves in the state," Principal Chief Conservator of Forests of Madhya Pradesh Alok Nath said.

Ground level forest officers, however, say the number of tiger cubs in reserve forests may cross 220. "I would say even 220 is a modest estimate, considering the overwhelming growth of tiger population witnessed in the reserve

forests in MP in the last one year", a senior forest officer, a key conservation strategist in the state forest department, told this newspaper here on Friday on condition of anonymity.

Bandhavgarh tiger reserve, known as tiger nursery of India, has literally been overflowing with the tiger cubs currently.

"At least 41 tiger cubs have been sighted in different forest ranges in Bandhavgarh tiger reserve in the past few months", the forest officer said.

According to Bandhavgarh tiger reserve director Vincent Raheem, two cubs each were sighted in Badkhera, Chanchura, Barhalli, and Panpatha forest beats, four cubs each were sighted in Kailhabah, Dhamkhore, Khitali and Tala forest ranges, 12 cubs were sight-

ed in Pataur forest range and five cubs were sighted in Magdhi forest range under the tiger reserve.

All the cubs are aged between five and ten condition of anonymity.

Madhya Pradesh which pipped Karnataka to earn the tag of "Tiger State" by housing the largest number of 526 big cats in 2018, has enjoyed a healthy male, female ratio in tiger population.

While one third of the total tiger population in MP is males, the rest two thirds are females.

As per the 2018 tiger census released in 2019, tigers were sighted in 1,432 forest beats in different tiger reserves in the state.

Three other tiger reserves have also witnessed similar phenomena, the forest officer said. There are six tiger reserves in MP.

New task force for protection of rhinos

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MAY 28

Environment and forest minister Parimal Suklabaidya here on Friday said that they have embarked upon an ambitious plan of setting up a new special task force for protection of rhinos and other animals in world famous Kaziranga National Park.

Informing that department has planned out various initiatives at a high level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at Kaziranga National Park on Thursday,

the minister said that the Chief Minister has given the go ahead to the department for preparing a comprehensive plan.

the minister said that the Chief Minister has given the go ahead to the department for preparing a comprehensive plan, including a new special task force, equipping the forest personnel with sophisticated weapons, satellite phones and advanced training, ramping up infrastructure and creating highlands for safety and security to the animals from annual flood, poaching and road accidents.



Narada accused get interim bail in HC

RAJIB CHOWDHURY | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 28

In a setback to the CBI in the high-profile Narada sting bribery case, the "larger bench" of five judges of the Calcutta high court on Friday granted interim bail on certain conditions to four prominent accused—including two sitting West Bengal ministers—who were under house arrest after being in judicial custody after a stay on their interim bail from a lower court within hours of their arrest on May 17.

Acting Chief Justice Rajesh Bindal and Justices

I.P. Mukerji, Harish Tandon, Soumen Sen and Arif Banerjee of the "larger bench" ordered the interim bail against a bond of ₹2 lakhs for each of the accused four—Firhad Hakim, state transport minister and outgoing Kolkata mayor; Subrata Mukherjee, state panchayat minister; Madan Mitra, Trinamul Congress MLA of Kamartuli; and Sovan Chatterjee, former TMC minister and a former Kolkata mayor.

The HC, however, directed all the four accused to appear before the CBI investigating officer in "virtual" mode if summoned.

THE COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC SUPPLY SOCIETY LTD SIRCILLA

eAuction Notice CESS/PUR/EAUC/DIS-04/2021
eAuction will be held for Disposal of various scrap/unserviceable items of Electrical equipment/line materials i.e., Winding wires, Iron poles, Meter scrap, Conductor scrap etc. Auction will be held on 05.06.2021. For more details visit www.auction.telangana.gov.in. email: cesssircilla@gmail.com, Mob: 94408-14059/58.

Sd/- Managing Director

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS & BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT

e-Procurement Tender Notice
Engineer-In-Chief (R&B) State Roads, CRN: NT No 2021/ENC/R&B/EE-R/DEE-4/AEE-2/2021 Dt:24.05.2021
1. Online tenders are invited under e-procurement platform for Three (3) works in Jogulamba Gadwal District for 6th call under Non Plan Scheme.
2. Tenderers can download the tender schedules from e-market place i.e., <https://tender.telangana.gov.in>. The last date of receipt of tenders is Dt: 09-06-2021 up to 3:30 PM.
Further details can be availed at e-procurement market place i.e., <https://tender.telangana.gov.in>.
RO No: 186-DPIC-AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22
Sd/- Engineer-In-Chief (R&B), State Roads & CRN

INDIAN RAILWAYS

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (BHARAT SARKAR)
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (RAIL MANTRALAYA)
(RAILWAY BOARD)

No. RS(POLY)/58/0501/1/2019
New Delhi, dt: 28.05.2021

Sub: Publication of E-Tender Notice against Ministry of Railways (Railway Board)'s E-Tender No.2020 PO TC for procurement of Primary Oil i.e. three items viz. Light Diesel Oil (LDO), Furnace Oil (FO) & Superior Kerosene Oil (SKO).

Executive Director, Railway Stores (C), Ministry of Railways (Railway Board), Government of India, for and on behalf of the President of India invites e-tender as per details given hereunder:-

1. E-Tender No.	2020 PO TC
2. Name of Work	Primary Oil conforming to relevant IS specification for the following products: i) Light Diesel Oil (LDO) as per IS specification IS:15770:2008. ii) Furnace Oil (FO) as per IS:1593-1982 iii) Superior Kerosene Oil (SKO)- Non-PDS, IS: 1459: 2016.
3. Approx. quantity in Ltrs.	On Rate Contract Basis: LDO - 1000 Kls. FO - 2091 Kls. SKO - 8674 Kls.
4. Earnest Money	As per Clause No. 15 of Tender Document
5. Last date and time for submission of e-tender	25/06/2021 at 14.00 hrs.
6. Website for complete details and e-tendering	http://www.reps.gov.in
7. Allocation Head	Grant No. 01

(S.K. Verma)
Joint Director, Ry. Stores (M)
Railway Board
1152/2021

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

कार्यालय, सिविल सर्जन संघ गुरुव्य अस्पताल अधीक्षक महाराष्ट्री अस्पताल, जगदलपुर, जिला बस्तर (छ.ग.)

क्रमांक/सी.एस/2021-22/1357 जगदलपुर, दिनांक 22/05/2021

// रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति (संशोधित) //

जिला बस्तर में रोपी जाँच सुविधाओं (डायनोस्टिक सर्विसेज) के विस्तार एवं सुट्टीकरण हेतु किसी दश संस्था से, जो कि चिकित्सकीय जाँच सुविधायें न्यूनतम दरो पर प्रदाय कर सके, से रुचि की अभिव्यक्ति (Expression of Interest) के माध्यम से आवेदन आमत्रित किये जाते हैं। आवेदन की विस्तृत जानकारी बस्तर जिले की वेबसाइट www.bastar.gov.in एवं कार्यालय के सूचना पटल पर उपलब्ध है।

आनलाईन आवेदन प्रारूप/प्रस्ताव डाउनलोड करने की प्रारंभिक तिथि- 24 मई 2021 प्रातः 11 बजे से आनलाईन आवेदन प्रारूप/प्रस्ताव

जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि - 12 जून 2021 प्रातः 11 बजे तक।

प्राप्त आवेदनों का प्रस्तुतीकरण - 14 जून 2021 सार्व 4 बजे से

सिविल सर्जन संघ गुरुव्य अस्पताल अधीक्षक नगरी 60801/1 नगरी अस्पताल, जगदलपुर, जिला बस्तर (छ.ग.)

COFMOW (INDIAN RAILWAYS)

Railway Offices Complex, Tilak Bridge, New Delhi – 110002, INDIA
TELEFAX: 91-11-23370493, EMAIL ID: <

SHORT TAKES

EC DEFERS KERALA RAJYA SABHA BYPOLLS

New Delhi, May 28: Citing the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Election Commission on Friday decided to defer a proposed Rajya Sabha bypoll for a seat from Kerala. The Commission said that Kerala Congress (M) leader Jose K. Mani had resigned as a Rajya Sabha member from Kerala on January 11 this year. His term in the Upper House was till July 2024.

"As per the provisions of Section 151A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the vacancy is required to be filled, through by-election within six months from date of occurrence of vacancy, provided that remainder of the term in relation to the vacancy is one year or more," it observed.

The EC had not yet announced any date for the proposed bypoll. The Commission said it reviewed the matter on Friday and decided that due to the outbreak of the second wave of Covid-19 in the country, "it would not be appropriate to hold the said by-election till the pandemic situation significantly improves" and conditions become conducive to hold the by-election.

The poll panel said it will take any further decision in the matter at an "appropriate time in the future" after taking inputs from the state concerned and assessing the pandemic situation from mandated authorities like the national and state disaster management authorities.

OVER 1.84 CR VAX DOSES AVAILABLE WITH STATES: GOVT

New Delhi, May 28: More than 1.84 crore Coronavirus vaccine doses are currently available with states and union territories, and three lakh more will be received by them in the next three days, the Union health ministry said on Friday.

The central government has so far provided, through the free of cost channel and direct state procurement, more than 22.46 crore doses to states and UTs. Of these, the total consumption, including wastage, is 20,48,04,853 doses, according to data available till 8 am on Friday.

A total of 1,84,92,677 Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with the states and UTs to be administered, the ministry said, adding 3,20,380 more doses are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days.

As part of the nationwide vaccination drive, the Centre has been supporting the states and UTs by providing them vaccines free of cost.

In addition, the central government has been facilitating direct procurement of vaccines by the states and UTs.

Vaccination is an integral pillar of the comprehensive strategy of the Government of India for containment and management of the pandemic, along with test, track, treatment, and Coronavirus appropriate behaviour.

ODISHA EXTENDS TENDER DEADLINE TILL JUNE 4

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 28

The Odisha government on Friday announced extension of the deadline for submission of bids for global tender floated for procurement of Covid-19 vaccines by one week. The tender process which was scheduled to end on Friday has now been extended till June 4.

According to Odisha State Medical Corporation Limited sources, the decision to extend the deadline has been taken by the state government in view of requests from many prospective vendors; cyclone Yaas and also for greater participation of vaccine suppliers.

"The deadline for online bid submission has been extended till 10 am on June 4. The online technical bid of the tender will be opened at 11.30 am followed by the financial bid at 5 pm," read a press release issued by OSMC.

The state government on May 15 had floated the global tender to procure 3.8 crore vaccines from leading manufacturers across the globe.

According to the tender document, the state government will offer advance payment up to 30 per cent of the value of each purchase order.



Police officers urge beneficiaries to maintain social distancing as they wait in a queue to receive the Covid-19 vaccine dose at a vaccination centre at Balurghat in South Dinajpur district of West Bengal on Friday. — PTI

Delhi unlock process to begin from May 31, says Kejriwal

Factories to open, construction activities to be allowed, says Kejriwal

New Delhi, May 28:

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said Delhi has somehow gained control over the second wave of Covid-19 and the government will now start the process of lifting the lockdown gradually, starting with resumption of construction activities and reopening of factories for one week from Monday.

This doesn't mean the fight against the deadly disease has ended, he stressed.

"It is time to start the unlock process. It should not be the case that people escape coronavirus but die of hunger. We have to maintain a balance between controlling the spread of Coronavirus and allowing economic activities," Kejriwal said during an online press briefing.

"At a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Friday, it was decided that the lockdown will be lifted gradually. In this process, we have to take care of the lowest strata first, daily wagers, labourers, guest workers who come to Delhi from far off areas in search of livelihood," he said. "Keeping this in mind, it has been decided to open factories and allow construction activities for one week from Monday."

Kejriwal said, adding the government will continue the unlock process every week based on the opinion of experts and the public.

However, if the cases start rising again, we will have to stop the unlock exercise, he added and appealed to people not to step out unless it is absolutely necessary.

In the last 24 hours, Delhi reported around 11,00 new cases. The chief minister had announced a lockdown in Delhi on April 19. — PTI

SC defers Class XII exams plea to Mon.

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 28

The Supreme Court on Friday deferred hearing to May 31 on a public interest plea to cancel the Class XII examination of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and the Council for Indian School Certificate Examination (ICSE) for the academic year 2020-21 to protect the lives of students in view of the current second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Appearing in person, Mamta Sharma referred to June 26, 2020, top court giving nod to CBSE decision to cancel board examination of the remaining papers of class X and XII in the wake of the pandemic.

Noting that the fate of some 12 lakh students hangs on the top court decision, Mamta Sharma in her petition has asserted that the grievances highlighted in her writ petition are squarely covered in the last year's judgment on Class X and Class XII exams of the Central Board of Secondary Education.

She has also annexed a list of 77 students who approached her for the purpose to establish her bona fide. The Centre had consulted the states on the CBSE examination and their responses were expected by Friday to enable it to firm up a final decision and declare it by June 1.

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC RAIPUR, MAY 28

Six days ago, a tribal welfare department officer of Chhattisgarh issued an order dated May 21 telling all employees in his department including those working in residential tribal hostels that they would get salary only if they submit documents confirming their vaccination.

The order soon sparked protests from a section of employees, leading to its withdrawal by him on May 27.

Masaram, however, tried to justify the order saying that he sought to achieve 100 per cent vaccination among the staff by encouraging them to get vaccinated.

As of May 27, a total 7,69,421 people in the 18-44 age group have been administered the first dose of anti-Covid vaccine in the third phase of vaccination in the state.

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SHORT TAKES
EX-COP JAILED FOR PLANTING DRUGS ON JOURNALIST

Moscow: A Moscow court on Friday sentenced five former police officers to lengthy prison terms for planting drugs on an investigative journalist, in a case supporters called a rare admission of wrong-doing from Russian law enforcement.

The arrest of prominent investigative reporter Ivan Golunov in June 2019 on trumped-up drug charges that could have landed him in prison for up to 20 years sparked an outcry with activists and Kremlin critics demanding his release.

Golunov, 38, was released days later and the charges were dropped after an unprecedented campaign in his support.

The same month President Vladimir Putin sacked two senior police officers over the wrongful arrest.

In his work, Golunov investigated everything from Russia's shady funeral industry to corruption in Moscow city hall.

His supporters and employer — the independent Russian-language news site Meduza — said the drugs had been planted on him as revenge for his work.

The five officers who arrested Golunov were also dismissed and taken into custody in January 2020.

3 CREW MISSING AFTER SHIPS COLLIDE IN JAPAN

Tokyo: A freighter sank in a Japanese strait early Friday after colliding with another ship, and three crew members from the cargo ship are missing.

Nine of the 12 crewmembers from the Japanese freighter have been rescued, and the coast guard was searching for others in waters roughly 4 kilometers (2.5 miles) north of the coast of Imabari in Ehime prefecture.

The Byakko collided Thursday night with a chemical tanker operated by a South Korean company, and the collision caused the Byakko to sink.

Ulsan Pioneer tanker was run by South Korean firm Heung-A Shipping Co. with 13 crew members, including Korean and Myanmar nationals, the coast guard said in a statement. It departed a port in China on Tuesday for Osaka, Japan, conveying acetic acid.

None of the Ulsan Pioneer's crew members was injured.

The Byakko was operated by Kobe-based Prince Kaiun Co. and was carrying car parts overnight to Kanda, a town in Fukuoka prefecture.

On average, around 400 vessels a day pass through the Kurushima Strait in southern Japan where the collision occurred.



Mice scurry around stored grain on a farm near Tottenham, Australia. — AP

DESTRUCTIVE MICE TORMENTING AUSTRALIANS

Bogong Gate: At night, the floors of sheds vanish beneath carpets of scampering mice. Ceilings come alive with the sounds of scratching. One family blamed mice chewing electrical wires for their house burning down.

Vast tracts of land in Australia's New South Wales state are being threatened by a mouse plague that the state government describes as "absolutely unprecedented." Just how many millions of rodents have infested the agricultural plains across the state is guesswork.

"We're at a critical point now where if we don't significantly reduce the number of mice that are in plague proportions by spring, we are facing an absolute economic and social crisis in rural and regional New South Wales," Agriculture Minister Adam Marshall said this month.

Bruce Barnes said he is taking a gamble by planting crops on his family farm near the central New South Wales town of Bogong Gate.

"We just sow and hope," he said.

The risk is that the mice will maintain their numbers through the Southern Hemisphere winter and devour the wheat, barley and canola before it can be harvested.

Nato holds massive war games as tensions with Russia simmer

Aims to simulate 30-nation military organisation's response to attack on any of its members

Aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth, May 28: As tensions with Russia simmer, thousands of Nato troops, several warships and dozens of aircraft are taking part in military exercises stretching across the Atlantic, through Europe and into the Black Sea region.

The war games, dubbed Steadfast Defender 21, are aimed at simulating the 30-nation military organisation's response to an attack on any one of its members. It will test Nato's ability to deploy troops from America and keep supply lines open.

Already in recent years, the United States and its allies have deployed troops and equipment in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to try to reassure those members neighboring Russia that their partners will ride to the rescue should they come under attack.

Russia's decision last month to send thousands of troops to the border area with Ukraine has raised concern at the military alliance, which launched one of its biggest ever defense spending initiatives after Russian troops annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014.

Top Nato brass insist that the military exercises, involving some 9,000 troops from 20 nations, are not aimed at Russia specifically, but they focus on the Black Sea region, where Russia stands accused of blocking the free navigation of ships.

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg says the exercises send an important message to any potential adversary: "NATO is ready."

"Nato is there to defend all our allies, and this exercise sends a message about our ability to transport a large number of troops, equipment across the Atlantic, across Europe and also to project maritime power,"



An F-35 jet takes off as military personnel participate in the Nato Steadfast Defender 2021 exercise on the aircraft carrier *HMS Queen Elizabeth* off the coast of Portugal. As tensions with Russia simmer, thousands of Nato troops, several warships and dozens of aircraft are taking part in military exercises stretching across the Atlantic, through Europe and into the Black Sea region. — AP

Russia backs Belarus' Lukashenko

Moscow, May 28: Russia on Friday threw its weight behind Belarus's increasingly isolated regime, slamming a European overflight ban as President Vladimir Putin prepared to host strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

The meeting is an important show of support for the authoritarian Belarusian leader who is facing a global outcry after he forced a Ryanair jet to land in Minsk last Sunday and arrested an opposition activist onboard.

The European Union in

response urged carriers based in the bloc to divert flights from Belarusian airspace and promised a fresh wave of sanctions against Lukashenko and regime officials.

The overflight ban has led to several cancellations of flights between Russia and Europe, after Russian authorities rejected flight plans that would have skipped Belarusian airspace.

Air France for the second time this week had to cancel a flight from Paris to Moscow on Friday, after Austrian Airlines did the

same for a Vienna-to-Moscow flight on Thursday.

Russia insists the cancellations are purely "technical", but they have raised concerns that Russia could be systematically refusing to let European airlines land if they avoid Belarus.

With the Putin-Lukashenko talks due later Friday in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi, Moscow hit out at the flight ban as politically motivated and dangerous.

What the West has done... for political reasons is completely irresponsible

HK TYCOON JIMMY LAI JAILED AGAIN

Hong Kong, May 28: Jailed Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai was among eight democracy activists handed new prison sentences on Friday for attending protests on the 70th anniversary of the founding of communist China that were followed by a sweeping crackdown.

Lai, who is already behind bars for taking part in earlier protests, was given 14 months after pleading guilty to organising an unlawful assembly on October 1, 2019.

He will now have to serve a total of 20 months for his multiple protest convictions.

Seven other leading activists, including 25-year-old youth campaigner Figo Chan, as well as former lawmakers Lee Cheuk-yan and Leung Kwok-hung, were also given new jail terms.

Some flashed "victory" hand signals on their way to court in a police van.

The new sentences are the latest in a relentless and successful campaign by China to smother dissent and dismantle Hong Kong's democracy movement.

The finance hub was convulsed by months of huge and often violent pro-democracy protests in 2019 in the most serious challenge to Beijing's rule since the city's 1997 handover. The clashes with police on China's October 1 National Day were some of the worst of that period.

— AFP

SYRIA'S ASSAD RE-ELECTED WITH 95% OF VOTE

Damascus, May 28: Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has been re-elected with 95.1 percent of the votes cast, the parliamentary speaker announced on Thursday, following an election criticised by the opposition and Western nations.

The two other presidential candidates, former state minister Abdallah Salloum Abdallah and Mahmud Merhi, a member of the so-called "tolerated opposition", received 1.5 percent and 3.3 percent of the vote respectively, according to the official results of Wednesday's election.

In a country ravaged by war since 2011, 14.2 million people went to the polls, a turnout rate of 76.64 percent, according to the parliamentary speaker.

The election went ahead in the two-thirds of the country controlled by the government, and in some Syrian embassy overseas.

It was the second presidential election in the country since the start of the war which has cost over 3,88,000 lives.

In 2014, Assad obtained 88 percent of the vote, according to the official results.

Assad has dismissed Western accusations that Wednesday's vote was neither "free nor fair". The United States, Britain, France, Germany and Italy have condemned the electoral process as "illegitimate".

— AFP

Germany admits its role in Namibia genocide

Berlin, May 28: Germany for the first time on Friday recognised it had committed genocide in Namibia during its colonial occupation, with Berlin promising financial support worth more than one billion euros to aid projects in the African nation.

German colonial settlers killed tens of thousands of indigenous Herero and Nama people in 1904-1908 massacres — labelled the first genocide of the 20th century by historians — poisoning relations between Namibia and Germany for years.

Berlin from 1884 to 1915. "In light of the historical and moral responsibility of Germany, we will ask forgiveness from Namibia and the victims' descendants" for the "atrocities" committed, Maas said.

While Berlin had previously acknowledged that atrocities occurred at the hands of its colonial authorities, they have repeatedly refused to pay direct reparations.

"We will now officially refer to these events as what they are from today's perspective: genocide," said Foreign Minister Heiko Maas in a statement.

He hailed the agreement after more than five years of negotiations with Namibia over events in the territory held by

However, he specified that the payment does not open the way to any "legal request for compensation".

Namibia was called German South West Africa during Berlin's 1884-1915 rule, and then fell under South African rule for 75 years, before finally gaining independence in 1990.

Tensions boiled over in 1904 when the Herero — deprived of their livestock and land — rose up, followed shortly after by the Nama, in an insurrection crushed by German imperial troops.

In the Battle of Waterberg in August 1904 around 80,000 Herero, including women and children, fled and were pursued by German troops across what is now known as the Kalahari Desert. Only 15,000 survived.

In a "gesture to recognise the immense suffering inflicted on the victims", the country will support the "reconstruction and the development" of Namibia via a financial programme of 1.1 billion euros (\$1.34 billion), he said.

The sum will be paid over 30 years, according to sources close to the negotiations, and must primarily benefit the descendants of the Herero and Nama.

— AFP

OLI CALLS UPON PARTIES TO HOLD ELECTIONS

Kathmandu, May 28: Embattled Nepal Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli on Friday urged all political parties to form an all-party government and hold fresh elections, as he tried to justify the controversial dissolution of the House of Representatives by the President, saying a "functionless" Parliament turned out to be the main source of instability in the country.

"Going for an election can never be a regressive act," Oli said in a televised address to the nation, a week after the House was dissolved by President Bidya Devi Bhandari. The president 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 Oli, who is heading a minority government.

Oli, 69, called upon the political parties to form an all-party government and hold elections, My Republica.com portal quoted him as saying.

Addressing the nation as the chief executive of the country, Oli took most of his time to criticise the moves taken by the Opposition parties and his fellow party leaders. He blamed the Opposition parties and dissident faction of the ruling CPN-UML for the dissolution of Parliament.

"We will compensate the owners of 5,600 boats affected by the

ban," fisheries minister Kanchana Wijesekera said while adding that seafood currently in the market was safe for consumption.

Millions of plastic granules washed up at the holiday resort of Kalutara — 43 kilometres south of Colombo — on Friday, a day after similar pollution at Negombo, a tourist and fishing area 40 kilometres north of the capital.

Sri Lankan authorities meanwhile deployed hundreds of security personnel in hazmat suits to clean the beaches of plastic waste and other debris from the Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl burning since May 20.

Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA) said a

possible oil leak was the biggest threat, but the ship's plastic cargo had already caused extensive damage. The impact on mangroves and lagoons was still being estimated while a beach clean up was already underway. Harm to marine wildlife and birds is also being assessed.

"Sri Lanka is one of the best bio-diverse countries in Asia and this type of plastic pollution, especially from microplastics can have long term repercussions," MEPA chairperson said.

— AFP

FISHING BAN Efforts to salvage vessel enters ninth day, government bans fishing along coast

Lanka fights plastic from burning ship

Colombo, May 28: Tonnes of plastic pellets from a burning container ship swamped Sri Lanka's west coast on Friday, prompting a ban on fishing as international efforts to salvage the vessel dragged into a ninth day. The government announced the ban along an 80-kilometre (50-mile) coastal area, including Colombo, fearing contamination with pollutants and plastic waste from the stricken ship. "We will compensate the owners of

possible oil leak was the biggest threat, but the ship's plastic cargo had already caused extensive damage. The impact on mangroves and lagoons was still being estimated while a beach clean up was already underway. Harm to marine wildlife and birds is also being assessed. "Sri Lanka is one of the best bio-diverse countries in Asia and this type of plastic pollution, especially from microplastics can have long term repercussions," MEPA chairperson said.

Sri Lankan Navy soldiers work to remove debris washed ashore from the Singapore-registered container ship MV X-Press Pearl, which has been burning for the ninth consecutive day. — AFP

SHORT TAKES
CROATIA AGREES
TO \$1.2 BILLION
FRANCE JETS DEAL

Zagreb: Croatia has agreed to buy a batch of used fighter jets from France, Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic said on Friday, in a deal worth one billion euros (\$1.2 billion).

The twelve Rafale planes will replace Croatia's Russian-made MiGs in the country's biggest arms purchase since its 1990s war of independence from Yugoslavia.

The EU member chose France's package over bids from Israel, Sweden and the United States and expects to get the first six planes by 2024.

Plenkovic told a cabinet session the French offer to supply the planes for 999 million euros was the best deal.

"For the most favourable price, Croatia gets the best rated and best equipped plane," the prime minister said. Critics had suggested the government should be focusing its efforts on helping the pandemic-hit economy to recover rather than spending on weaponry.

PAK: GIRL RAPED FOR REFUSING TO CONVERT TO ISLAM

Karachi: A minor Christian girl in Pakistan was allegedly raped after she refused to convert to Islam, Pakistani netizens have claimed. The hashtag #JusticeforSunitaMasih, has been trending on Twitter for the last two days after several prominent personalities, including celebrities and civil society members, tweeted about the incident, calling on Prime Minister Imran Khan to take notice and ensure that justice was provided to the girl.

However, police officials in Faisalabad and Sukkur on Thursday denied reports of the alleged rape and torture of the minor Christian girl in their respective cities as netizens shared posts detailing the victim's purported ordeal and demanding that authorities should take action against the perpetrators.

An analysis of the trend using the Twitter analytics tool, socialbearing.com, showed that the hashtag was initially tweeted on May 24 at around 5 pm.

BOAT ACCIDENT ON NIGERIAN RIVER KILLS 60

Lagos (Nigeria): Nigerian authorities confirmed that at least 60 people have died in a boat accident on the Niger River and that 83 missing passengers are also feared dead.

The boat with more than 160 passengers, including many children and women, sank after hitting an object and breaking up Wednesday while travelling along Nigeria's largest river in Kebbi state, in the northwestern part of the country. Emergency workers continued recovery efforts Friday.

Bodies were carried from the team's boat near the river bank to a waiting ambulance. Workers recovered 55 bodies on Thursday to bring the death toll to 60 so far, according to Sani Dododo, chairman of the Kebbi State Emergency Management Agency. "We hope to recover more bodies Friday," he said, adding that he fears the 83 passengers still missing might not be found alive.

Twenty-two passengers were rescued shortly after the accident, but no other person has been rescued alive since then.

ABUSE: NATIONS DEMAND ANSWERS FROM W.H.O.

Geneva, May 28: Fifty-three countries voiced alarm on Friday at reports that World Health Organisation leaders knew of sexual abuse allegations against the UN agency's staff and failed to report them.

In a joint statement, the United States, the European Union, Britain, Japan and others demanded WHO chiefs display "strong and exemplary leadership" on preventing sexual abuse, following media reports that WHO management knew of alleged cases in the DR Congo and did not act.

A report by the news agency earlier this month said internal emails revealed that the WHO's management was aware of sexual abuse claims in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019 and was asked how to handle it.

Delivering the joint statement to the WHO's main annual assembly, Canadian Ambassador Leslie Norton said the tone "must be set from the top" and that the 193 countries wanted "credible outcomes" on tackling the issue.

Pak 'threatens' Hindu body over genocide expose

Washington, May 28: A prominent Hindu American advocacy group alleged on Thursday that it has been threatened by Pakistan for recently launching a website exposing the role of the Pakistan Army in the 1971 genocide in Bangladesh.

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) said it has received a communication from Pakistan's Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Web Analysis Division, demanding that it take down the "Bengali Hindu Genocide" web page, which captures a variety of perspectives on the genocidal actions of then West Pakistan's (now modern Pakistan) military, "within (24) hours".

The letter also states that the government of Pakistan will "remove or block" access to HAF's "Bengali Hindu Genocide" web page in Pakistan.

The HAF has refused to take down the site. "The government of Pakistan's feeble attempt to threaten and intimidate a respected American non-profit organisation is just the latest example of its anti-American, anti-Hindu acts," stated Deepali Kulkarni, HAF director of human rights.

"The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has a proven track record of killing, forcibly converting or driving out Hindus, Christians, Ahmadis, Muslims and other religious minorities in Pakistan, and now it appears that it is going after these same religious minorities in other countries, too," Kulkarni said.

— PTT



Muslim worshippers take part in the Friday prayers during the inauguration of a 4,000-capacity mosque in Istanbul's iconic Taksim square on Friday. — AFP

Istanbul's Taksim Mosque opens

Istanbul, May 28: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday inaugurated the first mosque in Istanbul's Taksim Square, transforming the landscape of the area, eight years to the day after protests began there that shook his government.

The mosque is Erdogan's mark on the square, the most famous area in Turkey's economic capital, and a fulfillment of a 30-year-old dream.

"Taksim Mosque now occupies a prominent place among the symbols of Istanbul," Erdogan said after performing Friday prayers at the site.

"God willing, it will stay until the end of time." The opening was met with enthusiasm, with several thousand people praying outside in the square because the mosque filled so quickly, an AFP correspondent said.

"There are too many people and not enough mosques. God bless those who made this happen," said Abuzer Koc, who had a Turkish flag draped across his shoulders and had come to take part in

the inaugural prayer. Some 4,000 people will be able to pray inside the mosque, which combines Ottoman style with contemporary features.

When Erdogan served as Istanbul mayor in the 1990s, he lamented the absence of a mosque in Taksim Square, noting that the only visible religious site was an Orthodox church in an area not too far away.

"There wasn't even a prayer room and the faithful had to make do with praying on newspapers on the ground," Erdogan said on Friday.

Although Turkey is a Muslim-majority country, the mosque's construction was criticised when it began in 2017, with some opponents accusing Erdogan of seeking to "Islamise" the country and displace the founder of the secular modern republic, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

The new building

eclipses the "Republic Monument" in the square, which depicts the important figures of the Turkish War of Independence, including Ataturk.

— AFP

ment, humanitarian and human rights work, Microsoft Vice President Tom Burt said in a blog post late Thursday.

It did not say what portion of the attempts may have led to successful intrusions but said many of those targeting Microsoft customers were blocked automatically. "We're also in the process of notifying all of our customers who have been targeted," Burt said.

The cybersecurity firm Volexity, which also tracked the campaign but

has less visibility into email systems than Microsoft, said in a post that relatively low detection rates of the phishing emails suggest the attacker was "likely having some success in breaching targets."

Burt said the campaign appeared to be a continuation of multiple efforts by the Russian hackers to target government agencies involved in foreign policy as part of intelligence gathering efforts. He said the targets spanned at least 24 countries. Separately, the promi-

nent cybersecurity firm FireEye said it has been tracking "multiple waves" of related spear-phishing by the hackers from Russia's SVR foreign intelligence agency since March — preceding the USAID campaign — that

used a variety of lures including diplomatic notes and invitations from embassies.

The hackers gained access to USAID's account at Constant Contact, an email marketing service, Microsoft said. The authentic-looking phishing emails dated May 25 purport to contain new information on 2020 election fraud claims and include a link to malware that allows the hackers to "achieve persistent access to compromised machines."

Microsoft said in a separate, technical blog post that the campaign is ongoing and evolved out of several waves of escalating spear-phishing campaigns first detected in January.

USAID and Constant Contact provided no additional detail on how the hackers gained access. USAID spokeswoman Pooja Jhunjhunwala said Friday that a forensic investigation was ongoing and the agency was working with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. Constant Con-

UK approves single shot of Johnson & Johnson vaccine

Orders 20 million doses; vax found 72% effective in preventing Covid-19



Members of the public queue outside a Covid-19 vaccination clinic in Bolton, northwest England, on Friday. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Wednesday that Covid-19 vaccines are proving effective against a variant that has spread like wildfire in India and denied the government was being lax on travel from hotspots. — AFP

Surge in India costs Covax 190m committed vax doses

United Nations, May 28:

The "terrible" surge of the Coronavirus cases in India has severely impacted COVAX's vaccine supply in the second quarter of this year to the extent that there will be a shortfall of 190 million doses by the end of June, according to a joint statement by the WHO, UNICEF, GAVI and CEPi.

Britain has ordered 20 million doses of the vaccine, which was found to be 72 percent effective in preventing moderate to severe Coronavirus infection, according to a US trial.

The European Medicines Agency said in April that a warning about unusual blood clots with low blood platelet count should be added to the J&J product information following cases in the United States.

Britain has administered more than 62 million shots so far, mainly using the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines.

The J&J vaccine comes on stream as younger people are called for their jab, amid concern over the rise of the Covid variant found in India.

After months of falling cases, infections have started to rise again due to the emergence of the variant, which has put in doubt plans for a full reopening of the country on June 21.

Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng said Friday, however, "it was impossible for anyone to know what the situation will be like in a week or two weeks' time".

"We'll be looking at the data, we've said repeatedly that we won't make a final decision about the 21st of June until the 14th of June," he told Sky News.

— AFP

Health Organisation (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

"Countries that are advanced in their vaccination programmes are seeing cases of Covid-19 decline, hospitalisations decrease and early signs of some kind of normality resume. However, the global picture is far more concerning," the statement said.

Giving a call to action to equip COVAX to deliver 2 billion doses in 2021, the statement said, "we are

seeing the traumatic effects of the terrible surge of Covid-19 in South Asia — a surge which has also severely impacted global vaccine supplies."

If added that COVAX has proven it works as the global mechanism for equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, having delivered over 70 million doses to 126 countries and economies around the world since February — from remote islands to conflict settings — managing the largest and most complex rollout of vaccines in history. — PTI

EU OKAYS PFIZER VACCINE FOR KIDS AGED 12-15

Berlin, May 28: The European Medicines Agency on Friday recommended that the use of the coronavirus vaccine made by Pfizer and BioNTech be expanded to children ages 12 to 15, a decision that offers younger and less at-risk populations across the continent access to a Covid-19 shot for the first time.

The vaccine was the first one granted authorisation across the European Union when it was licensed for use in anyone 16 and over in December. So far, about 173 million doses of the shot have been administered in the 27-nation bloc, about three-quarters of the total given.

"Extending the protection of a safe and effective vaccine in this younger population is an important step forward in the fight against this pandemic," said Marco Cavaleri, who heads the EMA body that reviewed the vaccine.

The EU regulator had received the necessary data to authorize the vaccine for younger teens and found it to be highly effective against infection, he said. In a study involving 2,000 adolescents in the United States, none of those who received the vaccine got Covid-19. — AP

London, May 28: UK's roadmap to lifting all coronavirus restrictions appears to be balanced on a knife-edge, with authorities and scientists urging caution amid the rapid spread of the B.1.617 Covid-19 variant first identified in India, which the health secretary says is estimated to be behind up to three-quarters of new infections in the country. Public Health England

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Health Secretary Matt Hancock told a Downing Street briefing on Thursday that the government had always expected cases to rise as restrictions were eased. But he said it was "critical" to monitor the link between cases and hospitalisations.

On Thursday, a further 3,542 coronavirus cases

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"The latest estimates are that more than half and potentially as many as three-quarters of all new cases are now of this variant," Hancock said. — AP

UK plan to lift lockdown hangs in balance over B.1.617 variant

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Russian lawmakers on May 19 voted to uphold Moscow's exit from the accord. But the government of President Vladimir Putin said it was prepared to honor the accord if the Americans

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The treaty allowed its nearly three dozen signatories to carry out short-notice flights over one another's territory to monitor potential military operations.

Members include countries across Europe, the former Soviet Union and Canada. — AP

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quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	51,422.88
Nifty 50	15,435.70
S&P 500*	4,217.09
Dollar (\$)	72.43
Pound Sterling (\$)	102.74
Euro (\$)	88.28
Gold (10gm)* (\$)	47,910 ▼205
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.78
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.003
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.599 -0.011

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Tata Digital buys majority stake in Bigbasket

Tata Digital Ltd has acquired a majority stake in online grocery platform Bigbasket. Tata Digital is a 100 per cent subsidiary of Tata Sons. "Grocery is one of the largest components of an individual's consumption basket in India, and Bigbasket as India's largest e-grocery player, fits in perfectly," Pratik Pal, CEO of Tata Digital, said in a statement. Specific details about the deal were not disclosed.

Forex reserves hit lifetime high, rise to \$592.89 bn



The country's foreign exchange reserves rose by \$2,865 billion to a record high of \$592,894 billion for the week ended May 21, boosted by gold and currency assets, RBI data showed. The previous all-time high was \$590,185 billion for the week ended January 29, 2021. Foreign currency assets swelled by \$1,649 billion to \$548,519 billion. Gold reserves rose by \$1,187 billion to \$36,841 billion.

Gold bond issue opens on Monday, price at ₹4,889/gm

The issue price for Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22, which will open for subscription for five days from Monday, has been fixed at Rs 4,889 per gram of gold, the RBI said. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22 Series-III or the third tranche will be open for subscription from May 31 to June 4. For investors applying online and paying through digital mode, the issue price of gold bond will be Rs 4,839 per gram.

Economy added 16.9 lakh less jobs in FY21: SBI arm

Net job creation in the economy fell by 16.9 lakh in FY21 over the previous fiscal, shows an SBI Research analysis of EPFO payroll data. However, the FY21 numbers are better than the FY20 net job creation, which had declined by 28.9 lakh, further cementing the view that the economy is not creating new employment opportunities. The latest EPFO data shows that net new EPF subscribers stood at 94.5 lakh in FY21.

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■ Apex bank finds irregularities in auto loan portfolio RBI fines HDFC Bank

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MAY 28

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has imposed a penalty of Rs 10 crore on the country's largest private sector lender, HDFC Bank, for irregularities in the bank's auto loan portfolio. The central bank in a statement on Friday said that it had received a whistleblower complaint regarding these irregularities and its investigations found that the lender had breached the banking regulations.

"An examination of documents in the matter of marketing and sale of third-party non-financial products to the bank's customers, arising from a whistleblower complaint to RBI regarding irregularities in the auto loan portfolio of the bank, revealed, inter alia, contravention of the provisions of the Act was sub-



Regulation) Act and the regulatory directions."

The RBI had issued a show cause notice to the bank asking why a penalty should not be imposed on it for violating certain rules.

After considering the bank's reply to the show cause notice, oral submissions made during the personal hearing and examination of further clarifications/documents furnished by the bank, RBI came to the conclusion that the aforesaid charge of contravention of provisions of the Act was sub-

stantiated and warranted imposition of monetary penalty," the statement said.

The RBI said that the lender had breached Section 6(2) and Section 8 of the Banking Regulation Act. Under Section 6(2) a bank isn't allowed to enter into any business which doesn't fit into the list of activities allowed. Under Section 8, a bank cannot enter into any buying, selling or bartering of goods, except in connection with any security given or held by it.

According to reports, HDFC Bank sold GPS devices bundling them with auto loans to achieve sales targets between the years 2015 and 2019. The cost of such devices was added to the loan amount.

Last July, HDFC Bank had conducted a probe into allegations of improper lending practices and conflicts of interests in its vehicle loan operation involving the unit's former head Ashok Khanna. The investigations revealed personal misconduct by some of its employees whose names were fired.

Also, last year, in September, US-based Rosen Law Firm and Schall Law Firm had filed class-action lawsuits against HDFC Bank, accusing the private lender of failing to reveal to investors about improper lending practices at its vehicle loans unit and making misleading statements.

INDIAN BANK POSTS ₹1,709 CR NET PROFIT IN Q4

New Delhi, May 28: Indian Bank on Friday reported a net profit of Rs 1,708.85 crore in the March quarter. The lender had posted a net loss of Rs 217.74 crore in the year-ago quarter.

Sequentially, the bank had posted a net profit of Rs 514.29 crore in the December quarter of the financial year 2020-21.

The bank said figures of March 31, 2020, are related to standalone Indian Bank financials for the pre-amalgamation period, hence not comparable with the post amalgamation financials of December 2020 and March 2021.

The erstwhile Allahabad Bank was amalgamated into Indian Bank on April 1, 2020.

Total income during the January-March quarter of 2020-21 increased to Rs 10,647.87 crore. It was Rs 6,334.37 crore in the same period of 2019-20. Indian Bank said in a regulatory filing.

For the full year of the financial year 2020-21, the net profit of the bank was recorded at Rs 3,004.68 crore. In the previous financial year, the bank had a total income of Rs 753.36 crore. The total income for the year was Rs 45,185.04 crore. Income in the preceding fiscal was at Rs 24,717.43 crore.

On the asset quality front, the bank's gross non-performing assets (NPAs) or the bad loans stood at 9.85 per cent of the gross advances by end of March 31, 2021. It was 6.87 per cent by March 2020. — PTI

M&M expects chip crunch, pandemic to hurt first quarter

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, MAY 28



tions of Rs 1,635 crore for the fourth quarter.

The company had reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 588 crore in the same period last fiscal, M&M said in a regulatory filing.

The company's board also gave its nod to the highest-ever dividend of Rs 8.75 per share for the financial year 2020-21 to commemorate its 75th year in business.

The consolidated revenue from operations stood at Rs 21,456 crore during the January-March quarter under against Rs 16,315 crore in the corresponding period of the last fiscal.

For the entire 2020-21 fiscal year, the company reported a consolidated PAT of Rs 3,702 crore as compared with Rs 2,713 crore in 2019-20.

Revenue from operations stood at Rs 74,278 crore for the financial year, as against Rs 75,382 crore in 2019-20.

On a standalone basis, the automaker reported a PAT of Rs 48 crore for the fourth quarter. The firm posted a consolidated profit after tax (PAT) from continuing opera-

Microfinance collections dip 20% with second wave

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 28

Microfinance collections, which had returned to pre-Covid levels by March, have dropped 20 per cent with the second wave of the pandemic. Disbursements too have come down by more than half.

"In the first wave, there was a moratorium, but this time there is no moratorium. Though microfinance is considered as an essential service, our personnel are not able to meet the customers within the small time window available for them. However, digital payments are taking care of 70 to 80 per cent of the collections," said Manoj

Nambiar, chairperson, MicroFinance Institutions Network (MFIN).

Emergence of digital collections through cards, QR code and Bharat Bill Payment System have helped collections to improve gradually.

The localised lockdowns have also affected the disbursements. "Disbursements in April-May would be lesser than March levels by 50 per cent or more. Businesses are closed and MFIs are also cautious that they do not overburden the customers with additional credit. However, as the

lockdowns get lifted, disbursements would improve," said Nambiar.

However, Portfolio At Risk for over 180 days has increased to 6.70 per cent in the March quarter from 4.75 per cent in the previous quarter, though shorter-term buckets have registered improvement. "This is certainly a worry as these are customers who are really in distress. Unemployment levels are once again up and incomes have been affected both in rural and urban areas. Savings have been depleted in the first wave itself."

INDIAN IMMUNOLOGICAL TIES UP WITH BB

FC BUREAU
HYDERABAD, MAY 28

This board will be chaired by a retired Supreme Court or High Court judge and the members would comprise eminent persons from the media and entertainment industry, experts from various fields, including child rights, minority rights, and media law.

The GRB will oversee and ensure the alignment and adherence to the code of ethics by the OCCP Council members, provide guidance to entities on code of ethics, address grievances by consumers that have not been resolved by the publisher within 15 days and hear grievances or appeals filed by the complainant.

In the light of the Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code, IMAI is establishing the Digital Publishers Content Grievances Council (DPCGC) as the level-II self-regulatory body for publishers of online curated content (OCC) as required under Rule 12, with the intent to empower consumers to make informed viewing choices.

The DPCGC will have an online curated content publishers (OCCP) council, which will have publishers of OCC as members and a seven-member independent grievance redressal board (GRB).

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"We are converting the Karapattalai manufacturing unit of IIL near Hyderabad into a Bio-Safety Level-3 (BSL3) facility for the production of the drug substance and will take up construction of another block," Dr Kumar said.

The company, which comes under the National Dairy Development Board, said it would start the production of drug substance from June 15 and send out the first batch to Bharat Biotech by July.

The company's managing director, Dr K. Anand Kumar, said "IIL is expected to produce the drug substance for about 10-15 million doses per month. Initially, it will produce 2-3 million doses and will scale up to 6-7 million per month later in the year."

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The Atma said implementation of the notification hinges largely on the test infrastructure, as tests like wet grip and rolling sound emission are per-

formed on test tracks. "The timeline for adoption of new norms will need a workable revision to enable the tyre industry to test a large number of SKUs and also to arrive at practical threshold limits that suit the Indian conditions."

As per a draft notification by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), the proposed standards will become applicable for all new tyre designs from October 1, 2021, and for all other existing tyre designs for passenger cars, light commercial vehicles (LCVs), and heavy commercial vehicles (HCVs) by October 1, 2022.

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PANDEMIC SPURS BICYCLE DEMAND

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 28

The pandemic has spurred demand for bicycles owing to improving fitness consciousness and leisure requirements.

"The bicycle industry is witnessing a decadal-high demand growth of 20 per cent this fiscal, with sales likely to touch 1.45 crore units compared with 1.2 crore units last fiscal," said a Crisil report.

India is the world's second-largest manufacturer of bicycles.

The resultant improvement in cash flows will improve the financials of bigger bicycle manufacturers, which account for around 60 per cent of industry volume, it said.

In the five fiscal years through 2019, bicycle sales volume logged a modest compound annual growth rate of around 5 per cent. In fiscal 2020, it contracted a massive 22 per cent as government purchases plunged and a large bicycle manufacturer closed down shutters, however, last fiscal saw a turn for the better," Crisil said.

The momentum is likely to continue this fiscal, too, the report said.

UP AGAINST A CYCLONE 'It was a 15-hour battle between life and death in the raging sea. I confronted death several times'

Survivors tell a harrowing tale of lapses in sea disaster

DEBUT CHAKRABORTY & DHWANI PANDYA
MAY 28

When India's weather office sent out cyclone warnings on May 13 and most vessels moved to safety, one barge working on Oil and Natural Gas Corp's field off the Mumbai coast stayed put.

That decision would prove fatal when Tauktae, a storm with the intensity of a category 3 hurricane, struck on the evening of May 16. It tore apart the Papaa 305's anchors and slammed it into an offshore platform, taking down 261 people on board. Since May 17, 186 have been rescued, 70 bodies have been retrieved and five people remain missing. The storm left over 100 dead overall across several states.

India's oil ministry has

ordered an investigation led by a group of senior government officials into the accident, and wants a report within a month. State-run ONGC, and its billionaire offshore engineering contractor are under growing pressure to explain their roles in one of the world's worst offshore oilfield disasters in recent memory.

Interviews with survivors, rescue officials and executives from ONGC suggest that a serious misreading of the weather, as well as human error and safety lapses led to the tragedy. It was a busy time in the Arabian Sea on India's western coast when the cyclone hit the area.

Thousands of welders, painters and engineers had come from all over the country to work on renovating the giant metal structures ONGC

used for pulling out oil from the seabed. They lived in the barges hired by Afcons Infrastructure, an engineering company owned by billionaire Pallonji Mistry's Shapoorji Pallonji Group. Afcons was the main contractor for the jobs of fixing decays and painting rusted pipes and metals in order to protect the structures

from the corrosive onslaught of the sea.

The monsoon was closing in for arrival early next month, and the contractors were in a rush to complete as much work as they could on the platforms.

While most of the vessels returned to anchorages close to the coast, Papaa 305 anchored very near its original location, some 70 km from the coast. The weather deteriorated rapidly from the evening of May 16.

Afters the cyclone pushed the barge into a platform and caused it to sink on the evening of May 17, hundreds of the people on board clambered onto life rafts to escape. But almost all the rafts were in damaged condition, leaving them with no option but to jump into the sea, according to three survivors. Battling

strong winds and high waves, the surviving crew drifted in their life jackets miles away from the barge.

"It was a 1

SHORT TAKES

PCB gets UAE nod for players' travel

Karachi: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is all set to hold the remaining PSL matches in Abu Dhabi next month after getting permission from UAE authorities to land its chartered flights from Mumbai and Johannesburg carrying members of the broadcasting crew, players and officials. "The Abu Dhabi sports council has now written a letter to its immigration authority to allow the landing of the chartered flights from Mumbai and Johannesburg," a PCB official said.

He said after that clearance, chartered flights will be allowed to fly for Abu Dhabi.

The PCB faced a long delay getting visas for the Indian and South African broadcasting crew members but finally got visas for them on Thursday before the landing permission issue cropped up. — PTI

Games look like a fan-free event

Tokyo: The president of the Tokyo Olympic organising committee hinted on Friday that even local fans may be barred from venues when the games open in just under two months.

Fans from abroad were ruled out months ago as being too risky during a pandemic. The prospect of empty venues at the postponed Olympics became more likely when the Japanese government decided

Friday to extend a state of emergency until June 20 as Covid-19 cases continue to put the medical system under strain.

"We would like to make a decision as soon as possible (on fans), but after the state of emergency is lifted we will assess," organising committee president Seiko Hashimoto said at her weekly briefing. — AP

Allegri is back as Juventus coach

Rome: Massimiliano Allegri has returned to Juventus after the Turin giants sacked coach Andrea Pirlo following a single season in charge, the deposed Italian champions announced on Friday. "Welcome back home, Max!" Juventus said in a tweet to announce the re-appointment of the coach who won five straight Italian league titles with the club between 2014 and 2019.

"Now we are ready to begin again with Allegri, to build our future together; with his enormous professionalism, his moral strength, with the brilliant ideas of a coach capable of shuffling the cards, both on and off the pitch," Juventus said in a statement. The 53-year-old led Juve to four consecutive league and cup doubles with Italian Cup triumphs in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018. — AFP

Novak saunters into Belgrade final

Belgrade: Novak Djokovic eased into the final of the ATP tournament in Belgrade on Friday despite losing his form in the second set, beating Slovakia's Andrej Martin. He saw off his 119th-ranked opponent 6-1, 4-6, 6-0 to set up a Saturday final against either Federico Delbonis or another Slovakian, Alex Molcan. It will be the Serbian's third final of the year after his Australian Open triumph and loss to Rafael Nadal at the Italian Open last week, but his first on home soil since 2011. — AFP

Lakers cool off Phoenix Suns

Los Angeles: Anthony Davis scored 34 points and 11 rebounds and LeBron James delivered 21 points and nine assists as the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the short-handed Phoenix Suns 109-95 in a heated Western Conference playoff game Thursday. Davis is looking like his old self again and James' balky knee isn't the biggest injury story of the series anymore as the Lakers grabbed a 2-1 series lead in the opening round of the playoffs. Dennis Schroder finished with 20 points and four assists for the Lakers, who hosted a playoff game for the first time since 2013 at Staples Center. The game got physical in the final moments. — AFP

FAIR SHARE OF THE GAME

India, NZ to be adjudged joint winners in case of draw or tie

Dubai, May 28: India and New Zealand will be adjudged joint winners of the inaugural World Test Championship if their final clash in Southampton ends in a draw or tie, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Friday.

According to the playing conditions unveiled by the global body, "a draw or a tie will see both teams crowned as joint winners..."

The ICC has also allocated a Reserve Day to make up for any lost time due

ing the regular days of the Final, scheduled to be played from 18 to 22 June, with 23 June set aside as the Reserve Day.

"Both of these decisions were made in June 2018, prior to the commencement of the ICC World Test Championship," ICC stated.

The Reserve Day has been scheduled to ensure five full days of play, and it will only be used if lost playing time cannot be recovered through the normal provisions for each day.

"There will be no addi-

tional day's play if a positive result is not achieved after five full days of play and the match will be declared a draw in such a scenario," the ICC added.

In the event of time being lost during the match, the ICC match referee will regularly update the teams and media about the way in which the Reserve Day may be used. The final decision on whether the Reserve Day needs to be used will be announced at the scheduled start of the last hour on the fifth day.

While India play at home

with SG Test and New Zealand use Kookaburra at home, the final will be played with Grade 1 Dukes balls.

The final will also feature the implementation of three changes to international playing conditions, which were brought into effect with the ongoing World Cup Super League series between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka:

Short Runs — The Third Umpire will automatically review any call of a 'short run' by the on-field umpire and communicate

the decision prior to the next ball being bowled.

Player Reviews — The fielding captain or the dismissed batsman will be able to confirm with the umpire whether a genuine attempt has been made to play the ball prior to deciding whether to initiate a review for LBW.

DRS Reviews — For LBW reviews, the height margin of the wicket zone has been lifted to the top of the stumps to ensure the same Umpire's Call margin around the stumps for both height and width. — PTI



Indian allrounder Deepti Sharma gets her first dose of Covid-19 vaccine ahead of the England tour. — Twitter

Women cricketers get the jab

New Delhi, May 28: All members of the UK-bound Indian women's cricket team have been administered the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine ahead of their upcoming away series against England beginning June 16.

The Indian team, which is currently in quarantine in Mumbai, will begin its UK tour with a one-off Test in Bristol from June 16. It will be followed by two T20Is on July 9 and 11 in Northampton and three

ODIs beginning June 27. "All the players of the women's team have got their first dose of vaccination. Most of them got it in their respective cities, while a few who didn't, got their first jabs on Thursday," a BCCI source said.

Spin allrounder Deepti Sharma on Thursday shared a picture of her taking the jab on Twitter.

"Though I am a little scared of needles, but I still got myself vaccinated today. I urge people to please get vaccinated as

soon as they can! #GotTheDose #We4-Vaccine #CovidVaccine," she had tweeted.

The source said most of the players received Covishield vaccine and they will be administered their second dose by the UK health department.

The Indian women's team will depart for UK along with the men's squad, led by skipper Virat Kohli, in a chartered flight on June 2.

The members of Indian men's team, including Kohli, Mohammed Shami, Ajinkya Rahane, Cheteshwar Pujara, Umesh Yadav, Ishant Sharma, Jasprit Bumrah and Rishabh Pant, have taken the first jab of Covid-19 vaccine at different centres in the country.

The players are expected to take their second dose of Covishield in the UK.

Kohli and Co. will face New Zealand in the World Test Championship final in Southampton on June 18 before taking on England in a five-Test series. — PTI

PERERA TON GUIDES SL TO VICTORY vs BANGLA

Dhaka (Bangladesh), May 28: Sri Lanka avoided being swept by Bangladesh in their one-day international series when they won the third match by 97 runs with a Kusal Perera century and Dushmantha Chameera's maiden five-for on Friday.

Perera struck a 122-ball 120 to lead Sri Lanka to a respectable 286-6. The fast bowler Chameera then took 5-16 to undermine the reply by Bangladesh, which was all out for 189 in 42.3 overs.

The victory marked Sri Lanka's first in the ODI Super League. Captain Perera and Danushka Gunathilake opened with an 82-run stand after they won the toss. Perera drove Taskin to sweeper cover for a single in a bulletproof 50 off 44 balls, but the skipper needed luck three times to reach his sixth ODI century.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka 286/6 in 50 overs (K. Perera 120, D. de Silva 55 n.o; T. Ahmed 4/46) bt Bangladesh 189 in 42.3 overs (Mahmudullah 53; D. Chameera 5/16).

I didn't realise importance of pace early on: Bhuvneshwar

New Delhi, May 28: Indian seamers Bhuvneshwar Kumar says he never realised the importance of adding pace to his bowling in his formative years but once he did, it helped him "maintain that swing" which keeps batsmen guessing.

"To be honest, first couple of years I didn't realise pace is something that needs to be added," he said in a video posted by his IPL team SunRisers Hyderabad on its Twitter

handle. "As I kept playing, I realised with swing I need to improve my pace because bowling in late 120kph or just 130kph helps maintaining that swing and keep the batsman guessing," he further added. — PTI

Bhuvneshwar Kumar

increase the pace, but I didn't know how to do it..." Bhuvneshwar said.

The 31-year-old has so far taken 63 wickets in 21 Tests, 138 and 45 scalps in 17 ODIs and 48 T20Is.

"Fortunately, I was able to improve the pace and that really helped me in the later stages. So yes, when you have pace, not the express 140-plus, but bowling in the mid-130kph helps maintaining that swing and keep the batsman guessing," he further added. — PTI

Man City, Blues eye continental Cup

Porto (Portugal), May 28: Pep Guardiola's Manchester City are 90 minutes away from the trophy they so desperately crave but a Chelsea side transformed in recent months stand in their way in Saturday's all-English Champions League final in Porto, the Portuguese city which was named as a last-minute host.

It is the third final of Europe's elite club competition to be played between two Premier League sides, and the second in just three seasons, and so this is a match-up that underlines the strength of the cash-rich English game.

And these are the two clubs whose own transformations in the last two decades under mega-rich foreign owners have done the most to change forever the landscape of the Premier League. Not so long ago, the idea of Chelsea and City meeting in the biggest club game of all would have been laughable. Their only previous encounter in a final came in 1986 in the short-lived

Full Members Cup, when Chelsea won 5-4 at Wembley.

City, though, have never made it this far but are finally here, after 13 years of enormous investment from the Gulf and four previous years of disappointment under Guardiola, the man who was hired principally to win them the European Cup. Chelsea, though, have beaten City twice in the last six weeks, first in the FA Cup semi-final and then at the Etihad Stadium in the league. — AFP

Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola in this file photo.

BCCI could keep HCA out of meet

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD, MAY 28

Infighting in the Hyderabad Cricket Association has reached the national stage. On Saturday, the HCA may well cut a sorry figure if the BCCI decides to keep it out of the Special General Meeting called to discuss the IPL, T20 World Cup and domestic tournaments.

That is because there are two claimants — former secretary N. Shivlal Yadav and president Mohammed Azharuddin — to represent Telangana's cricket body at the virtual meet scheduled to begin at 12 noon.

It is learnt that the BCCI has referred the matter to the legal department and is yet to convey its decision to the HCA. Grapevine has it that Azhar will get the nod if president Sourav Ganguly calls the shots, else it will be Shivlal.

There is a likelihood of both the claimants being turned away from the meet too, for there are no stakes for the BCCI as there is no election or voting involved.

Both the parties are eagerly awaiting the link to be sent by the BCCI over email. HCA secretary R. Vijayamandala alleges president Azhar has changed the password for HCA's official email ID, which forced him to create a fresh one and correspond with the BCCI.

"Azhar has also kept the (April 11) HCA AGM register with him while I am the custodian of the book as secretary. I have sent him a registered post with regard to that," he says.

Getting entangled in a controversy would be the last thing on BCCI minds now and so there is every chance of them sidestepping the issue and asking the warring groups to settle scores at the local level.

Should they give access to one and the other moves court on the same, the decisions taken at the SGM could be on hold. The BCCI cannot afford that, since some big ones — completing the IPL and hosting the

● The BCCI has referred the matter (of two claimants) to the legal department and is yet to convey its decision to the HCA. There is a likelihood of both being turned away from the Special General Meeting, to be held virtually.

T20 World Cup — are on the table.

Bihar's too is a similar case, where there are two claimants to represent the Association. They could face the same fate as HCA.

Last week, Vijayanand announced Shivlal as HCA's representative for the BCCI meet while Azhar positioned himself as the nominee.

"This has been done in accordance with the resolution passed at the last (April 11) AGM under Rule No. 8 (j) of the HCA Constitution where Shivlal Yadav's name as HCA representative was unanimously approved," Vijayanand had said.

Azhar termed it illegal as that decision was taken at the AGM which continued after the president ended it abruptly (after a ruckus) and walked out with his supporters without completing the agenda. It also goes against the rule book which says "A person shall be disqualified from being a representative to the BCCI if he/she has been an office bearer of a State Association or the BCCI for a cumulative period of 9 years." Shivlal has put in 17.

Azhar also stakes his claim on the basis of being appointed HCA's representative at BCCI meets in a single point agenda at an Emergency Special General Body Meeting held on October 3, 2019, soon after he had won the election for a three-year term.

There will be butterflies in quite a few stomachs though, until lunch today.

Saina, Srikanth's Tokyo hopes end



Saina Nehwal

New Delhi, May 28: Kidambi Srikanth and Saina Nehwal's slim hopes of qualifying for Tokyo Games ended after the game's governing body (BWF) on Friday made it clear there will not be any change in the current ranking list and no further tournament will be held inside the qualification period.

Former World No.1 Srikanth and London Games bronze-medallist Saina's hopes were all but dashed when the last of the Olympic qualifiers in Singapore was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The duo had hung on a slim hope when the governing body said it "will issue a further statement on Tokyo Olympics qualifying at a later date".

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF) can confirm no further tournaments will be played inside the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games qualifying window," the apex body said in a statement on Friday.

"As such, while the qualification period officially closes 15 June 2021 as per the Revised Tokyo 2020 Qualification System, the current Race To Tokyo rankings list will not change," it added.

Owing to the health crisis, the world body had ear-

lier revised the qualification period, extending it by nearly two months to June 15 after postponement of three important events.

However, with no respite from the pandemic, BWF was forced to cancel or postpone the last three qualifiers — India Open, Malaysia Open and Singapore Open, leaving players, including Srikanth and Saina, with no chance to earn a qualification.

— PTI

PANGHAL, THAPA PUNCH THEIR WAY INTO FINALS

Dubai, May 28: Defending champion Amit Panghal (52kg) and Shiva Thapa (64kg) stormed into the Asian Boxing Championship finals with resounding victories in the last-four stage on Friday.

While Panghal out-punched familiar foe Saken Bibosinov of Kazakhstan 5-0, Thapa, the first Indian boxer in the tournament history to secure five medals, dominated top-seeded defending champion Bakhodur Usmonov of Tajikistan to make the finals with a 4-0 verdict.

However, tournament debutant and national champion Varinder Singh (60kg) settled for the bronze medal after a high-intensity clash against Iran's Daniyal Shahbakhsh. The Indian lost 2-3 after fighting his heart out.

— PTI