

OTHER STORIES

Bandi hails move on Ayushman

Hyderabad: BJP state president Bandi Sanjay on Tuesday welcomed the state government decision on implementation of Ayushman Bharat in the state. In view of this, the proposed deeksha on Wednesday demanding implementation of the Ayushman Bharat in the state has been postponed. He said that BJP exerted pressure on the government to implement the scheme and has succeeded in this. He urged the state government to enhance the limit for Aarogyaasri from ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh for Covid-19 treatment.

TS FEELS GST BURDENS STATES

FROM PAGE 1

State governments are procuring all these for free treatment for Covid patients at government hospitals as well as for supplying medical kits to the patients under home isolation.

The TS government is of the view that imposing GST ranging from 5 per cent to 12 per cent on these items burdened the states as also those undergoing paid treatment in private hospitals.

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had on May 9 ruled out exempting Covid19 vaccines, medicines and oxygen concentrators from GST, saying such an exemption will make the life-saving items costlier for consumers. Manufacturers will not be able to offset the taxes paid on inputs, and several states are planning to press their demand again at the GST Council meet.

Currently, domestic supplies and commercial imports of vaccines attract a 5 per cent GST, while Covid19 drugs and oxygen concentrators attract a tax of 12 per cent.

Congress working president Sonia Gandhi has also pleaded that all life-saving drugs, equipment and instruments required to treat Covid19 patients must be exempted from GST.

MWD REVIEWS PENDENCY OF FEE REIMBURSEMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The minorities welfare department (MWD) on Tuesday reviewed the pendency of fee reimbursement and scholarships amounts for four years between 2014-15 and 2017-18. MWD director Shah Nawaz Qasim asked the district minorities welfare officers (DMWOs) to send the bills at the earliest.

The clearance of fee reimbursement of students belonging to certain colleges was pending due to various reasons. Some of the colleges could not submit the details of the students, while bills of some colleges were pending due to a delay in processing. Hyderabad DMWO Mohammed Qasim has submitted bills of 23 institutions amounting to ₹25.53 lakhs while scholarship bills of ₹70 lakh.

He informed the officials that there is no pendency in Hyderabad as of now.

Qasim addressed the officials online and expressed satisfaction over the disbursement of amounts under the schemes till 2020 and asked the DMWOs to submit the bills immediately if any were pending with them.

Gutha likely to be renominated

Cabinet to okay MLC seat in Gov. quota

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Telangana Legislative Council chairman Gutha Sukender Reddy is likely to be re-nominated as MLC under Governor quota. TRS sources said Chief Minister Chandrashekar Rao has decided to continue Sukender Reddy as chairman of the Legislative Council.

Gutha's term as MLC and council chairman ends on June 3. An MLC vacancy under the Governor quota will arise on June 16, when incumbent MLC Madireddy Srinivas Reddy's term ends.

The Election Commission had recently deferred elections to six MLC seats under MLAs quota but has left out the governor quota. Following this, the CM decided to con-

vene a Cabinet meeting soon to approve nomination of Sukender Reddy under the Governor's quota and refer the matter to Governor for formal approval.

However, the TS Legislative Council will witness a rare occasion of appointment of pro-tem chairman for the first time in its history on June 3 as both chairman Sukender Reddy and deputy chairman Nethi Vidyasagar will retire on June 3. The pro-tem chairman will function till June 16.

According to Article 183 of the Constitution of India, the members holding office as chairman or deputy chairman have to vacate their office if they cease to be members of the council. This provision was incorporated because the Legislative

Council is a continuing institution without dissolution, unlike the Legislative Assembly with its five-year term.

To overcome this contingency in the Council, the Governor has to appoint a pro-tem chairman under Article 184 of the Constitution on June 3 until the election of regular chairman.

According to officials, such an instance was witnessed only once in India so far when the chairman and deputy chairman retired in Karnataka in 2018 following which the Governor had appointed a pro-tem chairman.

The CM is reportedly considering the names of V.G. Goud, Naradasu Laxman Rao, D. Rajeshwar and Farooq Hussain for the pro-tem chairman's post.



Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy inspects the oxygen plant at Gandhi Hospital in Secunderabad, on Tuesday.

—S. SURENDER REDDY

Kishan: Ventilators not used as staff not trained

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD MAY 18

Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy on Tuesday took a round of the two newly operational PSA oxygen plants sponsored by the PM-Cares Fund, each of which produces 1,000 litres of liquid oxygen per minute at Gandhi Hospital.

The minister also visited the ICU wards and enquired about the treatment being administered to patients. Hospital superintendent and others explained to him the details of treatment being given to Covid patients at the hospital.

Kishan Reddy also interacted with 110-year-old Ramananda Teerthulu, who became the oldest person in the country to recover from the deadly virus-hit. "His self-confidence as also the perseverance and will to fight is an inspiration to all of us," said the minister.

Kishan Reddy visited the library block that would function as the dedicated Covid-19 facility with 300 beds with oxygen support from next week.

The minister said the ventilators sent to the hospital under PM-

Cantt hospo to treat Covid-19 patients

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Union minister of state G. Kishan Reddy on Tuesday spoke to Union defence minister Rajnath Singh to convert the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel Cantonment General Hospital under the Secunderabad Cantonment Board into a full-fledged hospital.

He also spoke to the defence secretary and health secretary to provide equipment to the Cantonment Hospital from PM-Cares funds.

Kishan Reddy also spoke to senior officials of the Cantonment Board, and took their advice

and discussed the next course of action.

Top officials and staff of the board were asked by the minister to ensure that there would be no problem for the residents due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The hospital has 60 beds with oxygen cylinders and 10 additional ICU beds would be set up at a later stage. This is in addition to the 50 D-Type oxygen cylinders given to the hospital by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Hyderabad. ₹1 crore has been sanctioned from the MP Local Area Development Scheme for this project

Cares were not utilised due to non-availability of technicians. Some 50 ventilators remained unused at the MGM Hospital in Warangal, he said.

He said junior doctors are requesting treatment for their parents at the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (Nims). He

advised the doctors against strike and instead talk to the government and sort out their problems.

The minister said the state government has taken delivery of the black fungus medicine stocks and suggested that it also install oxygen plants sanctioned by the Centre.

BAR COUNCIL URGES KCR TO SANCTION ₹25 CR FOR WELFARE OF ADVOCATES

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The advocates and members of the Telangana Bar Council requested Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, to sanction ₹25 crores for the welfare of the advocates community during the pandemic.

They said a majority of advocates were struggling to make ends meet as the courts are fully not functioning.

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A. Narasimha Reddy, chairman of the Bar Council of Telangana state, addressed a representation on behalf of advocate community on the matter, also stated that some advocates had died of Covid-19 as they were unable to pay for treatment.

FRESH PROJECTS TO WOO HUZURABAD

From Page 1

Therefore, the party requires a strong leadership to neutralise the impact of Rajendar's exit.

With this, the Chief Minister has reportedly decided to rope in Rama Rao and Harish Rao who could match Rajendar's stature in Huzurabad and convince the entire party local leaders and cadre in the constituency to remain with the TRS.

party's local leaders and cadre besides launching development works worth several crores of rupees to garner people's support ahead of bypoll.

SIX NEW MED COLLEGES: DOCS DOUBT CLAIM, SAY FOCUS ON BASICS

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The state government's decision to establish medical colleges in Sangareddy, Jagtial, Kothagudem, Wanaparthy, Mancherla and Mahbubabad districts on Monday has received mixed response from the medical community.

Of several doctors contacted by *Deccan Chronicle* on Tuesday, some said it was a much-needed decision considering the pressure that medical infrastructure has been facing, especially during the pandemic, while others said the decision was too little too late. Director of Medical Education Dr Ramesh Reddy said, "The six medical colleges will help create advanced intensive care and emergency facilities, apart from enabling us to deal with disasters and accidents."

Healthcare Reforms Doctors Association-Telangana president Dr Mahesh Kumar, however, said the focus of the government should have been on primary and secondary healthcare centres.

He maintained that opening more medical colleges would not solve medical deficiencies existing within the community. "Primary healthcare centres and area hospitals are in a shambles because the medical community and government are not focusing on them. The level of medical teaching has gone down by several notches too. Just setting up buildings will not improve health infrastructure", Dr Kumar pointed out.

Dr Vijay Mohan, professor with the Osmania Medical College, said there was a need to boost the morale of medical students as well as teachers.

He underlined that facilities at medical colleges and curriculum have to be improved to enable students learn and perform better in the face of a medical crises like the one country is facing since the past two years. A government sector doctor in Hyderabad, who wished to remain anonymous, was not convinced. "The announcement is just an attempt to take the blame away from the government over its mismanagement of Covid crises," the doctor remarked. "Can anyone guarantee that the medical colleges will start admissions from the next academic year? At a time when the medical fraternity is facing the most difficult times in decades, in addition to receiving poor pay, what good will another college do? The crunch being faced is now. We cannot wait for another five or six years for help," another doctor remarked.

Burial ground is isolation centre for Covid-infected

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC MAHBUBNAGAR, MAY 18

With the spread of Covid-19 infection even to remote areas, the residents of Kishtampalli Thanda in Nawabpet Mandal of Mahbubnagar district have hit upon a novel idea — of shifting those tested Covid-19 positive to the burial ground for isolation purpose.

Kishtampalli village sarpanch Srinivasulu said the burial ground is adjacent to the Palke Vanam (village forest). A congenial atmosphere prevails there with sufficient natural oxygen supply.

The thanda is 500 metres away from Kishtampalli. The burial ground is adjacent to the thanda that has a population of 200. The village is safe from Covid-19 but residents of the thanda were infected.

The sarpanch said four people recently came from Pune to the thanda. All of them tested positive. They spread the infection to the other houses. "As the houses are small and congested, we have decided to shift them to the burial ground (Vaikunta Dhamam) where we have recently built a room."

The Vaikunta Dhamam has trees that turn the air fresh. This is an ideal place for people to live in isolation. Both electricity and water connections have been provided there.

The sarpanch urged the thanda people to take care of their health and shift the people with symptoms of



Burial ground turns isolation center for Covid positive at Kishtampalli thanda in Mahbubnagar district.

● **THE VAIKUNTA** Dhamam has trees that turn the air fresh. This is an ideal place for people to live in isolation. Both electricity and water connections have been provided there.

corona to the isolation room. Villagers are helping them with food and medicines. "We have served these isolated people with biryani in the past two days," the sarpanch said.

A tribal who was isolated along with 10 others from his thanda said he was feeling better with sufficient sunlight and air. "We were told by doctors to stand facing the Sun for about an hour in the morning to get Vitamin-D. The villagers are helpful in our

time of distress," he said. Are they afraid of sleeping in the burial ground at night? The tribal youth said they have no fear as the thanda is close by. "We are used to sleeping in the fields and this space is fine for us," he said.

The sarpanch said he had enquired about their stay during the night and was told they were sleeping together. We have provided electricity. So they are comfortable," he said.

A team of doctors has been visiting them and monitoring their health status.

The sarpanch said the facility at the burial ground has a capacity to lodge 30 people. "We told the thanda people to maintain physical distance and wear masks to protect themselves," he said.

Harsh Vardhan had ruled out any dearth of funds

From Page 1

Union health minister Harsh Vardhan went on record in the Lok Sabha in last March that there would be no dearth of funds. But his promise could fetch only ₹15 crore in the current fiscal in addition to ₹5 crore which had been released as per milestones. A few months ago, G. Kishan Reddy, minister of state for home, visited the campus and announced

● **A FEW** months ago, G. Kishan Reddy, minister of state for home, visited the campus and announced the Centre's grandiose plan of expanding the facility from the current 50 acres to 150 acres with more facilities.

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"The Centre has been neglecting Bibinagar AIIMS for a long time. We handed over the required buildings to the Centre in time but it failed to start full-scale operations even today. Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao has been pursuing with the Centre for adequate funds for the last seven years but in vain," said G. Jagadish Reddy, energy minister and in-charge of undivided Nalgonda district.

PAPER | SCAM Exam was scheduled to take place but got cancelled

Lt Colonel held for leaking paper

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 18

A Lieutenant Colonel was arrested on Tuesday from the AOC Centre in Secunderabad by the Pune city police on charges of leaking an Army recruitment exam paper. The officer's 'cut' in the scam was said to be ₹1 lakh per candidate, investigators alleged.

According to an official communiqué of Anti-Extortion Cell, Pune city police, which is in possession of *Deccan Chronicle*, Lt Col Bhagatpreet Singh Bedi, 44, had leaked the paper for the Army rela-

tive recruitment exam scheduled on February 28.

"Lt Col Bedi was responsible for printing of the question paper for the exam, which is meant for close relatives of Army personnel. The exam was scheduled to take place at multiple centres across the country but was cancelled when the paper leak came to light. A probe revealed that Bhagatpreet Singh had leaked the paper," said Vitthal Patil, senior police inspector with the anti-extortion cell.

On Tuesday, a team of Pune police, including

assistant police inspector Shirish Bhalerao, along with cops Atul Sathe and Pravin Rajput, took the Army officer into custody from Secunderabad. Before his arrest, his associate, identified as Virprasad Narnepati, 41, posted as store-keeper at the Ordnance Depot in New Delhi, was nabbed by the police.

Explaining the leak, officials said that during the printing, Lt Col Bedi managed to get a copy while ensuring that the act was not captured by CCTV cameras. "He forwarded it to Narnepati, who was

staying in a hotel in Secunderabad. Narnepati forwarded the paper to one Narsing Rao, who passed it on to one Pawan, who allegedly sent the paper to Vilas Kilari, an officer of Major rank, who sent it to Thirumurugan Thangavelu, another officer of Major rank," police explained. Eventually the leaked paper was sold to some candidates writing the exam. "Lt Col Bedi's cut was ₹1 lakh per candidate. He reportedly received some money, but had to refund it after the exam got cancelled," said the police officer.

From Page 1

The Directorate General of Shipping said it will conduct a thorough probe into the conditions and reasons behind the two barges going adrift near Bombay High despite early warnings of Cyclone Tauktae.

The cyclone sank a barge that had living quarters for employees working offshore, while two other construction barges lost anchors and drifted away.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) said that several parts of north India, including Delhi-NCR, will receive moderate rain over the next two days.

● **THE IMD** said that several parts of north India, including Delhi-NCR, will receive moderate rain over the next two days.

Cyclone Tauktae crossed the Gujarat coast as an "extremely severe cyclonic storm" around midnight and gradually weakened into a "severe cyclonic storm," before further weakening to a "cyclonic storm" now, the IMD said.

An orange colour-coded warning has been issued for the National Capital Region (NCR) for Wednesday with a forecast of rains and squally winds of 50-60 kilometres

per hour. The weakened cyclonic circulation will also move to Uttarakhand and bring rains to the state along with Himachal Pradesh in the next two days, an official said. Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani said 16 hospitals providing Covid treatment faced power outage due to the cyclone. The electric supply was restored in 12 of them, while the remaining four were operating on backup power generators, he said. The production of medical oxygen at a plant in Bhavnagar was disrupted due to the cyclonic storm, but the supply continued using the buffer stock, Mr Rupani said.

"The cyclone completed the landfall in Gujarat at 1.30 am last night, with Amreli, Gir Somnath, Junagadh, Porbandar, Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Botad districts in Saurashtra region remaining the worst affected," said Gujarat additional chief secretary (Revenue) Pankaj Kumar.

In Maharashtra, Cyclone Tauktae disrupted power supply to 46.41 lakh consumers in Thane, Raigad, Palghar, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and other districts since Saturday. The electricity supply of 34.14 lakh consumers has been successfully restored, a state government official said.

OTHER STORIES

WRONG TREATMENT KILLS PATIENT IN KHAMMAM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 18

A Task Force team raided Balaji Chest Hospital in Khammam after receiving a complaint that a patient died at the hospital due to wrong administration of Remdesivir injections.

The Task Force, led by district medical and health officer Malathi inspected the hospital's register that maintains a record of Remdesivir injections.

Relatives of the victim complained that the patient did not require Remdesivir injection at all but it was still administered.

There are also allegations that many of private hospitals are selling Remdesivir injections at rates much higher than the MRP.

TOCILIZUMAB TO BE GIVEN ONLY AFTER TESTS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The directorate of health and medical education has received several applications for the drug tocilizumab. Officials say this will be supplied only after checking the markers of the patient.

There is indiscriminate use of medicines, but this high-end drug is not to be used without clearance from the government.

Fearing a range of side-effects due to these high-end medicines, the government has effected restrictions on the supply of these drugs, stated Dr Ramesh Reddy.

TS TO SUPPLY BLACK FUNGUS DRUGS TO HOSPS

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

The state government will supply the drug, liposomal amphotericin B, to hospitals for treatment of the black fungus infection.

The government has also formed a task force in the health department to regulate its supply, in order to ensure its overuse, abuse and black marketing. This panel will evaluate the cases and accordingly allocate the supply.

The Telangana drugs control administration has asked stockists and distributors to supply the injections to hospitals directly but after approval from the task force. There exists a severe shortage of the medicine as production is limited.

Dr Ramesh Reddy, director of health and medical education said, "We will get the stocks in two to three days and this is to be used judiciously. Those who require it will be supplied. There are alternative medicines too and doctors would use them."

At the Government ENT Hospital and Gandhi Hospital, there are a total of 50 black fungus cases currently under treatment.

Dr Reddy said the recovered Covid19 patients must adopt preventive steps like wearing of masks at home so that the nose is protected. Fungus from the air invades the nose. "Invasive fungal infection starts due to the immune-compromised state of the body. Wearing face-mask at home for a month after recovery, till the immunity level improves, will help.

It is also important for sugar levels to be checked for diabetes. "Random blood sugar is an indication of the fluctuating sugar levels in the body."

Dr Reddy says, "Early diagnosis helps. Hence early symptoms of dark moulds in the nose, facial pain, jaw pains must be evaluated in Covid19-recovered patients. Those patients given steroids for treatment must be more careful. Early intervention helps. Endoscopic surgeries will help remove the fungus."

Black fungus is not infectious and it will not affect others in the family. Due to the infectious nature of Covid19, many are worried whether the infection will affect the entire household.

Health officials say black fungus can be tackled with preventive steps in patients who have recovered and they advised doctors to use steroids only when required.

Gangula playing cheap politics, says Rajender

Stop threatening elected representatives, warns former min.

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 18

In an emotional outburst, sacked minister and disgruntled TRS leader Etala Rajender accused his arch rival and minister for backward class, food and civil supplies, Gangula Kamalakar of playing 'cheap politics' for personal gain.

Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Rajender gave a strong warning to Kamalakar and said whatever he spoke to defame him would come back to him with double effect in future.

Reacting on Kamalakar's alleged threat to people's representatives of Huzurabad constituency that if they supported Rajender their bills would be stopped, contracts would not be given and would not sanction funds for developmental activities in their respective regions, Rajender said that the TRS was trying to separate a child from its mother and reminded Kamalakar that power did not remain permanent with anyone and no one lived for thousand years.

He came down heavily on Kamalakar for transforming Karimnagar, which was once enriched with a lot of natural resources, into a burial ground.

The minister post which Kamalakar enjoys now is not gained with his worth but with lobbying, he said. "The time is about to come very soon, when Karimnagar people will bury you in the same burial ground," Rajender said.

"I know what is your culture and I am not going to be afraid of your silly tricks which you are playing with the people of Huzurabad constituency. Have you ever done anything for Huzurabad, have you ever shared the problems of people of this region, have you ever played a little bit of role in the victory of people's representatives of Huzurabad constituency?" he questioned.

Rajender said when he was in the party, nobody spoke anything against him, but as soon as he was suspended from the Cabinet post with false allegations, the ministers and leaders of the TRS were attacking him like a wolf. "The ministers should have some character when they are in public and must not try to politically assassinate people's representatives who won on their own. Many people's representatives



Former health minister Etala Rajendar speaks to media persons in Huzurabad in Karimnagar district on Tuesday. —DC

Resign, contest to prove support: Gangula to Etala

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 18

BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakar told ousted minister Etala Rajendar that if the latter has any self-respect, he should resign from his MLA post and contest again to prove whether he has public support.

Addressing media at his camp office here on Tuesday, Kamalakar said everyone thought that Rajendar was going to resign as TRS MLA post when he went to take blessings from his father. But that did not happen. If Etala is really worried about self-respect and believes that people are on his side, he should resign and prove the same in public arena, he challenged.

The minister criticised Rajendar for meeting opposition party leaders belonging to Congress and BJP. "Is there any self-respect in consulting leaders of these parties," he asked. He pointed out that Rajendar had earlier said he would take a decision on his future course

of Huzurabad constituency are unable to move in their region due to the cheap politics played by Kamalakar and the TRS," he pointed out. Rajender said he was well aware of tax evasions Kamalakar made. "When time comes, it will be exposed to the public. After 2023, Kamalakar and his power will not exist," he said.

"People are not inno-



Gangula Kamalakar

of action after consulting people of his constituency and BC leaders in Hyderabad. "Then, what is the need to consult Congress and BJP leaders," he asked.

Kamalakar maintained that 80-90 percent of people in Telangana are with Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao because of enormous development undertaken by the CM and introducing schemes like Kalyana Lakshmi, Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bima, apart from implementing Mission Kakatiya and Bhagaritha projects. He accused Rajendar of

cent, they are watching every move of TRS leaders and are feeling ashamed of them. Since I have some patience, I am keeping quiet, once I lose that, you will be burnt to ashes in that heat," he said, expressing anger at Kamalakar.

"If the TRS leaders do not stop threatening people's representatives of Huzurabad constituency, then I will take up another movement for self-

● THE MINISTER criticised Rajendar for meeting opposition party leaders belonging to Congress and BJP. "Is there any self-respect in consulting leaders of these parties," he asked. He pointed out that Rajendar had earlier said he would take a decision on his future course of action after consulting people of his constituency and BC leaders in Hyderabad

being unable to tolerate CM's popularity and trying to split the party in Huzurabad constituency. Questioned about his granite quarries, Kamalakar asserted that he has not misused his power and was paying taxes to the government. "If it is proved that I have misused power, I am ready to pay five times more than what has to be paid," he stated.

The minister underlined that he is the true son of backward class community and a symbol of self-respect.

respect with the support of advocates, teachers, students, intellectuals, doctors and those who participated actively in separate Telangana movement and are silent now to teach them a befitting lesson," he warned.

Before holding a press meet, the former health minister went to his native place Kamalapur and took the blessings of his father Etala Mallaiiah.

TAKE ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTIONS, DEMAND ADIVASIS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 18

Adivasis led by the Thudumdebba on Tuesday submitted a memorandum to the District Panchayat Officer to take appropriate action against the illegal layouts and constructions.

These illegal layouts and constructions are violating the government orders and 1/70 Act (LTR Acts), and PESA Act in the Ichoda, Gudihathnoor, Indravelli, Muthnoor, Utnoor gram panchayats in the agency area in the Adilabad district.

RURAL PEOPLE IN NIZAMABAD OFFER SPECIAL POOJA TO CURB COVID-19

Nizamabad: To combat the Covid-19 pandemic, people in rural areas began pleading with the village deities. The villagers are conducting special pujas and offerings to the Goddesses and urged to come down with the ill effect of the pandemic. Several villages in Nizamabad district started village festivals in the last couple of days. The villagers in Nizamabad rural, Banswada, Jakranpally mandals performed pujas to Goddesses Saramma, Gali Poshamma, Ampudu Poshavva, Maha-

MED. COLLEGE SANCTIONED TO KOTHAGUDEM

DC CORRESPONDENT
KOTHAGUDEM, MAY 18

The people of Bhadradri-Kothagudem district are happy with the sanctioning of the medical college hospital in Kothagudem along with the nursing college.

It is a sudden gift to the district from Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao. The medical and health services in the district are very poor and the people used to go to Khammam and Hyderabad to cure chronic diseases and major surgeries. The district that had more Adivasi population is suffering a lot in going to hospitals at faraway places.

There are occasions that many of the patients demised on the way to Khammam and Hyderabad. A major advantage with the hospital is the availability of 1,000 beds to the people. Major surgeries can be done in the hospital and it is a benefit to the people of Kothagudem district.

The officials are searching for 250 acres for the medical college. The medical students will be available as a helping hand to the main doctors to treat the patients. K. Arun Kumar, a social activist in Kothagudem said, "It is really a boon to the Kothagudem and the patients need not to go to the other cities for the chronic diseases. We appreciate Chief Minister for granting a medical college hospital in Kothagudem."

THUNDERSTORMS IN TS FOR NEXT 48 HOURS: IMD

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Telangana state may witness isolated thunderstorms during the next 48 hours, said officials of Indian Meteorological Department (IMD).

During the last 24 hours, the highest rainfall in the state of 18.1 mm was recorded in Ranga Reddy district. Hyderabad witnessed maximum rain of 14.5 mm at Asifnagar. Many parts of the city were greeted by booming sounds of thunderstorms on Tuesday morning. Several parts recorded rain but it was intense on the outskirts.

According to IMD officials, two districts in the state have received surplus rainfall higher than 1,000 per cent in one day. They are Hyderabad and Medchal-Malkajgiri, which received 1,344 per cent and 1,220 per cent rainfall respectively.



Adivasis strongly press for medical college in Adilabad

DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 18

Due to lack of proper medical facilities and vulnerability to life threatening diseases, members of tribal communities in the interior areas of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district are undergoing a harrowing time especially in times of adversities.

Speaking to this correspondent, tribals requested Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao to announce a government medical college in Asifabad district to provide better medical facilities to the poor. It may be mentioned that people of marginalised sections form the majority of the population in the district. The state government has allotted a medical college to Mancherial district which has already become a medical hub after Karimnagar and is well-connected with Karimnagar and Hyderabad.

The lone medical college existing in Adilabad is 120 km away from Asifabad and people of the district are facing a lot of difficulties in getting proper treatment due to lack of medical colleges or top hospitals. Adivasis recalled that Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao had promised while addressing Komaram Bheem's death anniversary celebrations at Jodeghat in the past to provide better medical facilities to them and said even he was ready to lift patients in air ambulance from the interior and inaccessible areas.

Adivasis of erstwhile Adilabad are a disappointed lot with the state government announcing setting up of a medical college in Mancherial. People of the

● The lone medical college existing in Adilabad is 120 km away from Asifabad and people of the district are facing a lot of difficulties in getting proper treatment due to lack of medical colleges or top hospitals. Adivasis recalled that Chief Minister had promised while addressing Komaram Bheem's death anniversary celebrations at Jodeghat in the past to provide better medical facilities to them and said even he was ready to lift patients in air ambulance from the interior and inaccessible areas.

interior areas of Kagaznagar division have to travel nearly 180 km to reach Mancherial and it would be appropriate if another medical college set up in Asifabad for the benefit of people of interior areas. People are not getting proper medical treatment at the 50-bedded district hospital at Utnoor though it was upgraded with infrastructure and equipment in the past.

People of Erstwhile Adilabad district urged Asifabad ZP chairperson Kova Laxmi, MLAs Koneru Konappa of Sirpur (T), Atram Sakku of Asifabad, Azmeera Rekha Naik of Khanapur, Durgam Chinniah of Bellampalli to take up the issue of setting up a medical college in Asifabad with the Chief Minister and other top government officials.

Kanaka Prathibha, Sarpanch of Marlavai gram panchayat of Jainoor, said people of the tribal belt would get better medical facilities with easy access if the government set up a medical college in Asifabad.

Inspection



Police Commissioner V.B. Kamalasan Reddy along with officials inspects night lockdown enforcement at Telangana Chowk in Karimnagar on Tuesday. —DC

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited	
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001 Corporate Identification Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813, Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact Number: 96461-18774)	
Tender Enquiry No. MQP-177/2021-22/PO(M)	Dated: 18.05.2021
Chief Engineer/Metering, C-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala, invites E-tender for Design Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, Reading, Analysis and 8 year O&M of 1,17,500 number Smart Meters, AMI system & Communication infrastructure with a network platform in Agar Nagar Special Division of Ludhiana City on Turnkey Basis (OPEX Model). For detailed NIT and tender specification, please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 18.05.2021 from 05:00 PM onwards.	
Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in	
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IN BRIEF

NO HIGH COURT RELIEF FOR KALRA

New Delhi, May 18: The Delhi High Court on Tuesday declined to direct an expeditious decision on the bail plea of businessman Navneet Kalra, arrested in connection with alleged black marketing of oxygen concentrators, saying "let the law take its own course".

Justice Subramonium Prasad declined to interfere with the observations made by a sessions court while dismissing Kalra's anticipatory bail plea, saying the Supreme Court has already laid down the law with regard to observations made by courts and their reporting by media organisations.

The high court declined to grant the reliefs sought on behalf of Kalra, represented by senior advocate Vikas Pahwa, saying that he had moved an anticipatory bail plea which has become infructuous due to his arrest and therefore, nothing remains in the matter.

Pahwa had made two oral prayers on Tuesday, that directions be issued to the trial court concerned to decide his client's bail plea expeditiously and secondly, to expunge the observations made against Kalra by the sessions court as due to his arrest he can no longer challenge the order denying him anticipatory bail.

NIGHT CURFEW TO CONTINUE IN 36 GUJARAT CITIES

Ahmedabad, May 17: The night curfew in 36 cities of Gujarat, including nine metros, has been extended by three more days to control the spread of coronavirus, the state government said on Monday.

As per the decision taken by Chief Minister Vijay Rupani, the limited restrictions, including the curfew between 8 pm and 6 am, will continue to be in place in 36 cities from Tuesday to Thursday, a government release said.

Restrictions currently in force in other parts of Gujarat except these 36 cities will also continue between 6 am on May 18 till 6 am on May 20, it said.

Rupani said the government will take a call on whether to extend the night curfew and other curbs beyond May 20 after assessing the situation.

Gujarat on Monday reported 7,135 new coronavirus positive cases, taking its infection count to 7,59,754, while 81 deaths increased the toll in the state to 9,202, an official said.

The government has only ordered the continuation of essential services and activities during these three days, in accordance with the Centre's guidelines, said the release.

Services directly associated with the operation of Covid-19 and those specified as essential and urgent will not be affected. Medical, paramedical and allied health services, oxygen production and distribution systems will also continue, it said.

BADRINATH OPENS AFTER WINTER CLOSURE

Gopeshwar (U'khand), May 18: The famous temple of Badrinath in the upper Himalayan region of Uttarakhand opened after the winter break early on Tuesday amid traditional rituals.

The chief priest of the temple, Ishwar Prasad Namboodiri, opened the portals of the temple at 4.15 am chanting Vedic hymns and praying for the well-being of all.

However, the opening ceremony was a subdued affair with only a limited number of people, including the priests, the Dharmadhikari and administrative officials, attending it in compliance with the Covid-19 standard operating procedure.

In normal circumstances, thousands of people turn up at the high-altitude temple dedicated to Vishnu to witness its opening ceremony.

For the second consecutive year, the temple witnessed a simple, thinly-attended opening ceremony.

The temple was decorated with around eight quintals of marigolds on the occasion.

With the opening of Badrinath, all the four Himalayan temples known as char dham are now open in Uttarakhand. Kedarnath opened on Monday while Yamunotri and Gangotri opened on May 14 and 15 respectively. However, they have been kept out of bounds for pilgrims for the time being due to the pandemic.



Guest workers leave for their native states from the inter-state bus terminal at Kaushambi during the second wave of the Coronavirus in Ghaziabad on Tuesday.

- PTI



A medic, wearing a PPE, conducts random Covid-19 testing of street vendors near Charbagh Railway Station in Lucknow on Tuesday.

- PTI

MP sees rise in black fungus cases

Medical examination of all those who have recovered from Covid-19 to be conducted

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, MAY 18

Surge in black fungus infection cases in Madhya Pradesh has sent alarm bells ringing in the state administration forcing the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government to launch microbiological surveillance in the hospitals.

State medical education minister Vishwas Sarang told reporters that the government has launched a drive to detect black fungus infection cases in the state by conducting medical examination of all the

people who have recovered from Covid-19 in MP.

"We have launched microbiological surveillance in all the government as well as private hospitals in the state to detect potential cases of black fungus infection. We have ordered medical examination of all the people who have recovered from Covid-19 to detect developing infection cases and treat them", Mr Sarang said.

An official report said a total 500 cases of black fungus infections have been reported in the state so far.

The infection has claimed life of a man who had recovered from Covid-19 recently in the state.

"The ongoing survey to detect such cases could only establish the gravity of the situation in the state", a senior officer of the MP health department said.

The state government has created dedicated treatment facilities for such cases in the five government-run major hospitals in Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur, Gwalior and Rewa.

"We are facing shortage of antifungal drugs and

injections in the market. We have approached the Centre to ensure adequate supply of antifungal drugs and injections to the state as soon as possible", Mr Sarang said.

The Madhya Pradesh government had earlier declared that all the patients suffering from black fungus infection would be treated free of cost in all the government hospitals.

The state government on Tuesday fixed prices of the anti-fungus injections manufactured by various pharmaceutical companies and warned that

action would be taken against the druggists who were found selling the products at inflated prices. Meanwhile, Chhattisgarh government has also ordered microbiological surveillance in all the government and private hospitals in Chhattisgarh to detect cases of black fungus infection.

"As many as 76 cases of black fungus infections have been detected in Chhattisgarh so far", a spokesman for the Chhattisgarh health department told this newspaper on Tuesday. Chhattisgarh health

director Dr Priyanka Shukla has written letters to all chief medical health officers of the districts in the state and all the medical establishments in the state to conduct microbiological surveillance in the government and private hospitals in their areas and send weekly reports to the state health department.

The state health department asked the government and private hospitals in Chhattisgarh to follow the standard treatment protocol set for treatment of people suffering from black fungus infection.

EFFORTS BEING MADE TO RAMP UP VACCINE SUPPLY: MODI

New Delhi, May 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday that continuous efforts are being made to ramp up Covid-19 vaccine supply in a big way, asserting that attempts are on to provide states 15-day advance schedule of the inoculation programme as it will allow them to prepare accordingly.

Interacting with state and district officials at a virtual meeting, he described them as "field commanders" in the fight against Covid-19 and said localised containment zones, aggressive testing and sharing correct and complete information with people are weapons to defeat it. The meeting was attended by district magistrates from 46 districts across nine states.

People's convenience increases when information like bed availability for the sick or the vaccine availability are easily available, Modi said and also asked officials to curb black-marketing and take strict action should be taken against those who do so.

Noting that coronavirus infections are decreasing in some states and increasing in some others, he emphasised the need to be more vigilant in the face of decreasing tally and underlined that he has always stressed that the fight is about saving every single life.

Asserting that vaccination is a strong way to fight Covid, Modi said myths about it have to be collectively rooted out.

The health ministry is streamlining the system and process of vaccination, he said, stressing the need to stop vaccine wastage.

Noting that every district has its own unique challenges, he told officials that they had a free hand to innovate to suit their local needs and asked them to share their feedback about any change in policy they may want without any inhibition.

Hailing officials, the prime minister said many of them worked despite being Covid positive while some lost their family members but they gave duty their priority.

"You understand the challenges of your district much better. So when your district wins, the country wins. When your district beats Corona, the country defeats Corona," a PMO statement said quoting Modi. He asked officials to also take care of the ease of living of every citizen of their district, saying there is a need to stop infection and also ensure unhindered flow of essential supplies.

- PTI

● Hailing officials, Modi said many of them worked despite being Covid positive while some lost their family members but they gave duty their priority.

Ex-IMA chief dies of Covid; 2nd wave claims 270 doctors so far

Corona cases continue to fall

New Delhi, May 18: The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Tuesday said 270 doctors across the country have succumbed to the coronavirus infection in the second wave of the pandemic so far.

The list of the deceased doctors includes former IMA president Dr K.K. Aggarwal, who succumbed to the deadly virus on Monday.

Bihar saw the maximum number of 78 deaths of medical practitioners, followed by Uttar Pradesh (37), Delhi (29) and Andhra Pradesh (22).

According to the IMA Covid-19 registry, 748 doctors succumbed to the disease in the first wave of the pandemic.

"Last year, 748 doctors across India succumbed to Covid-19, while in the current wave, in a short period, we have lost 270 doctors.

"The second wave of the pandemic is turning out to be extremely fatal for all and especially for the healthcare workers who are at the forefront," IMA president Dr JA Jayalal said. Padma Shri awardee and eminent cardiologist Dr K.K. Aggarwal has died of Covid-19, a statement posted on his Twitter handle said.

Aggarwal (62), the former national president of the Indian Medical

VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 18

There appears to be some light at the end of the dark tunnel of the Covid-19 second wave, as for the second consecutive day India recorded less than 3 lakh daily new cases while daily recoveries crossed more than 4.22 lakh for the first time.

A decline of 1.63 lakh in the active caseload in the last 24 hours was registered, and 2,63,533 new cases.

However, the death fig-

ures continue to be very high. It may be noted that a total of 4,329 fresh fatalities were recorded in 24 hours on Tuesday.

Also, several states that were earlier reporting very high cases are now showing a decline in daily trends while some others continue to show an upward trajectory.

However, a Union health ministry official on Tuesday said that only two per cent of total population has been affected so far and 98 per cent are still susceptible.

human being. RIP! (sic)," he wrote on Twitter.

According to the statement posted on Twitter, Aggarwal passed away at 11.30 pm on Monday after a "lengthy battle with Covid-19".

"Even during the pandemic, he made constant efforts to educate the masses and was able to reach out to 100 million people through numerous videos and educational programmes and saved countless lives.

He wanted his life to be

celebrated and not mourned," the statement said.

Aggarwal posted videos raising awareness about the deadly virus on his Twitter handle. Even while he was hospitalised, his team at the Heart Care Foundation of India kept uploading videos about Covid-19.

In January, Aggarwal's banter with his wife during a live session on a social media platform had left netizens in splits. In the video, Aggarwal's wife was heard scolding him for going to take the anti-Covid vaccine shot alone and not taking her along.

The former IMA president is survived by wife Dr Veena Aggarwal, son Nilesh and daughter Naina. He had received the Padma Shri, the country's fourth-highest civilian honour, in 2010. He was also honoured with the Dr B.C. Roy Award.

Aggarwal's name was mentioned in the Limca Book of Records for training the maximum number of people in the lifesaving technique of hands-only CPR at one go.

Aggarwal was born in Delhi on September 5, 1958.

He completed his MBBS from MGIMS, Sevagram under the Nagpur University, where he was adjudged the best graduate in 1979.

Relatives of a patient react to the non-availability of a bed at a Covid hospital in Kolkata.

- PTI

Odisha extends curbs till June 1

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 18

The Odisha government on Tuesday extended the lockdown restrictions in the state till June 1 to arrest the steady surge in cases of Covid-19.

The first two-week long lockdown that came into force in the state on May 5 is set to end on Wednesday.

According to chief secretary Suresh Kumar Mohapatra, after thorough consultation with health experts, the government decided to extend the lockdown for two more weeks.

Sources said the State had exhibited a Test Positivity Rate (TPR) of 20 per cent but after nearly two weeks of lock-

down, the TPR has now dipped to 18.2 per cent.

This apart, in another major development, the government revised the period of relaxation for availing of essential commodities from 6 am to 12 pm daily to 7 am to 11 am.

"The weekend shutdown will however continue as usual. Tighter restrictions will be clamped during the weekends and violators will be strictly dealt with," chief secretary Mr Mohapatra informed through a virtual press briefing.

Offices in private/corporate and civil society sector shall work with reduced manpower, preferably at 33 per cent of their staff strength. Government offices will function with not more than 10 per cent staff.

FIGHTING | COVID

Over 1,000 children, parents reach out to govt helpline to tackle Covid woes

Kids, parents open up about Covid stress

New Delhi, May 18: From facing loneliness in Covid-19 isolation ward to exhibiting aggressive behaviour after parents contracted the virus, over 1,000 children and parents have reached out to government helpline seeking help.

With an objective of providing psychological first aid and emotional support to children affected during the pandemic, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is providing tele-counselling to children through Samvedna

(Sensitising Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance) - a toll-free helpline launched to provide psycho-social mental support for affected children. According to Women and Child Development Ministry officials, redressal of 1,009 complaints have been done between September, 2020 to May 7, 2021.

In a case from a Covid-19 isolation centre in Aurangabad, a 15-year-old child expressed frustra-

tion over not getting enough love from parents due to more number of siblings and called up to talk about her parents' pressure of getting her married early.

The counsellor spoke to the child and her parents and suggested to encourage her to focus on academics.

In another case, parent of a six-year-old child in Kanpur called to discuss the aggressive behaviour of their child who was lodged in an isolation centre after contracting the virus.

The counsellor suggested that the child engage in different activities like narrating stories or playing with toys. It was found that as the parents were keeping to themselves after the family tested positive, the child was feeling lonely and exhibiting aggressive behaviour.

A 17-year-old boy from Madhya Pradesh's Singrauli isolation centre called up and talked about being scared of loneliness. The counsellor advised him to spend time engaging in activities he is interested in and making a reg-

ular routine to get away from boredom.

This tele-counselling service is available on a toll-free number 1800-121-2830 from Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 1 pm and 3 pm to 8 pm and is exclusively for children who are willing to talk and are in need of counselling.

When a child/caretaker/parent dials Samvedna, they get to speak to a professional counsellor in a safe environment. Tele-counselling is provided to children under three categories: children who are in quarantine/isolation/Cov-

id care centres, children who have Covid positive parents or family members, and children who have lost their parents due to the pandemic.

This service caters to children from all over India in various regional languages like Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Oriya, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali, the Women and Child Development Ministry said.

This service was launched in September 2020 and aims to support children in the difficult times of pandemic.

SHORT TAKES

SHARK KILLS SURFER OFF OZ EAST COAST

Sydney, May 18: A surfer was killed by a shark on Tuesday off the Australian east coast, police said.

The man, aged in his 50s, had been surfing off Forster, 220 kilometres (137 miles) north of Sydney, when he was attacked late in the morning, a police statement said.

Onlookers pulled the man from the water suffering critical injuries to his upper right thigh, police said.

The Ambulance Service said the man could not be resuscitated despite the best efforts of paramedics and bystanders at the scene.

Forster beaches have been closed. Police said they were working with government authorities to identify the species of shark.

Lower North Coast Surf Life Saving branch president Brian Wilcox said a drone search after the attack had spotted two sharks in the area.

JET RETURNS TO SAN JOSE AFTER ENGINE ISSUE

San Jose, May 18: Federal officials say an American Airlines plane returned to the main San Jose airport shortly after takeoff on Monday after pilots reported an issue with one of the plane's two engines.

The airline said the pilots shut down the engine after an indicator light came on. The Federal Aviation Administration said it was investigating the incident. American Airlines flight 2049 took off for Phoenix but circled and returned to Mineta San Jose International Airport shortly after takeoff. The airline said the plane landed safely and taxied to the terminal, and no one was injured.

There were 112 passengers and five crew members on board the Airbus A320.

The two engines on the 20-year-old jet were made by International Aero Engines, a joint venture of Pratt & Whitney and German and Japanese companies.

In February, a Pratt & Whitney engine shed pieces of the housing over Denver during a United flight.

400 KG COCAINE BOUND FOR KOSOVO SEIZED

Rome, May 18: Italian border police said Tuesday they seized more than 400 kilograms of cocaine from South America in a joint operation with Kosovar and Albanian authorities.

The drugs, with an estimated market value of more than 100 million euros (\$122 million), were first detected at the port of Gioia Tauro, in the southern Italian region of Calabria.

They were hidden in a container coming from Santos, Brazil, "officially containing chicken," the Guardia di Finanza border police said in a statement.

Italian authorities decided to let the container continue its journey and arrive at its final destination in Lipjan, Kosovo.

There, Italian, Albanian and Kosovar police intervened and arrested 25 people, including seven charged with international drug trafficking.

Italy is known as a key hub for the illegal drugs trade, and its fearsome 'Ndrangheta mafia, based in Calabria, controls most of the cocaine entering Europe.

CANADIAN JAILED FOR SMUGGLING IMMIGRANTS

Washington, May 18: A Sri Lankan-origin Canadian national on Monday was sentenced to 32 months in prison on charges of smuggling undocumented immigrants from Sri Lanka into the US for financial gains. Sri Kajamukam Chelliah, aka Mohan, in his February guilty plea admitted to conspiring with others to facilitate the travel of undocumented immigrants from Sri Lanka through Haiti, Turks and Caicos Islands, and the Bahamas to the United States from on or about July 1, 2019, through on or about October 10, 2019.

Federal prosecutors said during the course of the conspiracy, Chelliah worked with other human smugglers, arranging housing and transport for undocumented immigrants en route to Canada through the United States.

Chelliah arranged for the individuals to be transported from the airport in Port Au Prince, Haiti, to a hotel where he housed and provided them with food. He then arranged for transportation by boat from Haiti to Turks and Caicos Islands, then to the Bahamas, and then by boat to Miami, Florida.

HK suspends operations of its Taiwan office

Hong Kong, May 18: Hong Kong is temporarily shutting its representative office in Taiwan, officials said Tuesday in the latest indication of strained ties.

"The Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office (Taiwan) has temporarily suspended operations with effect from today," Hong Kong's government said in a brief statement, which did not give a reason for the closure. A government spokesperson said that the decision "has nothing to do with the Coronavirus situation" in Taiwan where cases have recently spiked and prompted the re-imposition of some social distancing measures.

Asked whether the closure was tied to politics, the spokesperson declined to comment.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, which handles relations with China, said it "deeply regrets the Hong Kong government's unilateral decision" and vowed to keep its own office in the financial hub open despite strained ties.

Hong Kong abides by authoritarian China's view that democratic, self-ruled Taiwan is part of its territory and must be seized one day, by force if necessary. Like Beijing, Hong Kong does not recognise Taiwanese authorities as legitimate.



Bangladeshi journalist Rozina Islam, (C), is escorted by police to a court in Dhaka on Tuesday.

Scribe's health anomaly stories lands her in jail

Dhaka, May 18: A senior Bangladeshi woman journalist, known for her investigative reporting, was arrested on charges of violating a colonial-era official secrecy law, the police said on Tuesday, triggering protests by the rights groups and her colleagues. Rozina Islam, a senior reporter of Bangla daily *Prothom Alo*, the largest daily newspaper based on circulation, was on Monday detained for over five hours by the Health Ministry officials for allegedly clicking a picture of a document with her cell phone without permission.

She was later arrested by the police. The ministry filed a case against her at around midnight under the 1923 Official Secrets Act while she spent her night under the police custody, the police said. She was produced before a court here with a petition seeking her to be remanded in custody for five days, which the judge rejected and sent her to jail to await the routine

NEW CATHOLIC BISHOP: RESPECT PLURALITY

Hong Kong, May 18: Hong Kong's incoming Roman Catholic bishop Stephen Chow called for plurality to be respected, in a time of polarisation in the Catholic community as the city's political situation deteriorates.

Chow said while he had "no big plan" on how to unify a diocese that had become politically polarised over the last two years amid months of anti-government protests in Hong Kong, he believed that God wanted them to be united.

"Unity is not the same as uniformity," Chow said at a news conference Tuesday. "One thing I've always mentioned recently in schools is (there is) unity is plurality.

However, there is a huge amount of trade between Hong Kong and Taiwan. According to Hong Kong's government, Taiwan is its second-largest trading partner; its third-largest market for domestic exports, its fifth-largest market for re-exports and its second-largest source of imports.

— AP

10 wounded, 4 seriously, in Gaza strike: Israeli medics

Attack came as Palestinians went on strike in a rare collective action

Gaza City (Gaza Strip), May 18: A strike launched from Gaza on Tuesday wounded 10 people in southern Israel, four of them seriously, Israeli medics reported, as Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers continued to trade attacks.

The projectile attack Tuesday afternoon hit a region in southern Israel, according to the Magen David Adom rescue service. It came as Palestinians across Israel and the occupied territories went on strike in a rare collective action against Israel's policies. With the war in Gaza showing no sign of abating and truce efforts apparently stalled, the general strike and expected protests could again widen the conflict after a spasm of communal violence in Israel and protests across the occupied West Bank last week.

Israel's airstrikes toppled a six-storey building that housed bookstores and educational centres used by the Islamic University and other colleges, leaving behind a massive mound of rebar and concrete slabs. Desks, office chairs, books and computer wires could be seen in the debris. Residents sifted through the rubble, searching for their belongings. Israel warned the building's residents ahead of time, sending them fleeing into the predawn darkness, and there were no reports of casualties.

Israel said it was targeting militants, their tunnels and rocket launchers across the territory. "The whole street started running, then destruction, an earthquake," said Jamal Herzallah, a resident of the area. "This whole area was shaking."

Heavy fighting broke out May 10 when Gaza's militant Hamas rulers fired long-range rockets toward Jerusalem in support of Palestinian protests against Israel's heavy-handed policing of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a flashpoint site sacred to Jews and Muslims, and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers.



Palestinians carry the body of Obaida Jawabreh, killed on Monday during clashes with Israeli soldiers, at his funeral in al-Aroub refugee camp, north of Hebron city in the the occupied West Bank, on Tuesday.

— AFP

Biden supports Israel's right to self defence

Washington, May 18: US President Joe Biden, in a telephonic call with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, supported Israel's "right to defend itself" against indiscriminate rocket attacks and encouraged him to make every effort to ensure the protection of innocent civilians, it said.

During the phone call on Monday, Biden reiterated his firm support for Israel's "right to defend itself" against indiscriminate rocket attacks, it said. He encouraged Israel to make every effort to ensure the protection of innocent civilians, it said.

● **BIDEN WELCOMED efforts to address inter-communal violence and to bring calm to Jerusalem, the White House said in a readout of the call.**

The two leaders discussed progress in Israel's military operations against Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza, the White House said. "The President expressed his support for a ceasefire and discussed the US engagement with Egypt and other partners towards that end," said the readout.

Palestinian militant group Hamas has fired more than 3,000 rockets over Israel during the past seven days, pushing more than half of Israel's popu-

lation into shelter houses and Israel has carried out hundreds of devastating retaliatory attacks in Gaza. More than 200 people have been killed in the recent escalation in the region, including a caregiver from India.

US Secretary of State Tony Blinken, who is travelling right now, also spoke to his Israeli counterpart, Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi and discussed America's efforts to bring an end to the violence, which has claimed the lives of Israeli and Palestinian civilians, including children, said State Department Spokesperson Ned Price.

"Blinken also expressed deep concern at the inter-communal violence," Price said.

— PTI

EU MULLS WAYS TO HELP DEFUSE ONGOING CONFLICT

Brussels, May 18: European Union foreign ministers are meeting Tuesday to discuss how to use the 27-nation bloc's political clout to help diplomatic efforts to end the fighting between the Israeli armed forces and Palestinian militants.

The EU has been united in its calls for a ceasefire and the need for a political solution to end the latest conflict — now in its second week — but the nations are divided over how best to help. No firm decisions involving threats of sanctions or other measures are likely from the ministers' video-conference. At least 212 Palestinians have been killed in heavy airstrikes so far, including 61 children, and over 1,400 people wounded, Gaza's Health Ministry said.

— AP

China offers to host Afghan peace talks

Beijing, May 18: China, which has stepped up its diplomacy between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the wake of the US troops withdrawal from the war-torn country, has offered to host peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

Significantly, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who in the last two days held telephone talks with his Pakistani and Afghan counterparts, said that

China will back the Afghan government headed by Ashraf Ghani in playing a leading role. The offer to facilitate peace talks was made during Wang's phone talks with his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Haneef Atmar on Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian told a media briefing on Tuesday.

Asked to elaborate, Zhao said, "China is ready to facilitate intra-Afghan tal-

ks and will provide necessary conditions for negotiation in China." The US had announced its plans to withdraw its troops completely from Afghanistan by September.

The US troop pull-out has raised concerns in Beijing that it may lead to the regrouping of Xinjiang province's Uygur Muslim militants in Afghanistan, which shares borders with China.

During their telephonic

6K migrants arrive by sea: Spain, Morocco square off

Madrid, May 18: Spain faced a humanitarian and diplomatic crisis Tuesday after thousands of Moroccans took advantage of relaxed border controls in their nation to swim or paddle in inflatable boats onto European soil.

By Tuesday morning, around 6,000 people had crossed the border into

the Spanish city of Ceuta since the first arrivals began early Monday, the Spanish government said, including 1,500 thought to be teenagers.

The city of 85,000 people lies in North Africa on the Mediterranean Sea, separated from Morocco by a double-wide, 10-metre (32-feet) fence.

The sudden influx of migrants into Spain has deepened the diplomatic row between Rabat and Madrid in the wake of Spain's decision to allow in for medical treatment of the chief of a militant group that fights for the independence of Western Sahara.

— AP

y's meeting of the Arctic nations' foreign ministers in Reykjavik, Iceland, where Moscow is set to take a rotating chairmanship in the Arctic Council.

The base, which sits about 1,000 kilometres (600 miles) south of the geographic North Pole, was built using new construction technologies as part of Kremlin efforts to bolster the military amid spiralling tensions with the West following Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

— AP

Moeed Yusuf is Pakistan's NSA

Islamabad, May 18: Pakistan PM Imran Khan has appointed his Special Assistant on National Security Moeed Yusuf as the country's National Security Adviser (NSA).

Yusuf's elevation comes in the backdrop of the reported backchannel communication with India early this year, resulting in the restoration of the 2003 ceasefire agreement on the Line of Control in February. A notification dated May 17 was issued by the Cabinet Division to appoint Yusuf as the NSA. "The Prime Minister has been pleased to approve that Dr Moeed W. Yusuf, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Security and Strategic Policy Planning, shall function as National Security Adviser with the status of Federal Minister, with immediate effect," the notification read.

Last month, Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhry was asked by several journalists about reported backchannel talks with India.

Instead of outright rejection, he said: "States

have their ways and means to communicate which remain available even during wars. Therefore, whether any talks are taking place between India and Pakistan is not important."

In New Delhi, asked about the media reports that backchannel talks between India and Pakistan were going on for more than a year, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Arindam Bagchi did not give a direct reply. "If you talk about channels of communication on this issue, let me just recall that our respective high commissions exist and are functioning. So that is a very effective channel of communication," Bagchi said last month. India has told Pakistan that it desires normal neighbourly relations with Islamabad in an environment free of terror, hostility and violence. India has said the onus is on Pakistan to create an environment free of terror and hostility.

Yusuf is an academic with experience of working at various think tanks in the US.

— PTI

VAST | RESOURCES

Shrinking polar ice offers opportunities for shipping routes

Russian base projects its Arctic power

Nagurskoye (Russia), May 18: During the Cold War, Russia's Nagurskoye airbase was little more than a runway, a weather station and a communications outpost in the Franz Josef Land archipelago.

It was a remote and desolate home mostly for polar bears, where temperatures plunge in winter to minus-42 Celsius (43 degrees below zero Fahrenheit) and the snow only disappears from August to mid-September. Now, Russia's northernmost military base

is bristling with missiles and radar and its extended runway can handle all types of aircraft, including nuclear-capable strategic bombers, projecting Moscow's power and influence across the Arctic amid intensifying international competition for the region's vast resources.

The shamrock-shaped facility — three large pods extending from a central atrium — is called the "Arctic Trefoil" and is painted in the white-red-and-blue of the national

flag, brightening the otherwise stark vantage point on the 5,600-kilometre (3,470-mile) Northern Sea Route along Russia's Arctic coast.

Other buildings on the Island, which is called Alexandra Land, are used for radar and communications, a weather station, oil storage, hangars and construction facilities. Russia has sought to assert its influence over wide areas of the Arctic in competition with the United States, Canada, Denmark

and Norway as shrinking polar ice from the warming planet offers new opportunities for resources and shipping routes.

China also has shown an increasing interest in the region, believed to hold up to one-fourth of the Earth's undiscovered oil and gas. Russian President Vladimir Putin has cited estimates that put the value of Arctic mineral riches at \$30 trillion.

Tensions between Russia and the West will likely loom large over Thursda-

DECCAN Chronicle

19 MAY 2021

CBI's partisanship mars its actions over Narada

Those who are found to have broken the law must face the full force of the law. In a democracy no one is too high to be placed above this principle, which cannot but apply in the case of the West Bengal ministers and MLAs arrested in the Narada sting case that came to light in 2016 though the sting had been carried out two years earlier.

Where public servants are concerned — and the expression includes legislators — there is a moral dimension as well. They are keepers of public trust and exercise authority, including over public finances, in the name of the people. When they misuse their position for their private gain, the faith of the people in the system as a whole is shaken, and that is why they must not be permitted to get away when they do that.

However, in order that public servants are not harassed through motivated or frivolous complaints, or for vexatious ends, procedures are laid down for their investigation or arrest. The first step here is grant of sanction for their prosecution by appropriate authority.

In the case of chief minister Mamata Banerjee's ministers — Firhad Hakim and Subrata Mukherjee — and MLA and former minister Madan Mitra — ordinarily the Speaker of the Assembly should have been the proper authority to accord sanction for their prosecution. This is pretty much standard procedure.

Instead, state governor Jagdeep Dhankar, who appears to be fast acquiring a reputation for political partisanship losing over his status as high constitutional authority, was approached by the CBI and the arrests followed in five days flat.

The Assembly had just been constituted after the recent state election and the Speaker would have been place in a matter of days. Yet, the CBI chose to approach the governor for sanction although it could just easily have waited a few days more in such an old case. This cannot but re-confirm its status as the Centre's "caged parrot". Sadly, the governor did not send the file back either. This is so much the pity and does no good to India's claim to be a constitutional democracy.

Is it not a little curious that the CBI did not seek permission for the prosecution of Mukul Roy, who defected to BJP some years ago, and Suwendu Adhikari, who defected to the saffron party weeks before the recent election and is now the leader of the Opposition in the Assembly? This episode re-asserts the widely held impression that the BJP has become a dry-cleaner and acquiring its membership permits allegedly tainted politicians to come out smelling of roses.

This is a time when a responsible Centre should be working in partnership with states to fight the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic. But the Modi government's priority evidently lies elsewhere.

It is signalling that after BJP's emphatic defeat at the hands of the Trinamul Congress in the recent state polls, the Centre would take the fight against the legitimate victors to the extremes through the blatant manipulation of procedures even at the cost of hurting the spirit of democracy. Centre-state relations become collateral damage in such a scenario. Development and people's welfare will be on the backburner as political fights escalate, probably in the end leading to street battles. Truly, all this means the willful negation of the mandate of the people.

Taxes & FDI: Change attitude

It is one of life's simplest aphorisms that you can't have the cake and eat it too. If the Government of India's approach to getting foreign investment is akin to having the cake, its attitude towards trade disputes in which foreign investors emerge victorious as in international arbitration is the equivalent of wanting to eat the cake. The Scottish oil exploration company Cairn Energy has exposed this contradiction in official India's approach even as it has escalated the process by moving to attach Air India's properties abroad on the legal premise that the national carrier is India's alter ego.

A law on retrospective taxation that the previous UPA government passed in 2012 had proved extremely damaging to the country's reputation as an investment destination. Vodafone hit the arbitration trail to expose India's income tax claims as arbitrary. The basic approach hasn't changed despite NDA being in the saddle when losing such claims in arbitration awards. Far from being graceful in defeat and settling, official India has pursued matters legally through appeal and this after having acted in a questionable and predatory manner in the Cairn issue by selling the company's assets and shares to monetise its claims.

Official India can lay a claim to a sovereign right to its tax laws but this does little for the image of a country desperately seeking foreign investments in industry as they come with considerable job generating qualities while also fulfilling the "make in India" criterion dear to the central government as a policy initiative best serving national interests. At one time, there were as many as 17 claims, stemming from disputes over undelivered incentives, retrospective taxation and payment disputes, with regard to investments under bilateral treaties through which capital flowed into India.

The impression India leaves in potential foreign investors is it is a difficult country to deal with because its track record is not that good in keeping its word and delivering on promises after attracting investments. Only a change in attitude can help correct that and settling Cairn's \$1.2 billion award would be one way to demonstrate that India is keen on facilitating ease of doing business.

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Subhani



India can vaccinate swiftly by using 'mohalla method'



Probal DasGupta

The irony is stark. Millions scramble for oxygen cylinders and hospital beds, oscillating between life and death. Around the same time, several other millions decided the political fortunes of five states/UTs. Earlier this year, Indians defied a mortal fear of the coronavirus and voted in large numbers, with a turnout of 70 per cent or higher across states. On jobs, though, it was different. A listless rollout plan curtailed the availability of vaccines and people's tentativeness only hastened the inevitable. In two weeks, a second wave swept India, spiralling into its biggest crisis. An over-powered medical infrastructure burst at its seams.

While that's not the point. But every life-saving equipment is a survival kit, it's the pace of vaccinations that will ultimately ensure India's endurance against the virus. The point is: the secret to winning this war lies in our learning from past experience, including elections.

January 13, 2011 was a historic day for India. A two-year old child in West Bengal was found crippled by polio but was later cured. It was the last time polio would strike here. That day, India became polio-free. Two years earlier, India housed half the world's polio cases. No one thought the country could ever eradicate it. However, aided by the state, Unicef and others, India's feverish campaign against polio, led by 2.5 million vaccinators, touched 200 million homes, with 700,000 vaccinations in each round. Despite its challenges of poor infrastructure, India relied on its strengths: a "mohalla", or community, outreach.

Today, only 12 per cent Indians have got their first dose, against 50 per cent in America. Currently, the vaccination rate is less than half million a day,

sometimes falling further, given the shortage of vaccines. At this rate, it may take until summer 2022 to vaccinate 75 per cent of India. Are we prepared for more casualties until then?

A more dynamic and swifter pace of vaccinations is the antidote to arrest fatality numbers, build confidence and encourage a quicker economic revival. The polio experience is a test case. Juxtaposing the polling principle onto the vaccine execution plan gives it the kick it requires. The polling database, with details of citizens and their residences, is a ready master-sheet. In December 2020, Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla asked (then) chief election commissioner Sunil Arora to identify people above 50 at the polling station level. A promising start was made, but the plan ignored key aspects of our election experience. We should replicate our polling expertise, that was used in the polio campaign: the "mohalla method".

Currently, the approach of using hospitals for vaccinations has proved counterproductive. A sudden desperation and opening up of vaccinations for the 18-44 age group has led to longer queues. This inevitably means a high probability of an infection while on a hospital visit. Using the CoWin platform to register and then showing up with identifiers like PAN or Aadhaar cards at selected job centres like schools, community halls or sports venues often used as polling booths will decentralise the process.

Mumbai and Gurgaon recently started "drive-in" jabs. More such measures must be undertaken across the country. The aim should be to reach people, rather than herding them at overcrowded hospitals.

The "mohalla method" will increase vaccinated numbers in clusters. The knock-on effect is that as

neighbourhoods vaccinate, infections will slow down in clusters, creating identifiable safe zones. Earmarked vaccinated zones enable city administrations to loosen lockdowns methodically in areas where jabs have crossed high numbers and infections have fallen.

Using age as the sole criteria for prioritisation, instead of a combination of age, economic status and population density, was always expected to pose challenges. The prioritisation of senior citizens meant most people unlikely to go to work were vaccinated first. Next in line were the 45-plus population, many of whom can afford private vehicles. The most vulnerable population was the 18-45 age group — where more people use public transport. Given India has over 70 per cent people under 45, and most frontline workers including delivery personnel fall in this category, the approach meant most of India was unvaccinated against the second wave.

States with worse Covid numbers could form the bigger focus in this vaccination plan. At a city level, densely populated areas require more vaccine booths — based on voter lists from elections. Citizens who aren't on voters' lists in their neighbourhoods can use Aadhaar cards. This also helps those facing a tech challenge in online registrations.

The "mohalla method" demands deployment of substantial numbers of health workers, logistics, and vaccines. Cynics may say this isn't possible. But it actually works. India has over 12 lakh medical professionals, 7.8 lakh alternative medicine professionals, around two lakh medical students, diagnostic centre professionals,

We can reach a national jab rate of 10 million (one crore) a day, which means vaccinating the country in 4-5 months. If a third wave were to arrive in late 2021, most of India would have been vaccinated.

armed forces doctors, nursing assistants to provide jabs, the local police and paramilitary to handle the logistics and the armed forces to provide administrative support. Every neighbourhood can plan 5-6 centres of 25-30 volunteers each. Neighbourhood clusters could be simultaneously vaccinated in around 45-60 days (given availability of healthcare resources, vaccine supplies and errors in calculation). We can reach a national jab rate of 10 million (one crore) a day, which means vaccinating the country in 4-5 months. In a worst-case scenario, if a third wave were to arrive in late 2021, most of India would have been vaccinated.

But do we have vaccines? Choosing just two vaccines and then exporting them when just eight per cent of India was vaccinated was bound to lead to shortages. India needs over two billion jabs. Scaling up is a no-brainer. J&J's Phase 3 trials are set to begin. Russia's Sputnik V is here and will be distributed by Dr Reddy's Labs. Bharat Biotech has ramped up its capacity from 200 million to 700 million doses a year. India has asked for a waiver on intellectual property and barriers on vaccines from Europe and America.

It's taken a catastrophe for us to realise we must speed up vaccinations. To execute the blueprint, the bottom line is to shed lethargic bureaucracy and ensure an efficient supply chain and execution. A crisis taskforce needs to have a crack team of senior experts from amongst medical professionals, the armed forces and civil services. Like the polio campaign earlier, a targeted media campaign involving cricket and movie stars must be the focus. The campaign must be on a war footing and the national leadership has to make this period count. The war isn't over till we have enough ammunition to fight for our citizens. And we must vaccinate to win.

The writer, a retired Army officer, is the author of Watershed 1967, based on a forgotten war between India and China, and a member of the guest faculty at New York's Columbia University

LETTERS

THIRD WAVE

The Telangana High Court is right in seeking details of the strategy of the government to combat the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic (HC seeks details of third wave strategy, DC, May 18). While we fought the first wave bravely, we are now struggling and clueless to combat the second wave mainly due to our lack of planning. Now, the state government can be proactive and have well-planned strategies in place to fight the third wave of the pandemic.

G.V.N. Murthy
Hyderabad

INTER EXAMS

It is not wise to conduct Intermediate exams during the rampaging second wave of the Covid-19. It is better to declare all students as passed which will be a great relief to not only students but also worried parents. Colleges had hardly run for one to two months in the beginning of the year. The government must also give strict directions to private colleges not to collect more than 50 per cent annual fee for basically the survival of the institutions.

T. Kailash Ditya
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

New colony to come up on Jubilee Hills

HYDERABAD, May 18. The Jubilee Hills Co-operative House Building Society here, as been making good progress during the last two years and construction of about 500 houses is expected to commence shortly.

The Society has acquired about 1,400 acres of land, with a view to provide fully developed plots for nearly 2,500 members for construction of houses. Facilities have not been made for starting construction of 500 houses in the first phase.

Situated as it is at a height of about 2,000 feet, the colony, when developed, would be one of the most beautiful residential places in the city with well laid out parks and lawns, wide roads and all facilities.

Standing atop the hillocks or sitting in the balcony of a house, one can have a panoramic view of the city.

Sanjay Kumar



Political fallout of the Covid crisis across India

Various factors contributed to the BJP's poor performance in the West Bengal Assembly elections and one can't relate its poor showing only to the severe Covid-19 crisis and its mismanagement across the country. But the political fallout of the Covid crisis and its mismanagement for the BJP can't be ruled out. The results of the Uttar Pradesh panchayat elections have already given a glimpse of the challenge the BJP may face in the near future. It faced a tough challenge from the Samajwadi Party in the panchayat polls. The severe health crisis that India is facing at the moment may not have yet made the extremely popular Prime Minister Narendra Modi unpopular, but disappointment among a large number of Indians has started building. People may not directly blame the PM for the present health crisis, though some do, but what seems to have disappointed many Indians is his continued campaign for his party in West Bengal, which saw eight phases of voting.

With Covid cases rising alarmingly in several states, and cities gasping for

oxygen, there were even demands to merge the last few phases of the West Bengal polls to reduce the campaign, but the Centre was silent and BJP leaders continued to address big rallies in that state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi cancelled his rallies, which seems to have done damage control over people's disenchantment with Mr Modi, but the Election Commission, that announced a ban on big rallies hours after Mr Modi's announcement that he was cancelling his rallies, created the perception among ordinary people that his move was guided by the EC's decision, of which he may have got a hint in advance.

What seems to have disappointed many people is Mr Modi's somewhat delayed effort in trying to address the Covid crisis, weeks after India plunged from one crisis to another — from non-availability of beds to the shortage of oxygen, not to mention the non-availability of ventilators for patients in desperate need of it for treatment. When the country faced these multiple health crises, what people saw was Prime Minister Modi addressing several election rallies in West Bengal. People saw

this as a huge contrast to last year's Covid crisis and Mr Modi's handling of it. Last year, when Covid-19 had just erupted in India, Prime Minister Modi was in full command, as he took charge and announced a nationwide lockdown. There was criticism of the way the lockdown was announced and implemented without giving advance notice, but overall Mr Modi was applauded for his bold decision which seemed to have prevented the spread of Covid-19 across India.

Now, when people were looking towards Mr Modi for his leadership in handling this crisis, he failed to establish a connect with people. Citizens remember that during last year's crisis, that was far less severe than this one, he led from the front, addressed the nation several times, and kept a connect with ordinary people. It is true that the Centre is trying its best to solve even this present crisis and started the import of Covid vaccines and oxygen, along with several other such steps, but these should have been done much earlier. Though the Centre took these initiatives, at the same time it always tried to shift the responsibility to state

governments, on the ground that health is a state subject. Putting the blame on state governments for the current health disaster was not appreciated by most people. It is important to note that there has been no change in the constitutional provisions — health was a state subject last year, as it is this year — so why did the Centre take all the praise last year and now, as things are going out of hand, is trying to pass the blame to the states?

What might complicate the issue further and contribute to the growing disenchantment of people with the Central government, Prime Minister Modi and the BJP, is the emerging controversy around the pricing of the Covid vaccines. Not that there were no controversies around vaccination earlier, there were news about a shortage of vaccines and India having exported vaccines to various countries, but the *tu-tu-mai-mai* between the states and New Delhi may increase further on the differential pricing of the vaccines. It is understood that as of now the same vaccine will be procured by the states at a higher price, but it would be available to the Centre at a lower price. This dif-

ferential price is understandable if it is between private and government hospitals, but it is hard for an ordinary citizen to understand why he has to pay a higher price if he is given a vaccine purchased by a state government and a lesser price if the same vaccine is purchased by the Central government.

What seems to have made people feel unhappy with the Centre is its lack of initiative in negotiating with the Serum Institute of India for a better price, and instead advising the states to negotiate the price themselves. The question is — why can't the Centre take the initiative on this? This is not a "normal" health crisis across the country, in the midst of a raging pandemic, the question of whether health is a state subject or not should not even arise. Some states may have erred in their preparations, but it is not the time to play the blame game. This is a time for all the states and the Centre to work together and fight a national calamity.

The writer is a professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies and a political analyst. The views expressed here are personal.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,203.73	1.26
Nifty 50	15,108.10	1.24
S&P 500*	4,159.06	-0.10
Dollar (₹)	73.04	0.24
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.58	-0.30
Euro (₹)	88.95	0.05
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,833,333	0.69
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.56	-2.74
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.976	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.654	0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Credit Suisse to hire over 1,000 IT staff in India

Credit Suisse Group said it planned to hire over 1,000 IT employees in India this year to show its commitment to the country and its intention to establish it as a global technology innovation centre for the bank. The hires will comprise developers and engineers with capabilities in technologies such as cybersecurity, data analytics, cloud, API development, machine learning and artificial intelligence.

CCI okays APSEZ stake buy in Krishnapatnam



The Competition Commission of India (CCI) gave nod to proposed acquisition of additional 25 per cent stake of Adani Krishnapatnam Port Ltd by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. The acquirer already holds 75 per cent shareholding in Adani Krishnapatnam Port. "As a result of the proposed combination acquirer will hold 100 per cent shareholding and sole control of the Target," a release said.

Maruti opens ₹126-cr hospital in Ahmedabad

Maruti Suzuki, in partnership with Zyudus Hospitals, has announced the start of a multi-speciality hospital at Sitapur in Ahmedabad. With a total capital expenditure of Rs 126 crore, the hospital has been fully funded by the Maruti Suzuki Foundation—a CSR initiative of Maruti Suzuki. At present, it is being used as a Covid care facility to help treat patients in the region. The facility is expected to serve more than 3.75 lakh people.

Ujjivan SFB Q4 net jumps 86% to ₹136 crore

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (SFB) reported an 86 per cent jump in its net profit to Rs 136 crore for the fourth quarter from Rs 73 crore a year ago. Total income was down by 9 per cent at Rs 735 crore from Rs 810 crore. Net interest income also fell by 21 per cent to Rs 368 crore against Rs 467 crore. "The quarter was exceptionally good. Our disbursement was at an all-time high," MD & CEO Nitin Chugh said.



Occupancies improve, but revenues nearly halve Covid hotels stay in biz on thin margins

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 18

In order to address the scarcity of beds, hospitality chains have tied up with hospitals to provide accommodation with care for Covid patients. While this has improved the occupancies, the revenues are significantly lower. Since mid-April, several hospitality chains, including Taj Hotels, Ginger, ITC, Crowne Plaza, Radisson, Sarovar, Welcomhotel and Oyo, have opened their properties for Covid patients with mild symptoms as well those seeking isolation.

"At present, we have over 80 active quarantine and isolation facilities. Additionally, we have mapped and ensured readiness across 750 properties, which can be turned into quarantine centres across



the country, in case the need arises or demand increases," said Rohit Kapoor, CEO, Oyo India and South-East Asia. "For mildly affected employees, we have isolation facilities with health-care service providers. This includes 24*7 nurse care, on-demand pathology and pharmacy support, daily doctor visits, meals, among other services," he said.

According to Pradeep Shetty, honorary secretary

of the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India, more than 100 properties should be offering accommodation to Covid patients across key cities. "The occupancies should have been otherwise nil in these hotels due to the lockdown and Covid fears. Now the properties would be having around 30 per cent occupancies," he said.

However, the revenues are significantly low for the rooms. Some of the

state governments have capped the room rates for these facilities. As per the directive of the Delhi government, five star properties should not charge more than Rs 5,000 per patient per day and Rs 4,000 for four and three star properties.

"The average revenues per room would be around 50 per cent of the usual tariffs. Further, there could be some revenue sharing with the hospital partner," said Shetty.

According to Jaison Chacko, secretary general, FHRAI, there is also reluctance from the part of the staff. "We have been requesting the government to categorise hotel staff as frontline workers and provide them vaccination. Most of the hotel employees are not vaccinated and this puts their lives at risk," he said.

Sensex rises above 50,000 pts, Nifty regains 15K zone

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 18

The market trended higher for the second consecutive session on further drop in fresh daily Covid cases and gained over 1.2 per cent, anticipating limited impact of lockdowns currently in place in various parts of the country. The Sensex gained 612.60 points, or 1.24 per cent, and settled well above the 50000 mark at 50193. The

Nifty-50 too crossed the 15000-mark to close at two-month high of 15108, gaining 184 points.

"Barring the rising daily deaths and slower vaccination drive, we observe more positivity around the Covid-19 situation. Daily cases have fallen below 0.3 million mark this week with visible peaking, driven by Maharashtra, UP, Delhi, Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Haryana,

Gujarat, MP, Telangana, Jharkhand and Bihar. India's recoveries exceeded daily cases for the first time since mid-March and India's share in global recoveries rose to 53 per cent versus 50 per cent in daily cases," JM Financial said about Covid situation.

"Even as 25 states/Union territories (UT) comprising 90 per cent of GDP have lockdown-like curbs overlapping between May

12 and May 24, cases in 20 states/UTs comprising 70-72 per cent of GDP have peaked. Thus these restrictions could be eased soon," analysts from JM Financial said.

"NSE's India VIX index, an indicator of market volatility fell further by 1.89 per cent from 19.60 to 19.24 levels, a new low for 2021. Declining volatility is supporting the bullish market sentiment," said analysts.

LNG IMPORTERS DEFER DELIVERIES ON WEAK DEMAND

STEPHEN STAPCZYNSKI MAY 18

India's liquefied natural gas importers are asking suppliers to defer deliveries as measures to curb the spread of the deadly Covid-19 virus have cut demand for the fuel.

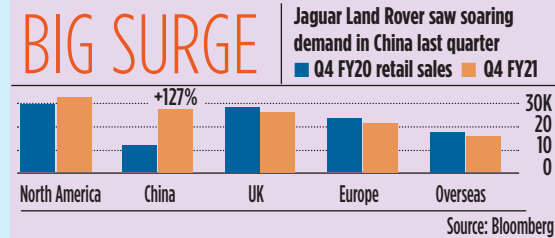
At least three companies, including Indian Oil Corp, have asked to delay shipments slated for May and June delivery, according to traders. Inventories at import terminals in western India, such as Dahej, are near full capacity, the traders said.

The deferrals illustrate the extent of the natural gas glut, which has worsened over the past several weeks. While Indian firms have been accepting most contracted LNG deliveries, they have disappeared from the spot market since the virus worsened last month and shipments became too pricey.

To make matters worse, a cyclone in the vicinity of import terminals has also forced diversions.

—Bloomberg

Tata Motors Q4 loss narrows to ₹7,600 cr



MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, MAY 18

Tata Motors, India's biggest automaker, which owns British iconic luxury car maker Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), narrowed its losses in the March 2021 quarter.

The Mumbai-based passenger and commercial vehicle maker's consolidated net loss for the quarter came down to Rs 7,605.4 crore, mainly on account of asset write downs in its subsidiary JLR, compared with a net loss of Rs 9,864 crore in the year-ago quarter. The company has incurred cash write downs on assets worth Rs 9,606.1 crore during the quarter: This is apart from the restructuring costs of Rs 5,388.2 crore. This is apart from the restructuring costs of Rs 5,388.2 crore. In total, the exceptional loss in Q4 related to JLR stood at nearly Rs 14,000 crore.

It posted a loss of Rs 9,894.2 crore in the corresponding period last year and profit at Rs 2,906.45 crore in the December 2020 quarter.

The carmaker's revenue from operations came in at Rs 88,628 crore for the fourth quarter, up 42 per cent from the revenue of Rs 62,492 crore clocked in

the same quarter last year.

On a standalone basis, Tata Motors reported a net profit of Rs 1,646 crore as against a loss of Rs 4,871 crore in the year-ago period.

For the full financial year 2020-21, the company reported a consolidated net loss of Rs 13,395 crore, against a net loss of Rs 11,975 crore in the previous year.

JLR sold 12 per cent more luxury vehicles in the March quarter as purchases more than doubled in China.

However, Tata Motors has flagged global supply-related challenges, where coronavirus cases are still high in many markets.

"Supply chain issues, in particular for semi-conductors, have become more difficult to mitigate and are now impacting production plans for Q1. The company is working closely with affected suppliers to resolve the issues and minimise the effect on customers," Tata Motors said in an exchange filing on Tuesday.

"While demand remains strong, the supply situation over the next few months is likely to be adversely impacted. We expect Q1 FY22 to be relatively weak," it said.

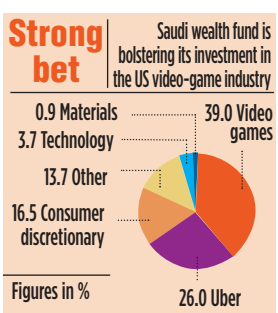
Saudi wealth fund loads up on video-game makers

PAUL ABELSKY MAY 18

Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund doubled down on its pandemic-era investments in video-game makers and added new bets as it raised holdings of US stocks by about a fifth to \$15.4 billion while exiting oil shares.

The Public Investment Fund brought its total commitment to video-game makers, including Activision Blizzard Inc, Electronic Arts Inc and Take-Two Interactive Software Inc to \$6 billion during the first quarter, according to regulatory filings. Those holdings were valued at \$3.3 billion at the end of the fourth quarter.

The PIF also added to its roster by buying \$141 million worth of stock in South Korean e-commerce



giant Coupang Inc, whose biggest backer is Japanese conglomerate SoftBank Group Corp.

Another new investment last quarter included Compute Health Acquisition Corp, a blank-check company set up by Intel Corp chairman Omar Ishrak, with the PIF buying a 8.7 per cent stake for \$75.7 million. The fund exited its stake in Suncor Energy Inc, Canada's top

integrated oil producer, selling 51 million shares.

The \$400-billion PIF is funded through a mixture of borrowing, cash and asset transfers from the government, and retained earnings from its investments. Chaired by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and managed by governor Yasir Al Rumayyan, the fund has outlined a plan to grow its assets to over 4 trillion riyals (\$1.1 trillion) by 2025.

As the PIF is positioning itself to power the local economy, it's also made several high-profile investments in recent years, including a stake in Uber Technologies Inc and big commitments to Softbank's Vision Fund.

The Riyadh-based fund acquired more than \$3 billion worth of stock in the three US video-game mak-

ers for the first time during the fourth quarter. By contrast, its exposure to US equities in the third quarter fell by \$3 billion, mainly because the PIF sold stakes in exchange-traded funds that track the real estate and materials sectors.

Prince Mohammed is a big fan of video games, particularly "Call of Duty." Activision's best-selling franchise. He told Bloomberg Businessweek in 2016 that he was part of the first Saudi generation to grow up with the gaming technology.

In the first quarter, the fund more than doubled its Activision Blizzard stake to 33.4 million shares and almost doubled its holding in Electronic Arts, reaching 14.2 million shares at the end of March.

—Bloomberg

IT & BIZ SERVICES MARKET GROWS 5.4% TO \$13.4 BN IN 2020: IDC

New Delhi, May 18: The IT and Business Services market in the country recorded a lower year-on-year growth of 5.41 per cent to \$13.41 billion in 2020 due to the impact of the pandemic on organisations, research firm IDC said on Tuesday.

However, the IT and Business Services market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 7.18 per cent between 2020-2025 and touch nearly \$19 billion by the end of 2025 on the back of increased spending in areas like cloud and artificial intelligence.

The Indian IT and Business Services market had grown by 8.43 per cent in 2019, but the growth rate fell in 2020 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on businesses in the country, as per IDC Worldwide Semi-annual Services Tracker.

Of the IT and Business Services market, the IT Services segment contributed 77.06 per cent and grew by 5.97 per cent in 2020. This is against a growth rate of 8.91 per cent in 2019. —PTI

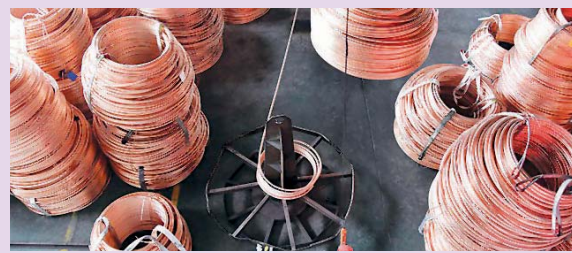
STOCKING | UP Once viewed as liabilities, fatter inventories are back in vogue World economy is running low on everything

BRENDAN MURRAY, ENDA CURRAN & KIM CHIPMAN MAY 18

A year ago, as the pandemic ravaged country after country and economies shuddered, consumers were the ones panic-buying. Today, on the rebound, it's companies furiously stocking up.

Mattress producers to car manufacturers to aluminum foil makers are buying more material than they need to survive the breakneck speed at which demand for goods is recovering and assuage that primal fear of running out. The corporate buying and hoarding is pushing supply chains to the brink of seizing up. Shortages, transportation bottlenecks and price spikes are nearing the highest levels in recent memory, raising concern that a supercharged global economy will stoke inflation.

Copper, iron ore and steel. Corn, coffee, wheat and soybeans. Lumber, semiconductors, plastic and cardboard for packag-



ing. The world is seemingly low on all of it. "You name it, and we have a shortage on it," Tom Linebarger, chairman and chief executive of engine and generator manufacturer Cummins Inc., said on a call this month. Clients are "trying to get everything they can because they see high demand," Jennifer Rumsey, the Columbus, Indiana-based company's president, said. "They think it's going to extend into next year."

The difference between the big crunch of 2021 and past supply disruptions is the sheer magnitude of it, and the fact that there is as far as anyone can tell - no clear end in sight. Big or small, few businesses are spared. Europe's

largest fleet of trucks, Girtel Logistics, says there's been a struggle to find enough capacity. Monster Beverage Corp. of Corona, California, is dealing with an aluminum can scarcity. Hong Kong's Moxam Technology Ltd. is delaying production of a new product because of a dearth of semiconductors.

Further exacerbating the situation is an unusually long and growing list of calamities that have rocked commodities in recent months. A freak accident in the Suez Canal backed up global shipping in March. Drought has wreaked havoc upon agricultural crops. A deep freeze and mass blackout wiped out energy and petrochemical operations across the central US in

February. Less than two weeks ago, hackers brought down the largest fuel pipeline in the US, driving gasoline prices above \$3 a gallon for the first time since 2014. Now India's massive Covid-19 outbreak is threatening its biggest ports.

For anyone who thinks it's all going to end in a few months, consider the somewhat obscure US economic indicator known as the Logistics Managers' Index. The gauge is built on a monthly survey of corporate supply chiefs that asks where they see inventory, transportation and warehouse expenses - the three key components of managing supply chains - now and in 12 months. The current index is at its second-highest level in records dating back to 2016, and the future gauge shows little respite a year from now. The index has proven unnervingly accurate in the past, matching up with actual costs about 90 per cent of the time.

To Zac Rogers, who helps compile the index as an assistant professor at

Colorado State University's College of Business, it's a paradigm shift. In the past, those three areas were optimized for low costs and reliability. Today, with e-commerce demand soaring, warehouses have moved from the cheap outskirts of urban areas to prime parking garages downtown or vacant department-store space where deliveries can be made quickly, albeit with pricier real estate, labour and utilities. Once viewed as liabilities before the pandemic, fatter inventories are in vogue. Transport costs, more volatile than the other two, won't lighten up until demand does.

"We're going to continue to see some price increases over the next 12 months," Rogers said.

A growing chorus of observers are warning that inflation is bound to quicken. The threat has been enough to send tremors through world capitals, central banks, factories and supermarkets.

—Bloomberg

DISRUPTIONS MAY DELAY COMPLETION OF HOUSING PROJECTS

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 18

Supply chain disruptions and worker migration due to localised lockdowns are affecting the construction of residential properties in key cities. The completion of more than 4 lakh housing units scheduled for this year might be delayed due to these disruptions.

Over 4.22 lakh units are scheduled to be completed by 2021-end across the top 7 cities, according to Anarock Property Consultants. Of this, 72 per cent of the total homes to be delivered by 2021-end are already sold out. Though there is no outright ban now during the current localised lockdowns unlike the first lockdown last year when construction activity came to a complete halt, disruptions in raw material supply chain may cause some delay in completion.

"The tally of 4.22 lakh homes scheduled for delivery across the top 7 cities by 2021-end must, however, be viewed in context with the severe second wave of Covid-19 infections. All the top cities have been affected, and it is likely that a part of these project deliveries will be pushed to 2022," said Anuj Puri, chairman, Anarock Property Consultants.

The transportation of raw materials is getting affected due to restrictions. Further, the closure of stores selling non-essential goods and restricted timings are affecting the availability. Most of the construction sites are permitted to deploy only a fraction of the workforce by ensuring social distancing norms. This too has affected the pace of work.

Moreover, the migration of workers to their native places ahead of lock-down in some cities has considerably constrained the construction activity.

"Now, amid the ongoing second wave of Covid-19 and the various curbs due to the lockdown in various states, the sector is facing a gradual slowdown which has made it extremely difficult to sustain the momentum," said Ashok Mohanani, president, Naredco Maharashtra.

SHORT TAKES

Big guns Federer, Serena busted

Geneva: Roger Federer lost the first match of his comeback proper on Tuesday as the Swiss tennis great tumbled out of the Geneva Open on his first outing in two months. Federer lost 4-6, 6-4, 4-6 to Spanish clay court specialist Pablo Andujar to wreck the 39-year-old's hopes of stringing a run of matches together. Meanwhile, former world number one Serena Williams crashed out of the WTA tournament in Parma, Italy, on Tuesday when she was beaten in straight sets 7-6, 6-2 in her second round match by Czech Katerina Siniakova. The 39-year-old, currently ranked eighth in the world, had been given a wild card to play in Parma after her premature exit from the Italian Open, where she also lost in the second round in what was her first match in three months. — AFP

England rest IPL stars for NZ series

London: England on Tuesday rested IPL stars including Jos Buttler and Jonny Bairstow for the upcoming two-Test series against New Zealand while Jofra Archer and Ben Stokes were not considered for selection due to injuries. England named a 15-man squad for the series starting June 2. "Multi-format players Moeen Ali, Jonathan Bairstow, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran and Chris Woakes are rested after completing a quarantine period following the cancellation of the Indian Premier League earlier this month. They will spend some time resting before joining up with their respective counties in due course," the ECB said in a statement. — PTI

Covid-free Saha fit for English tour

New Delhi: Wriddhiman Saha has recovered from Covid-19 and will be available for India's tour of England next month. Saha has reached his home in Kolkata after completing over a fortnight-long quarantine at a Delhi hotel. The wicketkeeper was picked for the England-bound squad subject to fitness. The 36-year-old was among the players who contracted the dreaded virus in the currently-suspended Indian Premier league while playing for SunRisers Hyderabad. "Wriddhiman is back home yesterday after two and half weeks of hotel quarantine in Delhi," a source close to the player said. Saha will have to return another negative RT-PCR test before joining the pre-departure bubble in Mumbai, where the squad will undergo hard quarantine before boarding the flight to England. — PTI

BCCI pays for Oz players' quarantine

Sydney: The BCCI is footing the bill for the 14-day quarantine of Australian IPL players, who have arrived here from Maldives, Cricket Australia interim CEO Nick Hockley said on Tuesday. Most of the 38 members of the Australian contingent, including top players, officials and commentators, landed at the Sydney airport on Monday after a forced stopover at Maldives. The players had to spend 10 days in Maldives due to a ban imposed by the Australian government on travellers from Covid-ravaged India till May 15. Hockley said the BCCI has kept its promise and funded the whole operation. "Yes," Hockley told *Sydney Morning Herald* when asked if BCCI was paying for the quarantine. — PTI

Cricketer Priya's mom dies of Covid

New Delhi: India international Priya Punia, who is part of the UK-bound women's cricket squad, has lost her mother to Covid-19. The 24-year-old cricketer wrote a heartfelt post on social media after her mother succumbed to the deadly virus. "Today I realised why you always told me to be strong. You knew that one day I would need the strength to bear the loss of yours. I miss you so much. No matter the distance I know you are always there with me. My guiding star, my mom. Love you always," Punia wrote on *Instagram*. — PTI

GHOST FROM PAST

Bancroft backtracks, other Aussies urge to end ball-tampering row

Sydney, May 18: Cameron Bancroft backtracked after dropping hints of other bowlers' involvement in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal while the men in question, including top pacer Pat Cummins, claimed innocence and pleaded for an end to "rumour-mongering and innuendo" surrounding the incident that tarred Australia's cricketing reputation. Bancroft kicked up a storm recently when he stated that it was "pretty self explanatory" when asked whether other bowlers in the team knew of the plan to use a sandpaper on the ball during the Cape Town Test against South Africa in 2018.

On Tuesday, a *Sydney Morning Herald* report, quoting sources familiar with the situation, stated that Bancroft had no fresh information to give to Cricket Australia's integrity unit, which contacted him. CA had offered a reinvestigation after Bancroft's interview. The men who were caught in the storm triggered by his statement were Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Nathan Lyon, who were all part of the team during the series. They issued a joint statement to deny any knowledge of the illegal plot.

"Bancroft, who is playing county cricket in the UK, had responded overnight on Monday in a conciliatory manner and indicated that he did not have significant new information to share with CA," the *Sydney Morning Herald* report stated. "Bancroft is said to have told CA he is supportive of the investigation and satisfied with the outcome," it added.

The Australian bowling attack in the Cape Town Test also comprised all-rounder Mitchell Marsh. According to the report, Bancroft also reached out to the affected bowlers in order to explain his recent comments. "Bancroft had claimed he was left flustered by the unexpected line of questioning and that there was no malice behind his remarks."

The joint statement issued by Cummins, Starc, Hazlewood and Lyon sought closure. "We pride ourselves on our honesty. So it's been disappointing to see that our integrity has been questioned by some journalists and past players in recent days in regard to the Cape Town Test of 2018," the statement read. "...we feel compelled to put the key facts on the record again: We did not know a foreign substance was taken onto the field to alter the condition of the ball until we saw the images on the big screen at Newlands."

The four bowlers said they learned valuable lessons and it is time to move on from the issue. "None of this excuses what happened on the field that day at Newlands. It was wrong and it should never have happened."

"We've all learned valuable lessons and we'd like to think the public can see a change for the better in terms of the way we play, the way we behave and respect the game. "We respectfully request an end to the rumour-mongering and innuendo.



A file photo of Cameron Bancroft addressing a press conference in Perth to issue an apology for his role in the 2018 ball-tampering scandal.

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It has gone on too long and it is time to move on," the statement said.

WARNER CAN REVEAL MORE, SAYS BROAD

England pacer Stuart Broad feels Australian cricket would be in for an "interesting time" if David Warner ever decides to write a book and open up about the ball-tampering scandal that led to him being barred from national captaincy for life.

Broad also agreed with Bancroft — who was banned for nine months for his role in the scandal — and then Australian bowling coach David Saker that the knowledge of the illegal play was not limited to the three men who were suspended for

their part in it.

"I have seen a couple of comments from David Warner's agent, too, and I think it will be an interesting time when he stops playing for Australia and writes a book," Broad said.

"There's no doubt the Aussies would have been hoping this episode was signed sealed and delivered. It was an incredibly tough thing for those three players to go through. I can't see it still being a conversation (when the Ashes start) in November, but I can see it being sung in the Barmy Army stands if they're allowed."

Broad said in his experience, a bowler is very sensitive to the condition of the ball. — PTI

DE VILLIERS' SA RETURN RULED OUT

Johannesburg, May 18: Cricket South Africa on Tuesday announced that AB de Villiers won't be coming out of international retirement ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup in India, saying that he has decided "once and for all" to not change his mind.

Putting to rest speculations around his comeback, CSA said that "discussions with AB de Villiers have concluded with the batsman deciding once and for all, that his retirement will remain final."

The statement was reportedly made after CSA announced the team for upcoming tour of the West Indies, though it focussed largely on the squads for the two Test matches and five T20Is in the Caribbean islands rather than de Villiers' retirement.

In May 2018, de Villiers had announced his retirement from international cricket. He played 114 Tests, 228 ODIs and 78 T20Is before announcing the surprise decision.

However, last month the 37-year-old versatile cricketer said it would be "fantastic" to make an international comeback ahead of the T20 World Cup. — PTI

Kane ready for showdown

London, May 18: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson is excited to face India in the World Test Championships (WTC) final next month as he considers show-downs against Virat Kohli's men to be a "fantastic challenge". India and New Zealand square-off in the final of the inaugural World Test Championships in Southampton from June 18.

"When we play against India, it has always been a fantastic challenge and so it is really exciting to be playing against them," Williamson said in a video posted by the ICC on its Twitter handle.

"It's really, really exciting to be involved in the final, obviously to win it would be that much better," said the 30-year-old considered one of the best current batsmen in the world.

Talking about championship and how it progressed, Williamson said, "We saw the contests in the WTC has brought real excitement."

"... the games were really tight such as in the India-Australia series and our series against Pakistan as well where you had to really fight hard to get the results, which is really great."

New Zealand pacer Neil Wagner admitted India possess fast bowlers who



India captain Virat Kohli and his New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson.

can exploit the English conditions but said the wickets can change any time and become flat also. "India has a lot of quality fast bowlers who have done well in different conditions, they can swing (the ball) under overcast conditions but when the sun comes out it (wicket) is flat and nothing happens."

"(English) Conditions can change throughout and so I am not getting carried away too much,

trying to control the controllables."

India batsman Hanuma Vihari, who is in England for a county stint with Warwickshire, said it would be a great feeling to play for his country in the WTC final.

"I am excited but I would want to be in that moment and not to get too much carried away by the importance of the situation," he said.

"But as a sportsman, to play for India in the final

of inaugural World Test Championships is always a great feeling," said the 27-year-old batsman who is currently playing county cricket in England.

The majority of the Kiwi players have reached the UK as they play a two-match series against England starting June 2 before the WTC final.

The Indians are expected to reach here in the first week of June. — PTI

Faf received death threat for Cup debacle

New Delhi, May 18: Former South Africa skipper Faf du Plessis was revealed that he and his wife received death threats after a mix-up with AB de Villiers led to the latter's run out during their 2011 World Cup semi-final defeat to New Zealand.

Played at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, Dhaka, South Africa lost the match by 49 runs to be knocked out of the tournament, which was won by co-hosts India. "I received death threats after that (match). My wife received death threats. We turned on



Faf du Plessis

social media and we were blown away. It became very personal. There were some very offensive things said that I won't repeat," du Plessis was

quoted as saying by *ESPNcricinfo*.

"It makes you introverted towards people and you put a shield up. All players go through this and it

forces us to keep our circles very small. It's why I've worked so hard on creating a safe space within our camp," he added.

SOUTH AFRICA ANNOUNCE SQUAD

South Africa named 19 players for two Test matches to be played in St Lucia and 20 players for five T20 internationals in Grenada. — PTI

Squads: Test: Dean Elgar (c), Temba Bavuma (vc), Quinton de Kock (wkt), Sarel Erwee, Beuran Hendricks, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, Wiaan Mulder, Lungi Ngidi,

Anrich Nortje, Keegan Peterson, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Preenelan Subrayen, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne, Lizaad Williams.

T20: Temba Bavuma (c), Quinton de Kock (w), Bjorn Fortuin, Reeza Hendricks, Heinrich Klaasen, George Linde, Sisanda Magala, Keshav Maharaj, Janneman Malan, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen, Kyle Verreynne, Lizaad Williams.



Sudhakar Vemuri

Quiet please! Ref Sudhakar leaves badminton court Covid claims renowned official

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 18

Renowned badminton official Sudhakar Vemuri passed away in Hyderabad on Tuesday morning while being treated for Covid-19. He was 71 and left behind his wife and two daughters.

Sudhakar umpired at three consecutive Olympics — Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000, only Asian to do so.

The respected umpire also officiated in several tournaments including two Asian Games in 1982 (New Delhi) and 1994 (Hiroshima, Japan), one Special Olympics in 1995 (Connecticut, USA), Thomas and Uber Cups, Sudirman Cups and World Championships, and many other national and international tournaments in India and across the world.

After retiring as an umpire in 2004, he became a referee and later a Course Conductor and Assessor.

He was the deputy chairman of Badminton Asia's Technical Officials Committee till he breathed his last.

He is also the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from Badminton World Federation (BWF) and Dr Ramineni Foundation Award in USA.

Born on December 1, 1949 in Hyderabad, Sudhakar did his schooling from Methodist Boys High School, graduation at Nizam College and completed his Master's degree from Osmania University before working for the Food Corporation of India, Syndicate Bank and Airtel.

Sudhakar entered the field of badminton in 1976 as a Line Judge in the Asian Championships held in Hyderabad. He became a State Umpire in 1980, National Umpire Grade II in 1982 and Grade I in 1984 by securing 99%, the highest mark.

Subsequently, he became a Badminton Asia Certified Umpire and International Badminton Federation (IBF) Accredited Umpire in 1988 before graduating to the IBF Certificated Umpire (the highest level in international umpiring) at the World Championships in

A colossal figure in the badminton circuit in Hyderabad, he passed on his wisdom to several upcoming players and officials. He leaves an unparalleled legacy of integrity, honesty and commitment to badminton, and will remain irreplaceable in the hearts of those who knew and loved him.

— PULLELA GOPICHAND
National badminton coach

I am shocked to hear that Shri Sudhakar Vemuri sir, international badminton umpire, has passed away. I extend my deepest condolences to his family.

— P. V. SINDHU
Badminton world champion

Really sad to hear about Vemuri Sudhakar sir. My condolences to his family. An irreparable loss to badminton. He trained many officials and players to be perfect and I personally have learnt a lot from you sir. You will always be in our heart.

— N. SIKKI REDDY
Badminton doubles player

Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1991.

"He was an excellent teacher for the Technical Officials of India and Asia. Badminton Association of Telangana (BAT) conveys its deepest condolences to his bereaved family," BAT president K. Taraka Rama Rao (KTR) and officials stated in a press release.

The Badminton Association of India too mourned Sudhakar's demise. "The sport has also lost one of its biggest emissaries," it said.

"We thank him for all that he has achieved with Badminton Asia. We send our deepest condolences to his family and loved ones. May he rest in peace," Badminton Asia stated.

"Deeply saddened. He was a person with high umpiring standards and a great guide to Indian badminton," said Jagan Mohan Rao Arishnapally, Handball Federation of India president.

WRESTLER | MURDER CASE

Court denies bail to 'hiding' Sushil

New Delhi, May 18: A Delhi Court on Tuesday refused to grant anticipatory bail to absconding Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl that led to the death of a wrestler.

Additional Sessions Judge Jagdish Kumar denied the relief to Sushil Kumar against whom a case of murder, abduction and criminal conspiracy has been registered.

Wrestler Sagar Rana died, while two of his friends Sonu and Amit Kumar got injured, after they were allegedly assaulted by Sushil Kumar and other wrestlers on May 4 night, at the stadium premises in the national capital.

Fearing arrest, the international wrestler moved the Rohini court in Delhi on May 17 seeking anticipatory bail, asserting that



Sushil Kumar

the investigation against him is biased and that no injuries are attributable to him.

However, Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Srivastava, representing the police, told the court that there is electronic evidence where he could be seen with a stick and hitting the wrestler. — PTI