

DECCAN

Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

KARIMNAGAR | MONDAY | 24 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 39.6°C
Min: 26.7°C
RH: 30%
Rain: Nil

Forecast: Cloudy sky.
Thundershowers likely.
Max/Min temp. 38/27°C

WORLD | 5

Bashir is sorry for
Diana interview

SPORTS | 8

Verstappen wins
Monaco GP

TABLOID

New trend that helps
embrace a simpler life

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ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana

Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha

Trayodasi till 12.09 am (Tuesday)

Star: Chitta till 9.47 am

Variyam: 2.45 pm to 4.10 pm

Durmuhurtam: 12.38 pm to 1.30 pm; 3.13 pm to 4.05 pm

Rahukalam: 7.30 am to 9 am

HIJRI CALENDAR

Shawwal 11,1442 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.35 am

Zohar: 12.23 pm

Asar: 4.46 pm

Maghrib: 6.50 pm

Isha: 8.05 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.44 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.42 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 3.35 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 3.03 AM

COUNTER POINT



Gap between 2 doses?
Ask our minister... I
am just a scientist!

SHORT TAKES

India to get
cheetah again

Bhopal: Cheetah, the world's fastest land animal which was declared extinct in India in 1952, is expected to be re-introduced into the country in November this year at the Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh, state forest minister Vijay Shah said on Sunday. The country's last spotted cheetah died in Chhattisgarh in 1947 and it was declared extinct in the country in 1952.

GST body to take
call on 02 gear

New Delhi: The GST Council is its upcoming meeting, scheduled to be held on May 28, is likely to take a call on levy of 12 per cent tax on import of oxygen concentrators for personal use. The Delhi High Court last week said that imposition of 12 per cent Integrated GST (IGST) on oxygen concentrators for personal use or those received as gifts is "unconstitutional".

Petrol reaches
₹100 in Mumbai

New Delhi: Diesel price in the national capital on Sunday crossed ₹84 mark while petrol rate in Mumbai neared ₹100 a litre after fuel prices were raised again. Petrol price was increased by 17 paise per litre and diesel by 29 paise a litre.

CRUCIAL | TEST

States offered 2 options on conducting board exams

CBSE Cl-12 exam likely in July-Sept

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 23

The state government will likely go with the CBSE's proposal to conduct the Class 12 or Intermediate exams between July and September, sources in the state education department said on Sunday, after the high-level meeting conducted by Union education minister Dr Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank'.

At the meeting, led by defence minister Rajnath Singh along with Dr Pokhriyal, with secretaries from the states participat-

The first option involves conducting exams at designated centres, while the second proposes shorter duration exams at their respective schools. Students and parents, however, call for cancellation of board exams

ing, the education ministry sought feedback and suggestions from all states, by May 25, on holding the exams that were earlier postponed due to the Covid-19 second wave.

There is a broad consensus among states about conducting Class 12 CBSE

exams and an "informed, collaborative decision" will be taken by June 1, Dr Pokhriyal said after the meeting.

States like Maharashtra said at a high-level meeting on Sunday that non-examination route for Class 12 students should be actively examined and Delhi and Kerala governments suggested vaccinating students before the exams.

According to sources, the CBSE has proposed conducting exams between July 15 and August 26 and the result to be declared in September. The board also proposed two options: con-

ducting regular exams for 19 major subjects at notified centres or conducting shorter duration exams at respective schools where students are enrolled.

On being asked whether the Telangana state government will be able to safely hold offline exams in the coming months, at a time when there is fear that a likely third wave will impact children more, an official in the education department said that the situation will have to be assessed on all fronts.

State e-pass rule creates
ruckus at TS-AP border

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 23



Vehicles from Andhra Pradesh are jammed at the Ramapuram crossroads near Kodad mandal checkpoint on Sunday after the Telangana police stopped their entry into the state for want of an e-pass.

— DC

Hyderabad and other areas used to reach the Garikapadu checkpoint in Jaggaayapeta mandal by 6 am and enter Telangana state after the lockdown relaxation period from 6 am to 10 am without e-passes. But new norms imposed by the Telangana government on Sunday made the e-pass a must to enter the state even during the relaxation window.

The restriction caused severe hardship to the people of Andhra Pradesh heading to their destinations in Telangana, and caused a traffic jam on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada national highway at Ramapuram crossroads.

A similar situation prevailed at Pondugala, Nagarjunasagar and Dachepalli in Guntur district on the Telangana border.

Making use of the curfew relaxation period, AP residents wishing to go to

sudden implementation of new norms without prior information.

Private employees D. Nagesh and P. Suraj said their relatives were in private hospitals in Hyderabad and they were going to look after them.

People contended, in vain, that during the lockdown relaxation time they can go anywhere but the Telangana government was imposing needless rules, treating them as though they belong to enemy countries.

■ Page 2: People seek AP
govt's intervention

Cyclone Yaas set to
pound WB, Odisha

RAJIB CHOWDHURI and
AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO | DC
KOLKATA/BHUBANESWAR,
MAY 23

As Cyclone "Yaas" is feared to strike the Odisha and West Bengal coasts in a "very severe" shape, as deadly as last year's Amphan, at a maximum windspeed of 155-165 kmph gusting to 185 kmph on May 26 evening, the Indian Air Force has assigned nearly a dozen transport aircraft and more than two dozen helicopters from its fleet for large-scale humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations in the two eastern states.

Cyclone "Yaas", which is gathering strength in the Bay of Bengal, is likely to cross the north Odisha-West Bengal coast between Odisha's Paradip and Sagar Island in West Bengal by May 26 (Wednesday) evening as a very severe cyclonic storm, the India Meteorological Department forecast on Sunday.

"Satellite imageries and ocean buoy observations indicate that Saturday's low pressure area which became well-marked over the east-central Bay of Bengal in the same evening has concentrated into a depression. It is now concentrated over

Cyclone "Yaas", which is gathering strength in the Bay of Bengal, is likely to cross the north Odisha-West Bengal coast between Odisha's Paradip and Sagar Island in West Bengal by May 26 (Wednesday) evening as a very severe cyclonic storm, the India Meteorological Department forecast on Sunday.

The bulletin added that the cyclonic storm will further intensify into a "very severe cyclonic storm" during the next 24 hours. And then it would continue to move north northwestwards, intensify further and reach northwest Bay of Bengal near West Bengal and north Odisha coasts by May 26 morning.

■ Page 4: Navy on standby
to help WB, Odisha

ID must if you step out
during lockdown: Cops

All those on road beyond 10 am need to justify their travel

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC
HYDERABAD MAY 23



Police lock up motorists at the Hyderabad Public School campus in Begumpet for violating norms by being on road after the lockdown relaxation ended at 10 am.

— DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Top cops of the city have intervened to make implementation of lockdown smoother after reports of police high-handedness on Saturday hit the headlines and social media.

Food delivery boys, who were at the wrong end of the stick, have been permitted to make their deliveries. They will, however, have to provide authentic proof for their presence in a place during the lockdown once police stop them.

As per orders issued by higher officials, there will be hassle-free movement for doctors, nurses, hospital staff, sweepers, pharmacists, lab technicians, hospital supervisors, managers, oxygen technicians, medical shop workers and so on, provided they produce the proof of their identity.

"Police have been asked to check doctor's appointment, date on prescription, vaccine date, recent medical documents, proof of donating blood, or being a patient's attendant. Tickets of passengers heading to railway stations or

airport and luggage will be checked," sources told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Food, e-commerce and essential delivery agents will be allowed, provided they produce proof of take-away orders and deliveries. e-Commerce services had been severely hit in different parts of Hydera-

bad and Secunderabad on Saturday after police took action against about 50 violators found roaming wearing tee shirts of delivery boys.

Delivery firms, such as Zomato and Swiggy, and e-groceries firm Big Basket, took objection at their deliveries being stopped

saying the government order on lockdown has exempted e-commerce operations from the lockdown restrictions.

In certain cases, food delivery workers had been stuck with food parcels with them after their vehicles were seized by police on Saturday.

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OTHER STORIES

NO CLARITY ON STUDENTS SAFETY DURING EXAMS

From Page 1

The state education official said that they are likely to go by what CBSE decides, owing to health conditions being conducive in the state.

There has been no response, however, on how the state government plans to keep the students and staff safe through vaccination before the exams, considering the shortage in supply of vaccines across the country.

The CBSE has already cancelled Class 10 board exams and announced an alternative marking policy. The April and May edition of the engineering entrance exam JEE-Mains were also postponed.

According to sources, the first option proposed was conducting exams at designated centres for 19 major subjects.

For minor subjects assessment can be based on performance in major subjects. This can be done if three months of time period is clearly and safely available to the board. August could be a likely month for holding the exams and the whole process is likely to go on till September end, a source said.

Elaborating on the second option, the source said, the exams can be conducted twice by the board depending upon the conducive situation. If a student is not able to appear due to any Covid related matter, he or she will be provided another opportunity to sit for exams."

The exams will be of 90 minutes duration instead of three hours and will be conducted in same schools where students are enrolled. The questions will be objective and very short answer type. Students will have to appear in one language and three elective subjects, the source added.

The tentative timeline for this option is the first phase of exams from July 15 to August 1 and the second phase from August 8-26. Exams are proposed to be conducted on Sundays also, the source said.

Virus on wheels



A motorist wears a helmet that resembles the Coronavirus and carries a balloon that also looks like the virus, to increase awareness of Covid-19, at Koti in Hyderabad on Sunday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

Second wave hits land registrations

Earnings from stamps and registration dept plunge

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 23

The second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has put the brakes on the real estate businesses, which was booming in the initial months of the year.

People are afraid of venturing out and are postponing their plans to buy or sell property. Many are not interested in selling their property unless the money is good.

As a result, registrations in April dropped significantly. Only half of normal registrations had been reported in the first week of May. And, from May 12,

● **REGISTRATIONS OF agricultural lands by Dharani have also fallen drastically. Compared to 19,477 registrations from April 1 to 10, it was a mere 13,311 registrations from May 1 to 10.**

when the government announced a lockdown, it has come to a standstill.

In April, the department of stamps and registrations generated revenue of ₹580 crore. More than 4,500 documents were registered on an average every day to net ₹20 crore to ₹25 crore.

Registrations halved in the first week of May. While 2,500 to 3,000 documents are registered per day, the daily income does not

exceed ₹12 crore. In the 11 days since the lockdown, 26,574 documents have been registered and they generated ₹120 crore. Meanwhile, construction of large buildings also came to a grinding halt as many migrant workers headed home for fear of being caught in a lockdown.

Based on past experiences, some builders and real estate traders are working towards providing all facilities to their workers. It may

be noted that many new projects were launched in the last three to four months after the first wave subsided.

Registrations of agricultural lands by Dharani have also fallen drastically. Compared to 19,477 registrations from April 1 to 10, it was a mere 13,311 registrations from May 1 to 10.

A total of 14,766 agriculture registrations were made through Dharani during the month, generating revenue of around ₹80 crore. Total revenue from registrations have not crossed ₹200 crore this month.

Book errant private Covid hospitals: Dasoju Sravan

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, MAY 23

Condemning police excesses on general public in the name of lockdown implementation, AICC spokesperson Dr Dasoju Sravan wondered why the state government was not enforcing GO 248 and GO 539, which were brought in to crack down on erring corporate hospitals and diagnostic centres.

He said that the over-enthusiasm Telangana police was only aimed at impressing Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao.

He said their behaviour has been affecting the livelihoods of scores of poor and marginalised families, belonging to SC, ST, BC and

minority communities and also affecting delivery of Covid-19 healthcare services.

"While the whole state is in the grip of the pandemic and people are subject to unprecedented suffering due to the second wave, Telangana police's excesses in the name of lockdown GO implementation, is causing further agony to the already suffering populace.

It is unfortunate that police are resorting to lathicharge, abuse, putting heavy fines on people and confiscating vehicles citing lockdown rules violations, even though people are scrupulously following rules.

What's disheartening is, police are thrashing and

obstructing even those involved in essential services delivery like e-commerce delivery staff, healthcare workers, vegetable and groceries vendors, transport operators and others.

Why are they turning a blind eye to the brazen violations committed by corporate hospitals, which were also violating GOs 248 and 539? asked Sravan, highlighting police excesses on the general public.

Alleging collusion among government and corporate hospitals, he also questioned as to why neither Telangana police nor Covid-19 Taskforce were showing the same intensity in cracking down on corporate hospitals.

BJP TO HOLD PROTEST FOR FARMERS' CAUSE TODAY

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 23

The BJP has decided to hold a protest programme on Monday titled 'Telangana Rythu Gosa — BJP Poru Deeksha' demanding that the government solve farmers' problems.

BJP leaders including state party president Bandi Sanjay Kumar and others will participate in the deeksha from 10 am to 1 pm at mandal level to state level party offices.

Announcing the programme, Sanjay alleged that the government had failed to purchase paddy from farmers and accused the Chief Minister of neglecting to pay money to farmers in time.

He said the traders were cheating farmers in the name of Tarugu, adding that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao was not fulfilling the loan waiver promise even after completing two years.

He appealed to the cadre to make the deeksha a success to press the government to solve the farmers' problems.



Dandepalli police personnel drops the elderly woman at her village on bike at Myadaripeta during the lockdown in Mancherla district on Sunday.

DANDEPALLI POLICE HELP ELDERLY WOMAN DURING LOCKDOWN

DC CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD, MAY 23

Dandepalli police helped an elderly woman of Kondapur village during the lockdown.

Police said the woman had reached Myadaripeta in Mancherla district for purchasing essential commodities during the lockdown relaxation on Sunday morning. However, by the time she

finished her shopping, it was 10 a.m. and no autos were plying to her village.

Area sub-inspector Srikanth saw her standing at the auto stand in the scorching sun and approached her.

The elderly woman informed him about her plight. The SI then asked a constable to drop her on a bike at Madhapur village, where her daughter lives.

TPCC inaugurates ambulance service

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 23

TPCC president Uttam Kumar Reddy on Sunday launched free ambulances for Covid-19 patients. Ambulance services would be available within 50 km of Hyderabad, he said.

Speaking to mediapersons, he said private ambulances were fleecing families of patients and the government was doing nothing to bring respite to the public from the daylight robbery. He asked the state government to control amounts charged by private hospitals. He pointed out that in other states the authorities have taken over private hospitals where they are providing free medical care to Covid patients.

The Congress leader lamented that was not increasing corona tests despite a High Court order to that extent.

He stated that any Covid patient or their family members calling PCC control room at Gandhi Bhavan would be provided ambulance service free of cost to and from any hospital in the twin cities. The ambulances

● **UTTAM KUMAR Reddy lamented that the government was not increasing Covid-19 tests despite a High Court order.**

have been gifted by legislator T. Jayaprakash 'Jagga' Reddy.

The TPCC president also visited the check dam site at Moosivoddu Singaram village in Palakeedu mandal for which ₹ 7.30 crore has been sanctioned with NABARD funds. He was surprised to see that work had started at a site that was 300 metres upstream of the site where it has been sanctioned.

He alleged that it was highly irregular and in violation of all rules to the extent that the entire village is against construction of the dam at that site.

He stated that the gram panchayat has passed an official resolution asking for the check dam work to be stopped at the present site and be shifted downstream.

He said that he would demand an ACB or Vigilance inquiry into the matter.



TPCC president Uttam Kumar Reddy, ex-PCC president Ponnala Lakshmaiah, Congress MLA T. Jayaprakash 'Jagga' Reddy and others at the launch of the free ambulance services at Gandhi Bhavan in Hyderabad on Sunday. — P. ANIL KUMAR

Ponnala blames Centre, state for spread of Covid-19

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 23

Former PCC chief Ponnala Lakshmaiah expressed dissatisfaction with the Centre and the state governments over what he called their dismal Covid-19 control measures.

Speaking to the media here on Sunday, he lamented that the Union and state governments had

ignored suggestions from experts over steps needed to be taken to contain and prevent the spread of the Coronavirus. He said that the state government was giving wrong figures with regard to Covid-19 positive cases in the villages.

Lakshmaiah said that there are 350 oxygen plants in Telangana state and wanted to know if the TRS government knew

about making best use of them.

He wondered why no action was being taken against private hospitals, which were fleecing people with exorbitant charges.

Reports about black fungus and Coronavirus were creating panic among people but the government has been silent on the issue, the Congress leader said.

Black fungus: ENT Hosp runs on fumes

BALU PULIPAKA | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 23

The Government ENT Hospital in Koti, the designated nodal centre for Telangana state for treating cases of mucormycosis, or black fungus, is running on fumes. In a grim tale, the staff at the hospital says they are turning away around 50 such patients every day over the past three days.

All of its 150 beds are full with patients suffering from the disease, and another 50 patients are crammed into the facility.

"We do not have space anymore," a doctor at the hospital told *Deccan Chronicle* on Sunday. "The Covid-19 vaccination centre here is being

● **PACKED WITH patients suffering from varying degrees of mucormycosis, the hospital has requested, via the official online request system, for 700 vials of liposomal amphoterecin-B injections. "We need these 700 to start with and need more supplies every day."**

converted for treatment of black fungus cases, and we can add another 30 beds there," the doctor said.

Packed with patients suffering from varying degrees of mucormycosis, the hospital has requested, via the official online request system, for 700 vials of liposomal amphoterecin-B injections. "We need these 700 to start with and need more supplies every day."

"Gandhi Hospital needs another 100 vials urgently, while private hospitals

are waiting for 200 more to keep the treatment going," a doctor said.

Gandhi Hospital is the nodal centre in Telangana for treating Covid-19 patients. But, it has been designated as a treatment facility for black fungus cases when the patients are Covid-19 positive.

The ENT Hospital, with three surgical beds, was never meant to cope with such an influx of emergency cases. The primary and first line of defence

treatment for black fungus is debridement -- the cleaning of the sinuses. This takes anywhere up to two to three hours for a patient.

"Since we have only three beds, we are not able to do more than 10 debridements a day. Ideally, we should be doing around 50 a day so we can repeat the procedures on all patients who need it, within two or three days of the first cleaning. But that requires more surgical beds, and more teams of specialists," the doctor said.

The faster the cleaning, the better the chances of healing. The procedure removes the growing mucus from the sinuses, prevents it from eating

into the bones, reaching the eyes, or the brain. Once the fungus takes hold of the eyes, and if the treatment is delayed, the infected eye, or both eyes must be removed. This is to prevent the infection from reaching the brain.

And if it reaches the brain, then the chances of the patient's survival get slimmer by the hour.

"It is not just the eyes that need to be removed. Sometimes, even the bones around it, sometimes up to the cheek, need to be removed; leaving gaping holes that need complicated reconstruction surgeries" something we are not just able to provide the patient," a doctor said.

PEOPLE SEEK AP GOVERNMENT'S INTERVENTION

From Page 1

They sought the intervention of the Andhra Pradesh government to secure free passage during the relaxation window.

The Telangana state police pointed out that the restrictions were meant to discourage those unnecessarily crossing the state borders and wandering in Telangana state, posing a big threat in times of the severe pandemic.

Meanwhile, leaders of Telugu Desam and other parties objected to the TS norms. They observed that Telangana is not a separate country but a neighbouring state and part of India and, hence, Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao should allow the unrestricted entry of people from the AP side during the relaxation. They demanded that AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy take the issue to the notice of Chandrashekar Rao for lifting restrictions on the AP people.

90% black fungus patients can be treated: Experts

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 23

Several doctors and medical experts emphasised on the need to create awareness on black fungus, a growing concern among Covid-19 recovered patients and diabetics. They were speaking at a webinar organised by the Telangana State Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Trade (TSFCCCT) here on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, senior ENT specialist and surgeon Dr M Mohan Reddy expressed concern over the increasing rate of fungal infection in the city, saying that the situation was so bad that hospitals in the city were overflowing with mucormycosis cases.

"In Telangana, ENT

Hospital at Koti is fully occupied with 150 patients and they are expanding the capacity by converting the vaccine centre into black fungus ward. If I have done 30 surgeries in the last 30 years, I have done the same number of mucormycosis surgeries in the last two to three weeks," he said.

Dispelling myths relating to the disease, Dr Reddy said even though it was a rare disease that was now spreading like wildfire, it did not mean it would affect every Covid patient. "The cases reported so far had a history of diabetes. However, it doesn't mean that all diabetics will get it. At the same time, all those who are subjected to high doses of steroids do not get black fungus," he added.

MP Revanth inaugurates Bolaram Covid hospital

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 23

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) working president and Malkajigiri MP A Revanth Reddy on Sunday inaugurated the Covid-19 Hospital at Bolaram in the Secunderabad Cantonment.

On the occasion, Revanth Reddy had allocated Rs 1 crore from his MP Local Area Development Scheme fund to the hospital. He also raised funds from his associates in the US for the 50-bed hospital.

This is the first dedicated Covid-19 hospital in the Cantonment, and its inauguration brings some relief to the residents of the area. The hospital has been set up with a capacity of 50 oxygen beds. Revanth Reddy said the Covid-19 vaccination programme for the people of the constituency would be co-

● **He promised to set up a full-fledged Coronavirus hospital with a capacity of 100 oxygen beds soon. He thanked everyone who had contributed for setting up the Coronavirus hospital in the Cantonment.**

ducted from the hospital.

He promised to set up a full-fledged Coronavirus hospital with a capacity of 100 oxygen beds soon. He thanked everyone who had contributed for setting up the Coronavirus hospital in the Cantonment.

Speaking to the media, he said the people of his Malkajigiri constituency were finding it difficult to get treatment in private hospitals, and the government had failed to control the 'medical mafia' which was overcharging patients. That was why he had set up the 50-bed hos-

pital. Speaking to this newspaper, J Maheshwar Reddy, vice-president of SCB, said, "This hospital would enable people across economic strata to use the services and recover from Covid-19. Also, it will have two ambulances to cater to emergencies." Earlier this month, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) had donated 100 oxygen cylinders, of which 50 were handed over to the SCB. Each of these cylinders can store 7,000 litres of oxygen. These high pressure seamless cylinders are certified by Bureau of Indian Standards and approved by the Petroleum & Explosives Safety Organisation.

An official of the board said, "We are spraying sodium hypochlorite at places of congregation to prevent the spread of Covid-19."

OTHER STORIES

APPALA KAVERI TRUST'S GESTURE TO ADIVASIS

PILLALAMARRI SRINIVAS | DC ADILABAD, MAY 23

Dr Appala Kaveri Foundation of Nirmal has distributed essential commodities to 300 Kolams families of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in Adilabad Rural, Gadeveda and Narnoor mandals in the Adilabad district on Sunday.

The essential commodities were distributed in the interior agency areas.

Kolam Adivasis depend on minor forest produce for their livelihood but Covid pandemic hit their livelihood comprises of making mats and baskets with the bamboo and sell them in weekly shandies for their living.

Addressing on the occasion, Foundation chairman Dr Appala Chakradhari said they wanted to supply essential commodities to the Kolam Adivasis who suffered a lot with the lockdown and are unable to feed their families with no sale of their traditional bamboo items.

Dr Chakradhari opined that it would be good if elected public representatives and NGOs come forward to provide essential commodities to the Kolam Adivasis.

Dr Chakradhari who is a pediatrician, conducted tests to the Kolam Children and women and gave medicines.

MANY KNOW PERSONS DIE BY COVID IN KHAMMAM

DC CORRESPONDENT KHAMMAM, MAY 23

Several Know people like Bhadrachalam Temple Trust former chairman, Kuricheti Panduranga Rao died due to Covid-19 on Sunday. Ramachandra Rao, who is known for his social service also died by Covid, Himachal Pradesh Governor B. Dattatreya expressed his condolences to the bereaved family members.

In Yellandu, a father and son, Venkatesh and Srinu, Tangirala Ranjith Kumar, a scribe in Khammam died of the virus. Alim Kureshi, a person living near Bhakta Ramadasu Kalakshetram died by the Coronavirus

TWO ILLEGAL COVID HOSPITALS SEALED IN KHAMMAM

DC CORRESPONDENT KHAMMAM, MAY 23

Two private hospitals treating Covid-19 patients illegally have been sealed and license of another private hospital for treating those affected by Coronavirus has been cancelled.

As per details available, the 80-bed Prasanthi Hospital had been given permission to treat 20 Coronavirus patients. However, the District Task Force Committee appointed to check irregularities in private hospitals over charging of enormous fee, found that Prasanthi Hospital was treating many more Covid-19 patients. As a result, the permission given to the hospital for treating Coronavirus patients has been cancelled for violation of government rules.

The Task Force team led by ACP Ramunujam and comprising district medical and health officer Malathi and Indian Medical Association secretary Kurapati Pradeep also found that two private hospitals - New Hope and Ganesh - have been extending Covid-19 treatment without getting any permission or license from the government. Following this, the two hospitals have been sealed and 50 Covid-19 patients being treated there shifted to other hospitals.

It is estimated that Prasanthi, New Hope and Ganesh hospitals had collected over ₹5 crore from patients by illegal means. Taskforce ACP said that they will continue maintaining their vigil over private hospitals that are treating Coronavirus patients with the permission of government. Strict action will be taken if any complaints are received against them, he said.

It may be recalled that Dr. Syam Kumar of a private hospital had been booked under various sections of IPC including 302 for administering duplicate Remdesivir injection to a patient five days ago.

Etala preparing ground for new political party

Likely to announce his plan at a massive public meeting

PULI SHARAT KUMAR | DC KARIMNAGAR, MAY 23

Ousted minister Etala Rajendar and his future course of action continue to be the topic of hot discussion across the state. The talk revolves around whether his expulsion from the Cabinet was a good move, whether he will quit the Legislative Assembly, if and by when he is likely to float a political party and whether he will join a national party.

However, impression is gaining ground since the time he changed his Twitter account profile picture and the developments in Huzurabad, that Rajendar is poised to launch a political party.

In the new profile photo, he is in a green kanduwa, with Telangana Talli and statues of martyrs on the right side while photos of Jyothirao Phule, Dr B.R. Ambedkar and Prof. A. Jayashankar on the left along with an image of Telangana state and a fist symbolizing the statehood movement also to the left set in blue, green and yellow background.

The photograph indicates that Rajendar is keen on having Backward



New banner of Etala Rajendar on Twitter.

Class (BC), Scheduled Caste (SC) and Tribes (ST) in his party. Rajendar emerged as a strong BC leader with a considerable hold over BCs, SCs, STs, employee and caste-based unions and students.

On several occasions, he has maintained that he never craved for any post or position and at the same time gave indications that he would not tolerate anyone hurting his self-respect, a slogan on which he is, ostensibly, preparing ground for his new party. He is likely to announce it at a massive public meeting in the near future. Towards this, and to garner political support, he has met some key

leaders of BJP and Congress and disgruntled leaders from the TRS.

It is also learnt that Rajendar is likely to resign as MLA during the public meeting. As people are bearing the brunt of a deadly Covid-19 second wave, he has decided to wait till the situation returns to normalcy.

Sensing this, TRS boss K. Chandrashekar Rao initially handed over the responsibility of taking care of the party cadre of Huzurabad constituency to BC welfare minister Gangula Kamalakara. However, when Rajendar attacked Kamalakara, the CM brought trouble-shooter T. Harish Rao into

● ON SEVERAL occasions, he has maintained that he never craved for any post or position and at the same time gave indications that he would not tolerate anyone hurting his self-respect, a slogan on which he is, ostensibly, preparing ground for his new party.

● HE HAS a considerable hold over BCs, SCs, STs, employee and caste-based unions and students.

Huzurabad politics.

When the TRS started focusing on his supporters, Rajendar asked them to pretend as if they were with the TRS and subsequently come in open support of his party.

Political analysts point out that Rajendar is set to do a Chandrasekhar Rao, who, on being denied a Cabinet berth by N. Chandrababu Naidu had established the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS).

If one were to go with the projections of good support from BCs, SCs, STs and student unions, Rajendar's outfit could be a big thorn to TRS and upset the appellation of Chandrasekhar Rao.

COLLECTOR INSPECTS NEWLY-BUILT 100-BED HOSP

DC CORRESPONDENT KARIMNAGAR, MAY 23

District collector D Krishna Bhaskar on Sunday directed the officials concerned to take necessary steps to provide water connection under Mission Bhagiratha project to the newly constructed 100-bed hospital here at Thippapur village in Vemulawada mandal of Rajanna Sircilla district.

The collector visited the 100 bed hospital complex building and inspected the sump constructed for storage of water on the premises of the hospital.

Speaking on the occasion, Bhaskar ordered the officials of Mission Bhagiratha project to provide water connection under the project to the water sump by Sunday evening.

The officials explained to the collector that a water tank with the capacity of 1.5 lakh litres of water was available on the hospital premises and steps were being taken to give bulk connections by laying pipelines.

Before that, Bhaskar observed general and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) wards that are set up at the hospital.

He informed that preparations were being made for inaugurating the hospital as soon as essential medical equipment were made available in the facility.



Mulugu MLA Seethakka distributes sarees to Asha workers at Kannaigudem in Mulugu on Sunday. —BY ARRANGEMENT

Seethakka felicitates Asha workers for Covid service

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, MAY 23

Congress national general secretary and Mulugu MLA Danasari Anasuya alias Seethakka felicitated 40 Asha workers with sarees at the Primary Health Centre in Kannaigudem of Mulugu district on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, she said thousands of Asha workers are working alongside doctors to fight Coronavirus pandemic. They too are taking care of those infected despite knowing virus may affect them.

● "IF INFECTED with Coronavirus, none of our loved ones will come near us. But Asha workers are serving us even during such times. I extend my special thanks to them," Seethakka remarked

Their services are thus invaluable, she said.

"If infected with Coronavirus, none of our loved ones will come near us. But Asha workers are serving us even during such times. I extend my special thanks to them," Seethakka remarked

The MLA also lauded services of police personnel on duty in these troubled times. She distributed to police personnel food packets organised by block Congress president Erusavadda Venkanna. She also gave essential commodities to families affected by Covid-19.

District Congress president Nallela Kumaraswamy, mandal president Afsar Pasha, MPP Janagam Sammakka, Chitamata Raghu and Md. Chand Pasha were present among those present on the occasion.

CPM OFFERS AID TO COVID PATIENTS IN KHAMMAM

DC CORRESPONDENT KHAMMAM, MAY 23

CPI-M district secretary Nunna Nageswara Rao said CPI-M has decided to serve the people during pandemic times and informed that they will serve food to the people who call to their helpline phone number. "We will serve nutritious food to the patients who are in home isolation at free of cost.

The party decided to involve various service activities during Covid-19 situation. We have already been running a Covid-19 care centre under Bodepudi Vignana Kendram and the food service is another activity", he said. The home isolated Covid-19 patients face difficulty to cook food, get essential commodities. He said that they will supply the food at their door steps just with a phone call.

"The persons who want food for lunch, can call at 9 am and for dinner at 3 pm to the phone numbers of Y Srinivasa Rao-9573691669 and M. Rama Rao-9491923632", he said.



Mayor, Gundu Sudharani inspects the disinfection spray works in the streets of Papaiahpet Chaman. —BY ARRANGEMENT

GWMC to launch disinfection drive

DC CORRESPONDENT WARANGAL, MAY 23

In a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus, the Greater Warangal Municipal Corporation (GWMC) has chalked out a plan to spray disinfectant sodium hypochlorite in all the 66 divisions under its jurisdiction.

Mayor, Gundu Sudharani finalised the plans with the health inspector Madhukar, Assistant Anil, Sanitary Inspectors and others utilise seven tractor mounted sprayers and auto-mounted sprayers to sprinkle the disinfectant on the streets across the tri-cities.

She directed the officials to ensure the entire GWMC area is covered by May 31. "Apart from

● MAYOR told the sanitation staff to clear the garbage in the sewers from time to time and avoid clogging.

the auto mounted and tractor mounted sprayers, we are also deploying hand pump sprayers to sprinkle disinfect in narrow lanes," she informed.

Sudharani told the sanitation staff to clear the garbage in the sewers from time to time and avoid clogging. She warned that she would conduct surprise visits and if negligence is found in terms of sanitation, no one would be spared. The mayor also told the officials to stick to the plan of fogging every ten days for mosquito control.

STAY | SAFE In contrast, people in urban areas not following lockdown norms, says police

Lockdown well-enforced in tribal, agency areas

DC CORRESPONDENT ADILABAD, MAY 23

Inhabitants of agency and rural areas are fully following the Covid lockdown protocols and lockdown guidelines as compared to urban and town areas in the old Adilabad district. All the shops remain closed in rural areas. Roads in the Agency areas and towns are free of traffic for most part.

Police say many people are not following the lockdown norms and Covid protocols in the towns and urban areas. The cases against the vehicle and bike-riders for violation of the lockdown norms are more in numbers in town areas.

Cops say they are trying their best to enforce lock-

● COPS SAY they are trying their best to enforce lockdown in the towns and registering cases against bike-riders and vehicle owners for violation of lockdown norms. Villages are hit majorly by the Covid pandemic in its second wave.

down in the towns and registering cases against bike-riders and vehicle owners for violation of lockdown norms. Villages are hit majorly by the Covid pandemic in its second wave.

Police are keeping a close watch on Adilabad town and in-charge SP Rajeshchandra is leading the enforcement efforts.

Curiously, very many government employees were seen on the roads with passes issued by the authorities. They are found roaming around in their vehicles during

office working hours. The numbers of C-positive cases and deaths in the Agency areas remain low. This is being attributed also to the self-lockdown by the people unlike in the free-wheeling urban areas. Overall, Covid positive cases and deaths are coming down in the old Adilabad district in the last one week.

Both tribals and non-tribals are performing the 'Bonalu' and offering prayers to village deities to protect them from the Covid virus in Adivasi gudums and villages.

Efforts underway to reduce crowds in Khammam markets

DC CORRESPONDENT KHAMMAM, MAY 23

It is being presumed that rhythu bazaars, non-veg outlets and other markets, which were kept open 6 am to 10 am every day are turning to spreading coronavirus.

Factors being attributed are that there is complete violation of Covid-19 guidelines and most people are not wearing masks, nor are they maintaining physical distance thereby making the markets super spreaders.

With experts urging

people to be utmost cautious in the next 20 days, the police department has swung into action and is reducing crowds at market places.

North Telangana IG T Nagireddy, who visited various localities, said that the police should facilitate setting up more markets in close proximity to colonies.

The attendance of people coming to the markets should be divided as this will ensure physical distance.

Nagireddy said, "The police department is

working out on making available vegetables and provisions at more places. With this, the crowd can be reduced at rhythu bazaars". He said that the people should follow self-discipline.

The people related to farm activities are being allowed to go to their fields while vehicle movement at the district border is restricted.

Those moving unnecessarily are being fined, he said. The IG visited Khammam and Julurpad and took stock of the situation.

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SHORT TAKES

DELHI COPS HOLD SPL DRIVE FOR COVID VIOLATORS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

The Delhi Police on Sunday said they want to curb the violations and their plan of “fine and prosecution” will be continued but they want to take a day off and educate people. Few of the districts in Delhi started the awareness drive early morning on Sunday.

In the Southwest district of Delhi, district team along with DCP Ingit Pratap Singh patrolled the streets and gave roses to the violators.

“We started this as there were complaints all over Delhi that police was being harsh on violators. So, the violators will be stopped today but won’t be fined. We will give them masks and roses,” said a senior police officer.

In Shahdara, the district team decided to make announcements on the streets about mask violations and coronavirus. Police personnel stepped out with speakers and mics to markets on Sunday.

R. Sathiyasundaram, DCP (Shahdara) said: “As the Covid cases have come down, the government may lift the lockdown soon. People will start moving out and the possibility of a third wave is very high. We want to create awareness. On Sunday, we won’t fine anyone and ask them to strictly follow guidelines. The public needs awareness.”

MP NOT TO GO IN FOR GLOBAL TENDER PROCESS

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOVAL, MAY 23

The Shivraj Singh Chouhan government is not keen on a global tender to procure vaccines and may solely rely on Indian vaccines Covishield and Covaxin.

The Chief Minister dropped hints to the effect while interacting with industrialists here a couple of days ago, sources said on Sunday.

“The global tender may sound like a popular slogan. But, I am apprehensive about its effectiveness,” he said while opening his mind on the matter.

Chouhan said the Sputnik and Pfizer vaccines were also available choices.

He, however, said that he had found out that handling of Pfizer may prove challenging considering the climatic conditions in MP and the cold storage chain available in the state since the vaccine has to be carried in -25 to -30 degree.

Chouhan is the second Chief Minister after his Assam counterpart Himant Biswa Sharma to shun global tender to procure vaccines.

The newly appointed Chief Minister of Assam has recently said ‘Global tender has no value beyond publicity’.

Chouhan said he had found the proper channel to get vaccines and he has been in touch with Prime Minister Narendra Modi for supply of Covishield and Covaxin for the state.

NATH BOOKED FOR ‘INDIAN CORONA’ REMARKS

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOVAL, MAY 23

Former chief minister Kamal Nath has been booked for sedition for allegedly terming the pandemic as ‘Indian corona’.

An FIR against the veteran Congress leader was filed late Sunday evening by the crime branch of Madhya Pradesh police under Section 124 A (sedition) and Section 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and provisions of Cyber Crime Act.

The FIR was filed based on a complaint by BJP’s Bhopal district unit president Sumit Pachouri.

The complaint alleged that Nath termed the pandemic as Indian corona and had tarnished the image of the country abroad. This amounts to sedition, the complaint alleged.

Nath had earlier said that when a pandemic hit the world in January of last year, it was said the virus generated from a particular lab in a Chinese town.

But, the situation has come to a stage whereupon coronavirus was identified as Indian corona by countries.

Britain has imposed restrictions on travel from India fearing that an Indian variant may enter into their country, he had said.



Volunteers who provide food to Covid-19 patients wade through a water-logged area following heavy rains in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday. Meanwhile, in West Bengal a number of voluntary and Left organisations have set up community kitchens to provide food to the poor so that they do not go hungry during the lockdown imposed to check the surge in Covid-19 cases.

— PTI

Lockdown extended in Delhi, if cases drop ‘unlock’ to start

Kejriwal stresses the need for caution to bring down the positivity rate

BHASKAR HARI
SHARMA | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

The lockdown in the national capital has been extended by another week, but Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday that if the daily Covid-19 numbers continue to drop, the “unlocking” process will start from May 31 onwards.

For now, the lockdown will be in place till 5 am on May 31, and the “unlock” process will also be slow, Mr Kejriwal added, stressing the need for caution as the city struggles to bring down the positivity rate.

“We didn’t know how long this wave would have lasted. But within a month, the people of Delhi cooperated. Delhi has fought the virus like a family... even when there was an oxygen emergency... now there is an acute vaccine shortage. But I believe we will find a solution to this too,” the Chief Minister said.

“Every Sunday, we sit down and decide whether the lockdown should be



Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addressing a press conference in Delhi on Sunday.

— D.KAMRAJ

extended. The April-May wave was very dangerous, and Delhi was the first one to impose a lockdown... We have been asking people about this and most feel the shutdown should be extended for another week so that we do not lose the gains,” Mr Kejriwal said, adding: “The daily cases are still above 1,000. So we are extending it till May 31, 5 am. If cases keep decreasing like they are right now, we will start the

process of unlocking next week. We will not open everything all at once. The unlocking will be gradual.”

“Now the wave is weakening visibly. We haven’t won yet, but we may be taking control... In 24 hours, the positivity rate is below 2.5 per cent. At one point we reported 28,000 cases daily (with a positivity rate around 35 per cent). Now in 24 hours we have reported 1,600

cases,” Mr Kejriwal said. The Chief Minister said his government’s top priority was to vaccinate the people of the city at the earliest to prevent a “third wave”, adding that he is in talks with vaccine companies for the required doses and is ready to buy the vaccines at any cost.

The vaccination of people in the 18-44 age group was stopped in Delhi on Sunday as the city has run out of stocks.

“It will not be correct to unlock in one go. The unlock process will happen gradually by allowing certain activities from May 31,” he stated.

The Chief Minister said the Delhi government had made arrangements to vaccinate everyone in

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The Chief Minister said the Delhi government had made arrangements to vaccinate everyone in

Delhi in three months but there was a shortage of vaccines in the country. “It’s being said a third wave of Covid-19 will arrive. But if everyone gets the vaccine, perhaps the third wave may not arrive,” he said.

“We are preparing to vaccinate everyone at the earliest. We are talking to the Centre and the vaccine companies. I am myself talking to vaccine companies, foreign and Indian ones, on how to vaccinate the maximum people. We are ready to spend any amount from the budget to get the vaccines for the people of Delhi,” he said.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) in its order stated the ongoing lockdown scheduled to end at 5 am on Monday, May 24 will now be extended up to 5 am on May 31. In the wake of the surging second wave, lockdown was imposed in Delhi on April 19. With the fifth extension, the city will complete nearly one-and-a-half month under restrictions to break the chain of infection.

STALIN CALLS FOR LOCKDOWN DISCIPLINE

R. MOHAN | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 23

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin made an impassioned plea to the people of Tamil Nadu to observe with discipline the lockdown that starts Monday so that the chain of Covid-19 infections can be stopped. Addressing a meeting on measures to contain Covid-19 with district collectors, police brass and medical personnel on Sunday, Stalin also said that all efforts are being made to supply fruits and veggies, milk and water to the seven crore people of the state so that they can stay at home at least over the next seven days.

It is déjà vu for Tamil Nadu as the state steps back to March 2020 when similar lockdown measures came into force nationally. Only medical shops will be allowed to be kept open and the scene could be a throwback to last year as the state takes a breather from daily activities, except for essential industrial activity and emergencies.

The state is taking major steps to reach fruits and vegetables with 1,610 vehicles and push carts to supply 1,160 tonnes of fruits and veggies to Chennai residents and a further 2,770 vehicles to cater to the rest of the state for the supply of 2,228 tonnes.

C’garh CM sacks district collector for assaulting lockdown violator

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
RAIPUR, MAY 23

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

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

In the video clip, the youth was seen showing

● **COLLECTOR WAS** seen in the video clip slapping the youth, smashing his mobile phone and then encouraging the policemen accompanying him to assault him.

the collector a piece of paper and something on his mobile phone. The collector, however, was seen smashing the phone.

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

The Chief Minister has

strongly disapproved of the incident.

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

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

“I sincerely apologise for Saturday’s behaviour. (I) never had the intention to disrespect or belittle the person”, he tweeted.

He said he knew the pain of people suffering from Covid-19 since his parents contracted the virus and his mother was still recouping from the disease. He said he asked people to follow Coronavirus guidelines strictly to contain the outbreak.

Chhattisgarh unit of IAS officer association also strongly condemned the officer’s behaviour stating that the civil servants must have empathy at all times, particularly amid challenging circumstances.

“It is unacceptable and against the basic tenets of service and civility”, the association said.

PANDEMIC | WOES

Sector still not over setbacks caused by demonetisation, digitisation, GST

Aligarh’s lock industry hit hard by lockdowns

Aligarh (UP), May 23: The Aligarh lock industry which employs nearly 1.5 lakh skilled and unskilled workers has demanded prompt steps from the Yogi Adityanath government for its “revival” in the face of persistent hardships intensified by lockdowns.

Severely setback by demonetisation and the subsequent digitisation, the sector was dealt a massive blow by the GST as it still is largely unorganised and lacks the resources to introduce online accounting, stakeholders of the

industry complained.

This, along with rising electricity charges, raw material costs and competition from low-cost Chinese products in the market, put severe stress on the industry that comprises around 6,500 cottage-scale units functioning in the traditional routine of production for six days and selling on the seventh.

To address the immediate needs of the industry, the secretary of the Aligarh Industrial Estate Manufacturers Association Din-

esh Chand Varshney has sent a memorandum to the Chief Minister, apprising him of the situation.

Laghu Udyog Bharti president Gaurav Mital said the members of his organisation had last week conveyed to the Chief Minister the crisis faced by the Aligarh lock industry during a video conference.

“There has been a sudden steep rise in the prices of all raw materials during the past two months but the market is not ready to accept any rise in our

finished products,” Vijay Kumar Bajaj, owner of one of the biggest and oldest units here, said.

“The government has a major role in pricing of steel, and it needs to step in with urgent remedial steps,” he pointed out.

Till about 40 years back, this industry was largely running on traditional technology, but as it faced challenges from other countries, specially from China, a number of local manufacturers “adopted the latest technology to compete with the best,”

Withdraw remark on allopathy, Min tells Ramdev

New Delhi, May 23: Union health minister Harsh Vardhan on Sunday called yoga guru Ramdev’s statement on allopathic medicines “extremely unfortunate” and asked him to withdraw the remark, saying it disrespects ‘corona warriors’ and can break the morale of healthcare workers.

In a strongly worded letter to Ramdev, the minister also said that “through your statement you not only disrespected corona warriors but also deeply hurt the sentiments of countrymen”.

“Your statement on allopathy can break the morale of healthcare workers and weaken our fight against Covid-19,” Vardhan said and added that doctors are fighting day and night to save people’s lives.

Citing a video circulating on social media, the Indian Medical association on Saturday had said Ramdev has claimed that allopathy is a “stupid science” and medicines such as remdesivir, faviflu, and other drugs approved by the Drugs Controller General of India have failed to treat Covid-19 patients.

The doctors’ body also quoted Ramdev as saying that “lakhs of patients have died after taking allopathic medicines”.

These remarks were denied as “false” by the Haridwar-based Patanjali Yogpeeth Trust.

In his letter, Vardhan asked Ramdev to withdraw his statement on allopathy and said the remarks disrespects ‘corona warriors’ and hurts the sentiments of the country.

“When allopathic doc-

tors saved lives of crores during Covid, your comments that allopathy is responsible for the death of lakhs is extremely unfortunate. We should not forget that the Covid battle can be won only through joint efforts,” Vardhan said.

“You also are aware that countless healthcare workers lost their lives in their fight against Covid,” he said in the letter.

“You calling allopathy treatment a ‘drama, useless and diwaliya’ (causing bankruptcy) is unfortunate,” the health minister said.

Vardhan said that if today deaths due to Covid-19 is just 1.13 per cent and recovery rate more than 88 per cent, it is because of the contribution of allopathy and its doctors.

“Even Covid-19 vaccine which has proved to be an effective tool in our fight against the infection has been given by allopathy,” he said.

“Baba Ramdev, you are a public figure and your statement holds value. I think that you should give statements on any issue keeping in view the time and circumstances. I hope you will think about it seriously and in view of the sentiments of corona warriors from across the world you will withdraw your statement,” he said.

Vardhan said the explanation given by Ramdev is not enough to pacify the sentiments of the people.

“In your explanation, you just said that your sentiment was not to hurt modern science and doctors. I don’t think your explanation was enough,” he said.

— PTI

India records a dip in new cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

As India battles a severe second wave of the Coronavirus, the cases seem to be reducing in the country. With 2,09,243 new cases recorded in a single day, the daily rise in Covid-19 cases remains below the three-lakh mark for the seventh day running, the health ministry said on Sunday.

More than 21.23 lakh fresh tests were conducted, setting a record of the highest count of Coronavirus testing on a single day. The ministry said the cumulative number of Covid-19 vaccine doses administered in the country exceeded 19.50 crore on Sunday.

“A total of 19,50,04,184 vaccine doses have been administered through 28,00,808 sessions, as per the provisional report till 7 am on Sunday,” it said. These include 97,52,900 HCWs who have taken the first dose and 67,00,614 HCWs who have taken the second dose, 1,49,52,345 FLWs (first dose), 83,26,534 FLWs (second dose); 99,93,908 beneficiaries under 18-44 age group (first dose), and 6,06,90,560 (first dose) and 97,87,289 (second dose) beneficiaries between 45 to 60 years; as well as 5,65,55,558 first dose beneficiaries and 1,82,44,476

second dose beneficiaries who are over 60, it further added.

The health ministry said that over 21.80 crore vaccine doses have been provided to the states and Union territories so far and over 1.90 crore jabs are still available with them. It added that 40,650 Covid-19 vaccine doses are in the pipeline and will be received by the states/UTs within the next three days.

“The government has so far provided, both through the free-of-cost category and through direct state procurement category, more than 21.80 crore vaccine doses (21.80,51,890) to states/UTs,” the ministry said in a statement.

Of this, the total consumption, calculated based on average up to May 22, including wastage, is 19,90,31,577 doses (according to data available at 8 am on Sunday). Over 1.90 crore Covid vaccine doses (1,90,20,313) are still available with the states/UTs to be administered, it said.

With the fresh cases, India’s Covid-19 tally climbed to 2,67,38,220. The death toll due to the disease rose to 3,03,355, with 4056 fresh fatalities. Active cases further reduced to 27,30,218, comprising 10.57 per cent of total infections.

Bajaj noted.

Though he and some others made conscious efforts to stay in tune with the changing times, many had to shut shop as they preferred the traditional methods.

Naseem Ahmad, who ran a successful unit in the Upper Kot area for over four decades, was forced to shut down around three years ago because of new challenges.

Talking about the woes of the industry, Ahmed said, “Most of the old cottage scale units were being

run on traditional lines and hardly any paper work. They would manufacture for six days and on the seventh day they would send their goods to nearby Delhi and get cash payments. Thousands of people were surviving through this system.”

“Most of the units were managing somehow, but the Covid-19 posed a fresh challenge and rendered the final blow,” Ahmed, a former president of the Aligarh Lock Manufacturers Association, lamented.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

TROPICAL STORM ANA MOVES AWAY FROM BERMUDA

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

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

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

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

U.S.' TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR HAITIANS

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

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

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

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



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

NINE KILLED IN ITALIAN CABLE CAR ACCIDENT

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

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

At that location, the cables of the ski lift were particularly high off the ground, said Walter Milan, spokesman for the Alpine rescue service. The cause has not been determined. Milan noted that the cable line had been renovated in 2016 and had only recently reopened after coronavirus lockdowns forced the closures of ski lifts across Italy. Mottarone reaches a height of 1,491 metres (4,900 feet) and overlooks the picturesque lake and the surrounding Alps of Italy's Piedmont region. The mountain features a small amusement park, Alpyland, that has a children's rollercoaster offering 360-degree views of the scenery. Many Italian ski areas feature mountain bike paths and hiking trails that are popular in spring and summer.

US-style digital visas in Britain

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

The post-Brexit changes will include the border

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Israeli police allow Jews to visit flashpoint Jerusalem site

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

Hamas defiant with military parade, top leader's appearance

Gaza City, May 23: Hundreds of masked Hamas fighters brandishing assault rifles paraded in Gaza City and the group's top leader made his first public appearance on Saturday, in a defiant show of strength after the militants' 11-day war with Israel.

Saturday marked the first full day of a cease-fire, and Egyptian mediators held talks to firm up the truce which ended the fourth Israel-Hamas war in just over a decade.

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

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

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

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

B'desh keeps ban on Israel travel

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

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

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

1 HELD IN ATTACK ON JEWISH MEN IN LOS ANGELES

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

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

Nepal's Oppn to file writ petition

To protest dissolution of House by Prez

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

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

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

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

Hold polls in one phase, EC to Oli

Kathmandu, May 23: Nepal's Election Commission has advised the government led by embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli to conduct the mid-term elections slated for November 12 and 19 in a single phase to prevent the further spread of Coronavirus infections during electioneering.

After a meeting with Prime Minister K.P. Oli on MSaturday, Chief Election Commissioner Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya said it is Election Commission's constitutional duty to successfully conduct polls

once the date has been announced.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Social media photos show Dubai princess at malls

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

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

The photos corresponded to those locations, with the Mall of the Emirates image likely taken in May due to the film being advertised in it. Taylor did not respond to a request for comment. The government's Dubai Media Office did not acknowledge the release of the images. The photos' pedestrian captions belie the fact that United Nations experts and human rights activists had called on Dubai's ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, to provide information on his daughter, Sheikhha Latifa, 35, had

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

Diana interview: Shamed Bashir says sorry to princes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PAYING | TRIBUTES

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

Ariana Grande remembers Manchester bombing victims

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Flowers for victims of the bombings.

DECCAN Chronicle

24 MAY 2021

Contain the 2nd wave, prepare for the third

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

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

Every resource at its command and at the private sector must be put to use to ensure that none dies due to lack of care. India's defence forces are already in the field in a limited way and their services must be made available to more people.

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

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

Too soon to call Nepal polls?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Subhani

Two years of Modi 2.0: Challenges & response



Ram Madhav

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

POLICE ROLE

When the government exempts food delivery operations during the lockdown, how can the police seize vehicles of the delivery staff? The staff don't pose a greater risk than those gathering in large numbers at vegetable markets. If police concentrate on forcing people to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour, the purpose of lockdown will be better served

K.A. Raju
Secunderabad

Daily-wage earners, street vendors, cab drivers are facing untold hardships due to loss of earnings and are on the verge of starvation. I request the government to extend help to them.

Shaik Khader
Hyderabad

VACCINE PLAN

Hyderabad's population is 1.2 crore, of whom 13 per cent are children and not eligible for the Covid vaccine. If four vaccination centres are set up in each of the 150 wards with three paramedics, the entire population can be vaccinated for Covid in a month.

Shaik Faiazuddin
Hyderabad

CASTE NAMES

It was very sad to see the names of Vice-Chancellors followed by their caste. When will we come out of this age-old system of identifying people only with their caste and not by their education, profession or other qualities?

V.B. Chadha
Secunderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Indira writes to Sadat on Bangla crisis

CAIRO, MAY 23. The Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, has sent a personal message to the UAR President, Mr. Anwar Sadat, which was understood to be primarily concerned with the grave situation in East Bengal and its consequent repercussions on the Indian sub-continent.

The content of Mrs. Gandhi's message were not known, but it was believed that the prime Minister had appealed to Mr. Sadat to use his good offices with Pakistan President General Yahya Khan, to stop the bloodshed in East Bengal.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,540.48	1.97
Nifty 50	15,175.30	1.81
S&P 500*	4,155.86	-0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.83	0.38
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.53	0.28
Euro (₹)	89.06	0.03
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,995▲119	0.24
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	66.47	2.09
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.977	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.635	0.001

* As of 8:30 PM IST

IBA seeks refund of interest waiver from government

The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has approached the finance ministry to refund the burden fallen on the banks' shoulders from the Supreme Court's March order which waived compound interest on all loan accounts above Rs 2 crore that opted for moratorium during March-August 2020. Loans below this got interest on interest waiver in November. The issue is being pursued by IBA, said S. Krishnan, MD, PSB.

Discoms' dues to gencos fall 3% to ₹78,379 cr in Mar.



Total dues owed by electricity distribution companies to power producers fell 3.4 per cent to Rs 78,379 crore in March 2021 as compared to the year-ago period, showing a reversal of discoms' growing outstandings. Outstanding dues of discoms towards electricity producers have been rising year-on-year and month-on-month for years. Distribution companies owed total Rs 81,116 crore to power generation firms in March 2020.

FPIs net sellers in equities by ₹6,370 cr in May

Overseas investors withdrew Rs 4,444 crore from Indian markets in May so far amid concerns over the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic and its possible impact on the Indian economy. As per depositories data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) took out Rs 6,370 crore from equities but pumped in Rs 1,926 crore in the debt segment during May 1-21. This took the total net outflow to Rs 4,444 crore.

Gold saving funds see ₹864-cr inflow in April

Gold saving funds and gold exchange traded funds (ETFs) witnessed net inflows of Rs 864 crore in April amid uncertain economic environment in the wake of the second wave of Covid-19. The positive inflow is expected to continue in the financial year 2021-22 as the precious metal remains an under allocated asset in investor portfolios in these uncertain times, Chirag Mehta of Quantum Mutual Fund said.



■PMJJBY sales rise 48%, insurers seek premium hike

High demand for PM life insurance cover in FY21

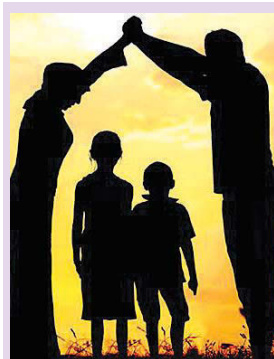
FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MAY 23

The onset of the Covid 19 pandemic last year has led to a huge spurt in the sale of the government's low-cost term life insurance policy, namely the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY). In 2020-21, a whopping 3.31 crore people bought the cover, a rise of 48 per cent, taking the cumulative number of persons enrolled in the scheme to 10.27 crore as on March 31, 2021.

The low-cost insurance policy, targeted at unorganised sector workers, including self-employed, has been priced at Rs 330 for Rs 2 lakh annual term life cover and is linked to all savings bank accounts. It is renewable annually.

Over the prior three years to 2020-21, the scheme had growth rates between 11 per cent and 18 per cent. Around 1.04 crore people bought the term cover in 2019-20, a growth of 18 per cent, while 59 lakh people were covered in 2018-19, a growth of 11 per cent. A good 2.23 crore people had bought PMJJBY in 2017-18, a rise of 72 per cent.

However, despite having a low incidence rate/mortality rate of 0.2-0.3 per cent, the scheme continues to make losses for life insurers. As a result, only Life Insurance Corporation of India and very few private life insurers are offering the scheme



to their customers through their banking partners.

An incidence rate or the mortality rate refers to the number of people who died out of the number of people enrolled in a given year.

Explains Amit Bhawan, assistant vice-president at Prudent Insurance Brokers, "Out of the total 3.31 crore people who bought the cover in FY21, the number of people who died were 62,166 that resulted in a claim outgo of Rs 1,243 crore against a premium of Rs 1,023 crore earned. So, the loss/claims ratio for insurers stand at 122 per cent in FY21. The average loss ratio for insurers in the last five years is Rs 139 which means as against a premium of Rs 100, insurers are on an average paying claim of Rs 139."

Ashvin Parekh, managing partner at Ashvin Parekh Advisory Services LLP, said, "Over 10 crore is quite a size-

On its own momentum						
Financial Year	Cumulative no. of persons enrolled	YoY enrolment	% Increase	Premium	Claims received (numbers)	Total amount of claims paid
2016-17	3.1			1,023	62,166	1,243
2017-18	5.33	2.23	72%	1,758	98,163	1,963
2018-19	5.92	0.59	11%	1,953	145,763	2,915
2019-20	6.96	1.04	18%	2,296	190,175	3,803
2020-21	10.27	3.31	48%	3,389	250,351	5,007

Figures in ₹ crore

able number of people covered. The enrolments have mostly come in 2020-21, which has largely to do with the Covid pandemic. With so many people getting covered, the government should give a choice to customers to enhance their coverage but increase the premium less than proportionately as it is targeted towards the lowest strata of the society."

Calls, text messages and questionnaire sent to LIC chairman M. Kumar did not elicit any response.

Heads of private life insurance companies told Financial Chronicle that in several meetings they have asked the government to increase the premium for the scheme.

Says R.M. Vishakha, managing director and chief executive officer at IndiaFirst Life Insurance, "PMJJBY is a very good scheme for social security, but the coverage needs to increase. Secondly, our loss ratio in the scheme

has been in excess of 125 per cent and the scheme has been loss making since inception. Even though term premium rates have gone up across the board where there is complete underwriting, PMJJBY continues to have a flat premium of Rs 330 with no medical underwriting. There is a repricing required to make it more viable and then it's in everybody's interest to push the scheme. According to our estimates the premium should rise to Rs 550."

Dhirendra Kumar, chief executive officer at Value Research, said, "This is the only insurance that has not been sold but it has been bought without any mis-selling and well targeted at people who would never have been served by life insurance companies directly. I really wonder if Rs 2 lakh is good enough to sustain anything. The government should give an option to customers to enhance their coverage."

G7 decision to cast shadow on Indian coal block auctions

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 23

The G7 decision to stop financing international coal power projects will raise questions about the investment risk related to coal auctions and put pressure on the government to stop increasing coal capacity, find experts.

The Group of Seven (G7) nations in their recent meeting agreed to stop financing international coal power projects by the end of this year. This decision can have serious implications on India's coal auctions and efforts to increase capacity.

"The G7 statement reinforces that the era of coal expansion is over - India will not secure any overseas assistance for new coal projects (mines or power plants) and will face increasing pressure to stop increasing its coal capacity and begin planning for an eventual phase-out," said Ashish Fernandes, lead analyst at Climate Risk Horizon.

"The global trend in coal divestment or exclusion policies means that new



coal plants in India are also increasingly unbankable, even if they were to get power purchase agreements to underpin commerciality at face value," said Tim Buckley, director, energy finance studies-South Asia, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

G7 financial support comes from Export Credit Agencies of these countries and direct financial institutions.

"The first round of private coal deposit auctions was lauded by the Indian government as likely to attract significant domestic and global investor interest from the likes of Rio Tinto, BHP and Peabody. But the government of India failed to

understand the implications of the recent global moves," he said.

Rio Tinto sold its last coal mine in 2018, having started to exit in 2014. BHP's last two thermal coal mines got zero interest in the market. Peabody is not interested in investing in Indian coal as its core US market volumes collapsed 30 per cent in 2020 and it is headed to its second bankruptcy. There were zero international bids in the first round of coal auctions, and the second round will garner a similar interest from offshore, said Buckley.

"Given that renewable energy now enjoys a significant cost advantage over coal, continued investment in the coal sector poses a serious investment risk in a cash-strapped economy. Indian government entities such as NTPC and PFC are still building and planning new coal projects that will not be competitive with renewables and risk locking the economy into a high cost, high pollution energy pathway," said Fernandese.

WTO'S TRIPS COUNCIL TO DISCUSS REVISED PROPOSAL OF IPR WAIVER

New Delhi, May 23: The Trips Council of the World Trade Organization will discuss a revised proposal submitted by 62 co-sponsors, including India, South Africa, and Indonesia, seeking patent waivers to manufacture Covid-19-related medical products, an official said.

In October 2020, India and South Africa had sub-

mitted the first proposal suggesting a waiver for all WTO members on the implementation of certain provisions of the Trips Agreement in relation to the prevention, containment or treatment of Covid-19.

The agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, or Trips, came into effect in

January 1995. It is a multi-lateral agreement on intellectual property (IP) rights.

According to the revised proposal, the waiver should be in force for at least three years from the date of the decision on the matter. The co-sponsors have stated that the duration has to be practical for manufacturing to be feasible and viable. —PTI

Man-made fibre exports dip, imports rise in FY21

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 23

Declining exports and increasing imports of man-made fibre and filaments in FY21 is a worry for the textile sector, which considers MMF a focus area to achieve a \$350 million export target for textiles.

MMF exports declined by 17.5 per cent to 1 million tonnes between April 2020 and February 2021. However, during the 11-month period, imports of MMF increased by 12.5 per cent to 542,000 tonnes.

The fall in MMF outbound shipments was spread across almost all the varieties in a range of 6 per cent to 58 per cent. The shipments were affected mainly due to Covid-19 disturbances. The overall exports are estimated to have accounted for about 30 per cent of the total MMF production, as per the data from Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals.

However, the production itself declined by 27.6 per cent year-on-year to 2.4

million tonnes during the period April and January 2021. The fall in output was mainly due to an average decrease of 56.7 per cent in production during the first five months of FY21 because of Covid-19 disruptions.

Meanwhile, imports of polyester filament yarn (PFY) and other synthetic yarn increased by 70 per cent and 29.6 per cent, respectively. This, in turn, increased overall MMF imports during the period. A surge of 127.2 per cent and 121.7 per cent in imports of PFY and other synthetic yarn from China was primarily responsible for the overall growth in inbound shipments of these varieties. Yarn from China has become cheaper than domestic yarn, says Care Ratings.

According to Rakesh Mehra, convener, sub-committee on man-made fibre & yarn, Confederation of Indian Textile Industry, exports across the value chain were affected by the demand in key markets like Europe and the US.

The export of MMF ready-made garments also declined by 25.2 per cent in FY21. Aligning itself with the global textile market, India had started promoting MMF exports in the past couple of years. Promotion of MMF is also important in achieving the targeted textile exports to \$350 million by 2025.

The government announced a production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme in November 2020 for the MMF segment and technical textiles for Rs 10,683 crore. Besides, a scheme of Mega Investment Textiles Parks has also been proposed in the Budget 2021-22 to enable the textile industry to become globally competitive and attract large investments.

"Increasing exports from around \$40 billion to \$300 billion in five years is quite ambitious without preferential and free trade agreements with key markets. Our exports have been hovering around \$40 billion for the past few years," said Mehra.

Cairn claim: India says never agreed to arbitrate tax dispute

New Delhi, May 23: India has challenged an international arbitration tribunal asking it to return \$1.2 billion to UK's Cairn Energy Plc on grounds that it had never agreed to arbitrate over a 'national tax dispute', the finance ministry said on Sunday.

In a statement, the ministry also refuted reports that the Government of India has purportedly asked state-owned banks to withdraw funds from foreign currency accounts abroad in anticipation of the potential seizure of such accounts on behalf of Cairn Energy.

While the government appointed a judge on the three-member arbitration panel and fully participated in the proceedings against India seeking Rs 10,247 crore in back taxes from Cairn, the ministry said the tribunal "improperly exercised jurisdiction over a national tax dispute that the Republic of India never offered and/or agreed to arbitrate."

India had seized and sold shares of Cairn in its erstwhile India unit, confiscated dividend due and withheld tax refunds to recover



the tax demand it had levied two years after passing a law in 2012 that gave it powers to levy tax retroactively.

Cairn invoked arbitration under the India-UK bilateral investment treaty.

In December last year, Cairn won an award that held the levy of taxes using the 2012 law unfair on the company and the tribunal asked the Indian government to return \$1.2 billion plus cost and interest.

In a statement, the finance ministry called the 2006 reorganisation of Cairn's India business for listing on the local bourses as "abusive tax avoidance scheme that were a gross violation of Indian tax laws, thereby depriving Cairn's alleged investments of any protection under the India-UK bilat-

eral investment treaty."

"The award improperly ratifies Cairn's scheme to achieve double non-taxation, which was designed to avoid paying taxes anywhere in the world, a significant public policy concern for governments worldwide," it said, adding the government on March 22 challenged the arbitration award in a court in The Hague—the seat of the arbitration.

It is not clear if a court in The Hague can go into merits of levy of taxation by the Indian government over a corporate amalgamation scheme.

Precedence dictates that challenges to international arbitration award are restricted to tribunal not following due process.

The tribunal that went into Cairn's challenge consisted of three judges—one judge each being named by the company and the Indian government and a third neutral presiding officer.

The three-member panel unanimously overturned the tax and asked India to return the value of shares sold, dividend seized and tax refund withheld.—PTI

MISSING | JAB Firm in talks with govts to build facilities for vaccine development and production

Covid loser Glaxo gets ready for next pandemic

SUZI RING
MAY 23

GlaxoSmithKline Plc fell behind in the Covid-19 vaccine race, but now the drugmaker is working to make sure it's on the front lines of the next pandemic.

The British pharma giant is talking with the UK and other governments about building facilities to bring vaccine development and production onshore before the next crisis, said Roger Connor, its vaccines chief. The labs would offer a range of vaccine technologies to tackle deadly viruses of the future, he said in an interview.

"When every government does their after-

action review from this pandemic, they'll start to think about manufacturing within their own boundary, or within their own region at least," said Connor. We want to "create in-country manufacturing and vaccine development capability for the future."

Glaxo's main R&D vaccine hubs currently are based in Belgium, Italy and the US, with manufacturing capacity globally, including the UK.

Despite being one of the world's largest vaccine companies by revenue, Glaxo wasn't among the frontrunners in developing a Covid-19 shot. Its sluggish effort disappointed some shareholders, and a decision by activist



investor Elliott Management Corp. to buy a significant stake in the company has increased scrutiny of its strategy.

Still, positive data from two vaccine trials last week—with partners Sanofi and Medicago Inc—suggest Glaxo may yet play a role in the pandemic effort.

The company is about to

undertake a huge restructuring, spinning off its consumer health division next year and leaving the biopharma and vaccines arms together. Connor describes the vaccines business as a "crown jewel" that has been undervalued, and its pandemic preparedness plans are one of the ways it can prove this.

"We've got one of the widest range of technology platforms of any vaccine company," he said. To prepare for a future pandemic, "you need to have fill-finish, you need to have bulk, you need to have technology choice, you need to have an R&D engine that connects very well to academia, to government monitoring of

virus evolution, and GSK brings all of those things."

Many countries were caught flat-footed last year when the coronavirus swept across the globe, leading to tensions over supplies and even export bans to keep shots and their ingredients at home. That's contributed to vast disparities in immunization rates between rich and poor nations around the globe.

A dosing error in Glaxo's trials with Sanofi last year set the drugmakers back by six months. Moreover, Glaxo's decision early in the pandemic to use its adjuvant technology—substances that enhance the immune response to vaccines—to partner with other drug-

makers rather than creating its own shot has drawn criticism. The company is now on track to have both the Sanofi and Medicago vaccines cleared for use by year-end, if the final trials are successful.

Glaxo and Sanofi plan to start advanced trials with more than 37,000 people in coming weeks, with multiple formulations of the vaccine to better protect against variants such as those first found in South Africa and India. The studies will predominantly be outside the US and focused on geographies with higher infection rates to give "every chance of making the trial successful," Connor said.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

21 die in China ultramarathon

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

Crucial test awaits Indian pugilists

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

Tsitsipas blasts to title in Lyon

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

Biles makes an historic vault

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

Middleton lifts Bucks past Heat

Los Angeles: Khris Middleton nailed a clutch two-pointer with less than one second remaining as the Milwaukee Bucks snatched a thrilling 109-107 victory against the Miami Heat in their NBA Eastern Conference playoff opener on Saturday. Middleton kept his composure superbly to drain the decisive jump shot from 18 feet with just 0.5 seconds on the clock, handing the Bucks a 1-0 lead in the best-of-seven first round series. Meanwhile Brooklyn Nets beat Boston Celtics 104-93. — *AFP*

FALL FROM GRACE

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

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

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

Ironically, all this unfolded on World Wrestling Day.

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

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

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

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

Both Vijender and

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

— **VIJENDER SINGH**
Indian boxing star

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

IMAGE WILL TAKE A HIT, SAYS SHARATH

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

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

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

UNFORTUNATE & SHAMEFUL: AJITPAL

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

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



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

— *PTI*

SUSHIL SENT TO 6-DAY POLICE REMAND

New Delhi, May 23: Olympic medallist wrestler Sushil Kumar was on Sunday remanded in police custody for six days over his alleged involvement in the death of a 23-year-old wrestler at Chhatrasal Stadium. After questioning him for around 30 minutes inside the court, the police sought his custody for 12 days for further interrogation.

Metropolitan magistrate

Divya Malhotra granted the police six-day custody of Sushil, who was arrested, along with co-accused Ajay, on Sunday from outer Delhi's Mundka area.

Sushil was evading arrest and had been on the run for nearly three weeks.

According to the Delhi police, Sushil and his associates allegedly assaulted fellow wrestler Sagar Dhankar and two of

his friends Sonu and Amit Kumar at the stadium on May 4 night. Sagar succumbed to the injuries later.

During the proceedings, Additional Public Prosecutor Atul Shrivastava, representing the state, told the court that Sushil's custodial interrogation was required to unearth the whole conspiracy and motive behind the crime. — *PTI*

BANGLADESH PIP LANKA IN COVID-HIT ODI

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

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

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

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

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

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

WORLD | T20

India women yet to get prize share

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INDIA LIKELY TO STRUGGLE IN WTC FINAL, SAYS MONTY

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

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

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

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



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

— *AFP*

Monaco victory puts Max on top

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Triumph over adversity

Spain, May 23: Diego Simeone said Atletico Madrid winning La Liga was a triumph of overcoming adversity after his team were crowned champions for the second time in seven years on Saturday.

Atletico beat Real Valladolid 2-1 to finish two points ahead of Real Madrid at the end of a draining season shaped by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"It's been a very hard year for us and for the world, difficult for every team and in such a tough season Atletico has come out as champions," said Simeone.

"That is symbolic, it speaks of the club and the team being made of something different, that in difficult moments, when everything seems impossible, with the pandemic and the injuries and without fans in the stadiums — with all this, our players gave it everything and they came out on top."

Luis Suarez scored the winner, his 21st goal of the season proving to be the one that clinched the title for Atletico, eight months after he was forced to leave Barcelona. "Suarez is a man of character. He's defiant, he's a goalscorer, a guy who after leaving an extraordinary club like Barcelona wanted to continue to show that he is among the best in the world," Simeone said.



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

— *AP*

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

THANKS FOR OPENING DOORS: SUAREZ

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

"I am filled with emo-

tions," the 34-year-old Uruguayan striker said after scoring in Atletico's 2-1 victory in Valladolid.

He offered veiled criticism of his former club, who finished the season in third place.

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

force," Suarez said.

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

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

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

Liverpool, Chelsea secure CL spots

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But after an uncertain

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

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

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

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

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

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

— *AFP*