

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VIJAYAWADA | TUESDAY | 25 MAY 2021

WEATHER

Max: 41.0°C
Min: 29.0°C
RH: 81%
Rainfall: Nil

Forecast: Overcast.
Max/Min temp.
41/29 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Vaishakha Shuddha
Chaturdasi till 8.28 pm
Star: Swati till 7.04 am, later
Vishakha till 4.10 am (Wed)
Varjyam: 12 noon to 1.24 pm
Durmuhurtam: 8.20 am to
9.12 am; 11.06 pm to 11.50 pm
Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Shawwal 12, 1442 AH
PRAYERS
Fajar: 5.10 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.15 pm
Maghrib: 6.42 pm
Isha: 8.15 pm
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.34 AM
SUNSET TODAY 6.34 PM
MOONRISE TODAY 5.30 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 5.13 AM

COUNTER POINT



Now, I am more worried about my hospital bills!

SHORT TAKES

You may enrol for job on-site

New Delhi: On-site registration and appointment has now been enabled for the 18-44 years age group on the CoWin platform for Covid-19 vaccination, the Union health ministry said on Monday. However, this feature is being enabled only for government Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs) at present, it said. This feature will not be available for private CVCs and they will have to publish their vaccination schedules.

SC notice on Covid ex gratia

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday sought the Centre's reply on pleas seeking ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh to the families of those who have died of Covid-19 and said that there should be a uniform policy for issuing death certificates to those succumbing to the deadly virus. Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the Centre, sought time to obtain instructions.

Farmers march to Delhi border

Chandigarh: Punjab farmers in large numbers are marching towards Delhi borders, said state BKU leaders in the wake of a call given to observe May 26 as a "black day" to mark six months of the agitation against the Centre's farm laws. Farmers are protesting at the Delhi's Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur borders since late November, demanding the repeal of the laws, which the Centre claimed is for their benefit.

Suu Kyi attends court in-person

Bangkok: Myanmar's ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, appeared in court in person on Monday for the first time since the military arrested her when it seized power on February 1. One of her lawyers, Min Min Soe, said Suu Kyi was able to meet with her defence team before the hearing began at a special court set up inside the city council building in Naypyitaw.

Full report on Page 5

WORLD | 5

3 Wuhan lab staff ill before Covid disclosed

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SPORTS | 8

Hussam starts well at Asian boxing

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AP gears up to face Yaas

CM attends virtual meet by Amit Shah, promised all steps for safety

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

Though the impact of the cyclonic storm Yaas would be relatively less on Andhra Pradesh, the state government has geared up its machinery to face any eventuality. Special care is being taken to ensure the medical care to Covid19-infected patients is not affected.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy attended a virtual review meeting called by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to take stock of the states' preparedness in facing the cyclonic storm. The CM promised the Centre that all requisite steps would be taken to ensure safety and security.

Later, the CM reviewed the matters with officials and directed them to ensure uninterrupted supply of medical oxygen to the Covid-infected patients undergoing treatment. He asked them to avoid any power cut to the oxygen generation plants, oxygen refilling plants and to the centres dealing with oxygen cylinders.

The CM stressed the need to arrange diesel generators at the hospitals as a power back-up in case of any disruption in power supply. He asked officials to depute power staff to attend to exigencies of power outage. The CM directed the officials to keep adequate stocks of medical oxygen ready especially in vulnerable areas and take all steps to avoid any short supply.

He laid stress on making alternative arrangements in case of any disruption in transport of medical oxygen especially from Angul in Odisha due to the storm. The CM also directed the officials to shift the C-infected patients from parts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts in case of a need and underscored the need to evacuate the people living in low-lying areas to safety.

Page 2: Officials put on high alert



Huge waves are seen in the Bay of Bengal off the Ramakrishna Beach in Visakhapatnam on Monday, ahead of Cyclone Yaas making landfall on the Odisha-West Bengal border.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

All set to clear roads of uprooted trees

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 24

Srikakulam collector J Niwas and superintendent of police Amit Baradar visited several villages on the seaside in Ichapuram and Kaviti mandals on Monday and asked the local officials to keep the main roads free from uprooted trees and electric poles for free movement of oxygen tankers and ambulances carrying patients.

He told them that a cyclone has formed over Bay of Bengal, which is likely to cross the Odisha-West Bengal border on May 26. He said that there was a warning from IMD that high velocity winds and rain will occur before and after crossing the systems that will cause large scale destruction. He said that he had also spoken to National Highway authorities to keep the roads free

from debris. The collector told the officials that there should be no interruption of power as it would affect Covid patients in hospitals and Covid care centres and see that oxygen supply was maintained.

When farmers asked him about saving crops, the collector told them that 19,000 tarpolines were acquired to cover the crop from rains and 5,000 bags to carry them to a safe place. He suggested that the crop could be stored in schools, which have been closed now. He also asked the officials to maintain power supply, install generators and drinking water at cyclone shelters. He also suggested linking up PDS supply with cyclone shelters.

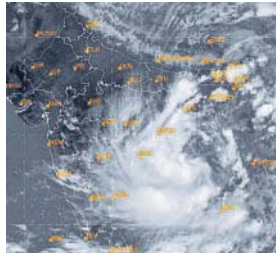
He said a campaign will be held in the fishermen community village to stop them from venturing into the sea for next four days.

North Odisha, West Bengal to face brunt

DC CORRESPONDENTS
KOLKATA/NEW DELHI,
MAY 24

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday accused the Centre of "repeatedly depriving" West Bengal by allocating it funds less than the other states facing the threat of the "Very Severe" Cyclone Yaas.

In its bulletin at 4.30 pm, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Kolkata stated that Yaas "is very likely to move north-northwestwards, intensify further into a Severe Cyclonic Storm during the next 12 hours and into a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm in the subsequent 24 hours. It would continue to move north-northwestwards, intensify further and reach Northwest Bay of Bengal near north Odisha and West Bengal coasts by 26th May early morning.



The satellite image of Cyclone Yaas.

— PTI

It is very likely to cross north Odisha-West Bengal coasts between Paradip and Sagar islands around Balasore, during noon of 26th May as a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm."

According to its forecast, Yaas is likely to clock its maximum wind speed at 155-165 kmph gusting to 185 kmph from 11.30 am on Tuesday for the next 24 hours. Its maximum speed will however drop to 105-115 kmph gusting to 125 kmph 11.30 am onwards.

Hopes for global vax goes dim

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The hopes of the Telangana and Andhra Pradesh state governments to procure Covid-19 vaccines through global tenders took a hit after the manufacturers informed a few states such as Delhi and Punjab that they would not supply vaccines directly to the states but would deal with the Centre.

These states had invited global tenders much before the TS did although AP government was the first in the country to invite global tenders on May 14.

SV Ayurveda college to study concoction

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 24

The Union Ayush ministry has directed the Sri Venkateswara Ayurvedic College run by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Trust

Board in Tirupati to study the concoction of Bonigi Anandaiah for Covid cure and prevention and send a report to them.

Page 2: Data of 500 receivers to be taken

It may be mentioned that the Telangana government on May 19 invited global tenders to procure

one crore vaccines. As many as nine states had done so including Andhra Pradesh so far but none

received a positive response from manufacturers. While the TS government was still hopeful of getting a positive response, the communication sent by the manufacturers to Delhi and Punjab over the past two days came as a shocker.

As per state government tender conditions, the bidders are invited to attend a pre-bid meeting on May 26 via Google meet. Bidders can quote their offers to supply the vaccine in part too, provided that monthly supply shall not be less than 15 lakh doses.

Page 3: Global vax makers refuse to deal with states

Toolkit row: Delhi police reach Twitter office to issue notice

New Delhi, May 24: The Delhi Police's Special Cell on Monday served a notice to Twitter India in connection with the probe into the alleged 'Covid toolkit' matter, with two teams descending on its offices in Delhi and Gurgaon, officials said.

"The Delhi police team went to the Twitter office to serve a notice to Twitter, as part of a routine process. This was necessitated as we wanted to ascertain who is the right person to serve a notice, as replies by Twitter India MD have

● **EARLIER,** official sources said that two teams of Special Cell had raided the Twitter India offices located in Delhi's Lado Sarai and in Gurgaon, on the outskirts of the national capital, in connection with the probe into the 'toolkit' matter.

been very ambiguous," Delhi Police PRO Chinmoy Biswal said.

Earlier, official sources said that two teams of Special Cell had raided the Twitter India offices located in Delhi's Lado Sarai

and in Gurgaon, on the outskirts of the national capital, in connection with the probe into the 'toolkit' matter.

The Special Cell has sought a clarification from the microblogging site for classifying a related tweet by BJP leader Sambit Patra as "manipulative", an official said.

It appears that Twitter has some information that is not known to the police. This information is relevant to the inquiry, Biswal said.

— PTI

SOCIAL | BEHAVIOUR

Aviation regulator ticks off chartered flight's staff for violation; orders them off the roster

Wedding party flies high to skirt social distancing norms

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 24

A caper pulled off by a Madurai couple to have their wedding mid-air as a strict lockdown was in place on the ground on Sunday has landed the crew of the SpiceJet aircraft, used for the marriage with a crowd of friends and relatives around, in a soup.

With the video of the ceremony in the sky going viral, several questions were raised since the

guests onboard the Boeing 737 flight were not wearing facemasks and not maintaining social distancing, as mandated by aviation rules.

Soon after the video came out, there was also a debate as to which police officer should crackdown on the errant crowd.

Is it the responsibility of the police district under whose jurisdiction the Madurai airport falls, from where the plane had taken off, or that of the district covering

● Initial enquiries revealed that the flight was booked by a travel agent and that it was presumed to be a jolly ride for the guests post-wedding.

● All the guests produced negative RT-PCR test certificates for Covid-19, as per the aviation norms, before boarding the flight.

Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple, over which the aircraft is said to have hovered when the nuptial ceremony was held?

Though such discussions raged only on social media, where someone even identified the couple as Rakesh

and Dakshina, Indian civil aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) cracked the whip on the airline, demanding a report and also taking the crew on board off the roster.

Initial enquiries revealed that the flight was booked

by a travel agent and that it was presumed to be a jolly ride for the guests post-wedding. All the guests produced negative RT-PCR test certificates for Covid-19, as per the aviation norms, before boarding the flight.

According to sources, the passengers were clearly told about the prevailing guidelines on Covid-19 prevention. When the flight was airborne, however, the guests threw all caution to the winds and gathered around the couple, who took to the

aisle to tie the *thali*. The guests were even teasing the couple as it happens in a regular wedding.

Not only the bride but even the guests were also bedecked in glittering jewellery and draped in shimmering silk with jasmine adorning their locks — a scene straight out of any marriage hall during the normal times.

And there were also television cameramen and professional photographers jostling amidst the crowd on the aisle to capture the

moment for posterity.

However, the leaking of a video clip on social media led to people talking about it and the airline authorities claiming that the marriage party hoodwinked them in following both the aviation and Covid-19 restrictions for flight passengers.

Since the DGCA prime facie felt that the crew had failed to stop the marriage party from violating the norms, it has ordered for taking them off the roster.

SHORT TAKES

PEOPLE TO GET
EPASS TO CROSS
BORDERSDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

In the wake of curbs being imposed on movements of people from parts of AP to Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Karnataka at inter-state borders, AP police have advised the people to plan their travel accordingly and obtain epass without fail.

In a statement from the office of Andhra Pradesh DGP here on Monday, the police said that as it was mandatory to enter into the above mentioned states to have epass, they should get it by applying online with valid reasons for their travel to be allowed.

With regard to Andhra Pradesh, the police said that as there is relaxation in imposing of curfew from 6.00 am to 12.00 noon, the people should travel during that period either to enter into the state from other states or to go out of the state and even to move within the state. The police said that except for government exempted ambulance and emergency services, all others must get an epass to travel.

The police also advised the people to carry supporting documents in case they were attending funerals and other family programmes to avoid trouble of getting stopped.

● **PEOPLE TRAVELLING** from parts of AP to Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Odisha and Karnataka at inter-state borders, were advised by police to obtain epass without fail.

COMMUTERS FROM
AP TOWARDS TS
COME DOWN

From page 1

However, commuters from AP came down heavily on the TS government for taking decisions pertaining to both the states unilaterally, suddenly and without consulting the stakeholders from AP.

A commuter from Vijayawada, who was stranded at the Garikapadu checkpoint on his way to Hyderabad in a car, said, "Earlier, the TS government stopped ambulances carrying Covid-19 infected patients from parts of AP to Hyderabad to get treatment on pretext of not having requisite approvals from hospital authorities and also from the Covid Control Centre, necessitating the intervention of its High Court to reverse its order. Now, again the TS government has got an idea overnight and is stopping entry of vehicles carrying commuters without any prior announcement and consultation of the AP government. It cannot go on like this between both AP and TS."

Krishna district superintendent of police M. Ravindra Babu said, "It is better for commuters to get an e-pass to proceed to Hyderabad until the issue is resolved amicably between both the states instead of facing the ordeal of being stranded at the inter-state border. Moreover, all other vehicles having requisite permits are being allowed to cross the border with no issue at all."

A police officer at Vadapalli check-post in Nalgonda district said, "The move is aimed to discourage commuters just to move around from AP to TS with no specific reason, to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. Only a few vehicles were noticed from parts of AP on Monday at our border and we advised the commuters either to get an e-pass to proceed to Telangana or to go back. Some moved away while some others resisted."

So was the case at Ramapuram check-post in Kodad as the local police said they were not allowing vehicles without having an e-pass to enter Telangana and the number of vehicles on Monday had come down.

On the other hand, AP's major opposition parties including the Telugu Desam and the BJP lambasted the TS government for imposing curbs on entry of people of AP on one pretext or the other despite directions from the High Court with regard to patients being transported in ambulances.

BJP AP state general secretary S. Vishnuvardhan Reddy played the Chief Ministers of both states for failing to resolve the contentious issue and asked AP Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy why he was not insisting on the AP people's right to travel in Telangana state. He asked the Chief Minister if he had forgotten the fact that Hyderabad still remained a common capital for both the states.



Thick clouds hove over the sky due to the impact of cyclone Yaas, while the fishing vessels are seen anchored at the fishing harbor in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

Cyclone Yaas: Fishermen
on coast put on high alert

Govt gave ₹10k incentive under YSR Matsyakara Bharosa

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

Fishermen in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh are put on high alert not to venture into the sea and secure their assets like boats and fishing nets along the shore, in the wake of impending cyclonic storm Yaas.

Though the IMD forecast the intensity of the storm to be relatively less on AP, the state fisheries authorities sounded alert among the fishermen from nine coastal districts from Srikakulam to Nellore not to venture into the sea.

The ban on marine fishing which lasts up to June 30, has come handy during the time of the storm, as no motorised and mechanised boats are permitted for fishing in the sea during that period with an exception for traditional boats to fish in shallow waters near the shoreline.

However, keeping in mind some section of fishermen flouting the norms

OFFICIALS PUT ON HIGH ALERT

From page 1

"Start relief camps by providing them with essential supplies and other amenities," he said. Meanwhile, the authorities in Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and

and venturing into the sea on traditional crafts and also on motorised boats for a brief period during the early hours of the day during the impending storm, the fisheries authorities are carrying out awareness programme at all fish landing centres to ensure that none violate the rule to ensure their safety.

As fishermen keep their boats, fishing nets and other equipment on the shore, the authorities advised them to secure them so that they may not be washed away in case of occurrence of high tide in

Srikakulam districts have been put on high alert.

Home minister M. Sucharitha, chief secretary Adityanath Das, DGP Goutam Sawang and several top officials were present at the CM's meet.

the sea.

A senior official from the fisheries department said, "Though AP is not going to have a major impact of the storm, still we have advised our fishermen to be on the safe side by avoiding venturing into sea on traditional boats and others in violation of norms. Our personnel are keeping close watch at the fish landing centres to keep check on movement of the fishermen and boats."

Meanwhile, Kakinada-based Reliance Foundation which sends both text and voice mes-

sages on weather conditions and other issues to farmers and fishermen on their mobile phones on a regular basis, has been sending cyclone alerts to the fishermen from its whether cell in the last two days alerting them about the storm and asking them not to venture into the sea and reach shore immediately in case if they are already in the sea.

Reliance Foundation state coordinator for AP and TS, N. Chittibabu said, "Nearly 82,347 fishermen received messages successfully on cyclone alert on Monday and this means that they are aware of the storm and on the safe side."

The AP government recently gave away a financial incentive worth ₹10,000 each to over one lakh fishermen under YSR Matsyakara Bharosa Scheme to compensate for not going for fishing in the sea during the ban period.

CM calls for caution on
spread of black fungusDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy directed officials to curb the spread of black fungus by taking steps to treat infected patients on a priority basis and watch out for white and yellow fungus.

He held a review meeting with deputy chief minister Alla K. Krishna Srinivas and top officials at his Camp Office here on Monday.

He directed the officials to be on the alert for reports about spread of black, white and yellow fungus and treat people showing such symptoms.

Referring to procurement of 15,000 oxygen concentrators, he instructed officials to pay attention to maintenance and asked them to set up a system to ensure that they work properly.

He wanted every hospital to have more than 50 beds with oxygen facilities and completion of oxygen generation facilities by August. He announced a 30 per cent incentive to hospitals which will have their oxygen plants by August.

On preparedness for Yaas cyclonic storm,



Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy

Reddy directed chief secretary Adityanath Das to stay put at Visakhapatnam to monitor the situation.

The officials said that calling of tenders for construction of medical colleges at Paderu, Machilipatnam, Piduguralla and Pulivendula was complete and assured to complete the tender process for remaining colleges by June 10. The Chief Minister urged them to start work on medical colleges from July.

With regard to the tender process for 11 existing medical colleges under the Nadu-Nedu programme along with VIMS,

Visakhapatnam and Victoria Hospital, he wanted the works to also begin by August-end. He called for teaching hospitals to be maintained with corporate hospitals with regard to supply of food, sanitation and quality of healthcare.

Reddy asked officials to come up with SOPs for maintenance of teaching hospitals in the state.

Later, he was briefed about the ayurvedic concoction from Krishnapatnam.

Ayush commissioner V. Ramulu informed that one Anandaiah has been giving such medicine in Krishnapatnam for the last 30 to 34 years and he was offering five types of medicines, including eye drops, to Covid-19 patients. He said that the samples of the medicine were sent to a lab for analysis and some to the Central Council for Research Ayurvedic Studies for examination. It would take six to seven days to get a detailed report on the concoction, he said.

The Chief Minister sought the officials to get the eye drops examined by specialists so that a decision could be taken after getting the report.

BAIL | DELAY

In-charge magistrate asks for discharge summary from the Military hospital

Rebel MP's release from custody likely to be delayed

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

YSR Congress rebel MP K. Raghu Ramakrishna Raju's release from judicial custody may be delayed by three to four days until his health condition improves.

When the MP's lawyers arrived at the 6th additional civil junior judge court in Guntur to submit sureties for his release on

bail on Monday, the in-charge magistrate asked for the MP's discharge summary from the Military Hospital in Secunderabad where he is undergoing treatment. The doctors informed that it would take up to four days for him to improve.

The lawyers said that once the discharge summary is submitted in the court, it would accept the bail bond of ₹1 lakh and

● Meanwhile, the apex court is to hear the petition filed by the MP's son Bharath on Tuesday.

two surities of like amount. The court would then issue a release order for the MP from judicial custody.

As per norms, the Guntur district jail authorities have to get the signature of the MP on the bail bond, which means

Anandaiah's medicine triggers
demand for ayurveda, homeoDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 24

With the "Pasaru" (organic concoction) prepared by B. Anandaiah of Krishnapatnam in Nellore District attracting attention throughout the state, Coronavirus patients have started looking for medicines available in alternative systems, especially Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Unani. Even "Natu" (local) medicines are being sought after.

The development has come in the wake of corporate and private hospitals charging hefty sums for treatment, in some cases even after death of the patient. Fear of such charges is compelling patients with mild and moderate symptoms to isolate themselves at home. It is such people who are looking to Ayurvedic products, as they are said to have no side effects even if they do not work. Covid-19 patients believe these medicines will at least boost their immunity and help them keep the virus at bay.

In fact, Ayurvedic pharmacies have been since many years selling such immunity boosters, including Chyavanprash, Agastya Haritaki Rasayana and Samsamanivati. Now, people are queuing for these medicines at Ayush hospitals.

Ayush regional joint director Dr. K. V. Ramana confessed that they have seen demand for Ayurvedic products rising in the aftermath of Anandaiah's episode. He maintained that such immunity boosters have been available with pharmacies all over the country. There is no truth in misleading propaganda that they cause side-effects.

"In fact, it is well known fact that most allopathic drugs have side effects. These are acknowledged by the drug manufacturers themselves on the medicine strips. In Ayurveda there are no such problems. Even the mixture prepared by Anandaiah has been found to cause no harm. These medicines act as immunity boosters," Dr Ramana maintained.

A Unani expert in Ayush department Dr Raghunath said Unani medicines also boost immunity among human beings. Kakinada Ayush Hospital medical officer Dr K. Mohan Babu said Ayush hospitals are working round the clock to make available immunity boosters to people.

East Godavari district Ayush medical officer and homeopathic medicine expert Dr J. Jagadeeswara Rao said "Arsenic-Alvem-30" is being given to patients for boosting their immunity. He said people

No harmful toxic
items in Anandaiah's
concoction: MinisterDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 24

Deputy Chief Minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas alias Nani, who holds the Medical and Health portfolio, said a committee of medical experts appointed by the state government has found no harmful or toxic substances in Anandaiah's concoction that claims to cure Covid-19.

After inaugurating a 30-bed German Shed for Coronavirus patients at Eluru in West Godavari district, Nani told media that people need not have any apprehensions or reservations over the issue.

The minister, however, clarified that experts of ICMR, who are also studying the mix being provided by Anandaiah, are yet to submit their report. He said only based on the central institution's report could the state government take a decision on efficacy of the concoction.

STOPPING THE DISTRIBUTION OF
CONCOCTION CHALLENGED IN HCDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

A petition was filed in the AP High Court here on Monday, challenging the state government's move to stop distribution of concoction to treat coronavirus patients by B. Anandaiah at Krishnapatnam in Nellore district.

The petitioner M. Uma Maheswara Naidu through his counsel Y. Balaji petitioned the court that stoppage of distribution of concoction was leading to deaths. The petitioner said that Anandaiah was distributing the medicine for the last one month and it was curing the patients and also improving levels of

immunity of infected persons. He also said that when hospitals were expressing helplessness, patients were being brought to Krishnapatnam for his medicine. The patients have been recovering after taking the medicine given by him.

He pleaded the court to issue an order to direct both the Centre and the state government to approve the concoction as ayurvedic medicine prepared by the Anandaiah and also provide the raw material in bulk besides protecting the rights of Anandaiah. He also asked for interim direction to the state government to resume distribution of the concoction.

ICMR TEAM FAILS TO TURN UP TO
STUDY KRISHNAPATNAM CONCOCTIONDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 24

The much-publicised report of ICMR team on Bonigi Anandaiah concoction has not yet been received. People have been pinning hopes on a green signal from the

organisation so that its distribution could be resumed.

Sources, however, pointed to TTD chairman Y. V. Subba Reddy's statement that ICMR has handed over the matter to Ministry of Ayush for a final decision.

are resorting to homeo medicines for Corona treatment after awareness

regarding them has increased.

Data of 500 receivers to be taken

From page 1

The college would collect the data pertaining to 500 persons who took the concoction, secured by the district administration of Nellore to carry out the study, said Y.V. Subba Reddy, chairman of TTD.

Referring to the reports over a team from the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) coming to Nellore to study the concoction of Anandaiah, Subba Reddy said the council had transferred the subject to the Ayush ministry for further action since the con-

coction was not an allopathic medicine.

Speaking to the media in Vijayawada on Monday, the TTD chief said SV Ayurvedic College had received directions from Ayush department on Monday morning and a team of professors led by the principal of the college would carry out the study.

Subba Reddy maintained that it would take one week to complete the study and they would submit the report to the Ayush ministry. He informed that the distribution of the medicine

will be taken up under the supervision of the TTD if the ministry of Ayush permitted.

Indirectly pointing to the criticism of former Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu over halting the distribution of Anandaiah concoction, the TTD chairman took a dig at the former for politicising every issue. "Who will take responsibility in case something happens to people if the medicine distributed without proper study on its side effects and efficacy," Subba Reddy questioned.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court is to hear the petition filed by the MP's son Bharath on Tuesday, seeking CBI probe on charges of sedition booked against the MP by the APCID, his arrest, ill-treatment and medical report given by the government general hospital in Guntur giving clean chit on his health condition after interrogation by CID sleuths.

IN BRIEF

GLOBAL VAX
MAKERS REFUSE
TO DEAL WITH
STATES

FROM PAGE 1

A total supply of one crore doses shall be completed within six months of issuance of Letter of Intent (LoI).

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said the vaccine manufacturers Pfizer and Moderna had communicated to them that they would not sell vaccines to states, but will deal only with the government of India. Punjab government too on Sunday announced that Moderna turned down their request for vaccines saying it did not supply directly to states.

The task force on Covid vaccines headed by IT minister K.T. Rama Rao is closely watching the developments in these states before taking a decision on revising tender guidelines to attract manufacturers and also to negotiate with global manufacturers directly.

UNIDENTIFIED
55-YEAR-OLD
MAN FOUND DEADDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 24

A 55-year-old-man was found dead near Railway Station under One-Town police station limits in Vizianagaram city. The police are yet to establish the identity of the deceased person. A case has been registered and investigation.

Elsewhere a 20-year-old-man died by suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan at Ukkunagaram in Vizag city. The deceased was identified as V. Deepak Kumar.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Smt. Dodda Adi Lakshmi, W/o. Dodda Papi Reddy, No.14394681Y Ex.Naik, (C/o. Nagireddy Narsi Reddy, # 53-8-1124, RTC Colony, Gandhi Nagar, 1st Lane, Guntur -1. A.P.) State that my name entered in my husband Army records as ADI LAKSHMI and my date of birth is also 10th June 1982. But My correct name as per Civil documents is DODDA ADI LAKSHMI and my correct date of birth is 1st January 1976.

INDIAN RAILWAYS
RAILWAY ELECTRIFICATION
www.ireps.gov.inTENDER NOTICE NO. 30215054
Date: 21.05.2021

Separate E-Tenders (on-line) are invited by the Chief Project Director, Railway Electrification, Secunderabad for the following Works, which will be received upto 11.00 hrs. on 21.06.2021 and will be opened and the same day at 11.00 hrs at the office of Senior Material Manager, Railway Electrification, Secunderabad.

SI No: 1 Description of Work: Supply of Reliability improvement Kit Suitable to work with UFSBI of Deltron make as per RDSO/SP/147/2005 or latest. It comprises of the following items (a) Automatic media changeover of modems working or redundant channels for data transmission of OFC/ Quad / Microwave radio (any 2 media) = 1 pair. (b) Secondary modem for UFSBI (for use with Secondary media OFC/ Quad= 1 pair. (c) Type C&D Power line (VF 24 AC/DC -02 Nos& V2OC/3PH 150V-2 Nos) & Data line SPD (MPD 4D /5T-2 Nos) comprising suitable to work with 1 Pair UFSBI = 1Set (d) Power monitor & soft star unit (PMS)= 1 Pair. Insp: Consignee 2. Installation & Commissioning of reliability improvement Kit suitable to work with UFSBI. 3. Supply of indication box of media changeover switch. Insp: Consignee. **Approx Value of Work:** Rs. 33.26 Lakhs **Earnest Money Deposit:** Rs. 66,520/- **Cost of Tender Form:** Rs. 0/- **Delivery Period:** 60 Days

1. Closing of Tender through e-tender (on-line): 11.00 hrs 21.06.2021
2. Opening of Tender through e-tender (on-line): 11.00 hrs 21.06.2021

For further tender conditions/details (available in the tender documents) and for downloading of tender documents, please visit our Website 'www.ireps.gov.in'.

***Any modification to the tender documents/corrigendum/addendum if required will be posted on the above website at least ten days in advance of opening of tender and may be seen on the website.

Chief Project Director, Railway
A0498 Electrification/Secunderabad

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <https://www.ireps.gov.in> or www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in

Avoid watching any video
related to Covid: Expert

Condition of many recovering patients has deteriorated, say doctors

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MAY 24

Coronavirus patients at hospitals, Covid care centres or even in home isolation invariably panic while watching adverse pandemic-related news and views on their phones. Post a study, doctors have concluded that many patients on the path of recovery have deteriorated and even died after repeatedly watching such videos.

This is particularly so with regard to patients on ventilators, who watch videos streaming on their own phone or those of their attendants in government and private hospitals.

The study found that over 90 per cent of Coronavirus patients continue using their mobile phones on their beds while being treated. Doctors realised that many of them panic while watching videos

● The study found that over 90 per cent of Coronavirus patients continue using their mobile phones on their beds while being treated. Doctors realised that many of them panic while watching videos related to the disease.

● Dr Endluri Prabhakar, head of psychiatry in Anantapur General Hospital, has been leading teams that counsel Covid-19 patients

related to the disease.

Dr Endluri Prabhakar, head of psychiatry in Anantapur General Hospital, has been leading teams that counsel

Covid-19 patients admitted to the hospitals in this regard.

“Instead of spending time peacefully on the hospital bed, patients end

up damaging their health themselves. We are counselling them to totally avoid watching any video related to Coronavirus,” Dr Prabhakar said. He pointed out that patients can instead watch videos involving comedy, spirituality and nature to ensure that their mind remains calm.

A doctor of the hospital said adverse videos affect the patients' oxygen levels, heart beat and other parameters.



Police caught hold of a motorist trying to escape daily checks on lockdown violations at Benz Circle in Vijayawada on Monday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

AP sees drastic fall in Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

Andhra Pradesh recorded a drastic fall in fresh Coronavirus infections to 12,994 after registering the highest of 24,171 during the second wave of the pandemic on May 16, giving much relief to the state government.

The state health authorities reported here on Monday that out of 58,835 samples tested, 12,994 persons were found infected with the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours. However, the state reported the highest caseload of 24,171 out of 94,530 samples tested

for Covid-19. Out of a total number of 1,86,76,222 samples tested so far in the state, 15,93,821 persons were found infected with the virus and of them, 13,79,837 were recovered while 2,03,762 are still infected with the virus.

Among daily cases of Coronavirus, only four districts reported more than 1,000 cases with East Godavari continues to lead the state with 2,652 followed by 1,690 in Visakhapatnam, 1,620 in Chittoor, 1,047 in Anantapur, 874 in Kadapa, 864 in Srikakulam, 856 in Kurnool, 706 in West

Godavari, 703 in Prakasam, 670 in Guntur, 535 in Vizianagaram, 503 in Nellore and 274 in Krishna.

East Godavari found to be the worst affected with highest number of Coronavirus total active cases at 33,893 followed by 23,919 in Prakasam, 23,134 in Chittoor, 19,682 in Visakhapatnam, 16,715 in Nellore, 15,902 in West Godavari, 15,045 in Guntur, 13,019 in Srikakulam, 11,272 in Krishna, 8,546 in Anantapur, 8,411 in Vizianagaram, 7,607 in Kurnool and 6,617 in Kadapa.

With regard to daily

cases of death of Coronavirus infected patients, Chittoor recorded the highest at 14 followed by 10 each in Kurnool and Vizianagaram, nine in Anantapur, eight each in East Godavari and Visakhapatnam, seven each in Guntur, Krishna, Nellore and Srikakulam, four in West Godavari, three in Prakasam and two in Kadapa. With this, total number of deaths reported so far in the state rose to 10,222.

The state health authorities discharged 18,373 Coronavirus infected patients after recovery in the last 24 hours.

₹3,904 CRORE
QUALCOMM
GETS VSEZ NODDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 24

The Visakhapatnam Special Economic Zone on Monday approved setting up of two units in Hyderabad. The zone sanctioned mega unit M/s Qualcomm India Pvt Ltd over an area of 1.57 million square feet in 17 floors.

M/s Qualcomm, basically into wireless technologies, 5G R&D, Auto R&D. Artificial Intelligence, will set up a mega facility in Hyderabad which will be operational by September 2022. This SEZ is developed by Raheja Group.

The total proposed investment by Qualcomm is ₹3,904 crore and will export IT services worth ₹28,658 crore and provide employment to 8,700 in the next 5 years.

KRMB meet put off,
AP seeks office shiftDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The Krishna River Board (KRMB) meeting scheduled to be held on Tuesday to discuss water allocations to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh for the new water year set to begin on June 1, has been postponed at the last minute.

The KRMB on Monday announced the meeting was postponed following the request of the Andhra Pradesh government and the fresh date would be notified later.

It said that the AP government sought postponement of the meeting on the grounds of officials being engaged in Yaas cyclone relief measures and Polavaram project works due to which they could not attend the meeting. The meeting will be held in virtual mode in view of Covid second wave and lockdown in both the states.

The KRMB last met on March 9 in virtual mode but the meeting ended abruptly due to technical glitches in video conferencing. Official sources said the KRMB had included the issue of AP and TS not releasing funds to the board in time to meet its administrative costs in the agenda of the meeting.

As per the agreement, both the states have to bear the expenditure equally. The amount will be utilised for payment of salaries to staff, installing telemetry devices at irrigation projects to gauge the consumption of water by both the states accurately to avoid

disputes over water sharing besides meeting day-to-day administrative expenses.

The board wants to seek ₹18 crore for the new water year. Last year, the board sought ₹8 crore, but only the Telangana government released its share of ₹4 crore. Sources said the AP government owed dues for the last two years.

The KRMB office is likely to be shifted from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam. As per AP Reorganisation Act, 2014, the office of Godavari River Management Board (GRMB) should be located in Telangana and KRMB in Andhra Pradesh.

However, the KRMB continues to function from Hyderabad so far and the AP government is strongly demanding to shift the KRMB office to Visakhapatnam immediately. The AP government already identified premises in Vizag for the purpose.

The meeting is also expected to discuss the complaints lodged by both the state governments against each other over taking up “illegal projects” on river Krishna. While the TS government is accusing AP of taking up Rayalaseema lift irrigation scheme without taking any approvals from the KRMB, the AP government complained that the TS government had taken up Palamuru Ranga Reddy, Dindi projects without any approvals. Both the governments also failed to submit detailed project reports (DPRs) of all the projects being taken up on Krishna despite repeated reminders by the board.

Jr docs hold out
strike threatDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

Junior doctors in Andhra Pradesh have threatened to boycott all their duties in medical colleges of the state if AP government fails to fulfil their demands by May 27. These demands include recognising them as senior residents and hike in their stipend.

In a letter to director of medical education on Monday, Andhra Pradesh Junior Doctors' Association (APJUDA) wanted all final year postgraduate medical students of both government and private colleges to

be considered as senior residents. The association pointed out that some of these students are even performing duties in Coronavirus wards.

As such, the junior doctors asked state government to hike the stipend of senior residents to ₹80,000 without further delay, pointing out that this demand has been pending since January 2020.

APJUDA president Dr Rahul Roy said, “In case there is no response from the state government, we may be forced to act against our will and boycott all duties in medical colleges of the state from May 27.”

Covid care centre
for paediatric casesDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 24

A special paediatric Covid care centre will be set up at Old CTIR Building site in Rajamahendravaram with 1,000 beds and the AP Paper Mills will supply oxygen to the centre through pipeline. Rajamahendravaram MP M. Bharat said that as it is expected that the third wave may hit children badly, as a precautionary step, the paediatric centre is proposed at the Old CTIR Building and all infrastructure facilities will be provided in the centre. He visited the site on Monday and said that the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is getting ready to face any challenge of third wave and he was alerting and cautioning the officials and public repre-

sentatives frequently to take precautionary steps for it. He said that discussions were being held on whether the centre will be set up in German Sheds mode or on the lines of Anantapur. He said that the children who will contract the virus will be treated in “Oxygen on Wheels” buses. He exhorted the parents to take care on their children for not sending them out and also create awareness among them on the virus.

Mr Bharat said that a “super sixty team” has been formed to render services to the Covid-19 victims and the team leaders are supervising various programmes under the scheme. He said that “Oxygen on Wheels” programme is being supervised by Nagam Bhaskara Rao and 15 members.

SMART | POLICING

TAW comes in handy for police in busting several cases

Chittoor police recover 682 cellphones

AVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, MAY 24

The Technical Analysis Wing (TAW) – an arm of Chittoor district police department – which played a crucial role in busting the case of burglary involving cellphones worth ₹8 crore in Nagari, has been playing a crucial role in cracking

several sensational cases and helped the police to recover over 682 cellphones worth ₹1 crore since its inception.

Formed by SP S. Senthil Kumar on December 6, 2020, TAW team consists of 20 constables with B. Tech or M. Tech background. They underwent training in cybercrime investigation and mastered in using the latest

technology and adhering to the principles of investigation.

The TAW team played a crucial role in cracking many sensational cases. One of the prominent cases busted by TAW was the case of theft involving Xiaomi mobile phones worth ₹8 crore, a highway robbery case reported on AP-TN border near Nagari on

August 26, 2020. With the help of TAW, the police have traced and nabbed the members of MP's Kanjarbhat tribe, who were traditionally involved in highway robberies at different locations across the country.

Another such challenging case was the arrest of miscreants who damaged Nandi idol at Shivalayam temple in G.D. Nellore

mandal and zeroing in on the culprits, who decamped with ₹1.7 crore in the guise of employees of an ATM cash remitting agency in October last year. The team also busted the case of burglary involving ₹3.04 crore worth diamond and gold jewellery from a house in Chittoor city. SP Senthil Kumar specially commended DSP.

KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD.
(A Government of India Undertaking)

E-Tender Notice No : CO-M-L206-4-E42550-TN dated 25/05/2021

Konkan Railway Corporation Limited invites open tender electronically through website www.ireps.gov.in for the following works : General Ukeep, Maintenance, Services including provision of subsidized meals at Ratnagiri Running room on Contract basis for a period of Two years. Estimated Cost: ₹ 2.14 Crore exclusive of GST. EMD: Nil. Last Date & Time of Submitting Tender in Website : 17/06/2021 up to 15:00 Hrs. Date & Time of Opening of Tender: 15:30 hrs. 17/06/2021. Other details may be viewed on the website www.ireps.gov.in

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(An Institution of National Importance Under Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India)

JIPMER invites applications for M.Sc/MPH/PBD/PGD/PGF Courses - 2021-22

IMPORTANT DATES

1 Online Registration from	21-05-2021 (Friday) - 11 AM
2 On-line Registration closes on	15-06-2021 (Tuesday) - 5 PM
3 Date of Entrance Examination	02-07-2021 (Friday)

For more details (Prospectus) & latest information Visit - www.jipmer.edu.in
Admission to all B.Sc Courses will be based on the merit score of the NEET (UG) 2021
DEAN (ACADEMIC)

SHORT TAKES

SC SEEKS REPLY ON PLEA FOR COMPENSATION

New Delhi, May 24: The Supreme Court on Monday sought the Centre's reply on pleas seeking ex-gratia compensation of ₹4 lakh to the families of those who have died from Covid-19 and said that there should be a uniform policy for issuing death certificates to those succumbing to the deadly virus.

A vacation bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M.R. Shah also asked the Centre to place before it the ICMR guidelines on death certificates for Covid-19 victims, saying there should be uniform policy for issuing such documents.

The apex court was hearing two separate pleas seeking directions to the Centre and states to provide ₹4 lakh compensation to the families of Coronavirus victims as provided under the Disaster Management Act of 2005, and a uniform policy for issuing death certificates.

The bench said unless there was a uniform policy for issuance of any official document or death certificate stating that the cause of death was Covid, the kin of the victims would not be able to claim benefits of any compensation scheme, if given.

Justice Shah asked Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for Centre in the matter, whether there is any uniform policy on death certificates as there are many situations of death, where reason is not given as Covid.

MAHA PROMISES FREE TREATMENT FOR BLACK FUNGUS

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MAY 24

The Maharashtra government told the Aurangabad bench of the Bombay High Court on Monday that fungal ailment mucormycosis was now covered under the Mahatma Jyotiwo Phule Jan Aarogya Yojana and the Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojana. Citizens will receive free treatment for mucormycosis at pre-identified hospitals and nursing homes across Maharashtra under those schemes.

The Maharashtra government told a bench of Justice R.V. Ghuge and Justice B.U. Debadwar that 1,000 more hospitals would be empanelled for treating mucormycosis under the above two schemes soon.

The government also said that not only anti-fungal medicines, required for treating mucormycosis, will be provided free of cost to patients admitted in these hospitals, but also private hospitals will be restrained from raising astronomical bills. The government said it was also working on capping the cost of the treatment for mucormycosis at private hospitals in the state.

The bench was also informed that citizens, even those who did not hold cards for the insurance schemes mentioned above, could avail the treatment for mucormycosis at the 130 hospitals identified by it across the state for free of cost.

SC: EXPEDITE REGISTRATION OF GUEST WORKERS

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 24

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Centre and the states to expedite the registration of guest workers and those working in the unorganised sectors so that the benefits of the schemes framed to mitigate their sufferings in the wake of Covid pandemic actually reach them.

"Every state has social security scheme but our anxiety is that the benefits of the schemes are not reaching the targeted section", said a bench comprising Justice Ashok Bhushan and Justice M.R. Shah while hearing a matter relating to the 'problems and miseries of guest workers' in the wake of Covid pandemic taken up by the court on its own motion.

Directing the registration of all the guest workers including those in unorganised sector, the court directed all the states and Union Territories to make operational the community kitchen for the stranded guest workers wherever they may be situated.

It further ordered that the guest workers stranded anywhere in the country should be provided the dry ration under the Atma-Nirbhar Scheme or any other suitable scheme.

AIIMS chief says recovered patients need longer care

Says Covid-19 patients are suffering from cough, breathlessness, brain fogging

VINEETA PANDEY | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 24

AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria on Monday said that recovered patients need longer care as several of them will experience symptoms such as coughing, breathlessness, brain fogging, chest pain, anxiety, increased pulse rate and heart beat, joint pain, body ache, insomnia, fatigue etc and they need to be treated for these.

"If the symptoms are seen for 4-12 weeks, it is called ongoing symptomatic Covid or post-acute Covid syndrome. If symptoms are seen for more than 12 weeks, it is called post-Covid syndrome," Dr Guleria said.

Meanwhile, the Covid-19 positivity rate is steadily declining and is 12.66 per cent at present as the country recorded 2.22 lakh fresh cases on Monday. However, toll still remains a cause of concern. In the last 24 hours, 4,454 new fatalities were recorded.

The National Mortality Rate currently stands at 1.14 per cent and 10 states account for 79.52 per cent of the deaths in the last 24 hours out of which Maharashtra saw the maximum casualties followed by Karnataka.

Covid recovered patients are now outnumbering fresh detections and 3.02 lakh patients were discharged from medical supervision in the last 24 hours.

However, the rising cases of Mucormycosis (Black

Lockdown extended in Raj, Haryana, Bihar, U'khand

New Delhi, May 24: Lockdown was extended in Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Puducherry, with many states already imposing Covid-induced restrictions till May-end to rein in the spread of infection and the mounting deaths which crossed the three lakh mark.

The Rajasthan government, which extended the Coronavirus lockdown by 15 days till June 8, also said the state may allow some relaxations in commercial activities from June 1 in districts where the Covid-19 situation will show significant improvement.

Extending the lockdown till May 31, the Haryana government said the positivity and fatality rates have to be brought down further, though it did allow some relaxations in the curbs. Haryana state chief secretary Vijai Vardhan, in an order, said the lockdown, which was earlier imposed till May

Fungus) is now becoming a new worry. Punjab has recorded 111 such cases. Delhi on Monday reported 1,550 new Covid-19 cases and 207 deaths, bringing down both fatali-

ties and positivity rate which is now 2.52 per cent, prompting Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal to say that the second wave is under control now.

Meanwhile, the Centre

has been extended till May 31. However, certain relaxations were given like standalone shops have been allowed to function during the day. The other shops, except in malls, are allowed to open from 7 am to 12 pm on an odd-even basis.

Lockdown was also extended in Bihar and Himachal Pradesh till May end while Uttarakhand too decided to continue with the Covid-induced curfew, as several states said that the restrictions have led to an improvement in the pandemic situation.

The Nitish Kumar government extended till June 1 the lockdown that has been in force for nearly a month in Bihar. "The lockdown has had a good impact and there has been a decline in the corona contagion. Hence, a decision has been taken to continue with the lockdown till June 1", Chief Minister Nitish Kumar tweeted after chairing a high-level meeting con-

vened to review the pandemic situation in the state.

The Uttarakhand government extended the Covid-19 related curfew period, which was to end on Tuesday morning, till June 1.

Himachal Pradesh government has extended the corona curfew in the state till May 31, an official spokesperson said. The decision to extend the curfew till six am on May 31 was taken in the state cabinet meeting chaired by the Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur here on Monday, he added.

Among the southern states, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and

Telangana have extended their lockdown this month, while Andhra Pradesh will continue to have curfew. The Puducherry government on Sunday announced the extension of the ongoing lockdown till May 31 as Covid-19 cases continue to soar in the Union Territory.

— PTI

has allowed on-site registration in addition to online appointment for vaccination for those in the 18-44 years age group.

This feature is enabled

only for government Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs) presently. This feature is not available for private CVCs presently and they have to publish their vaccination schedules with slots for online appointments.

The walk-in vaccination will be available only if there are vaccines left unused in case those who have registered online do not turn up on the day of the vaccination.

"Even though CoWIN provides for features such as registration of up to four beneficiaries with a mobile number... those without access to the internet or smart phones or mobile phones may still have limited access for vaccination. Therefore, the feature for on-site registration and appointment is now being enabled for the 18-44 years age group on CoWIN," Union health ministry said.

The Centre has left states/UTs to decide on opening of on-site registrations for the 18-44 years age group based on the local context, officials added. Union health ministry has advised states and UTs that abundant caution should be exercised and extreme due care should be taken while opening up on-site registration and appointment for 18-44 years age group, in order to avoid overcrowding at vaccination centres.

With states struggling to meet the growing demand for vaccines, the nationwide vaccination drive will suffer further delays.

— PTI



A police officer marks a shop with 'O' for 'Odd' for relaxation in the opening of shops during the lockdown in Gurugram on Monday.

MP relaxes curfew norms in 5 districts

RABINDRA NATH CHOPHAL, MAY 24

Graded unlocking of Madhya Pradesh which has been under 'corona curfew' or lockdown since April 24, began on Monday with the state government ordering relaxations in curbs in five districts.

The five districts where relaxation of lockdown was made were Jabua, Alirajpur, Khandwa, Burhanpur and Bhind.

Accordingly, functioning of government offices with cent per cent officers and 25 per cent employees has been allowed in these districts, while shops dealing with groceries have been permitted to open during the day.

Construction activities have also been allowed with Covid-19 protocol in these districts.

The decision to lift curbs in these districts was taken in the wake of sharp drop in fresh Coronavirus positive cases and fatalities in the past couple of weeks.

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has earli-

er dropped hints that unlocking of the state would be done in a phased manner considering improvement of pandemic situation in particular districts.

Madhya Pradesh has recorded sharp fall in active cases in the past one week.

The number of Coronavirus active cases which had crossed one lakh mark eight days ago came down to 53,653 on Monday. The state on Monday reported 2,963 fresh cases taking the tally of cases to 7,67,274.

The state has recorded 60 deaths in the last 24 hours taking the death toll to 7,618.

Meanwhile, the state government has started preparations to face the challenge of a possible third wave of pandemic in the state.

The state government has set up two dedicated children Covid care centres in Bhopal and Indore following warning by experts that children may be hit more in the upcoming third wave of pandemic that may hit the country by December.

Safety first



People wait in their cars for a Covid-19 vaccine shot at a drive-in centre in Noida on Monday.



A BMC health worker screens passengers for Covid-19 at a railway station in Mumbai on Monday.



Police officers check the commuters for e-pass during the lockdown in Coimbatore on Monday. Tamil Nadu recorded 34,867 new cases and 404 deaths in the last 24 hours.

DELHI HOSP HAD 40 KIDS WITH 'SEVERE' COVID

New Delhi, May 24: The Delhi government-run Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Narayan Hospital has recorded around 40 cases of "severe" Coronavirus infection among children during the second wave and around 15 of them were aged below one, a senior doctor said on Monday.

Dr Urnila Jhamb, the head of the hospital's paediatrics department, said data collected during the second wave does not suggest that children have been infected in large numbers, "but it doesn't mean it won't happen in the third wave".

Around 400 children suffering from Covid-19 were admitted to the facility from March to December last year, she said.

"During the second wave of Coronavirus, starting April 1, the hospital has recorded around 40 cases of severe infection among children so far. Of these, around 15 were aged below one," she said.

"We admitted only severe cases, those who required oxygen or ventilator, this time. That's why the number seems low (compared to last year)," Dr Jhamb said.

— PTI

TOUGH TIMES

People are unable to shake off memories of their hospital stay leading to worries about PTSD

Patients recovering from Covid see a long road ahead

New Delhi, May 24: Crowded wards with scarcely a doctor or an attendant in sight, patients holding on to each other to go to washrooms so filth they gagged and most agonising, people around them dying. For Covid patients now back home, harrowing images from their hospital stay are the hurdles on their road to recovery.

Over a year after the pandemic began and deeper into the second, deadlier wave, many of those who have been to Covid hell and back are unable to shake off the memories of their days in hospitals, leading to worries about PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and other anxiety related problems, including insomnia.

It's a "numbing experience" for many Covid-19 survivors who come out from hospital, observed Dr Samir Parikh, director, Department of Mental Health and Behavioural Sciences, Fortis Healthcare, Gurgaon.

Their days in hospital are seared into the memories of Covid patients who seem to be healing but may only from the outside.

"Hardly any doctor attended to us for the first two days. There were six of us — women and men — in the same Covid-19 ward. We had to throw empty plastic bottles out of the door to catch the staff's attention. I watched at least three people die on the bed right across from mine," a Delhi homemaker said, requesting anonymi-

ty. The 57-year-old, who is slowly regaining her strength, spent five days at a government hospital in the city.

Cases were spiking in the national capital and hospital beds were hard to come by when she was taken ill last month. With oxygen saturation levels falling, high fever and deteriorating HRCT chest values, she needed urgent hospitalisation and the family managed that with a shudder.

There was no one to take us to the washroom and

we, the patients, would hold each other's hands and go to that very unhygienic toilet, which was down the hall and unisex.

The attendants, overburdened, exhausted and frustrated themselves, were often unhelpful.

"When the old man right across from my bed would take off his oxygen mask repeatedly, the ward boy would shout at him and say 'Uncle ji, this won't affect us. So you can keep doing this'," she recalled.

Almost a month later, she still wonders what happened to the woman who was on the bed next to hers.

As cases continue to rise and hospitals stay overburdened, sociologist Sanjay Srivastava said this is a pandemic that seems

to have no answers, causing a general rise in social anxiety, distrust and psychological instability.

There has also been a realisation about the fragile nature of what in India was always believed to be a strong idea, the state, the London-based academic added. "There is also a feeling of extreme psychological distress due to the seemingly mysterious nature of the virus, a mystery that none of the usual authorities — doctors, hospitals, the government — has any answers for," Srivastava said.

The stories of continuing patient distress are many. Several patients said they couldn't bathe for days in hospital because there was no water or use toilets that

were clogged and dirty.

Siva Shakthi, a student in Puducherry, sought an early discharge for her 57-year-old mother Alamelu from the Puducherry-based Indira Gandhi Medical College because of its unhygienic conditions. Her mother has co-morbidities such as heart issues and high blood pressure and she didn't want to take a chance.

"The hygiene was pretty bad. That's why she had to come back in just three-four days. Both men and women had to use the same toilet. It was very disturbing," Shakthi said.

"Medication was given but drips weren't. You had to take care of yourself which is the case with a lot of hospitals in the country today," she added.

According to Parikh, the patient may experience a range of emotions while in treatment for multiple complications that may arise. "They are isolated so they might feel loneliness, being around sick people and perhaps seeing death around, anguish, pain, grief, their family may also go through the same," he explained. Some of these patients can get PTSD, Parikh said.

What can be done is to have a support system in place and ask them to express themselves openly every time they get worried. Be connected with people through messages, calls and video calls. When you're back, don't rush to work, or be over busy. Give time to self care," he added.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

U.S. JOURNALIST
DETAINED IN
MYANMAR

Yangon: An American editor of a Myanmar-based news outlet was detained by authorities in Yangon as he attempted to board a flight out of the country on Monday, his employers said.

United States citizen and managing editor of Frontier Myanmar Danny Fenster “was detained at Yangon International Airport this morning,” his employers said in a statement on their verified Twitter account.

“We do not know why Danny was detained and have not been able to contact him since this morning. We are concerned for his wellbeing and call for his immediate release,” it added.

Myanmar has been in uproar since the February 1 coup, with near-daily protests and a nationwide civil disobedience movement.

ANA TURNS INTO
A POST-TROPICAL
CYCLONE

Miami (US): Ana weakened into a post-tropical cyclone late Sunday as it moved away from Bermuda after bringing rain and wind to the island in the Atlantic Ocean, forecasters said.

Ana was located about 680 miles (1,095 km) northeast of Bermuda with maximum sustained winds of 40 mph (65 kph), the National Hurricane Centre in Miami said in an 11 pm advisory. It was moving northeast at 28 mph (44 kph). Ana formed as a subtropical storm early Saturday, then transitioned to a tropical storm on Sunday. It then weakened to a depression later in the day.

The hurricane center said it would dissipate 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. Meteorologists expect the 2021 season to be busy, but not to the level of last year's the record-breaking season.

TURKEY DETAINS
I.S. BOMB EXPERT
WANTED BY U.S.

Istanbul: Turkish intelligence officers have arrested an Egyptian-born terror suspect wanted by Washington who was a top explosives expert for the Islamic State group, state media reported on Monday.

The suspect, identified as Mustafa Abdulwahab Mahmud and born in 1999, was detained with three others on the outskirts of Istanbul after fleeing Syria, the reports said.

The indictment said he joined the IS group in Syria, where he specialised in making suicide belts and various explosive devices.

The Istanbul prosecutor's office is seeking 22.5 years in prison on charges of membership of a terror group.

He was detained on a tip from US intelligence services, who have been tracking his movements, the media reports said, adding that he is believed to have been plotting attacks inside Turkey, including against US interests.

Once accused of letting jihadists pass freely through its territory, Turkey has stepped up its fight against the IS group.

OMAN SEES RARE
PROTESTS OVER
JOB LAYOFFS

Dubai: Scattered protests in Oman over layoffs and poor economic conditions drew a massive police presence on Monday in at least one city in the sultanate, with protesters throwing stones at one point and police firing tear gas.

Videos posted to social media show several dozen Omanis in the city of Sohar trailed by a long line of riot police vehicles. Other images appear to show a line of police in riot gear near a government labour office in the city, some 200 kilometers (125 miles) northwest of the capital, Muscat.

Other images appear to show Omanis fleeing and others being arrested. The images correspond to known landmarks around Sohar, the first major city people enter in the sultanate after coming over the border from the neighbouring United Arab Emirates.

Similar scattered protests on Sunday brought another mass police presence, activists said online. That demonstration was acknowledged by Oman's Labor Ministry in a tweet, which said it was aware of people gathering there to try to find new job vacancies.

3 Wuhan virology lab staff
ill before Covid disclosed

Undisclosed US intelligence may renew calls for probe into origins of virus

Beijing/Washington, May 24: Three researchers from the Wuhan Institute of Virology sought hospital care in November 2019, weeks before Beijing disclosed the Covid-19 pandemic, a US media report said, citing a previously undisclosed American intelligence document that could add weight to growing calls for a full scale probe of whether the Coronavirus may have escaped from China's top bio lab.

The details of the reporting go beyond a State Department fact sheet, issued during the final days of the Trump administration, which said that several researchers at the Wuhan lab, a centre for the study of Coronavirus and other pathogens, became sick in autumn 2019 “with symptoms consistent with both Covid-19 and common seasonal illness,” the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

The origins of the Covid-19 remain a widely debated topic, with some scientists and politicians maintaining that the possibility of a lab leak of the deadly virus exists. The Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV) is near the outbreak's known epicentre of Huanan Seafood Market in central China's Wuhan city, where the virus first emerged in late 2019 and became a pandemic.

Former US president Donald Trump was among those who supported the theory that the virus might have escaped from a bio lab in China.

“Three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick enough in November 2019 that they sought hospital care,” the paper said.

The disclosure of the number of Chinese researchers, the timing of their illnesses and their hospital visits come on the eve of a meeting of the World Health Organisation's decision-making body, which is expected to discuss the next phase of an investigation into Covid-19's origins.

The paper said that current and former officials familiar with the intelligence about the lab researchers expressed differing views about the strength of the supporting evidence, with one person saying it was provided by an international partner and was potentially significant but still in need of further investigation and additional corroboration.

China, however, denied the WSJ report on Monday, with Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian saying the WIV released a statement on March 23 that made it clear that there were zero Covid-19 infections at the institute. — PTI



NHS staff directs public as they arrive by car to an NHS Test and Trace mobile Coronavirus testing unit in Hayes, Hillingdon in west London on Monday. Additional Covid testing was set to begin on May 24 in west London boroughs, including Hillingdon, after the identification of the variant first identified in India.

— AFP

EU takes on Astra for its
failure to give vax on time

Brussels, May 24: At loggerheads for months with the Anglo-Swedish pharmaceutical company it accuses of failing to deliver the promised number of Covid-19 vaccine doses, the European Union's executive branch will try to persuade a Brussels court on Wednesday that the case is urgent enough to justify ordering the company to make an immediate delivery of the missing shots.

AstraZeneca's contract signed with the Commission on behalf of EU member states foresaw an initial 300 million doses for distribution among all 27 countries, with an option for a further 100 million. The doses were expected to be delivered throughout 2021. But only 30 million were sent during the first quarter.

Deliveries have increased slightly since then but, according to the

Commission, the company is set to provide only 70 million doses in the second quarter. It had promised 180 million.

While the EU insists AstraZeneca has breached its contractual obligations, the company says it has fully complied with the agreement, arguing that vaccines are difficult to manufacture and it made its best effort to deliver on time. — AP

INDIAN HIGH
COMMISSION SAYS
OFFICIAL'S WIFE
TESTED -VE IN PAK

Islamabad, May 24: The Indian High Commission in Islamabad on Monday clarified that an official's spouse, who was reported by the Pakistani media to have been tested positive for the Coronavirus, has tested “negative” for Covid on RT-PCR conducted on arrival here and in Lahore.

“In response to media reports that the spouse of an official of the Indian High Commission tested positive for Covid on RAT, it is clarified that said individual has tested ‘Negative’ for Covid on RT-PCR, conducted on arrival in Islamabad. RT-PCR in Lahore, as per reports, was also ‘Negative’, the Indian High Commission tweeted.

Earlier, Pakistan asked 12 officials of the Indian High Commission (IHC) in Islamabad to quarantine, along with their family members and drivers, after one of them reportedly tested positive for the Coronavirus since their arrival from India last week, the Foreign Office said.

A group of 12 officials and their family members crossed over to Pakistan through the Wagah Border on May 22, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said on Sunday. — PTI

BRAZIL CONFIRMS
1ST CASE OF STRAIN
FOUND IN INDIA

Brasilia (Brazil), May 24: Brazil's health minister said that the government is concerned about the Coronavirus variant first identified in India after the first cases of it were confirmed in the South American country. Marcelo Queiroga denied, however, that there was community transmission of the variant, which was first identified in Brazil in the northeastern state of Maranhao, where 100 people are being monitored. A case was also confirmed Saturday in Ceara state. — AP

UK confident to lift
virus curbs by June

London, May 24: British health officials expressed optimism on Sunday that the Coronavirus restrictions remaining in England can be lifted in June after an official study found that the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines offer effective protection against the variant first identified in India.

Authorities in Britain on have expressed concern in recent weeks that increasing cases of the Indian variant could jeopardise the UK's so-far successful plan to reopen its economy. More than 2,880 cases of the Indian variant have

been recorded in England, figures show.

The government has said the variant appears to be more transmissible, but there was still uncertainty about how concerning this was. Jenny Harries, chief executive of the UK Health Security Agency, said officials in England are on track to proceed with the final stage of unlocking the country from June 21 if the public remains cautious. — AP

Trained dogs could sniff out Covid: Study

London, May 24: People who are infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19 have a distinct odour that can be detected by trained dogs with a high degree of accuracy, according to new research in the UK.

In what has been described as the most complete study of its kind to date, combining dog trial, odour analysis and modelling, the London School of

Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) led collaborative research with the charity Medical Detection Dogs and Durham University to find that specially trained dogs can rapidly and non-invasively detect the disease with up to 94.3 per cent sensitivity and up to 92 per cent specificity.

The dogs were able to detect odour from individuals who were asymptomatic, as well as those

with two different strains of Covid-19, and with both high and low viral loads, the study released last week said.

With the threat of new variants entering the country, the need for testing means we face potential continued disruption for some time to come. That's where these amazing dogs could play a role, said Professor James Logan, Head of the

Department of Disease Control at LSHTM, who led the project.

“Further research is needed to see if the dogs can replicate these results in a real-world setting, but these findings are hugely encouraging. The advantage of using this method is being able to detect Covid-19 with incredible speed and good accuracy among large groups of people, even in asymptomatic cases,” he said.

The dogs were trained by the team at Medical Detection Dogs to identify Covid using body odour samples which were sent to the research team by members of the public and National Health Service (NHS) staff. The team at LSHTM collected and processed a total of 3,758 samples and chose 325 positive and 675 negative samples for testing. — PTI

BIZ | ON HOLD

Officials rules out quake as a cause, investigation to continue

‘Shaking building’ puts traders in tizzy

Shenzhen, China, May 24: Business owners face uncertain prospects after being shut out of a skyscraper in southern China that started to shake unexpectedly last week and sent passersby running in panic.

The 300-metre (1,000-foot) SEG Plaza in the city of Shenzhen near Hong Kong began shaking last Tuesday, prompting the evacuation of the occupants and causing pedestrians to flee for safety.

Emergency management officials quickly ruled out a quake as the cause of the

wobble in the tech hub's Futian district, and a probe is ongoing into the cause.

One business owner said that he was on the fifty-third floor last week when the building started swaying. “I saw something moved, (and) when I got up I saw everything moved,” said Arman Hasanpour, an Iranian businessman based in the building.

“After that we came out very fast.” He said there has been ‘a few shakes’ since the initial wobbling of the building, which was built in 2000. “Now, we

don't know how to make business and how to cope with it... everything is not clear.” The SEG Building on Monday was sealed off with red tape covering the entrances.

But a handful of business owners from the electronics market on the ground floor were rolling trolleys packed with taped-up goods out of the shuttered tower.

Across the road, an electronics trader surnamed Wang said that he had heard people complain before that the skyscraper had swayed. — AFP

Merkel, Macron
favour WHO
improvement

Geneva, May 24: French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday were among leaders rallying around efforts to strengthen the World Health Organisation and the world's ability to prepare for and defend against pandemics.

It came as the UN health agency opened its annual assembly, with a draft resolution in the works that acknowledges missteps in the response to Covid-19.

The sweeping proposal would seek to boost pandemic response, stabilise WHO's funding and ensure greater access to health care including to vaccines, tests and treatments linked to the Coronavirus.

The European Union and Vanuatu were behind the resolution, which was to be considered during the eight-day assembly.

It would create a working group on strengthening WHO's readiness and response to health emergencies.

We have to have institutions that are up to the task, that meet our ambitions, Macron said by video during the mostly virtual meeting. WHO, he said, must be robust and

COVID SHADOW
HANGS OVER
W.H.O. MEETING

Geneva, May 24: Calls for World Health Organisation reform and steps to avert future pandemics feature high on the agenda as the UN agency kicks off its annual member states' meeting on Monday.

With the Covid-19 crisis still raging and wealthy nations continuing to hoard most doses of life-saving vaccines, the WHO's main decision-making body has plenty to discuss.

The 74th World Health Assembly (WHA) begins Monday with statements from national leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, health ministers and other high-level representatives of the WHO's 194 member states. — AFP

flexible in times of emergency and crisis. And it must be completely transparent to make sure that people trust the organisation. — AP

Suu Kyi appears for
first time in court

Bangkok, May 24: Myanmar's ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, appeared in court in person on Monday for the first time since the military arrested her when it seized power on February 1. One of her lawyers, Min Min Soe, said over phone that Suu Kyi was able to meet with her defence team for about 30 minutes before the hearing began at a special court set up inside the city council building in Naypyitaw, the capital.

The lawyers also met with Win Myint, who was president of the government Suu Kyi led as state counsellor and faces some of the same charges. Suu Kyi's only previous court appearances have been by video link and she had not



Aung San Suu Kyi

been allowed to meet in person with any of her lawyers.

Min Min Soe said Suu Kyi wanted to tell Myanmar's people that her National League for Democracy party will stand by them. She said that “since the NLD was founded for the people, the NLD will exist as long as the people exist,” Min Min Soe said after the hearing. — AP

BBC to probe into
Diana interview

London, May 24: The BBC said on Monday it will review its editorial policies and governance after an independent report found one of its journalists used deception to secure a landmark interview with Princess Diana.

The British broadcaster's board said that the internal probe would be conducted by a group of non-executive directors led by Nick Serota, its senior independent director, and report back by September.

“We must not just assume that mistakes of the past cannot be repeated to day — we must make sure that this is the case,” the board of governors said in a lengthy statement.

“We think it is right that we review the effective-



Princess Diana

ness of the BBC's editorial policies and governance in detail,” it added.

An investigation by retired judge John Dyson concluded last Thursday that journalist Martin Bashir had tricked Diana's brother Charles Spencer into helping to arrange the 1995 interview, in which she spoke about her troubled marriage. — AFP



People walk past the temporarily closed of 300-metre (1,000-ft.) SEG Plaza (C) in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen, in Guangdong province on Monday. — AFP

DECCAN Chronicle

25 MAY 2021

CBSE's Class 12 exams: Choose dates prudently

The consensus among states consulted about the conduct of CBSE's Class 12 examination for the academic year 2020-21 appears to be in favour of the board's proposal for a shortened format. Facing a very tricky decision on holding the qualifying exam for higher studies in the time of the pandemic, the Centre has gone in for an exhaustive consultation process. Opinion largely favours the conduct of the exams since they are crucial in defining what courses students will take as they graduate to college. Imposing the loss of a whole year on lakhs of school-leaving students is an inconceivable penalty though students and parents may nurse different opinions. The focus has to be on the greater good.

Any risk versus benefit calculation would show that to hold the exam sometime after the second wave of the Coronavirus is forecast to dip, say in August-September, would be beneficial though it will not come without risks. The Class 12 exam is a life-defining crossroads and requires detailed planning in view of the safety of the students and their exam supervisors. States insisting on students as well supervisory staff being vaccinated is a fair call and must be heeded in the current circumstances. There are ethical boundaries to cross in vaccinating the young but since a majority of those taking the exam are likely to be as old as 17, vaccinating them will help protect them against any severe forms of the disease.

The shorter format wherein tests in one language and three elective major subjects will be spread over 45 days and held in their own schools, with marks for other subjects to be judged proportionally, seems the better option as it would also limit the exposure of students. The trickiest part would, however, be in choosing the timing of the exams. The proposition would work better the later the exams are held in the year and the new college term can be adjusted to begin accordingly, perhaps at the start of 2022. The idea of holding the exams in the same schools that they used to go to when in-person classes were held last is worth considering because the familiarity of the environment might help assuage the fears of exams in the time of the pandemic.

All this, of course, assumes that a consensus would emerge among the states on holding the Class 12 board exams and that any student suffering from Covid-19 at that time would get another opportunity. The cancellation of Class 10 exams was a prudent decision but one that was relatively easy to take. To keep politics out of the decision making will also be challenging and it will still be the Centre's call on the feasibility of holding the exams in the safest manner possible with adequate precautions against such congregations of students becoming super spreader events. We need no reminder that the current dominant virus strain in India is affecting a greater proportion of young people and it is understandable if an element of fear should enter the decision-making process. It is not only their studies and careers that are at risk but their lives.

Act against those trashing docs

Since Covid-19 gripped the world last year and caused devastation worldwide, including in India, our doctors — who practise allopathic medicine, the core of scientifically validated therapeutics — and nurses have been in the forefront of the war against the pandemic. Much more than three lakh people may have died in India if it weren't for their dedication.

And yet yoga teacher Ramdev thought it fit to traduce allopathy and by extension its practitioners, more than a thousand of whom died fighting the virus. He called allopathy "a stupid science", a "tamasha" (farce). In doing so, he mocked the national effort to fight the disease, which continues to claim thousands of victims daily. Perhaps the "Baba" is miffed that Coronil, made by the drug manufacturing units of his vast commercial empire, didn't pass the test of science and the false claims around it were exposed.

The Indian Medical Association has demanded action against Ramdev under the law for demoralising the medical community and weakening the national fightback against the disease. Options can be considered under the Epidemiology Act or Disaster Management Act. Is the government up to it? While promoting the ancient Indian discipline of ayurveda, the government regrettably ended up promoting quacks and superstition peddlers hiding behind the rubric "Hindu civilisation". It may not be easy for it to move against those publicly downgrading science.

It may be recalled that Bhopal BJP MP Pragma Thakur, once allegedly associated with a bomb blast in a minority community locality and for embarrassing the government by praising Mahatma Gandhi's assassin, has claimed she is safe from Covid as she drinks cow urine, which she touted as a cure. As a public servant, she sought to discount modern medicine and science, and backed a wholly untested belief among some Hindus about the medicinal virtues of cow urine — including for Covid — since the cow is an animal they revere. Does the Centre, the BJP or the Madhya Pradesh government propose to act against her?

The MP government, however, appears energetic about booking former CM Kamal Nath for making a reference to the "Indian" variant of Covid, now a subject of discussion in the global scientific community, including here. Mr Nath is accused of weakening the national effort in the anti-Covid fight.

DECCAN CHRONICLE

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Subhani



Israel & Gaza: Use truce to find a lasting solution



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray
Reflections

America's President Joe Biden did well to stress that while the United States remains committed to Israel's security, only the promised two-state formula can really solve the Arab-Israeli conflict in the long run. That might atone to some extent for what Arabs call the "Nakba", or literally "disaster", in which the Zionists destroyed over 600 Palestinian villages and forced their inhabitants into exile.

Nothing is to be gained by fawning on Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi tends to do. History, once written, cannot be erased, as I told the last Arab mayor of Jerusalem when he claimed that Israel was doomed because even the Crusaders' kingdom did not last more than 80 years. In fact, Mr Biden would have done even better to emphasise that there can be no more effective guarantee of Israel's security than a sovereign Palestinian state as envisaged in the 1991 Madrid Conference.

The ceasefire between Israel and the radical Hamas movement, which rules the Gaza Strip, ended 11 days of bitter fighting that killed about 250 people, mostly Palestinian civilians. Although both adversaries accomplished their immediate political goals, the fragile peace can collapse any moment. It is in their interest, therefore, as well as of the entire Middle Eastern region and the world at large to take advantage of this respite from violence to lay the foundations of a lasting settlement.

Such plain-speaking would certainly have denied the US President the thanks that Mr

him to recognise Israel almost as tit for tat. Morarji Desai probably wanted to develop closer ties but dared not. P.V. Narasimha Rao finally did so under American influence. India wanted Israeli weapons but would not admit it. Israeli diplomats contemptuously attributed India's pro-Arab stance to the Muslim vote at home.

Not that American policy was or is any more principled. When President Harry S. Truman reneged on Franklin D. Roosevelt's commitment to the Arabs, his frank excuse was that his supporters included influential American Jews who were anxious for the success of the Zionist state. He did not have to placate a similar Palestinian lobby.

Such calculations also operate in West Asia. In the lead-up to Hamas' rocket barrage, Prime Minister Netanyahu pursued a series of flagrantly reckless policies. Many believe that he deliberately provoked Hamas in order to prevent his domestic opponents from uniting against him and establishing a governing coalition. Israel has had four elections in the last two years, and if the Prime Minister fails to hold on to power, he might have to face corruption charges and a prison term. Yet, the war that he unleashed was more of a gift to Hamas than he bargained for. Hamas, too, needed a crisis to compensate for its declining reputation in the Gaza Strip, alienation from the Palestinian Authority under President Mahmoud Abbas, and the political confinement

imposed by 14 years of the land, air, and sea blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt. Systematically weakened and humiliated by Israel, President Abbas could do nothing about the unlawful eviction of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem or the Israeli military's attack on the Al-Aqsa mosque, which precipitated the conflict. Hamas exploited the two incidents as well as the leadership vacuum, in the process neutralising the blockade by demonstrating that it would not stand by while Palestinians suffered aggression.

For once Israel's armed forces found themselves simultaneously engaged in Gaza, East Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and — what probably worries Mr Netanyahu the most — in Israel's ethnically "mixed cities". The Israeli police stood by as well-organised Jewish militias attacked the Palestinians who retaliated against Jews and their synagogues. Not only did the violence revive painful memories of the killing of 13 Palestinian protesters in October 2000, it also intensified the community's sense of disenfranchisement and discrimination that goes back to the Deir Yassin massacre of the Palestinians on April 9, 1948.

A mere ceasefire cannot address deep-seated grievances that are rooted in history. But atonement can be made for some evils of the past. Israel's withdrawal to the borders that it enjoyed in 1967 and independence for the West Bank and Gaza, as specified in the Oslo accords, might achieve that. The United States can help to ensure that it happens. But instead of the Palestinians promising to respect Israel's security, it's the Israelis who must now undertake not to seize any more Palestinian territory or indulge in any other hostilities against the Palestinian state.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

A mere ceasefire cannot address deep-seated grievances that are rooted in history. Israel's withdrawal to the borders that it enjoyed in 1967 and independence for the West Bank and Gaza, might achieve that.

LETTERS

STAFF FOOL PATIENTS

Greed knows no bounds or human values in India (Staff fool patients to sneak out vials, DC, May 24). It is disgusting to note that hospital staff are indulging in malpractices and trying to cash in on the situation. They are reflecting the 'criminal' attitude of private hospitals which 'fleece' in the name of "treatment". Such rogues should be punished so that future culprits will think twice before repeating such crimes.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

It was highly appalling to read the news. Authorities must bring the guilty to book. Further, Covid-19's message has been that empathy is the strength every healthcare facilitator needs to pay attention to.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

THIRD WAVE

The fury of the second wave is on the wane thanks to lockdowns. To fight the third wave, it's imperative to ensure vaccination of 70 per cent of population by 2021. Sixty five per cent are rural folk. The health-infra is abysmal. As such, states must walk extra miles to facilitate it. Unless it is done, we shall fail our peasants.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

India will take all steps to ensure its security: PM

NEW DELHI, MAY 24.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, today warned that if the world failed to recognise the threat to peace to the India-Pakistan, sub-continent caused by the massive influx of refugees into India from East Bengal, India would be constrained to take all necessary measures to ensure its security and preservation.

In a strongly worded statement in the Lok Sabha on the problems created by the refugee influx, Mrs. Gandhi said that unless conditions were created for the early return of the refugees under credible guarantee, for their safety and well-being there could be no lasting stability or peace in the sub-continent.

Aakar Patel



Why Twitter's action on BJP 'manipulation' is rattling govt

Twitter has marked tweets by Bharatiya Janata Party figures, including its spokesman Sambit Patra, as "spokesman manipulation". The BJP leaders had publicised what it said was a Congress toolkit to defame India. But the fact checking website Alt News showed that this content that the BJP was showing was fake.

The BJP said on its letterhead that the All-India Congress Committee had distributed instructions to Congress workers, volunteers and supporters to use the term "super spreader Kumbh", "not comment on Eid gatherings", "use dramatic pictures of funerals and dead bodies which is already being done by the foreign media". This turned out to be bogus and even the letterhead was forged, as Alt News quickly showed.

Twitter believed the fact-checking website, which is based in Ahmedabad, more than it did the Government of India, and branded the content fake. The BJP is upset and has sent another threatening note to Twitter saying that it should remove the "manipulated media" tag because the govern-

ment was investigating the matter. The problem of course is that the government first defamed the Congress, then it got caught peddling a lie and now it claims it is checking its own claim — amplified by all its ministers through their official accounts — to see if it is true. That is why a small news operation has more credibility today than the government of the Republic of India.

Twitter has a transparency centre where it puts up the data on take-down and information requests. These are legal notices from the Government of India asking Twitter to either block an account, take down some content which the government does not like or reveal the identity of a particular user.

From January 2012 to June 2014, it rarely received requests from the Indian government except for one or two. In the second half of 2016 it received 151 requests. This doubled to 306 between January and June 2018. It doubled again to 662 between July and December 2019. Between January and June 2020, the latest period for which the data is available, the Narendra Modi

government sent 2,367 requests, including those to reveal identities, those it wanted blocked and those whose content it did not like and wanted to be taken down.

The question is why is the government now sending thousands of "requests" to Twitter to comply? The answer is that the social media is reflecting a reality that the BJP does not want communicated. More people are saying things on the social media that are upsetting the government.

One way to deal with this would be to ignore it, which is what the various governments of India did in the past, which is why the number of takedown notices Twitter received were few. But if a government is sensitive to what is said about it, and sensitive to such an extent that it finds any criticism intolerable, then it will do what is going on in the India social media today.

Twitter is slightly different from Facebook and pretends to have more independence and pretends to be a guardian of free speech. Facebook is just a cutthroat corporate company that will go to bed

with authoritarian governments and do whatever they want in terms of blocking users and content and promoting the government's material even if it incites violence. Twitter says that it stands for freedom of its users, that it is "committed to the open exchange of information", and that it is why it publishes this transparency report from which the data above has been taken.

India is not the only democracy which makes such requests of Twitter. In the United States, the Secret Service which protects the President is obliged to assess every threat made against the President even if these are made casually. But this is not censorship of views. What is happening in India is that criticism of the government is not being allowed. And the deliberate vilification of the Opposition by the government is being pushed, and when it is caught it resists accountability.

India is going the way of China, where the social media has to be in full compliance with the government's desire to control the messaging and to carry out mass sur-

veillance. It is nobody's case and certainly not mine that India was ever some haven of free speech before the Narendra Modi government. It was not. Few democracies have the full force of government backing the blocking of free speech of citizens as is the case in India. We have jail terms for free speech under laws like sedition, criminal defamation, criminal contempt and laws which criminalise things communicated in words or even without words. This has always been the case.

But the criticism of the government was not intolerable as it has become now. This government insists on only one narrative and is willing and enthusiastic about stopping the other side from expressing itself. And it is also, as the toolkit fiasco shows, willing to fabricate material to invalidate what anyone else says. This is what the Emergency must have been like, and those who lived through it might not be feeling very different nowadays.

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	50,651.90	0.22
Nifty 50	15,197.70	0.15
S&P 500*	4,199.50	1.05
Dollar (₹)	72.96	-0.16
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.14	0.37
Euro (₹)	89.08	-0.02
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,015.95	0.19
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.14	2.56
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.972	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.611	-0.021

* As of 8:30 PM IST

FDI jumps 19% to \$59.64 bn in 2020-21: Govt

Foreign direct investments (FDI) into the country grew 19 per cent to \$59.64 billion during 2020-21, the commerce and industry ministry said. Total FDI, including equity, re-invested earnings and capital, rose 10 per cent to the "highest ever" of \$81.72 billion during 2020-21 against \$74.39 billion in 2019-20. "FDI equity inflow grew by 19 per cent in 2020-21 (\$59.64 billion), compared to 2019-20 (\$49.98 billion)."

Jaypee CoC defers voting, may consider NBCC bid



Jaypee Infratech's financial creditors deferred the voting process on Suraksha Group's offer to acquire the realty firm and will decide later this week whether bids of Suraksha group as well as NBCC should be considered again. The Committee of Creditors on Monday decided to conduct voting on May 27-28 on whether offers from both the contenders— Suraksha group and NBCC—should be allowed.

Bank credit up 6.02%; deposits grow 9.87%

Bank credit grew by 6.02 per cent to Rs 108.69 lakh crore and deposits increased by 9.87 per cent to Rs 152.17 lakh crore in the fortnight ended May 7, 2021, RBI data showed. In the fortnight ended May 8, 2020, bank advances stood at Rs 102.52 lakh crore and deposits at Rs 138.50 lakh crore, according to RBI's Scheduled Banks' Statement of Position in India as on May 07, 2021, released on Monday.

MFIs credit costs may be in 3-6% range in FY22

With their collection efficiency getting impacted amid disruptions caused by the Covid second wave, microfinance institutions (MFIs) may see their credit cost in the 3-6 per cent range in the current fiscal, India Ratings and Research said. It said collections of micro lenders and small finance banks are likely to have declined 3-5 per cent MoM in April 2021 and additional 5-7 per cent in May 2021 (first fortnight of the month).



■Apex court may direct plea to RBI SC unlikely to grant another moratorium

KFALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 24

The Supreme Court on Monday indicated that it would not be able to grant relief in terms of an interest-free loan moratorium for another period of six months or till the Covid-19 situation improves. The apex court observed that this is a policy decision and the court cannot decide to pass such directions. The court said that a representation can be allowed to be made to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The court will hear the matter again on June 11.

In the light of the Covid second wave and the consequent lockdowns, a plea has been filed afresh by Advocate Vishal Tiwari before the Supreme Court this month seeking directions for relief to borrowers in the form of a fresh loan moratorium on term loans. Tiwari urged the court to direct that no bank or financial institution would take action for auction in respect of any property of any citizen or party or any corporate for a period of six months for non-payment of loans.

The petition stated that the central government and its concerned ministries along with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have failed to bring in any sound relief in this present situation for stressed sectors and individuals for whom sustenance and existence have become difficult.



A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M. R. Shah made an observation while waiting for the video connection of Advocate Tiwari to be established. Justice Bhushan asked Justice Shah, "Have you seen the prayers, brother?" To this, Justice Shah said, "Yes. We cannot grant it. A representation can be allowed to be made to the RBI."

The court then deferred the hearing to June 11.

In a statement, Harsh Vardhan Patodia, president, Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India (Credai), appreciated the Supreme Court's stance.

"We appreciate the view of Hon'ble Supreme Court for guiding the matter of extension of loan moratorium for a period of six months this year to the Reserve Bank of India. In line with the representation made to the apex court, we feel due relief for borrowers is an absolute necessity considering the prolonged

impact of the second wave of the pandemic, and consequent financial stress borne by individuals and businesses due to loss of employment and business opportunities. With the real estate sector being more severely impacted in 2021 as compared to 2020, as the apex industry body, Credai has already made separate representations to RBI and the Government of India on the matter."

The petition said, "No such monetary relief and packages has been declared by the sovereign in this stressed time and people are under tremendous pressure to maintain the EMIs and are always under the threat of accounts being declared NPA. With no salary, revenue for individuals it has turned out to be a hopeless situation for individuals. The RBI on 6-5-2021 has issued a circular for resolution plan 2.0, which cannot be said to be adequate relief to all in the present circumstances..."

POSTPAID-PREPAID SWITCH THROUGH OTP ON THE CARDS

New Delhi, May 24: Mobile phone subscribers may soon be allowed to switch from a postpaid connection to prepaid and vice versa by using an OTP-based authentication and without a need to change SIM card, according to an official DoT note.

Industry body Cellular Operators' Association of India (COAI) has proposed the mechanism to the Department of Telecom (DoT) and the DoT has asked telecom operators to carry out proof of concept (PoC) on the same.

The final decision on allowing the change in the account will depend on the outcome of PoC, according to the DoT note.

"The PoC for conversion from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa may be carried out by the telecom service providers as per the procedure...The decision regarding implementation of the procedure shall be taken after the assessment of the outcome of the PoC," DoT ADG Suresh Kumar said in a May 21 note.

The COAI, whose members include Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, had requested the department on April 9 for permission to allow mobile customers to migrate from prepaid to postpaid and vice versa without undertaking fresh KYC procedure and by using OTP (one-time password) based authentication.

—PTI

It's a \$3 trillion stock market now

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 24

Indian stock market's capitalisation crossed the \$3 trillion mark for the first time on Monday on a closing basis, with the help of a big surge in mid-cap and small-cap companies' stock prices along with the rally in the shares of large companies.

Since market benchmarks Sensex and Fifty-50 peaked in February post-the Union Budget, the broader market has seen even a bigger rally than large-caps from the pandemic lows and this helped the market cap to rise to over \$3 trillion mark. The market-cap had briefly crossed the \$3-trillion mark on Friday in intraday trade.

The market capitalisation of the BSE, which has the largest number of listed companies on board, stood at Rs 218,94,202.30 lakh crore or \$3,00,085.00 lakh crore at Monday's USD-INR exchange rate of around Rs 72.96. One lakh crore is



equivalent to 1 trillion.

With a \$3-trillion market cap, the BSE is now among the top seven stock exchanges in the world. Only the New York Stock Exchange, Nasdaq, Shanghai Stock Exchange, Hong Kong Stock Exchange, Euronext and London Stock Exchange are now ahead of the BSE in terms of m-cap.

Though the benchmark Sensex reached an all-time high of 52,516.76 points on February 16 due to the rally in the large-cap companies, it is the broader market that has taken the BSE's market cap to \$3 trillion. From the April lows, the

BSE Mid-cap Index has rallied 103.48 per cent and the BSE Small-cap index 141.53 per cent compared to the 71.67 per cent rally in the Sensex. This clearly shows the broader market rally since March 2021 was responsible for the big surge in the stock market capitalisation.

On Monday too the broader market outperformed with BSE Mid-cap up 0.86 per cent and BSE Small-cap 0.70 per cent compared to the Sensex gaining 0.22 per cent.

A total of 4,722 companies are listed on the BSE and a majority of them fall in the mid-cap and small-cap categories.

"Market capitalization of equities of listed companies on BSE reached \$3 trillion for the first time ever," said Ashishkumar Chauhan, MD and CEO, BSE.

The market's capitalisation had hit \$2.5 trillion on December 16, 2020. It took only 159 days for the market to gain \$500 billion to touched \$3 trillion in valuation on Monday.

Zeta raises \$250 mn from SoftBank Vision

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 24

Banking software platform Zeta on Monday announced it has raised \$250 million in funding, led by Japan's SoftBank, valuing the firm at \$1.45 billion. This is one of the largest single investments in a banking tech startup globally.

Zeta, founded by serial entrepreneur Bhavin Turakhia and Ramki Gaddipati was last valued

at \$300 million when it raised \$60 million from Sodexo—also Zeta's largest customer currently.

Zeta is the 14th company this year to cross the \$1 billion valuation mark after Meesho, Cred, Pharmeasy, ShareChat, Moglix and others. The proceeds of this funding round will be used to accelerate Zeta's growth in the United States, Europe and India, including scaling its operations, team, and platform to meet the demands of its

expanding customer base.

Zeta counts amongst its customers over 10 Banks and 25 fintechs, across eight countries, including Sodexo, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank, Yes Bank, RBL Bank, SBM Bank India and others.

A recent Aite Group study found 61 per cent financial institution executives believe investment in newer technologies will improve their customer experience.

Roche Antibody Cocktail launched at ₹59,750/dose

New Delhi, May 24: Drug majors Roche India and Cipla on Monday announced launch of Roche's Antibody Cocktail in India priced at Rs 59,750 per dose for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid-19 in patients who are at high risk.

"The first batch of the Antibody Cocktail (Casirivimab and Imdevimab) is now available in India while a second batch will be made available by mid-June. In total they can potentially benefit 2,00,000 patients as each of the 1,00,000 packs that will be available in India offers treatment for two patients," Cipla and Roche said in a joint statement.

Cipla will distribute the product, it added.

The price for each patient dose [a combined dose of 1,200 mg (600 mg of Casirivimab and 600 mg of Imdevimab)] will be Rs 59,750 inclusive of all taxes. The maximum retail price for the multi dose pack (each pack can treat two patients) is Rs 1,19,500, inclusive of all taxes.

As per the statement, the drug will be available through leading hospitals

and Covid treatment centers.

The Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation had recently provided an emergency use authorisation (EUA) for the Antibody Cocktail (Casirivimab and Imdevimab) in India. It has also received a EUA in the US and several EU countries.

We are optimistic that the availability of Antibody Cocktail in India can help in minimising hospitalisation...play a key role in treatment of high risk patients before their condition worsens, said V. Simpson Emmanuel, MD and CEO, Roche Pharma India.

Umang Vohra, MD and Global CEO of Cipla said we look forward to leveraging our solid marketing and distribution strengths in India to provide broader, equitable access to this innovative treatment option in the country.

The cocktail is to be administered for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid in adults and children (above 12 years weighing at least 40 kg) who are confirmed to be infected with Sars-Cov2.

—PTI

GUPTA'S LIBERTY STEEL TO SELL UK PLANT TO PAY BACK DEBT

ADITI KHANNA LONDON, MAY 24

Liberty Steel, the company led by British Indian businessman Sanjeev Gupta, on Monday announced very constructive and productive meetings as part of its ongoing restructuring plans, which will result in the sale of its Stocksbridge plant in south-east England to help pay back lender Credit Suisse.

Gupta, who heads the wider Gupta Family Group (GFG) Alliance, and his newly formed Restructuring and Transformation Committee held advanced discussions with Credit Suisse Asset Management (CS) in Dubai over the weekend to reach a formal standstill agreement on its Liberty Primary Metals Australia business while refinancing is completed that will repay Credit Suisse out in full.

The investment bank has, meanwhile, agreed to pause court proceedings against Gupta's empire while the sale of Stocksbridge is conducted.

Both parties also made significant progress in agreeing a framework to resolve GFG Alliance's remaining exposure with CS, Liberty Steel, the UK's third largest steel maker, said.

This work includes identifying a positive solution which will allow Liberty to complete the restructuring and refinancing of its UK operations, protecting thousands of jobs and supporting the fulfilment of its vision to be a leader in the decarbonisation of the UK steel industry, it added.

A formal sale process for the aerospace and special alloys steel business at Stocksbridge and its downstream plants, the narrow strip mill at Brinsworth and Performance Steels at West Bromwich will be launched shortly, according to a statement by Liberty Steel.

The company has been working on a refinancing plan since its main lender Greensill Capital collapsed earlier this year. This sale will allow it to focus on developing its Rotherham plant.

—PTI

SF90i | STRADALE The hybrid car is for the masses, with no production limit set

Ferrari pitches \$5,00,000 supercar for daily driving

HANNAH ELLIOTT MAY 24

The main thing Ferrari will tell you about the 2021 Ferrari SF90 Stradale is how much of a bargain it is.

The arithmetic requires some squinting around the edges of elitism and a healthy injection of relative logic. It goes like this: The two-door coupe is the second hybrid from Modena, Italy's crown jewel, the first being the La Ferrari of 2013. That car, which had 950 horsepower, cost more than 1 million (\$1.2 million) when it debuted, and examples today sell for \$4 million (and an additional million for the convertible version). The new SF90



Stradale, with 986 horsepower, starts at the breezy bargain basement price of \$507,300. (One fine distinction: The SF90 is a plug-in hybrid, while the LaFerrari does not plug-in.)

And while the LaFerrari was limited to 499 units sold, plus one auctioned for charity, the SF90 is a veritable car for the masses, with no production limit set at all. So, see? Big

deal! Huge.

Well. A test drive of Ferrari's new hybrid across Los Angeles on May 19 did not convince me that this half-million-dollar machine spells a new era of budget-friendliness at the 81-year-old brand. But with an on-the-road dynamism born of the most advanced integration I've ever experienced with electric or conventional power, it does

convince me that the future of the brand is in good hands. Those who can afford the price tag have much to anticipate.

This car is extreme in every way, so of course that's reflected in its styling. Eat this: With 1000cv and at a dry weight of 3,461 pounds, it has a weight-to-power ratio of 1.57 kg/cv and produces 390 kg of downforce at 250 km/h-which, for the first time ever at Ferrari, puts a V8 engine, not a V12, at the most powerful and fastest of the production model range. It adds an eighth gear to the dual-clutch automatic transmission and adds 20 per cent torque over its predecessor, but the gearbox still weighs 10kg less. It

has brand-new actuation hydraulics that cut clutch times to 200 ms. (Compare that to the 488 Pista's 300 ms.)

A high-performance Li-ion battery provides power to all three motors and guarantees a 25 km (16 miles) range in all-electric mode, using just the front axle. Top speed is 211mph; it can go to 62mph in 2.5 seconds. The push to such great speeds feels instant; thank the electric motor gods for that.

The split nose and upturned grin of the hood, the dorsal fin on the roof, the unique placement of the rear air vents, and the big lip on the rear assist its spaceship-like speeds.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

No spin, Shivalal plays straight

Hyderabad: Former BCCI interim president and Hyderabad Cricket Association secretary N. Shivalal Yadav distanced himself from the spat involving HCA president Mohammed Azharuddin saying there was no animosity between them.

Both former Test cricketers are locked in a tussle to represent the HCA at the BCCI's Special General Meeting scheduled this Saturday.

"I have absolutely no issues with Azharuddin. If the BCCI accepts his candidature, good luck to him. If they allow me to, I will attend, since the HCA General Body has nominated me," Shivalal said on Monday. Shivalal reiterated he was not against Azhar in any way. "I want to make it very clear that it's not personal and I am not trying to suppress Azhar and make it to the BCCI Special General Meeting," he said.

BCCI to donate in Covid relief work

New Delhi: The Indian cricket board on Monday said it will distribute 2,000 oxygen concentrators of 10 litres each to various medical organisations, ramping up the country's overwhelmed healthcare infrastructure in its fight against the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

The deadly second wave of the pandemic has caused unprecedented health crisis with thousands losing their lives. Last month, the national capital region emerged as the worst sufferer due to oxygen crisis, leading to fatalities in multiple hospitals. "The Board of Control for Cricket in India on Monday announced that it will contribute 10-Litre 2,000 Oxygen concentrators to boost India's efforts in overcoming the Covid-19 pandemic," the BCCI said in a release. — PTI

Hurt Shapovalov out of French Open

Paris: Canada's world number 15 Denis Shapovalov withdrew from Roland Garros due to a shoulder injury on Sunday.

"I am saddened to share that after consulting with my medical team I have made the difficult decision to withdraw from Roland Garros," the 22-year-old wrote on Instagram.

"Unfortunately, my shoulder has been bothering me over the last few weeks and, while all medical tests look good, it is for the best to play it safe and rest." Shapovalov was runner-up to Casper Ruud in the Geneva clay court final on Saturday. At the Rome Masters last week, he had two match points in the third round against Rafael Nadal before the 13-time Roland Garros champion recovered to win. — AFP

Mickelson oldest to win golf major

Kiawah Island, USA: Phil Mickelson has delivered so many thrills and thrills over 30 years of pure theater that no one ever knows what he will do next. His latest act was a real stunner: A major champion at age 50. Mickelson captured his sixth major and by far the most surprising Sunday at the PGA Championship. He made two early birdies and let a cast of contenders fall too far behind to catch him in the shifting wind of Kiawah Island.

He closed with a 1-over 73, building a five-shot lead and not making any critical mistakes that kept him from his place in history. Julius Boros for 53 years held the distinction of golf's oldest major champion.

He was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship in San Antonio. — AP

Booker shines as Suns sink Lakers

Los Angeles: Devin Booker scored 34 points as the second-seeded Phoenix Suns outplayed the Los Angeles Lakers in their Western Conference playoff series opener with a hardfought 99-90 victory on Sunday.

Booker — playing in the first NBA playoff game of his career — spearheaded a deserved win over the reigning NBA champions, rallying his team after an injury to Chris Paul restricted the Phoenix veteran's influence. — AFP

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LILLE BLOSSOM

Galtier's men pip powerhouse PSG to win French league

Paris, May 24: Lille won the Ligue 1 title on Sunday thanks to a 2-1 victory at Angers which ensured they were crowned French champions for the first time since 2011 on the final day of the season.

An early Jonathan David strike and Burak Yilmaz's penalty in first-half stoppage time ensured that Christophe Galtier's Lille finished one point ahead of second-placed Paris Saint-Germain, who won 2-0 at Brest.

Angelo Fulgini pulled one back in added time at the end of the match, but the hosts couldn't stop Lille becoming champions for the fourth time in their history.

The match was played behind closed doors due to Covid-19 restrictions but fans poured into the streets of Lille to celebrate at the final whistle.

Supporters lit flares and chanted songs in the northern city's central Place Charles de Gaulle in jubilation at a historic triumph against far wealthier opposition.

"This is exceptional. It's been a long day and a lot of pressure. To beat Paris Saint-Germain to the league title is something exceptional," a jubilant Galtier said to *Canal+*.

"The players were amazing... The credit goes to the players, they are the heroes," he added.

The title win came after another away success for Lille, who finish the season unbeaten on the road since November, and ends a three-year league winning streak for PSG.

It was fitting that it was David and Yilmaz who scored the crucial goals at Angers, as both have been key to an improbable run to the title that has also held significant pressure from Monaco.

Mauricio Pochettino's PSG will have to settle for the French Cup in a disappointing season for the mega-rich club. They lost eight times — a record since they were taken over by Qatar Sports Investments in 2011.

— AFP



Lille players celebrate after defeating Angers to claim the French top division football league title at the Raymond-Kopa Stadium in Angers, north-western France, on Sunday.

— AFP

Aguero ends City career in style

Manchester (United Kingdom), May 24: Sergio Aguero signed off for Manchester City in style on Sunday, scoring twice in a 5-0 romp for the Premier League champions against Everton before lifting the trophy for the fifth time in his Etihad career.

City's record goalscorer, who is leaving the club after next week's Champions League final, hit a quickfire double after coming off the bench with 25 minutes remaining.

His efforts added to earlier strikes from Kevin De Bruyne, Gabriel Jesus and Phil Foden as City showed no sign of letting up ahead of the showpiece clash against Chelsea in Porto.

● **Manchester City's record goalscorer Sergio Aguero, who is leaving the club after next week's Champions League final, hit a quickfire double after coming off the bench with 25 minutes remaining.**

"He helped me a lot," the City boss said as fans celebrated in the stands. "We cannot replace him."

"'SERGIO CLOSE TO BARCELONA DEAL'

Aguero is close to agreeing a move to Barcelona that would unite him with fellow Argentine superstar Lionel Messi, according to Pep Guardiola.

"Maybe I reveal a secret," Guardiola told the BBC. "Maybe he is close to agreeing a deal for the club of my heart — for Barcelona."

— AFP

Juve, AC Milan qualify for CL

Milan, May 24: Juventus qualified for the Champions League on the final day of the season on Sunday with a 4-1 win at Bologna and were joined by AC Milan who beat Atalanta 2-0.

Napoli had to settle for a Europa League spot, finishing fifth, one point behind Juventus, after a 1-1 draw at home against Hellas Verona.

A pair of Franck Kessie penalties at the end of either half ensured AC Milan finished the season second 12 points behind city rivals Inter Milan — and return to the Champions League for the first time since the 2013-2014 season.

"We deserved the Champions League as well as second place," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli, whose side had missed the chance to seal their berth last weekend against Cagliari.

"We went through the whole championship at



Juventus' Alvaro Morata scores against Bologna on Sunday. — AFP

the top, unfortunately we had thrown away the match point last Sunday. "I'm really excited, happy, I have to thank the club because they made us work in a spectacular way."

Atalanta had already

left on the bench by Juventus coach Andrea Pirlo, who opted for an attacking line-up of Paulo Dybala and Alvaro Morata flanked by Federico Chiesa and Dejan Kulusevski.

"It was a shared choice, Ronaldo was tired after the fatigue on Wednesday," said Pirlo.

"He made himself available to the team but I chose to have another player named Morata play, who is not the latest arrival. I have a quality team, with many choices available."

A Morata brace along with goals from Chiesa and Adrien Rabiot prevented Juventus missing out on the elite European competition for the first time since 2012.

In Naples, Amir Rrahmani scored for Napoli after an hour against his former club, which would have been enough to secure a berth at the top table. — AFP

RAMOS OUT OF SPAIN'S SQUAD FOR EURO 2020

Madrid, May 24: Sergio Ramos was left out of Spain's squad for the European Championship on Monday following a season plagued by injuries. Spain coach Luis Enrique said Ramos' lack of play recently made it difficult for the Real Madrid defender to be included in the Euro 2020 squad.

The 35-year-old Ramos missed most of the second half of the season after a series of muscle injuries and a knee problem that required surgery.

He would enter Euro 2020 with a chance to break the record for most appearances for a national team. The veteran Spain captain already holds the European record with 180 appearances. The world record of 184 is held by Egypt player Ahmed Hassan. — AP

ASIAN | BOXING

Hussamuddin gives India winning start

Dubai, May 24: India were off to a confident start at the Asian Boxing Championships with Commonwealth Games bronze-winner Mohammed Hussamuddin (56kg) beating Kazakhstan's Makhmud Sabyrkhan in his opening bout to enter the quarterfinals, here on Monday.

Hussamuddin prevailed 5-0 against the 19-year-old two-time Asian youth champion.

The Indian has a real tough one next up as he will meet reigning World and Asian Games champion Mirzazbek Mirzahalilov. Mirzahalilov is the top seed in the draw and is the defending champion as well.

The score-line might suggest otherwise, but Hussamuddin was locked in a gruelling battle with the youngster.

The exchange of blows was fierce as the two boxers put up an entertaining show. The Indian, however, proved to be a better defender than the Kazakh, who relied just too heavily on counter-attacks.

On Tuesday, Olympic-bound Simranjit Kaur (60kg), Sakshi (54kg), Jasmine (57kg) and Sanjeet (91kg) will fight their respective last-8 stage bouts at the event which is



Mohammad Hussamuddin (56kg) celebrates after winning his bout on Monday.

being jointly hosted by the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) and the UAE Boxing Federation.

The continental showpiece features 150 pugilists from 17 countries this year including strong boxing nations such as Uzbekistan, Philippines and Kazakhstan.

India's best-ever show at the Asian Championship was in the 2019 edition in Bangkok where the country secured an unprecedented 13 medals including two gold, four silver and seven bronze. — PTI

KOCHI TUSKERS STILL OWE 35% MONEY TO PLAYERS

Melbourne, May 24: Former Australia batsman Brad Hodge on Monday cheekily enquired if BCCI has been able to "locate" the money that the now defunct Kochi Tuskers Kerala owed him for representing them in the 2010 edition of Indian Premier League.

The 46-year-old had played 14 games for KTK, scoring 285 runs at an average of 35.63. He was bought by Kochi Tuskers for \$425,000 at the 2010 auction.

"Players are still owed 35% of their money earned from ten years ago from the @IPL representing Kochi tuskers. Any chance @BCCI could locate that money?," Hodge tweeted.

As per Hodge's tweet, it seems that Kochi Tuskers still owe the Australian more than \$127,000.

He was reacting to a report published in the *Telegraph* about Indian women's team not receiving their share of \$550,000 ICC prize money from the BCCI.

It must be noted that Kochi Tuskers were expelled after just one season for defaulting on an annual payment of ₹55.3 crores in 2011.

Players such as Rahul Dravid, S. Sreesanth and Mahela Jayawardene had represented the franchise, which was bought for a whopping ₹1550 crore. It had finished eighth in the 10-team tournament.

KTK had failed to pay the bank guarantee per year, which led to their termination from the cash-rich league. — PTI

WORLD TEST | CHAMPIONSHIP

Gill says India well prepared for final

New Delhi, May 24: India opener Shubman Gill feels the team can't be better prepared for the World Test Championship final against New Zealand but underlined the importance of playing session by session in English conditions.

Gill is undergoing a 14-day quarantine in Mumbai along with the rest of the squad. It will be his first tour of England with the senior team having made his debut in Australia in December last year.

He did not have the best of times in the home series against England and he is looking to make amends starting with the WTC final against New Zealand from June 18.

"We did well in Australia. We have been playing well overseas and I feel we can't be better prepared for this final. As an opener, I feel you should be able to play session by session not just in England, overseas in general," Gill told *India TV*.

"It is very important to play session by session. In England whenever there is cloud around, the ball swings more and when the sun is out, it gets easier to bat. It is important to assess those conditions as an opener," he said.

Talking about the quarantine protocols in Covid times, he said: "It is very hard, you are in a room for 14 days there is not much to do. We are given workout schedules, we do that. We try to keep ourselves busy watching movies and spend some time on the I-pad but it is very hard," said Gill, who has played seven Tests so far.



It is very important to play session by session. In England whenever there is cloud around, the ball swings more and when the sun is out, it gets easier to bat. It is important to assess those conditions as an opener. — SHUBMAN GILL Indian opener

Gill has been with the Test squad since 2019 but got his big break with the Boxing Day Test at the MCG in December.

Asked about time spent in the team and interactions with skipper Virat Kohli and opener partner Rohit Sharma, he added: "Virat *bhai* tells me to play fearlessly whenever we speak about the game. He speaks about mindset a lot, that you have to be in good frame of mind when you go out to bat and shares his experiences."

"And when I am batting with Rohit *bhai*, we usually discuss where the bowlers will bowl, what the situation is like, depending on that, when to take risk or not." — PTI