

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 23 | MAY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 32°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: 3.4 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Vaikasi 9
Tithi: Dwadashi
Star: Hastam
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6.00 pm
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.34 am
Luhar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.16 pm
Maghrib: 6.24 pm
Isha: 7.38 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.29 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.42 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 3.26 PM

MOONSET TOMORROW 2.55 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+43,96,614)	(+3,307)
2,65,10,573	2,98,867

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+35,873)
TN: 18,06,861 20,046

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

16,68,09,691

DEATHS

34,63,660

COUNTRIES,
AREAS WITH
CASES **219**

worldometers.info

Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine 80 per cent effective against B.1.617.2 variant: UK study

London, May 22: Two doses from either the Oxford/AstraZeneca or the Pfizer vaccine are over 80 per cent effective in preventing infection from the B.1.617.2 variant of COVID-19, first discovered in India, a new UK government study has reportedly found. The Oxford/AstraZeneca two-dose vaccine is also being produced by the Serum Institute of India as Covishield and being administered among the adult population in India to protect against the deadly virus. The UK findings are said to be based on data from Public Health England (PHE) and have also revealed that the two doses provide 87 per cent protection from the B.1.17 variant, first discovered in Kent region of England and also considered highly transmissible. According to 'The Telegraph' newspaper, the latest study's findings were presented to a meeting of the government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag) this week. — PTI

COUNTER

POINT



Unused medicines? Don't throw them away... Let's try them on Covid patients!

'8 lakh guest workers left Delhi'

New Delhi, May 22: Over eight lakh migrant workers left Delhi in the first four weeks of the lockdown imposed to contain the spread of the second wave of Covid-19, according to a report from the Delhi transport department.

Between April 19 and May 14, a total of 8,07,032 migrant workers left Delhi for their home states in buses, out of which 3,79,604 left during the first week of the lockdown

itself. The number started declining from thereon, 2,12,448 left in the second week, 1,22,490 in the third and 92,490 in the fourth.

"The timely coordination with transport authorities of neighbouring states, especially Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand by the government of NCT of Delhi has helped about eight lakhs migrant workers to reach their destination without difficulty," read the report. PTI

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Tiruchy MP wants Covid test at every doorstep in rural areas



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Biden: Two-state solution to conflict

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Olympics on track: IOC chief



TN tightens lockdown, most shops to be shut for a week

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 22

No shops, including vegetable and grocery vends, will be allowed to open for one week from Monday, when the state will be under a total lockdown, permitting the continuation of just a handful of essential services and preventing people from stepping out of their homes.

However, to prepare the people for the lockdown and enable them to stock up on essential goods, all shops would be open till 9 pm on Saturday and from 6 am to 9 pm on Sunday, when outstation buses would also be operated, Chief Minister M K Stalin announced on Saturday through a statement.

Coming after the Chief Minister's meeting with high-level officers and medical experts, the statement said vegetables and fruits would be supplied through vehicles operated by the horticulture department in Chennai city while the local local bodies will lead the effort in to supply them to homes in the districts, it said.

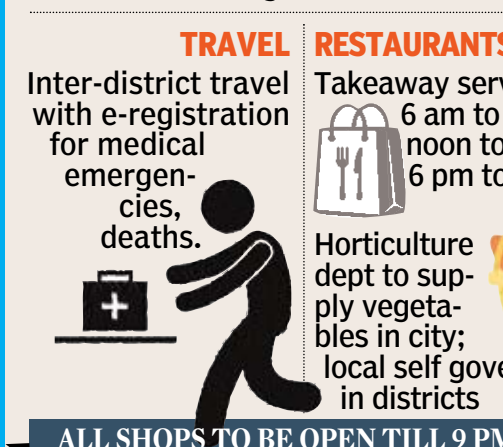
Pharmacies, including that of indigenous medicine and veterinary sciences, would be open as usual and daily distribution of milk, water and newspapers be allowed during the total lockdown, the statement said.

Only essential departments in the secretariat and district administrations will function, while banks, insurance companies and IT firms have

NO: All shops, including vegetable vends, groceries, malls



YES: Pharmacies, milk, water, newspapers Media, fuel stations, ATMs, transport of agricultural products, essential goods



ALL SHOPS TO BE OPEN TILL 9 PM TODAY

been asked to allow their employees work from home. Malls too will not be allowed to open.

Restaurants, as usual, can provide takeaway service from 6 am to 10 am, 12 noon to 3 pm and 6 pm to 9 pm and e-commerce food delivery can also function only during those hours. Other e-commerce services would be allowed between 8 am and 6 pm.

Rest of the services that have been allowed in the earlier relaxation to the lockdown like the functioning of petrol and diesel bunks and ATMs, transport of agricultural products and essential goods and inter-district travel for valid reasons like medical emergencies and deaths after e-registration would continue, the statement said. ■ P3

No dose, Delhi shuts vaccination centres

New Delhi, May 22: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said Covid-19 vaccination centres for those in the 18-44 years age group are being closed in the national capital due to lack of doses and appealed to the Centre to provide more vaccines.

From Sunday, all vaccination centres for youths in Delhi will be closed as stocks have run out, he said in a press conference.

The Chief Minister extended four suggestions to the Centre to enhance vaccine availability in the country.

The central government should within 24 hours direct all capable companies in the country to start manufacturing Covaxin as Bharat Biotech has agreed to share its formula, he said.

Vaccines manufactured abroad should be used in India and the Centre needs to buy vaccines on the behalf of states, he said. Foreign companies should be allowed to manufacture vaccines in India and the Centre should try to get vaccines from such countries that have more doses than what they need, he added. — PTI

Drop 'Indian variant', social media cos told

New Delhi, May 22: The government has asked social media companies to immediately remove any content on their platform which mentions or refers to the term 'Indian variant' of coronavirus, in a bid to curb spread of misinformation around Covid-19.

On Friday, the IT ministry wrote to all social

media platforms emphasising that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has not associated the term 'Indian Variant' with the B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus in any of its reports.

Digital platforms said they have received the latest advisory.

A notice issued in this regard by the IT ministry

states that a "false statement" is being circulated online that implies that an 'Indian variant' of coronavirus is spreading across the countries.

The IT ministry said the matter has already been clarified by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The social media platforms have been asked to

"remove all the content that names, refers to, or implies 'Indian variant' of corona virus from your platform immediately", it said.

Previously, the IT ministry had issued advisories regarding curbing of false news/misinformation concerning coronavirus on social media platforms. — PTI



An overcrowded bus as per Covid-19 protocol at Koyambedu mofussil bus terminus as the government announced lockdown from Monday. — N. Sampath

Nepal Prez dissolves Parliament, oppn to protest

Kathmandu, May 22: The leaders of Nepal's opposition alliance on Saturday decided to take all legal and political means to counter Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and President Bidya Devi Bhandari's "unconstitutional and undemocratic" move of dissolving the House of Representatives.

President Bhandari on Saturday dissolved the House of Representatives and announced mid-term polls on November 12 and

19 after she determined that both embattled Prime Minister Oli and the opposition alliance's candidate Sher Bahadur Deuba were not in a position to form a government.

Ms Bhandari's announcement came after Mr Oli recommended the dissolution of the 275-member House following an emergency midnight Cabinet meeting.

In a joint statement issued at the end of a meeting called to discuss the



Bidya Devi Bhandari

matter, the Opposition leaders expressed their commitment to unitedly defend the constitutional rights of Nepali citizens

achieved at the end of years of political struggle.

They appealed to "all political and civil forces to condemn and stand against the Oli-Bhandari duo's regressive, autocratic intentions". The Himalayan Times reported. They condemned their move as "unconstitutional, undemocratic and arbitrary."

The statement was signed by Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba, CPN-Maoist Centre

chair Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda", CPN-UML leader Madhav Kumar Nepal, chairperson of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal Upendra Yadav and vice-chair of the Rastriya Janamorchha Durga Paudel.

The Opposition alliance is devising a strategy to approach the Supreme Court with all its lawmakers on Sunday demanding to scrap the president's decision.

The Nepali Congress in a

separate statement earlier expressed serious concerns over the dissolution of the House.

The NC said that Ms Bhandari and Mr Oli had forgotten their morale and acted unconstitutionally.

After Mr Oli's announcement not to seek a vote of confidence in parliament after his re-appointment on May 10, Ms Bhandari invited leaders to stake claim to the position as per Article 76(5) giving less than 24 hours. — PTI



Boats anchored at a beach in Puri, Saturday. Cyclone Yaas is likely to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm and cross the Odisha and the West Bengal coasts on May 26. — PTI

Navy keeps ships standby for Yaas

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO JDC
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 22

■ **THE RAILWAYS** has cancelled a total 74 trains passing through East Coast Railway jurisdiction

A low pressure area formed over east-central Bay of Bengal on Saturday, which is likely to intensify into a very severe cyclonic storm and move towards West Bengal, north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts around May 26 morning, the met department said.

Wind speed is expected to reach 90-100 km per hour gusting to 110 kmph from May 26 forenoon along and off West Bengal, north Odisha and Bangladesh coasts, and increase thereafter till evening.

The very severe cyclonic storm, which has been named 'Yaas', will hit the coast with a wind speed of 120-160 kilometre per hour (kmph) gusting up to 185 kmph and heavy downpours, the IMD said.

The Indian Navy has kept on standby ships and aircraft to render assistance in the most-affected areas, a defence spokesperson said.

Fishermen have been advised to stay away from the central Bay of Bengal between May 23 and 27 and the Railways has cancelled a total 74 trains passing through East Coast Railway jurisdiction.

In New Delhi, the National Crisis Management Committee headed by cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba met on Saturday to review preparedness for Yaas, with the top bureaucrat of the country directing various agencies to ensure safety of Covid-19 patients and oxygen generation plants.

Gujarat Guv clears Bill to penalise 'forcible conversion by marriage'

Ahmedabad, May 22: Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat has given his assent to an amendment bill, which provides for a prison sentence of up to 10 years for fraudulent or forcible conversion by marriage, a state minister said on Saturday.

Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which was passed by the assembly on April 1, has been approved by the governor, legislative and parliamentary affairs minister Bhupendrasinh Chudasama said in a statement.

As per the amended Bill, a forcible "conversion by marriage, or by getting a

person married, or by aiding a person to get married" shall invite imprisonment of three to five years and a fine of up to Rs 2 lakh. If the victim is a minor, woman, Dalit or tribal, the offender may be punished with a jail term of four to seven years and a fine of not less than Rs 3 lakh. If an organisation violates the law, the person in charge can be sentenced to minimum of three years and maximum of ten years in jail.

During a poll rally in Vadodara on February 14 this year, Chief Minister Vijay Rupani had said his government would bring a strict law against "love jihad" in the state. — PTI

Sputnik V production by Aug

New Delhi, May 22: The production of the Sputnik Covid-19 vaccine in India is expected to start in August, news agency ANI reported quoting Indian envoy to Russia Bala Venkatesh Varma.

"For Sputnik, 150,000 doses plus 60,000 doses supplied to India. By May-end about 3 million doses will be supplied in bulk. Those will be filled in India. Production in India

is expected to start in August," Mr Varma said. "It will be produced in India in three phases. First, supply from Russia - fully made - which has already started. Second, RDIF will send to India in bulk. And in the third phase, the Russian side will transfer the technology to an Indian company and the Indian company will produce it fully," he said. Agencies

SHORT TAKES

423 more Covid cases in Pudukkottai

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKKOTTAI, MAY 22

As many as 423 corona cases increased on Saturday in Pudukkottai district in addition to the existing 2,400 persons undergoing treatment, according to law minister S. Raghupathi.

Inaugurating the vaccination drive at Thiruvappur in the presence of Pudukkottai Collector B. Uma Maheswari and others, the minister said the district administration is going to organise a vaccination drive 'Ungalai Thedi Thaduppoosi' in rural areas.

He said there is no oxygen shortage in Pudukkottai district. The number of oxygen beds has increased to 600, besides suitable arrangements for oxygen supply in Covid care centres, he added.

Unorganised sector appeals for Covid relief

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, MAY 22

The Unorganised Workers' Movement has appealed to Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to announce adequate Corona relief to the workers in the unorganised sector, who lost their livelihood.

In a letter to Stalin, the movement's state co-ordinator V. Maheswaran pointed out that due to the present lockdown, the working class like building workers, pavement dwellers, autorickshaw drivers, saloon employees, headload workers and private company workers who used to earn from Rs 100 to 500 per day are confined to their homes without any earning and suffering a lot.

He said the state government should arrange essential commodities free of cost plus a Corona cash relief Rs 2,000 to all unorganised sector laborers.



CROWDING IN MARKET CONTINUES

With the Tamil Nadu government announcing stricter lockdown from Monday, people buying vegetables at Koyambedu wholesale market in the city on Saturday.

—DC

Govt banks on global tender for 18-44 age group vax drive

T. SUDHEESH I DC
CHENNAI, MAY 22

The state government is banking on global tender for intensifying the 18-44 age group vaccination drive, which is crucial in the fight against the rampaging second wave of Covid-19.

Though the state had floated a global tender on May 15 to procure 3.5 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines for the 18-44 age group, the government has not received vaccines so far.

Health minister Ma. Subrahmanian on Saturday told reporters that the government was awaiting 3.5 crore vaccines ordered via global tenders.

The number of vaccination centres has been reduced due to shortage of

vaccines. The state has so far received 77 lakh doses of vaccines, out of which over 70 lakh doses have been administered. A few percent of vaccines had been wasted. The government had asked the Centre to allocate 13 lakh doses at a cost of Rs 36 crore to vaccinate the 18-45 age group. Of this, 11 lakh have been approved. The vaccination drive for the same age group has kick-started in districts like Tirupur and Tiruchy. The door-to-door vaccination programmes are also introduced in Chennai. In the coming days, vaccination camps will be introduced in all districts, he said.

Though the vaccination drive for the 18-44 age group was launched, youths in several parts of

the state are unhappy, failing to find slots in the CoWin portal, the official website to register for the jab. The urban primary health centres and private hospitals have shut camps citing vaccine shortage. According to reports, the number of vaccination centres was reduced by half from 4,000 due to vaccine shortage.

Experts pointed out that it is very unlikely to get vaccines in bulk for the state as the government is creating a kind of 'very-soon' impression. Dr Raja, president, Indian Medical Association (IMA)- Tamil Nadu says it will take time to get a huge amount of vaccine doses. It is not going to happen soon, as the government expects, as a lot of politics over

vaccines are playing out globally. The only possible way to get vaccines is to ramp up the domestic production capacity, he said.

It may be recalled that multiple states in the past fortnight have placed global bids for a total of 21 crore vaccine doses, fixing deadlines of three to six months for the stocks to be delivered in batches.

The union government in a statement on Wednesday said states would receive nearly 5 crore vaccine doses from the two vaccine manufacturers till the end of June for the 18-44 age group. States have given orders for vaccines, like Uttar Pradesh (4 crore), Odisha (3.8 crore), Kerala (3 crore) and smaller states making bids for 1-2 crore doses.

Panic buying in city, a big threat

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR I DC
CHENNAI, MAY 22

Shopkeepers who had downed shutters and gone home for the day rush back to open their outlets as the news of the week-long total lockdown broke, along with the new regulation that it will be business as usual till 9 pm on Saturday and Sunday, triggering a panic buying spree that posed a renewed threat of spreading Covid-19 infection.

Though most shops were open for business by 5 pm, the customers started flocking a bit late, some of them not aware of the change in the timing and others a bit lethargic to rush out immediately as they had a full day on Sunday to shop.

Many people, however, wondered how one could buy vegetables in one go and stock them up. Even the idea of stocking up groceries for a week was resented by many, who anyway had no other choice.

In Koyambedu wholesale market, where retail sellers do their shopping every day, the price of vegetables shot up by even five times as business increased following the government announcement.

Retailers, anticipating more business, rushed there to only find the prices jacked up several times

from that of what they paid in the morning. Reacting to the government order under which vegetable sales would only happen through the carts, passing through the streets, a Koyambedu shopkeeper said it was not practically possible.

Since it was said that the exercise would be carried out with the help of the Horticultural Department, he said that authorities seemed to lack an understanding on the volume of business that they do in Koyambedu every day. More than 5000 tonnes of vegetables arrive in over 450 lorries at the wholesale market every day from various places across the State and from other States. Those vegetables are procured by the retailers who take them away in more than 2000 vehicles like vans and carts.

Overnight the Horticulture department cannot replicate the business and supply vegetables to the whole of Chennai through carts, he said. The lockdown was inevitable, considering the

manner in which the pandemic was spreading rapidly all over the State, said A. Vikaramaraja, president of the Federation of Traders Associations (Vanigar Sangams).

He urged the traders to do business by adhering to the Covid-19 norms and requested the authorities not to harass them needlessly.

However, he warned that further extension of the lockdown would wreak havoc in the lives of the traders, who had already lost their livelihood.

Also some experts expressed the apprehension that the panic buying, leading to the crowding of people in public places, could lead to the spread of the virus, thus defeating the very purpose for which the lockdown was being brought in.

By giving just one and a half days for the people to stock up groceries, vegetables and other necessities for a week, we cannot help people in the Indian context particularly those who eke out a living on daily wages, they said.



Health minister Ma. Subrahmaniam opens around 130 beds zero delay ward at RGGGH in the city on Saturday. Health secretary Dr J. Radhakrishnan, Hospital Dean E. Tharanirajan also present.

—DC

Businessman jumps to death from hospital building

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 22

A 52-year-old man admitted to a private hospital in Tambaram after he was tested positive for the coronavirus. Sources said that the hospital authorities had asked Rajendran's family shift him to another hospital, as they were unable to meet the oxygen needs of the

from Rathinamangalam in Vandalar was admitted to the private hospital in Camp road, Tambaram after he was tested positive for the coronavirus.

Sources said that the hospital authorities had asked Rajendran's family shift him to another hospital, as they were unable to meet the oxygen needs of the

Covid-19 patients. Police sources said that this might have triggered Rajendran to end his life. On Friday night, he allegedly jumped from the third floor of the hospital building. Police said he died on the spot. The Selaiyur police registered a case and began the investigation.



Youngsters waiting for their job at a camp organised by Chennai Corporation in Chintadripet on Saturday.

—DC

Tiruchy MP wants Covid test at every doorstep in rural areas

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, MAY 22

Tiruchirappalli MP S. Thirunavukkarasar has said that coronavirus is spreading fast in the rural areas of the state and wanted Covid-19 tests to be conducted at every doorstep there. If anyone has oxygen deficiency, they should be admitted in the nearby hospitals.

Thirunavukkarasar, who held review meetings with Tiruchy collector S. Sivarasu and other concerned officials at Tiruchy on

Saturday, told the media that in the first phase he has handed over 30,000 face masks to the district collector.

He said there is no shortage of beds in Tiruchy district with 2,500 beds now available. The shortage of oxygen has been set right thanks to various steps.

He warned that the infection will spread further from next month, leading to the third wave and wanted everyone to take care of themselves.

He congratulated Chief Minister

M.K. Stalin for his tireless fight against the pandemic and wanted to establish at least three oxygen production units in and around Tiruchy.

The MP also hailed the efforts of the Tiruchy district officials, especially the medical staff, who staked their lives, for safeguarding the people.

On the release of all seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, he said the court verdict is final. Such release should be done through court only, he added.

Corporation ramps up door-to-door fever checks

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 22

The Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has intensified special door-to-door checks to track residents suffering from fever.

GCC commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi said that as many as 11,963 volunteers have been deployed across the 15 zones to collect details. They will also collect details of people aged above 45 as part of the vaccination programme.

So far 5,08,538 people were identified as suffering from fevers. Of this, 4,50,873 were subjected to RTPCR tests. The volunteers will distribute face masks and hand gloves to the residents and create awareness on adhering to Covid-19 appropriate behaviour inside and outside houses.

The residents who are suffering from fevers should keep an eye on their oxygen level with the help of pulse oximeters. If anybody found their oxygen level low, they can seek help from the volunteers for further check-ups, said the commissioner.

2 lakh doses of Covishield vaccine reach Chennai airport from Pune

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 22

Two lakh doses of Covishield arrived at the Chennai airport from Pune around 12 noon on Saturday, informed airport authorities.

According to the sources, two lakh

Covishield doses, in 20 parcels, were airlifted by an Indigo airlines flight from Pune.

The vaccine doses which arrived today have been shifted to the warehouse in the Directorate Of Medical And Rural Health Services in Teynampet, from where they will be supplied to other dis-

tricts of TN soon.

The Tamil Nadu government had placed an order for Rs 46 crore worth of Covid-19 vaccines to accelerate the vaccination drive in the state. The Government has begun vaccinating the people in the age group of 18-44 for the coronavirus disease in the state.

WHEN THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY COME OUT



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

The Coronavirus that has let loose the Grim Reaper into human civilization has also shone the light on the good, the bad and the ugly faces of our multifaceted society. To catch a glimpse of the ugly side, walk through the streets and alleys and it would be on the face. Yes, count the number of faces without a mask and you will realize the intensity of the civil disobedience movement that is brewing in soci-

ety. Whatever the rulers of the State or the authorities keep parroting, there are these people who just won't listen, leave alone obey orders. They don't bother to use a facemask and even assume that it is their right to go bare face, despite science saying that they could endanger others by such behaviour.

Those people come in all sizes, shapes and ages. Of course, I can understand young rebels without a

cause breaking a rule and going without masks but what about bravos who mock at law-abiding citizens. For them, wearing a mask is a sign of cowardice. Only those fearing the Coronavirus would cover the nose and mouth and the brave would just face it with an open face, they believe. In fact, the lack of fear of the virus on the prowl also emanates from the pearls of wisdom dropped by some habitual naysayers, who ridicule science and has now been proclaiming that Covid-19 is a construct of an unidentified cabal. And believe me, I even know a retired college professor holding a doctoral degree in science, averring that there is no such thing as Coronavirus.

Apart from the kind that

just don't bother to get a mask for protection, there is another lot that loves wearing it a bit lower as a chin guard. They are fence sitters. They do not know whether a mask is necessary to prevent the spread of the pandemic or not but they just do not have the courage and the wisdom of those naysayers to go completely without it. If castigated, say by the security guard at a shop holding a thermal scanner and a can of hand sanitizer, they will reluctantly pulled it up to ensure that they do not land in trouble. But in private they may tell you that they knew people who were infected even after being taking all the precautions like masks, social distancing and so on. Then there are those who speak on the inefficacy of vaccination

and many others taking risks, say like attending weddings or religious events. Yet the ugly ones are just skeptics unlike the bad ones that are greedy and scheming.

To know how greedy can man become, just look around for those who have benefitted financially in the pandemic. Every disaster would leave scores of individuals and organisations with additional wealth. But without going into such past chicaneries, let me state that many private hospitals have made good money this season. A glance at a 'discharge bill' for a Covid-19 patient, which was circulated on WhatsApp groups, gave a clear picture of the booming business. We, of course, get to read in newspapers and other media of

government fixing rates for treatment in private hospitals, certain drugs and so on. But how much are they followed. For a family desperate to save the life of a dear one, it is the bed and the treatment that are important and not the money they would have to shell out. There are a million personal stories.

Let us not just point fingers at private hospitals alone. There are other racketeers, too. What was the price of a surgical mask, say in January, 2020? Who hiked the price of drugs used on Covid-19 patients? Too many people out there see in the pandemic a cash cow and are reaping the benefit, exposing the bad face of the society. But what restores our faith in humanity is that there is also a good facet that

the pandemic brought to the fore with all its glowing beauty amidst the overall doom.

In fact, too many good things are happening. To start with, it is the doctors, nurses and other medical staff at government hospitals, who, with their exemplary dedication, have made a mark this season, also dispelling the old myth that public health facilities do not provide good treatment. In fact many of them died in the line of duty and many more were infected and went to the brink. Yet they are soldiering on and beating the Coronavirus on its track. Then comes the Corporation's survey workers who go from house to house checking on the health of people and also arranging for the tests and

hospitalization of those getting infected. They are all the more helpful to old people living alone.

The most beautiful face of our society, however, is the volunteers. Apart from those who help people find hospital beds, oxygen and medicine, there is a set that delivers food to infected persons on quarantine. One such person whom I know personally is Latha Dubai who won't even flinch to cook once again for someone who has been late in asking for it. Finally, organizations like the Popular Front of India undertake the funerals of those dying of Covid-19, thus giving dignity to the dead, too. Many people from all over the State have too many words of praise for those faceless men in PPEs.



IN BRIEF

BJP'S SONALI GUHA WANTS TO REJOIN TMC

Kolkata, May 22: Former TMC MLA Sonali Guha, who switched over to the BJP ahead of the elections, on Saturday wrote to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, apologising to her for leaving the party and urging her to take her back.

In the letter, which was shared by Guha on social media, she said that she left the party after being emotional. While the BJP described her overtures as a 'drama', the TMC said no decision has been made by the party on taking her back.

"I am writing this with a broken heart that I took the wrong decision of joining another party after being emotional. I could not get accustomed there," she said.

"The way a fish cannot stay out of the water, I will not be able to live without you, 'Didi'. I seek your forgiveness and if you don't forgive me, I won't be able to live. Please allow me to come back, and spend the rest of my life in your affection," she added.

Guha, a four-time MLA and once considered to be the 'shadow' of the chief minister, was among the slew of TMC leaders who switched over to the BJP ahead of the assembly elections. She was dropped from the TMC's candidates' list this time, following which she left the party after an emotional outburst on TV channels, and joined the BJP.

She did not fight the elections, but had said that she would work for strengthening the BJP's organisation.

IMA WANTS CENTRE TO ACT AGAINST RAMDEV

New Delhi, May 22: The Union health ministry should take action against yoga guru Ramdev as he has misled people by making "unlearned" statements against allopathy and defamed scientific medicine, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) said on Saturday.

The Resident Doctors' Associations of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Safdarjung Hospital too condemned Ramdev's statement and demanded "strictest steps" be taken against him.

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

Lakhs of patients have died after taking allopathic medicines", the association said quoting the yoga guru.

Ramdev should be prosecuted under the Epidemic Diseases Act as "untutored" statements are "a threat to the literate society of the country as well as to the poor people falling prey to him", the apex doctors' body said in a statement.

It alleged that Ramdev is trying to take advantage of the situation and create a sense of fear and frustration among the people at large.

He is doing this "so that he can sell his illegal and unapproved so-called medicines and make money at the cost of the public at large", the association said.

BODO TRIBAL LEADER NAMED ASSAM SPEAKER

DC CORRESPONDENT
GUWAHATI, MAY 22

In what may be called the beginning of inclusive politics in Assam, ruling BJP nominated and elected 50-year-old Bodo tribal leader Biswajit Daimary as 21st speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly.

Mr Daimary, son of a farmer and a mahout, who washed glasses in a tea stall to help the family in his school days has come a long way by starting his career as a student leader and being one of the architects of peace in Western Assam, the Bodo heartland.

Mr Daimary, himself a trained mahout, wanted to become a teacher from an early age, thus he joined the Assam Rashtrabhasha Prasar Samiti in Class-V and appeared for Hindi examination passing Visharad when he was in Class IX only. A former MLA from 2001 to 2006, Mr Daimary represented the state in parliament as a BPF Rajya Sabha MP from 2008 to 2014 and then from 2014 to 2020 and was re-elected as BJP MP in the upper house in 2021.



Family members prepare to cremate a Covid-19 victim at the Nigambodh Ghat cremation ground in New Delhi on Saturday.

Barge deaths: Min Pradhan must resign, says Shiv Sena

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, MAY 22

After Congress and NCP, the Shiv Sena too has demanded the resignation of Union petroleum minister Dharmendra Pradhan holding him responsible for deaths of people on board barge P305 that sank off the Mumbai coast during the cyclone Tauktae.

"People were left to drown in Mumbai Sea and this act amounts to culpable homicide. The Tauktae cyclone cannot be held responsible for this. But who remained asleep despite getting the cyclone warning are criminals," said the Sena in an editorial in its mouthpiece *Saamana* on Saturday.

Barge P-305, which housed personnel engaged in maintenance work of an offshore oil drilling platform of the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), sank on Monday evening during the cyclone. The official death toll in the tragedy has reached 60.

However, the Sena said that 75 workers have died, of which 49 bodies have

been found and 26 are still missing.

The Uddhav Thackeray-led party slammed Mr Pradhan saying he was conspicuous by his absence during the tragedy. "Will Dharmendra Pradhan quit owning moral responsibility for the death of innocent people? Do petroleum minister, ONGC chairman, its board of directors have any responsibility or not?" it asked.

It was a case of culpable homicide as ONGC did not take the cyclone warnings seriously and recall the 700 workers on the barge. The callous approach of ONGC administration is surpris-

ing. Hence a culpable homicide case should be filed against it for its negligence, the Sena said.

Had the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard not launched search and rescue operations, all the 700 people would have drowned in the sea. These workers may be employees of a private company, but they were doing oil rigging for ONGC. Hence, it was the duty of the ONGC administration to protect them, said the Sena, which heads the MVA Government in Maharashtra.

Earlier, the Congress and NCP – the other two constituents of the MVA – had demanded the resignation of Mr Pradhan holding him responsible for the mishap.

However, the BJP alleged that the MVA is politicising the issue only to protect Afcons Infrastructure, which had chartered the barge. Party leader Ashish Shelar demanded that Afcons be charged with culpable homicide. He alleged the state government and the police are trying to shield owners of the firm.

BOY DIES AFTER BEING BEATEN FOR VIOLATING U.P. 'CURFEW'

Unnao, May 22: Two police constables and a homeguard have been charged with the murder of a 17-year-old vegetable seller who was caught for violating the 'corona curfew' and allegedly beaten mercilessly, first outside his home and then inside a police station, officials said on Saturday.

The incident, which took place in Unnao district's Bangarmau area on Friday, led to angry protests from locals who relented after senior police officers assured the boy's family of an impartial probe, they said.

The constables and the homeguard have been booked under Indian Penal Code section 302 (murder), they said.

Constables Vijay Choudhury and Simavat have been suspended and homeguard Satyaprakash has been sacked, police said.

The incident had taken place on Friday in the Bhatpuri locality in Unnao district's Bangarmau when the boy was selling vegetables outside his house.

The boy's family alleged that he was caught by a constable for allegedly violating the 'corona curfew' and thrashed with a stick.

He was later taken to a police station, where he was again thrashed following which his condition deteriorated and he was rushed to the Community Health Centre, where he was declared dead, the family alleged.

Agitated locals blocked a road and their protest ended late on Friday night after senior police officers, including ASP Shahi Shekhar Singh, assured the boy's family all help, an impartial probe, and handed over a copy of the FIR.

- PTI

MP reports white fungus infection

State sees surge in black fungus cases also

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MAY 22

After Bihar, Madhya Pradesh has reported the case of white fungus infection.

A 55-year-old man, who has recovered from Covid-19 earlier this month, was on Saturday detected to have contracted white fungus infection in the government-run Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Medical College and Hospital in Jabalpur.

"This was the first case of white fungus infection in Madhya Pradesh. The fungus was removed in a surgery and the patient is doing absolutely fine after the surgery", Dr Kavita Sachdev, head of the department, ENT, in the medical college hospital told this newspaper.

The case was diagnosed as Aspergillosis, commonly known as white fungus infection, after culture of the fungus in the virology lab of the college, she said.

She, however, said the white fungus infection detected in the patient was different from that found in four patients in Patna Medical College Hospital on May 19.

While it was a case of 'candidiasis' detected in four patients in Patna medical college hospital, it was a case of aspergillosis detected in the patient in the hospital in Jabalpur. According to her, candidiasis affects lungs and is said to be more lethal than black fungus infection, medically known as mucormycosis. But, aspergillosis affects paranasal sinuses (nasal cavity) and is said to be less lethal than black fungus infection.

According to the experts, black fungus infection spreads to lungs and other vital organs through blood and may prove fatal if there is delay in treatment.

White fungus infection remains localized for quite some time before spreading to other organs.

The 55-year-old man of Jabalpur, who contracted white fungus infection, had tested positive for coronavirus in April and was discharged from hospital in the first week of May following his recovery. He was admitted to

WB records first black fungus death

Kolkata, May 22: A 32-year-old woman died of mucormycosis, commonly known as black fungus infection, becoming the first death due to the disease in West Bengal, a state health department official said on Saturday.

Shampa Chakraborty, a resident of the southern part of the city's Haridevpur area, was admitted to the Sambhunath Pandit Hospital with Covid-19. She was later diagnosed with mucormycosis, he said.

The patient, who was highly diabetic and was on insulin, died on Friday.

At present, five patients are undergoing treatment for the disease in the state and all of them are from neighbouring Bihar and Jharkhand, the official said adding, "We are constantly monitoring their condition."

Besides constituting an expert committee to deal with black fungus cases, the state health department has formulated an advisory, titled 'Mucormycosis - if uncar-

ed for - may turn fatal', for the common people.

The advisory mentioned warning signs of the disease such as pain and redness around eyes or nose, fever, headache, coughing and shortness of breath along with vomiting blood and 'altered mental status' - general changes in brain function like confusion, amnesia, loss of alertness and disorientation.

Those having health conditions such as uncontrolled diabetes, suppression of immune system by steroids, prolonged stay in Intensive Care Unit, comorbidities post-transplant and malignancy are prone to be attacked by the fungal disease, it said.

The advisory pointed out that nasal blockage or congestion, one-sided facial pain, numbness, blackish discolouration over bridge of nose or palate, toothache, loosening of teeth, blurred vision along with chest pain and worsening of respiratory symptoms are suspected signs of being infected by mucormycosis.

- PTI

Netaji Subash Chandra Bose medical college hospital in Jabalpur last week when he complained of severe pain in his face.

Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh has witnessed a surge in cases of black fungus infection declared as epidemic in the state on Saturday.

"Madhya Pradesh has so far reported 610 black fungus infection cases", state health commissioner Akash Tripathy said.

The infection has claimed the lives of 31 people so far.

Indore has reported the highest number of 250 cases of black fungus infection in the state, followed by Bhopal where 190 such cases have been reported.

"The situation has worsened due to lack of awareness about the disease among the people particularly those who have recovered from Covid-19 as well as acute shortage of the anti-infec-

tion drug, Amphotericine-B", experts say.

"The situation of the patients is pathetic due to shortage of the drug", I.D. Chourasia, neurologist of government-run Hamidia hospital here said.

"The country faced shortage of Amphotericine-B injections due to sudden surge in cases of black fungus infection after May 4. We were till now dependent on import of the drug.

But, pharmaceutical companies in the country have started manufacturing the drug and normalcy in the supply of the injection will be restored in 15 days", Rajiv Singhal, secretary of All India organisations of chemists said.

According to the doctors, a patient suffering from black fungus infection needs administration of three doses of the anti-infection injection per day for 20 days for recovery.



A doctor treats a patient infected with the black fungus at the NSCB Medical College and Hospital in Jabalpur on Saturday.

- PTI

FIGHTING | COVID

The number of Adverse Effect From Immunisation cases put out may not be accurate

Reporting AEFI tough job, many may be going unreported

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

The Centre had recently released a report on the Adverse Effect From Immunisation (AEFI) detected from the people that have been vaccinated with Covishield.

The government has claimed that since the Covid-19 vaccination drive was initiated, over 23,000 adverse events were reported. Of these, 700 cases were reported to be serious and severe.

The AEFI Committee's in-depth case review of 498 serious and severe events found 26 cases to be potential thromboembolic (formation of a clot in a blood vessel that might also break loose and carried by the blood stream to plug another vessel) events fol-

lowing the administration of Covishield vaccine – with a reporting rate of 0.61 cases/ million doses.

However, in the absence of proper reporting mechanism and proactive approach of authorities to trace vaccinated people after they leave the vaccination site, such a claim may not be reflecting the true picture and full magnitude of the AEFI.

Here is a first hand experience of struggle to get AEFI recorded in the national capital. It took me five days to get the AEFI recorded for my 21-year-old son.

My son was vaccinated on May 13 at EDMC PS Trilokpuri Site 1 (East Delhi) at around 11.15 am with Covishield. He stayed back for 30 minutes at the site to check for AEFI dur-

ing which he had no other problem other than pain in arm. Back home, he developed 101 degrees C fever at 6.30 pm and complained of very sharp shooting pain in vaccinated arm. I gave him Dolo 650 for fever, as advised by the doctors. He again had fever next morning. But it was the fever on the evening of May 14, that alarmed me. My son reported high fever and numbness in hand. His hand was getting cold and finger nails started turning blue.

A doctor-friend saw him through video call and checked his tongue, eyes, palm and hands. He said none of them were blue and only fingernails were getting blue. The doctor asked us to give lots of fluid to him and wait for some time before going to the hospital while he figured where to

● IT HAS BEEN NOTICED THAT None of the helpline numbers given by the government – 1075, 191, +911123978046, 0120-4473222 - are functional or reachable. There are no emails, phone numbers of doctors available on any government site to report AEFI.

get him admitted since hospitals were not easily accessible.

Thankfully, in about 30 minutes, his nails started turning pink again. His hands and feet were warm, there was no numbness and sensation was back.

I thought of reporting it as AEFI. The real struggle began now.

None of the helpline numbers given by the govern-

ment – 1075, 191, +911123978046, 0120-4473222 - were functional or reachable. There are no emails, no phone numbers of doctors available on any government site to report AEFI. No provision on CoWin or Aarogya Setu app.

I went back to the vaccination centre, a school, which was shut after 5 pm and got the number of the doctor on duty. He directed me to a Nodal Officer, who said he can only treat but has no role in recording AEFI.

Meanwhile, I had tagged ICMR, Union Health Ministry, Drugs Controller General of India, Serum Institute of India asking for contact details to report AEFI. There was no response. I also tagged Mr Adar Poonawala who heads

SII to guide me to report AEFI for his vaccine. He too has not responded so far.

Finally, I had to write in the group of health journalists after which my colleagues got active and with the intervention of some senior bureaucrats, I could manage to "report" AEFI of Covishield. This was four days of the AEFI.

After registering my AEFI report the district immunization officer called to take my son for a cardiological checkup. There was a fear of thrombosis. His ECG and blood tests were conducted, which thankfully were normal. But what if I had not made so much noise? What if he actually had thrombosis or some other severe side effect from Covishield?

I have been hearing horror stories of people dying of cardiac arrest or other complications after vaccination. Two days back my sanitation staff came to me saying she will not get her son vaccinated because someone died in her neighbourhood soon after the vaccine dose. And all such things go unreported.

In my son's case the nodal official said he developed allergy to the vaccine. AEFI is exactly that. But we hate recording such data. If this is the condition in Delhi where educated are struggling, one can imagine what would be happening among general population in other areas.

It is important for the government to take AEFI tracking more seriously and aggressively as it is doing for vaccination.

SHORT TAKES

OZ ACADEMIC TO FACE SPYING TRIAL IN CHINA

Sydney, May 22: Chinese-born Australian academic and author Yang Jun will go on trial in China on espionage charges next week, after spending more than two years in detention, Canberra's foreign minister has confirmed. Yang is one of two high-profile Australians detained in China on spying allegations amid escalating tensions between Canberra and Beijing. The trial for Yang, who also goes by his pen name Yang Hengjun, will begin on Thursday, Australia's Foreign Minister Marise Payne said.

"Despite repeated requests by Australian officials, Chinese authorities have not provided any explanation or evidence for the charges facing Dr Yang," Payne said.

THREE KILLED, 27 HURT IN SERIES OF CHINA QUAKE

Beijing, May 22: At least 3 people were killed and 27 others injured after a series of earthquakes that jolted Yangbi Yi Autonomous County in China's Yunnan Province on Friday, local authorities said. The quake was felt in all 12 counties and cities of the Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture, with Yangbi being the worst hit, Yang Guozong, the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) chief of the prefecture, said.

Two deaths were reported in Yangbi county and one in Yongping County. Three people were severely injured and 24 others had minor injuries, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. About 72,317 residents in 20,192 households were affected by the quakes.

CHINA'S 'FATHER OF HYBRID RICE' DIES

Shanghai, May 22: An agronomist hailed as a Chinese national hero for helping develop hybrid rice and easing hunger for millions worldwide died on Saturday at the age of 90, state-run Xinhua news agency said.

Yuan Longping, known in China as the "father of hybrid rice", is credited with cultivating the world's first high-yield hybrid rice strain in 1973.

Yuan died in a hospital in Changsha, capital of Hunan province, Xinhua said. It said he had suffered from an unspecified illness.

Hybrid rice, which can yield 20 percent above conventional varieties according to experts, was subsequently widely planted in China.

FIVE STABBED IN AMSTERDAM, SUSPECT NABBED

Amsterdam, May 22: One person was killed and four injured in a stabbing late Friday night in Amsterdam and police said they arrested a suspect nearby. Four victims were taken to a hospital for treatment, police said. Their condition was not immediately known. There was no immediate word on the possible motive.

We have arrested a suspect. We are investigating what exactly happened and why, Amsterdam Police spokeswoman Marijke Stor said.

The stabbings happened in a neighborhood with many bars and restaurants, but they were closed at the time of the incident because of coronavirus lockdown restrictions.

Further details were not immediately available.

'THAT '70s SHOW' ACTOR MASTERSON FACES RAPE TRIAL

Los Angeles, May 22: US actor and Scientologist Danny Masterson must stand trial for the alleged rape of three women at his home in the Hollywood Hills, a Los Angeles judge ruled Friday.

"That '70s Show" star Masterson denies the accusations made by the women, who were previously also members of the secretive California-based group and said they did not come forward earlier for fear of reprisals from its hierarchy.

"I found all three witnesses to be credible and the evidence sufficient to support the charges," said Judge Charlaine Olmedo, ordering Masterson to be formally arraigned on June 7 and to hand over his passport by that time.

Masterson, 45, allegedly raped the women, all in their twenties at the time, "by force or fear" in separate incidents between 2001 and 2003.

He faces a maximum sentence of 45 years to life in prison if convicted on all charges. He is currently free on \$3.3 million bail.

Nepal President dissolves Parl

Bhandari announces mid-term polls in Nov.

Oppn for legal, political steps

Kathmandu, May 22: Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari has dissolved the House of Representatives and announced mid-term polls on November 12 and 19 after she determined that both embattled Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and the Opposition alliance were not in a position to form a government. Bhandari's announcement came after Prime Minister Oli recommended dissolution of the 275-member House following an emergency midnight Cabinet meeting.

A press statement issued by the Office of President said the Parliament was dissolved and dates of mid-term polls were announced in line with Article 76 (7) of the Constitution of Nepal. The council of ministers has recommended conducting the first phase of the poll on November 12 and the second phase on November 19.

The move followed a notice from the Office of the President which said that it could appoint neither K.P. Sharma Oli, the incumbent prime minister, nor Sher Bahadur Deuba, Nepali Congress president, as claims made by both to form a new government were insufficient.

With four lawmakers in the 275-member House of Representatives dismissed by their party after they chose to be part of another party, a prime ministerial candidate requires support of at least 136 lawmakers in Parliament to form a new government. Interestingly, both Oli and Deuba had claimed the support of some lawmakers, whose names were included in the list of both of them, according to Nepalese media reports. This is the second time President Bhandari has dissolved Parliament on the recommendation of Prime Minister Oli following a political crisis.

Last year on December 20, President Bhandari had dissolved Parliament but later it was reinstated by the Supreme Court in February. Nepal's political crisis had taken a dramatic turn on Friday as Prime Minister Oli and

the Opposition parties staked separate claims for the formation of a new government by submitting letters of support from lawmakers to the President. Prime Minister Oli had reached the President's Office Shital Niwas and presented his list, a couple of minutes ahead of the Opposition leaders.

Oli was the first to declare that he had the support of 153 lawmakers of the House of Representatives, citing that he does not have adequate support to go through another floor or test.

The letter he submitted had his signature along with the signatures of Janata Samajbadi Party-Nepal chair Mahanta Thakur and the party's parliamentary party leader Rajendra Mahato. Likewise, Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba along with other leaders of the Opposition alliance reached Shital Niwas with signatures of 149 lawmakers including 27 lawmakers from the Khanal-Nepal faction of the CPN-UML.

— PTI

ent came after PM Oli recommended the dissolution of the 275-member House following an emergency midnight Cabinet meeting. In a joint statement issued at the end of a meeting called to discuss the matter, the Opposition leaders expressed their commitment to unitedly defend the constitutional rights of Nepali citizens achieved at the end of years of political struggle.

They appealed to all political and civil forces to condemn and stand against the Oli-Bhandari duo's regressive, autocratic intentions.

They condemned their move as "unconstitutional, undemocratic and arbitrary."

— PTI

ENSURE FAIR, FRAUD-FREE POLLS: OLI

Kathmandu, May 22: Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli on Saturday asked the Election Commission to initiate necessary preparations for the upcoming elections for the dissolved House of Representatives and ensure fair and fraud-free polls in November.

In a meeting with the commissioners of the poll body, Oli said that the parliamentary elections were inevitable.

The prime minister directed the election commission to expedite its preparations to hold the election on the stipulated dates," according to Surya Thapa, a press aide to Oli.

CPN-UML Chief Whip Vishal Bhattarai said Oli stressed for holding a fair and fraud-free election, according to *The Rising Nepal*.

— PTI

Biden: Two-state solution to conflict

Washington, May 22: US President Joe Biden has said that there is no shift in the commitment of his administration towards the security of Israel but insisted a two-state solution that includes a state for Palestinians remains the only answer to that conflict.

Biden's comment comes a day a ceasefire was announced between Israel and Hamas negotiated by Egypt following a 11-day war that caused a lot of casualties and infrastructure damage in Gaza.

"There is no shift in my commitment, the commitment to the security of Israel, period," Biden told reporters at a joint news conference along with the visiting South Korean President Moon-Jae-In. "No shift, not at all, but I tell you what there is a shift in. The shift is that we still need a two-state solution. It is the only answer. What I'm convinced of is that we can now move, as

I did even before I was able to negotiate — well, I shouldn't — before the ceasefire was negotiated," he said. Biden said his administration is going to make sure that the US is going to provide for security in the West Bank.

"We renewed the security commitment, as well as economic commitment to the people on the West Bank," he said. In his call with the Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, he said he indicated to the Israeli is it was very important that they stop in Jerusalem this intercommunal fighting. "It has to end. I'm prepared to put together a major package with other nations who share our view to rebuild the homes and without providing Hamas the opportunity to rebuild their weapons systems, rebuild the Gaza. They need to help, and I'm committed to get that done," he said.

— PTI

SPACE | MISSION

China's rover roaming the Red Planet

Shanghai, May 22: China's Mars rover drove from its landing platform and began exploring the surface on Saturday, state-run Xinhua news agency said, making the country only the second nation to land and operate a rover on the Red Planet. The launch last July of the Tianwen-1 Mars probe, which carried the Zhurong rover, marked a major milestone in China's space programme.

Tianwen-1 touched down on a vast northern lava plain known as the Utopia Planitia a week ago and

Ready to sail



Britains Queen Elizabeth II meets military personnel during her visit to the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth in Portsmouth, England on Saturday, ahead of its maiden operational deployment to the Philippine Sea. The aircraft carrier will embark on her first operational deployment on Sunday, leading the UK Carrier Strike Group in engagements with 40 nations, including India, Japan, Republic of Korea and Singapore.

— AFP

Covid crisis in India a sign that worst may be yet to come: IMF

IMF proposes \$50 bn vax plan

Washington, May 22: Observing that the ongoing "catastrophic" second wave of Covid-19 in India is a sign that the worst may be yet to come, the IMF has said that the situation in the country is a warning of the possible events in low- and middle-income nations that have seemingly escaped the pandemic till now.

A report co-authored by International Monetary Fund (IMF) economist Ruchir Agarwal and its Chief Economist Gita Gopinath said that under the business-as-usual scenario, the vaccine coverage in India is expected to remain under 35 per cent of the population in 2021.

The second wave in India, following a terrible wave in Brazil, is a sign the worst may be yet to come in the developing world, it said. While India's health system held up fairly well in the first wave, this time its health system is so overwhelmed that many people are dying because of a lack of oxygen, hospital beds, and medical care, it said.

"India is a warning of possible events in other low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) that so far have seemingly escaped the pandemic, including in Africa, it said. For India, the report said, current bilateral purchases of vaccine plus coverage from COVAX will cover about 25 per cent of its population by the first half of 2022.

To get to 60 per cent coverage, India will need to immediately place sufficient vaccine orders of about 1 billion doses through contracts.

— PTI

Berlin: Quarantine for all from the UK

Berlin, May 22: Germany will require people arriving from the UK from Sunday onward to go into quarantine for 14 days.

The decision is a response to the spread of a Coronavirus variant first detected in India. Friday's announcement by the Robert Koch Institute, Germany's national disease control centre, that Britain is being classified as a "virus variant area" comes a week after it went back on a list of "risk areas," which has few conse-

quences under current rules. From Sunday, airlines and others will only be able to transport German citizens and residents from Britain.

Under rules, all people arriving from "virus variant areas" — which also include India itself and Brazil — must spend 14 days in quarantine at home after their arrival. They cannot cut that period short by testing negative. People arriving from "risk areas" can avoid a 10-day quarantine.

— AP

First, vaccinating of at least 40 per cent of the global population by end-2021 and at least 60 per cent by the first half of 2022. Second, insuring against downside risks such as new variants that may necessitate booster shots. Third, managing the interim period where vaccine supply is limited.

— PTI

LABRADOR RETRIEVERS JOIN THAI VIRUS FIGHT

Bangkok, May 22: Thailand has started deploying a canine virus-detecting squad in hopes of quickly identifying people with Covid-19.

Angel, Bobby and Bravo are among six Labrador retrievers that have been trained by researchers at the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University to sniff out a unique odour that people with Covid produce in their sweat.

— AP

CANADA EXTENDS FLIGHT BAN FROM INDIA, PAKISTAN

Ottawa, May 22: Canada has extended the ban on direct flights from India and Pakistan by one more month until June 21 in a bid to arrest the spread of new variants of the Covid-19, according to an official announcement.

The ban on flights from India and Pakistan was extended as the previous 30-day ban, first imposed on April 22, was set to expire on Saturday, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) News reported. Cargo flights, however, will be permitted to maintain shipments of essential supplies, such as vaccines and personal protective equipment.

— PTI

Diana interview: Ex-BBC head quits

London, May 22: Tony Hall, who was director of BBC news and current affairs at the time of the public broadcaster's explosive 1995 interview with Princess Diana, resigned Saturday as board chairman of Britain's National Gallery.

Hall, who subsequently rose to the top job at the BBC, was heavily criticised in a report this week for a botched inquiry into how journalist Martin Bashir obtained the blockbuster interview. In a statement, the 70-

year-old said his continued presence at the gallery would be a "distraction to an institution I care deeply about".

"As I said two days ago, I am very sorry for the events of 25 years ago and I believe leadership means taking responsibility," said Hall, who served as the BBC's director-general from 2013 until 2020. John Kingman, the deputy chair of the National Gallery's board of trustees, will assume Hall's role for the time being.

He said the gallery is

"extremely sorry" to lose Hall but that "we entirely understand and respect his decision".

The 126-page report by retired Judge John Dyson, published Thursday, found the internal BBC investigation had covered up "deceitful behaviour" by Bashir, who was little-known as a journalist when he interviewed Diana. The BBC also has faced questions about why Bashir was rehired in 2016 as the broadcaster's religious affairs correspondent.

Diana's sons, Princes William and Harry, have excoriated the BBC since the report's publication, saying there was a direct link between the 1995 interview and their mother's death in a traffic accident two years later. In the interview, Diana said her marriage to Prince Charles had failed because he was still in love with former lover Camilla Parker Bowles, whom Charles would go on to marry a decade later.

— AP

First-ever powered flight by Nasa's Perseverance on Mars

China's rover roaming the Red Planet

beamed back its first photos of the surface a few days later. The Mars probe and rover are expected to spend around three months taking photos, harvesting geographical data, and collecting and analysing rock samples. The six-wheeled, solar-powered, 240-kilogramme Zhurong is named after a Chinese mythical fire god.

China has now sent astronauts into space, powered probes to the Moon and landed a rover on Mars — the most prestigious of all prizes in the competition

for dominion of space.

The US and Russia are the only other countries to have reached Mars, and only the former has operated a rover on the surface. Several US, Russian and European attempts to land rovers on Mars have failed in the past.

In February, US space agency Nasa landed its rover Perseverance, which has been exploring the planet. The rover launched a small robotic helicopter on Mars which was the first-ever powered flight on another planet.



In this image released by the China National Space Administration on Saturday, a landing platform and the surface of Mars are seen from a camera on the Chinese Mars rover Zhurong.

— AP/PTI

DECCAN Chronicle

23 MAY 2021



Shailaja Khanna
Off the beaten track

Old-world musicians need a helping hand

Eight-year-old Partho struggles to overcome sleep as he is gently woken up as usual at 5 am to start his daily practice of vocal scales for 30 minutes. Up and down, concentrating hard to get the correct pitch, it's a chore he completes, as he has been told time and time again that he is blessed to have inherited the family music genes. His mother, lying in bed, listens resentfully; her baby practising to prepare for a professional career in music seems a total waste of time. Her husband, acknowledged as one of the finest harmonium players in the country hasn't had a paid concert in months. Once, an eagerly sought after accompanist whose concert diary was booked 20 days in a month, Anirban (name changed) has had to break four precious saved FDs to keep the family stove lit. Hospitalisation of his sister due to Covid complications added to the already stretched budget. Things don't look to be improving in the near future, with predictions of a Third Wave destroying the hope that in 2021 his life would "normalise".

Twenty-three-year-old Intiaz lives in a small house, shared with eight other family members, behind the Jama Masjid area in old Delhi. He has trained for 18 years to be a singer. His uncle was a very erudite vocalist; with over 100 disciples. All his life he had heard his uncle say, music is a sacred art, handed down to us through the generations, whose ultimate goal is "ruh ko maalik se jorna". To "connect" to a Raga, and to achieve the correct usage of notes, one needs to withdraw from the outside world and to go inwards, introspect, constantly repeat and practise, then finally, the Raga emerges. It takes a long time; one must be single minded. Today, with no expectation of any concerts or income, Intiaz queries "we are told today, use technology to connect to a new audience; you can reach the whole world! But where did we have the time to acquire these skills, useful to a performer of today? Like handling technology, knowing how to record oneself, public relations... we were told to stay away from all this and to focus on the music. Concerts would follow; organisations are there whose job is to showcase your talent. Become worthy of them. *Bas hamme to ye sikhaaya gaya tha...*" he trails off.



Girija Devi singing in the intimate baithak style at Sankat Mochan temple, Banaras. — RAKESH SINHA

Things are no better for the established, seasoned performers. A disconsolate senior vocalist shared, "Right now, teaching online classes is how most of us spend our time. But it's a compromise. Our traditions are not meant to be passed on like this. It's distorting the whole point of it all. Learning music, you need the eye contact to see the Guru's expressions, to copy the exact nuance. Hearing it through a device is not the same. Yet, I need to ensure that the training continues, the students continue their practice; one can't let long gaps come in, and they need to connect at least weekly with me. I really pray this doesn't last long."

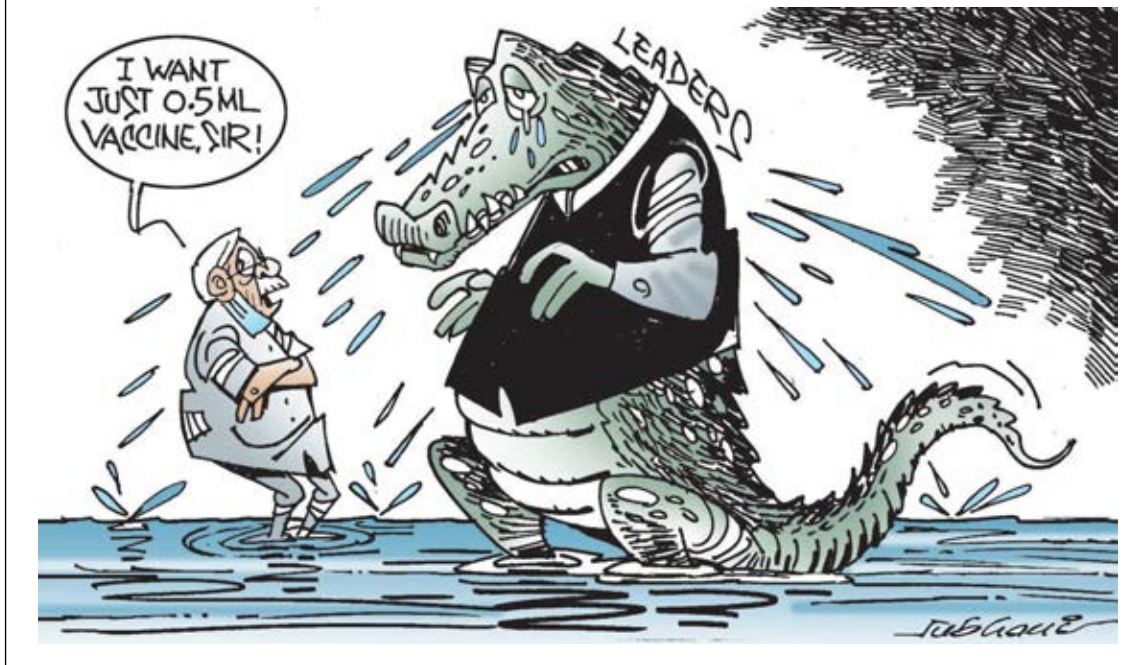
But some of the problems in the world of the arts are self-inflicted, and not linked only to the present crisis. A senior sarod exponent said, "My generation has not tried to create a new audience; or even nurture an existing audience, specially in the smaller towns and cities. The classical arts are meant for a niche audience; they can never be for mass entertainment. But exposure to the music of masters results in acquiring a taste for the art, which then needs to be fuelled by periodic concerts. That's how, in the past, we have had great centres of music like Banaras, Patna, Lucknow, Tanjore. Nowadays, only needy artists, who may not be great performers, agree to perform in places where the fees are not good enough. Over the last 30 years, this has affected the audience size, which has really shrunk. Many major music festivals are free as only a limited handful of artistes have the drawing power to sell tickets. A handful of popular artists have slowly, steadily, hiked up their fees over the years, even though they are aware that the tickets sales don't justify their fees."

The passing away of several senior musicians due to the virus is another cause of depression in the community. Sixty-four-year-old Pt Sajjan Mishra, younger of the famed Mishra duo, rues the unexpected passing away of his elder brother Rajan Mishra due to Covid complications. "It's been 54 years since we have sung together; I can't imagine the concert stage without him. He went so fast; *jab tak soch paayen, sab kuch khatam ho gaya tha. Hamne 2-3 din bahut haath pairr maare*. We tried so many hospitals — Medanta, Fortis... by the time we were offered a ventilator bed at AIIMS, it was too late, he had had a heart attack in the morning and it was considered dangerous to move him. It's God's will; the new DRDO 750-bed hospital in Banaras is named after him, but he is no more. In our country we really need to focus on and spend on education and healthcare; other things can wait."

Who knows what the future holds? An economic recovery would surely help, but perhaps the solution lies in encouraging a shift to new mores — from those mindless do's and don'ts that go against the grain of initiative and artistic freedom, and keep away younger audiences.

Shailaja Khanna writes on music, musicians and matters of music

Subhani



War of the chips



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

One of the less analyzed reasons for the Chinese aggression in Eastern Ladakh since the April of 2020 is access to fresh water sources. Though there has been some discussion and dissection of this train of thinking in the rarefied echelons of strategic policy deliberations the issue has never really travelled into wider setting of public dialogues. It has something to do with semiconductors or the ubiquitous chip that powers our daily existence.

A chip or microchip is a semiconductor wafer usually manufactured from silicon that combines an assortment of electronic circuits, incorporating resistors, transistors, capacitors and diodes that interlock to perform a required task. A single integrated circuit can comprise of thousands to millions of such electronic circuits contingent upon the computing power required.

Semiconductors rule the world today. Optimising and producing speedier, thinner and more formidable semiconductors will be seminal in defining the outcome of numerous economic and geopolitical conflicts of our times. As it has been prophesized by Steve Bank the mentor of the Lean Start up movement "to get hold of the semiconductors may be the 21st century equivalent of getting hold of the oil supply in the 20th century". This is the strategic resource that all emerging and great powers of the world are in a race to both secure and control.

The omnipotent and captivatingly nomenclatured Silicon Shield is what safeguards Taiwan. The Taiwan Semi Conductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is the world's largest third party chip manufacturer. It exercises dominance to the extent of 55 per cent if not more over the global market share insofar it pertains to

the production of microchips. These semiconductors do not just power cellphones and laptops, they are central to the functioning of virtually everything from automobiles to weapon systems.

The factum that TSMC produces the microchips that run the electronics of the Lockheed Martin F-35 Lightning II stealth multi-role combat aircraft, the latest jewel of the US Air Force, is a sterling example of the extent of strategic importance of the both the resource and its supply chain. Were the semiconductor industry of Taiwan to collapse it would not only constitute a national security threat to the US but also for the entire hub and spoke security architecture crafted by the United States globally. That is how the Silicon Shield of Taiwan is in itself a weapon of deterrence for Taiwan, especially against an ever expansionist China in the 21st century.

Both the US and China are trying to be autonomous when it comes to manufacturing of semiconductor chips. If the US were for some reason be deprived of access to the foundries of Taiwan, the US defence and consumer electronics industries would be set back at least half a decade if not more.

As China is investing heavily in setting up its own chip foundries, it could become the world leader in this technology in the next decade or so. That's why, one of the early decisions made by the Biden administration was an executive order, promulgated in early 2021, to address both chip shortage and the gaps in its supply chain to the US. This deficiency is critical for the US as its global share in chip manufacturing stands at just 12 per cent. A large part of the US government's sanctions against Huawei are singularly

The semiconductor industry requires two key resources sand and fresh water... Chinese water systems like the Yangtze, Huang Ho and Mekong rivers are full of effluents. That is how Kashmir, Aksai Chin and Ladakh became crucial for China.

focused on inhibiting the company's access to the world's most modern chip manufacturing technology — Taiwan's TSMC.

China had the foresight that its initial success as the world's low-cost factory was going to run its course and other countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh, to name a few, would soon occupy that space. As a result, China needed to build more advanced and sophisticated products to be on par with the United States. However, most of these products required custom chips — and China lacks the domestic manufacturing capability to produce them. China uses 61 per cent of the world's chips in products for both its domestic and export markets, importing around \$310 billion worth in 2018 alone. China was quick enough to appreciate that its incapacity to fabricate these sophisticated chips could well turn out to be the proverbial chink in its armour.

Beijing has always had mega motivations to build its own homegrown capacity. A total of 1.4 trillion dollars have been earmarked in the 2021 budget alone for the development of the semiconductor industry. By 2025 the objective being that 70 per cent of chips used in China would be Made in China under the National Integrated Circuit Plan. Over 70 projects have been commenced utilising capital outlays in the past few years alone. Chinese semiconductor industry has gone from making zero to 16 per cent of the world's chips.

But how does all of this mesh with the larger geopolitical conflicts between India and China? There is a growing realisa-

tion that the battle between the US and China to acquire leadership in semiconductor manufacturing is going to divide the world into microchip manufacturing haves and have not's. That is where India fits into the Chinese plans. The semiconductor industry requires two key resources sand and fresh water. They are the basic raw materials. 10,000 litres of fresh water is needed to manufacture one 30-cm silicon wafer.

China's Achilles heel is this availability of fresh water. Key Chinese water systems like the Yangtze, Huang Ho and Mekong rivers are full of effluents. That is how Kashmir, Aksai Chin and Ladakh became crucial for China. The Taklamakan desert (located in Aksai Chin) not only provides abundant sand but huge reservoirs of fresh water from Himalayan rivers and glaciers. The Shaksam valley alone is home to 242 glaciers that can serve as the grand reservoir of fresh water for Chinese chip manufacturing. It, therefore, becomes imperative to view the Sino-Indian standoff through this technological lens also.

From 2011 onwards the UPA government had made chip manufacturing a priority. In September 2013 two consortiums, including IBM and ST Microelectronics, had proposed building semiconductor wafer plants in India with an outlay of USD 8 billion. However the proposals died after the NDA/BJP government assumed office in 2014. Finally in the June of 2020 the government finally announced a Performance Linked Incentive for Promotion of Electronic Components and Semiconductors and Electronics Manufacturing Clusters. However, as it is with the current dispensation, it is always a case of too little too late.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS

This refers to chief minister M.K. Stalin's announcement of total lockdown in the state for a week from May 24, that too without relaxation. Taking into account the escalation in Covid cases since his inception, he has taken the right decision to contain the virus, which we welcome. While he was in the opposition last year, he was too critical of such actions by the previous government. Now he would have realised that preaching is too easy. Hopefully, even after lifting this complete lockdown, he would be wise enough to keep the Tasmac shops closed for long, as it's the biggest spreader of the virus.

Capt. N. Viswanathan,
Coimbatore

The TN government has continued lockdown for another week with more restrictions. Provision shops will remain closed for a week. Since shops will remain open on Sunday till 9 pm there will be a mad rush to stock things for a week. Also, a mad rush can be expected on the next day of lifting of the lockdown. They may be super-spreading clusters. This should be avoided. Social distancing will go for a toss. The idea of closing of provision shops must be relaxed. The shops may be kept open for restricted hours as at present. Secondly, lockdown is not a solution for the spread of the virus. It only affects the poor people who are daily wage earners. Vaccination is the one and the only remedy and efforts must be taken by the State to procure vaccines and vaccinate the entire population on a war footing. Those who come out of their homes without vaccination should be given shots so as to overcome this situation as is done in Saudi Arabia.

Sravana Ramachandran,
Chennai

NATURE'S LOSS

This refers to Green activist Bahuguna falls to Covid. Green warrior Sunderlal Bahuguna, who died of Covid-related complications will always be remembered for the iconic Chipko or 'hug the tree' movement where he mobilised village women to hug trees and stop them from being felled in the early 1970s. The movement set off a new understanding of the value of forests. He also championed the cause of organic farming, underlining the danger of pesticides and chemical farming. Bahuguna emphasised the protection of sustainable livelihoods along with the protection of the environment. He was also involved in several constructive activities relating to the regeneration of degraded forests. Bahuguna was invited to take part in important international conferences and his opinions on environmental issues were widely sought. He was honoured with several prestigious awards, including the Padma Vibhushan.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

Gautam Moorthy



An 'out of the box' solution to end Israel, Palestine row

As the entire world heaved a sigh of relief, even if with fingers crossed, as the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire came into effect at 2 am local time on Friday, May 21, ending the devastating 11-day conflict that saw over 240 fatalities, most of them civilian, the question uppermost on everyone's mind is if this respite is ensure a permanent truce and an end to the conflict. The conundrum and the antagonism that led to this dispute is the unshakeable belief by both the Israelis and the Palestinians that they are the rightful owners of the land for which they are fighting.

Without going deeply into the genesis of the dispute, it is worth recollecting that much headway has been made on the path to peace, keeping in mind the situation in 1948. Starting with the first Camp David Accord in 1978 between Israel and Egypt, which resulted in Egypt granting full recognition to the State of Israel in return for the Sinai Peninsula, to the Abraham Accords of 2020, much water has flown under the bridge. In between, the Oslo Accord of 1993, leading to the much-publicised Camp

David Accord of 1993, promised a two-state solution which at the last minute failed mainly as Israel refused the right to return of all displaced Palestinians.

With most Arab countries grudgingly accepting the existence of the State of Israel (with back-channel diplomacy active to get Saudi Arabia too on board), the main parties in the dispute, besides Israelis and Palestinians, are the Iranians. Iran is implacably hostile to Israel and to a large extent to Saudi Arabia as well. Iran is known to fund and support Hamas in the same way as it funds and supports Hezbollah in Lebanon. Violence has been the rule rather than the exception since the first "intifada" of 1987, with brief lulls in between. Therefore, is there any possible solution to end this never-ending cycle of violence? There possibly is, and it is perhaps as "out of the box" as it can get.

Briefly, before the 1967 war, the West Bank was a part of the Kingdom of Jordan from 1948 onwards. Jordan eventually relinquished all claims on the West Bank in 1988 and even deprived the Palestinians of their

Jordanian citizenship. The Gaza Strip has had a more convoluted history and was occupied by Egypt till 1967, when it was captured along with the Sinai Peninsula by Israel. Subsequently, as a result of the Israel-Egypt peace accord, Egypt relinquished all claims on Gaza, agreed to keep the Sinai Peninsula demilitarised and created a small buffer zone between it and the southern border of Gaza. In 1994, as a result of the Oslo Accords, Gaza came under the control of the Palestinian Authority. Since 2007, however, it has been completely under control of Hamas, which views the Palestinian Authority, now called Fatah, with contempt and is implacably opposed to it. In 2005, Israel withdrew unilaterally from Gaza: its military as well as its settlements. After ousting Fatah, Hamas took complete control of the territory in 2007.

The situation today is that the Palestinians remain hopeful of regaining the West Bank without Israeli settlements, and of a restoration of peace in the Gaza Strip, with the ultimate aim of the establishment of a full-fledged independent

Palestinian state. For this to happen, with of course Israel's grudging acceptance, a new paradigm needs to evolve. Having the same belligerents talking to each other again through well-meaning intermediaries is not going to yield any new result. All that will come of it will be more of the same.

Hence, as a forerunner to any eventual Palestinian state, given the current impasse, and to forestall any further bloodshed, there exists a strong case for Jordan to reclaim the West Bank and for Egypt to reclaim the Gaza Strip, of course with Palestinian consent. Both Jordan and Egypt have good diplomatic relations with Israel. Both have the trust of the Palestinians. If they are sovereign owners of the land, their locus standi improves vastly compared to them being just honest brokers. Their ownership and control of the territories will bestow upon them the necessary authority to deal with Israel on equal terms and not as mere supplicants, as is happening now with Fatah. Once these lands become their sovereign territories, the issue of settlements on the West Bank can be taken up in due

course. It must be reiterated that Israel has to withdraw all its settlements in Gaza. The issue of settlements in the West Bank is not set in stone. In this way, Hamas can be defanged on the Gaza Strip.

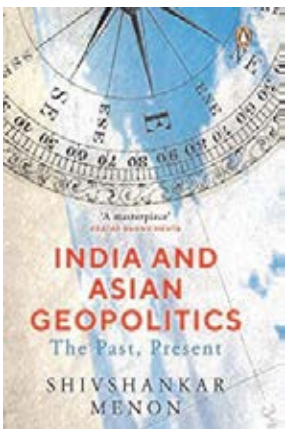
Such a proposal, it is felt, would have the backing of all Arab countries. Iran too can be brought on board. Without Iran's support, Hamas cannot be the disruptive force that it is today. Subsequently, after peace is established, both Jordan and Egypt can relinquish their claims on the West Bank and Gaza respectively to pave the way for the establishment of a full-fledged sovereign Palestinian state. This idea may seem hare-brained at first. It is however predicated on the fact that the belligerents want a just and durable peace with an end to violence and the desire for wanting peace is not as hare-brained as remaining in a perpetual state of conflict and suffering.

The writer is a retired lieutenant-general and a former member of the Armed Forces Tribunal and a former director-general of ordinance services

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

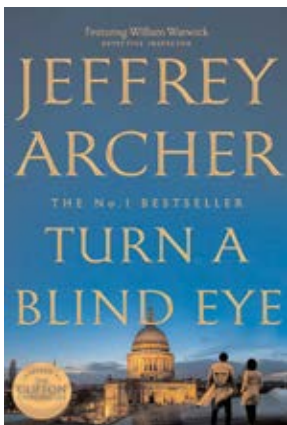
NON-FICTION

- 1 **INDIA AND ASIAN GEOPOLITICS: THE PAST, PRESENT**
Shiv Shankar Menon
Penguin, ₹699
- 2 **KARMA: A YOGI'S GUIDE TO CRAFTING YOUR DESTINY**
Sadhguru
Penguin, ₹299
- 3 **INDIA'S POWER ELITE**
Sanjaya Baru
Penguin, ₹699
- 4 **BORN A MUSLIM: SOME TRUTHS ABOUT ISLAM IN INDIA**
Ghazala Wahab
Aleph, ₹999
- 5 **GHALIB: A WILDERNESS AT MY DOORSTEP: A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY**
Mehr Afshan Farooqi
Allen Lane, ₹799
- 6 **REPUBLIC OF HINDUTVA**
Badri Narayan
Penguin Viking, ₹499
- 7 **ALL ROADS LEAD NORTH — NEPAL'S TURN TO CHINA**
Amish Raj Mulmi
Context Westland, ₹799
- 8 **REMNANTS OF A SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 9 **THE MYSTERY OF THE PARSEE LAWYER**
Shrabani Basu
Bloomsbury, ₹699
- 10 **INDUS BASIN UNINTERRUPTED**
Uttam Kumar Sinha
Penguin Vintage, ₹799



FICTION

- 1 **TURN A BLIND EYE**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹450
- 2 **WHEREABOUTS**
Jhumpa Lahiri
Penguin, ₹499
- 3 **THE LAST QUEEN**
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni
HarperCollins, ₹599
- 4 **SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499
- 5 **TAKEDOWN**
Brad Thor
Emily Bestler Books—Atria, ₹599
- 6 **THE BEGUM AND THE DASTAN**
Tarana Husain Khan
Tranquebar, ₹499
- 7 **KLARA AND THE SUN**
Kazuo Ishiguro
Faber & Faber, ₹699
- 8 **MURDER AT THE MUSHAIRA**
Raza Mir
Aleph, ₹799
- 9 **CLUB YOU TO DEATH**
Anuja Chauhan
Picador, ₹499
- 10 **A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton, ₹699



Bahrison, New Delhi

If only our netas read Gandhi, instead of making him a deity



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

review

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi told Richard Symonds, the Quaker relief worker, that his books sold more copies than Jawaharlal Nehru's. Symonds thought that was because of Pyarelal's translations. But the sparkling prose of *Restless as Mercury: My Life as a Young Man* leaves readers in no doubt that the future Mahatma needed no translator to brush up his language.

I was not at all surprised, therefore, to gather from the text that the book's catchy title is Gandhi's own description of his personality. It may have been originally coined by his sister, as the jacket blurb claims, but Raliyat Gandhi, who does not appear in the story, would have used a Gujarati version of the phrase. Four lines after admitting "I used to be restless as mercury, not sitting still even for a little while", Gandhi stresses how "revolting" he found the spectacle of "cows freely eating human faeces". He says "the feeling has persisted to this day".

If India's leaders had read Gandhi instead of elevating him to a deity and worshipping the deity for their own political purposes, people would not have been deluded today into believing that cow

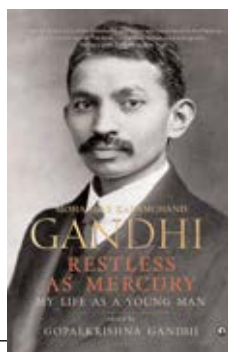
dung and urine cure coronavirus. They might then have been spared the agony of mucormycosis, the aggressive "black fungus", among Covid-19 patients. Of course, by his own admission, Gandhi, too, was a slave to quackery, insisting when his wife was ill in South Africa that she give up salt and pulses. Typically, he responded to her protests not by scientifically explaining the benefits of this sacrifice but with the emotional coin of himself also giving up salt and pulses.

The childhood encounter with cows is one of many episodes in this engrossing book that recall the wisdom those old sayings "morning shows the day" and "the child is father of the man". Gandhi can say with the Alexandrian poet, Constantine Cavafy (quoting from memory after fifty years), "Under the passions of my youth/ Were being formed the patterns of my poetry/ The province of my art was being planned." In a sense he was shaped in the crucible of South Africa. Continuing the analogy, it can be said of the enigmatic and intriguing man who shook the mighty British empire, (as E.M. Forster said of Cavafy) that he stood "at a slight angle to the universe".

Gandhi might have thought

it was the universe whose position needed slight adjustment. Some might say such grandiosity came later when the acclaimed Mahatma parleyed on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor. They would be wrong. One episode in this book explains that the self-esteem was always there. A letter from his son Harilal, with whom relations were strained, prompted Gandhi to ask himself if he had "failed to take sons' interests into account". His answer was a resounding and uncompromising "No". As he explains, "I did consider their interests, too, according to my own lights." His own lights! It was all that mattered.

There is nothing to beat

RESTLESS AS MERCURY: MY
LIFE AS A YOUNG MANBy MOHANDAS
KARAMCHAND
GANDHI
Edited by
GOPALKRISHNA
GANDHI
Aleph, ₹999

honest righteousness. One can understand the intense frustration that must have inspired South Africa's General Smuts' "The saint has left our shores, I sincerely hope forever" when Gandhi returned to India for good in 1916. In much the same vein, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar claimed that Gandhi's national status owed something to a tendency to speak less than "the whole truth." But the Dalit leader should have known there was no conscious suppression: Gandhi merely shared what he thought relevant.

Under the passions of his poetry (returning to the Cavafy analogy) also lurked a healthy respect if not for Britons, then for the institutions they had shaped and the beliefs that had inspired them. "Englishmen must learn to be the Brahmins, not Banias" he wrote elsewhere. He spoke of the Imperial Crown, of being British subjects, of Magna Carta. The alternative to genuinely believing in the praise he frequently heaped on Britain and the British would cast too much aspersion on Gandhi's character to be acceptable.

This record of his years in South Africa also traces the beginnings, emergence and gradual solidification of ahimsa and satyagraha, the weapons of war (or peace) that he wielded with such deadly effect. The fasts, convictions and jail sentences they resulted in brought to an end eight years of struggle against an iniquitous racist dispensation. Later, Gandhi employed those same

methods with devastating effect against a much more formidable adversary. But that story has been told many times already.

His grandson and editor, Gopal Krishna Gandhi, has recreated this section of his life from Gandhi's own writings scattered in many places. It must have been a monumental enterprise, possible only because it was a labour of love. All the greater the pity that minor flaws sometimes mar the effect. I am curious about "India Club" in Calcutta; also the "India House" in London Gandhi stayed in. One or two personalities could have been explained. Moreover, computer spellchecks don't spot words that are correctly spelt but accidentally misused. There is no mechanical substitute for thorough proof-reading. Such minor infelicities cannot of course be blamed on Gandhi. His writing grips the reader from beginning to end. Once started, I could not put down the narrative.

Let me end with Symonds as I started. I can't be sure from the context whether it's the same Symonds to whom lavish compliments are paid on page 139 but Gandhi was obviously fond of the young Quaker. When he fell ill of typhoid in Delhi, Gandhi took him into Birla House, allowed him to drink a glass of beer and nursed him back to health saying that a public hospital would kill him. With Covid fatalities soaring, we can hardly dispute the Mahatma's opinion.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

WAR FICTION WHICH RESEMBLES FACT



Anil Bhat

review

The novel is about the life of a young army officer Lieutenant Bharat involved in operations against militants in Manipur following the period 1987-89. Bharat gets baptised by gunfire while on his first patrol when he is able to kill a militant. But his ever-cautious commanding officer still has apprehensions about his capabilities. Other day to day operations are also interestingly described till his unit moves to Sri Lanka.

The story of induction into Sri Lanka and coping up with the fears of mines is narrated through conversations. On reaching Batticaloa the protagonist participates in a raid on a Tamil Tiger camp in a hurriedly planned operation, which almost turned into a failure. The success is further exploited by leaving a small stay behind party led by Bharat. Next day when he is heavily outnumbered by the Tamil Tigers, he repels them with mines, firearms and guile.

The novel brings out the paradox that

the Tamil Tigers whom the Indian Army was fighting, were trained by the members of the same army. The soldiers also question the wisdom of the government who at times is seen to be in secret talks with the Tamil Tigers. Also depicted is the pain of losing men in combat and its after-effects on the minds of the tactical leaders.

Details about excellent training, tenacity, dedication and endurance of the Tamil Tigers is narrated through the interrogation of an apprehended cadre. In one incident the Tamil Tigers almost lure the protagonist into a trap, but an incident of indiscipline saves the day.

Bharat gets to command a group of ill-disciplined men. With his dedication and hard work is able to keep them motivated for the operations. A number of challenges of man management crop up which he is able to handle with maturity. An incident also describes the loss of fourteen soldiers in an IED (improvised explosive device) blast because of the mistake of a senior commander.

On de-induction, Bharat gets to know that

his girlfriend has deserted him. Yet, he stoically takes that in his stride.

Although the author calls it fiction, the situations which he has penned could and probably are based on true and honest account of incidents which happened on ground. A fast paced, absorbing and unputdownable novel, it avoids lengthy descriptions and military jargon, but keeps the reader hooked with the interesting plain and honest conversations narrated.

After the Galwan incident on 15 June 2020, super-surprise occupation of the Kailash Range on August 29-30, 2020, and the Sino-Indian military standoff in Eastern Ladakh, it has become amply clear that the tactical leadership, meticulous planning, coordination and teamwork are the ingredients for success. Also, these incidents and some others earlier ones like the surgical strikes, the bull's eye bombing at Balakot and the capture and repatriation of an Indian Air Force officer have resulted in increased respect for the Armed Forces by the Indian public. All

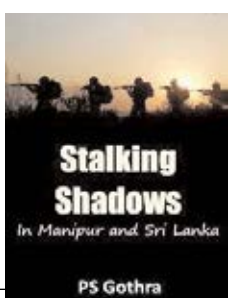
this is certainly going to the novel more attractive

While the book is an interesting read for everyone from mid-teens onwards, it will also be inspiring to young military and corporate leaders alike and even young readers, who may learn some lessons on leadership.

Published only on Kindle, the modestly priced novel is free for the Kindle Unlimited subscribers and well supported by reader-friendly info-tech apps.

The author is a senior army officer, with a vast experience in the counter terrorist operations in Manipur, Sri Lanka and Jammu & Kashmir. He has also handled intelligence and information warfare assignments. Educated and brought up in various parts of the country, he is a post-graduate in History and Defence Studies. Hailing from a family of soldiers the author is the fourth generation serving in the Army. He published a novel in 2018 called *Soldiering a Life on the Edge* which narrates the life of a captain in counter-infiltration and counter-terrorist roles. While another novel by him called *Lies and Deceit of Puhama to Balakot* could not be published, he frequently writes short stories related to army life.

The reviewer, a strategic analyst and former defence ministry and Indian Army spokesperson, can be contacted at wordsword02@gmail.com

STALKING SHADOWS IN
MANIPUR AND SRI LANKABy P.S. GOTHRA
Kindle Direct
Publishing, ₹115

FAST FACT: Happiness is as exclusive as a butterfly, and you must never pursue it, is the life philosophy of **Ruskin Bond**, one of India's oldest and best-loved authors in the English language, who turned 87 this week. It is a mysterious thing, to be found somewhere between too little and too much, he writes in *A Book of Simple Living*. He has written more than 500 short stories and 200 books.

PAUL PICKERING'S LOVE STORY WITH AN INDIAN CONNECTION



The elephant culturally symbolises India more than any other country and British novelist Paul Pickering says the pachyderm in his new novel has her roots in India. According to the author, his book *Elephant* is an affirmation of "I am my voice". "And my voice is as big as an elephant, which in turn is as big as creation. In the love story between Natasha and the man in Paris, the novel explores the interface between fact and fiction; the man in Paris uses the story of the elephant to get Natasha to go back to her first love, her voice, poetry," he says.

In a country house in England, a precocious teenage exile from revolutionary Russia sets down his adventures on paper, beginning with his first ball

in St. Petersburg and how he frees a huge African elephant from a cruel circus. But a hundred years later, an American academic feels the boy may have invented the elephant as the only kind and uplifting being in dark times.

"This fast moving story is on the side of the individual and against nationalism, authoritarianism, scapegoating, fake news and the cancel culture that seeks to obliterate the boy at the heart of the story from history and that is why he commits it to paper," Pickering told PTI. Enfolded the love story and the journey is the *Elephant*, which Natasha realises is the raw power of the universe; yet always looking for a good outcome in line with the survival of the planet. The book, published by Salt Publishing, spans two historical periods. — PTI

Monograph studies the tone of mridangam



B. Vijayalakshmi

review

Legendary mridangam exponent Umayalpuram K. Sivaraman, who has completed 75 years of his musical career, has authored the book, *Musical Excellence of Mridangam*, jointly with eminent scientists T. Ramasami and M.D. Naresh (formerly associated with Central Leather Research Institute in Chennai) to study the tonal properties of the instrument.

Mridangam, also called Naadha Vadiyam and king of percussion instruments, has evolved over centuries and is the key accompanying instrument in Carnatic music. The instrument not only provides tonal beauty but also embellishes the music by adding to harmony.

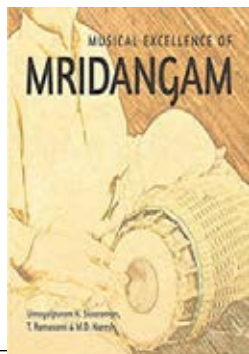
The book, or the monograph as the authors prefer to call it, starts with a conversation with

Sivaraman, an active researcher on the construction of mridangam. The octogenarian maestro elaborates his philosophy of the instrument towards musical excellence. He then goes into the weight and shape of mridangam and lays stress on the need for researchers to make the black patch (the main component of the instrument in producing the naadham) durable for longer periods of time.

According to him, the art of mridangam lies in extolling the perfection and beauty of *naadham* (tone) and should demonstrate the tone of Naadha Vadiyam.

The book has a detailed chapter on Nobel Laureate C.V. Raman's pioneering scientific investigations into the harmonics of mridangam sound. Raman's work published in the 1920s on acoustic

properties of the instrument demonstrated that unlike other percussion instruments of western origin, mridangam produced harmonic vibrations. He explored

MUSICAL EXCELLENCE OF
MRIDANGAMBy Umayalpuram K.
Sivaraman, T. Ramasami
and M. D. Naresh
Academic Foundation,
New Delhi, ₹1,995

Warm, fuzzy resumé of pets of royal heroes



Rupa Gulab

review

While poring over dusty tomes of ancient Indian history, Nandini Sengupta discovered marvellous stories about the special relationships certain kings and queens had with animals: this includes everything from gigantic elephants to little birds. The more they loved them, the more they pampered them. And no, they weren't just given little snacky treats or toys as tokens of love, but were treated like royalty too.

Take Samand Manik, Mughal king Akbar the Great's favourite cheetah. As head of the cheetah platoon, Samand Manik wore jewelled collars, was carried on palanquins, had personal liveried servants, and was frequently invited to court to impress foreign dignitaries and diplomats.

Then there was King Jayakesi whose favourite pet was a talking parrot who could recite the Vedas and discuss Chanakya Niti. Every evening, the king would let the parrot out of its golden cage and have animated conversations with it while he had his dinner.

While some animals were merely household pets, others like dogs, horses, and elephants accompanied their masters to the battlefield. A few of them merely as lucky mascots (Shivaji insisted that his dog Waghyia was always at his side), others as fighting partners who wore armour as protection, and carried weapons as well. Elephants, for example, had lethal daggers attached to their tusks in order to cause maximum damage to enemy troops. Elephants and horses were also at their terrifying best on the battlefield because they were made to drink vast quantities of intoxicating substances.

Some of these beloved animals eventually died on the battlefield like Alexander the Great's favourite horse Bucephalus and his fierce bear-like dog Peritas. Both were deeply mourned, given memorials fit for kings, and two cities along the banks of the Jhelum and Ravi rivers were named after them. Chetak was another heroic horse who succumbed to his battle wounds—but only after he carried his master, Maharana Pratap of Mewar, to safety. He was honoured by poets and artists and there's even a memorial to him (Chetak Chabutra) in Rajasthan. In some cases, the bonds between pets and masters were so strong that even death could not separate them. In this book you will discover a pet who leapt into his master's funeral pyre, and a master who climbed into his pet's funeral pyre.

There's nothing ordinary about this book. The stories make you feel warm, fuzzy (and occasionally weepy), Sengupta's lively sense of humour adds a sprinkling of sparkle, and the cherry on the cake is this: She gets into each animal's head, speaks in their voices, gives them interesting personalities and human emotions like love, anger and jealousy. History purists won't be disappointed either, because each story has a historical source and context mentioned at the end, which makes it easy to separate fact from fiction.

Rupa Gulab is a freelance writer and the author of Girl Alone, Chip of the Old Blockhead and The Great Depression of the 40s

THE BLUE HORSE AND
OTHER AMAZING ANIMALS
FROM INDIAN HISTORYBy NANDINI SENGUPTA
Hachette India, ₹299

SHORT TAKES

Batra elected FIH chief for 2nd term

New Delhi: Incumbent Narinder Batra of India was on Saturday re-elected as the International Hockey Federation (FIH) president for a second term after beating Marc Coudron of Belgium by a slender margin of just two votes during the world body's virtual 47th Congress. Considered the favourite from the beginning, Batra, who is the also the President of the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and an International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, barely managed to pip Coudron, who is the chief of Belgium Hockey Federation and sits on the country's Olympic panel. Batra secured 63 votes as against his rival's 61 to emerge winner during the online voting process, in which 124 member associations participated. — PTI

Tanwar tests +ve, dropped from team

New Delhi: South Asian Games gold-medallist Vinod Tanwar (49kg) has been withdrawn from the Indian men's boxing team for the Asian Championships in Dubai after he tested positive for Covid-19. Tanwar, who had travelled for a tournament in Russia's St. Petersburg last month, had gone home for a break after he came back to the country. The 23-year-old returned positive for the virus when he was tested in isolation on his return to Patiala earlier this week, ruling him out from what would have been his maiden appearance at the continental showpiece. "Vinod Tanwar's name was withdrawn from the squad as he was tested positive for Covid-19," the Boxing Federation of India said. — PTI

148 athletes get first dose of vax

New Delhi: As many as 148 athletes across all sports, including those who have qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Games, have already received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccination, according to the Indian Olympic Association. Out of these 148 athletes, 17 have got both the doses and 131 have received their first shot, IOA president Narinder Batra said. These 148 include potential athletes who can make it to the Tokyo Olympics which is opening on July 23. Besides this, 13 Tokyo Paralympic-bound athletes have got their first vaccine shot while two have received both doses. The Tokyo Paralympics opens on August 24. The total number of athletes (including para-athletes), who have got at least their first dose till May 20, is 163. — PTI

India football team kick off training

New Delhi: All the players and support staff of the Indian football team have tested negative for Covid-19 after arrival in Qatar and have also started training ahead of the joint Qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup and 2023 Asian Cup next month. The team, which arrived in Doha on Wednesday evening, was under compulsory quarantine and waiting for the results of their RT-PCR tests before starting their preparatory camp. "Yes, all the 28 players and support staff tested positive in the tests done after their arrival," All India Football Federation General Secretary Kushal Das said. — PTI

Tsitsipas enters Lyon title clash

Lyon: World number five Stefanos Tsitsipas came from a set down to beat Lorenzo Musetti 4-6, 6-3, 6-0 on Saturday and reach the final of the ATP event in Lyon. In Sunday's final, the 22-year-old Greek will face Britain's Cameron Norrie who raced past Karen Khachanov 6-1, 6-1 in the other semi-final. Norrie, 25, had already played on Saturday morning having beaten French hope Arthur Rinderknech 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in a quarter-final suspended overnight with the last set still to play. Musetti, came into the event as an alternate but made the most of his chance with wins over Felix Auger-Aliassime, Sebastian Korda and Aljaz Bedene. — AFP

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Never-ending Saha

Wriddhiman's journey comes full circle to be understudy again

Kolkata, May 22: It's a circle of life that has put Wriddhiman Saha in the same position that he was a decade back when he came to England in 2011 as skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni's understudy.

The script was repeated in 2014 with Saha seen dutifully carrying the bats, towels and drinks for his teammates and in 2021, he is again expected to watch Rishabh Pant's pyrotechnics from the dressing room, something that has solely missed from his style of batsmanship despite being decent at his craft.

"Obviously, there would be criticism when you don't do well. I always try to deliver the way I've learnt over the years," Saha said ahead of joining the team's bio-bubble in Mumbai on Monday.

Despite being steady with the bat, somehow Saha's willow wielding hasn't exactly inspired the highest confidence. "If people are saying my batting is not up there, maybe that's the case... But, I don't think I need to change anything — mental approach or technique. I just try to keep my focus and work hard," he said.

IPL BUBBLE NOT FOOLPROOF: SAHA

Saha has indicated that the bio-bubble for IPL-14 was not as foolproof as the one in UAE last year, becoming the first India player to publicly question the tightness of the controlled environment.

"It's the job of the stakeholders to assess it, but the only thing I would say is that there was not a single individual during our training in UAE, not even a ground staff. Here there would be people, kids peeping from nearby walls. I don't want to comment much but we saw how the IPL went off smoothly in UAE," Saha said. — PTI



A file photo of India's wicket-keeper batsman Wriddhiman Saha.

Varun still feels weak & dizzy

Chennai, May 22: Kolkata Knight Riders spinner Varun Chakravarthy is still not fit for intense training after his recovery from Covid-19 as he is still feeling "weakness and dizziness".

Chakravarthy was the first player in IPL to test Covid-19 positive and within a couple of days, the tournament was suspended because of multiple cases inside the bio-bubble across franchises.

The 29-year-old Chakravarthy recovered on May 11 and is currently recuperating at his

I'm now doing well and recovering at home. I still haven't been able to resume training full tilt because of post-Covid-19 symptoms. Although I don't have cough or fever, there is weakness and dizziness.

— VARUN CHAKRAVARTHY
Kolkata Knight Riders spinner

Chennai residence.

"I'm now doing well and recovering at home. I still haven't been able to resume training full tilt because of post-Covid-19 symptoms. Although I don't have cough or fever, there is weakness and dizziness," Chakravarthy told *ESPNCricinfo*.

"The loss of smell and

taste is still intermittent, but I'm confident of being able to resume training soon."

Having experienced the effect of the dreaded virus first hand, Chakravarthy's advice to all athletes is to give their bodies at least two weeks of complete rest after recovery before resuming

any training.

"The thing I've learnt for them to continue to mask up so that you keep others around you safe."

With India facing a health crisis after the second wave of the pandemic hit the country, it's a mental battle for anybody who tested positive for Covid-19. — PTI

LECLERC TAKES POLE DESPITE CAR DAMAGE

Monaco, May 22: Charles Leclerc will start on pole for his home Monaco Grand Prix after setting the fastest time in qualifying on Saturday despite ending the session with crash-damage to his Ferrari.

Red Bull's Max Verstappen will set off alongside him on the front row of Formula One's iconic street race with world champion Lewis Hamilton in unfamiliar territory back on the fourth row.

Qualifying was red flagged at the end, depriving Hamilton and Verstappen of a late chance to better Leclerc's time with a flying lap.

With overtaking difficult on Monaco's tight and twisting circuit, Hamilton's chances of moving up to 99 grand prix wins look compromised.

After winning three out of four races this season the seven-time world champion leads Verstappen by 14 points in the drivers' world championship.

Leclerc secured his eighth career pole but first at Monaco despite his big crash into a wall which ripped off his car's front wing. — AFP

WRESTLER | MURDER CASE

Sushil held in Punjab: Report

New Delhi, May 22: India's two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar, who was on the run for over a fortnight for alleged links with the murder of former international wrestler Sagar Dhankar, was arrested by Delhi Police in Punjab on Saturday, according to a source.

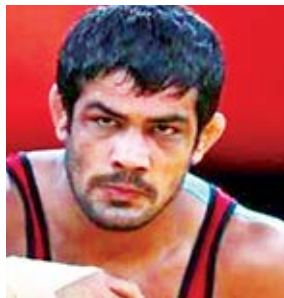
"Kumar has been arrested near Jalandhar. His associate Ajay Kumar, accused in the case, has also been arrested," a source told a news agency.

On May 18, Kumar had moved an anticipatory bail in New Delhi's Rohini court, but the court rejected his bail plea.

Last week, Delhi Police had announced a cash award of ₹1 lakh for feedback on the celebrated wrestler who was absconding since May 4.

On May 4, two groups of wrestlers clashed with each other at Chhatrasal Stadium leading to the death of 23-year-old Dhankar due to injuries he sustained during the brawl.

The Delhi court had also



Sushil Kumar

issued a non-bailable warrant (NBW) against Kumar. Delhi Police issued a lookout notice for Kumar.

"A lookout notice has been issued for Kumar," Dr Gurjib Singh Sidhu, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (North West Delhi) had said.

Kumar, employed with the Indian Railways, is posted as an Officer on Special Duty (OSD) at Chhatrasal Stadium, where the brawl allegedly took place.

Kumar won bronze in 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and silver in 2012 London Olympic Games in 66 kg category. — Agencies

FIFA TO CONSIDER HOLDING WORLD CUP EVERY 2 YEARS

Lausanne, May 22: Fifa on Friday launched an overhaul of the international football calendar beyond 2024, saying it is open to "everything" including the organisation of a World Cup every two years, despite opposition from wilting players and fears over a devalued product. The 71st Fifa Congress voted by a large majority to carry out "a feasibility study on the consequences of the organisation" of World Cups for men and women "every two years".

No deadline has been set for such a controversial reform to the sport's crown jewel, the main income generator for Fifa since its creation in 1928, and which has been contested every four years since 1930 for men and 1991 for women.

Fifa's football development chief Arsene Wenger suggested in March that the World Cup, the European Championship and other international tournaments be held every two years. It was an idea dubbed "unrealistic" by European Leagues, a body which groups 37 leagues and club associations in Europe. — AFP

Games on track, insists IOC chief

New Delhi, May 22: International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach on Saturday asserted that the Tokyo Olympics will go on as scheduled despite opposition from the majority of Japanese population amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic.

The IOC president said hosting the Olympics, already postponed by a year in 2020 due to the unprecedented health crisis, will send a strong message that there is still "light at the end of the tunnel."

Bach made the statement during his address at the 47th International Hockey Federation (FIH) Congress held virtually.

"With Tokyo (Olympics) finally on the horizon, the final countdown has begun. During this difficult times, we need to send a strong message of resilience, unity and our diversity. Tokyo will show light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

Bach's remarks came close on the heels of IOC vice president John Coates' views that the Tokyo Games will go ahead even if the city is under a state of emergency due to the pandemic.

The IOC's stance under-



Thomas Bach

scores the challenges to host the Games in a Covid-hit world.

While most Japanese are not in favour of hosting the Games due to the strain it is expected to put on the country's medical infrastructure in the wake of the pandemic, the IOC remained adamant.

Bach exuded confidence that together with the local organisers, the IOC would be able to deliver a safe Games, which was postponed last year because of the pandemic.

"The safety and security of our everyone is utmost priority. But together with our Japanese colleagues we will have to ensure that our athletes came together and compete in a safe environment.

"Over 70 per cent athletes and officials have already been vaccinated and this number will grow with time," he said. — PTI

Atletico crowned La Liga champs

Madrid, May 22: Atletico Madrid edged city rivals Real Madrid to the La Liga title in dramatic fashion after coming from behind to beat Real Valladolid 2-1 in the final game.

Diego Simeone's side trailed to Oscar Plano's strike but turned the match around in the second half through goals from Angel Correa and Luis Suarez.

Real scored twice late on to beat Villarreal 2-1 but

came up short as they needed Atletico to drop points. The results mean Atletico end the season on 86 points, two ahead of second-placed Madrid and seven above third-placed Barcelona.

It's the eleventh time that Atletico have been crowned champions of Spain, with just three of them coming in the last 40 years, in 1996, 2014 and now 2021.

It was a highly satisfactory triumph for Los

Colchoneros as they finished just two points ahead of defending champions Real, who end the season without silverware.

Simeone has now won two La Liga titles, a Copa del Rey and a Supercopa Espana in a decade in charge, as well as two Europa League successes and two UEFA Super Cups. Atletico have been title favourites for much of the season, leading the league table since

December 5 when they went top with a 2-0 win, also over Valladolid.

Barcelona — playing without skipper Lionel Messi, who was resting before the summer's Copa America — won 1-0 at Eibar through Antoine Griezmann's acrobatic strike and clinched third place ahead of Sevilla.

Julen Lopetegui's side play their final game on Sunday against Alaves but will finish fourth with a win. — Agencies

BCCI has its work cut out in scheduling IPL phase 2



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

Faced with a whopping ₹2,500 crore loss if IPL2021 is not completed, the BCCI is leaving no stone unturned to resume the suspended tournament. With barely seven months remaining in the year, which also includes the T20 World Cup in a packed international itinerary, all

avenues are being explored, including squeezing in the remaining half of the league in the English season.

According to former captain Michael Atherton writing in the London *Times*, the BCCI has been in talks with the England Cricket Board (ECB) to see if there is a window of

opportunity in the six-week gap between the World Test Championship final (India versus New Zealand, ending June 22) and the first India-England Test which starts on August 4.

After Atherton broke the story, the ECB put out a statement that there has been no official request from the BCCI for playing the IPL in England. But that seems to be a technicality, dictated by power-play in the upper echelons of the sport, and not a rebuttal that such move has indeed been made.

It is hardly likely that

BCCI, the richest and most influential cricket board, will risk a certified request at this stage for fear of it being spurned. The process has to begin with sending 'feelers' and seeing how the other party responds before taking the next step. What's amply clear is that informal talks between the BCCI and ECB have taken place.

With New Zealand already in England, many Kiwi players engaged in the IPL would be readily available if the tournament resumes in say July. Those from the Caribbean can also be depended on.

Ditto South Africans. Along with English players who play in the League, this adds up to quite a number of overseas players that can be tapped.

The problem would of getting Aussie players — who make up quite a number — to travel across several seas to be in England, always a threat in these Covid times, though sources within the BCCI aver that this issue can be licked with some cajoling, as also the attraction for players — for money and limelight — of playing in the IPL.

How matters proceed

from here is dependent on several factors, not the least a complicated home season for England which could become the biggest stumbling block for IPL 2021 to be played in that country.

This is the inaugural season of 'The Hundred', a coveted tournament which the ECB would be loath to lose.

Unless the quid pro quo with the BCCI is hugely beneficial (e.g. allowing Indian players in The Hundred which would boost the brand equity of the tournament), the ECB is unlikely to make a major

shift in its current itinerary. Apart from The Hundred, remember, there's the Test series against India which is very lucrative for counties where the matches will be held.

Apart from these hassles, squeezing in the tournament in July has other issues. What happens, for instance, to India's second-string team's projected tour of Sri Lanka for white ball series?

If players like Shikhar Dhawan, Bhuvneshwar, Kuleep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal are unavailable, this tour is kaput.