

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 28 | MAY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 35°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: 1%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Vaikasi 14
Tithi: Dhuvithiyai
Star: Moolam
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.25 am
Luhar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.27 pm
Maghrib: 6.29 pm
Isha: 7.46 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.40 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.41 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 8.54 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 9.43 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+1,76,285)	(+3,485)
2,75,44,455	3,18,750

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+33,361)	474
TN: 19,78,621	27,405

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

16,94,04,850

DEATHS

35,18,899

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES

219

uorlometers.info

Will give 'befitting reply' to IMA: Patanjali

Haridwar: Patanjali Yogpeeth on Thursday confirmed that it has received a defamation notice served by the Indian Medical Association (IMA), demanding an apology from Yoga Guru Ramdev over remarks on allopathy, and said it will give legally a 'befitting reply'.

One-year extension for RAW chief, IB head

New Delhi: Research and Analysis Wing chief Samant Kumar Goel and Intelligence Bureau head Arvind Kumar were given a one-year extension in their services, an official order said on Thursday. Goel, a 1984-batch IPS officer from Punjab cadre, would continue to be the Secretary of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) for a period one-year beyond the presence tenure which ends on June 30, the order said. Similarly, Kumar, an IPS officer of Assam and Meghalaya cadre, will continue to head the Intelligence Bureau for a period of one year after June 30.

COUNTER POINT



Not cash... he has sent Coronil worth ₹1,000 crore, sir!



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Experts' panel on black fungus to meet today



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Garcetti US 'envoy' to India

SPORT | 8

Zidane resigns as Real Madrid coach



Vol. 11 No.151 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES | 4.00

IT GUIDELINES

Obey law, govt orders Twitter

New Delhi, May 27: The row over Twitter's handling of certain messages escalated into an all-out war of words on Thursday, with the government saying the messaging platform was levelling baseless and false allegations to defame India and dictating terms to the world's largest democracy.

Stating that Twitter has refused to comply with new digital rules requiring identification of the originator of a flagged message and appointing grievance redressal officers, the Ministry of Electronics and IT said the purported commitment of the US-based firm to India not only sounds hollow but completely self-serving.

"Twitter needs to stop beating around the bush and comply with the laws of the land," the ministry said without saying what action it could take in case non-compliance continued.

It started with Twitter calling the visit by Delhi Police to its offices a form of 'intimidation' – a statement which met with vociferous protests from both the government and the Delhi Police.

While the government called it "totally baseless, false and an attempt to defame India", Delhi Police said the statement was "mendacious" and designed to impede a lawful inquiry.

Twitter had marked several tweets by ruling BJP leaders on an alleged strategy document of opposition to target the government over Covid as containing "manipulated media", which prompted the police to visit its offices late on Monday.

Twitter said it was committed to India as a vital market, but criticised the new IT rules and regulations that it said "inhibit free, open public conversation."

Delhi Police said it had gone to the Twitter office to ask its India head to join the investigation as the messaging platform seemed to have information based on which it declared the "toolkit" manipulated media.



MIXED BRAND OF VACCINE DOSES IS FINE, SAYS CENTRE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 27

Head of the experts committee on Covid-19 Dr V.K. Paul said on Thursday the Centre was contemplating holding trials on giving cocktail doses of vaccines to people on a trial basis.

However, he said as per protocol, vaccinators must stick to the same dose of vaccine as the first one. "You ask me if a person can get inoculated with a vaccine different from the one he received in the first dose, scientifically and theoretically it is possible. But recommending this is an evolving situation and there is no robust scientific evidence. Only time will tell," he said.



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inaugurates a Covid-19 injection camp at Broadway HRNC school ground in Chennai on Thursday.

— N. Sampath

Curbs in Chennai may be eased, other cities to stay

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 27

Certain minor relaxations to the total lockdown that is now in force could be expected from next week in Chennai and other districts that have shown a decline in the number of daily infections when the government formally makes the announcement on Friday or Saturday.

A suggestion for relaxations was mooted at a meeting of ministers and

high level officials at the Secretariat, presided over by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, on Thursday, to take stock of the Covid-19 situation and chalk out plans to contain the spread of the virus, sources said.

However, with the numbers shooting through the roof in many parts of the state, particularly Coimbatore, there is no possibility of lifting the lockdown all over, the sources said, adding that even the relaxations

would be to just allow groceries, vegetable and meat shops to open for a few hours daily and nothing more than that.

The other restrictions are expected to continue for some more time till the situation improves all over the State.

The Chief Minister pointed out to the collectors of Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Madurai, Trichy, Salem and Erode districts that the spread of Coronavirus in the second wave was high in there.

HC clears duty-free import of medicine

New Delhi, May 27: The Delhi High Court Thursday allowed duty free import of Amphotericin B, used for treating black fungus patients, primarily those affected by it after recovering from Covid-19, on furnishing of a bond by the importers till the Centre takes a final decision on waiving the customs duty on it.

The court said the medi-

cine is required to save lives of thousands of people and the Centre government shall seriously consider waiver of customs duty till the drug is in short supply in India. "We direct that if any import is made by any person of this drug, it shall be allowed on a bond furnished by the importer without the actual duty being paid, till a decision is taken by the Centre."

Pandemic spreads to rural areas: Centre

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 27

With Covid-19 cases still significantly high and the virus now spreading into rural areas, the Centre on Thursday directed all the states and Union territories to continue the ongoing Covid-19 guidelines till June 30 and go in for "intensive and local containment measures" in districts that are report-

ing a high count. In the past 24 hours, 2.11 lakh fresh Covid-19 cases and 3,847 deaths were reported across India.

Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla said strict implementation of the containment and other measures had led to a fall in new and active cases in a majority of states/UTs, barring some areas in the Northeast and South India.

Rains kill 5 as Didi claims ₹15 k cr loss

DC CORRESPONDENTS
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI/KOLKATA/
BALASORE, MAY 27

A day after the "Very Severe" Cyclone Yaas ravaged India's east coast, a thunderous rain due to depression left five persons dead and injured five others in West Bengal, while in Odisha the threat of floods loomed large as water levels of major rivers increased on Thursday.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee estimated the extent of damage due to



A girl sits on a chair as people wade through a waterlogged road in the aftermath of Cyclone 'Yaas', in Kolkata.

— PTI

the cyclone at around Rs 15,000 crore and announced that her gov-

ernment will spend Rs 1,000 crore as Duare Traan (Relief at Doorstep) to

rehabilitate the affected.

At the state secretariat Nabanna, Ms Banerjee said, "A preliminary assessment estimates the damage caused by the cyclone at Rs 15,000 crore. We are allocating Rs 1,000 crore for immediate relief to house building and to meet the agricultural losses, among others. Once water recedes in villages in the next seven days, our government will run Duare Tran camps like Duare Sarkar for the enrolment of the affected from June 3 to 18 and verify their claims of losses from June 19 to 30."

Recall Lakshadweep ruler, Rahul writes to PM

DC CORRESPONDENT
WITH AGENCY INPUTS
NEW DELHI, MAY 27

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking his urgent intervention in Lakshadweep. He demanded that "anti people policies" being announced by

the Lakshadweep administrator Praful Khoda Patel, be withdrawn. Mr Gandhi also claimed that the dilution in quarantine rules by Mr Patel in Lakshadweep has led to a "lethal spike in Covid cases".

Mr Patel, a former MLA of Gujarat who served as a minister of state for home under Narendra Modi's

chief ministership in Gujarat, was made administrator of the country's smallest Union Territory in December 2020 after the death of Dineshwar Sharma, the then administrator of the island. He is being blamed for the Covid-19 surge in Lakshadweep and is accused of creating social tension in

Lakshadweep where Muslims form nearly 97 per cent of the population and most are Scheduled Tribes. Mr Gandhi, in his letter to the Prime Minister, has said that the "administration demolished structures used by the fisherfolk, fired contractual workers in various government departments".

Calling the moves "draconian", Mr Gandhi said these "regulations penalise dissent and undermine grassroots democracy".

Since taking over as Lakshadweep's administrator last year, Mr Patel has been making changes in the local administration, sparking a countrywide outcry.

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OTHER STORIES

IAF airlifts 780 kg medical essentials from Delhi

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 27

IAF aircraft airlifted medical equipment weighing 780 kilograms from Delhi to the Chennai Airport on Wednesday evening. Sources in the Chennai Airport said an IAF C-130 aircraft carrying medical essentials weighing 780 kilograms arrived at the Old Airport in Chennai. The consignment containing Oxygen concentrators, ventilators, face masks, RT-PCR kits have been shifted to Omandurar Government hospital in City.

TN call on vaccine complex: Centre to revert in a week

From P1

Universal vaccination is the only panacea available now to fight the raging pandemic. "Hence, a favourable decision has to be taken to fulfill the Prime Minister's vision of self-reliant India," Mr Stalin pointed out.

Mr Stalin recalled that the IVC, run by HLL Biotech Limited (HBL) under the Union ministry of health and family welfare (MoHFW), was lying dysfunctional after its launch in 2017. The Centre has already invested around Rs 700 crore in this facility, he said, adding that the recent attempts to find a private partner to run the vaccine complex have also not borne fruit.

State health minister Ma. Subrahmanian, meanwhile, expressed the hope that the past liabilities and legal disputes can be sorted out once vaccine production started there.

"The Chief Minister had on Wednesday called a high level meeting on his return from the visit to the Chengelpet facility and then sent the state labour minister to Delhi to brief the Centre on the state's request," the minister said.

DMK leader and MP, T R Baalu told reporters in Delhi that he met Industry Minister Piyush Goyal in this connection and Mansukh Mandaviya (Minister of State, Chemical and Fertilisers) was also present during discussion.

The Centre has said it would revert to the TN government in about a week on the matter, Baalu, flanked by TN Industries Minister Thangam Thennarasu, said.

TN adds 33,361 new cases, 474 fatalities

Chennai, May 27: Tamil Nadu recorded 33,361 new coronavirus cases on Thursday, pushing the total caseload to 19.78 lakh while the toll mounted to 22,289 as 474 people succumbed to the deadly virus in the last 24 hours.

According to a medical bulletin, 30,063 people were discharged today, taking the total recoveries to 16,43,284 leaving 3,13,048 active infections.

Chennai, which has been witnessing a declining trend in daily new cases, saw 2,779 people contracting the contagion on Thursday, totalling to 4,93,881 till date.

The metropolis also leads in the number of fatalities with 6,723 deaths.

The number of samples tested today was 1,74,145, raising the cumulative number of specimens examined so far to 2.69 crore till date.

Besides Chennai, Chengalpatt added 1,392 cases, Coimbatore 4,734, Erode 1,699, Madurai 1,395, Thiruvallur 1,221, 2,074, Tiruchirappalli 1,617 and Virudhunagar 1,016.

Cuddalore, Kancheepuram, Kanyakumari, Nagapattinam, Namakkal, Ranipet, Salem, Thanjavur, Theni, Thirupathur, Thiruvannamalai, Tuticorin, Villupuram reported fresh infections in excess of 500.

Among the 474 deaths, 125 died without any pre-existing illness. —PTI

Experts' panel on black fungus to meet today

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 27

The Tamil Nadu government has constituted an expert committee to study the cause of Mucormycosis (black fungus) in the state and ensure its effective treatment.

Health minister Ma. Subramaniam on Thursday said that a committee of 13 medical experts including ENT specialists and pulmonologists will meet on Friday to discuss the Mucormycosis situation in the state. The team will discuss how to handle the disease and deploy expert doctors.

As many as 256 cases of Mucormycosis have been reported since it was declared as a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Diseases Act 1897.

The state has received 500 vials of Amphotericin-B from the Centre. It will be sent to the respective centres, said the minister.

It was on May 20 the state declared Mucormycosis as a notifiable disease. The treatment of this fungal infection requires a multi-disciplinary approach consisting of eye surgeons, ENT specialists, general surgeon, neurosurgeon and dental maxillofacial surgeon, among others, and administration of Amphotericin-B injection as an anti-fungal medicine.

Talking to reporters in

Responding to the spike in Covid-19 cases in Coimbatore district, the minister said the government had sent two more IAS officers to implement containment measures effectively

Virudhunagar, the minister denied the allegations of leader of Opposition Edappadi K. Palaniswamy that Covid-19 patients were dying due to oxygen scarcity. "We took over the government only 20 days ago. During the previous government, the per day availability of oxygen was 250 MT. Now the production has increased to 650 MT per day. So there is no basis in his allegation, who left just 250 MT oxygen a day."

Responding to the letter written by Coimbatore South MLA Vanathi Sreenivasan to the Union health minister demanding the Centre's intervention in the Covid-19 situation in the state, the minister said there was no need for the Centre to step in now. Even with essential drugs including Remdesivir and containment activities, the government has done a tremendous job in the last 20 days. Now the Centre has allocated 1.5 lakh

Tasmac staffer dies of black fungus

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 27

A 40-year-old man from Chengalpatt, who was diagnosed with Mucormycosis, passed away at the government hospital here on Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Ramesh Purushothaman, a resident of Amaintha Karanai village near Madurantakam. He worked at the Mambakkam Tasmac in Madurantakam as supervisor.

The man, who also had co-morbidities, including diabetes, was admitted to the Chengalpatt government hospital two weeks ago with symptoms of black fungus. He had severe pain in his left eye, swelling and blurred vision, the hospital sources said. After surgical removal of his left eye, Ramesh was undergoing treatment at the intensive care unit, where he passed away without responding

to treatment. He is the third person to die of black fungus in the state. Last week, a 46-year-old man from Ramana-thapuram died of Mucormycosis at Rajiv Gandhi government hospital in Madurai.

So far, 181 cases of black fungus have been reported in Tamil Nadu. Though the number of cases is much less as compared to the coronavirus infection, Mucormycosis is considered to cause a significant increase in the mortality rate

to treatment.

Another suspected death was reported in Thoothukudi as a 57-year-old man, who was Covid-19 positive, was reportedly diagnosed with black fungus.

The global tender floated for vaccines will be opened on June 6. After this, we will get 3.5 crore vaccine doses in six months. The government will be able to vaccinate all people in the state, he said.

Cash relief to transgenders sans ration cards: TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 27

The Tamil Nadu government has informed the Madras high court that it will sympathetically consider the matter pertaining to transgenders and the fact that the eligible persons need to possess ration cards may not stand in the way of their receiving the relief (₹4,000 cash benefit) since there are other forms of identity cards that indicate their orientation.

Recording the submission made by Advocate general R. Shanmugasundaram to the above effect, the first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said the State government should take a decision in such regard and come to the aid of the transgenders who require immediate relief.

Passing interim orders on a petition filed by Grace Banu, the bench posted the matter to June 7 for the State government to indicate if any measures have been taken in such regard.

Recording the submission made by Advocate general R. Shanmugasundaram to the above effect, the first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said the State government should take a decision in such regard and come to the aid of the transgenders who require immediate relief

Nursing dreams



Nursing candidates waiting to attend their interview near Chennai corporation health department in the city on Thursday.

— DC

Hope Centre looks into larger allocation of oxygen supply to Pondy, says HC

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 27

Pointing out that a particular manufacturing facility that was regularly producing more than 80 MT of oxygen daily has reduced production to 72 MT daily, and Puducherry's allocation has been reduced to 28 MT per day, the Madras high court has expressed its hope that the Centre looks into a larger allocation of oxygen supply to Puducherry, since Puducherry perceives its requirement to be 65 MT per day.

Stating that Puducherry's concern appears to be in the dip of the oxygen available on a daily basis, the first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy made the above observation.

The bench was passing further interim orders on a suo motu proceedings initiated by it pursuant to newspapers reports relating to alleged shortage of oxygen and drug Remdesivir and on another batch of PILs.

The bench said the figures furnished by the State of Tamil Nadu and the Union Territory of Puducherry in the independent reports indicates a falling rate of positive cases in both places, particularly in the city of Chennai. At the same time, the number of persons successfully treated has increased, though the number of deaths has gone up. Generally, there is a time lag between positivity going down and the rate of deaths plateauing, the bench added.

The bench said by and



large, there does not appear to be dearth of beds or facilities. The supply of oxygen to the State has been increased by the Centre to 650 MT per day. In addition, the State government has used its own resources to augment the supply and to arrange for oxygen generators, concentrators and the like. Nursing students have been engaged, as the State's report says, to monitor the blood oxygen level and discontinue the oxygen feed if the appropriate levels were maintained by the patients, the bench added.

The bench said the Centre has filed affidavits indicating the position as to vaccines and their availability, and the availability of Liposomal Amphotericin-B needed to treat mucormycosis, which the State has declared as a notified disease. The allocation of vaccines over the next 15 days to the State and the Union Territory has been indicated. The allocation of essential drug to treat mucormycosis has also been shown by way of a table in an affidavit filed by the Department of Pharmaceuticals in such regard. The State's report filed by the Health

Secretary deals with the several aspects, including infrastructure and facilities, and refers to measures being taken to deal with the charges demanded by private hospitals while treating Covid patients, including persons belonging to the economically weaker sections, the group insurance scheme of the government covers about 1.58 crore families (about 4.26 crore persons), the bench added.

The bench said several suggestions have been made by several of the intervenors. One of the suggestions pertains to the covering up of the dead bodies upon death due to Covid. It was submitted that at least the face should be covered by some transparent material so that the relatives may have a glimpse of the face for the last time or even identify the person. There were other suggestions for passes to be made available to NGOs who were providing free food to persons who were quarantined and to others who do not have ready access to food, the bench added.

The bench said since the second surge appears to be subsiding and facilities and infrastructure may now be available, the other matters need not be looked into at the moment. But there were citizens facing unemployment and lack of income avenues or loss of savings upon much of it going in treatment. These aspects have slowly to be considered by the State, the bench added and posted to May 31, further hearing of the case.

Light of hope



Devotees celebrate lakshadeepam at Kapaleeswarar temple tank in Mylapore, on Thursday.

— DC

Reaching out



Greater Chennai Corporation health department staff vaccinating a differently abled at his home in Choolai.

— DC

Step forward: TN must get IVC up and running



B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

Despite decreasing trend in positive cases in Chennai, people across Tamil Nadu should not lower their guard and adhere to lockdown norms. At the same time, only rapid vaccination drives in all parts of the state can rein in the virulent second wave of Covid-19.

After opening up vaccination for those in the 18-44 age bracket, the state has been requesting the Centre for more vials in proportion to its population. As the demand-supply ratio of vaccines is pathetically low, it is time the Centre and state coordinated and got the integrated vaccine complex (IVC) in Chengalpatt oper-

ational.

The Madurai Bench of Madras high court recently asked as to why the Centre was procuring oxygen and Covid vaccines from private companies instead of utilising government-owned manufacturing units like BHEL in Tiruchy and IVC in Chengalpatt.

Central government's state-of-the-art Integrated Vaccine Complex set up by HLL Biotech at Chengalpatt, capable of producing one billion doses annually, has not manufactured a single vaccine in the last several years.

IVC is supposed to manufacture and supply cost-effective immunization

programme vaccines in the country.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, who had declared that his government will initiate immediate steps to manufacture Covid vaccines in the state, visited the IVC facility in Chengalpatt this week. His letter urging the Centre to hand over the vaccine manufacturing facility to the Tamil Nadu government on lease to commence vaccine production has brought a ray of hope. Also, it will ratchet up pressure on the Centre to ramp up vaccine production.

While experts are not sure if the Chengalpatt facility can immediately manufacture Covid vaccines, the government should take urgent measures to iron out technology compatibility issues. Only a scaled-up vaccination drive can stop the spread of this highly-transmissible pathogen and prevent the virus from mutating further.

TN should release funds for feeding stray animals: Court

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 27

The Madras high court on Thursday said the State should release adequate funds to the Animal Husbandry Department for the stray animals to be fed to some extent.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy passed the interim order on a petition filed by V.E.Shiva, which sought a direction to the

authorities to take necessary steps to ensure that the stray animals are provided with food and water in this Covid-19 pandemic.

The bench said this petition relates to stray animals who find it difficult to forage for food with the lockdown in place. In particular, several horses have been left to feed for themselves by the owners, who otherwise exploit them to earn a living. The Committee constituted by a previous order has met and the suggestions made by the Committee will,

doubtless, take care of the situation, but the problem is the funds. Though CSR funds have been opened for the project, no money is forthcoming. Since the amount which has to be expended would run into a few lakhs and not more, the State should release adequate funds to the Animal Husbandry Department for the stray animals to be fed to some extent, the bench added.

The bench said the Animal Husbandry Department has sought an initial amount of Rs 9 lakh

or thereabouts. "It is hoped that the State immediately sanctions the amount, so that the stray dogs, cats, abandoned horses and even elephants can be taken care of and their daily food can be organised by NGOs and the Animal Husbandry Department under the aegis of the Committee. An appeal may also be made to the corporate houses for funds or material that may go into feeding stray animals", the bench added and posted to May 31, further hearing of the case.

Animal welfare board seeks donations

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 27

The Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board seeks donations for feeding street animals during the lockdown period. The amount will be utilised for the procurement of dry feed and other foods by the Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board for street animals through organisations involved in animal welfare activities in their respective

areas, depending upon the need, a release stated.

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, coordinating with concerned local bodies, has been issuing feeder passes/animal rescue passes to individuals, animal welfare activists. Interested individuals may contact the concerned Regional Joint Director of Animal Husbandry and the Volunteers in the limits of Greater Chen-

nai Corporation may contact the Director of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Chennai either in person or through e-mail tnawb2019@gmail.com for availing the passes.

The public, corporate, philanthropic organisations, NGOs / Community Based Organisations, are requested to Demand drafts and Cheques may be drawn in favour of "TAMILNADU ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD

CSR FUNDS" and sent to the Member Secretary, Tamil Nadu Animal Welfare Board, Directorate of Animal husbandry and Veterinary Services, Veterinary Polyclinic Campus, No. 571, Anna salai, Nandanam, Chennai. Funds can be remitted directly to its account at ICICI Bank, Branch - Cenotaph Road Branch, Chennai, Account no-000101236907, IFSC Code-ICIC00000001 and MICR no-600229002.

SHORT TAKES

PENPA IS CHIEF OF TIBETAN GOVT-IN-EXILE

Dharamshala (HP), Mar 27: Penpa Tsering was on Thursday sworn-in as president of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the Dharamshala-based Tibetan government-in-exile, and said he will reach out to the Chinese government to find a mutually beneficial and non-violent solution to the Sino-Tibet conflict.

Chief Justice Commissioner Sonam Norbu Dagpo administered the oath to Penpa Tsering, the second democratically-elected Sikyong (president) of the 17th Parliament-in-Exile of the Central Tibetan Administration, at a small ceremony held here amid the restrictions imposed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Penpa Tsering succeeded Lobsang Sangay.

He said his government will tread the path of middle way espoused by the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

Based on which, we will reach out to the Chinese government to find a mutually beneficial, negotiated, non-violent solution to the Sino-Tibet conflict. We hope that this in turn shall set a good example in resolving conflicts around the world, Penpa Tsering said. He said the main responsibility of his 'Kashag' (Cabinet) will be to address the critical challenges being faced by endangered Tibet and sufferings of the Tibetan people. He said it is of utmost importance to Tibetans to abide by the guidance of the Dalai.

LAKSHADWEEP: RAHUL SEEKS PM'S INTERVENTION

From P1

His new rules, which he says are "reforms", include implementing the anti-social Activities Regulation bill, 2021, or the Goonda Act in the island territory where the crime rate is already very low. Mr Gandhi also said in his letter that the administrator's attempt to undermine the islands' ecological sanctity is evident in the draft Lakshadweep Development Authority Regulation. "Livelihood, security and sustainable development are being sacrificed for commercial gains... Under the guise of development and maintaining law and order in a low crime union territory, the draconian regulations penalise dissent and undermine grassroots democracy," his letter said.

The administrator has also taken over the control of the local administrative powers of the elected Zilla panchayat. He also gave a nod to opening liquor bars in the island, a non-alcoholic zone due to its Muslim population, to promote tourism, and introduced a beef ban while eliminating non-vegetarian food from the menu of Anganwadi children.

The tribal population of Lakshadweep is about 95 per cent and beef is part of their regular diet.

Tejpal case verdict

HC asks sessions court to redact references to victim's identity

Panaji, May 27: The Goa bench of the Bombay High Court on Thursday directed a sessions court, which recently acquitted journalist Tarun Tejpal in a 2013 rape case, to redact all references in its judgement which disclose the victim's identity, before uploading it on the court's website.

A vacation bench of Justice S C Gupte was hearing an appeal filed by the Goa government, challenging the May 21 judgement passed by sessions judge Kshama Joshi acquitting Tejpal in the case.

Tejpal, former editor-in-chief of Tehelka, was accused of sexually assaulting his then colleague in the lift of a five-star hotel in Goa in 2013 while they were attending an event.

The sessions court while acquitting Tejpal questioned the victim's conduct, holding that she did not exhibit any kind of "normative behaviour" such as trauma and shock which a victim of sexual assault might plausibly show.

Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Goa government, on Thursday told the HC that the observations made in the judgement and most of the findings with regard to the victim were "astounding". —PTI



A municipality worker sanitizes the area before a special Covid-19 vaccination drive for boatmen, at the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar on Thursday. —PTI

Controlling Covid-19 is my only focus, says BSY

Bengaluru, May 27:

With speculations rife that some attempts were on within the ruling BJP to replace him, Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Thursday said controlling the Covid-19 pandemic and protecting the interests of the people were his only priorities now. In a veiled attack on those trying to exert pressure for unseating him, he said those who had gone to Delhi have been sent back with answers as he asserted that addressing the Covid situation should be the priority of all ministers and legislators.

"The only thing before me is Covid, controlling it and protecting the interest of the people is my priority. If some have gone somewhere (referring to some legislators

● "We should focus towards controlling Covid, there is no other matter in front of me, facing Covid is my first priority," Karnataka Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

going to Delhi to meet high command), they have been given the right answers (by the high command) and sent back," Yediyurappa said.

Speaking to reporters here, he said when people are in distress and deaths are increasing due to Covid, controlling it together should be the priority of legislators, ministers and everyone.

Asked whether he will call a legislature party meeting, the Chief Minister merely said, "there is no need to discuss it, with you (media)." —PTI

Even their father can't arrest me: Ramdev

Dehradun, May 27: Amid the raging controversy over Ramdev's alleged disparaging remarks against allopathy, another controversial video surfaced on social media in which the yoga guru is seen reacting to the demand for his arrest, saying "even their father cannot arrest him".

"They are just making a noise. They keep creating trends like Thug Ramdev, Mahathug Ramdev, Giraftra Ramdev and so on," he said responding to #Arrest Ramdev trends on social media. "Arrest to khair unka baap bhi nahin kar sakta Swami Ramdev ko (even their father cannot arrest Swami Ramdev)," he is caught saying in the video.

Reacting to the yoga guru's latest video, K.S. Ravi, a senior doctor and the editor-in-chief of National Journal of Clinical Anatomy, said it shows he is not apologetic at all about making "insensitive" comments about allopathy and allopathic doctors.

"Ramdev's statement is full of

arrogance. It shows that he considers himself above law," said Dr Ravi, who is also the president of the Society of Intellectuals.

He demanded quick action against Ramdev for his "denigrating remarks" to boost the morale of doctors who are risking their own lives to serve people in the time of Covid.

"Ramdev continues to make statements like this because he feels politically protected," said a former president of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) in Uttarakhand, who did not want to be named.

Citing a video circulating on social media, the IMA had on Saturday said Ramdev has claimed that allopathy is a "stupid science" and "lakhs of patients have died after taking allopathic medicines". The IMA also wrote to Narendra Modi, demanding that Ramdev be booked immediately under sedition charges for alleged misinformation campaign on coronavirus vaccination and challenging government protocols for its treatment. —PTI

Second wave on downswing: Centre

But cautions active cases are very high

New Delhi, May 27: The

Centre on Thursday said the second Covid-19 wave in India is on the "downswing" and hoped this trend will be sustained even when restrictions are systematically relaxed, but at the same time highlighted that the current number of active cases is "still very high". The Centre also stressed that any relaxation of curbs by the states and the union territories (UTs) may be considered at an appropriate time in a graded manner. NITI Aayog member (Health) V K Paul told a news conference here that the country continues to witness the stabilisation of the second wave in most parts, both by the number of cases and positivity rate, and despite a sus-

Maha curbs to continue, graded easing later: Uddhav

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government will extend the coronavirus-enforced lockdown-like curbs in the state after June 1 and relax them later in a phased manner, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said on

tained and high overall testing coverage which is "reassuring".

"We are achieving this in the face of very significant restrictions in most states in addition to other tools and operations, including testing and Covid appropriate behaviour and vac-

Thursday. Thackeray issued necessary directives in this regard to the state administration during a cabinet meeting, said a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) here. Currently, a wide range of restrictions are in force till June 1 to stem the spread of coronavirus. Precautions are needed at the moment even though case positivity rate in the state is reducing. —PTI

cination efforts. Nonetheless, it is reassuring that we are on the downswing of second wave and we do hope and believe that it will be sustained even when restrictions are gently, systematically and cautiously opened up," he said.

No threat to personal safety of employees: IT ministry

From P1

The IT ministry soon after issued a statement saying India has a glorious tradition of free speech and democratic practices dating back to centuries. "Twitter's statement is an attempt to dictate its terms to the world's largest democracy. Through its actions and deliberate defiance, Twitter seeks to undermine India's legal system," it asserted.

It went on to highlight previously raised concerns around certain locations in Ladakh being shown as part of China, alleged reluctance to block content around a 'genocide plan' during farmers' protest, rampant proliferation of fake and harmful content against India, and no action being taken on a type of coronavirus being called the Indian variant.

The government, the statement said, "condemns the unfortunate statement issued by Twitter as totally baseless, false and attempt to defame India to hide their

own follies."

"Twitter has a large user base in India, it earns significant revenue from its Indian operations but is also the most reluctant to appoint an India-based grievance redressal officer and mechanism, chief compliance officer and nodal officer to whom its own users can complain when they are subjected to offensive tweets," it said.

It went on to say that Twitter employees are safe in India and there is no threat to their personal safety and security.

In its first official statement after the Delhi Police visited the company's offices in Delhi and Gurugram to serve notice to its country managing director about the investigation into the 'manipulated media' tag, Twitter said it will continue to be strictly guided by principles of transparency and protecting freedom of expression.

The company said it will "strive" to comply with applicable law in India to keep its service available

in the country but will "advocate for changes to elements of these regulations that inhibit free, open public conversation."

"Right now, we are concerned by recent events regarding our employees in India and the potential threat to freedom of expression for the people we serve," Twitter said in a statement.

"We, alongside many in civil society in India and around the world, have concerns with regards to the use of intimidation tactics by the police in response to enforcement of our global Terms of Service, as well as with core elements of the new IT rules."

In the new digital rules, social media companies like Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter have been asked to identify within 36 hours the originator of a flagged message as well as conduct additional due diligence, including the appointment of a chief compliance officer, nodal contact person and resident grievance officer.

Lockdown volunteers



Volunteers distribute food to needy people during the lockdown amid Covid-19 pandemic, near Safdarjung hospital, New Delhi on Thursday. —PTI

FIGHTING | TERROR

Many policemen, security personnel test positive for virus

J&K: Covid hampers anti-militancy ops

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, MAY 27

The lingering Coronavirus pandemic has hampered greatly if not halted completely counterinsurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir. Stating this, J&K Director General of Police Dilbag Singh said on Thursday that a large number of policemen and other security forces personnel too have contracted Covid-19, thereby making it difficult for the counter-militancy grid to continue its operations with the pace it would conduct these until recently. The other reason he said is the huge deployment of uniformed forces on the roads and other public places to enforce lockdown which

entered the 28th day on Thursday.

Singh, while speaking to reporters in southern Kulgam district said, "Covid pandemic has affected anti-militancy operations to some extent. But it is not like we are leaving areas free for terrorists to roam around".

He further said "many policemen and security forces personnel have tested positive for the virus. But despite the fact that the J&K police are fighting Covid pandemic and enforcing lockdown through their deployments on roads and streets across the Valley, specific lead based anti-militancy operations are being conducted in South Kashmir and other parts of Kashmir".

● THE DGP said that the number of active militants keeps fluctuating and, as of now, intelligence reports suggest there are about 100 of them active in the four districts

Asked if it was true that the recruitment into militant outfits from among the local youth has plummeted in the recent past, the police chief said, "Unfortunately, the recruitment is still taking place, but the graph is very less compared to previous years. The J&K police have been doing a lot on this front and making concerted efforts to plug it completely. I believe more steps need to be taken to stop it fully."

He, however, also said "we don't want local youth to turn to guns. The police have been working hard to prevent misguided youth who have joined various terror outfits to return and live peaceful and dignified lives. Here in Kulgam itself a group of youth which was about to join militancy was brought back and each of the boys was united with their family." He added, "Likewise, in other districts too many such youths were stopped from treading on the wrong path."

He claimed that proscribed outfits like Jaish-e-Muhammad, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Al-Badr "continue to get oxygen from across the Line of Control (LoC) and contin-

ue to try to lure Kashmiri boys into their fold".

Singh said that the police authorities have in many instances succeeded in persuading militants to lay down their arms and surrender before the security forces even during live encounters. "Young boys do agree to surrender but older ones aren't ready. From our end, efforts are on to reach out to misguided youth to help them come back," he asserted.

Replying to another question, the DGP said that the number of active militants keeps fluctuating and, as of now, intelligence reports suggest there are about 100 of them active in the four districts of south Kashmir—Kulgam, Shopian, Pulwama and Anantnag.

SHORT TAKES

BAGHDAD TENSE
AFTER MILITIA
COMMANDER HELD

Baghdad, May 27: Tensions mounted in Iraq's capital after the arrest of a militia commander on terrorism charges, prompting a dangerous showdown by the detainee's paramilitary supporters and the Iraqi government.

The confrontation began on Wednesday after Iraqi security forces arrested at dawn militia leader Qassim Mahmoud Musleh based on a judicial investigation and arrest warrant on terrorism charges, Iraq's military said in a statement.

Musleh is the head of the Popular Mobilisation Forces in Anbar province. Shortly after the arrest, forces affiliated with the PMF which maintains offices inside the heavily fortified Green Zone, were deployed surrounding Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's headquarters. Tensions reached fever pitch when Iraqi security forces and the elite Counter-Terrorism Service were deployed to protect the government and diplomatic missions.

HAWKING'S
ARCHIVE, OFFICE
ACQUIRED

London, May 27: London's Science Museum and the Cambridge University library said Wednesday they have acquired a large collection of items belonging to late physicist Stephen Hawking, from his personalised wheelchairs to landmark papers on theoretical physics and his scripts from his appearance on *The Simpsons*.

The entire contents of Hawking's office at Cambridge, including his communications equipment, memorabilia, bets he made on scientific debates and office furniture, will be preserved as part of the collection belonging to the Science Museum Group.

Hawking occupied the office at the university's department of applied mathematics and theoretical physics from 2002 until shortly before his death in 2018. Highlights will go on display at the London museum early next year. Museum officials are also hoping to create a touring exhibition in the UK before setting up a permanent display in London.

3 JAILED OVER
'17 BARCELONA
ATTACKS

Madrid, May 27: A Spanish court on Thursday imposed prison sentences ranging from 8 to 53 years on the three surviving members of an extremist Islamist cell that killed 16 people and injured 140 others in two consecutive attacks in and near Barcelona in 2017.

The three convicted by Spain's National Court were accused of forming part of the cell or aiding it, but not of directly carrying out the attacks. Two cell members, including a Muslim cleric believed to have been the ringleader, died in an apparently accidental blast at a country house while preparing explosives before the attacks.

Six more were shot and killed by police after driving vehicles into groups of bystanders in Barcelona and the nearby coastal town of Cambrils. The Islamic State group later claimed responsibility for their actions. A panel of judges convicted Mohamed Houli Chemlal, a 24-year-old Spaniard who survived the explosion days ahead of the attacks, and Driss Oukabir, 32 and originally from Morocco.

U.S. RESIDENT
SOUGHT BY CHINA
FREED IN DUBAI

Dubai, May 27: A permanent resident of the United States wanted by China was freed by Dubai on Thursday, taking off on a flight to Turkey after spending weeks in detention.

Beijing had sought Wang Jingyu over his online comments about a deadly confrontation between Chinese and Indian forces last year.

Activists and his supporters say plainclothes police officers arrested the 19-year-old student as he came off an Emirates flight in April at Dubai International Airport, trying to connect onto New York.

The State Department acknowledged his arrest, described the case as a human rights' concern and warned that he could have faced extradition to China.

He was freed just hours after *The Associated Press* began asking questions about his case.

Wang's case comes as the United Arab Emirates, long a US defence partner in the Mideast, has drawn closer to China in recent years in trade and in efforts to combat the Coronavirus pandemic.

UK health min defends virus record

Hancock responds after ex-aide Cummins alleged govt's poor Covid response caused deaths

London, May 27: Britain's health minister on Thursday defended his handling of the Coronavirus pandemic after a former top government aide alleged the government's botched response had led to tens of thousands of needless deaths.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock hit back after Dominic Cummings singled him out for criticism in an excoriating attack on the government. In testimony to lawmakers on Wednesday, Cummings accused Hancock of lying to the public and said he "should have been fired" for mistakes including testing failures that saw patients with the virus discharged from hospitals to nursing homes.

Thousands of people died with Covid-19 in British care homes in the first months of the outbreak. Hancock said "the unsubstantiated allegations around honesty are not true." "I have been straight with people in public and in private throughout," he told legislators in the House of Commons.

"Every day since I began working on the response to this pandemic last January, I've got up each morning and asked: What must I do to protect life?" Cummings, who left his job as Prime Minister Boris Johnson's top adviser in November, claimed the government's slow and chaotic initial response, and Johnson's failure to learn from mistakes, meant that tens of thousands of people had died unnecessarily.

He said Johnson was "unfit for the job" of prime minister. Johnson brushed aside the criticism, saying "some of the commentary I have heard doesn't bear any relation to reality." "What people want us to get on with is delivering the (reopening) road map and trying, cautiously, to take our country forward through what has been one of the most difficult periods that I think anybody can remember," he told reporters on Thursday. Opposition Labour Party health spokesman Jonathan Ashworth said that, whether or not Cummings' allegations were true, the government had questions to answer.

"These allegations from Cummings are either true, and if so the secretary of state (Hancock) potentially stands in breach of the ministerial code ... or they are false and the prime minister brought a fantasist and a liar into the heart of Downing Street," he said. —AP

3 cops wounded
in Dallas shooting

Flower Mound (US), May 27: Three officers were shot and wounded Wednesday night while answering a report of a suicidal person in a Dallas suburb, police said.

The three officers were responding to a 911 call about 7 p.m. Wednesday at a house in a Flower Mound residential neighbourhood about 25 miles (40.23 kilometres) northwest of Dallas. According to a police statement, they were trying to contact the man, who was alone in the house, when gunfire erupted from inside.

The officers returned fire, but police have had no contact with the man since a standoff ensued.

POLITICAL | TSUNAMI

Ankara, May 27: Millions of Turks have been glued to their screens, watching a crime boss tell wild stories about international drug smuggling, murders and the murky ties between politicians and the mafia.

But the gang boss starring in these videos is real, and his claims have set off a political tsunami that has unsettled President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's government, leaving his popular interior minister particularly exposed.

The accusations thrown



A waiter sets up tables at an outdoor dining area of a restaurant in Islamabad on Thursday as restaurants prepare to reopen for outdoor dining following a lift on a nationwide lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the Covid-19. — AFP

Melbourne set for fourth
lockdown as cluster grows

Canberra, May 27: Australia's second-largest city was set to enter its fourth lockdown Thursday as concern grew over the rapid spread of infections from a Coronavirus variant. The seven-day lockdown for Melbourne and the rest of Victoria state comes after a new cluster in the city rose to 26 infections, including a person who was in intensive care.

Another 10,000 people have had some degree of contact with those already

infected. "Unless something changes, this will be increasingly uncontrollable," Victoria Acting Premier James Merlino said. The federal government declared Melbourne a hot spot, which entitles the city to additional federal resources. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said 218 military personnel were in Victoria helping in pandemic operations and more would be sent if Merlino asked. Additional vaccine doses were also

being sent to Victoria.

Only 3.9 million vaccine doses have been administered among Australia's population of 26 million. Health Minister Greg Hunt described the lockdown as "highly regrettable, but necessary restrictions under the current circumstances." People will only be able to leave home to shop for food and essential items, provide or receive care, exercise, work or study if they are unable to do so from home. —AP

Garcetti US 'envoy' to India

Washington, May 27: President Joe Biden is expected to nominate Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, a trusted political ally, as America's next ambassador to India, according to media reports.

Biden is expected to announce the names of political ambassadors, including for India, as soon as next week, according to a report in Axios.

President Biden, a Democrat, is also expected to announce Nicholas Burns as the ambassador to China and Rahm Emanuel and Tom Nides as ambassadors to Japan and Israel respectively, the report in the American news website said on Wednesday.

Garcetti, 50, who served as the co-chair of Biden's presidential campaign,

PIO VENKATARAMAN NOMINATED TO
KEY BIDEN ADMINISTRATION POST

Washington, May 27: US President Joe Biden has announced his intent to nominate Indian-American trade expert Arun Venkataraman to a key position in his administration related to foreign commercial service.

Venkataraman is the nominee for Director General of the United States and Foreign Commercial Service and Assistant Sec-

retary for Global Markets, Department of Commerce, the White House said on Wednesday.

With over 20 years of experience in advising companies, international organisations and the US government on international trade issues, Venkataraman is currently the Counsellor to the Secretary of Commerce.

—PTI

was initially considered for the Cabinet.

Garcetti is the 42nd Mayor of Los Angeles, the second-largest city in the United States, after New

FB reverses course, won't
ban laboratory virus theory

Washington, May 27: Facebook has reversed its policy banning posts suggesting Covid-19 emerged from a laboratory amid renewed debate over the origins of the virus, raising fresh questions about social media's role in policing misinformation.

The latest move by Facebook, announced late Wednesday on its website, highlights the challenge for the world's largest social network of rooting out false and potentially harmful content while remaining open for discourse.

"In light of ongoing investigations into the origin of Covid-19 and in consultation with public health experts, we will no longer remove the claim that Covid-19 is man-made or manufactured from our

● A RECENT Wall Street Journal report said three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick in November 2019, ahead of the wider outbreak of the disease.

apps," the statement said. "We're continuing to work with health experts to keep pace with the evolving nature of the pandemic and regularly update our policies as new facts and trends emerge." The new statement updates guidance from Facebook in February when it said it would remove false or debunked claims about the novel Coronavirus which created a global pandemic killing more than three

million.

The move followed President Joe Biden's directive to US intelligence agencies to investigate competing theories on how the virus first emerged — through animal contact at a market in Wuhan, China, or through accidental release from a research laboratory in the same city.

Biden's order signals an escalation in mounting controversy over the origins of the virus which emerged in Wuhan.

A recent *Wall Street Journal* report, citing a US intelligence report, said three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick in November 2019, ahead of the wider outbreak of the disease.

—AFP

Taiwan struggles
with test backlog

Taipei, May 27: Facing Taiwan's largest outbreak of the pandemic and looking for rapid virus test kits, the mayor of the island's capital did what anyone might do: He Googled it. "If you don't know, and you try to know something, please check Google," Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je quipped.

Praised for its success at keeping the virus away from more than a year, Taiwan had until May recorded just 1,128 cases and 12 deaths.

But the number of locally transmitted cases started growing this month

and it soon became clear that the central government was ill prepared not only to contain the virus, but to even detect it on a large scale due to a lack of investment in rapid testing. That left officials like Ko scrambling to catch up as the number of new infections climbed to some 300 a day.

Ko's search put him in contact with six local companies who make rapid tests and his government was soon able to set up four rapid testing sites in a district that had emerged as a virus hotspot.

—AP

FDA NOD TO THIRD ANTIBODY DRUG

Washington, May 27: US health officials have granted emergency authorisation to a third antibody drug to help reduce hospitalisations and deaths due to Covid-19.

The FDA said Wednesday it authorised the drug from GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Biotechnology for people with mild-to-moderate cases of Covid-19 who face extra risks of severe illness, including seniors and those with

underlying health problems.

There has been low demand for two similar drugs already available, due mainly to the logistical hurdles of delivering them and confusion about their availability. US health officials have been trying to raise awareness of the treatments, connecting people who test positive for Covid-19 with information about nearby providers.

—AP

GERMANY LAYS
1ST STONE FOR
'HOUSE OF ONE'

Berlin, May 27: Religious leaders and politicians in Berlin laid the foundation stone Thursday for a new multi-faith place of worship which aims to bring Christians, Jews and Muslims together under one roof.

"The idea is bigger than the building," project director Roland Stolte said at a ceremony to mark the beginning of construction work on the so-called "House of One". Conceived a decade ago, the ambitious project is scheduled to open by 2025 on Museum Island in central Berlin.

Built on the site of a former church which was demolished under the former East German communist regime, the building will contain three separate places of worship for Christians, Jews and Muslims. Yet the mosque, the synagogue and the protestant church will be connected by a large communal hall designed to host communal events and festivals.

—AFP

<p>PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited</p> <p>Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001</p> <p>Corporate Identification No. U40109PB2010SGC033813 website: www.pspcl.in (Contact 9646118773)</p> <p>Tender Enquiry No.: Q-3999/21-22/PO-T/CE-MM</p> <p>Chief Purchase Officer/MM, Central Purchase Organization, PSPCL, 2 Floor, Multi Storey Building, The Mall, PSPCL invites E-tender of 9,500 Nos. EEL-3 (Re-designated as EEL-2), ISI Marked, Three Phase, 63 KVA, oil immersed, CRGO/Amorphous core, Aluminium wound, distribution transformers complete with fittings as per PSPCL specifications & conforming to IS 1180 Part-1 (2014) & IS 2026 (with latest amendments). For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 28.05.2021 onwards.</p> <p>Note: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in</p> <p>C-204/21</p>	<p>RC No PR-Advt. No. :- 761515/27/26/2021/4873</p>
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DECCAN Chronicle

28 MAY 2021

Stop govt repression of Lakshadweep residents

The quiet life of about 70,000 people in Lakshadweep, an archipelago of 36 islands in the Arabian Sea about 300 km off the Kerala coast, has been in turmoil for the last six months, in direct consequence to the efforts of Praful Khoda Patel, a BJP leader from Gujarat, who landed in the Union territory as administrator in December last year. Mr Patel has been working overtime to overturn, both through legal and administrative measures, every system that has been existing there — some for centuries, some recent — creating deep resentment among the people.

The administrator has taken over the powers of the local self-governments with respect to agriculture, fisheries, animal husbandry, health and education, virtually denuding the elected representatives of whatever little say they have in the administration of their society. The newly introduced Lakshadweep Prevention of Anti-Social Activities Regulation 2021 provides for preventive detention of people whom the administration feels engaged in or preparing for activities which include crimes are normally tried under IPC and Information Technology Act, 2000. That the goonda act, as the new regulation is called, is sought to be imposed in a place which has reported hardly a heinous crime in decades shows the intentions of the administrator in poor light. The Lakshadweep Animal Preservation Regulation 2021 the administrator has introduced seeks to ban cow slaughter and consumption or sale of beef in any form in a place where an estimated 65 per cent of the population consumes meat. The draft Lakshadweep Town and Country Planning Regulation 2021 virtually ends the rights of landowners once that land falls under the development plan of the administration.

Apart from the legal route, Mr Patel has launched a series of administrative actions that has left the islanders high and dry. Among them are the demolition of makeshift-yards where the fishermen keep their boats to save them from the marauding cyclones which never fail to touch the island and the introduction of bureaucratic procedures for emergency evacuation of medical cases to Kerala, depriving the people of their assurance of emergency medical help.

Union territories are formed with a view to taking to tiny communities the benefits of the best of Indian democracy; it is undemocratic, unfair and unjust to serve them the worst of it. Every single act of Mr Patel is aimed at unsettling the lives of the people with little regard to their welfare or opinion. It is nothing less than an assault by the mighty Indian State on a hapless people and an attempt to impose its will and lifestyle on a society which is made up of 93 per cent indigenous people who have been classified as Scheduled Tribes.

The Union government must immediately recall Mr Patel and stop the process he initiated in the island at the earliest. The government must instead strengthen its local self-government system to administer the people taking the best of Indian democratic traditions.

Lakshadweep and its people are geo-politically and strategically important to India. Short-sighted, thoughtless and haphazard acts of administrators sent from Delhi should not be allowed to play havoc with it. The Union government must act, and act quickly and undo the damage the administrator has done.

Minimise curbs on social media

The new IT laws that have kicked in seek to moderate content on social media and most major platforms are planning to fall in line. Accountability in hosting content in media is desirable but the grave danger is the government, in its zeal to thwart what it sees as content aimed at denigrating its leaders, might use the laws to abridge the freedom of expression which has been a great feature of Indian democracy.

The reaction to WhatsApp going to court on the premise that users will lose their privacy protection has been projected as a challenge to India's sovereignty, which it is not. As a platform that essentially enables communications, WhatsApp has apprehensions regarding its end-to-end encryption which ensures confidentiality of messages shared between individuals and groups. There is a need for further engagement on this count as over 500 million users, including many departments of the Government of India, use WhatsApp regularly.

If a law challenged is seen as an affront to official India it only betrays the authoritarian nature of government. What is needed is a more nuanced approach to find a balance between the right to privacy and the need to allow action against malicious content, like those which have harmed Indian society as in rumours spread on internet platforms leading to the exodus of northeastern people, the lynching of "child kidnappers", and denigration of minorities, etc.

As the county with the most recorded objections to social media content, India must realise it needs to liberalise laws on content that are way too draconian, respect the right to privacy in matters that do not transgress the laws of the land and face up to the Internet age freedoms without trampling upon them.

The knotty issue involving those wishing to establish a wholesome degree of control over social media just to aggregate more power and the millions of Indians who use global platforms for their sheer convenience must be resolved by placing the most reasonable restrictions on fundamental rights through fair grievance redressal mechanisms.

Subhani



7 yrs of PM Modi: Can he lead us out of the abyss?



Karan Thapar

As I See It

As we approach Narendra Modi's seventh anniversary as Prime Minister I think I've realised why so many are disappointed with him. The one quality we looked for when we voted for him in 2014 — and which some believe they had found in the immediate years thereafter — is what is missing today when we most need it. And it's called Leadership.

Let me explain what I mean. I'm not simply referring to assertiveness and conviction. They are necessary but not sufficient. What I have in mind is the capacity to paint a vision for the future, convince the country to ascribe to it and then boldly lead towards its realisation. It might sound fanciful but it's not unlike Moses leading the Israelites through the parted waters of the Red Sea to the promised land he had committed himself to deliver.

Think back to 2014. Perhaps he was misunderstood but Dr Manmohan Singh was widely perceived as a paralysed Prime Minister. Not just silent but also a prisoner of his own coalition and, even, his own party. He was not his own man and, therefore, could not be our leader either. The country saw him as Mrs Sonia Gandhi's "poodle" and he did precious little to change that impression.

Mr Modi, on the other hand, presented himself as the chief minister who had worked miracles in Gujarat. Many accepted that as fact and refused to entertain any doubts because they wanted a saviour. Here was a self-made man who had risen by his own efforts and talent. He didn't carry the burden of family nor the taint of compromise. He also had the gift of oratory and thus knew how to pre-

sent himself. During the 2013-14 campaign he sold himself to us and we readily bought him.

Yet behind this truth lies another and it's possibly more important. Each of us saw in him what we wanted to see even if it wasn't there. The Narendra Modi that we voted for was probably more our creation and less of his own making.

So you could say disappointment and disillusionment were perhaps inevitable. The real Narendra Modi was bound to be different from the image we had created and convinced ourselves we were acquiring. But in the early years so strong was our belief in him that we overlooked — foolishly and myopically — the first signs our faith had been misplaced. We found excuses for his impetuous and thoughtless demonetisation. We accepted his silence when Muslims were baited and lynched or dalits thrashed for being uppity, on the grounds that the Prime Minister can't speak on every occasion. Indeed, most people didn't even pay heed when he mistook mythology for science. Finally, the way the diaspora cheered him and foreign leaders like Barack Obama, Theresa May, the Asean heads of government and Middle Eastern potentates courted him convinced us that this was

Mr Modi defied his own scientists and continued with massive political rallies and shahi snans. He didn't care this could fan the flames. Ultimately, when the pot boiled over, he handed the problem to the state governments.

quite a man.

Even when the scales began to drop — and for some they did fast and furiously — there was a reluctance to accept that the Prime Minister lacked the one quality we so badly wanted: Leadership. His promises of a \$5 trillion economy or doubling farmers' incomes in five years were a beguiling illusion many refused to see through. His boast of standing up to Pakistan and making India feel good again was bombast but we failed to recognise it as hot air. His talk of reform was tantalising — because we knew we needed it badly — but he didn't deliver, yet many kept hoping that he would.

Of course, there's no doubt on some things he has made a difference — Swachh Bharat, Jan Dhan, Ujjwala Yojana, rural roads and houses, medical insurance and electricity in villages. We applauded him for this, forgetting that it's what governments are elected to do. These aren't extraordinary achievements. They are just the simple expectations of needy people. Perhaps this is why he gets little credit for them today.

It was against this background the Covid-19 pandemic hit us and we suddenly realised that our colossus has feet of clay. He had nothing to say beyond the trite and the foolish. He reduced us to banging dishes and lighting candles, all in the hope this "mahabharat" could be won in 21 days. Even his fabled oratory took flight. In the early months he didn't stop speaking, but what he said was leaden. I suspect he realised this because he soon opted

for silence.

The last year has revealed a Prime Minister who has failed repeatedly and has only himself to blame. He failed to anticipate how many vaccines we need and we are, as a result, woefully short. Yet all he had to do was enhance capacity by supporting our own vaccine manufacturers. It would have been "atma nirbhar", but he didn't do it. After that he defied his own scientists and continued with massive political rallies and *shahi snans*. He didn't care this could fan the flames. Ultimately, when the pot boiled over, he handed the problem to the state governments. He told them to acquire their own vaccines, knowing it would be both expensive and difficult to do, whilst exacerbating the problem by opening up vaccinations for every adult in the country although he knew the jabs did not exist. In one single stroke he made a bad problem considerably worse.

So if I were to say our great leader — the man we thought could be our Moses — has led us into a blind alley, would I be wrong? If I were to say the qualities of strength and decisiveness that we identified in 2014 have turned into obstinacy, defiance and recklessness, would I be wrong? If I were to say the power of speech that mesmerised us when we heard it from Madison Square Garden has become theatrical and, even, exasperating, would I be wrong?

Now the only question is this: Is Mr Modi the Prime Minister to lead us to the other shore? The truth is that we have no other. We have to believe he is. We have three years to find out, but for all our sakes I hope he has it in him. We can't change captains mid-sea, particularly when we don't know if there is another cyclone heading our way. But when we reach dry land, we must ask ourselves two simple questions: Why did we err in our judgment? And can we be certain it won't happen again?

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

RAMDEV'S IMPERTINENCE

Baba Ramdev has cocked a snook at the Indian Medical Association in response to the defamation notice served by them asking if anybody has the courage to arrest him for his disparaging remarks. The manner in which Ramdev has dealt with a threat speaks volumes about his proximity to the powers-that-be. In the past, too, he had exhibited his arrogance and impertinence and still gone scot-free. As long as the yoga guru remains the blue-eyed boy of the ruling dispensation, he can turn anyone upside down!

P.G. Menon, Chennai

BLACK DAY

Apropos the editorial, Protest in time of Covid needs urgent resolution. May 26 Wednesday was really a Black Day for the country as hailed by the farmers who are protesting for the record last six-months. Honesty and straightforwardness of the governance alone will not suffice the purpose. Every demand of the people shall be looked into and dealt by the government with compassion. It will vouchsafe the care of the Centre for the welfare of people. The farmers' protest which is prolonging for the last six-months is for a genuine cause. Why should a sea of farmers protest for about six months unless there is a huge problem that affect their livelihoods? They demand for the repeal of the three controversial agricultural laws introduced by the Centre and a legal guarantee for the payment of Minimum Support Price for their produce. Why should the Centre be adamant not to accede to the demand for the repeal of the laws?

Manoharan Muthuswamy, Chennai 6

TRAIN THEM IN HR

It is very disturbing to note that many citizens and especially senior persons with lifestyle health problems in Ootacamund and in some other parts of the district were ill-treated and abused by the policemen for violating curfew norms even after they had explained well the reason for being out of their homes for very unavoidable needs like buying milk, medicines, etc. I feel that many senior citizens would have similar unsavoury experiences though no news about them are reported and seen in the media. The policemen, all young and recent recruits to the service, should be taught and trained in HR besides their usual curriculum as they are also sure to become old with years passing and suffer problems and ailments related to old age. The violations or omissions or slips in following the rules are not wantonly committed by old people. Such people do not merit such discourteous treatment at the hands of policemen.

Kongunaattan, Coimbatore

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Devi Kar



We often hear educators lamenting the lack of creativity and innovativeness in Indians as a whole. Indeed, it is shocking that hardly any inventions have emerged from India in the past 50 years. However, we can't continue to blame our colonial shackles for the lack of creativity in terms of inventions and patents.

It is upsetting to learn from the latest data compiled by WIPO, the Geneva-based World Intellectual Property Organisation, that in 2019, companies like Samsung and Huawei filed more international patent applications *each* than the whole of India. India was responsible for less than one per cent of the total global applications for patents that year. It is also disturbing to know that unlike colleges and universities abroad, our higher educational institutions have no presence at all in this area. It has been inferred that not only do these figures indicate the sad state of innovative initiatives in India, they also confirm the low spending in research and development by our government. It is important to explore the reasons for this sad state of affairs.

There are many deep-rooted reasons

for this intellectual famine that our country has been experiencing. Most people cite rote learning in schools, which steadily destroys imagination and creativity in young minds, as the main culprit. This article will deal with a single major reason — that is the unconscious but constant reinforcement of plagiarism in our entire educational system.

First, the very concept and awareness of plagiarism is woefully absent in our school education. This year, when we announced in school that we would be tackling the issue of plagiarism, one of our senior students spoke up, saying: "No offence meant, but why is it we were not warned about this when we produced cut-and-paste projects and presentations in the lower classes?" She was spot on. Schools always looked out for factually correct and visually attractive presentations rather than original work. Unfortunately, our board examiners too reward students who produced attractive portfolios, the contents of which were gleaned from the Internet. Before the advent of the Information Age, the cut-and-paste jobs were carried out with the help of illustrated books and magazines, scissors

and glue.

Forget about projects and presentations, even answers to questions and essays have been written with the help of readymade notes and guidebooks. Since these fetched enviably high scores, including in the board exams, they were in great demand, making it unnecessary for students to think for themselves and to do their own research or write their own notes. I remember an oft-repeated joke that you could write a good essay on almost any topic if you prepared just a single essay on God. So, if you were asked to write an essay on "a rainy day", you could write about God's natural creations, which included the sky and earth, sun and of course rain, and then move on to a rainy day. Moreover, students have always been encouraged to quote at length, to enhance the richness of an answer or essay. Even in undergraduate class, students quoted writers to support an argument, but seldom presented research-based evidence of his or her own.

In art class children have been made to copy images and patterns. Imaginative composition — if set as an assignment — was usually "corrected"

and modified to conform to the teacher's ideas. Where music is concerned, how many children are encouraged to compose their own tunes? It is a shame that creative writing is not part of the regular school curriculum. In language and grammar classes, a child's originality is killed at the primary level itself. A schoolboy, asked to write a sentence with "mother", had his simple sentence: "My mother has big eyes". But this was crossed out with a thick red marker and changed to: "My mother is a noble lady". The next sentence, "I hate drinking milk", using the word "milk", was rejected in favour of: "Milk is a nutritious drink". The poor boy was being set in a mould created by his unimaginative teacher.

Also, looking upon the prescribed textbook as the students' Bible causes considerable damage to creative minds. If an answer was based on the subject-related textbook, it was marked correct, but if certain "key" phrases and terms were not used but explained in the student's own words, it was more than likely that the student would be heavily penalised. This is what defeats the making of independent minds.

It is extremely urgent today that we

correct all these mistakes and the lacunae of the past and begin by introducing the concepts of plagiarism and intellectual property right from the junior classes. It is true that much of early learning happens by observing and imitating. But children are imaginative too. We teachers must learn to foster this natural gift and be less rigid about the need to conform. As Picasso said: "All children are born artists. The problem is to remain an artist as we grow up."

As children grow older, they could be taught to consciously acknowledge the sources from where they have taken content. This practice, if well inculcated in our young, will go a long way to making them intellectually honest. Apart from developing academic honesty, educators should encourage and celebrate original work. When our children join school in the kindergarten, they are curious, imaginative and creative. It is we adults who cramp their style and freedom by straitjacketing them. The fault that India does not produce inventors lies in ourselves.

The writer is a veteran school educator based in Kolkata

Blame schools if India's kids can't show creativity or be innovative

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,115.22	0.19
Nifty 50	15,337.90	0.24
S&P 500*	4,206.76	0.26
Dollar (₹)	72.59	0.27
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.49	0.63
Euro (₹)	88.49	0.78
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,223*319	0.66
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.16	0.42
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.987	0.25
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.617	0.043

* As of 8:30 PM IST

US first quarter GDP unchanged at robust 6.4%

The US economy grew at a robust annual rate of 6.4 per cent in the first three months of this year, unchanged from the government's initial estimate. The recovery from last year's deep recession gained steam at the beginning of this year, helped by vaccines to combat the virus and trillions of dollars in government assistance. The rise in the GDP was the same as the government's first look one month ago.

Sun Pharma Q4 net zooms over 2-fold to ₹894 cr



Sun Pharmaceutical Industries reported a more than two-fold jump in consolidated net profit to Rs 894.15 crore for the March quarter, from Rs 399.84 crore a year ago, mainly on a robust performance in the Indian market. Consolidated total revenue from operations stood at Rs 8,522.98 crore against Rs 8,184.94 crore. For the full year 2020-21, Sun posted a net profit of Rs 2,903.82 crore against Rs 3,764.93 crore.

Pricol grows 17.3%

Coimbatore: The total Income of Pricol Ltd, automotive component and precision engineered product manufacturers, was ₹1,397.81-cr in FY21 as against ₹1,212.96-cr in FY20 and the revenue from operations for the year ended March 31, 2021 was ₹1,336.15-cras as against ₹1,139.05-cr in FY20. The Company's operational EBITDA was ₹178.00 cr in FY21, as against ₹97.78-cr in FY20. The Profit Before Tax was at ₹46.52-cr for FY21 as compared to a loss of ₹216.72 cr in FY 20. Including exceptional item of ₹190.72 cr.

BPCL says no plans to sell stake in Petronet, IGL

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) said it has no intention to sell a part of its stake in Petronet LNG Ltd and Indraprastha Gas Ltd (IGL) to help its new owner avoid making an open offer for the two gas companies. "We have no intention to pare down our stake in IGL or Petronet. Any parring down will be value destruction," BPCL director (finance) N. Vijayagopal said at an earnings call with investors.



■ Health crisis more pervasive and debilitating than financial crises

Near-term outlook clouded: RBI

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, MAY 27

The Covid-19 pandemic has unleashed a once-in-a-lifetime crisis on the world economy and the outlook remains grim. India's near-term outlook is clouded, with an accentuation of downside risks and potential externalities of global spillovers, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in its annual report for 2020-21, published on Thursday. Faster vaccination holds the key to an escape from the pandemic, said the RBI. The central bank warned that compared to "financial crises, a health crisis can be more pervasive, persistent and debilitating in its impact on the real economy. Letting down the guard is perilous; it is best to prepare for future waves."

It also rued the fact that private investment is the missing piece in the story

FROM THE RBI ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

- ▶ RBI balance sheet size increased by ₹3.72 lakh crore to ₹57.07 lakh crore as on March 31, 2021, up 6.99 % from ₹53.34 L cr on June 30, 2020
- ▶ Covid 2.0 biggest risk to growth forecast
- ▶ For a self-sustaining GDP growth trajectory post-Covid, a durable revival in private consumption and investment demand would be critical as they account for around 85% of GDP
- ▶ Services sector contraction unprecedented in Indian history
- ▶ Inflation remains a key concern, constraining monetary policy from using any available room to support growth

of the Indian economy in 2020-21 and reviving it awaits an environment in which 'animal spirits' are rekindled and entrepreneurial energies are released so that backward and forward linkages and multipliers prepare the ground for a durable investment-

driven recovery.

"Embattled by new waves of infections and mutant strains of Covid-19, the slow pace of inoculation in several parts of the world and visceral vaccine protectionism, the global and domestic outlook has once again turned grim and

overcast with extreme uncertainty and downside risks," the RBI said.

The central bank said the impact and the duration of the second wave of the pandemic are the biggest threats to its growth estimates for the country for the ongoing financial year, with consensus gravitating towards its earlier forecast of 10.5 per cent.

The report said the deterioration in major fiscal indicators in 2020-21 may be attributed to the pandemic superimposed on a cyclical slowdown in tax revenues and a counter-pandemic fiscal push through higher government expenditure.

"Going forward, as growth revives and the economy gets back on track, it is important for the government to adhere to a clear exit strategy and build fiscal buffers, which can be tapped into in events of future shocks to

growth," the RBI said.

It also said that it will ensure a comfortable level of liquidity in the system during the current financial year and monetary transmission will continue "unimpeded".

The apex bank asked banks to closely monitor their bad loans and prepare themselves for higher provisioning in the wake of the second wave and the Supreme Court order lifting the ban on classification of non-performing assets. The waiver of compound interest on all loan accounts which opted for moratorium during March-August 2020 may put stress on banks' financial health. The RBI, however, noted that banks are better positioned than before in managing stress in their balance sheets in view of higher capital buffers, improvement in recoveries and a return to profitability.

Prices of edible oils, pulses to pressure inflation

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 27

The sharp price rise in edible oils and pulses had led to historically high inflation in March. Pressure from these food items is likely to persist in view of supply-demand imbalances, says the RBI.

Oils and fats went through a sharp price build-up, leading to a historically high inflation of 24.9 per cent in March 2021. Precautionary buying on account of the pandemic and rise in interna-

tional prices of edible oils led to this adverse development. In fact, international food prices firmed up from June 2020, primarily led by palm oil, sunflower oil and soybean oil prices, driven by supply shortfalls as well as depreciation of the US dollar, the RBI said in its annual report.

In order to contain the price escalation, basic customs duty (BCD) on crude palm oil was revised down to 27.5 per cent from 37.5 per cent with effect from November 27, 2020. However, it got revised fur-

ther to 32.5 per cent when the agricultural infrastructure development cess was introduced in the budget. Increasing global prices, increase in export levy on crude palm oil by Indonesia from December 2020 and imposition of 8 per cent export tax on crude palm oil by Malaysia from January 2021 kept prices high.

Similarly, prices of pulses recorded a 45-month high inflation of 22.8 per cent in April 2020 primarily led by tur and urad. Prices witnessed robust

growth during the months of April-May and September-November 2020, reflecting stockpiling by consumers, lockdown and rain related supply disruption and a decline in kharif pulses production, higher exports and lower imports during April-February 2020-21.

The government released 2 lakh tonnes of tur from the buffer stock through open market sales, extended the time limit for import of tur under an import quota of 4 lakh tonnes for 2020-21 as

on December 31, 2020, expedited imports of urad under the already issued import quota of 1.5 lakh tonnes and extended the MoU with Mozambique for import of 2 lakh tonnes of tur for another five years. With pulses production rising by 6 per cent for 2020-21 over 2019-20, tur, gram and masur prices eased during December 2020-February 2021.

However, the RBI expects that pressures from pulses and edible oils might persist in view of supply-demand imbalances.

BEZOS WILL PASS BATON TO NEW CEO ON JULY 5



Jeff Bezos Andy Jassy

New York, May 27: Amazon founder Jeff Bezos has picked a date to step down as CEO.

Bezos, who grew Amazon from an internet bookstore to an online shopping behemoth, said on Wednesday that Amazon executive Andy Jassy will take over the CEO role on July 5.

"We chose that date because it's sentimental for me," Bezos said during an Amazon shareholder meeting. He explained that it was exactly 27 years ago on that date in 1994 that Amazon was incorporated.

Seattle-based Amazon.com Inc announced that Bezos was stepping down as CEO in February, but didn't provide a specific date. Jassy, his replacement, currently runs the company's cloud-computing business.

— AP

Cadila seeks human trial nod for antibody cocktail

May 27: Zydus Cadila has sought regulatory approval for clinical trials of its antibody cocktail to treat mild Covid-19, as the country grapples with a shortage of medicines and vaccines needed to effectively tackle a devastating second wave of the pandemic.

The treatment candidate, ZRC-3308, was earlier shown to reduce lung damage during animal trials, the drugmaker said, adding it was found to be safe and well-tolerated.

The therapy is a cocktail of two monoclonal antibodies, which mimic natural antibodies that the body generates to fight infection.

"At this juncture, there is a critical need to explore safer and more efficacious treatments to combat Covid," Zydus Cadila's managing director, Sharvil Patel, said in a stock exchange filing.

The company is seeking permission to conduct early-to late-stage human clinical trials from the Drugs Controller General of India.

The US FDA has given emergency use authorisations to similar treatments developed by Vir Biotechnology and GlaxoSmith-Kline as well as ones made

Paytm eyes \$3 bn IPO, more than \$25 bn valuation

SARITHA RAI
MAY 27

Paytm, India's leading digital payments provider, is aiming to raise about Rs 21,800 crore (\$3 billion) in an initial public offering late this year, according to a person familiar with the deal, in what could be the country's largest debut ever.

The startup, backed by investors including Berkshire Hathaway Inc, SoftBank Group Corp and Ant Group Co, plans to list in India around November and its offering could coincide with the Diwali festival season, said the person, asking not to be named because the details are private.

Paytm, formally called One97 Communications Ltd, is targeting a valuation of around \$25 billion to \$30 billion. The One97 board plans to meet this Friday to formally approve the IPO, said the person. Paytm declined to comment in response to emailed questions.

If successful, Paytm's initial share sale would surpass Coal India Ltd's offering, which raised more than Rs 15,000 crore in 2010 in the country's largest IPO so far. Banks shortlisted to run the Paytm offering include Morgan Stanley, Citigroup Inc and JPMorgan Chase & Co, with Morgan Stanley the leading contender, the person said. The process is expected to get rolling in late June or early July. The banks did not immediately respond



Vijay Shekhar Sharma

to requests for comment.

The public market debut will include a mix of new and existing shares to meet regulatory obligations in India. The country's regulations require that 10 per cent of shares are floated within two years and 25 per cent within five years. Paytm, led by founder and chief executive officer Vijay Shekhar Sharma, has been focusing on ramping up revenue and monetising its services over the past year. It's expanded beyond digital payments into banking, credit cards, financial services, wealth management and digital wallets. It also supports India's financial payments backbone, the Unified Payments Interface or UPI.

Paytm has fended off stiff competition from a swathe of global players including Walmart Inc-owned PhonePe, Google Pay, Amazon Pay as well as Facebook Inc-owned WhatsApp Pay. It has the biggest market share of India's merchant payments. Paytm has over 20 million merchant partners and its users make 1.4 billion monthly transactions. — Bloomberg

ASCI ASKS INFLUENCERS TO DISCLOSE PAID BRAND PITCHES



Dolly Singh

Mumbai, May 27: Come June 14, 'influencers' with wide following on social media who advertise brands from their accounts will have to disclose paid partnerships, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) said on Thursday.

The self-regulatory body pegged the size of the digital influencers industry at \$150 million, with digital marketing coming a long way over the past few years.

It has been engaged in stakeholder interactions since last year and released a draft of the influencer advertising guidelines in February 2021.

Dhruv Chitgopekar, founding partner of the Collective Artists Network and the chief executive of Bigbang.Social, who was among those consulted, told reporters that influencers started off as "guerillas" on the marketing scene but are now at the forefront.

He exuded confidence that the guidelines will not result in any dip in revenues for such influencers and there will be better transparency.

Dolly Singh, a digital influencer, admitted that she has seen a dip in engagement ever since she started disclosing a paid partnership but urged everyone to be more optimistic.

ASCI secretary-general Manisha Kapoor said the organisation has hired technology firms to trawl content to identify non-disclosure.

Its chairman Subhash Kamath said so far it has seen 95 per cent compliance with its actions after flagging norm violations, and if nothing works, the body can also escalate it to the sectoral regulators. — PTI

EXTRAORDINARY | YEAR

Consumer staples, healthcare sectors generated highest listing gains

IPOs give decadal high listing returns in FY21

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 27

The RBI annual report, released on Thursday throws light on primary equity market dynamics as FY20-21 proved to be a year of decadal high average IPO listing returns at 36 per cent, which according to the RBI, might have been fuelled by oversubscription along with other factors in play, like underpricing of IPO as well as consumer-focused businesses attracting listing premium.

"The exuberance witnessed in the secondary market gripped the pri-

mary market, with the year 2020-21 turning out to be an extraordinary one for initial public offers (IPOs) by Indian companies, as 21 out of 29 IPOs have generated positive returns for investors on listing," the RBI said.

"A sector wise analysis of 201 IPOs over the last 10 years (2011-12 to 2020-21) indicates that IPOs from consumer staples and healthcare sectors generated the highest listing gains in India."

Main board IPO average listing returns in the last 10 years (sector-wise) were —consumer staples (27.5 per cent), healthcare (21.4

per cent), industrials (16.5 per cent), materials (15.4 per cent), information technology (15.2 per cent), consumer discretionary (14.6 per cent), financials (12.7 per cent) and communication services (4.3 per cent).

"The firm specific characteristics are found to be not statistically significant in explaining the price run-ups on the IPO listing day," RBI said and felt oversubscription as a major factor for the listing gains/returns.

"Thus, the decadal high average IPO listing returns of 36 per cent realised during 2020-21



might have been fuelled by an average oversubscription rate of 71.3 times of IPO issue size."

Delving on underpricing of IPOs as one of the reasons for higher listing gains, the RBI said, "Information asymmetry is regarded as the root

cause of underpricing wherein the issuer deliberately under prices its IPO to attract uninformed investors. Other reasons are providing compensation to investors by the issuers for undertaking ex-ante uncertainty risk."

"Intuitively, a higher oversubscription rate is a signal to the investors in the secondary market on the potential increase in share prices and expected returns."

Also, RBI's study of last 10 years IPOs on BSE and NSE suggest's that IPOs issued during the boom period are relatively more underpriced,

The primary segment witnessed increased activity during 2020-21. Resource mobilisation through IPOs, follow-on public offers (FPOs) and rights issues increased by 43.1 per cent to Rs 1.1 lakh crore during 2020-21 from Rs 76,965 crore in the previous year, the RBI said.

Of these, Rs 46,060 crore were mobilised through 57 IPO/FPO issues, out of which 27 issues amounting to Rs 246 crore were listed on the SME platform of BSE and the NSE. Resource mobilisation through rights issues rose to Rs 64,059 crore in 2020-21 from Rs 55,642 crore.

SHORT TAKES

Nadal, Djokovic & Roger in same half

Paris: Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer, the three most successful men in Grand Slam tennis history, were on Thursday all drawn in the same half of the French Open.

Having slipped to number three in the world, it was always likely that Nadal, the 13-time champion, would face top-ranked Djokovic before the final. The two great rivals could now meet in the semi-finals this year.

Djokovic is top seed and could possibly face 2009 winner Federer in the quarterfinals. All three men are chasing history at the French Open which starts on Sunday. Nadal and Federer are locked on 20 Grand Slams each while Djokovic, who has 18, can become the first man in over half a century to win all four majors on more than one occasion. — *AFP*

Nagal misses French Open cut

Paris: India's top player Sumit Nagal could not make a hat-trick of Grand Slam main draw appearances following a straight-set defeat in the second round of the French Open Qualifying event here. The Haryana youngster crashed out of the Clay Court major with a 3-6, 3-6 loss to Alejandro Tabilo from Chile, last night. In the engrossing contest that lasted one-and-a-half-hours, Nagal could break the serve of his rival, ranked 23 places below him at 146, only twice while he himself dropped his serve five times. With the defeat of the 23-year-old from Hajaraj, India's challenge has ended in the Qualifiers.

Ramkumar Ramanathan, Prajnesh Guneshwaran and Ankita Raina have already exited from the tournament. — *PTI*

Osaka won't talk to media in France

Paris: Tennis star Naomi Osaka says she is not going to speak to the media during the upcoming French Open.

The world's highest-earning female athlete wrote in a Twitter post on Wednesday that she hopes the considerable amount that I get fined for this will go towards a mental health charity.

The French Open is scheduled to begin Sunday in Paris. Osaka heads into the clay-court tournament ranked No. 2 in the world. The 23-year-old Osaka has won four Grand Slam titles. That includes last year's U.S. Open and the Australian Open this February.

"I've often felt that people have no regard for athletes mental health and this very true whenever I see a press conference or partake in one," wrote Osaka. — *AP*

Athletes to be vaccinated for Oly

New Delhi: Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Thursday said all the Tokyo Games-bound athletes and officials have got their first Covid-19 vaccine and they will get their second doses before their departure from the country for the multi-sporting spectacle. "The IOA is... ensuring that all the participants through the IOA for the Tokyo Olympics including athletes, technical officials and delegate members will follow all precautions and will be vaccinated before leaving for Japan," the IOA said. — *PTI*

76ers exorcise Wizards 120-95

Los Angeles: Ben Simmons silenced the critics with a 22 point, nine rebound, eight assist performance as the Philadelphia 76ers routed the Washington Wizards 120-95 to grab a 2-0 playoff series lead on Wednesday. Joel Embiid also scored 22 points and grabbed seven rebounds while Tobias Harris garnered 19 points. Simmons scored 12 of his 22 in the first quarter, delivering a breakout playoff performance after being criticized for scoring just six points in Sunday's game one of the series. — *AFP*



Villarreal players celebrate winning the Europa League final against Manchester United in Gdansk, Poland, on Wednesday.

— *AP*

WILL-A-REAL!

Gutsy Villarreal kill Man U with last kick in sudden death

Gdansk (Poland), May 27: Villarreal defeated Manchester United 11-10 on penalties to win their first major trophy after a 1-1 draw in the Europa League final as goalkeeper David de Gea missed the decisive spot-kick in a remarkable shootout.

Gerard Moreno gave Villarreal the lead 29 minutes into the Spanish club's first European final, but Edinson Cavani equalised early in the second half before Unai Emery's team prevailed on spot-kicks, extending United's four-year trophy drought.

Eric Bailly replaced the injured Harry Maguire in central defence, with the United captain surprisingly named among the substitutes despite suffering ankle ligament damage two weeks ago.

De Gea started ahead of Dean Henderson in goal, while Paul Pogba took up a more orthodox midfield role as Fred was only deemed fit enough for a spot on the bench.

An early collision between Juan Foyth and Pogba left the former Tottenham defender bloodied but both sides were slow to click into gear on a damp and chilly night on the Baltic coast.

Carlos Bacca's clever rabona cross created an opportunity for Pau



Villarreal players throw their coach Unai Emery into the air as they celebrate winning the Europa League final match against Manchester United in Gdansk, Poland, on Wednesday.

— *AP*

Torres, the centre-back linked with a summer move to United, while Marcus Rashford tested Geronimo Rulli with a dipping effort from distance.

Jeremy Pino scuffed wide on the counter, but Villarreal were soon ahead.

Dani Parejo swung in a free-kick from the left and Moreno peeled away from Luke Shaw and Victor Lindelof, steering beyond

De Gea as the Swede desperately tugged at his shirt.

Moreno's 82nd goal for Villarreal equalled the club record of former Manchester United forward Giuseppe Rossi.

United continued to dominate possession as Villarreal soaked up the pressure, but the Spaniards remained a threat as Torres curled over at the end of normal time.

Weariness and a raft of substitutions slowed the tempo in the closing stages as the rain intensified with penalties almost inevitable.

The first 21 penalties were successfully converted before De Gea had his attempt palmed away by Rulli as United lost for the sixth time in seven shootouts, handing Emery a record fourth Europa League crown.

— *AFP*

RASHFORD FACES RACIST ABUSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Gdansk (Poland), May 27: Manchester United forward Marcus Rashford said on Thursday he faced "at least 70 racial slurs" on social media after his team's loss on penalties to Villarreal in the Europa League final.

"At least 70 racial slurs on my social accounts counted so far," Rashford wrote on *Twitter* less than 90 minutes after the game finished.

"For those working to make me feel any worse than I already do, good luck trying," the tweet added.

Rashford added he was outraged that he was sent a mountain of monkey emojis in a message from a person using a profile which identified them as a teacher.

"Yes I'm a black man and I live every day proud that I am, he wrote at the time.

No one, or no one comment, is going to make me feel any different. So sorry if you were looking for a strong reaction, you're just simply not going to get it here," he further added. — *AP*

Zidane resigns as R. Madrid coach with immediate effect

Madrid, May 27: Zinedine Zidane has resigned as Real Madrid manager with immediate effect, the Spanish club said Thursday just days after they were beaten to the La Liga title by Atletico Madrid.

The Frenchman's departure comes at the end of a disappointing campaign for the 13-time European champions, who also lost to Chelsea in the Champions League semi-finals, as they failed to win a trophy for the first time in 11 seasons.

"We must now respect his decision and express our gratitude for his professionalism, dedication and passion over the years and what he means to Real Madrid," a club statement said.

"Zidane is one of Real Madrid's great icons and his legacy extends beyond what he has achieved as a coach and player at our club," it added.



Zinedine Zidane

Only 10 days ago Zidane, who has a contract until 2022, denied press speculation he had already told his players he would be leaving at the end of the season.

"How am I going to tell my players that I am going now? It's a lie," he said after a 1-0 win at Athletic Bilbao.

"I'm focused on this season. There is a game left and we are going to give everything. I only care what happens in this finale," he said.

But, perhaps tellingly, he added: "The rest, we will see at the end of the season." — *AFP*

Ex-F1 driver Karun subjected to racism

New Delhi, May 27: Denied entry into a restaurant on the basis of his skin colour recently, former Grand Prix driver-turned TV expert Karun Chandhok says more awareness needs to be created against racism through Formula 1 though it has already taken "impressive" steps to address the issue.

Chandhok competed in Formula 1 between 2009-2010. He is now a well-respected commentator and alongside seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, one of the few non-white faces seen in

the paddock. After posting about his recent experience at a restaurant during the Monaco GP last week, Chandhok said on social media that he would not dwell on the past but focus on contributing to make the sport more diverse including having more Indians on board. He didn't reveal in which country the incident took place.

"I'm not really interested in talking about the past (about that incident) - the key is to talk about the future. We need to understand and learn why more



Karun Chandhok

people from non-white haven't been able to get involved in the sport and Formula 1 plus Lewis via his Hamilton Commission are doing some very important research to understand that,"

Chandhok said.

"Formula 1 at the moment has really taken up the cause of improving diversity within the sport.

"Historically, this is a sport where over 90 per cent of the people involved have been white and therefore as one of the few people from a minority ethnic background, I'm very encouraged to see that F1 as a sport and the teams as participants are taking steps to change that balance," said Chandhok.

Formula 1 has shown more intent in addressing racism after Hamilton

said the sport was not doing enough for the cause.

He also lamented the lack of support from some of the fellow drivers.

"While drivers are of course the most high profile and someone like Lewis has been very vocal about the topic, the reality is that the drivers are a small number of people when compared to engineers, mechanics, commercial and marketing people, TV pundits and journalists, marshals and officials, etc that make up the sport," he further added. — *PTI*

Mark not happy with ECB's take

London, May 27: Former opener Mark Butcher feels the ECB should have agreed to the BCCI's request to change the Test series schedule to accommodate the remaining games of IPL as it would have given the England Board the leverage to get top Indian players for its 'Hundred' tournament.

The Indian Board had informally made a request to shift the five-match Test series between India and England, starting August 4, by a week in order to accommodate the remaining 31 IPL games but it has not met with any favourable response from England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB).

"Well, listen. I take a deep breath here ... as does the nation. I think it's a massive missed opportunity," Butcher said during the latest Wisden Cricket Weekly Podcast.

Butcher said accepting the request would have given ECB the leverage to get top Indian cricketers such as Virat Kohli and M. S. Dhoni for 'The Hundred' tournament, the ECB's flagship project.

"...the ECB is absolutely desperate to make this (Hundred) work. They have to be, they have bet the house on The Hundred, but at every turn, it seems a greater power doesn't want it to happen," said Butcher.

"And so for me, this was the opportunity where you'll say 'Okay, we'll bite the bullet... We would do this for the BCCI on the proviso that we get Kohli, Dhoni, whoever we like, signed up for three years to play in The Hundred, starting 2022'," he added.

The inaugural edition of 'The Hundred', a 100-ball tournament involving eight men's and women's



I think it's a massive missed opportunity. The ECB is absolutely desperate to make this (Hundred) work. They have to be, they have bet the house on The Hundred, but at every turn, it seems a greater power doesn't want it to happen.

— **MARK BUTCHER**
former England player

teams, was scheduled to take place last year but was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"And you have leverage for the first time ever: you have something that they need, that they want. Obviously, the BCCI will lose a lot of money if they don't get the IPL in the window," Butcher said.

"You also have the extraordinary spectacle of the IPL being finished at the behest or because of English cricket. And you use that lever in order to get something you desperately need. So I think there's an opportunity missed," he added.

The IPL was suspended early this month after multiple Covid-19 cases were reported inside its bio-bubble. — *PTI*

PHYSICIAN WARNS ABOUT VIRUS THREAT IN GAMES

Tokyo, May 27: A physician representing a Japanese medical body warned Thursday that holding the postponed Tokyo Olympics in two months could lead to the spread of variants of the Coronavirus.

Dr. Naoto Ueyama, chairman of the Japan Doctors Union, said the International Olympic Committee and the Japanese government had underestimated the risks of bringing 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes into the country, joined by tens of thousands of officials, judges, media and broadcasters from more than 200 countries and territories.

"Since the emergence of Covid-19 there has not been such a dangerous gathering of people coming together in one place from so many different places around the world," Ueyama said, speaking in Tokyo at the Foreign

Correspondents' Club of Japan. "It's very difficult to predict what this could lead to," he added.

Ueyama continually likened the virus to a conventional war situation, and said he was speaking from his own experience as a hospital physician who works just outside Tokyo. He has not been involved in any of the Olympic planning.

"I think the key here is if a new mutant strain of the virus were to arise as a result of this, the Olympics," he added.

The IOC and local organisers said they have been relying on the WHO for public-health guidance. They say the Olympics and Paralympics will be safe and secure, focused on extensive testing, strict protocols, social distancing, and keeping athletes largely isolated in the Olympic Village alongside Tokyo Bay. — *AP*

Mary stands tall, cruises into final

Dubai, May 27: Six-time world champion M. C. Mary Kom (51kg) and Sakshi (54kg) stormed into the Asian Boxing Championship finals after notching up gruelling victories in their last-four stage bouts here on Thursday.

While Mary Kom prevailed 4-1 over Mongolia's Lutsaikhan Altantsetseg, two-time youth world champion Sakshi upstaged top-seeded Kazakh Dina Zholaman 3-2.

However, Monika (48kg) settled for a bronze medal after going down 0-5 to second-seeded Alua Balkibekova of Kazakhstan. The top-seeded Mary Kom dug from her huge reservoir of experience to outwit the sprightly Altantsetseg.

The veteran's right hooks were particularly impressive in a compelling performance. She fought with a perilously low guard despite the aggressive intent shown by her rival and relied on her sharp reflexes to score on counter-attacks. The 38-year-old

will now be gunning for her sixth gold medal at the continental showpiece. She will be up against Kazakhstan's Nazym Kyzaiabay.

Sakshi also endured a tough one against Zholaman but came out trumps, riding on her grit.

Earlier, in an intense contest, Monika just could not keep pace with Balkibekova, who craftily dodged the Indian's attacks and connected some eye-catching combination punches to dominate the proceedings.

On Wednesday night, Ashish Kumar (75kg) lost 2-3 to Asian Games silver-medallist Abilkhan Amankul of Kazakhstan in the quarterfinal. Also going down in the quarters was Narender (+91kg). He lost 0-5 to Kazakhstan's Kamshibek Kunkabayev.

On Friday, five Indian men — Amit Panghal (52kg), Varinder Singh (60kg), Shiva Thapa (64kg), Vikas Krishan (69kg) and Sanjeet (91kg) — will fight it out in the semifinals. — *PTI*