

SHORT TAKES

NAVY BRINGS
02 TANKS &
EQPT TO VIZAGDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 23

As part of the Operation Samudra Setu II, *INS Jalashwa* arrived in Visakhapatnam on Sunday, carrying critical Covid-19 relief consignment, including oxygen cylinders and ventilators, from Brunei and Singapore.

INS Jalashwa embarked on the journey with 18 cryogenic oxygen tanks and other critical Covid-19 equipment including 3,650 oxygen cylinders and 39 ventilators from Brunei and Singapore. The oxygen containers and ventilators were facilitated by the Indian missions and the consignment is being handed over to government agencies in various states and NGOs.

CM FLAYED FOR
SILENCE ON
RAJU'S ISSUEDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 23

Telugu Desam MLC Mantena Satyanarayana Raju on Sunday asserted that the report of the Secunderabad Army Hospital had made it clear that third degree methods were used on rebel YSRC MP Raghu Ramakrishna Raju while in the custody of the AP-CID police. He asked why the Chief Minister and the home minister were not breaking their silence on this issue till now.

The TD MLC demanded that the Lok Sabha Speaker take stringent action against the AP-CID police for ill-treating a member of the Lower House. He sought that since the Supreme Court confirmed that Raju was ill-treated in the AP police custody, the Speaker should consider this as a privilege motion and take action against the AP government and the police officers. He demanded that all those police officers guilty of "custodial torture" be suspended immediately and criminal cases be filed against them.

14 RED SANDERS
LOGS SEIZED IN
KADAPADC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, MAY 23

Kadapa Red Sanders Task Force police on Sunday morning arrested 14 labourers from Tamil Nadu in Water Gandhi area on outskirts of Kadapa city. They also seized 14 red sanders logs and an Eicher vehicle.

Task Force inspector Subrahmanyam told media persons on Sunday afternoon that they had received a tip-off from reliable sources and reached Water Gandhi during early hours of the day. There, they found labourers from Tamil Nadu loading red sanders logs into an Eicher truck.

Police forces surrounded the area and arrested all of them. They also seized red sanders logs as well as the truck.

All the arrested will be produced in court for remand, the inspector said.

'GOVT ON A HIGH,
NOT KEEN ON
LIQUOR BAN'DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, MAY 23

Pradesh Congress Working President Dr N. Tulasi Reddy said the YSRC government had failed to address the issue of alcohol ban in the state.

Pointing out the revenue from alcohol sales, he said the government was not only going back on its promise but was seeking higher revenue from it.

Speaking to reporters in Vempalle on Sunday, he said that during the previous Telugu Desam government, the liquor income was ₹4,386 crore in 2015-16, ₹4,645 crore in 2016-17, ₹5,460 crore in 2017-18 and ₹6,220 crore in 2018-19 financial years. In contrast, under the YSRC Congress rule, liquor income was ₹6,915 crore in 2019-20 and ₹11,575 crore in 2020-21 and the government expects an income of ₹15,000 crores in the current fiscal.

The Congress leader criticised that the Jagan Mohan Reddy had completely forgotten about its complete prohibition promise. He said alcohol was creating strife in the lives of people. Human relations were being undermined by the menace. He questioned the government when it would implement the timeline.



An amphibious transport ship of Indian Navy, *INS Jalashwa*, carrying cryogenic tanks and oxygen cylinders from Brunei and Singapore enters the harbour in Visakhapatnam on Sunday.

— DC

First dose vaccination drive
to resume across AP today

A total of 28,15,000 doses will be procured by the state govt till June 15

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 23

The first-dose Corona-virus vaccination will resume in Andhra Pradesh on Monday. A total of 28,15,000 doses will be procured by the state government till June 15, including supplies from the Central government and the vaccine doses purchased by the state government.

The first dose of Covishield vaccine will be administered to employees above 45 years belonging to railways, RTC and banks and journalists for three days from May 24.

Health department principal secretary Anil Kumar Singhal said on Sunday that district collectors have been advised accordingly. The vaccine doses will be given on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. No Covaxin first dose would be administered.

He said 13,13,000 vaccine doses are distributed across 13 districts that included 1,55,000 Covaxin vaccine doses. He recalled that Chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy had written a letter to Prime Minister to say that "vaccines are

Corona infections see a drop

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 23

The Coronavirus positive cases have started to decline in AP providing a slight sigh of relief as 18,767 new positive cases were registered in the 24 hours ending on Sunday morning. It may be recalled that the state had been logging 21,000 to 24,000 new cases every day for the past few days, turning the situation grim.

The drop in numbers on Sunday gave a new ray of hope to those involved in the containment efforts of the pandemic. Meanwhile, the state reported 104 deaths, increasing the death toll

to 10,126. The total cumulative positive cases recorded in the state is 15,80,827 of which 2,09,237 are active cases. As many as 91,629 samples were tested in the past 24 hours in which 18,767 were found positive.

Meanwhile, the official bulletin said, 20,109 patients recovered and were discharged, taking the cumulative total to 13,61,464 in the state, which accounts for a recovery rate of 86.12 per cent.

The highest number of new positive cases was registered in East Godavari at 2,887, followed by Chittoor at 2,323, West Godavari

1,846, Visakhapatnam 1,668, Guntur 1,249, Kurnool 1,166, Prakasam 1,162, Nellore 1,045, Srikakulam 971, Kadapa 883, Vizianagaram 821 and Krishna district 774.

The single day highest number of 15 Covid-19 deaths registered in Chittoor district followed by 13 deaths in West Godavari and 11 deaths in Vizianagaram district. Nine new deaths were reported in Visakhapatnam, eight each deaths registered in Anantapur, East Godavari, Guntur, Krishna and Kurnool districts. Seven new deaths were reported in Srikakulam.

doses have been administered to beneficiaries, of which 23,38,791 received two doses and 32,01,022 one dose.

The state government would purchase 14,86,220 vaccine doses by June 15 including 11,45,540 Covishield doses and 3,40,680 Covaxin doses. The Central government

has allotted 14,15,420 doses to AP for May, of which 11,65,365 doses were received and 2,50,060 doses expected.

The Central government has allotted 7,68,010 doses to AP for June. In addition to the quota due in May, 10,18,000 doses are expected to be received from the Centre by June 15.

Narayana
endorses
mixtureDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 23

CPI national secretary K. Narayana has put his weight behind the Ayurveda mixture that is claimed to work against Covid-19 of B. Anandaiah of Krishnapatnam and slammed those talking negatively against it. Critics say a headmaster took ill after intake of the medicine.

During a visit to Krishnapatnam village on Sunday, Narayana questioned the rationale behind judging the efficacy of the mixture based on one instance of its reaction on one person. At the same time, it must be noted that there was no complaint from over 60,000 people who took the concoction so far, he said.

Narayana said Ayurveda and home remedies are time-tested and part of the traditions here.

Resolve border issue with
TS immediately, says TDDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 23

Telugu Desam AP president K. Atchannaidu on Sunday strongly objected to the YSRC Congress government not taking immediate steps to resolve the issue of AP patients being prevented from entering Telangana at the inter-state borders.

He accused Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana state of playing with lives of common people at a time when Coronavirus pandemic is putting them through unimaginable

suffering.

Atchannaidu demanded that the AP government form a task force to coordinate with Telangana officials in resolving the problem of patients being stopped at the inter-state border.

He warned that TD would not remain a silent spectator if AP government continued to ignore the patients' woes stranded on the borders.

The AP TD president condemned lathicharge by Telangana police at Pondugala check post when occupants of vehicles protested over not

being allowed to enter Telangana from AP. He pointed out that such incidents are not occurring in other states of the country.

Atchannaidu asked whether Telangana state was not part of India and wondered whether some other laws outside of the Indian constitution are in force in Telangana state that allowed it to prevent people from AP entering the state.

He lamented that even Chief Secretary was not responsive in dealing with everyday problems of the people.

Covid-19 patients
tapping Ayurvedic
hospitals in Kurnool

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, MAY 23

Enthused by encouraging results of Ayurveda in Nellore, Covid-19 patients are turning to Ayush Covid care centre for treatment.

Daily out patients are increasing, said sub-controlling officer Prabhakar Reddy.

With Ayurveda cure working efficiently, there is an increased demand for Ayurveda products in Kurnool district. Sub-controlling officer Dr Prabhakar Reddy the Covid centre set up by Ayush department is getting increased number of calls every day. People are taking Ayurveda medicine as a preventive measure while already affected patients are turning to Ayurveda. We are prescribing 10-day course to

Covid-19 positive patients and 30-day course for preventive medication, he said.

He said his team has been creating awareness about the use of Ayurveda product in schools and colleges in the district. There is a sure cure for anti-fungal and anti-viral diseases in the Ayurveda medicinal system. Certain medicines have proved to be working efficiently to control cytokine storm, which has been worsening the Covid patients, he said.

He further said that the fear of the disease is causing panic among the people which is weakening the immunity system. There are effective medicines in Ayurveda to improve immunity by reducing anxiety and fear, he added.

TTD to produce
Anandaiah's
concoction: MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MAY 23

Even as the authorities temporarily suspended the preparation and distribution of Krishnapatnam concoction, touted as a cure for Covid-19, till its efficacy is scientifically established, Cheviredy Bhaskar Reddy, Chandragiri MLA and Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Trust board,

announced that the TTD would produce and distribute Bonigi Anandaiah's herbal concoction as an immunity booster which has no side-effects.

The distribution of the Krishnapatnam concoction was indefinitely suspended by the authorities, till its efficacy is scientifically established. A team from AP Ayush Department, led by commissioner V. Ramulu Naik, on Saturday inspected the demonstration of medicine preparation in Krishnapatnam.

Post verification, they stated that Ayush protocols and guidelines did not accept these preparations as Ayurvedic medicines. They also said the preparations were similar to traditional local medicines and there was no need for any licence for this.

Also, the TTD Ayurveda experts, who collected the herbs-spice mix on Saturday, certified that it had no side-effects and was in fact a great immunity booster.

In this regard, Reddy, along with Ayurveda experts of TTD, on Sunday examined the

equipment required for the preparation of the medicine, availability of required herbs, stocks and preparation site in the TTD Ayurveda Pharmacy located at Narasingapuram near Chandragiri.

Speaking to the media later, the MLA informed that the TTD would scale up the preparation and distribution of the mixture formulated by Anandaiah, if it got approval from the Ayush department, ICMR and any other equivalent research institutes. He also stated that TTD Ayurveda experts had started research on the concoction and an in-depth research should be done at least in four stages.

"According to the information available so far, it has been confirmed that there are no side effects. The TTD has its own state-of-the-art Ayurvedic pharma and it has the capacity to manufacture this concoction on its own. In just 60 days, it is possible to supply it to the entire state," Reddy said.

However, he also said the concoction prepared by Anandaiah was not a permanent antidote to the Covid-19, although it was known for its ability to increase immunity. "The preparation of this medicine will be carried out, considering it as an immunity booster," he clarified and stated that the manufacturing and distribution of this medicine would be done following the instructions of the Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

VASANTHOTSAVAM AT TIRUCHANOOR
TEMPLE OFF LIMITS FOR DEVOTEES

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MAY 23

In view of the Covid-19 situation, the Vasanthotsavam of Goddess Padmavathi Devi Ammavaru will be conducted behind closed doors in Ekantham (solitude) at the Tiruchanoor temple near Tirupati from May 25 to 27.

The Ankurarpanam for the three-day annual fete, also known as *Upasamanotsavam*, will be held on Monday evening. As the restriction on darshan continues as part of the measures taken to check the spread of Covid-19, the festival will be observed in Ekantham without permitting devotees.

PANDEMIC | POLITICS BJP leaders hold dharna from 10 am to 12 noon in AP

Govt failed to contain Covid, says BJP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 23

BJP leader Kanna Lakshminarayana has alleged that YSRC Congress government totally failed to contain the Coronavirus spread in AP despite full support from the Central government. The BJP organised state-wide protests against the failure of the YSRC government towards containment of Covid-19 spread in its second wave.

Recalling the letter written by Chief Minister

Jagan to PM Modi against supply of Coronavirus vaccines to private hospitals, Lakshminarayana said the BJP asked the CM to focus on infrastructure, development of medical facilities and vaccination to save the lives of the people.

Lakshminarayana said the BJP leaders, activists and supporters held dharna from 10 am to 12 noon on Sunday against the YSRC government's failures in curbing the pandemic. He said the CM did not take the Corona spread

BJP leaders protest in Vijayawada on Sunday.

in the state seriously from the beginning. Prime Minister Modi had warned at the CMs' meet-

ing that the second wave would be severe but Jagan did not take it seriously. "He did not conduct a review on the availability of beds and the vaccine to control the situation," the BJP leader said.

Lakshminarayana said PM Modi had allocated ₹35,000 crore in the budget to get the vaccine early to the people across the country, and he further allotted about 30,000 ventilators from PM Care fund to hospitals. "A maximum of 4,960 ventilators were allocated to AP giving top pri-

ority to our state."

The YSRC government has completely failed in utilising these ventilators, he said.

Lakshminarayana alleged that the state government failed to deliver oxygen and did not make enough efforts to make remdesivir injections available. Tenders were called by the government for construction of churches at a time when infrastructure in the medical field should have been given top priority, the BJP leader said.

IN BRIEF

POLAVARAM
DOUSTEES
PETITION NHRCDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 23

The Rights Watch (Andhra Pradesh), a human rights organisation, working in agency area lodged a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) against the government for 'violation of Article 21', using farmers' lands for dumping yard purposes at Pydipaka village of Polavaram mandal in West Godavari, which is the upper reservoir region of the Polavaram project dam.

Organisation president Balu Akkisa said that land acquisition proceedings were initiated in the village way back in 2007 by paying a meagre ₹1.40 lakh per acre. The monetary compensation for trees, borewells and wage compensation for agriculture labourers were not estimated by the authorities.

But, the officials have acquired lands up to the year 2016, after commencement of New Land Acquisition Act 2013 and the farmers cultivated on them until that year. But, in 2016 June and July, land acquisition authorities forcibly evacuated the villagers and shifted them to new rehabilitation and resettlement colonies without providing basic infrastructure facilities like primary health care centres, primary school buildings, play grounds, community centres and others as defined in section 6 of G.O.Ms.No.68.

However, nearly ten families opted to stay back in Pydipaka village until the completion of houses in R&R colonies. Officials tried to forcibly evict these families by disconnecting power and water supplies. Balu said that these 10 families depended on cattle for supporting their livelihood as there was no income to them due to lack of agriculture activity.

CYCLONE YAAS:
HELPLINES SET UP
FOR QUICK AIDDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 23

Helplines have been set up in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam ahead of the landfall of Cyclone Yaas on May 26 on the Odisha-West Bengal border. The process of evacuation of people in vulnerable areas has commenced in Srikakulam district, bordering Odisha.

Communication and connectivity along with power lines and inundation will remain the focus point to minimise the trouble.

High velocity winds of up to 150 kmph are likely along and off the coast on May 26. Heavy rainfall is expected from May 24 to May 26 in West Bengal, Odisha and north Andhra under the influence of Cyclone Yaas.

On Saturday, the system lay as a deep depression 560 km north northwest of Port Blair, 590 km east southeast off Paradeep, 690 km south southeast off Balasore (Odisha), 670 km off south southeast off Digha (West Bengal).

It will move north-northwest and concentrate into a cyclone (on May 24). During the subsequent 48 hours, it will become a very severe cyclone storm and move in a north northwest direction and cross Odisha-West Bengal between Paradeep and Sagar Islands on May 26 evening.

BJP DEMANDS
MEASURES TO
CURB COVIDDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 23

Bharatiya Janata Party workers in several places in East Godavari District staged agitations, demanding the government should take immediate steps to curb Covid-19 and provide ventilator facility to patients in the hospitals. Leading the agitation in Ramanahpetta, the party district general secretary Rambala Venkateswara Rao said that the central government has supplied ventilators to the state government, but the government failed in making use of these ventilators effectively. He said that the central government was supplying tonnes of oxygen to the state, but the government is not able to set up oxygen plants to store it. He said that the government failed in supervising the private hospitals which are squeezing money from the patients.

Strict lockdown



Police stopped and seized the vehicles of those who violated lockdown rules at Benz Circle in Vijayawada on Sunday.

—DC

Private hospitals scour for
Aarogyasri patients in AP

East Godavari has imposed around ₹1.7 crore penalties on erring hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 23

The managements of private hospitals which are usually packed with patients are now scouring for patients with Aarogyasri cards to admit them in their hospitals.

With the government taking a serious view of the private hospitals not filling up 50 per cent of beds for Aarogyasri beneficiaries and threatening action against the violations, the managements are in a hurry to get Aarogyasri patients. They were admitting such patients earlier, too, but only after forcing them to cough up money under the cashless scheme.

On the instructions of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, East Godavari District Collector D. Muralidhar Reddy cracked the whip on such erring hospitals and ordered nodal officers to slap huge penalties.

Dr YSR Aarogyasri district coordinator Dr P. Radhakrishna said that around ₹1.7 crore penalties were levied on the private hospitals on charges of not admitting the Covid-19 patients under the Aarogyasri scheme.

He said if Aarogyasri beds were found as vacant in private hospitals, there would be a fine at the rate of ₹20,000 per bed.

The tough measures have yielded results. East Godavari district has stood first in the state in

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, MAY 23

The second wave of Covid-19 which is rampaging through the Chittoor district, is rapidly spreading the deadly infection of black fungus. As many as 17 cases of mucormycosis, a rare infection, were reported in the last three days.

Around 10 cases of mucormycosis are said to be being treated at the

Cops to take care of kids of +ve parents

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, MAY 23

Despite burdened by lockdown duties, the police personnel are going beyond the call of duty and winning hearts in the districts. As a new initiative, they have decided to take care of children whose parents have tested positive.

Kadapa district superintendent of police Karur Karunapati Nagendra Kumar Anburajan said they have made special arrangements to look

after such children till their parents recover. He has urged the public to seek their help for any children of Covid-positive parents on '100,' '104,' '1098' or District SP's phone number '94407 96900' for immediate assistance.

Taking note of mental distress being caused by the ravaging Coronavirus, the SP said they would also ensure help and counseling from experts for the people suffering from mental anguish. He assured that

the district police would always be in the forefront of service to society.

The SP is also showing special attention to treatment for cops and their families. People in home isolation are taken well care of by attending to their needs, medical or otherwise.

Cops on duty are checked for temperatures and other symptoms. Face masks and sanitation rules are strictly enforced.

A special health desk has been set up at the

Disha police station at the district police headquarters to check on the well-being of police personnel and also their family members.

A diagnostic centre is operated with nominal fees. Also, a 15-bed Covid care centre is solely set up for the police with oxygen and all other facilities. The SP has also arranged for an interest-free loan of up to ₹1 lakh from the Police Welfare Fund for those in financial difficulties due to Covid.

8 black fungus cases in Nellore dist

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 23

As many as eight black fungus cases have been detected in SPSR Nellore district, of which two had been noticed a month back. One patient is being treated at the GGH and all others at the Apollo Hospital in the city.

A solace to the patients is that this disease is included under the Aarogyasri scheme. Hospitals have been given

allocating beds to the patients under the Aarogyasri scheme with 68 per cent occupancy.

Dr Radhakrishna said that the district stood at second place only five days back. As such, it is not surprising that man-

amphotericin-B injections for this treatment. An isolation ward and an operation theatre have been set up at the old hospital building of Dodla Subba Reddy Government General Hospital here exclusively for the black fungus treatment. One such patient is being treated at the isolation ward.

The condition of a 40-year-old patient admitted a few days back in GGH was stable and doctors

● **AN ISOLATION ward and an operation theatre have been set up exclusively for the black fungus treatment.**

are awaiting the CT Scan report.

The absence of the super specialty wing at the GGH attached to the Government Medical College is a handicap.

The GGH in Visakhapatnam is the only fully-equipped hos-

pital with a group of expert doctors attached to the super specialty wing to treat such cases in the government sector in Andhra Pradesh.

Meanwhile, admissions to GGH in Nellore fell to some 50 or 60 cases in the last two days, as against the 120 to 130 cases a few days ago. "We will be thankful to the almighty if the trend continues and cases start looking downwards" a medical officer said.

Their task has become tougher given the growing tendency of people to avoid the highly expensive treatment at private hospitals and prefer treatment in home isolation or at Covid care centres.

pital doctor.

They are currently not available at the notified hospital for black fungus. We have placed an indent and we expect that they will arrive by next week. In the meantime, patients are being treated with antibiotics and pain relievers," he added.

said the infected patients require Liposomal Amphotericin B injections 300 mg dose daily for 2 to 4 weeks. "However, these injections are currently not available at the notified hospital for black fungus. We have placed an indent and we expect that they will arrive by next week. In the meantime, patients are being treated with antibiotics and pain relievers," he added.

At least 40 docs
down with CovidDC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MAY 23

Dr Gangulappa, 53, the head of the department (HOD) of anatomy department at Anantapur Government Medical College died of Covid-19 at the Government General Hospital (GGH) here on Sunday. He was the senior professor in the anatomy wing of medical college.

He had been part of treating Covid patients at the GGH and tested positive for the virus 20 days ago. Though the doctor tested negative, he developed respiratory complications in the early hours of the day. The doctors and staff of medical college and GGH condoled his death.

It is worrying that the medical staff treating Covid patients at special wards and ICUs are being infected by the virus even after vaccination. Sources said at least 40 doctors from GGH, Super Specialty Hospital and Cancer Hospital have

tested positive and many of them are being treated at various hospitals.

IMA city chapter president and psychiatric ward head at the GGH, Dr Endluri Prabhakar, has reportedly tested positive and is being treated at the GGH, sources said. He has been leading a counselling centre to create awareness among the Covid patients at the hospital. At least 400 patients get his guidance in a month. Similarly, super specialty hospital superintendent, medical college principal among others are suffering from Covid.

Meanwhile, Rapthadu Tahasildar Shivaiah died of Covid at the Super Specialty Hospital on Sunday. The revenue official tested positive a few days ago and was admitted to the hospital. Collector Gandham Chandrudu and the revenue association expressed shock over his demise. An officer in the agriculture department, Suresh Babu, also died of Covid in the district.

22 deaths in less
than a month in
Nehrunagar villageDC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL, MAY 23

A pall of gloom has descended on Nehrunagar in Pagidyalam mandal in Nandikotkur constituency. As many as 22 deaths occurred in less than a month.

It is like every other house in the village, with a population of 3,000, took part in funeral preparations almost

on a daily basis, said a villager. Not all of them are Covid-19 deaths, informs Pagidyalam tahsildar Rajasekhara Babu. A medical report on the causes of deaths submitted to the government, a copy of which is in DC possession, reveals that 8 deaths were due to Covid-related complications. The remaining deaths were attributed to cardiac arrest, brain stroke, alcohol intoxication, old age with multi-organ failure and kidney diseases. One died of suicide.

The villagers say never had they lost so many in just one month. Nehrunagar is on the backwaters of the Krishna river and very fertile. Adjoining

villages like Muchumarri are also witnessing symptoms of Covid, they said.

Lakshmi Reddy, a villager said that they were in the grip of a fear psychosis with so many lives lost under mysterious circumstances. Though the loss is understandable in the case of aged people, even middle-aged ones succumbed to unknown causes, he said.

District Medical and Health Officer Dr Rama Giddaiah said a medical camp was set up at the village and a fever survey was also undertaken. Since April, 1,375 people tested for Covid and 373 people above 45 years were given the first dose of vaccination. The second dose was given to 125 people, which is due by the end of May.

The village has 147 Covid active cases, of which 137 are getting treated in Covid care centers and 6 in hospitals. Only 4 infected persons are in home isolation and kits have been distributed to them. Police are strictly enforcing Covid protocols in the village and dissuading people from gathering in large numbers.

15 MT OXYGEN
PRODUCTION
PLANT READYDC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, MAY 23

To meet the medical oxygen needs of Covid-19 patients, the Andhra Pradesh Paper Mills revived a 15 Mts capacity oxygen plant in the paper mill. Earlier it shut down some years ago.

Rajamahendravaram MP M. Bharat took the initiative and requested the management to revive the plant. The Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy also wanted the management to revive the plant. M. Bharat said that in response, the management brought a team of technical experts from New Delhi and the production began on Sunday.

COVID | CRISIS

'Government is ignoring the textile parks initiated during TD regime'

Apparel and textile sectors in tatters

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, MAY 23

Hopes of a large population of artisans and weavers in the district have been dashed since Covid crisis has completed stalled works on new units at the textile and apparel parks in the district.

Thousands of workers particularly women are working in the garment industry and living at temporary camps in Bengaluru, while the much-promised textile parks in Pamidi, Dharmavaram, Hindupur

and Dharmavaram are yet to become a reality.

No units have come up at the two textile parks Pamidi and Rayadurg parks and the only unit that commenced at Rayadurg centre remains idle due to lockdown restrictions.

There were already delays from 23 to 180 months prior to the outbreak of Covid.

The artisans blame it on selection of site, delay in completion of infrastructure facilities and amenities. According to the report of Comptroller and Auditor General

(CAG), this caused non-achievement of objectives of the parks as envisaged.

There was 24 to 100 per cent shortfall in setting up of units in these parks while the shortfall in employment generation ranged from 74 to 100 per cent.

The textile parks constructed at Pamidi and Rayadurg are in a dilapidated state and the costly equipment and machinery is lying idle.

Dr Suresh, the Praja Science Vedika president, opined that the apparel park at the centrally

located Pamidi can be temporarily used as a Covid care center instead of investing money on temporary sheds.

Anantapur district has a great potential for emerging as textile hub and offers bright prospects for employment generation.

TD politburo member and former minister Kalava Srinivasulu alleges the government is ignoring the textile parks initiated during TD regime. It should focus on upgrading the skills of artisans and work on developing other less

intricate products and keep the weaving tradition alive, he demands.

Since 2002-03 efforts have been on to develop textile and apparel parks in the state with the domestic market in focus. As many as 11 parks have been taken up in the state CAG reviewed the state of five parks — Brandix India Apparel City Private Limited, two by APIIC Apparel Export Parks at Proddatur and Vizag and two by the department of handlooms and textiles at Rayadurg and another place.

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SHORT TAKES

DELHI COPS HOLD SPL DRIVE FOR COVID VIOLATORS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

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

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

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

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

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

MP NOT TO GO IN FOR GLOBAL TENDER PROCESS

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MAY 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

NATH BOOKED FOR ‘INDIAN CORONA’ REMARKS

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MAY 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

● **CHIEF MINISTER** says his govt’s top priority is to vaccinate the people of the city at the earliest to prevent a “third wave”, adding that he is in talks with vaccine companies for the required doses and is ready to buy the vaccines at any cost.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C’garh CM sacks district collector for assaulting lockdown violator

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
RAIPUR, MAY 23

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

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

In the video clip, the youth was seen showing

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

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

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

The Chief Minister has

strongly disapproved of the incident.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PANDEMIC | WOES

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

Aligarh’s lock industry hit hard by lockdowns

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Withdraw remark on allopathy, Min tells Ramdev

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“When allopathic doc-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

India records a dip in new cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 23

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

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

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

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

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

“The government has so far provided, both through the free-of-cost category and through direct state procurement category, more than 21.80 crore vaccine doses (21,80,51,890) to states/UTs,” the ministry said in a statement.

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

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

SHORT TAKES

TROPICAL STORM ANA MOVES AWAY FROM BERMUDA

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

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

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

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

U.S.' TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS FOR HAITIANS

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

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

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

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



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

— AP

NINE KILLED IN ITALIAN CABLE CAR ACCIDENT

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

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

At that location, the cables of the ski lift were particularly high off the ground, said Walter Milan, spokesman for the Alpine rescue service. The cause has not been determined. Milan noted that the cable line had been renovated in 2016 and had only recently reopened after coronavirus lockdowns forced the closures of ski lifts across

Italy. Mottarone reaches a height of 1,491 metres (4,900 feet) and overlooks the picturesque lake and the surrounding Alps of Italy's Piedmont region. The mountain features a small amusement park, Alpyland, that has a children's rollercoaster offering 360-degree views of the scenery. Many Italian ski areas feature mountain bike paths and hiking trails that are popular in spring and summer.

US-style digital visas in Britain

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

The post-Brexit changes will include the border

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

— AFP

Israeli police allow Jews to visit flashpoint Jerusalem site

Hamas defiant with military parade, top leader's appearance

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

Muslims who entered were required to leave their IDs with police at the entrance. It said three Muslims were arrested, including a guard. Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said the site was open for "regular visits" and that police had secured the area to prevent "incidents", without elaborating. Israeli police had briefly clashed with Palestinian protesters after Friday prayers in an early test for the truce, which had taken effect hours earlier. The Waqf said Sunday it was the first time Jews had been allowed to visit the site since May 4, a week before the war broke out. The Al-Aqsa Mosque is the third holiest site in Islam. It sits on a sprawling hilltop in Jerusalem's Old City that is revered by Jews as their holiest site because it was the location of the biblical temples.

The site has often been the scene of Israeli-Palestinian violence and was the epicentre of the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising. Israeli police repeatedly clashed with Palestinian protesters in the days leading up to May 10, when Gaza's militant Hamas rulers fired rockets at Jerusalem. — *AP*

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

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

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

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

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

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

1 HELD IN ATTACK ON JEWISH MEN IN LOS ANGELES

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

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

Nepal's Oppn to file writ petition

To protest dissolution of House by Prez

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

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

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

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

Hold polls in one phase, EC to Oli

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

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

once the date has been announced.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Social media photos show Dubai princess at malls

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

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

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

Sheikha Latifa, 35, had

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

— AP

Diana interview: Shamed Bashir says sorry to princes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP

PAYING TRIBUTES

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

Ariana Grande remembers Manchester bombing victims

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Flowers for victims of the bombings.

— AP

DECCAN Chronicle

24 MAY 2021

Contain the 2nd wave, prepare for the third

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

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

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

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

Too soon to call Nepal polls?

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

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

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

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

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

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

DECCAN CHRONICLE

KAUSHIK MITTER
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Subhani



Two years of Modi 2.0: Challenges & response

Ram Madhav

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

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

As he began his second term after the landslide in 2019, the decisive and hands-on approach continued. The bill for the abrogation of triple talaq was introduced and passed in July. And in early August came the historic abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Constitution. Towards the end of the year, another big step was taken by passing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). In November the same year, the Supreme Court had delivered its final verdict on the Ram Janmabhoomi dispute allowing for the construction of a temple at the site under question. Mr Modi did not waste any time in constituting a trust led by people not only dedicated to the cause but also involved in the temple movement for decades.

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

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

However, the deadly second wave has caught the country off guard. One important lesson that the coronavirus crisis has taught was the need for empowering grassroots institutions. The way forward is not hyper-centralisation, but "cooperative federalism". **Economy:** As the government entered the second term, it moved fast on the reforms front. New and broad-based reforms in the agriculture and banking sectors, together with the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

LETTERS

K'PATNAM CLAIM

The observations of the Ayush team on the concoction to cure Covid-19 patients prepared by Bonigi Anandaiah of Krishnapatnam deserves to be given wide publicity. The government or ICMR should not shy away from following the observations of the Ayush team. The formulation should be given an honourable test.

Govardhana Myneedu
Vijayawada

VACCINE PLAN

According to the IMF Chief Economist, the second wave in India is a sign that the worst is likely to be imminent. The country's medical infrastructure is crumbling. The possible solution is the Centre along with states producing, manufacturing, procuring, and importing Covid-19 vaccines for the entire Indian population.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

RAMDEV'S ATTACK

The IMA and the allopathic fraternity have rightly raised their voices against the mocking utterances by Baba Ramdev against allopathic treatment of Covid-19. He derided the vast number of deaths despite being given costly medicines. He is shrewd enough not to mention the 87.76 per cent recovery rate and 1.12 per cent case fatality rate. The whole thing was a promotional for Patanjali products. The Centre must take quick action on Ramdev.

K. Nehru Patnaik
Visakhapatnam

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

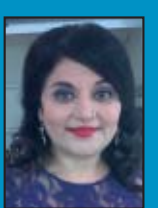
Indira writes to Sadat on Bangla crisis

CAIRO, MAY 23.

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

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

Kishwar Desai
London Diary



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

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

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

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

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

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

The experts are still divided on

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

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

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

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

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

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

quick BITES

INDICATORS

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

* As of 8:30 PM IST

IBA seeks refund of interest waiver from government

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

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



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

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

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

Gold saving funds see ₹864-cr inflow in April

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



■PMJJBY sales rise 48%, insurers seek premium hike High demand for PM life insurance cover in FY21

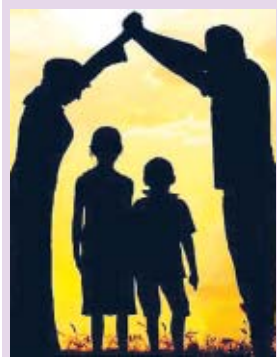
FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 23

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

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

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

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



to their customers through their banking partners.

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

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

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

On its own momentum							
Financial Year	Cumulative no. of persons enrolled	YoY enrolment	% Increase	Premium	Claims received (numbers)	Total amount of claims paid	Claims ratio (%)
2016-17	3.1			1,023	62,166	1,243	122
2017-18	5.33	2.23	72%	1,758	98,163	1,963	112
2018-19	5.92	0.59	11%	1,953	145,763	2,915	149
2019-20	6.96	1.04	18%	2,296	190,175	3,803	166
2020-21	10.27	3.31	48%	3,389	250,351	5,007	148

Figures in ₹ crore

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

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

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

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

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

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

Man-made fibre exports dip, imports rise in FY21

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 23

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MISSING | JAB

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

Covid loser Glaxo gets ready for next pandemic

SUZI RING MAY 23

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

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

"When every government does their after-

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

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

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



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

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

The company is about to

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

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

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

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

eral investment treaty."

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

It is not clear if a court in The Hague can go into merits of levy of taxation by the Indian government over a corporate amalgamation scheme. Precedence dictates that challenges to international arbitration award are restricted to tribunal not following due process.

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

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



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

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

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

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

G7 decision to cast shadow on Indian coal block auctions

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 23

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

In October 2020, India and South Africa had sub-

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

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

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

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

JAYPEE INFRA RESOLUTION TAKES A MESSY TURN

New Delhi, May 23: Realty firm Suraksha Group on Sunday strongly objected to Jaypee Infratech creditors panel's move to consider fresh submissions by NBCC and warned of appropriate legal action against lenders as well as the interim resolution professional (IRP) if voting on the group's offer fails to materialise.

The Suraksha Group has conveyed its objections in a letter addressed to IRP Anuj Jain and the committee of creditors (CoC).

The development comes hours after the IRP called for a meeting of the CoC in the morning of May 24 to discuss state-owned NBCC's addendum to its resolution plan, which was rejected by the panel on May 20. The Suraksha Group's bid was also approved for voting on that day.

The meeting of the CoC will be from 10 am to noon on Monday, just two hours before the scheduled voting process on the Suraksha Group's offer will commence. The voting process will be on from noon on May 24 till 5 pm on May 27.

On May 20, the CoC approved Suraksha Group's bid and rejected NBCC's offer, saying it was not compliant with certain provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and a Supreme Court decision in March this year.

However, Monday's CoC meeting is to discuss NBCC's addendum to its bid, which was submitted late on May 18.

Peeved over the proposed CoC meeting, the Suraksha Group said, "We wish to put on record strong objections to such actions to ratify and discuss the resolution plan of the other resolution applicant at this late stage..." Listing out the reasons, Suraksha Group said it had submitted the resolution plan on May 18 within the stipulated timeline of 4 pm. NBCC's plan was submitted not only after stipulated timelines but also after opening and circulation of the Suraksha Group's plan to the CoC members. —PTI

SHORT TAKES

21 die in China ultramarathon

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

Crucial test awaits Indian pugilists

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

Tsitsipas blasts to title in Lyon

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

Biles makes an historic vault

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

Middleton lifts Bucks past Heat

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

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FALL FROM GRACE

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

New Delhi, May 23: There was lingering disbelief and considerable disappointment as the country's sports fraternity came to terms with Sushil Kumar's monumental fall from being one of India's greatest Olympians to an arrestee in a murder case. The stockily-built man, who used to be wrapped in the Tri-colour after winning medals for the nation, had his face masked by a towel and both hands held by Delhi Police's special cell officers on Sunday after being on the run for past many days. Ironically, all this unfolded on World Wrestling Day.

He was evading a Non-Bailable Warrant for his alleged involvement in the death of a 23-year-old wrestler Sagar Dhankar during a brawl at the Chhatrasal Stadium, considered the cradle of Indian wrestling, made most famous by Sushil — India's only sportsperson with two individual Olympic medals. Dhankar was the son of a Delhi Police constable and trained at the stadium before he died on May 5 because of the injuries he sustained in the brawl. The chain of events has left the Indian sports fraternity shocked even though respect for Sushil's achievements remains intact. The 37-year-old is, to this date, India's only world champion in wrestling and a three-time Commonwealth Games gold-winner.

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

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

— VIJENDER SINGH
Indian boxing star

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

IMAGE WILL TAKE A HIT, SAYS SHARATH

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

"If this has actually happened, it is unfortunate and reflects badly on Indian sport, not just wrestling," he said. "He is one of the best athletes we have had. People look up to him. So if he has done what he has done, it will negatively impact not just wrestlers but athletes from other sports also."

UNFORTUNATE & SHAMEFUL: AJITPAL

Former hockey captain Ajitpal Singh, an Indian Olympic Association observer at the 2008 Olympics, recalled interacting with Sushil at the Games and said he still can't understand what exactly went wrong with the "polite" man. "...it is very shameful and unfortunate. Being a role model Sushil should have led by example and never indulged in such a brawl. The sport gave him everything, money, fame," he said. — Agencies



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

SUSHIL SENT TO 6-DAY POLICE REMAND

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

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

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

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

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

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

BANGLADESH PIP LANKA IN COVID-HIT ODI

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

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

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

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

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

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

Triumph over adversity

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

Atletico beat Real Valladolid 2-1 to finish two points ahead of Real Madrid at the end of a draining season shaped by the Covid-19 pandemic. "It's been a very hard year for us and for the world, difficult for every team and in such a tough season Atletico has come out as champions," said Simeone.

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

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



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

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

THANKS FOR OPENING DOORS: SUAREZ

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

"I am filled with emo-

tions," the 34-year-old Uruguayan striker said after scoring in Atletico's 2-1 victory in Valladolid. He offered veiled criticism of his former club, who finished the season in third place.

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

force," Suarez said.

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

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

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

— AFP

Liverpool, Chelsea secure CL spots

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

But after an uncertain

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

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

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

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

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

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

WORLD | T20

India women yet to get prize share

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

INDIA LIKELY TO STRUGGLE IN WTC FINAL, SAYS MONTY

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

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

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

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



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

Monaco victory puts Max on top

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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