





## IN BRIEF

**Cop in coma after bike mishap**

**Hyderabad:** A constable heading home to celebrate his marriage anniversary met with an accident at Punjagutta and is in a coma at a hospital. Police said N. Venu Babu, 36, working with the Mirchowk police, was heading home in Jubilee Hills when he lost control of his bike at about 10 am near Ameerpet. He received a call from his wife, N. Mary, stating that their relatives had come to celebrate the anniversary. Police said Babu sustained grave injuries. The Punjagutta police rushed him to a nearby private hospital where the doctors determined that he had gone into a coma. He is undergoing treatment at the hospital, a police official said.

**COURT DIRECTED POLICE TO REGISTER CASE**

From Page 1

Alleging that Goutham Kumar and Subhas Reddy tampered and created fabricated revenue records, reports, and court documents purporting the lands to be government lands, the complainant approached the local court.

After examining the documents, the local court directed the police to book a case against the accused and investigate the matter.

Subsequently, the Jawaharnagar police registered a case under Indian Penal Code sections 120-B (criminal conspiracy), 166-A (public servant disobeying direction of law), 167 (public servant framing incorrect document), 168 (public servant unlawfully engaging in trade), 170 (personation of public servant), 171 (wearing garb or carrying token used by public servant with fraudulent intent), 447 (punishment for criminal trespass), 468 (forgery for the purpose of cheating), 471 (whoever fraudulently or dishonestly uses as genuine any document to be a forged document), 307 (attempt to murder), 506 IPC (criminal intimidation) and further investigation is underway.

# Graveyard staff ignores govt list, charges more

CM had ordered GHMC to collect fixed tariff for last rites

MADHY DEEKSHITH I DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Graveyards and crematoriums are disproving an old age that with death, all debts are paid. When a family loses its precious member, having faced travails with hospitals and treatment, illness and suffering, even the last journey loses all solemnity and dignity as they have to face a pandemic-imposed chaos, queues, and hassles, and inflated prices.

Understanding the difficulties of families, Chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao had given clear instructions to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) to impose a fixed tariff of ₹8,000 for performing last rites on a funeral pyre using wood and ₹4,000 for electric cremation.

Municipal administration and urban development principal secretary

Arvind Kumar was on a spree of surprise inspections on Monday to ensure no additional charges in the city graveyards and crematoriums.

Kumar, along with zonal commission P. Pravanya, made a surprise visit to Panjagutta and Bansilalpet cremation grounds. Kumar went to check whether the public were being made to pay more than the prescribed rates.

An official release said that Kumar expressed satisfaction over the prescribed rates being followed. He observed that GHMC employees were stationed at every centre to check the same. He also inspected crematoriums located in Punjagutta, Bansilalpet and Jubilee Hills as part of the surprise inspection. He also inspected the amenities at crematoriums and checked the electric cremation facility in

Punjagutta. But all of this has not had the desired results. At Amberpet crematorium, the staff struck off the government price list and made it clear to people that they would be collecting a fee far higher than the official tariff. The staff eventually collected whopping amounts from family members who came to cremate bodies.

*Deccan Chronicle* during field inspections found out that crematorium staff at Amberpet in Secunderabad zone completely shut down the electric crematorium. When asked about the amounts being charged for a funeral, even before some of the family members could respond, Amberpet staff got into a confrontation and asked the reporter to delete photographs taken.

However, a family member said the crematorium staff demanded ₹40,000 to conduct the last rites on a

wooden pyre, but after negotiations, agreed to conduct the cremation for ₹25,000.

According to official data, there are 960 graveyards and crematoriums in Hyderabad city limits. Several of these graveyards no longer have much space left to bury bodies. Crematoriums at Bansilalpet, Panjagutta, Amberpet and SR Nagar have modern facilities, including electric crematoriums.

However, the crematorium at SR Nagar became defunct for the last six months as the management did not clear electricity bills. Out of two crematoriums in Bansilalpet, only one has been functioning.

Even though several of the crematoriums have not cremated Covid-19 bodies but are collecting whopping amounts for non-Covid-19 cremations too.

## Covid vaccine: TS hopes dim on global tenders

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY I DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

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

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

It may be mentioned that the TS government on May 19 invited global tenders to procure one crore vaccines. As many as nine states had done so including Andhra Pradesh so far but none received a positive response from manufacturers.

● **THE TS government** on May 19 invited global tenders to procure one crore vaccines. As many as nine states had done so including Andhra Pradesh so far but none received a positive response from manufacturers.

The TS government had set a June 4 deadline for manufacturers for submission of bids to supply vaccines. Official sources said there was no response.

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

As per state government tender conditions, the bidders are invited to attend a pre-bid meeting on May 26 via Google meet. Bidders can quote their offers to supply the vaccine in part too, provided

that monthly supply shall not be less than 15 lakh doses. A total supply of one crore doses shall be completed within six months of issuance of Letter of Intent (LoI).

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said the vaccine manufacturers Pfizer and Moderna had communicated to them that they would not sell vaccines to states, but will deal only with the government of India.

Punjab government too on Sunday announced that Moderna turned down their request for vaccines saying it did not supply directly to states.

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

## GHMC clears garbage near OGH Annapurna

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Following a report in these columns on Monday, the GHMC cleaned the garbage dumped at the Osmania General Hospital. The report, 'Piles of garbage outside OGH a health worry,' spoke of paper plates strewn around the Annapurna centre at the hospital.

On Monday, the waste was cleared and disinfected powder sprayed around the food centre.

The issue came to light after a citizen raised the issue of hygiene on social media.



GHMC sanitary employees clean the area in front of the Annapurna canteen near Osmania General Hospital in Hyderabad on Monday. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

## TD LEADER'S WIFE ACCUSED OF JUBILEE LAND-GRAB

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

A complaint was lodged against Telugu Desam leader and former minister Prathipati Pulla Rao's wife at the Jubilee Hills police station for alleged land grab case.

The Jubilee Hills police said a complaint was received from Murali Mukund, secretary of Jubilee Hills Cooperative House Building Society, against Prathipati Teene Venkayamma, alleging that she had trespassed and grabbed a 1,519-square yard plot belonging to the housing society.

Prathipati's wife has been contending that she had purchased the plot and had even removed the board of the Jubilee Hills Housing Society installed at the plot, sources said.

On Sunday night, the society approached the police and lodged a complaint alleging that Venkayamma had trespassed into the plot.

The society alleged that she and her followers were trying to grab the plot by threatening the society members and asked the police to take action against her. However, Venkayamma insisted that the land belonged to her, as she purchased it spending lakhs of rupees.

When asked about the case, Jubilee Hills police inspector S. Rajashekar Reddy said, "The case appears to be civil in nature and we are taking legal opinion before proceeding. So far, we have not booked any case against anybody."

● **PRATHIPATI'S WIFE** contended that she had purchased the plot and had removed the board of the Jubilee Hills Housing Society.

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH I DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

As a part of the nationwide strike by ASHAs (Accredited Social Health Activists) who are demanding higher wages, 150 workers who are employed with the Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) on Monday held a protest at a public health centre (PHC). The protest was staged in front of the dispensary affiliated to the Cantonment fourth and fifth wards.

"The workers told me that their workload has increased manifold, in the wake of the pandemic. While they are serving 12-hour shifts, their pay remains a paltry ₹7,000 per month. Their demand for higher pay is the need of the hour," T. Satish Gupta, a former member



ASHA workers during a protest demanding higher salary at a public health centre at Picket in Secunderabad on Monday. — DC

## Fresh start



A couple walk towards their home in Hyderabad on Monday after a marriage ceremony. According to the state government orders, only 40 members are allowed at a wedding function. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE

## KAVITHA HELPS ADMIT WOMAN FOR DELIVERY

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Nizamabad MLC K. Kavitha once again rose to the occasion while responding to a May 22 Twitter SOS from a 23-year-old pregnant mother, Jyothi.

The woman was facing severe complications as the delivery date drew nearer. Her husband Raju Naik, a cab driver from Kosgi in Kodangal Assembly constituency, was also finding it difficult to meet the medical expenditure and launched a crowd-funding campaign to raise money.

On coming to know of their problem, Kavitha reached out to the family and personally looked into the case of Jyothi. Given the delivery complications, Kavitha moved Jyothi to a private hospital and decided to bear all the medical expenses to ensure that both Jyothi and the unborn were safe, especially during Covid times.

On Monday, Jyothi was blessed with a boy. The couple, overwhelmed by Kavitha's gesture, thanked her for the 'wonderful help.'



K. Kavitha, MLC

● **GIVEN THE** delivery complications, Kavitha moved Jyothi to a private hospital and decided to bear all the medical expenses

## Long power cuts irk city residents

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Parts of the city on Monday faced prolonged power cuts, causing irked residents to take to social media to vent their anger. The temperature in the city which had reached a sweltering 39° Celsius, only made matters worse.

"Power cut at Hyderabad Attapur Panduranga nagar colony from 2:15pm, could u plz restore it? (sic)," tweeted Ramesh Kumar K.

"Frequent power cuts in the past five days have turned out to be a latest regular problem for us in Quthbullapur, Hyderabad. The situation is more troublesome for us who are working from home and patients isolated at home (sic)," said Raj ET on Twitter.

While some people were tired of having power cuts in the summer, others said that the power supply in the city was patchy, at best.

"For The Past Two Years We Are Facing Power Cut / Fluctuations. How much

● **THE CITY** suffered long hours of power cuts on Monday, and the mercury nearing 40° Celsius raised the temperature among residents.

● **MANY SUFFERERS** took to social media to complain of the prolonged power cuts, many of them without advance notice.

Ever You Complain, Just Making All Sort Of Excuses. Just Imagine, In Central Hyderabad, These Problem Occur, What About Other Areas. Omg! (sic)" tweeted one Syed Abdul Wadood.

When contacted by this newspaper, an official of the Telangana State Southern Power Distribution Company Limited said that there were certain transmission issues, due to wind in the morning. However, they were firm that no power cut lasted for hours, and most of the disruptions towards Monday evening was due to "maintenance work".

## STORY | OF HOPE 50-bed facility meant for those with mild Covid-19 asymptomatic

# Isolation centre at Methodist school

SANJAY SAMUEL PAUL I DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Methodist Boys High School, which has been turned into a Covid-19 isolation centre, started its functions from Monday onwards, after being formally inaugurated on Sunday. This 50-bedded facility is open for those who are having mild symptoms or not required hospitalisation and is equipped with all necessary medical support, along with oxygen concentrators.

There are 10 doctors and 30 paramedical staff working on rotation basis, rendering services without any charge.

Hyderabad Regional Conferences' Bishop M.A. Daniel said, "Looking at the condition of the state, which is falling short of medical facilities, Methodist Church wants to extend its support to ease the load on the government



One of the classrooms of the Methodist Boys High School has been turned into an isolation centre for Covid-19 patients. — DC

as well hospitals, with a hope that this gesture will help many infect-

ed to recover soon and also in containing the spread of virus."

B Shankar Luke, vice-chairman of State Minorities Commission, who is also a member of Methodist Church, said, "Doctors' daily consultations, medication, food recommended by dietitians, and accommodation are absolutely free." "This centre also provides free food to those who are in home quarantine. In times of emergency, if oxygen supply is required, we will provide oxygen concentrators."

Vinaya Sheela Isaiah, principal of Methodist Boys High School, said, "I am so glad that this place has been converted as an isolation centre. This school, which will be completing 100 years next month, will proudly say, it served corona-infected patients."

Raja Praveen, a volunteer, told this correspondent: "All our team members are using safety equipment and this work is giving us great satisfaction."

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## OTHER STORIES

CONG LAUNCHES  
HELPLINE FOR COVID  
CONSULTATIONDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

AICC secretary S.A. Sampath Kumar alleged that the state medical department was in a coma mode and it was time it reinforced itself.

He stated that it was unfortunate that rather than increasing Covid tests and coming to the rescue of people, Chief Minister K. Chandrababhan Rao and IT minister K.T. Rama Rao, were only delivering irrational speeches.

He demanded Chandrasekhar Rao to review the village-level situation and act accordingly.

He was speaking after launching a helpline, along with IYC state president Shivasena Reddy, for free covid consultation and releasing a poster about the same.

Sampath said that the Union and state governments were only blaming each other on the vaccination issue. He slammed the state government for stopping vaccination by a week even as there is no clarity on the second dose. He said that 19 of 32 district hospitals do not have a corona emergency CT scan facility and 28 hospitals are without oxygen and ventilator facilities.

The AICC secretary urged Rama Rao to direct that task force committee to initiate stringent action against those selling remdesivir injections in black market.

Shivasena Reddy highlighted programmes carried out under Rahul Gandhi Care for Covid patients scheme and launched the help line (040-40527748) for free doctor consultation to Covid patients.

LEADERS BREAK  
RULES, PEOPLE  
CRY FOULDC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 24

With elected representatives of people themselves resorting to violation of lockdown rules, the police, government officials and common public seem to be at their wits' end in the undivided Karimnagar district.

Not only people's representatives, but also their relatives are throwing cautions to the wind and are going against the Covid norms, causing troubles to officials of police department who are discharging their duties risking their lives in the pandemic situation.

As per the orders issued by the state government, police officials are implementing the lockdown rules strictly without sparing anyone who are violating the norms. They are imposing fines and seizing vehicles of those who are venturing out of homes without valid reasons.

At Dubbapally checkpoint in Sultanabad mandal of Peddapalli district on Sunday, the police stopped a vehicle which belongs to one of the relatives of Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) Peddapalli MLA, Dasari Manohar Reddy, after the lockdown relaxation hours and asked him the reason why he came out at odd hours of lockdown.

The person who introduced himself as Dasari Anji Reddy, a relative of Peddapalli MLA, informed the police first that he was a farmer and was going to sell the produce and when questioned about the produce and about e-pass, he said he was returning from a wedding ceremony. When asked about the wedding invitation card, he could not show it to the police.

Anji Reddy then asked the police to impose a fine which he would pay and then leave, warning them not to stop him saying that he did not have patience to wait until they completed their procedures. Apart from that, he indulged in heated arguments with the police officials and started abusing them and threatened that he would use his political influence against them. Meanwhile, the higher officials who reached the spot asked the policemen on duty to note the number and later let him go as he was creating a ruckus on the road.

In another incident of lockdown rules violation, Backward Class Welfare minister Gangula Kamalakara held a press meet after the relaxation hours at about 12.30 pm in a hotel, that too without following the Covid rules. More than 20 leaders sat at one place to hold the press meet without maintaining physical distance. The press meet was not meant to convey a message of public interest but was related to the party's internal issue.

## +ve, with fungus? No issue

Black fungus patients who are Covid +ve do not require treatment for virus: Doc

KANIZA GARARI | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24Confusion reigns over how to  
categorise, record BF deathsDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Patients testing Covid-19 positive after reporting to hospitals with black fungus infection is due to the presence of the virus in the body. It is not a re-infection with Covid-19, doctors have explained.

They do not require treatment for Covid-19 but only for black fungus.

Those who are testing positive for Covid-19 with black fungus infection are sent to Gandhi Hospital. In the private sector, such patients are being treated separately. They, however, do not have the ability to infect others.

Dr Prashant Kumar, senior pulmonologist at Medak Government Hospital, explained: "Some patients are testing positive due to the viral load in the body. Viral shedding is seen for a month or two months. The RT-PCR testing positive is due to the virus presence, but these patients require treatment for black fungus only." The fungal infection cases from districts are high and these patients are coming to both private and government hospitals.

In hospitals, test results showed that many were not aware that they had Covid-19. They had symptoms of fever, cough and cold and opted for medicines from government medical kits.

A doctor at a government public health centre explained: "ANMs were to monitor these

● **THE EARLY** symptoms of black fungus are swelling on the face, high sugar levels and recovery from Covid-19. Getting these evaluated from ENT doctors helps.

An ENT doctor explained: "The deaths are happening after brain surgery. We need proper guidelines to understand how this must be categorised and tabulated. There is a

grey area. What is not clear is whether this would be notified as death due to black fungus."

There are many in the last stage of invasion in the brain and lungs, who have been sent back home. A senior ENT doctor at a private hospital says: "We did not admit those patients as there was little we could do. After two days, relatives have called us to say they are no more. These cases are the missed ones and

they too will not be recorded."

The early symptoms of black fungus are swelling on the face, high sugar levels and recovery from Covid-19. Getting these evaluated from ENT doctors helps.

Getting to know of the infection early helps in the start of the medicines early and the control of the invasion in the eyes and the brain. There is no mechanism to report death due to black fungus despite it being a notified disease.

All ENT Hospital beds full,  
50 surgeries done in 5 daysDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The Government ENT Hospital is full. All the 230 beds are occupied by patients of black fungus. There were 50 surgeries for black fungus in the

hospital from May 18 to May 22. A team of Ayurveda doctors are to work along with allopathy doctors for the cure of these patients.

A doctor at an ENT hospital said: "For post-operative care and treatment,

ugs or Covid-19 treatment. The viral load is expected in the body. For that reason, it is recommend-

ed not to test again as there are false positives." Experts say a combination of the illness is not

possible as black fungus will emerge only after the exit of the Covid virus.

PLEA ASKS HC  
FOR ONLINE  
TRACKING OF  
MED SUPPLIESDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

An urgent petition came up before the Telangana High Court on Monday, seeking the setting up of an online tracking system by the Telangana government to fast-track applications from patients for life-saving drugs to cure the black fungus infection, especially liposomal amphotericin-B.

Advocate T. Jayant Jayasooriya filed the PIL, describing the agony of black fungus patients and how they are desperately waiting for their turn for the injections due to the short supply. A division bench of the High Court headed by the Chief Justice will hear the case on Tuesday.

The petitioner wants the state government to call global tenders to procure the drug in injection form and direct the Union government to enhance the state quota for the vials.

The situation in the state, the petitioner said, has been messed up since the director of the Drugs Control Administration issued a circular directing the manufacturers, stockists, suppliers of liposomal amphotericin-B to not issue any stock directly to the hospitals or the patients. As per the circular, the stocks cannot be released without recommendations of the committee constituted by the government on drugs release.

"There is no tracking facility available to know the status of the patient's application. The present system is depriving the black fungus patients of their right to get the injections done on time. The delay in the procedure is proving to be fatal. The fungus is further spreading into the jaws, eyes and other parts of the body," the petitioner told the court," the court was told.

The petitioner said the press releases and statements by the state government and its machinery kept saying that steps had been taken to procure sufficient drugs and that there was no scarcity of liposomal amphotericin-B injections. On contrary, patients are waiting for days to get the drug and they are not in a position to know when they would get it, the petitioner said.

Dr Nageshwar Reddy  
bags endoscopy awardDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Dr D. Nageshwar Reddy

Dr D. Nageshwar Reddy, chairman of Asian Institute of Gastroenterology Hospitals, bagged the prestigious V Schindler Award constituted by the American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. He is the first Indian doctor to be bestowed with the distinguished international recognition in the field of medical sciences.

In a virtual ceremony on Monday, this award was given to Dr Reddy for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. The crystal award is the highest category award of Rudolf V Schindler who was the father of gastroscopy. Dr Klaus Mergener, president of ASGE awarded Dr Reddy for his accomplishments in endoscopic research, teaching and service in the field of GI Endoscopy.

Dr Reddy is the first one to promote GI endoscopy in India, said ASGE. Accepting the honour, Dr D Nageshwar Reddy said, "It is very humbling for me as an international member of ASGE to receive this award. This is

also a testament to all endoscopists worldwide from developing nations that hard work and dedication are always recognised irrespective of where they work. I rededicate myself to the education and promotion of quality endoscopy."

Dr Reddy also said success would not have been possible without the support of his wife Carol, his family members and colleagues at AIG hospitals.

Essentials costlier  
as lockdown bitesDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

In times of the serious Covid-19 crisis, soaring prices of essential items are adding to the woes of the people. While fuel prices keep going up, there has been a significant rise in the price of edible oil.

Edible oil prices more than doubled in a year's time. The prices of grains and pulses are also going up. A 15-litre tin of sunflower oil was available at between ₹1,300 and ₹1,400 last year. Now, it is priced at ₹2,900.

Likewise, the prices of broiler chicken and eggs have also been hiked in a month's time. The farm price of the broiler was ₹95 per kg a month ago and now it is ₹170. In a month, prices for 100 eggs rose from ₹350 to ₹495.

Abdur Rahman Suhail of Farhat Foods at Mir Alam Mandi said the prices of different essential items have been going up since the lockdown came into effect in different states. There is an average hike of ₹1,200 to ₹1,300 per quintal of wheat, ₹1,000 hike for pulses, ₹700 hike for Sonu Masuri rice and a rise of ₹600 for onion prices in the wholesale market, compared to what they were a year ago.

Taking advantage of an extreme hike in edible oils, a few millers are mixing cottonseed oil, palm oil or soybean oils in sunflower oil to

● **ABDUR RAHMAN** Suhail at Mir Alam Mandi said the prices of essentials have been going up since the lockdown came into effect in different states. There is an average hike of ₹1,200 to ₹1,300 per quintal of wheat, ₹1,000 hike for pulses, ₹700 hike for Sonu Masuri rice and onion prices have risen ₹600 in the wholesale market, compared to what they were a year ago.

make more money. A Facebook user has posted two pictures of a five-litre 'Sunflower oil' can, highlighting the prices. One quoted a price of ₹599 in May 2020 and the other showed a price of ₹1,082 now. "We all hate palm oil, but Modi is forcing all restaurants to use it even though palm oil price has also doubled. Still, it's the cheapest that restaurants can afford to use."

Khaleda Begum of Nampally says mutton stalls are also looting people "with both their hands", by selling the meat at ₹750-₹800 per kg. There is also a hike in the prices of vegetables. "Within four hours we have to purchase everything. We have to buy items at their rates. Yes, vegetable vendors are facing difficulties due to the lockdown, but why have the companies hiked the prices of essentials," she asked.

State records 3,043  
new cases, 21 deathsDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The number of new cases of Covid-19 fell to 3,043 in the state on Monday, against 59,709 tests carried out, the state health department's Covid-19 bulletin said. There were 21 deaths due to the disease.

The total number of cases stood at 5,56,320 at the end of the day, and the Covid-19 death toll at 3,146. A total of

39,206 patients are in home treatment and isolation, the bulletin said.

The GHMC area recorded 424 new cases, Khammam 198, Medchal Malkajgiri 185, Ranga Reddy 165, Karimnagar 162, Nalgonda 159, Peddapalli 106, Warangal Urban 111 and Warangal Rural 109.

There are 90 micro containment zones in the state and Warangal Rural has the highest number at 19.



Police personnel check motorists during the lockdown imposed to curb the spread of the Coronavirus at MJ Market in Hyderabad on Monday. — S. SURENDER REDDY

Police keeping record of  
first-time lockdown offendersNAVEEN KUMAR | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

The city police officials are maintaining a data of first-time offenders during lockdown when it comes to venturing out on vehicles and seizing the same if they are caught violating the rules the second time. "Counselling and warning are given for the first time and their details are noted down by us," said police officials manning check-posts, adding that they were photographing the vehicles before impoundment to avoid complaints from owners about mishandling.

Hyderabad city police officials said they were often giving the vehicles back in a few hours. "When caught roaming without any valid reason for the first time, we take a photo of the offenders, take the details down and counsel them about the risks of stepping out during such a deadly pandemic. We then let them off with a warning. However, when caught for the second time, we seize the vehicles," police officials at the Begumpet check-post said, adding that as many as 500 vehicles were temporarily lodged in the parking lot of Hyderabad Public School.

When asked about the maintenance of seized vehicles, officials said photographs were captured before the vehicle



Top: Autorickshaws and cars which were seized for being on the roads after the end of the lockdown relaxation seen parked at Koti, Hyderabad. Above: Two-wheeler riders use a gap in the median to escape a checkpoint at Goshamahal in Hyderabad on Monday.

was kept in custody and the same would be used as evidence if there were any damages while the vehicles were in custody. Officials also revealed that there was an increase in the number of seized vehicles for the past one week. "We are seizing several vehicles during these checks and shifting them to the police grounds. The owners will collect them after due court procedures," added the police.

**THE DISTRICT MEDICAL & HEALTH OFFICER, HYDERABAD DISTRICT NOTIFICATION**

Lr.No.2528/E/1/2019 Dated: 24.05.2021

Walk-in-Interview will be conducted to fill up (75) posts of MEDICAL OFFICER (PART TIME) temporarily on contract basis for a period of (01) year.

Interested eligible candidates have to download the application form from the District Official website [www.hyderabad.telangana.gov.in](http://www.hyderabad.telangana.gov.in) and attend for certificate verification from 25.05.2021 to 29.05.2021 during the office hours (from 10.30 AM to 05.00 PM) at Seminar Hall, O/o the DM&HO, 4th floor, Harihara Kala Bhavan, Patry, Secunderabad with filled in application form and all original certificates.

Sd/- District Medical & Health Officer, Hyderabad District

R.O.No.5463-DP/CL/Adv/1/2021-22

**JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (JIPMER)**

Dhanvantri Nagar, Puducherry - 605 006.

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

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

**IMPORTANT DATES**

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

For more details (Prospectus) & latest information Visit - [www.jipmer.edu.in](http://www.jipmer.edu.in)

Admission to all B.Sc Courses will be based on the merit score of the NEET (UG) 2021

DEAN (ACADEMIC)



## IN BRIEF

WOMAN ROBS  
OWN HOUSE WITH  
LOVER'S HELPDC CORRESPONDENT  
KHAMMAM, MAY 24

Police arrested a housewife and her friend for burgling her own house in Karepalli on Monday. Archana Darak, wife of pawn-broker Sivaprakash Darak, and her friend Bathula Venkata Krishna Prasad were taken into custody and jewellery weighing 1,330 grams, 2,330 grams silver and a laptop, worth ₹63 lakh, were seized from their possession.

Sivaprakash and Archana Darak were married in 2008 and they have three children.

His customers were mostly farmers, who mortgaged jewellery and took loans.

Following disputes, Archana moved to her parents' place in Guntur. Police said that she developed extra-marital relations with one Bathula Venkata Krishna Prasad (27), resident of Gannavaram, and decided to marry him. She went to Karepalli following her mother-in-law's demise. She planned to decamp with the jewellery from Siva Prakash's house and called Venkata Krishna to come to Karepalli. While the family members were busy, Archana took the keys of the locker from the pocket of her husband and stole the valuables.

POWER STAFF TO  
DISPLAY ID CARD  
PROMINENTLYDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Chairman and managing director (CMD) G. Raghuma Reddy of the Telangana State Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (TSSPDCL) has asked electricity staff to ensure that their identity cards are clearly visible to police forces who may stop them during the lockdown period. He advised employees to also display TSSPDCL sticker on their vehicles as an additional measure.

The CMD's suggestions came after police beat up an electricity worker in Nalgonda on Saturday. Following this, he has ordered all officers, line-men and other employees of the discom to wear their identity cards on their shirts and affix stickers on their vehicles.

Raghuma Reddy's announcement came after a telephonic conversation between DGP Mahendar Reddy and power minister Jagadish Reddy, wherein the latter protested against police attacking electricity staff discharging their duties, despite their services being exempt under the ESMA Act.

MLA COMES TO  
SAVE BARBER  
FINED BY COPSDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Yakutpura MLA Ahmed Pasha came to the rescue of barber who had been penalised by the traffic police for violating the lockdown, though he had a permit.

Pasha stopped his vehicle at Madina Circle when the barber, Hari Krishna, called him for help, and asked him about the problem. Krishna told him that his vehicle was seized by the police when he was returning home, though he had a valid pass. The police had also taken his photographs.

Pasha approached Charminar traffic inspector K. Srinivas, who was on duty, and informed him of the incident. When Krishna showed the permit letter, the inspector apologised, released the vehicle and deleted the photographs taken by a departmental photographer.

KCR to open TS purse  
strings to stop Covid

CM says no other priority but contain pandemic

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao said that the state government was ready to spend any amount to contain coronavirus in the state and there is no constraint of funds.

Stating that there is no other priority except for controlling Covid-19, he asked finance minister T. Harish Rao to increase budgetary allocation for health and police departments by decreasing the budget of other departments.

He instructed Harish Rao to identify departments that incur less

● **RAO HELD** a high-level meeting at Pragathi Bhavan to review the Coronavirus situation in the state on Monday with senior officials

expenditure and divert those funds to police and health departments, which are incurring heavy expenditure in the fight against Covid-19.

Rao held a high-level meeting at Pragathi Bhavan to review the Coronavirus situation in the state on Monday. Senior officials from health, police and other departments were present.

Rao asked officials to implement a 'dual pronged strategy' to check the spread of virus. He said that Coronavirus tests should be increased substantially while at the same time there was a need to intensify the ongoing door-to-door fever survey. Those showing symptoms should be provided with medical kits, he said. He sought purchase of 50 lakh rapid antigen test kits in order to increase corona tests.

The Chief Minister instructed corona task force chairman K.T. Rama Rao to talk to vaccine manufacturers for

supply of the quantity needed for the second dose.

Rao said that around 160 beds in Gandhi hospital and 200 in Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital should be earmarked separately for black fungus patients. He said the bed strength for black fungus patients should be increased to 1,500 in the State with 1,100 of them earmarked for Hyderabad.

"People from the neighboring States are coming here for treatment of Covid and black fungus. It appears that we cannot escape from giving treatment to people from other states," Rao said.

## BJP sets off on farm protest

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar charged that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao was ruling like Kaala Yama and alleged that his family assets were increasing by the day while farmers were being pushed into debts.

Participating in Rythu Gosa - BJP Poru Deeksha - against the state government's failure in purchasing paddy, he said that Rao visited Gandhi and MGM hospital because of pressure mounted by BJP in the form of protests and agitations. He slammed Rao for not honouring his free urea and seeds promises. He said that farmers were struggling at IKP purchase centres.



BJP state president Bandi Sanjay Kumar pays tribute to Mahatma Gandhi before taking part in the Telangana Raithu Gosa - BJP Poru Deeksha, a protest on farmer issues, at the party office at Nampally.

The BJP leader alleged that farmers were not being paid for the produce that had been purchased. He demanded the Chief Minister to review the situation and purchase the entire paddy crop.

Party national vice-

president D.K. Aruna alleged that the state government had failed to procure paddy even after the Union Government had made certain exemptions. She said that the produce that was to be purchased by April-end

remains unsold. She said that the situation was so bad that farmers are yet to be given the required number of gunny bags. Arrangements should be made to procure and transport paddy from villages, she said.

KCR CREATING  
ETALA, HARISH  
RIFT: MAHASABHADC CORRESPONDENT  
KARIMNAGAR, MAY 24

Javvaji Kumaraswamy, the president of Mudiraj Mahasabha in Huzurabad constituency, alleged on Monday that Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is trying to create a rift between former health minister Etala Rajendar and finance minister T. Harish Rao.

The leaders of the Mudiraj Mahasabha staged a dharna alleging that the TRS is trying to spoil the image of Rajendar by making "false" allegations of land-grab in Ellanthakunta mandal of Huzurabad assembly constituency.

Kumaraswamy recalled that the CM had often stated that Rajendar and Harish Rao were with him from the time of the TRS's inception and they faced a lot of hardships for achieving statehood.

Now Chandrashekar Rao is trying to create a wedge between "true friends". Many leaders along with Harish Rao were facing "injustice" in the party, like Rajendar, with the intake of new leaders from outside.



TPCC chief N. Uttam Kumar Reddy interacts with patients at Suryapet district government hospital on Monday.

Uttam meets Covid  
patients in NalgondaDC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Nalgonda MP and TPCC chief, N Uttam Kumar Reddy, on Monday visited Suryapet district government hospital and interacted with patients in Covid wards.

He enquired about the treatment and services in the hospital and discussed all issues with the superintendent and doctors. He assured the doc-

tors that as the local MP, he would take up the pending issues to the notice of the state and Union governments.

Later, he met the district collector seeking establishment of a small ICU ward with ventilator and purchase of CT scan equipment for Huzurabad government hospital.

He also urged the collector to procure dialysis equipment and oxygen lines in Kodad gov-

ernment hospital. He demanded that the state government should increase the tests in all PHCs and focus on RT PCR tests.

The TPCC president accused the government of reducing the number of tests and showing that positive cases were declining. He stated that he is ready to extend help to increase the bed capacity in Suryapet district hospital from 300 to 1,000.

## YAAS | IMPACT

AP government says officers are busy gearing up for cyclone

## KRMB meet put off, AP for new office

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

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

The KRMB on Monday announced the meeting was postponed following the request of the Andhra Pradesh government and

the fresh date would be notified later.

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

The KRMB last met on March 9 in virtual mode but the meeting ended

● **THE KRISHNA RIVER** Management Board office is likely to be shifted from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam.

abruptly due to technical glitches in video conferencing. Official sources said the KRMB had included the issue of AP and TS not releasing funds to the board in time to meet its administrative costs in the agenda of the meeting.

As per the agreement, both the states have to bear the expenditure

equally. The amount will be utilised for payment of salaries to staff, installing telemetry devices at irrigation projects to gauge the consumption of water by both the states accurately to avoid disputes over water sharing besides meeting day-to-day administrative expenses.

The board wants to seek Rs 18 crore for the new water year. Last year, the board sought Rs 8 crore, but only the Telangana government released its share of ₹4 crore. Sources

said the AP government owed dues for the last two years. The KRMB office is likely to be shifted from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam. As per AP Reorganisation Act, 2014, the office of Godavari River Management Board (GRMB) should be located in Telangana and KRMB continues to function from Hyderabad so far and the AP government is strongly demanding to shift the KRMB office to Visakhapatnam immediately.

OWAISI SLAMS PM  
FOR NOT CLEARING  
THE AIR ON CHINADC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

MIM president Asaduddin Owaisi hit out at the Narendra Modi government for not clearing the air over the stand-off with China. He was reacting to reports of a minor face-off between Indian and Chinese troops in the Galwan valley. The Indian Army ahs denied the claim.

Owaisi termed the situation in Ladakh as "still worrisome." "The PMO has not officially briefed the press nor answered questions in Parliament. What does he want to hide? We lost 20 bravehearts in Galwan last June. China still denies us access to Depsang, Gogra, Hot Springs and Demchok," Owaisi said in tweets posted on Monday. The MIM leader asked whether the Prime Minister "still maintain(s) the fiction that no one has entered India." "What's the plan for reversing ingress in Ladakh? Is the PM going to continue just sitting, hiding behind the excuse of 'legacy issues' to accept the new status quo (sic)," Owaisi asked. He questioned why India was not being taken into confidence about the "ground realities." "Can the PM tell the country when the status quo ante in Ladakh will be restored? Or should we just accept the fait accompli that has been created by China?" he tweeted.

## NIZAMABAD POSITIVITY RATE COMES DOWN

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NIZAMABAD, MAY 24

For the first time, the Covid-19 positivity rate has reduced to single-digit in Nizamabad district on Monday. Of the 1,227 tests including 62 RT PCR tests, a total 120 persons (9.77 per cent) tested positive. For the last two months,

Covid19 positivity rate for the district was in double digit and ranged from 10 to 25 per cent.

Precautions taken by the people and the decrease in tests have resulted in the low positivity rate. The single digit positivity rate is a good sign - that the spread is under substantive check.

## OBITUARY



**Smt. Indira Agarwal**  
(W/o Pramod Agarwal Saraiwala)

Left us to the heavenly abode on Monday 24-05-2021

**Deeply Mourned**  
Govind Agarwal, Lokesh Agarwal, Mohan Agarwal & Deepak Agarwal (Devar), Subham Agarwal (Son), Vidit Agarwal, Utkarsh Agarwal (Nephew) & Saraiwala Family  
**Firm:** Hiralal Changamal Saraiwala

**Residence:** Hira House, Raj Bhavan Road, Somajiguda, Hyderabad.

**Ph: 9849311563, 9000951563**

(CA-3623)

## OBITUARY

"...and the dead in Christ will rise first"  
1 Thess: 4:16(b)



**Mrs. SUZANA**  
W/o Mr. M.G.K. Emmanuel (Veer Kumar)  
Slept in the LORD on May 24th, 2021  
Funeral took place on same day.  
-- Grieving Husband, Children  
Mrs. Sheetal Priya & Prasanna,  
Mrs. Carlyn, Mrs. Merlyn & Subhas,  
Grand-Children, Sisters and Family Members.

87th BIRTHDAY  
REMEMBRANCE

Thou shalt also be crown of Glory in the hand of the Lord and a Royal Diadem The in the hand of thy God (Isiah:62)



**RAJA JOSEPH JYOTHI**

Freelance Writer & Editor in Gruha Jyothi (Christian Edition)  
D.O.B: 25-05-1934 D.O.D: 07-05-1990  
Inserted by: Family Members  
Ph. No: 9848285984, 9866749413.

(S/2122/D00239)

## IN THE LOVING MEMORY OF



**DAMAN JAGGI**  
Passed away on 22.05.2021  
You will remain in our hearts forever.  
We love and miss you.  
**Mandeep & Manmeet Jaggi**  
**Prabdeep & Shalini Jaggi**  
**Simranta Jaggi**  
**Manjeet Jaggi**  
**Suhani, Gurbani & Mahema**

(A/2122/D00011)

## 1st Death Anniversary

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:7



**Mr. P. John Veeraraju**

D.O.B: 22.07.1942 D.O.D: 25.5.2020  
Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure, you are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure.

Inserted by: Mrs. Mariamma (Wife)  
Mr. P. David (Son) & Daughter-in-law  
Daughters & Son-in-laws  
Grand Children  
Ph: 9000788661, 7780430130

## “మనసంతా నీవే”

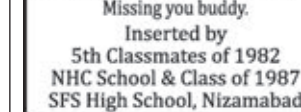


**FORTUNA NELSON**  
"Tears Do Not Dry Up"  
Unfathomable Sadness, Enchanting Smile Frozen, YOU left us with Unconceivable Grief of Legacy.  
**K.DAVID NELSON.**  
**Sandeep, Caroline & Alyna**  
**Mayuri, Rufus, Amy & Sam**  
**Sachendra, Moses & Sarah**  
Ph: 9000020122

## SHRADHANJALI



**Late Sanjeev Reddy Sarsan**  
(02.06.1971 - 13.05.2021)  
A Friend taken from life too soon is nothing but tragedy. We will honour his legacy and remember him always.  
Missing you buddy.  
Inserted by:  
5th Classmates of 1982  
NHC School & Class of 1987  
SFS High School, Nizamabad.



**Mrs. B. SHANTHA**  
Inserted By:  
**FAMILY MEMBERS**

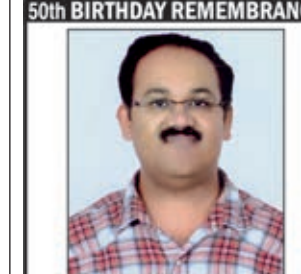
## 9th ANNIVERSARY

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Ps. 116:15



**SMT. KAMALA THAKUR**  
DOD: 25.05.2016  
Prominent Leader For Separate Telangana Agitation Of 1969 & Ex Convincor Congress Mahila Vibhag  
Fondly Remembered By  
**Family Members**  
Ph: 9392489560 / 9391057540

## 50th BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE



**BERI RAJA KRISHNA RAKESH MOHAN YADAV**  
D.O.B: 25-05-1971 D.O.D: 27-10-2012 (in U.K)  
You will be always loved and remembered by us everyday.  
Inserted by: Father: Beri Chandra Mohan Yadav, Wife: Anna Beri, Daughter: Deepthi Beri, Son: Rohan Beri, Sister: Rajashri B., Brother: Ravikanth Beri, Sister-in-Law: Prasanna Beri

## 3RD DAY CEREMONY



**Chintala Lata**  
DOB 03-09-1954 | DOD 23-05-2021  
Enshrined in our Memories  
Husband: Chintala Nandkumar  
With Love: Sons, Daughter, Son-in-law, Daughter-in-laws & Grand Children  
Contact: 98490 32732

## 9th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

In the resurrection and the life whoever lives and believes in me will never die. John. 11:25-26



**Mrs. P. GRACE DOROTHY**  
W/o. Mr. P. Solomon Raj DR. / Retd.  
DOB: 23-05-1955 DOD: 25-5-2012  
Inserted by: - HUSBAND  
Son: RICKY, Daughter: RINNIE,  
Daughter-in-law: REENA  
& Grand Children  
Ph: 8374835673

Ph: 8374835673

## 5th ANNIVERSARY

Of Our Most Beloved Mother



**SMT. KAMALA THAKUR**  
DOD: 25.05.2016  
Prominent Leader For Separate Telangana Agitation Of 1969 & Ex Convincor Congress Mahila Vibhag  
Fondly Remembered By  
**Family Members**  
Ph: 9392489560 / 9391057540



**Shri. Suresh L. Adwant**  
(Retd. JCEE, APPCB)  
Passed away on. 21.05.2021  
Sons: Sandeep S. Adwant & Saurabh S. Adwant  
Contact No. 9346246146 &  
KKB Envirocare Consultants Pvt. Ltd.

## OBITUARY



**SHASHIKANT MEDAKKER**  
DoD : 23rd May, 2021  
Inserted by:  
Family members

## 1st ANNIVERSARY

With profound grief, we would like to inform you Mr. Santosh Karia (77 years) passed away on 24 May 2021.



**Mrs. Parasa Vijaya Samson**  
(Retd Teacher at V.M. Home)  
**W/o Late Parasa Samson**  
DOB: 21-12-1934 Promoted to glory 25-5-2020  
It's been a year already but we cherish your memories and miss you dearly.  
Inserted by:  
Children and Grandchildren

## 1st ANNIVERSARY

With profound grief, we would like to inform you Mr. Santosh Karia (77 years) passed away on 24 May 2021.



**Mr. SANTOSH KARIA**  
S/o Late Madhavji Karia  
Due to the pandemic situation we request you to offer condolences over phone.  
Amit Karia - 98666 88865  
Sonali Karia - 98491 77822

## 1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY



**Mrs. Parasa Vijaya Samson**  
(Retd Teacher at V.M. Home)  
**W/o Late Parasa Samson**  
DOB: 21-12-1934 Promoted to glory 25-5-2020  
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**Mr. SANTOSH KARIA**  
S/o Late Madhavji Karia  
Due to the pandemic situation we request you to offer condolences over phone.  
Amit Karia - 98666 88865  
Sonali Karia - 98491 77822



## SHORT TAKES

## TOSS exam fee date extended

**Hyderabad:** The Telangana Open School Society (TOSS) has extended the last date for payment of examination fee for the SSC and Intermediate examinations with a fine of ₹50 till May 31. Earlier, the last date for payment of examination fee with a fine of ₹50 was May 24. — INN

## YOUTH DIES AFTER BIKE RAMS INTO CHECKPOST

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
ADILABAD, MAY 24

Jannaram police registered a case in connection with the death of Venkatesh Goud (32) of Kotha-Kommugudem of Luxettipet mandal. He died after being hit by the iron-gate at Tapalapur forest check-post in Jannaram mandal on May 22.

The incident took place when he was going towards Jananram from Kothakummariwada of Luxettipet. CCTV video footage went viral on social media.

Family members of Venkatesh lodged a complaint against the bike rider and blamed him for Venkatesh's death.

It is learnt that Venkatesh Goud of Kommugudem was on the pillion seat when his friend Chandrasekar was riding the bike.

The speeding bike hit the iron-gate when the forest staff present there was signaling them to slow down their bike.

CCTV footage showed that even as the forest staff pulled up the gate to some height, Venkatesh hit his head against it and fell off the bike, taking fatal hits to his head.

## 24-YEAR-OLD BOOKED AFTER RAMS SUV

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD MAY 24

The police registered a case against a 24-year-old youth for ramming his car into an SUV and injuring the woman driver near Gowlidoddi on Friday.

According to the FIR, Muthigi Akshitha, 28, was heading for her home in Gopanpally in her SUV (TS09 EP 3150) when a car driven by Ram Avtar, 24, rammed her vehicle.

"Ram's car was running at over 100 kmph when he suddenly swerved the vehicle to make a U-turn and crashed it onto the SUV," said the police, adding that Akshitha ended up with a fracture on her left hand and injuries on her head.

Following a complaint from Akshitha's father, Muthigi Venkatesh, the Gachibowli police booked a case against Ram Avtar under Section 337 (rash and negligent driving) and took him into custody. Cops seized his car (TS07 GF 3334).

A test done on the spot showed that he was not drunk at the time of the mishap. The Cyberabad traffic police shared the CCTV footage of the accident on social media on Sunday and warned the public against over-speeding and quick U-turns.

## WOMAN HELD FOR BLACKMAILING LOVER, SPOUSE

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD MAY 24

A 33-year-old woman who fell in love with a married person and started blackmailing his spouse was arrested by Rachakonda cybercrime police on Monday. Police said the accused, Alluri Neha, a team leader at a multinational company, lost her job due the pandemic.

Police alleged that Neha met a person at a gym in Nagole fell in love with him. On coming to know that he was married, she created multiple fake social media accounts, purchased new mobile numbers and started sending vulgar and abusive messages to the victim and her family members, claiming to be having an extramarital affair with the man. She demanded ransom to stop her from further defaming the man, the police said. She even registered an allegedly false case with the LB Nagar police against the victim's husband.

Upon receiving the complaint, the Rachakonda cybercrime police started investigation, traced Neha and took her into custody.

## TS-AP logjam leaves hundreds stranded

**Aim is to discourage unwanted travel, say police**

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

The interstate borders between Telangana state and Andhra Pradesh remained tense for the second consecutive day, albeit with less intensity when compared with Sunday, as vehicles heading for Hyderabad from Andhra Pradesh were stopped at Garikapadu in Krishna, Ramapuram in Kodad and Vadapalli in Nalgonda districts on Monday.

Though thousands of vehicles were stranded at the inter-state borders on Sunday, causing a lot of inconvenience to commuters as the TS government decided not to allow vehicles to cross its border without having e-pass, by Monday, the number of vehicles had come down as information was spread about curbs on interstate travel.

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

A commuter from Vijayawada, who was stranded at the Garikapadu checkpost on his way to Hyderabad in a car, said, "Earlier, the TS government stopped ambulances carrying Covid-19 infected patients from parts of AP to Hyderabad to get treatment on pretext of not having requisite approvals from hospital authorities and also from

## TS puts block on AP liquor buyers

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
KHAMMAM, MAY 24

Coronavirus cases are rising in mandals of Khammam district, which share border with other states. As a result, Telangana government is serious about not allowing people from neighbouring states to enter Telangana.

Sattupalli Assembly segment has nine check posts on the border with Andhra Pradesh, including Bharainpadu, Duddupudi, V-Venkatapuram and KC Mallela.

Many people from neighbouring AP come to these areas in Telangana to buy liquor during curfew relaxation hours. It is feared it is these people who are spreading Covid-19 in mandals of Khammam APH.

The Covid Control Centre, necessitating the intervention of its High Court to reverse its order. Now, again the TS government has got an idea overnight and is stopping entry of vehicles carrying commuters without any prior announcement and consultation of the AP government. It cannot go on like this between both AP and TS."

Krishna district superintendent of police M.

More than five Covid-19 cases have been reported in 45 villages on a single day in Khammam district. Most of these villages are located along the border with other states.

Khammam collector R. V. Karnan said the state government has decided to open isolation centres in villages where more than 10 Covid-19 cases are reported. He maintained that there is no dearth of Remdesivir and oxygen stocks in any government hospital.

He pointed out that 49 private hospitals in the district have been given permission to treat Covid-19 patients. "Stern action will be taken against these hospitals if they violate guidelines of the government, including the amount of fee to be charged," the collector warned.

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

A police officer at

Vadapalli check-post in Nalgonda district said, "The move is aimed to discourage commuters just to move around from AP to TS with no specific reason, to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. Only a few vehicles were noticed from parts of AP on Monday at our border and we advised the commuters either to get an e-pass to proceed to Telangana or to go back. Some moved away while some others resisted." So was the case at Ramapuram check-post in Kodad as the local police said they were not allowing vehicles without having an e-pass to enter Telangana and the number of vehicles on Monday had come down.

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

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

## Crowded times



People are made to sit close to each other in long queues as they wait to get their Covid-19 test, at Fever Hospital in Hyderabad. — DEEPAK DESHPANDE



A group of guest workers waits in close proximity outside the Secunderabad station to board a train to their native places on Monday — S. SURENDER REDDY

## Water supply to be hit in different parts on May 27

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MAY 24

Hyderabad Metro Water Supply and Sewage Board has notified that there will be no water supply in certain areas of the city from May 27 due to replacement of 1500 mm PSC pipeline from Patancheru to Hydernagar.

Supply will not be available from 6 am on May 27 to 6 pm on May 28 in the following areas: Gangaram, Deepthi Nagar, KSR Enclave, Aparna Hills, Adarsh

● **SUPPLY WILL** not be available from 6 am on May 27 to 6 pm on May 28.

Nagar, Shanti Nagar, Miyapur, Mythrinagar, Madinaguda, Ushodaya Nagar, Vyshali Nagar, Ram Krishna Nagar, Sairam Colony, Miyapur X Roads, Matrusri Nagar, Rajaram Colony, Ambedkar Nagar, Janapriya Phase 1 & 2, Miyapur village, Madhav Nagar, Bhanu Township, Nandi Cooperative society, Huda Mayuri Nagar, S.

C. Bose Nagar, Sirla Gardens, RBR Balaji Nagar, Adithya Nagar, Srirangapuram under O&M Division 15, Hydernagar, Addagutta, Nizampet Main Road, Vasanth Nagar part of KPHB Colony, Ram Naresh Nagar under O&M Division 9, Bolaram Municipality, Gandi Gudam, Sulthanpur, Kistareddy, and Patelguda village under O&M Division 32. Water pressure will be low in Erragada and SR Nagar under O&M Division 6.



Clouds fill the sky over fishing vessels anchored at the fishing harbour in Visakhapatnam on Monday, ahead of the Cyclone Yaas landfall on Wednesday. — K. MURALI KRISHNA

## TS paddy farmers worried over Cyclone Yaas' impact

## AP gears up to face yet another storm

**DURGA PRASAD SUNKU | DC**  
HYDERABAD MAY 24

Giribabu, a paddy farmer of Jangaon district, has expressed a major worry of farmers in Telangana: "How to dry our paddy if there is going to be more of rainfall in Telangana?" The weather office has warned that the state is set to face the onslaught of Yaas cyclone through this week.

"Paddy has around 20-25 per cent moisture content. We have to dry it and reduce the moisture to 16 per cent before the state government procures it from us. The moisture content would increase if there is rain. We have to dry the grains for a longer period, which leads to discoloration," laments Giribabu.

Giribabu adds that the already labour-intensive process of paddy harvesting would only get more complicated with the rains. Speaking to Deccan Chronicle, Vissa Kiran Kumar from Rythu Swarajya Vedika said, "If the crop gets wet due to the rain, there would be a loss of Rs 500 per quintal."

The rain forecast has left the farmers in deep pain. As per the IMD forecast, "Thunderstorms associated with lightning and at times gusty winds of 30 to 40 kmph are very likely to occur at isolated places in Adilabad, Komaram Bheem, Mancherial, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Mulugu, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Khammam and other districts."

The forecast is for a period from May 24 to 26 and for the 28th too.

The rain is likely to pose a threat to the rabi seasonal crops (winter-grown crops) like maize, paddy, and Bengal gram in addition to mangoes.

Farmers are already battered by the lockdown. They are hit by the low market prices and many of them are unable to go to their fields due to travel restrictions.

tions. The recent heavy rainfall has already played havoc with their crops, and now comes the prediction of more rain due to a cyclonic formation in the Bay of Bengal.

Every year, the Telangana state government has, through the civil supplies department, been procuring paddy from farmers. This year, the government has estimated that there would be about 1.41 crore tonnes of paddy yield. However, so far, the government has procured only 60 lakh tonnes directly.

Paddy procurement by the government has also been impacted by the lockdown. "Procurement by the state government is very slow this year. So far, it has procured only around 50 per

Covid-infected patients undergoing treatment. He asked them to avoid any power cut to the oxygen generation plants, oxygen refilling plants and to the centres dealing with oxygen cylinders.

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

He laid stress on making alternative arrangements in case of any disruption in transport of medical oxygen especially from Angul in Odisha due to the cyclone.

cent of the yield. It is not possible to complete the procurement by May end. Due to the unprecedented rain, it has been difficult to dry the wet crops. There are not enough of the dryers and paddy has to be dried in the open," said Kanneganti Ravi from the Rythu Swarajya Vedika.

Ravi has requested the government to speed up the process of procurement and use government buildings like schools, colleges and function halls to store the paddy and other crops in view of rains.

In addition to that, they have requested for an increase in the procurement centres by 5,000 more. They also want the government to procure other crops like bengal gram as was assured to them.

## RAJU'S RELEASE TO BE DELAYED

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 24

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

When the MP's lawyers arrived at the 6th additional civil junior judge court in Guntur to submit sureties for his release on bail on Monday, the in-charge magistrate asked for the MP's discharge summary from the Military Hospital in Secunderabad where he is undergoing treatment.

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

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

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

**GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA**  
**IRRIGATION & CAD DEPARTMENT**  
Office of the Superintending Engineer,  
Irrigation Circle, Gajwel

Tenders are invited for the following work in Siddipet District, Gajwel Division:

**e-procurement Notice No. 02/C-GAJWEL/2021-2022, Dt. 21.05.2021:** Minor Irrigation - (FDR 2020) - Repairs to Bund portion damaged during heavy rainfall of the source - Annareddy cheruvu, Kondapak (village and mandal) - Siddipet District - for 1 (One) work with ECV: Rs. 31.85 Lakhs from Dt. 01.06.2021 to Dt. 08.06.2021

For Details visit [www.tender.telangana.gov.in](http://www.tender.telangana.gov.in) e-procurement market place

**Sd/- Superintending Engineer,**  
Irrigation Circle, Gajwel

F.O.No 12150-PP/CL/Advt/1/2021-22

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**  
**NUCLEAR FUEL COMPLEX**  
**ECIL POST, HYDERABAD-062**

**Deputy Chief Executive (A&A), NFC on behalf of President of India invites Two-part sealed tenders from the reputed Transport Contractors for the following work:**

**NIT No:** NFC/Tpt./Vehicles/2021/01 **Name of the work:** For hiring 10 (Ten) Swift Dzire (AC) vehicles or equivalent vehicles for commuting of senior officers of Nuclear Fuel Complex from specific points in the twin cities to NFC & back and other duties during intervening period and other vehicles on "As and When required basis". **Estimated Cost:** Rs. 55,80,000/- **EMD:** Declaration to be submitted as per prescribed format mentioned in Tender Document at Annexure. **Period of Contract:** 12 Months.

Tender forms and other details can be obtained from the Office of Administrative Officer-III (Transport), IVth Floor, Aadhar Building, Nuclear Fuel Complex, Hyderabad-500062 on payment of Rs. 1000/- in the form of DD/B/C drawn from a scheduled bank in favour of "Pay & Accounts Officer, NFC". The last date of receipt of tender form will be up to 14.00 hrs on 24/05/2021. Other details/information can be seen on NFC website: [www.nfc.gov.in](http://www.nfc.gov.in)

**Deputy Chief Executive (A&A), Nuclear Fuel Complex**  
**For and on behalf of the President of India**



## DECCAN Chronicle

25 MAY 2021

### CBSE's Class 12 exams: Choose dates prudently

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

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

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

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

### Act against those trashing docs

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

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

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

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

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

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Subhani



## Israel & Gaza: Use truce to find a lasting solution



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray  
Reflections

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

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

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

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

Netanyahu tweeted to some 25 governments, but would have ensured some respect for American diplomacy. India is not of course among the 25 recipients, but it would be a mistake to gloat over the seemingly fulsome thanks of Israeli and Palestinian diplomats for the speech by India's United Nations representative, T.S. Tirumurti, at the Security Council debate.

All that their praise meant was that South Block once again passed off opportunism as diplomacy, a skill India's leaders have raised to an art form during the long years of nonalignment, which the Americans called "neutrality". New Delhi was at pains then to claim equidistance from Washington and Moscow. Not that India, with limited resources and the geopolitical handicap of location, could have taken a lead role even if it had wanted to. An impoverished and grossly overpopulated Third World nation at odds with its western and northern neighbours, struggling desperately to battle the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, should not even pretend to global authority. Even before events reduced his stature, Mr Modi was no Jawaharlal Nehru to be listened to when he spoke on global matters. Nothing in his background or career indicated any grasp of international affairs. Moreover, his bombastic style — demanding applause for saving "humanity from a big disaster by containing the coronavirus effectively" — hardly commands respect.

India's rulers have always taken an ad hoc attitude to Israel. Only Jawaharlal Nehru's disgust with Egypt's King Farouk, then heading the Arab League, prompted

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

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

#### LETTERS

##### CLASS XII EXAMS

It would be prudent to formulate a national policy for vaccinating Class XII students along with their teachers and staff in Oct-Dec at their respective schools (CBSE CI-12 exam likely in July-Sept, May 24). These students are grown up enough to be inoculated. It will enable boards to conduct classes from January to March 2022 and the final exams in April 2022.

Vineet Chaturvedi  
Secunderabad

##### CELEBRITY ARROGANCE

A little name, fame and money brings out the arrogance and ignorance of a few people. Baba Ramdev utters reckless statements and Olympian Sushil Kumar gets involved in a brawl and murder case. They seem to lack class, decency, humility or integrity. We put them on a pedestal and they get carried away.

N. Prabhakar  
Hyderabad

##### E-PASS RULE

The sudden imposition of the e-pass rule at the TS-AP border is not justified (State e-pass rule creates ruckus at TS-AP border, DC, May 24). Even though it is a welcome action, TS should note connections between people in both states. Hyderabad is also common capital for another four years.

S.S. Rama Chandra Murty  
Hyderabad

#### 50 YEARS AGO IN

### DECCAN Chronicle

#### India will take all steps to ensure its security: PM

NEW DELHI, MAY 24.

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

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

Aakar Patel



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist



## SHORT TAKES

SC SEEKS REPLY  
ON PLEA FOR  
COMPENSATION

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

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

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

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

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

MAHA PROMISES  
FREE TREATMENT  
FOR BLACK FUNGUS

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC  
MUMBAI, MAY 24

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

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

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

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

SC: EXPEDITE  
REGISTRATION OF  
GUEST WORKERS

PARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

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

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

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

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

AllMS chief says recovered  
patients need longer care

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

VINEETA PANDEY | DC  
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

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

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

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

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

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

However, the rising cases of Mucormycosis (Black

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

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

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

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

Vardhan, in an order, said the lockdown, which was earlier imposed till May

Fungus) is now becoming a new worry. Punjab has recorded 111 such cases.

Delhi on Monday reported 1,550 new Covid-19 cases and 207 deaths, bringing down both fatali-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

vened to review the pandemic situation in the state.

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

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

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

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



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

MP relaxes curfew  
norms in 5 districts

RABINDRA NATH  
CHOUDHURY | DC  
BHOPAL, MAY 24

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

The five districts where relaxation of lockdown was made were Jhabua, Alirajpur, Khandwa, Burhanpur and Bhind. Accordingly, functioning of government offices with cent per cent officers and 25 per cent employees has been allowed in these districts, while shops dealing with groceries have been permitted to open during the day.

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

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

Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has earli-

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

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

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

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

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

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

DELHI HOSP HAD  
40 KIDS WITH  
'SEVERE' COVID

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

## Safety first



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



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



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

## TOUGH | TIMES

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

## Patients recovering from Covid see a long road ahead

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was no one to take us to the washroom and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

were clogged and dirty.

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI







## SHORT TAKES

U.S. JOURNALIST  
DETAINED IN  
MYANMAR

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

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

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

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

ANA TURNS INTO  
A POST-TROPICAL  
CYCLONE

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

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

The hurricane center said it would dissipate on Monday. No watches or warnings were in effect for the storm. It posed no threat to land. Ana was the first named storm in the Atlantic this year, though hurricane season doesn't officially start until June 1. Meteorologists expect the 2021 season to be busy, but not to the level of last year's the record-breaking season.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OMAN SEES RARE  
PROTESTS OVER  
JOB LAYOFFS

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

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

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

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

3 Wuhan virology lab staff  
ill before Covid disclosed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Trained dogs could sniff out Covid: Study

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Commission, the company is set to provide only 70 million doses in the second quarter. It had promised 180 million. While the EU insists AstraZeneca has breached its contractual obligations, the company says it has fully complied with the agreement, arguing that vaccines are difficult to manufacture and it made its best effort to deliver on time. —AP

UK confident to lift  
virus curbs by June

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Merkel, Macron  
favour WHO  
improvement

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

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

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

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

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

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

COVID SHADOW  
HANGS OVER  
W.H.O. MEETING

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

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

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

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

Suu Kyi appears for  
first time in court

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

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



Aung San Suu Kyi

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

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

BBC to probe into  
Diana interview

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

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

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

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



Princess Diana

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

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

## BIZ | ON HOLD

Officials rules out quake as a cause, investigation to continue

## ‘Shaking building’ puts traders in tizzy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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



## SHORT TAKES

UK ACTIVIST  
CRITICAL AFTER  
GETTING SHOT

**London:** An activist who has played a leading role in anti-racism demonstrations in Britain is in critical condition after being shot in London, her political party says.

The Taking the Initiative Party says Sasha Johnson was shot in the head on Sunday. It said Johnson, who played a leading role in Black Lives Matter protests last year, had received numerous death threats. The recently founded Taking the Initiative Party said Johnson, a member of its executive leadership committee, was a strong, powerful voice for our people and our community.

The Metropolitan Police force said a 27-year-old woman was in a hospital in critical condition after being shot in south-east London early Sunday. It did not identify her, but said there is nothing to suggest it was a targeted attack.

AFGHAN FORCES,  
TALIBAN CLASH  
NEAR CAPITAL

**Mihtarlam, Afghanistan:** Afghan forces clashed with Taliban fighters in a provincial capital about 120 kilometres (75 miles) from Kabul, officials and witnesses said, prompting the defence minister to take charge of a counteroffensive.

Violence has soared in Afghanistan since US forces began their final pull-out on May 1, as the insurgents press on with a campaign to seize new territory.

Fierce fighting erupted late Sunday on the edge of Mihtarlam, a city of around 140,000 people and the capital of Laghman province.

At one point Defence Minister Yasin Zia took personal charge in the field, officials said. "With the arrival of reinforcements, the enemy has sustained heavy blows," Zia, a former army chief of staff, said in a video message.

The ministry said at least 50 Taliban fighters were killed in overnight fighting.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said that the insurgents captured 37 security checkpoints in city's outskirts.

IRAQ KILLINGS  
SPARK CALLS FOR  
ELECTION BOYCOTT

**Baghdad:** A wave of deadly attacks on pro-democracy activists and journalists in Iraq have sparked mounting calls to boycott October parliamentary elections, as perpetrators go unpunished.

Killings, attempted murder and abductions have targeted more than 70 activists since a protest movement erupted against government corruption and incompetence in 2019.

Elections were set in response to a central demand of the protracted protest movement that lasted from October to June 2020, and during which demonstrators also rallied against Iran's influence in Iraq. But as attacks continue with impunity, more voices have joined a call to boycott the vote.

Ex-lawmaker Faeq al-Sheikh Ali resigned after anti-government campaigner Inhab al-Wazni was shot dead in an ambush in the central holy Shiite shrine city of Karbala on May 9.

"I announce my withdrawal from the legislative elections," he said after Wazni's killing. He also called for other leaders of the protest movement to pull out of the race.

ITALY PROBES  
CABLE CAR CRASH  
WHICH KILLED 14

**Stresa:** The investigation into Italy's cable car disaster that killed 14 people will focus on why the lead cable snapped and why the emergency brake didn't engage and prevent the cabin from careening back down the mountain until it pulled off the support line and crashed to the ground, the lead prosecutor said on Monday.

Verbania Prosecutor Olimpia Bossi outlined the contours of her investigation based on what she said was objective, empirical fact of what occurred: "The brakes of the security system didn't work. Otherwise the cabin would have stopped," she said. "Why that happened is naturally under investigation."

Bossi spoke to reporters as the lone survivor of Sunday's horrific tragedy, a 5-year-old Israeli boy living in Italy, remained hospitalised in Turin in intensive care with multiple broken bones. The Israeli foreign ministry identified him as Eitan Biran. His parents, younger brother and two great-grandparents were among the dead, the ministry said, correcting an earlier statement that had included Eitan among the victims.

## China ignores India's protest over CPEC

Defends \$60 billion infrastructure project with Pakistan passing through Pak occupied Kashmir

**Beijing, May 24:** China on Monday again defended its controversial \$60 billion CPEC project with Pakistan, disregarding India's protests as it is being laid through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, saying it is an economic initiative and has not affected its principled stand on the Kashmir issue.

Leaders of China and Pakistan have praised the progress of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in recent days as the two close allies

celebrated the establishment of 70 years of their diplomatic relations. India has protested to China over the CPEC, the flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as it traverses through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The massive infrastructure project connects China's Xinjiang province with Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan province. China has been defending the CPEC, saying it is an economic proj-

● **THE MASSIVE infrastructure project connects China's Xinjiang province with Gwadar port in Pakistan's Balochistan province.**

ect not aimed at any third country.

Answering questions on the CPEC at a media briefing on Monday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said that the CPEC as one of the pioneering

projects under the BRI has made important and major progress in infrastructure, energy, ports and industrial parks. He said the Belt and Road Initiative is an open international economic cooperation initiative with objectives of enhancing regional connectivity and achieving common development. "We are also extending the CPEC to regional countries, including Afghanistan. This will not only boost faster economic development in Pakistan,

but also regional connectivity," he said.

Asked how China sees regional prosperity being furthered by the CPEC in view of India's position that it passes through Indian territory illegally occupied by Pakistan, Zhao said the project has not affected China's principled position on Kashmir. "China has stated its principled position on Kashmir many times. The CPEC is an economic initiative that targets no third country. It is not

about territorial disputes and does not affect our principled position on the issue of Kashmir," he said.

On the CPEC's extension to Afghanistan, he said, "on third party participation in the CPEC, China is having discussions with third parties, including Afghanistan." "The two sides are having consultations through diplomatic channels. We notice that Afghanistan imports and exports goods through Gwadar and Karachi ports. High-speed highways are

also being extended to Afghanistan," he added.

In a message to his Pakistani counterpart Arif Alvi on Friday on the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Pakistan diplomatic relations, President Xi Jinping said the CPEC has achieved remarkable results. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said at a high-level meeting in Islamabad that the CPEC will bring economic progress not only to Pakistan but the entire region. —PTI

EU to respond as  
Belarus diverts jet  
to arrest reporter

**Brussels, May 24:** Angry European Union leaders were set to consider a joint response on Monday to Belarus' diversion of a plane travelling between EU member nations in order to arrest a prominent Belarusian opposition journalist.

Raman Pratasevich, who ran a popular messaging app that played a key role in helping organise massive protests against Belarus' authoritarian president, was on board the Ryanair flight from Athens, Greece, to Vilnius, Lithuania, when it was diverted to the Belarusian capital, Minsk while flying over Belarus.

Belarusian flight controllers had warned the plane crew of an alleged bomb threat and ordered it to land in Minsk, and a Belarusian fighter jet was scrambled to escort the Ryanair airliner.

Shortly after the landing, the 26-year-old Pratasevich and his Russian girlfriend were led out of the plane. The jet was eventually allowed to continue its flight and landed in Vilnius hours behind schedule.

Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda on

Sunday called the incident a state-sponsored terror act and proposed banning Belarusian planes from European Union airports and serious sanctions against the Belarusian government.

The 27 EU leaders open a two-day summit later on Monday and the issue immediately shot to the top of the agenda amid united condemnation of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell called it yet another blatant attempt by the Belarusian authorities to silence all opposition voices. He called the diversion of the plane an inadmissible step highlighting a further worsening in relations between both sides.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the incident shocking and accused the Belarusian government of endangering the lives of those aboard the aircraft, including some Americans.

He called for the release of Pratasevich and for the Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation to review the incident. —AP

Nepal's Oppn files  
writ petition over  
House dissolution

**Kathmandu, May 24:** Nepal's Opposition alliance on Monday filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court demanding restoration of the House of Representatives and appointment of veteran Nepali Congress leader Sher Bahadur Deuba as the Prime Minister.

Leaders of the alliance moved the apex court two days after President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House on the recommendations of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli, who headed a minority government after losing a trust vote in the House on May 10.

In the writ, the petitioners have demanded that Nepali Congress President Deuba should be lawfully appointed the Prime Minister of Nepal in accordance with Article 76 (5). Their other demands include the scrapping of the announcement of elections in November, to stop election-related programmes

amid the pandemic, and to issue an order to summon House meeting to facilitate presentation of the budget within the time provisioned by the Constitution, it said.

The petitioners noted that the dissolution was "unconstitutional" as there was legal room for the appointment of a new government as per Article 76(5) of the Constitution of Nepal. As many as 146 members of the dissolved House of Representatives — 61 from the Nepali Congress, 49 from the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), 23 from the Madhav Nepal faction of the CPN-UML, 12 from the Upendra Yadav-Baburam Bhattarai of the Janata Samajbadi Party and one from Rastriya Janamancha Nepal — have signed the petition, challenging Prime Minister Oli and President Bhandari's House dissolution move late on Friday night, *The Kathmandu Post* reported. —PTI

## Protest for survival



During a protest against incessant kidnappings and killings, residents of Gauraka community in Tafa Local Government Area of Niger State set bonfire on the Kaduna-Abuja highway in Gauruka, near Abuja, Nigeria, on Monday.

— AFP

## Blinken off to West Asia for peace talks

Assailant stabs 2 to death  
in Jerusalem, shot dead

**Washington, May 24:** The United States' Secretary of State Antony Blinken departs on Monday for a Middle East trip aimed at consolidating the ceasefire that brought 11 days of deadly bombardment between Israel and Hamas to a halt.

"Secretary Blinken will meet with Israeli leaders about our ironclad commitment to Israel's security," US President Joe Biden said in a statement. "He will continue our administration's efforts to rebuild ties to, and support for, the Palestinian people and leaders, after years of neglect."

Biden, who came under criticism from many within his own Democratic party for not pushing US ally Israel more publicly to call a ceasefire, has touted his administration's "quiet, relentless diplomacy" to bring about a halt in



Antony Blinken

the fighting.

Blinken's trip, in addition to meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders, will take him to Cairo and Amman for consultations with officials there.

In a tweet, Blinken said that the trip will aim to support "efforts to solidify a ceasefire".

"The United States has engaged in intensive diplomacy to bring an end to the hostilities and reduce tensions," he added.

Israeli strikes on Gaza this month killed 248

**Jerusalem, May 24:** An assailant stabbed two young Israeli men before being shot dead by police at a tram station in Jerusalem on Monday, Israeli police said.

"Attacker shot and killed," police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. Hadassah medical centre said it was treating two men in their 20s for stab wounds. Both were in moderate condition and one was identified by the

army as a soldier.

There was no immediate confirmation of the assailant's identity.

The incident happened a short distance from Sheikh Jarrah, which saw weeks of protests against the planned expulsion of Palestinians from their homes in the occupied east Jerusalem neighbourhood in the build-up to this month's fighting between Israel and Gaza militants.

The May 10 rocket attack

by Palestinian militants led to Israeli air strikes, an escalation that cost the lives of 248 people in Gaza and 12 in Israel.

The violence ended in an Egyptian-brokered truce on Friday.

But the weekend saw Israeli police crack down again on stone-throwing protesters at the highly sensitive Al-Aqsa mosque compound, in a sign of how volatile the situation remains. —AFP

Palestinians, including 66 children, and have wounded over 1,900 people, the Gaza health ministry says.

Rockets and other fire from Gaza claimed 12 lives in Israel, including one child and an Arab-Israeli

teenager, an Israeli soldier, one Indian, and two Thai nationals, medics say. —AFP

## Intl court opens Dafur case hearing

**The Hague, May 24:** The International Criminal Court Prosecutor opened a hearing on Monday of evidence against an alleged leader of a notorious militia blamed for atrocities in Darfur, calling him a "willing and energetic" perpetrator of crimes in the conflict-torn region of Sudan in 2003-2004.

Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda's comments came at the start of the first presentation at the global court of evidence against a suspect charged

with involvement in crimes by the Janjaweed militia in Darfur. "It is my great privilege to be present here today when finally one of the suspects in the Darfur situation is before this court to face independent and impartial justice," Bensouda said.

"Let me express my sincere respect and admiration for the courage, patience and resilience of the Darfur victims who have waited for so long for this day to arrive," Ali Mohammed Ali Abdul Rahman Ali, known as Ali Kush-

ayb, is charged with a total of 31 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes dating back to the deadly Darfur conflict in 2003 and 2004 including murder, rape, torture and persecution. He has not entered a plea to the charges but at a hearing last year he told judges the allegations were "untrue."

His lawyer, Cyril Lauczi, disputes the court's jurisdiction in the case. Monday's hearing is not a trial. Instead, it is intended to establish whether evidence against Kushayb

is strong enough to merit putting him on trial at the global court. A decision is expected later this year.

The conflict in Darfur broke out when rebels from the territory's ethnic central and sub-Saharan African community launched an insurgency in 2003, complaining of oppression by the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum. The government of now-deposed President Omar al-Bashir's government responded with a campaign of aerial bombings. —AP

## FRIGHTENING | DAYS

There are signs that a time may come without any tomorrow for newspaper

## Uncertainty looms over HK's Apple Daily

**Hong Kong, May 24:** A shadow of fear hangs over Hong Kong's outspoken and staunchly pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper, with its billionaire owner Jimmy Lai now jailed and many reporters asking themselves: "Are we next?" Each day, tomorrow's date is hung up on the walls of the bustling newsroom, a constant reminder of the need to get the next edition out.

But there are growing signs a time may come

when the 26-year-old newspaper has no tomorrow in a city that once marketed itself as a regional bastion of the free press.

"I am facing the greatest crisis since I took up the post over three years ago," Apple Daily's chief editor Ryan Law said, just days before authorities used a new national security law to freeze Lai's assets, including his media empire shares.

On a table in Law's office sat five recent resignation

● **THE RAUCOUS tabloid, founded by Lai in 1995, has unapologetically backed Hong Kong's long and fruitless democracy campaign and can be withering in its criticism of both Beijing and Hong Kong's leaders.**

letters from staff, a vivid illustration of the worries coursing through the newsroom.

But Law, an Apple Daily veteran of some two decades, remained defiant — and devoted to journalism despite the threat.

"Some colleagues asked if Apple will eventually close shop when the CEO or I am arrested," he said.

"I said: Apple is still here even after Mr Lai's arrest."

As China's crackdown gathered pace in the wake of 2019's huge and often violent democracy protests, mainland authorities

made no secret of their desire to see Apple Daily — and its Next Digital parent group — shuttered.

The raucous tabloid, founded by Lai in 1995, has unapologetically backed Hong Kong's long and fruitless democracy campaign and can be withering in its criticism of both Beijing and Hong Kong's leaders.

Lai has long been branded a "traitor" and a "black hand" by Chinese state media, and declared guilty

by senior communist party leaders.

Hong Kong's police chief has recently taken to calling for a "fake news" law, making clear Apple Daily is in his sights.

Prosecutions have come thick and fast for Lai over the last year.

He is currently serving a 14-month sentence for attending two protests in 2019, and faces two more ongoing prosecutions linked to other rallies. —AFP



## quick BITES

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

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

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

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

## Jaypee CoC defers voting, may consider NBCC bid



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

## Bank credit up 6.02%; deposits grow 9.87%

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

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

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

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

KFALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, MAY 24

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

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

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



A bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M. R. Shah made an observation while waiting for the video connection of Advocate Tiwari to be established.

Justice Bhushan asked Justice Shah, "Have you seen the prayers, brother?"

To this, Justice Shah said, "Yes. We cannot grant it. A representation can be allowed to be made to the RBI."

The court then deferred the hearing to June 11.

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

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

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

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

## POSTPAID-PREPAID SWITCH THROUGH OTP ON THE CARDS

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

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

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

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

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

—PTI

## It's a \$3 trillion stock market now

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MAY 24

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

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

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



equivalent to 1 trillion.

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

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

From the April lows, the

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

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

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

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

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

## Zeta raises \$250 mn from SoftBank Vision

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, MAY 24

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

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

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

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

expanding customer base.

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

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

## Roche Antibody Cocktail launched at ₹59,750/dose

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

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

Cipla will distribute the product, it added.

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

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

and Covid treatment centers.

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

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

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

The cocktail is to be administered for the treatment of mild to moderate Covid in adults and children (above 12 years weighing at least 40 kg) who are confirmed to be infected with Sars-Cov-2.

—PTI

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

ADITI KHANNA  
LONDON, MAY 24

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

—PTI

## RBI issues guidelines on co-op bank amalgamation

FALAKNAAZ SYED  
MUMBAI, MAY 24

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Monday said that it would consider the amalgamation of district central co-operative banks (DCCBs) with state cooperative banks (StCBs) subject to various conditions, including that a proposal should be made by the state government concerned. The guidelines will also apply for amalgamation of one or more DCCBs in a state with the StCB or amalgamation of one DCCB with another.

The Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020 has been notified for the StCBs and DCCBs with effect from April 1, 2021. Amalgamation of such banks needs to be sanctioned by the Reserve Bank of India.

The RBI said it would consider proposals for amalgamation when the state government makes a proposal to amalgamate one or more DCCBs/s in the state with the StCB after conducting a

detailed study of the legal framework along with additional capital infusion strategy, assurance regarding financial support, if required, projected business model with clear profitability and proposed governance model for the amalgamated bank. Similarly, it would also consider a proposal when the scheme of amalgamation is approved by the requisite majority of shareholders or when such proposal of the state government has been examined and recommended by the Nabard.

"The proposal for amalgamation of DCCBs with the StCB will be examined by the Reserve Bank in consultation with Nabard and the sanction/ approval will be a two-stage process. In the first stage, an 'in-principle' approval will be accorded subject to fulfilment of certain conditions, following which the processes for amalgamation may be initiated by all concerned. After completion of the above

processes, Nabard and Reserve Bank may be approached for final approval along with a compliance report. To enable the Reserve Bank to consider the application for sanction, the state government shall submit the information and documents specified to the concerned regional office of Reserve Bank and Nabard," said the central bank said.

Detailing the regulatory criteria, the RBI said that the financial parameters of the amalgamated entity based on notionally consolidated latest audited financial statements should be robust. It should have its capital to risky asset ratio (CRAR) above the prescribed regulatory minimum, the gross non-performing assets below 7 per cent and net NPA below 5 per cent and availability of adequate liquid assets. Post-amalgamation, it should be a profit making and financially viable entity on a sustained basis, said the apex bank.

## SF90i | STRADALE The hybrid car is for the masses, with no production limit set Ferrari pitches \$5,00,000 supercar for daily driving

HANNAH ELLIOTT  
MAY 24

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

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



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

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

deal! Huge.

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

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

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

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

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

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

—Bloomberg





## SHORT TAKES

## No spin, Shivalal plays straight

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

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

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

## BCCI to donate in Covid relief work

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

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

## Hurt Shapovalov out of French Open

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

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

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

## Mickelson oldest to win golf major

**Kiawah Island, USA:** Phil Mickelson has delivered so many thrills and spills over 30 years of pure theater that no one ever knows what he will do next. His latest act was a real stunner: A major champion at age 50. Mickelson captured his sixth major and by far the most surprising Sunday at the PGA Championship. He made two early birdies and let a cast of contenders fall too far behind to catch him in the shifting wind of Kiawah Island. He closed with a 1-over 73, building a five-shot lead and not making any critical mistakes that kept him from his place in history. Julius Boros for 53 years held the distinction of golf's oldest major champion. He was 48 when he won the 1968 PGA Championship in San Antonio. — AP

## Booker shines as Suns sink Lakers

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

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

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## LILLE BLOSSOM

## Galtier's men pip powerhouse PSG to win French league

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP



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

## Aguero ends City career in style

**Manchester (United Kingdom), May 24:**

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

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

His efforts added to earlier strikes from Kevin De

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

Bruyne, Gabriel Jesus and Phil Foden as City showed no sign of letting up ahead of the showpiece clash against Chelsea in Porto.

"When I came here the first title for me was the most important, for the club and for me, that Man City started to win more titles so I'm so happy because it's not easy to be 10 years at one club, for

me it's an honour," he told Sky Sports.

"Before the game I felt so strange, the sensation is not good. I prefer to think about the good moments," added the Argentine, who said he hoped to feature in the Champions League final.

Manager Pep Guardiola was in tears after the final whistle in Manchester, describing Aguero as a

"special person for all of us".

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

**'SERGIO CLOSE TO BARCELONA DEAL'**

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

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

## RAMOS OUT OF SPAIN'S SQUAD FOR EURO 2020

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

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

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

## Juve, AC Milan qualify for CL

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

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

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

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

"We went through the whole championship at



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

the top, unfortunately we had thrown away the match point last Sunday.

"I'm really excited, happy, I have to thank the club because they made us work in a spectacular way."

Atalanta had already

ensured a third consecutive season of Champions League football but missed out on a first second-place Serie A finish days after losing out in the Coppa Italia final to Juventus.

Cristiano Ronaldo was

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

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

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

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

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

## City girls make it to sailing worlds

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 24**

Hyderabad sailors Jhansipriya Laveti and Vaishnavi Veeravamsham have been selected for the World Championships at Lake Riva Del Garda, Italy, starting from July.

This is a first ever for Telangana that two girls have been selected for the World Championships in the sub juniors category in the same year. The Under 16 Worlds will be attended by 264 sailors from across more than 60 countries making it the most deeply competitive regatta for youth.

Vishvanath Padidala another sailor from Hyderabad who learned the ropes at the Yacht

Club has also been selected for the Italy Worlds taking the tally of Telangana sailors to three.

Vishvanath was selected from The Yacht Club to represent the Navy Sailing Team in 2016 and is currently seeded at 3 in India. His father rides an autorikshaw and often works on construction labour sites in Hyderabad.

Jhansipriya's mother is single and works as part of the housekeeping team at a city hospital. She is all excited about her daughter going for her fourth international after the 2019 Oman Asians and the Atlantic Week at Portugal and Spain.

Vaishnavi's mother works as domestic help at various houses in



Jhansipriya and Vaishnavi pose with coach Suheim Sheikh at the Yacht Club.

Marredpally and cannot believe that her daughter is India No.2 and will be carrying the tricolour to Italy for a World Championship.

Both Jhansi and Vaishnavi, students of Udbhav School at

Rasoolpura, joined sailing in 2018 and rapidly rose to the top of the Indian fleet.

"We are both looking to move up the ladder to the Olympic and Asian Games Class, the Laser, and participate in the forthcoming Asian Trials to be held in Hyderabad in August given that this is our last year in the under 16 category," said a jubilant Vaishnavi who is eagerly looking to migrating to the Lasers and the 29er.

"Garda is a lake and is known for heavy weather and hopefully our experience with Hussain Sagar monsoons will help a great deal," Jhansi added confidently.

"Jhansipriya is India No.1 and Vaishnavi India

No.2 and we are proud that she was selected and we shall leave no stone unturned in their participation at the Worlds," said Lt Gen. K.S. Rao, president of the Telangana Sailing Association.

"Both girls are training hard and I do hope that Covid related visa issues and quarantine issues do not spoil the party. Fingers crossed," said Suheim Sheikh an alumni of IIT Madras, their coach and also the president of the YCH Foundation, a charitable sports organisation at Hussain Sagar with the tagline "Dignity Through Sports" and works only with marginalised children taking them to international levels of sailing.

## ASIAN | BOXING

## Hussamuddin gives India winning start

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

## KOCHI TUSKERS STILL OWE 35% MONEY TO PLAYERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## WORLD TEST | CHAMPIONSHIP

## Gill says India well prepared for final

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

— SHUBMAN GILL Indian opener

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

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

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