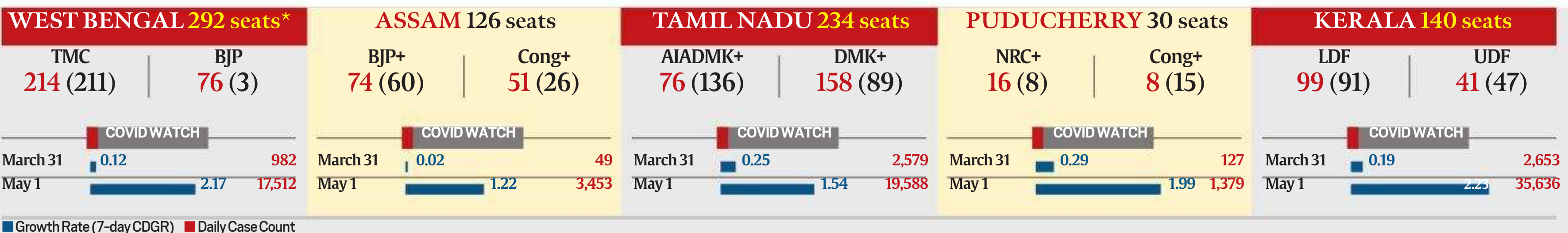




DECISION
2021



Results and leads up to midnight on Sunday. Elections were held in 292 out of 294 seats in West Bengal. Figures in parentheses are for 2016. For both 2021 and 2016, only seats won by major parties have been listed. In Assam, AIUDF and Cong, and BJP and AGP, fought in alliance; in 2016, AIUDF and Cong fought separately. Growth rate of Covid-19 cases: 7-day compounded daily growth rate (CDGR). Daily case count data from May 1. Source of Covid-19 data: Central, state governments.

BIG WIN FOR INCUMBENTS IN BENGAL, ASSAM, KERALA; DMK WINS TAMIL NADU

Bengal decides: Didi, not Modi

Mamata takes TMC to historic victory, but loses her own seat

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & SANTANU CHOWDHURY
KOLKATA, MAY 2

MAMATA BANERJEE made history in 2011, ending the 34-year rule of the Left Front. A decade later, she made history again, roaring to a third term in spectacular fashion, fighting back anti-incumbency, a wave of desertions from her party, and a giant BJP election machinery led personally by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

In an ironic twist to the Trinamool Congress's triumph, however, Banerjee herself lost — she was edged out narrowly by her lieutenant-turned-BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari, whom she had chosen to confront in his stronghold of Nandigram.

Adhikari defeated Banerjee by 1,956 votes, as per data on the Election Commission website at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NANDIGRAM ON COUNTING DAY
PAGE 5



Mamata Banerjee at a post-victory press conference in Kalighat, Kolkata, on Sunday. With her is her nephew and Trinamool MP Abhishek Banerjee's daughter. Partho Paul

Bengal defeat robs BJP of planks, boosts Mamata, federal pushback

RAVISH TIWARI & LIZ MATHEW
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

ALTHOUGH FIVE states went to the polls, for the BJP, West Bengal was the grand prize it pulled out all the stops for: from a super-charged campaign led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with al-

most the entire Cabinet and the BJP top brass roped in, to a pointed attack that targeted TMC leader and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and framed the contest as "Modi vs Didi."

For the party, a West Bengal win would have helped plant its flag in a state it has long coveted, demoralised a

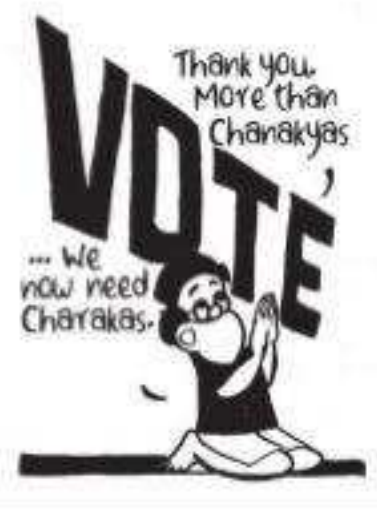
shrinking Opposition and helped it to argue that it had secured public affirmation when it's seen floundering in the face of the unprecedented Covid crisis.

But that didn't happen. Banerjee, who herself lost the election, led her

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BUSINESS AS USUAL

By UNNY



DECISION 2021

WAYANAD TO COASTAL AREA, CONGRESS CAN'T STOP PINARAYI VIJAYAN WAVE
PAGE 6

RESULTS OF BYPOLLS TO 4 LOK SABHA, 12 ASSEMBLY SEATS
PAGE 7

In Assam, BJP returns to power; mandate by people to 'protect culture', says Sarma

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, MAY 2

THE BHARATIYA Janata Party (BJP), together with its allies, is all set to return to power in Assam for a second consecutive term.

Despite a spirited fight by the Congress-led grand alliance or *mahajot*, the counting trend clearly shows the stage set for BJP's victory. In the run-up to the elections, the party used the rhetoric of polarisation, overcame political opposition to the implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, and trumped anti-incumbency with successful implementation of a series of welfare schemes.

"People of Assam have elected a BJP government for the second time," incumbent Assam



CM Sonowal at party office in Guwahati Sunday. PTI

CM Sarbananda Sonowal told the press in his brief first reaction on the poll results. Sonowal won from Majuli. In a statement in the evening, he thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "dynamic leadership and unconditional help that he has been rendering to the state of Assam since 2014."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

As LDF bucks trend, storms back to power, why this is Vijayan's win

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, MAY 2

THE CPM-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) came back to power in Kerala on Sunday with a decisive win, breaking the state's long tradition of the incumbent government being unseated



Vijayan first CM in four decades to retain power

every five years. That the LDF won 99 out of 140 Assembly seats, eight seats

more than what it won in 2016, makes this a victory of Pinarayi Vijayan, considering the LDF campaign revolved almost entirely around the Chief Minister. Addressing the press in Dharmadam, his home constituency, after the LDF win, Vijayan said, "This is a historic victory... In the last five years, the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

In Tamil Nadu, DMK staves off ADMK challenge, comes to power after a decade



DMK workers celebrate in Chennai on Sunday. PTI

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, MAY 2

STAVING OFF a strong challenge from incumbent AIADMK, the alliance led by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) on Sunday won or has leads in 157 seats out of 234, paving the way for the DMK's return to power after a gap of 10 years.

At the time of going to press, the DMK had won or was leading in 133 seats (up from the 89 seats it won in 2016); the Congress in 16 of the 25 seats it contested; Dalit Party VCK in four seats; and the CPM and the CPI in two seats each.

Under the leadership of DMK chief M K Stalin, who is set to take charge as Chief Minister,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Batra stops admissions, more hospitals sound alarm

JIGNASA SINHA
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

A DAY after 12 Covid patients, including a senior doctor, died after oxygen stocks at Batra Hospital in South Delhi's Mehrauli ran out, authorities at the private facility said Sunday that they were still struggling for supplies and have stopped new admissions.

capital, too, continued to scramble for oxygen supplies with six of them, including two children's facilities, saying they were left with barely a few hours of supply. Among them was Jaipur Golden Hospital, where 20 Covid patients had died last week after a drop in oxygen pressure.

The other hospitals that sought help were Vimhans and Triton Hospital in South East Delhi, Akash Hospital in Dwarka, and Sitaram Bhartia Hospital and



At an oxygen refilling centre in Kanpur on Sunday. PTI

Rainbow Madhukar Hospital in South Delhi. Some of them received supplies on an emergency basis from the Delhi government, while the others got their stocks at the last minute.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Dr Sudhanshu Bankata, executive director of Batra Hospital, said: "We have informed our patients and posted signs that we won't be taking new admissions. We have also conveyed to the government

that we can't work with the limited supply of oxygen."

The hospital, which was providing treatment to 327 patients, is planning to discharge several of them and bring the bed count down to 200-220. Previously, two Delhi government facilities, GTB Hospital and RGSS Hospital, had reduced the number of Covid beds because of oxygen shortage.

A Delhi government official said they are ready to start more

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

SOS is refrain within as Congress continues downward march

MANOJ CG
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

YET ANOTHER counting day and yet another demoralising defeat for the Congress. Since 2014, of the 40 Assembly elections held, the party, on its own, could win and form governments in only four states and a Union Territory.

After today's defeats in Kerala, Assam, Puducherry and the wipeout in West Bengal, Congress leaders across states are admitting, in hushed tones, that the bigger worry is that the party is losing its legitimacy — moral and political — to lead the Opposition at the national level as it is fast ceding space to regional forces in the fight against the BJP.

The defeat, many party leaders said, is set to deepen internal turmoil and give another window for the detractors of senior leader Rahul Gandhi, who had virtually led the party's campaign in Kerala, from where he is an MP. His sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had campaigned in Kerala and Assam.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Revisit vaccine policy, consider lockdown to curb virus: SC to Centre

ANANTHAKRISHNAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE SUPREME COURT Sunday called upon the Centre to revisit its vaccine procurement policy stating it would "prima facie result in a detriment to the right to public health which is an integral element of Article 21 of the Constitution". It also urged the Centre and states "to consider imposing a lockdown to curb the virus in the second wave in the

interest of public welfare".

On lockdown, the Supreme Court bench of Justices DY Chandrachud, L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat said, "We are cognisant of the socio-economic impact of a lockdown, specifically, on the marginalised communities... thus, in case the measure of a lockdown is imposed, arrangements must be made beforehand to cater to the needs of these communities."

Further, observing that no

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Foreign missions get help from Youth Cong, Govt says: 'Don't hoard oxygen'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE OXYGEN crisis in Delhi has opened up a new front between the Government and the Opposition Congress, this time involving two foreign missions. And led to an unusually undiplomatic message from the Government to "all high commissions and embassies": Do not

hoard oxygen.

This comes in the middle of a global Covid diplomacy push with India sending more than 6.5 cr vaccines to over 80 countries and around 40 nations, including the US, sending aid in the form of oxygen and related equipment, like concentrators and tankers, and key drugs such as remdesivir.

Sunday's spat was sparked

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

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WEB
EXCLUSIVE

TAMIL NADU: NILGIRIS WITNESSING RISE IN CASES OF CHILD MARRIAGES

According to the data from the district administration, the number of cases under The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) has registered a rise of 52 per cent from April 2020 to March 2021 as compared to the period between March 2019 and March 2020.

ENTERTAINMENT



100 YEARS OF SATYAJIT RAY

Manikda and the little songs of his cherished road

TECH



HP CHROMEBOOK 11A REVIEW

It seems perfect with superb battery life, light and a great keyboard

EXPRESS AUDIO

How women gamers are making their presence felt

NEW EPISODE EVERYDAY

In this episode, we talk to Leslie Pirritano about her journey as a gamer navigating a male-dominated world and how the industry has evolved over the years

FROM PAGE ONE

Bengal defeat

party to a landmark 200-plus tally. The BJP surged from just three to over 80 seats and retained Assam. But the West Bengal defeat saw the BJP perform worse than it did barely two years ago in the Lok Sabha elections where its 18 MPs translated to just over 120 seats.

Indeed, since its historic win in Tripura in early 2018, the BJP has been under-performing in Assembly elections.

The under-par performances in Jharkhand, Haryana, Maharashtra, Delhi after the party's stellar performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections have raised questions over the erosion of the formidable political capital mobilised by Modi for his party. With the defeat in Bengal, those questions get sharper focus.

The Opposition Congress continues its downward spiral — it could not wrest Kerala which has been returning the Opposition to power every time for over five decades. Instead, it cleared the way for the victory of regional forces: TMC (Bengal); DMK (Tamil Nadu); and Left-front (Kerala), all staunchly opposed to BJP.

This has revived hope in the Opposition ranks against what they see as the BJP's "one nation, one policy" politics. More so, since this comes after the RJD scare in Bihar last November where the ruling NDA scraped through with a wafer-thin majority.

Not just for Modi, the West Bengal outcome is also a major setback for Home Minister Amit Shah who monitored all aspects of the campaign. In his public addresses, Shah's refrain was that the state needed a BJP government so that it (read Hindus) could do Saraswati Puja and carry out their Durga idol immersion without any hindrance.

Despite the call taken by the party that it should not announce a specific target, Shah, mid-campaign, repeatedly claimed the BJP would cross 200 seats.

"Vipaksh ke swar ab uthenge. Paristhitiyan bhi abhi nakaratmak bani hain," said a senior BJP leader when asked about the national impact of the West Bengal results. The TMC and DMK combined together account for 46 MPs in Lok Sabha, slightly behind

the 51 members of Congress.

Banerjee, Pinarayi Vijayan and Stalin are strong votaries of federal politics and are expected to stand up to what they see as the BJP's my-way-or-the-high-way approach in Parliament.

"This gives us hope in Uttar Pradesh, a BJP win in Bengal would have had a severe demoralising impact on the Opposition not only in UP but nationally. Mamata has given hope to the entire Opposition," said a senior Samajwadi Party leader. He added that this will recharge their cadres in UP.

The raging pandemic adds another dimension. That the performance of BJP-ruled states in pandemic management has not exactly been exemplary has also undermined the party's rhetoric — which it used in Bengal — for a "double engine" government to ensure vikas.

Internally, the West Bengal verdict has highlighted the risk of centralised decision-making where the BJP echo-chamber, amplified by what TMC campaign strategist Prashant Kishor called a "supportive media", misread the wind.

"West Bengal is a big setback. The sad part, which the leadership doesn't realise, is that many in the party will be happy with this setback. There will be no accountability for this defeat despite investing so much resources for this campaign," said a leader who no longer occupies a national position in the party but was an office-bearer when Shah was party president.

"If anyone knows Bengal's history, they should have known that it cannot be polarised on communal lines like many other places. Remember, S P Mookerjee was part of A K Fazlul Huq government in pre-Independent Bengal," said the leader. Another party functionary cited how the party could not sweep the SC/ST/OBC seats wondering how effective was the party's feedback mechanism.

Congress SOS

While many leaders, including the 23 who had written to Sonia Gandhi last year demanding sweeping changes in the party, are silent as of now,

Bengal decides: Didi, not Modi

midnight.

At press time, the Trinamool Congress had either won or was leading in 214 of the 292 seats that went to polls in West Bengal's extraordinary eight-phase election.

The BJP had won or was leading in 76.

For the first time in Bengal's history, the Left and Congress will have no representation in the Assembly. Both parties, which fought the election in alliance, drew blanks. The third partner in their alliance, the ISF, has managed to win a seat.

The TMC has got 48 per cent of the vote, an improvement over its performance in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. The BJP has got 38.1 per cent, according to Election Commission data.

"Banglar joy, Bangla-i pare (This is the victory of Bengal. Only Bengal could have done this)," Banerjee declared as she emerged from her home in Kalighat at 5.10 pm.

She greeted a crowd of party workers and supporters, but asked them to return to their homes since the Covid-19 situation was grave, and there were restrictions on big celebrations.

"Go home. Take a bath in warm water. Wear masks and use sanitisers. Please do not go for victory rallies. We will announce dates (for celebrations) after Covid-19 is controlled. Many are infected with Covid-19," Banerjee said.

She addressed the media after 6 pm and congratulated the people "for this landslide victory despite all odds".

Prime Minister Modi congratulated Banerjee on the victory. "Congratulations to Mamata Didi for @AITCofficial's win in West Bengal. The Centre will continue to extend all possible support to the West Bengal Government to fulfil people's aspirations and also to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic," he posted on Twitter.

Through the day, there was drama as the contest in Nandigram, the most high-profile of the election, appeared to swing back and forth between Banerjee and Adhikari.

It was initially reported that Banerjee had won by a margin of 1,200 votes, but the returning officer subsequently announced Adhikari's victory by 1,956 votes.

The TMC wrote to the West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer, asking for a recount. The EC had not responded until late night on Sunday.

"Bengal has saved the country. Bengal has saved democracy and humanity. Our 'Khela Hobe' (Game On!) and 'Joy Bangla' slogans have borne fruit. Due to the Covid situation, there will be no big oath-taking ceremony. We will hold a small ceremony and the date will be announced later. Right now my priority is Covid. I will start working immediately and we will also tide over this

crisis," Banerjee said.

"We will provide free vaccines to the people of Bengal. We will appeal to the Centre to provide free vaccines to all 140 crore people (of the country). I will sit on a satyagraha if this is not done," she said.

The Chief Minister said she had fought against "money power, muscle power, and the partisan attitude of the Election Commission."

"Our target was 221 seats. We will get there, as elections were not held at two seats. We will also file cases against the Election Commission for their partisan attitude. I will move the Supreme Court. We will go jointly with other political parties. There should be a *lakshman rekha* for the EC," Banerjee said.

The TMC has won not only in its strongholds, but also in areas where the BJP did well in 2019, including the former Maoist belt of Jangalmahal, and North Bengal. It has also done well at seats where deserters who joined the BJP contested.

Apart from Mukul Roy, Suwendu Adhikari, and actor-turned-BJP leader Hiran Chatterjee, all BJP heavyweights, including Union Minister Babul Supriyo, MP Locket Chatterjee, former Rajya Sabha MP Swapna Dasgupta, and senior party leaders Rahul Sinha and Samik Bhattacharya, have lost.

The TMC has won a number of seats in Malda and Murshida-

bad, considered to be Congress bastions. The election results in this belt signal a consolidation of Muslim votes in favour of the TMC, which have traditionally gone to the Congress.

The Trinamool Congress also appears to have got a large chunk of women's votes, thanks to its slogan '*Bangla Nijer Meyekai Chaaye*' (Bengal wants its own daughter).

The Chief Minister held 137 rallies across the state during the campaign period; she was on a wheelchair for many of those after sustaining a leg injury during campaigning in Nandigram. This image of Banerjee appears to have struck a chord with voters while boosting the morale of party workers.

Not only the relentless campaign by the Chief Minister, but initiatives by her government just before the polls appear to have had a silent impact on voters, especially women.

In December, the state government launched '*Duare Sarkar*', an outreach programme bringing welfare schemes to people's doorsteps. '*Swasthya Sathi*' (universal health insurance cards) also appears to have had a major impact.

The TMC's narrative of labelling the BJP as '*bahiragata*' (outsider) too seems to have found acceptance among voters. The BJP, which was without a chief ministerial face, failed to counter this.

sources said anger is simmering. "It is perhaps not the right time because people are fighting for their lives during the pandemic...but one thing I can tell you is that the Congress cannot revive under the present set-up," said a senior leader.

"This election has shown that the BJP or the NDA is not invincible. They can be defeated. The Congress has to gear itself for that task, not in the present shape but in a totally different shape," said former Union Minister M Veerappa Moily.

Interestingly, even leaders outside the G-23 are increasingly dismayed. Former Union Minister Ashwani Kumar's made his anguish clear Sunday. "The chastening election results are an SOS for the Congress ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections," he said. "The need for demonstrable and purposive action to address the organisational and communication gaps was never more evident. For Congress to retain its resilience and relevance in national politics it must secure internal cohesiveness and establish an emotional connect with the people."

Analysing the results, one leader said: "In Bengal, we have not reached double digits...in Kerala, there is infighting. We don't have a president, we have a president who is a president but not a president; in Tamil Nadu, we managed to win some seats courtesy DMK."

"In the heartland, we are not able to challenge the BJP. In other states, people are trusting regional parties to fight the battle against the BJP. That leaves us with little space," another senior leader said.

BJP wins Assam

At 11 pm on Sunday, the ECI website said the BJP had won 41 seats and was leading in 18, while its allies the ACP won eight and was leading in one, and the UPPL won six. The Congress won 18 and was leading in 11, while its allies the AIUDF was leading in seven and won nine, and the BPF won three and was leading in one seat.

In 2016, the BJP had won 60 seats, the ACP 14 and the BPF 12. "We want to assure the people of Assam that all the promises we had made during elec-

tions will be fulfilled in letter and spirit," influential Assam Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told the press outside his official residence in Guwahati. He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP president JP Nadda.

"Today's verdict is a clear mandate given by (the) people of Assam to protect our civilisation and culture. Along with that this mandate is people's blessings and support for the mahayogya of development that is ongoing under PM Modi's leadership," said Sarma.

When asked by journalists about the prospects of Sarma becoming the CM, he replied he did not want to comment on that. "The parliamentary board of our party will decide on this. Then we will follow that," Sarma said.

The three-phase election has been essentially a triangular contest between the NDA — the BJP, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) — on the one side; the '*mahajot*' — Congress, All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), Bodoland People's Front (BPF), three Left parties and a regional party, the Anchalik Gana Morcha (AGM) — on the other; and an alliance of two newly formed regional parties — Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Rajior Dal (RD) — on the third.

LDF bucks trend

state faced several crises, but the LDF stood with the people on all such occasions. This victory shows that people have accepted the performance of the government."

On bucking anti-incumbency, Vijayan said, "The state had a tradition of experimenting with governments every alternate election. This election has changed that, which is why this is historic."

Referring to the defeat of the BJP in Nemon, the only seat it won in 2016, Vijayan said, "Kerala is not a land for communalism. There is no space here for communal politics."

Vijayan also lashed out at sections of the media, saying, "Certain right-wing media tried to defame the government and

fabricated stories against us. They think they can manipulate the political agenda of the state using their clout. They should self-introspect."

The Left alliance swept 12 out of 14 districts, unseating the UDF in many of its traditional strongholds. In the Central Kerala districts of Kottayam, Idukki and Pathanamthitta, the LDF improved its tally, apparently with the support of its new ally, the Kerala Congress (M), which won five seats. However, its leader Jose K Mani lost the election from Pala.

The CPM, which won 67 of the 87 seats it contested (including 11 party-backed Independents), has emerged as the biggest winner of this election. Ally CPI, which fought from 24 seats, won 17.

The Congress, which fought on 93 seats, could win only 22, while ally IUML bagged 14 seats out of the 24 it contested. The results are a huge disappointment for the Congress-led UDF, which had won 19 of 20 seats in the 2019 parliamentary polls.

The BJP, which contested from 113 seats including its sitting seat of Nemon, drew a blank. The party's chief ministerial candidate, Metro man E Sreedharan, lost from Palakkad.

The Sabarimala issue, which cost the LDF heavily in the parliamentary elections, dent make a dent this time around despite the Congress and BJP making it part of their campaign.

DMK wins in TN

the party had earlier won 38 of the 39 seats in the 2019 parliamentary polls.

The AIADMK-led alliance has 85 seats, with 76 seats for AIADMK (down from 136 in 2016), 5 for PMK, and 4 for BJP.

While the DMK victory was largely on expected lines, the ruling AIADMK also put up a strong fight, with Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami single handedly leading the poll campaign, riding on his clean image and his handling of the pandemic last year. But there were several factors stacked against the AIADMK — the burden of the alliance with the BJP and the rebellion of the Sasikala faction,

among others.

The traditional pattern of urban and semi-urban regions favouring the DMK was in evidence in almost all the urban constituencies, including Chennai and Trichy. All Assembly seats in Thiruvallur district, north of Chennai, voted for the DMK. The DMK also won in the Cauvery delta districts as well as central and southern Tamil Nadu.

The AIADMK, however, made significant gains in parts of northern Tamil Nadu and the Kongu belt in the west, where Palaniswami hails from. What seemingly helped the AIADMK in northern Tamil Nadu was the 10.5% reservation that the party announced for the OBC-Vanniyar community and in the west, Palaniswami's massive infrastructure push in the form of flyovers and bridges.

Among the big winners is Stalin's son Udhayanidhi, who recorded probably one of the biggest victory margins in the state — over 60,000 votes from Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni.

Among the big names who lost are TTV Dhinakaran of the AMMK, who lost to AIADMK minister Kadambur Raju, bringing the curtains down on the politics of the Sasikala faction, at least for now. Veteran movie actor and Makkal Needhi Maiam founder Kamal Haasan lost to BJP's Vanathi Srinivasan.

SC on vaccines

one shall be denied hospitalisation or essential drugs for lack of local residential proof or identity proof, the bench asked the Centre to formulate a national policy on admissions to hospitals within two weeks, which should be followed by all states.

The Centre had, on April 20, revised its vaccine policy and said it would purchase only 50 per cent of the output, and allow vaccine manufacturers to sell the balance 50 per cent directly to states and private entities at higher prices.

The bench of the three Justices suggested that the procurement of vaccines be centralised, and distribution within states and Union Territories be decentralised. '*Prima facie*, the rational method of proceeding in a manner consistent with the right to life (which includes the right to health) under Article 21 would be for the Central Government to procure all vaccines and to negotiate the price with vaccine manufacturers. Once quantities are allocated by it to each State Government, the latter would lift the allocated quantities and carry out the distribution,' the bench said.

Referring to the revised vaccine policy, it said, compelling states to negotiate with manufacturers on the ground of promoting competition and making it attractive for new vaccine manufacturers will likely be detrimental to those in the 18-44 age group. This group, it said, also included 'Bahujans' or those belonging to other underprivileged and marginalised groups who may not have the ability to pay.

Providing these essential vaccines to these groups, and its pricing — should it be free or subsidised — would depend on the states, and based on their finances. "This will create disparity across the nation. The vaccinations being provided to citizens constitute a valuable public good. Discrimination cannot be made between different classes of citizens..." the bench said.

Foreign missions

by posts on social media by Youth Congress that its volunteers had supplied oxygen cylinders to the New Zealand and Philippines missions following specific requests. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar described this as "unsolicited supply" while the MEA spokesperson said that "given the pandemic

situation, all are urged not to hoard essential supplies, including oxygen".

Jaishankar's remarks were in response to a tweet by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh after Youth Congress chief B V Srinivas posted visuals of the volunteers at the Philippines Embassy with oxygen cylinders on Saturday night.

"While I thank @IYC for its stellar efforts, as an Indian citizen I'm stunned that the youth wing of the opposition party is attending to SOS calls from foreign embassies. Is the MEA sleeping @DrSJaishankar?" Jairam posted.

Jaishankar's response was terse. "MEA checked with the Philippines Embassy. This was an unsolicited supply as they had no Covid cases. Clearly for cheap publicity by you know who. Giving away cylinders like this when there are people in desperate need of oxygen is simply appalling," he posted.

"Jairamji, MEA never sleeps; our people know across the world. MEA also never fakes; we know who does," he wrote.

Adding to the political spat was a tweet on Sunday by the New Zealand High Commission requesting help from Srinivas and the Youth Congress for an oxygen cylinder. "Right away. Please share further details in DM," Srinivas responded.

The High Commission had, meanwhile, deleted the tweet and posted another: "We are trying all sources to arrange for oxygen cylinders urgently and our appeal has unfortunately been misinterpreted, for which we are sorry."

Srinivas later put out a video clip of Youth Congress workers entering the High Commission with a cylinder. "New Zealand high commission opened gates of the embassy and accepted cylinders. Also, they thanked the #SOSIYC team for this quick relief as the patient inside the embassy was critically ill," he tweeted.

Speaking to The Indian Express, Srinivas said that one of the volunteers — Manu Dixit — received a call from "someone on behalf of the Philippines Embassy" for cylinders.

The Philippines Embassy and the New Zealand High Commission did not respond to requests for a comment.

Batra Hospital

temporary Covid facilities and add 1,000 beds in the city but have not been able to due to the oxygen shortage.

The Delhi government has claimed that it has not got its full allocation of 490 MT (increased to 590 MT later) on a single day since the crisis started. Several hospitals have had to turn away patients and send SOS messages to the government as well as post them on social media for oxygen supply.

Recalling Saturday's incident at Batra Hospital, a senior doctor told *The Indian Express*: "We faced hell. I called the Additional Health Secretary, the CM's office, Central government staff, everyone we knew. Half of them didn't take our calls and the rest didn't help us. We were supposed to get 7,000-8,000 litres but were left with 2,500 litres to survive. This supply also got exhausted."

The hospital said there was no oxygen in the central supply machines from 12 noon to 1.15 pm Saturday. Apart from those dead, other critical patients faced "long-term damage due to lack of oxygen", the doctor said.

Dr SCL Gupta, medical director of the hospital, said: "We will only increase the bed count after we get a sufficient supply of oxygen regularly. We don't want to struggle every day and make 50 calls for the supply. We have told the government that we'll make do with the minimum supply."

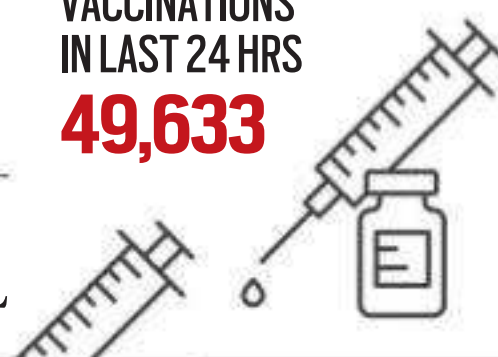
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3 THE CITY



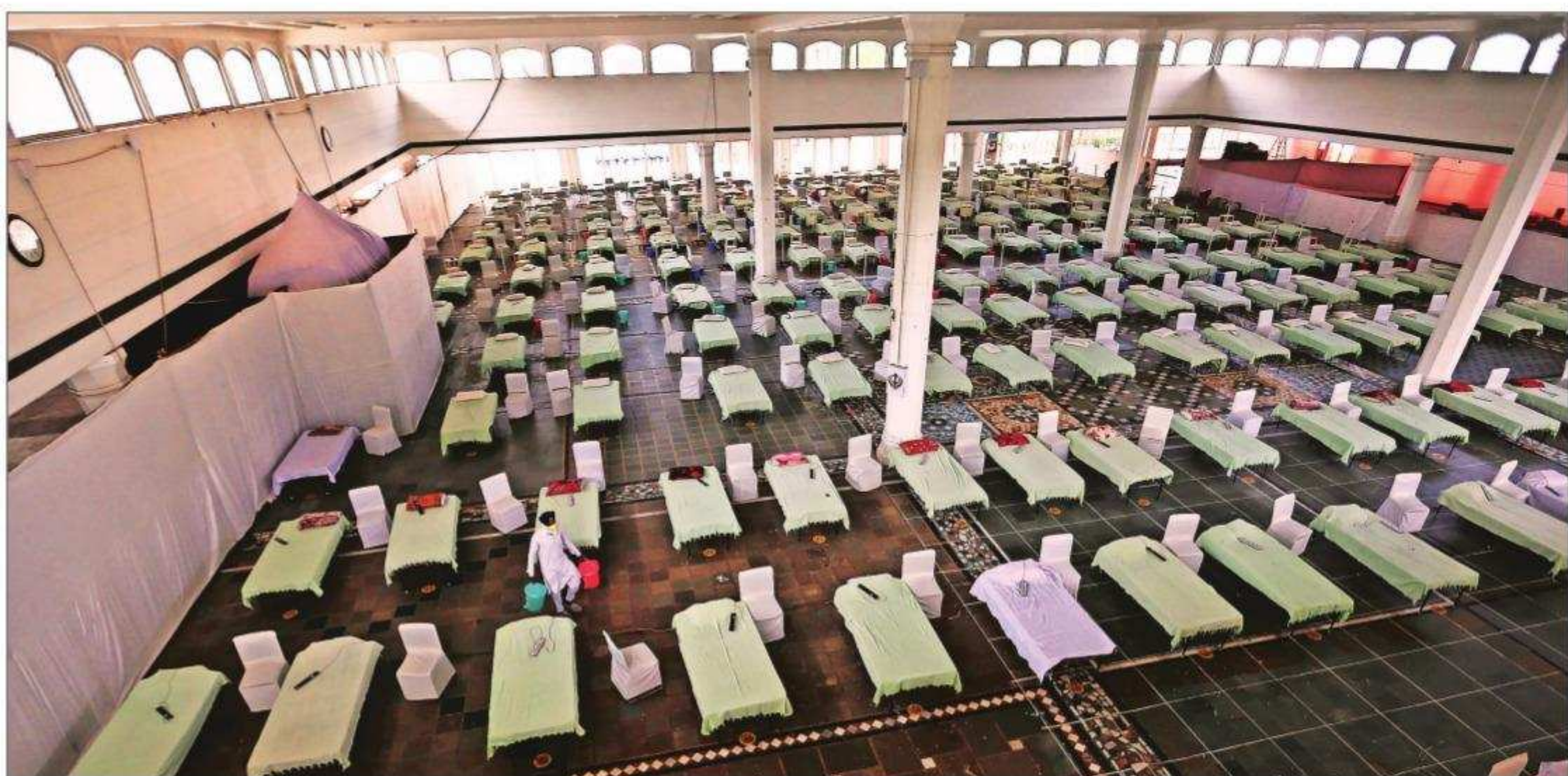
CORONAVIRUS
IN THE CAPITAL

VACCINATIONS
IN LAST 24 HRS
49,633



		Total	Vacant	
TOTAL CASES		21,420	1,278	
11,94,946				
HOSPITAL BEDS		5,154	20	
ICU BEDS				
	Daily cases	Recoveries	Deaths	Tests
May 1	25,219	27,421	412	79,780
May 2	20,394	24,444	407	71,997
Total	92,290*	10,85,690	16,966	1,73,03,562

Total active cases



Beds set up for Covid patients at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib on Sunday. *Gajendra Yadav*

SEEKS RECALL OF COURT ORDER ON ALLOCATION OF OXYGEN TO CAPITAL

Delhi using HC to raise farcical demands, covering up its incompetence: Centre

SOFI AHSAN
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

A DAY after the Delhi High Court warned it would initiate contempt proceedings if its direction on supplying 490 metric tonnes of medical oxygen to the national capital was not complied with, and asked the Centre to arrange cryogenic tankers for the national capital, the Union government approached the court on Sunday on an urgent mentioning and sought recall of the order.

It also alleged that "apathy on part of the Delhi government has become a regular and daily affair". The court was also told by the Centre that allocation of Delhi has been increased to 590 MTs but it is receiving some 440 MTs on a daily basis.

The Centre through Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said "great harm" would be caused to the "system" in place against the pandemic if the court decides to go into the legal aspect of whether the responsibility to arrange tankers in the constitutional scheme would be of Centre or the state: "It would cause serious

harm to the total management of Covid-19 in the country. It is not the right time to decide constitutional issues whether tanker allocation is state subject or not. We are not in a position to have luxury of constitutional arguments."

He added that it will "impair the entire nation" and the court cannot decide it when only one state has issues.

However, the division bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said the Centre itself has raised the issue regarding responsibility of tankers in its application and there has to be a resolution to the problem. The court later asked the amicus curiae, senior advocate Rajshankar Rao, to suggest ways of resolving the dispute which otherwise would require adjudication by it.

The court also said Delhi is on a different constitutional footing after issuance of notification stating that the government of Delhi would mean Lt-Governor. However, the Centre submitted that it has been done "for different reasons".

"These are allegations or counter-allegations. We are dealing with a much larger situation. We are dealing with hundreds of people, that is why we are exercising this jurisdiction," said the court after hearing arguments of the Delhi government and Centre on the latter's plea seeking recall of the order.

The court also said allocated liquid oxygen is not something "that can be carried in a gunny bag" and it requires special transport. It added that Delhi is not an industrial state and while it could requisition tankers from industrialists in other states — and even if they are in turn willing — the other state governments may not allow it.

"Every day we are being told there is a shortage of oxygen. The stated position is that oxygen is in excess of what demand is on an all-India basis," said the court. However, Mehta said, "If used judiciously, the country is in a position to meet the demand."

The court also said that experts of the Centre have worked out a guideline or formula on oxygen allocation and must supply oxygen according to the same principle: "Nobody is questioning their judgement... apply that formula and if accord-

ing to that whatever it comes... if it comes to 500 or 700 or 800 we are not concerned." However, Mehta submitted "that would be a wider issue. It would affect supply of other states".

In his preliminary submissions, Mehta said the court asking why Maharashtra or Madhya Pradesh are getting more would have its own implications: "Why something is more and something less may not perhaps lie in Delhi High Court."

The bench said it would hear on that aspect and was not averse to the submission that "you should not consider a particular aspect which may not lie before us".

'Great prejudice would be caused to capital', says Delhi

In its plea, the Centre said the Delhi government is found to be "completely wanting in making any efforts whatsoever to arrange for the transport of the quantity allocated to it except for a few tankers" and that many other non-industrial states have managed their own state.

The Delhi government seems to be only interested in using the platform of the High Court "to communicate or raise its demands in a farcical and misleading manner", it added.

"It is submitted that the Union of India is further constrained to state that rather than discharging its constitutional, statutory, and humanitarian duties and obligations in the times of the present crisis, the GNCTD seems to be channeling most of its energies in creating a facade to cover up its complete incompetence/incapacity, especially at the end of the last-mile delivery," the Centre said.

It also said whatever oxygen is being supplied in Delhi is "also not being distributed and utilised in a judicious manner causing serious risk to the lives of residents of Delhi". Internal distribution of oxygen, management, and supervision of admissions and other things shall have to be done by Delhi, the union government said.

Seeking recall of Saturday's order, the Centre in its application said there would be "chaotic situation" in the country if other states start following suit and shirk from their responsibility of

providing road transport.

"Internal distribution of oxygen amongst hospitals by GNCTD appears to be clearly unscientific and is in complete disarray. It appears GNCTD issues orders without consulting stakeholders which results in disruption of established supply chains as well as further confusion to others intended to be served through the new supply chains," the Centre said, adding that Delhi has been the only state raising issues "and trying to create a narrative in the ongoing court cases about the supply of oxygen whereas the fact of the matter is that they are unable to fulfil the promise and lift the oxygen allocated to them".

The Delhi government called the Centre's application "uncalled for" and opposed the recall of order. It further said a great prejudice would be caused to the national capital if the court does not go into the issue regarding tankers too and decide legally.

The court sought a response from Delhi to the Centre's application and said it would hear the issue regarding Delhi's allocation on Wednesday.

No beds, several hospitals in Noida turn away patients

ASHNA BUTANI
NOIDA, MAY 2

COVID PATIENTS were turned away from the gates of most hospitals in Noida on Saturday with no ICU or oxygen beds being available. A few critical patients, however, were given emergency treatment or provided with oxygen cylinders outside the wards.

At the Government Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) in Greater Noida, three critical patients lay on stretchers and were put on oxygen support while their families waited near the Covid help desk under a shed. With the shed barely sheltering them from the sun and the heat, family members of each patient took turns to fan them. A patient's daughter kept reminding him to lie down in the prone position.

Another patient, Sunita Devi (53), who was brought in an ambulance from Bulandshahr, waited on a stretcher while her family kept asking authorities about the bed situation. Her son, Vivek Kumar (31) said she has no other symptoms besides breathing problems, which started two days ago. "Since then, we tried to admit her to hospitals in Bulandshahr, Sikandrabad and Meerut but didn't get a bed anywhere," he said. Her oxygen levels were down to 80, despite oxygen support.

Devi eventually got a bed at GIMS after waiting for a few hours.

Simultaneously, a doctor from the hospital made calls to people and tried to arrange a bed for a relative. Another doctor who tried to help her, and did not want to be named, said, "I wish people understood that doctors are not God. We have been working really hard but we cannot assure anyone a bed. This is a systemic breakdown. We had 200 beds in the hospital but the situation became so severe that

we added more beds somehow." In emergency cases, like the three patients on stretchers, the doctor said oxygen is provided by the hospital.

At the testing counter, three healthcare workers sat on a bench and advised people on whether they should get tested or not. Among them was a woman, who wanted to get an RT-PCR test because her husband tested positive and she was worried about her one-year-old son. After checking her oxygen levels, which was 99, a healthcare worker explained to her that only people who have low oxygen levels and are very sick should get tested since testing is strained at the moment. She was advised to try a few private labs instead.

At Kailash Hospital in Greater Noida too, a doctor said there are 200 beds — all occupied. Thirty seven of these were ICU beds. The doctor said, "In case a patient is critical, we treat them in the emergency ward till they stabilise and then refer them to other hospitals."

At the hospital, the daughter of a diabetes and heart patient requested authorities to arrange a bed but was told there are no beds with ventilators.

The hospital was referring patients to either Metro or Sharda hospitals or GIMS. But at Sharda hospital too, an equally grim situation played out with a board at the entrance of the Covid ward reading, "No. of oxygen bed available = 0," in both Hindi and English. The family of an aged heart patient said they had to wait over three hours to get admitted.

According to the district's Covid live bed tracking website (gbcncovidtracker.in), there are 802 ICU/ventilator beds in the district, all of which are occupied. There are 1,816 functional oxygen beds, with 0 vacancies. And there are 1,162 normal beds, of which 732 are vacant. The data was last updated on May 2 at 3.18 pm.



A board at Sharda hospital says no beds are vacant. *Ashna Butani*

'30 infants in ICU': Oxygen SOS from children's hospital

SHIVAM PATEL
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

A CHILDREN'S hospital in South Delhi's Malviya Nagar raised an alarm over shortage of oxygen, twice in less than 12 hours on Sunday. Around 30 newborns and children are admitted in the ICU at the hospital.

Tagging the Delhi CM and Union Health Minister in a tweet, Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital first said it had liquid oxygen supply only till noon.

AAP MLA Raghav Chadha said in a tweet at 11.57 am that the government had arranged oxygen for the hospital: "We have arranged five D Type oxygen cylinders for Rainbow Children's Hospital from our Rajghat Response Point. The government's oxygen reserves are extremely limited due to reduced oxygen supply to Delhi, but we are doing everything possible to avert any untoward incident."

Dr Dinesh Vashist, head of the hospital, said they had received 10 oxygen cylinders at 1.45 pm and 10 more were on the way: "These 20 cylinders would last us about 4-5 hours. We will have to request our vendor for more. All patients and children in ICU are ok as of now."

In the evening, however, the hospital was staring at yet another crisis. Dr Vashist said they had stock to last till 11 pm and the



Several hospitals raised an alarm through Sunday

number of patients, including newborn babies and children in ICU, were about 25-30, the same as morning. "I don't know how I will be able to save the patients this time. We have stopped new admissions due to this... it's a critical situation. We were told we will get a few oxygen cylinders in the evening but didn't," he said. At 11.50 pm, the hospital in a tweet said it has "received 15 liquid oxygen cylinders that will suffice for few hours".

Oxygen availability, like in several other hospitals, has been a source of constant anxiety for the hospital. "This is a daily affair. About 2-3 days ago, we were in a similar situation. Oxygen is a basic requirement of a hospital and a consistent supply has not been assured. We are constantly fire fighting," Dr Vashist said.

Jaipur Golden Hospital, where 20 patients had died after oxygen

pressure dropped last week, also said they had oxygen to last only till 1 am. "We are left with around 3 hours of oxygen. Inox Air Products has delayed scheduled supply for today. Please help with SOS top up. We have 150 patients on oxygen out of which 70 are in the ICU," it tweeted at 10 pm.

The hospital received 4 MT of oxygen at 11.30 pm. Chadha said liquid medical oxygen was provided at night. "Firefighting continues," he said, referring to a large number of SOS calls from different hospitals through the day.

Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Science and Research in Outback Institutional Area posted messages asking for help through the day. After their first message, they received a few cylinders that would last till around 11 pm. At 8.45 pm, the hospital posted another message, "We have still not received any LMO (liquid medical oxygen) and are in an extremely tight situation."

Vimhans in Nehru Nagar, which has seen regular disruption in oxygen levels over the past two weeks, also said they had not got supply from their supplier, Linde, and said the company had told them they did not have stock for the next 7 days.

The hospital has 135 patients — 94 in the ICU (40 on ventilators) and 41 on oxygen beds. Chadha said they got help at 10 pm when a cryogenic tanker brought them 3 MTs of oxygen.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE DELHI government has identified 77 schools as sites for vaccination in the city, in addition to primary health centres, polyclinics and hospitals.

A large-scale vaccine rollout for those between the ages of 18 and 44 is expected to start Monday, though many complained that appointments slots were not available on government locations through the CoWin app on Sunday either.

A few private hospitals had opened slots for those falling in this category on Saturday.

According to data provided by the Delhi government, 873 people between the ages of 18 and 44 got the first shot on Saturday.

The government has said several times that infrastructure for vaccinating all adults within 3 months can be set up quickly, provided they get vaccine doses from manufacturers on time.

On Saturday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Delhi had received 4.5 lakh doses and the rollout will begin in full strength on Monday.

At Sarvodaya Bal Vidyalaya No. 1 near Jama Masjid, among the schools that have been de-

clared a vaccination site Sunday, the security guard said preparations will be made early Monday morning by district authorities.

He said, "Today, a few people from the DM office inspected the school and took photos. They said they will set up their camp soon, but did not mention when."

Similarly, at Government Boys' Senior Secondary School, New Ashok Nagar, the school was shut and the guard said district authorities had visited to take a look around. He said supplies can come any time between Sunday evening and early Monday morning.

Public Notice in accordance with Notification No. DNBR (PD) CC. No. 065/03.10.001/2015-16 dated July 09, 2015 issued by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) about Change in Management of

AURIOLUS FINVEST PRIVATE LIMITED ("Company")
(CIN: U65990DL2018PTC339877, RBI Regn. No. N-14.03486 as NBFC-ND-NSI)
Regd. Office: AD-13, Basement (LGF), Tagore Garden, New Delhi - 110027
Corp. Office: Plot No. 88, Udyog Vihar, Phase IV, Gurgaon, Haryana - 122015
Tel: 0124-4069775

The Company has obtained prior approval of RBI vide Letter No. SUO-36061/CMS IV/05.01.372/2021-22 for the proposed change in management as follows:

Sl.No.	NAME OF DIRECTOR	PARTICULARS
1.	Mr. Narayan Ramaswamy	Appointment
2.	Mr. Parag Dhol	Resignation

Reasons for above mentioned changes: The above-mentioned changes are proposed to be done in the ordinary course of business.

Any clarification / objection may be addressed to Ms. Preeti Jain, Company Secretary & Compliance Officer of the Company at preeti.jain@bizfunds.com within 30 days of publication of this notice.

A copy of this notice is also available on the website of the Company.

Place: New Delhi Date: 03.05.2021

IMPORTANT NOTICE

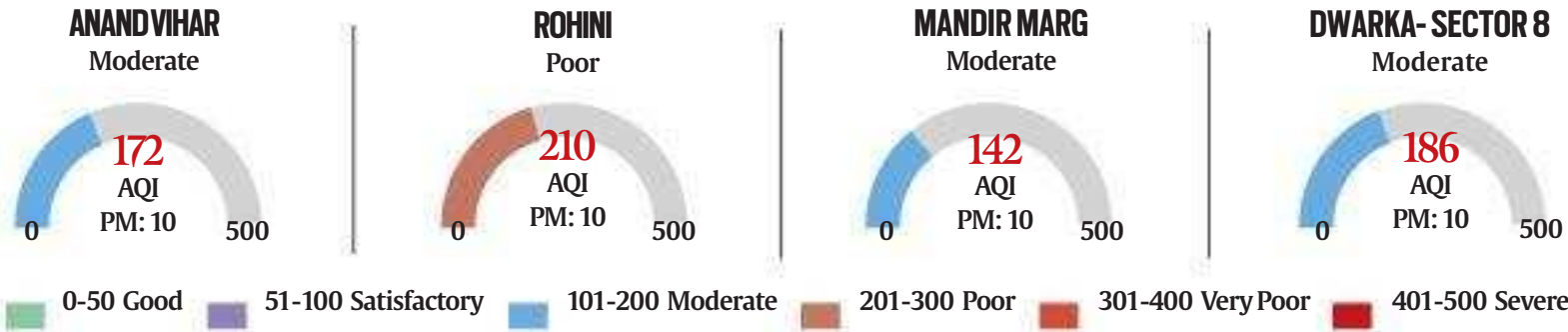
It is notified for the information of passengers that services of following Special Trains will be discontinued due to low occupancy and other operational reasons from the date shown as under:-

Train No. & Name	Date from Cancellation
02487/02488 Bikaner Jn.-Delhi Sarai Rohilla-Bikaner Jn. Special	03.05.2021 to till further advice

Note: For any kind of information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website: www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in

Visit RailMadad website:- www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in
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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"



SKYWATCH

FORECAST: May 3

Partly cloudy sky

MAX: 380.6°C above normal

MIN: 250.2°C above normal

HC TO DELHI GOVT

‘Ensure compliance on pricing of essential drugs’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE DELHI High Court Sunday directed the Delhi government to ensure that medicines being used to treat Covid-19 patients, oxygen cylinders and other such equipment are not sold at prices above the maximum retail price and said that any person found to be indulging in such malpractices shall be booked and brought to the notice of the court.

The division bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said independent contempt action would be taken against all such persons. The court was told that Covid-19 medicines and oxygen cylinders are being sold in the black



Oxygen cylinders are being sold at a price much higher than the MRP in the black market. *Praveen Khanna*

market and at a price much higher than the MRP.

It also directed the state government and Delhi Police to give wide publicity in newspapers and other media to the

helpline number created by police for reporting overcharging by ambulances, fake Covid medicines, blackmarketing and hoarding of medicines, oxygen cylinders, concentrators, medical equipment and harassment at cremation grounds.

The bench also said big hospital chains have “only saved capital costs” and it will later also deal with the aspect of them not having their own oxygen generation plants. It said “we are firefighting this time” but may issue directions when the situation is better.

Senior advocate Rahul Mehra told the court that two of the big hospitals in the national capital have already started the process and one of them will have it in place next week.

People running for oxygen, docs seek centralised system



A patient waits outside Lok Nayak hospital for admission. *Abhinav Saha*

MALLICA JOSHI
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

PEOPLE WITH dipping oxygen levels running around in the heat, their relatives pleading with hospital authorities to admit them, often in vain -- over the past two weeks, as Delhi’s Covid graph has shot up and oxygen availability mired in a tug of war between central and Delhi governments, the capital’s residents have been at the receiving end.

Doctors dealing with the caseload in hospitals, both government and private, are appealing to the government to create a centralised triage system for patients who at the moment have to rely on the Delhi Corona app to check availability of beds. More often than not, the hospital numbers are busy or unresponsive, leaving patients on their own.

“There are people who are running around in the heat trying to find a bed when their oxygen levels are 70. This should not be happening. The government must create a system where patients

can go and then they are assigned hospitals. No private system can cater to them. The government will have to step in,” said Dr Sumit Ray, medical superintendent at Holy Family Hospital.

The hospital had set aside 270 beds for Covid patients but has increased that number to 390. They have beds with oxygen support in the corridors and trolleys in between existing beds in the ICU to cater to patients. Yet, he said, it is not enough, as day after day, patients end up at the hospital begging to be treated.

Ray, a critical care specialist, says the situation is something that he has never seen: “Being an intensivist, I have seen many deaths, but never like this. These are cases where we know that a person needs critical care but are not able to provide it. Not just here, but in any hospital. My resident doctors cry, not because they complain about the load, but because they are helpless.”

At Indraprastha Apollo Hospital, the situation is hardly different, says internal medicine specialist, Dr Suranjit Chatterjee.

“In my 25 years of practice, I have never seen a situation like this. There are patients everywhere but we have no place or oxygen for them. They are begging us to treat them. The government must come through and provide a triage system which also has some basic facilities for patients. We have young patients in the emergency ward crashing because we don’t have any place in our ICUs. There has to be a system to save them,” he said.

According to Delhi government officials, Delhi has a system whereby people who have tested positive can call the helpline, 1031, and get help from officials and doctors on the line to decide the course of action. The helpline number, however, is usually out of reach and when someone calls, he is redirected to the Delhi government’s Delhi Corona app to seek information on availability of hospital beds.

But many hospitals which show availability on the app often refuse patients when they call, saying they do not have oxygen beds. The Indian Express called 10

hospitals where beds were available as per the app, but the call was not answered in a single one.

An epidemiologist in a government hospital in Delhi, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the problem with pandemics always boils down to governance. “Public health is and will always be an issue of governance and not health or disease. These situations only help expose the underlying issues. What Delhi is seeing is a complete lack of coordination between different governments. A centralised control room that actually works is what we need, but the governments are not being able to provide anything other than a headless chicken approach,” he said.

Delhi saw 20,394 cases on Sunday. The positivity rate dipped from 32% to 28%. This is for the first time in a week that the positivity rate has gone below 30%. The city recorded 407 deaths. At present there are 21,420 beds for Covid patients in Delhi, of which only 1,277 are available. There are 5,154 ICU beds, of which only 20 are vacant, the Delhi corona app says.

BRIEFLY

2 ambulance drivers held for overcharging patients

New Delhi: Two ambulance drivers were arrested and booked under Essential Commodities Act by Delhi Police for overcharging Covid patients and their families. One of the accused, Kandhi Lal (45), was caught from Mukherjee Nagar taking Rs 14,000 for covering a distance of 6 km. Lal was taking a Covid patient’s family to Nigambodh Ghat. The other accused, Bablu (22), was arrested for overcharging a Covid patient and demanding Rs 9,000 to take them from ESIC hospital to AIIMS. Police said the distance between the two hospitals is less than 10 km. He was arrested after the patient called police. **ENS**

L-G asks depts for plan on shortage of beds, oxygen

New Delhi: Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal on Sunday asked departments concerned to furnish an action plan to address the shortage of hospital beds, medicines, medical oxygen as well as increasing the capacity of crematoriums and graveyards amid a surge in Covid cases in Delhi. The L-G, who is in home isolation after testing positive, has also suggested employing services of recently retired doctors and para medical services to plug the gaps in the city’s health infrastructure.

One held for selling medical equipment at inflated prices

New Delhi: A medical store owner was arrested for allegedly selling coronavirus-related equipment at prices four times higher than the MRP, police said on Sunday. The accused has been identified as Sudhir Gahlot, a resident of Mohan Garden, Uttam Nagar, they said. During the raid, following a tip-off, three oxygen flow meters, two water nozzles and 18 oxygen pumps were recovered from his possession, police said, adding he was previously involved in five cases of cheating. **PTI**

Haryana RSS leader’s son, friend die in accident

New Delhi: Two people, including the 37-year-old son of Haryana RSS leader Pawan Jindal, were killed in a road accident in Gurgaon early Sunday morning. The BMW they were travelling in collided with a Metro pillar on the city’s Golf Course Road. According to police, the incident occurred around 1 am in the DLF Phase 2 area. The deceased have been identified as Jindal’s son, Gaurav Jindal, who was a businessman, and his friend, Sawan Khanna. The two were returning in Jindal’s car after visiting a friend in DLF Phase 1. “We suspect the vehicle was speeding. Both the deceased succumbed to their injuries on the spot, but nobody else was injured,” police said. Haryana home minister Anil Vij tweeted on Sunday morning that “the entire organisation” was in shock. **ENS**

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

23 ASSAM RIFLES, 03RD MAY 2021



The Tagra Teyees family proudly remembers above Martyrs who in the true traditions of the Assam Rifles made supreme sacrifice while bravely combating terrorists in Changsha, Mon District (Nagaland) on 03 May 2015. May the Almighty grant eternal peace to their soul. Their gallant action will continue to inspire us all.

DEEPLY REMEMBERED BY
COMMANDANT & ALL RANKS
23 ASSAM RIFLES ‘TAGRA TEYEEES’

SUKRITA BARUAH
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE DELHI University administration has decided to defer examinations for its final-year students by two weeks in light of the current Covid situation.

Dean Examinations Diwan Rawat said the decision was taken following a meeting attended by all deans and chaired by the acting

the university’s examination branch. The exams were scheduled to take place between May and June.

“There are 16 positive cases in the exam branch itself, and we lost two of them on Sunday morning. Because of this, the exam branch is closed for three days. Since exams depend on faculty members and students, these two weeks will give some time for the situation to stabilise,” said Rawat.

Before this, the Delhi University Teachers’ Association (DUTA) had written to acting Vice-Chancellor P C Joshi requesting the postponement of the examinations.

“Many Heads of Departments have already written to the Dean, Examinations, requesting that the exams for final year/semester students be postponed in view of the number of Covid pos-

Vice-Chancellor. He also stated that the most immediate factor for the postponement was the large number of Covid cases among



The exams were scheduled to take place between May and June. *Archive*

itive cases amongst students and teachers. Once again, the University must take a sensitive view of the situation that students and teachers find themselves in — no one is in a position to write or conduct examinations

at this moment. Hence, we request you to consider cancelling examinations for all students and decide upon alternative means to evaluate students. Deadlines for submission of Internal Assessment must be extended,” DUTA had written.

The current decision applies to final semester and final-year students. The deferred exams will be conducted in the online open book exam mode. “It’s difficult for us to postpone the exams more than this because it will be difficult to evaluate and declare results on time. Many students have job offers and offers from foreign universities and require their results within a time frame,” said Rawat.

The university has already stated that decisions regarding examinations for students from other semesters will be taken “at a later stage”.

Khattar chairs Covid meeting in Gurgaon

SAKSHI DAYAL
GURGAON, MAY 2

WITH HOSPITALS in Gurgaon bringing up the issue of oxygen shortage repeatedly over the last few days, Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, in a meeting with officials in the district late Sunday evening, suggested that they explore the possibility of increasing use of oxygen concentrators to reduce the consumption of liquid oxygen.

Khattar arrived in Gurgaon post 6 pm and chaired a meeting with officials to discuss the Covid situation, touching upon streamlining oxygen supply, curbing blackmarketing of oxygen cylinders, and availability of Remdesivir, among other things. During the meeting, officials

told Khattar there has been “some improvement” in the oxygen supply in the district, upon which the CM gave directions to stop black marketing of oxygen cylinders and make arrangements for providing cylinders to individuals.

Regarding the latter, MCG commissioner Vinay Pratap Singh, who is supervising oxygen supply, said a separate counter has been set up in Manesar for distribution of individual oxygen cylinders, which will be given on the basis of Covid test reports.

Khattar, in the meeting, said he had received complaints that high rates were being charged for ambulances, and directed officials to fix rates for private ambulances.

On Sunday Gurgaon inched closer to 40,000 active cases, recording 3,609 new cases. The count of active cases is 39,256.

POLICE HEADQUARTERS, CHHATTISGARH, NAVA RAIPUR
TENDER NOTICE

No. PHQ/Sec-10/ARMS/ 1847A/2021, Naya Raipur, Dated: 30/04/2021

Sealed tenders are being invited from Original Equipment Manufacturer and/or authorized by the OME for the following item :-

S.No	Name of Item	Qty	Specification	EMD in Rs	Remarks
1	Flannelette Rolls	60000	Technical specification available with Tender form	90,000-00	The participants must have experience of equipment supply, service etc.

The cost of the tender document, State Govt. Chillan of Rs. 1000/- (Rupees two thousand only) amount to be deposited in the Head of A/C-0055-Police-800-other receipt or it shall be in third form of Demand Draft of State Bank of India/ scheduled Bank/ (other than cooperative Bank) payable at Raipur. Tender Fee is nonrefundable and can not be exempted in any condition. The tender document will be submitted to the following address :-

A. I.G. of Police (P&P)
Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Naya Raipur. Pin:-492 002
Phone & Fax : 0771-2229622

The tender offer in the prescribed tender form along with all the relevant documents sealed and completed in all the respect must be submitted as per the schedule below.

SCHEDULE FOR TENDER

a) Address for submission of Tender Document	A.I.G. of Police (P&P) Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Naya Raipur
b) Last Date and Time for receipt of Tender	24/05/21 till 03.00 pm
c) Place, Time and Date of Opening Technical Bid	AIG of Police (P&P), Police Headquarters, Chhattisgarh, Naya Raipur 24/05/21 till 04.00 pm
d) Place, Time and Date of Opening Technical Bid	Shall be intimated.
e) Date till which the Bid to remain valid	Till 31/03/2022

Note:-

1. In case of tender opening date being declared as holiday, tenders will be opened on next working day.

2. Tender forms shall not be supplied by Post.

3. Quantity of goods can be increase or decrease.

sd/-
AIG of Police (F&P)
Police Headquarter, Raipur

60426

WESTERN RAILWAY-AHMEDABAD DIVISION
NOTICE INVITING
E-TENDER

(i) Name of work with its Location and Completion Period: E-Tender No.: CWM-EW-SBI-01-2021-22; Name of Work: Zinc Aluminium Metalizing of Rails in Engineering Workshop, Kaligaon, Ahmedabad; Location: Office of the Chief Workshop Manager, Engineering Workshop, Western Railway, Opposite "D" Cabin, Sabarmati, Ahmedabad - 380 019, Tel: 079- 2750 5503 & 079- 2750 6245; Completion Period: 08 Months; (ii) Approximate Cost of the Work: ₹ 2,44,50,052.70; (iii) Earnest Money to be deposited: Nil (As per Bid Security Declaration); (iv) Date and Time for submission of tender: 28.05.2021 upto 15:00 Hrs; (v) Date and time of opening: 28.05.2021 at 15:30 Hrs; (vi) Website Particulars, Notice Board Location where complete details of tender can be seen and address of the Office etc.: Website particulars: www.irops.gov.in Notice Board Location and address of the Office: Office of the Chief Workshop Manager, Engineering Workshop, Western Railway, Opposite "D" Cabin, Sabarmati, Ahmedabad - 380019, Tel No.: 079-27506503 & 079-27508245.. Note:- The complete detailed terms and conditions of work are available on Railway Website.

No.: W/623/01/2021-22 Date: 28.04.2021

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WESTERN RAILWAY-AHMEDABAD DIVISION
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Notice Inviting Tender No. DRM-Snt-ADI-Sig 08 of 2021-22; DRM / S and T acting for and behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No DRM-Snt-ADI-Sig 08 of 2021-22 closing date 27.05.2021, 15:00 Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored; (1) Name of Work: Part supply of signaling material, installation, testing and commissioning in connection with various track circuit, point and Bridge work in section of AHMEDABAD - PALANPUR, MAHESANA - BHILDI, MAHESANA - VIRAMGAM and various other locations of Ahmedabad Division; (2) Estimated Cost of Work: ₹ 1,35,30,218.76/- (Rupees One Crore Thirty Five Lakh Thirty Thousands Two Hundred Eighteen Rupees and Seventy Six Paise only); (3) Earnest Money Deposit: ₹ 0.00/- (The Bidders should be submitted Bid Security Declaration in lieu of Bid Security / Earnest money Deposit); (4) Date and time of closing: Not later than 15:00 hrs of 27.05.2021; (5) Date and time of opening of Tender: Opening on 27.05.2021 at 15:30 hrs; (6) Web site of E-Tendering: www.irops.gov.in

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5 DECISION 2021

WEST BENGAL • KERALA • TAMIL NADU • ASSAM • PUDUCHERRY



WEST BENGAL

7,34,07,832
Total Voters

6,01,94,422
Turnout
(approx number)

82%
Turnout
(approx %)

BIG WINNERS

Minister of Panchayats & Rural development
Subrata Mukherjee (Ballygunge), TMC; 76.66% votes

Minister of Urban Development and Municipal Affairs
Firhad Hakim (Kolkata Port), TMC; 69.23 % votes

Minister for North Bengal Development
Aroop Biswas (Tollyganj), TMC; 51.4% votes

Minister for Education
Partha Chatterjee (Behala Paschim), TMC; 48.84% votes

Mukul Roy (Krishnanagar Uttar), BJP; 54.19% votes

BIG LOSERS

Babul Supriyo (Tollyganj), BJP; by 50,080 votes

Swapan Dasgupta (Tarakeshwar), BJP; by 7,484 votes

Locket Chatterjee (Chunchura), BJP; by 18,417 votes

Md Salim (Chanditala), CPM; by 65,957 votes

Rajib Banerjee (Domjur), BJP, by 42,620 votes

Rabindranath Ghosh (Natabari), TMC; by 23,440 votes



The mood at the BJP's office in Kolkata around 11 am as the trends hinted at a surge in TMC numbers. Partha Paul

2 yrs, and a 10% vote gap: how BJP didn't see winds of change since '19

RAVIK BHATTACHARYA & SANTANU CHOWDHURY
KOLKATA, MAY 2

DESPITE THE BJP pulling out all the big guns and resources to contest the Assembly polls in West Bengal, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah extensively campaigning, the party struggled to cross double digits.

In fact, as per election results and leads till 6 pm, the BJP's vote share stood at 37.70%, a decline of nearly 3% from its 40.30% votes in 2019. On the other hand, the TMC had increased its vote share to 48.20% from 43.30% in 2019. In other words, a 10% vote gap stood between the two parties.

In fact, as per the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP led in 121 Assembly seats in the state, a far cry from its 76 till last count.

Observers and BJP insiders blamed a range of factors for the party's disappointing show: the

lack of organisation at the booth level, wrong selection of candidates, bringing in of TMC turncoats, not having a CM candidate to take on Mamata Banerjee, too much dependence on central leaders, consolidation of Muslim votes towards the TMC, and lack of proper feedback.

"Maybe people did not accept candidates who came from other parties... We will analyse what went wrong. We tried our best to reach out to the people," BJP state chief Dilip Ghosh said.

A senior BJP leader said, "We did win a lot of seats as a section of the people believed in us. We have established that it is the BJP vs the TMC in Bengal. But somehow Khela Hobe and Bengal's daughter campaigns of the TMC were more acceptable than our Sonar Bangla approach and development promises."

A majority of the BJP's 46 candidates who joined from different parties, including 36 from the Trinamool, lost. After announce-

ment of the candidate lists, the BJP had seen protests across the state, which were a sign of things to come that the party dismissed.

Party leaders said the BJP also failed to realise that the Trinamool had gained some of the ground lost by it by cracking down on corrupt party workers in areas like Jangalmahal and North Bengal. The frontal attacks on Mamata Banerjee may have also backfired.

True to her firebrand image, Mamata led the TMC from the front, addressing over a 100 rallies, most of them with her one leg in a cast.

The lack of local faces in comparison, leaving the entire campaign to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and J P Nadda, also appears to have been act of hubris. In districts like Howrah and Purba Medinipur, the BJP's entire gameplan rested on TMC's deserter stalwarts. But these failed to deliver, with the TMC winning all 16 seats in Howrah.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

BJP CLAIMS ATTACKS

THE BJP alleged that its workers and leaders were attacked by TMC leaders across Bengal soon after the results, with Kailash Vijayvargiya appealing to the TMC to restrain them. The BJP alleged that the house of its Belegghata candidate, Kashinath Biswas, was set on fire though timely action ensured there was not much damage. It also claimed that the party office was ransacked at Arambagh and another put on fire at Kasba. In Nandigram, some BJP workers' houses were allegedly ransacked. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tweeted, "Hope the administration ensures everyone's safety."

CONG 1, ISF 1 MAKE UP SANJUKTA MORCHA

In a first, no Left MLA in Bengal

Changes in campaign, but Left fails to make impact; CPM Politburo blames 'polarisation of votes'

ATRI MITRA
KOLKATA, MAY 2

FOR THE first time since Independence, the West Bengal Assembly will have no representative of the Left. The Sanjukta Morcha, comprising the Left parties, Congress and the newly floated Indian Secular Front (ISF), won two seats in a House of 294. The two Morcha candidates to win were the Congress's Nepal Chandra Mahato, who scraped through in Baghmundi, Purulia district, and the ISF's Nawshad Siddique from Bhangar.

With the shrinking of the party in the state it once ruled for more than 30 years now complete, the CPM Politburo blamed 'polarisation of votes' for its defeat. "The BJP suffered a severe setback despite its money power and manipulations in West Bengal. The people of Bengal have very clearly rejected the ideology of communal polarisation... The urge to defeat the BJP led to a sharp polarisation, squeezing out the Sanjukta Morcha."

A senior CPM leader added, "Even our supporters thought that to resist the BJP they should vote for the TMC. Thus we lost even our winning seats to the



Nepal Chandra Mahato (Cong) and Nawshad Siddique (ISF) were the only two Morcha candidates to have won

TMC. However, we are working for the people. Our volunteers are providing aid to Covid-affected people. Our movement for employment of youth will continue."

West Bengal Congress chief Adhir Chowdhury also blamed polarisation. "Mamata Banerjee successfully instilled fear psychosis among Muslims. We failed to convince people that the Congress is the only force consistently fighting against the BJP and its communal ideology. The Sitalkuchi incident helped Mamata polarise voters too," Chowdhury said, adding, "If this divisive politics prevails, it will be tough for us."

In Delhi, Congress spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said that while the results were a matter of "concern,

discussion and deliberation", the party welcomed the fact that the people of West Bengal had "decimated the vicious divisive agenda as also the money and muscle power of the BJP". "They have chosen peace over division and hatred," Surjewala said, congratulating Mamata Banerjee on the TMC's phenomenal win.

In the hope of wooing lost ground, the Left had implemented several changes in its campaign, including fielding youth and student leaders as candidates, but none made an impact. The most keenly watched of these nominees, JNU students' union president Aishwarya Ghosh, finished third in Jamuria, getting 14.82% votes.

Other young leaders such as Diprita Dhar (Bally), Minakshi Mukherjee (Nandigram) and Srijan Bhattacharya (Singur) also lost, as did CPM veterans Sujana Chakraborty, Ashok Bhattacharya, Sushanta Ghosh and Kanti Ganguly. The TMC retained Singur.

The Congress lost all the constituencies in its strongholds such as late stalwart Ghani Khan Chowdhury's Malda and Adhir Chowdhury's Murshidabad -- constituencies that it had held through the Left dominance in West Bengal and later Mamata's rise.

Didi wins khela 10-8

PM Modi addressed 18 public meetings in Bengal, in as many constituencies. TMC won 10 of those on Sunday. A look at how the drama unfolded in these 10 seats

Chowringhee: TMC

TMC's Nayna Bandopadhyay (70,101 votes) defeated BJP's Devdutta Maji (24,757).

What PM said at rally in Chowringhee's Brigade Parade Ground: "Ashol poriborton (genuine change) is Bengal BJP's mantra."

Jaynagar: TMC

TMC's Biswanath Das (1,04,952) beat BJP's Rabin Sardar (66,269).

What PM said: "I can witness the wave of 'ashol poriborton' in this region."

Uluberia Purba: TMC

TMC's Bidesh Ranjan Bose (86,526) defeated BJP's Pratyush Mandal (69,400).

What PM said: "People of Bengal have decided: Didi must go."

Haripal: TMC

TMC's Dr Karabi Manna (1,10,215) defeated BJP's Samiran Mitra (87,143).

What PM said: He assured people that he will make Bengal "tolamukt" (free of extortion).

Sonarpur Dakshin: TMC

TMC's Lovely Mitra (96,822) defeated Anjana Basu (76,432).

What PM said: "No Indian is an 'outsider' in Bengal. When BJP forms the government after May 2, a son of the soil will become CM."

Howrah Central: TMC

TMC's Arup Roy (96,465) defeated BJP's Sanjay Singh (55,340).

What PM said: "Didi's corrupt government has ushered in 'ease of crime' and 'ease of loot'. A BJP government will bring 'ease of doing business' and 'ease of living'."

Krishnanagar Dakshin: TMC

TMC's Ujjawal Biswas (91,738) defeated BJP's



PM Modi at a campaign rally

Mahadev Sarkar

(82,433).

What PM said: "Didi and her party are crossing all lines. Her people are abusing the SCs, STs, OBCs.... Didi has strategised to stop them from voting and facilitate her goons to rig votes."

Bardhaman Uttar: TMC

TMC's Nishith Kumar Malik (1,11,211) defeated BJP's Radhankanta Roy (93,943).

What PM said: "Tormenting 'Ma', looting 'Mati' and bloodshed of 'Manush' is the reality of Didi's slogan."

Barasat: TMC

TMC's Chiranjeet Chakraborty (1,04,431) defeated Sankar Chatterjee (80,648).

What PM said: "Didi's frustration is increasing as the day of result is coming closer. She now gets angry even when I say 'Didi O Didi' in rallies. Every child in Bengal has started saying 'Didi O Didi'."

Jamuria: TMC

TMC's Bardhaman Hareram (71,002) defeated BJP's Tapas Roy (62,951).

What PM said: "People used to come here for employment but today people from here are migrating. Didi, who speaks of Ma-Mati-Manush, has spread mafia raj here."

SWEETY KUMARI

In Nandigram, a puja begins after a wait

ATRI MITRA
NANDIGRAM, MAY 2

IN THE battleground constituency of Nandigram, scenes at a puja reflected the nail-biting contest that TMC chief Mamata Banerjee was in against former aide-turned-rival Suvendu Adhikari of the BJP, in the latter's family bastion.

On Sunday morning, preparations were complete for a "yaggo" (puja) for Adhikari at the Chandimata temple in Parulbari area, but as the trends began hinting at a victory for the TMC, the numbers dwindled due to reluctant participants. However, as Adhikari inched closer in the contest, priest Ashim Chakraborty dug his heels in. "We should start the puja because there is a stipulated time to hold the yaggo." The locals in front of the temple agreed.

In the first four rounds of counting in the morning, Adhikari took a lead of nearly 8,000 votes after Banerjee gradually narrowed the margin. In the afternoon, after 16 rounds, Adhikari was leading by only six votes.

Krishnakanta Karak (39), a resident of Maheshpur who stood behind the temple, said, "We were sure about Suvendu Adhikari's



Shashti Ghosh



PTI

A puja for Suvendu Adhikari in Nandigram; Banerjee (right) at Kalighat temple in Kolkata, after trends hinted at a TMC victory.

victory. But we never expected such results."

While roads seemed deserted in BJP-dominated areas in the constituency, the mood was different in TMC-dominated Sonachura, Daudpur, Samsabad and Nandigram bus stand, with hundreds of Mamata Banerjee supporters playing with green "abir" (colours).

The tables seemed turned in favour of the TMC, and news agency ANI tweeted that Banerjee had won. But just after the tweet, the Election Commission an-

nounced that the counting was not final, later declaring that Banerjee had lost to Adhikari with a margin of 1,736 votes. The TMC then approached the EC for a recount, alleging EVM tampering and fraud, and it was only in the night that the EC officials confirmed that Adhikari had won by 1,956 votes.

DEO Smita Pandey confirmed the same to *The Indian Express*.

However, TMC leaders maintained it was their chief's decision to contest the poll against Adhikari from Nandigram which enabled the party to fight back.

More than 40 TMC leaders had joined Adhikari as he defected to the BJP in a mega rally in December last year. And it was his clout in Nandigram which had earlier made the TMC almost unbeatable in rural Bengal.

In such a situation, Banerjee's decision to fight from Nandigram not only boosted the morale of her party's grassroots workers but also posed a big challenge to the BJP.

As counting of votes progressed, it became clear that with Banerjee's decision, the TMC was able to win over almost all the

seats in the Adhikari family's stronghold in East and West Midnapore and Jhargram.

But Adhikari won from his home turf. "My sincere thanks to the great People of Nandigram for their love, trust, blessings, and support, and for choosing me... It is my never-ending commitment to be of service to them and working for their welfare..." he tweeted.

Banerjee, who led the TMC campaign in a wheelchair following an injury, may now contest a by-poll in Khardaha where TMC candidate Kajal Sinha had died due to Covid.

Between the lines: young voters declined, elderly rose

HARIKISHAN SHARMA & RITIKA CHOPRA
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

WHILE BOTH the Trinamool and BJP focused their election campaign in West Bengal around youth, and jobs, an interesting poll factoid could have determined how that went down with the electorate. Election Commission data shows that in both absolute numbers and vote share, young voters, particularly first-timers, declined in the state compared to the last Assembly

The rate of decline was more in the 20-29 years age bracket, which saw voter numbers dip by 1.39%

elections. At the same time, the state saw the highest rise among voters 80 years and older.

So while Bengal's total voter numbers went up by 11.37%, from 6.58 crore in 2016 to 7.33 crore now, those under the age

30 declined by 1.21%, from 1.92 crore in 2016 to 1.90 crore in 2021. In terms of vote share, their fall was 3% — from 29% to 26%.

Of this chunk, the number of first-time voters — 18-19-year-olds — declined 0.76%, to 20.32 lakh in 2021 from 20.48 lakh in 2016. Their share in the total electorate declined from 3.11% to 2.77%.

The rate of decline was more in the 20-29 years age bracket, which saw voter numbers dip by 1.39%, from 1.72 crore in the last Assembly polls to 1.70 crore. In terms of proportion, this age

BENGAL NUMBERS

■ 2016 ■ 2021

TOTAL VOTERS

6.58 cr

7.33 cr

UNDER-30 VOTERS

1.92 cr

1.90 cr

80-PLUS VOTERS

8 lakh

11 lakh

group that formed the biggest chunk in 2016 — 26.19% — is now at 23.19% and is second largest.

However, the sharpest decline was in the 40-49 years age bracket. Voters in this category decreased by 8.48%, to 1.29 crore from 1.41 crore five years ago — their proportion came down from 21.52% to 17.69% during this period.

The number of voters in the 80+ age group increased by 37% — 8 lakh to 11 lakh — over the past five years, the highest among all age-groups. The proportion of this group to the total

electorate went up from 1.25% to 1.54%.

Other older age brackets also saw an increase — 70-79 years by 33.23%; 60-69 years by 33.13%; 50-59 years by 22%; and 30-39 years 27.78%. The proportion of each of these groups to the total electorate also went up.

In fact, voters in the 30-39 age group now account for the highest — 23.82% — share in the state's electorate. At 20.76%, this group had been the third largest chunk in 2016, after 20-29 years old (26.19%) and 40-49 years old (21.52%).



Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan greets supporters at a counting centre in Kannur as the results indicate he is returning to power, on Sunday. AP

ALLY IUML HOLDS ITS GROUND

Wayanad to coastal areas, Cong can't stop Pinarayi wave

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
MAY 2

BUCKING its tradition of voting out the ruling party every five years, Kerala chose to stay with the Left Democratic Front, rendering the Congress-led UDF an embarrassing defeat in the state. The coalition, which bagged 19 out of 20 seats in the Lok Sabha elections of 2019, ended with 41 seats in the 140-strong Assembly. The UDF show was mainly confined to central Kerala districts of Ernakulam and Kottayam, and ally IUML's stronghold of Malappuram. In fact, the Congress, the UDF's leading party, fared the

worst. Of the 93 seats it contested, fielding new and young faces in half of them, it could win only 21. In Rahul Gandhi's Wayanad Lok Sabha seat too, where he extensively campaigned, the UDF lost in three of the seven Assembly segments. Congress state president Mullappally Ramachandran called the defeat unexpected. "There is nothing in the political situation in Kerala that justifies this verdict." In the southern districts of Thiruvananthapuram and Kollam, the Congress won only three out of 25 seats. Among the biggest shocks for the party was the defeat of V S Sivakumar from Thiruvananthapuram to minor LDF ally Janathipathya Kerala

Congress's Antony Raju. Congress young face and two-term legislator K S Sabarinathan lost to CPM local leader G Stephen, who had faced protests from within the party. In Opposition leader Ramesh Chennithala's Alappuzha district, the Congress win was limited to his seat. The Congress had expected a wave in its favour in coastal areas in southern districts as the fishermen community was angry with the LDF government over a deal with US firms for deep-sea fishing. The Catholic diocese of Alappuzha and Kollam had openly come out against the deal during the elections, leading the Congress to hope for gains in the 40-odd

coastal constituencies in Kerala. However, that did not happen. In North Kerala districts also, the Congress could not improve its tally. In Kozhikode district, the party could not win in a single seat. The IUML on the other hand won 17 of the 27 seats it contested, retaining its hold on its bastion of Malappuram district. Last time, it had contested 23 seats and won 18. The breakthrough Kerala Congress led by P J Joseph won only two of the 10 seats it had contested. Among the UDF leaders who lost were K M Shaji (IUML), V T Balram (Congress), Anil Akkara (Congress) and K S Sabarinathan (Congress).

The defeat is a second blow for the Congress after the local body elections in December, that the LDF had swept, and many party leaders admitted it was a do-or-die battle. After the December loss, the Congress had brought in former chief minister Oommen Chandy to the centre-stage, making him the chairman of the election committee. It had also this time selected names based on "winnability", avoiding its usual pitfall of factional leaders pushing own leaders. The party also hoped to have made an impact with the anomalies in electoral rolls alleged by Chennithala in the run-up to voting. The ruling CPM had maintained silence on the matter.

BJP back to ground 'zero' in Kerala, temple no answer to party prayers

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
MAY 2

FAR from winning at least half-a-dozen seats as it claimed it would do, the BJP ended with a duck in Kerala, losing even Nemom that it had won in 2016. Moreover, unlike last time when it ended up second in seven constituencies, it managed that mark in only five. The Nemom win had been positioned as a stepping stone for the BJP into Kerala's politics. The party had also hoped to make gains by playing up the controversy over the Sabarimala temple entry issue, targeting the Hindu vote. However, it got only around 11% of the votes, around the same as 2016, and a drop from its 2019 Lok Sabha count. Among the big losers was BJP state president K Surendran, who could win neither of the two constituencies he contested from, Konni or Manjeshwar. The much-publicised Metro Man E Sreedharan, a self-proclaimed chief ministerial candidate, put up a fight till the last

round of counting in Palakkad constituency but eventually lost. In Kazhakkootam constituency, party candidate Sobha Surendran lost to Temple Affairs Minister Kadakampally Surendran, despite the latter bearing the Sabarimala heat. During the campaign, CPM CM-candidate Pinarayi Vijayan had stated that while five years back the BJP had opened its account in Nemom, "this time, we will close that account and the BJP's vote share will go down". On Sunday after CPM candidate V Sivankutty defeated the BJP's Kummamam Rajasekharan in Nemom, Vijayan noted, "BJP leaders even said the party would form the government without getting a majority." Prime Minister Narendra Modi had himself raised Sabarimala issue in his campaign, reciting Ayyappa chants. The poor show of the BJP in Kerala is likely to trigger unrest in the state unit. The RSS had been directly involved in campaigning in several constituencies. A party leader said the result showed Kerala does not accept the new BJP leadership.



UDF Thripoonithura candidate K. Babu celebrates his victory with supporters at Kochi. PTI

Jose Mani gives up RS seat but loses bid for his father's mantle

SHAJU PHILIP
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
MAY 2

ALTHOUGH THE CPM-led LDF retained power in Kerala with 99 seats, LDF ally Kerala Congress (M) chairman Jose K Mani lost from his party's home land Pala. Jose lost Pala, which his father late K M Mani represented for half-a-century, to NCP-Kerala leader and sitting legislator Mani C Kappan. The NCP-Kerala leader had won the seat in the by-election held in 2019 after the death

of K M Mani. Kappan retained Pala for a margin of 15,000-odd votes. Jose's party bagged five seats for the LDF in central Kerala, but the loss of Pala is a setback for him. The Junior Mani had quit as a member of the Rajya Sabha early this year to contest the election from Pala, in a bid to claim the legacy of his father. If he had got elected, Jose would have emerged as a key figure in the new Pinarayi Vijayan cabinet. Jose had earlier got elected to the Rajya Sabha on a UDF ticket when his party had been an ally

of the UDF. After shifting to the LDF, he had quit the RS membership on moral grounds. In the LDF, Jose had faced protests from a section of CPM workers who have been traditionally against the Kerala Congress (M). In fact, days before elections, KC (M) workers had clashed with the CPM in Pala. On Sunday, Jose blamed his rival's underhand deal with the BJP for his defeat. In a saving grace for Jose, his rival P J Joseph's Kerala Congress won only two seats out of the 10 it contested.

BJP DEFEAT IN BENGAL

Sweets, crackers at Haryana farm protest sites

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, MAY 2

FARMERS ACITATING against the three farm laws since last year burst crackers and distributed sweets at *dharna* sites in Haryana as news came in of the BJP's defeat in the Assembly elections in West Bengal. The protesting farmers called the West Bengal results their first significant win against the ruling BJP at the Centre, which will

boost their agitation against the farm laws. In the run-up to the elections, many farmer leaders of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha had toured Bengal to campaign against the BJP as part of their agitation. They had appealed to the voters not to support the BJP. The election results were keenly followed at the protest sites in Haryana on Sunday. As soon as it became clear that Mamata Banerjee's TMC was sweeping the polls, farmers at



At Khatkar toll plaza, Jind

the venue of their protest at a toll plaza in Hisar district distributed *gulab jamuns*, while those at a toll plaza in Jind district burst crackers and distributed ladoos. "Next year, the farmers from the entire country will go to Uttar Pradesh to defeat it (the ruling BJP) there in the Assembly polls," said Haryana BKU leader Gurnam Singh Chaduni, who had addressed several public meetings in Bengal against the farm laws.

"The BJP may disappear from the country," said Chaduni in a video message addressed to the farmers. "Now, the reverse gear of the BJP government has started." Jind BKU president Azad Palwa said, "The Bengal results will give more strength to the farmers as they had campaigned against Prime Minister Narendra Modi there. This is our first big victory as the BJP had made the Bengal Assembly election a prestige issue."

'On CAA... I feel we must protect genuine refugees'

SEEN AS a prime contender for the Chief Minister's post in Assam, senior BJP leader Himanta Biswa Sarma spoke to Liz Mathew after his party's victory in the state. *Excerpts:*



What has helped the BJP return to power?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made the Northeast the centre of development in the country... There are policies towards the development of infrastructure, roads, railway, universities etc. The state government too took a number of initiatives. People have also appreciated the state government's fight against Covid... and have voted against the divisive politics and unholy alliances of the Opposition.

The BJP usually backs the incumbent CM in an election. Why not in Assam.

The central leadership will have to answer this question. But I think as a political party, we do not have a strait-jacket formula. According to the political situation and requirement, the party adopts a policy or stand.



As health minister, you managed the state's Covid situation. Do you think it helped the party's victory?

Some things have contributed. A women empowerment policy, of transferring cash to 22 lakh women, the management of Covid where Assam is a model for other states... People have realised that continuity in government would make Assam prosperous.

Given the Covid situation, doesn't the state require experienced hands?

It's time the country is

united, keeping aside political differences and rally around the PM... Whoever is going to head the government, first priority is to manage the Covid situation.

Were you promised chief ministership of Assam?

No, absolutely not... We have not discussed anything on that line... I am satisfied that, somewhere in the BJP's victory, there is a small contribution from my side also.

What's going to be new in this government?

We have a vision document which is slightly different from the last one. Because we did not have governmental experience last time... Last time, it was only I who had the ministerial experience in the government. But this time we will have many experienced hands...

What will happen to the CAA after the West Bengal defeat for the BJP (the party kept quiet on the Act in Assam during the polls)?

The CAA is a legislation passed by Parliament and the Centre has to frame rules for it. We will not be able to say anything unless we have the rules. But I strongly feel that India must protect its genuine refugees.

Mahajot maths lacked one X factor: a CM face

ABHISHEK SAHA
GUWAHATI, MAY 2

THE CONGRESS-led grand alliance or Mahajot, and the tie-up formed by two new regional parties in Assam, failed to stop the NDA forming the government for a second term.

Among those who lost was state Congress chief Ripun Bora, from his constituency Gohpur. Soon after, he submitted his resignation to Sonia Gandhi.

In the 2016 elections, the Congress had won 26 seats in Assam. This was the first election after demise of the veteran Congress leader Tarun Gogoi. Till 11 pm on Sunday, the Congress had won 18 seats and was leading in 12, a marginal improvement of just four seats despite putting up a spirited fight, forming some strong coalitions and getting its house in order.

A senior Congress leader said that the lack of a face for CM might have hurt the Mahajot's prospects. In the absence of Gogoi, there were several contenders for the post in the state unit, with differences between them spilling out in the open.

One of the contentious issues for the leaders was the Congress decision to align, for the first time, with MP and perfume baron Badruddin Ajmal's AIUDF -- which enjoys a large support base amongst Bengali-origin Muslims. In the campaign, the BJP constantly attacked the Congress-AIUDF alliance, saying it would promote illegal migration, helping the BJP douse some of the fire over its CAA plans.

In 2016, the AIUDF had won 13 seats with a 13.05% vote share. This time the party contested 20 seats and till 11.15 pm, had won nine and was leading in seven. When asked about the Mahajot Sunday, Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told



Akhil Gogoi's wife celebrates his win Sunday. *Dasarath Deka*

the press in Guwahati, "A strong Opposition is good for the health of democracy. My only point is that the Opposition should leave politics of appeasement. I hope they speak for the entire population of Assam."

The election was essentially a triangular contest between the NDA, Mahajot and an alliance of two newly formed regional parties -- the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and Rajiwar Dal (RD). That also hurt the Congress.

The Congress leader quoted above said, "The AJP and RD ate up our votes."

While the AJP failed to secure a lead on any seat and its president Lurinjyoti Gogoi lost both the constituencies he contested from, jailed activist Akhil Gogoi, who leads the RD, was set to win Sibsagar. Gogoi is in jail for over a year now after being booked on charges of sedition.

"As Akhil Gogoi steps into parliamentary politics, I hope that the unparliamentary work that he was involved with till now stops," Sarma said Sunday. On Lurinjyoti Gogoi, he said, "He has a future."

The influential BPF, led by Hagrama Mohilary, a former ally of the BJP, was supposed to have given a shot in the arm to the Mahajot in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). But Sunday's results showed that was not the case.



Celebrations outside the DMK office in Chennai on Sunday. PTI

DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



LONDON ENGAGEMENTS

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister S Jaishankar will be visiting London from May 3 to 6 to participate in the G-7 Foreign Ministers meeting, at which India has been invited as a guest country. As he will also have bilateral meetings in London, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have a bilateral summit through virtual mode with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on May 4. Johnson was scheduled to come to India in April end, but his visit was cancelled due to the second Covid surge.

POINT TO PONDER

AS THE Congress suffered yet another humiliating defeat in the state elections, most of its leaders vent their anger at the sad state of affairs in the party in private. Some, however, rejoiced at the defeat of the BJP at the hands of the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal. Party spokesperson Ragini Nayak said in a tweet: "If we (Congress) keep finding happiness in Modi's defeat, when are we going to self introspect on our losses?" Interestingly, her tweet came minutes after senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi tweeted that he was happy to congratulate Mamata Banerjee and the people of West Bengal for defeating the BJP.

DUTY FIRST

CONDUCTING ELECTIONS amidst a pandemic has been challenging for the Election Commission. There were officers who contracted the virus, but continued working through the illness from home. There have also been officers on the ground who lost family members but chose to resume their duties as soon as possible to ensure the election process is not disrupted. Among them is West Bengal's Chief Electoral Officer Aariz Aftab whose father-in-law passed away just two days ahead of counting. He rushed to Patna for the final rites and came back to resume his duty. District Election Officer of Howrah, Mukta Arya, lost her father but continued working. SP Birbhum Nagendra Tripathi lost her mother. He went for her last rites to UP, but rejoined duty in two days.

In run-up to polls, many TMC leaders came under CBI, NIA and ED radar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

AFTER A thumping victory in the West Bengal polls on Sunday, TMC chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee once again accused the Narendra Modi government of using constitutional and central agencies against her party.

Banerjee's remarks came in the wake of a string of raids and probes launched by the agencies against leaders of the TMC, including Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, in the run-up to the elections.

■ In the first week of March, CBI issued a lookout circular against Bikash Mishra, brother of TMC youth leader Binay Mishra

in the coal pilferage case. Binay Mishra has been chargesheeted by the CBI in a case of cattle smuggling and is also under probe in the coal pilferage case. Said to be absconding, CBI is preparing to get a Red Corner Notice issued against him. On March 16, the ED arrested Bikash Mishra.

■ In March, the ED summoned state minister Partha Chatterjee and former minister Madan Mitra in two different cases related to chit funds. Both contested the elections as TMC candidates.

■ Just a week before the polls, CBI and ED also summoned six top officials of the TMC government for questioning in different cases. These included Gautam Sanyal, principal secretary in the CM's office, state security advisor Surajit Kar Purakayastha, and state additional chief secretary BP Gopalika, among others.

■ Also in March, TMC's Jorasanko candidate Vivek Gupta was questioned for several hours in connection with the Saradha chit fund scam.

NR Congress-BJP alliance victorious in Puducherry

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, MAY 2

THE NR Congress-BJP alliance secured the majority in Puducherry, winning 16 seats in the 30-member assembly. Counting in four seats was still in progress at the time of going to press.

The Indian National Congress, which was ruling Puducherry until its government was toppled in February, won two seats. Its ally DMK won five seats and was leading in one more seat.

According to the Election Commission website, which announced the results for 26 seats, the NR Congress won 10 seats and the BJP five.

Even as the alliance looked to form the government, there was speculation in the political circles that the BJP may be trying to come out of the alliance to form a government on its own with the help of six Independent

MLAs.

NR Congress leader and the chief of the winning alliance, N Rangasamy, said he will be meeting his party MLAs as well as BJP leaders on Monday. "The swearing-in ceremony will be held in two or three days," he told The Indian Express. When asked about the BJP's earlier demand for the CM post, Rangasamy said: "That cannot happen. We are all in the same alliance, I will be the CM."

But a top source in the Puducherry government said the BJP may be trying to seek the help of six Independent MLAs to form the government if Rangasamy, a former CM, refuses to agree to its demand.

BJP chief in Puducherry V Saminathan was not available for comment.

The BJP was accused of toppling the previous Congress government two months ago with senior Congress ministers and MLAs resigning from their MLA posts and later joining it.

Want to quit this, do something else: Kishor

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's poll strategist Prashant Kishor on Sunday announced that he was "quitting" his work as a political consultant in the wake of the massive victory of the TMC in Bengal.

In December, in the face of several TMC leaders being inducted into the BJP, Kishor ironically had tweeted that he would quit the political space if the BJP were to cross a hundred seats in Bengal, and that he was confident that they would be reduced to a figure under that.

Even as his words turned out to be prophetic, Kishor on Sunday announced on television channels that he did not want to "continue what he was doing."

Speaking to NDTV, he said, "I have done enough. It is time for me to take a break and do something else in life. I want to quit this space."

To India Today, Kishor said he was thinking about quitting for a while, and Bengal has given him that chance. Pressed on whether he would join electoral politics, he remained non-committal. He said said politics has always been on the radar, but that he had failed in the past and he would have to rethink what he had done wrong, and had not made a decision thus far.

Kishor, who works with the political consultancy IPAC, said it was time for his colleagues, "who had done the actual work" to take over, and there was no better time than now to hand over the baton to someone. In December, Kishor had tweeted, "For all the hype amplified by a section of the supportive media, in reality BJP will struggle to cross double digits in West Bengal. Please save this tweet..."

4 LS, 12 Assembly bypolls: Spoils shared

Karnataka: BJP narrowly wins Belagavi LS seat, splits two House constituencies with Cong

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BENGALURU, MAY 2

THE BJP narrowly maintained its hold over the Belagavi Lok Sabha seat in Karnataka with Mangala Angadi, the widow of former Union Minister Suresh Angadi, defeating Congress's Satish Jarkiholi by just 1,781 votes.

The Belagavi by-poll was necessitated by the death of Suresh Angadi in September 2020 following a Covid-19 infection.

The BJP attempted to capitalize on the sympathy wave for the four-term MP who was tipped to be a candidate to replace Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa.

Andhra: YSRCP keeps Tirupati LS

Hyderabad: The YSR Congress Party Sunday retained the Tirupati Parliamentary Constituency with its candidate M Gurumoorthy winning by a huge margin.

The by-poll, held on April 17, was necessitated by the death of YSRCP MP B Durga Prasad due to Covid-19 last September.

The Telugu Desam Party's candidate was former MP Panabaka Lakshmi while the BJP fielded former IAS officer K Ratna Prabha. Gurumoorthy polled 6,24,748 votes, the TDP candidate got 3,53,642 votes, and the BJP received 56,992 votes.

ELSEWHERE...

- Mizoram: MNF defeated
- TRS wins Nagarjuna Sagar
- Nagaland: No contest
- JMM wins Madhupur
- BJP retains Salt assembly seat in Uttarakhand

After 4 yrs of turbulence, Dhinakaran fails to bag single seat, BJP wins 4

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, MAY 2

SQUEEZED OUT by the two rival alliances led by DMK and AIADMK, it appeared to be the end of the Amma Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (AMMK), which failed to bag a single seat in the Tamil Nadu assembly elections, with even party founder T T V Dhinakaran losing from Kovilpatti constituency.

The results announced on Sunday came as a major setback to the political ambitions of Dhinakaran, who floated the party in 2018 to prove a point shortly after his and his aunt V K Sasikala's expulsion from the AIADMK.

The AMMK's wipe-out is an outcome of a series of chaotic events – largely attributed to the BJP – that unfolded in Tamil Nadu after the death of the then chief minister J Jayalalithaa in 2016, which not only broke the spirit of the AIADMK but also led it to a forced alliance with the national party.

A series of I-T and CBI searches targeting mining baron Sekar Reddy in December 2016, a revolt by then chief minister O Panneerselvam against the party's interim general secretary Sasikala soon after the raids and yet another series of raids targeting top AIADMK ministers were among the major events that the BJP has been accused of scripting to make inroads in Tamil Nadu politics after Jayalalithaa's death. This turbulence was followed by more: merger of the two rival AIADMK factions and finally the ouster of Sasikala from the party, which was again attributed to the BJP's gameplan.

Incidentally, while Dhinakaran's party was wiped off on Sunday, the BJP, which did not have a single seat in the previous assembly, won four seats, matching its best-ever performance of 2001. Vanathi Srinivasan in Coimbatore South, Nainar Nagendran in Tirunelveli were among the winners.

On the other hand, some AIADMK ministers, who closely worked with the BJP in the past four years, also lost the elections. D Jayakumar, the only minister deputed to issue statements against Sasikala after her ouster and Mafoi Pandiarajan, a close aide of Panneerselvam who was in touch with the RSS camp on his behalf, were among those who lost.

Even when Sasikala was sent to prison on corruption charges and was ousted from the party later, there was a section of AIADMK leaders who strongly believed that only her leadership could save the party from the clutches of the BJP, irrespective of poll victories. "Looks like that chapter is over. There is no scope for a revival. Why should Dhinakaran fight against the AIADMK or BJP having lost all seats they contested?" said a senior AIADMK leader, who had been silently supporting Sasikala.

Sources close to the Sasikala family said she will continue to stay away from politics. "Had Dhinakaran won a couple of seats or at least one seat in the assembly, there were reasons for him to assert his power. Where is his space now? Why should Sasikala now take risks for Dhinakaran's political life when the BJP can still trouble her with pending cases? She cannot forget the last four years spent in prison," said a source.

An AIADMK minister who won the election hoped that the BJP would lose interest in the AIADMK soon.

Rajasthan: Cong retains 2, BJP 1

Jaipur: The Congress and BJP managed to retain the Assembly constituencies in the bypolls to three seats, the results for which were declared Sunday. The results were along expected lines for Congress as it retained Sahara and Sujargarh while BJP retained Rajsamand, with the winning candidates getting the sympathy vote from the constituents.

On two of these seats, the incumbent MLAs had died due to Covid-19 while a third had died while undergoing treatment following a stroke. Following the wins, the Congress tally will now be 106 in an Assembly of 200, while BJP will have 72 MLAs. Congress also has the support of 13 Independents and one Rashtriya Lok Dal MLA. RLP with 3, and CPI(M) and Bharatiya Tribal Party with 2 each occupy the remaining seats, while one seat, Vallabhnagar in Udaipur, continues to be vacant. In Rajsamand, Deepti Maheshwari's margin against Tansukh Bohara of Congress stood at 5,310.

ENS

BIG WINNERS



Chief Minister
E K Palaniswami
(Edappadi),
AIADMK;

69.97% votes



DMK Chief
M K Stalin
(Kolathur),
DMK;

56.77% votes

Deputy CM
O Panneerselvam
(Bodinayakanur),
AIADMK;

46.4% votes

DMK chief Stalin's son
Udhayanidhi Stalin
(Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni),
DMK;

67.86% votes

DMK leader E V Velu
(Tiruvannamalai), DMK,
66.08 % votes

BIG LOSERS



Seeman
(Thiruvottiyur)
Naam Tamilar
Katchi;

by 17,104 votes



Vijayakanth's wife Premalatha
(Vriddhachalam)
DMDK;

by 27,650 votes

I Murugan

(Dharapuram), BJP;

by 668 votes

TTV Dhinakaran
(Kovilpatti), AMMK;

by 5,549 votes

Khushbu Sundar
(Thousand Lights), BJP;

by 18,086 votes

Mumbai: In a setback to the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government, BJP's Samadhan Autade defeated NCP's Bhagirath Bhalke in the bypoll to Pandharpur Assembly constituency in Solapur district. Autade won the seat by a thin margin of 3,733 votes on Sunday.

As per the official figures, Autade secured 109450 votes while Bhalke got 105717 votes. Over 66 per cent turnout was recorded during polling in the constituency on April 17, according to the Election Commission.

The bypoll was being projected by the contestants as a test of the MVA government's popularity.

The BJP and NCP were in a direct fight in the bypoll, which was necessitated by the death of NCP legislator Bharat Bhalke due to Covid-19 in November last year. While NCP fielded Bhalke's son Bhagirath, the BJP fielded Autade, who contested the 2019 Assembly poll as an independent candidate and the 2014 polls as a Shiv Sena candidate.

"The victory of BJP candidate Autade in Pandharpur is a comment on the corrupt and non-competent MVA government in Maharashtra," Opposition leader in Assembly Devendra Fadavis said. "The public mandate for the

TWITTER REACTS TO TMC VICTORY

Congratulations to Mamata Didi for @AITCofficial's win in West Bengal. The Centre will continue to extend all possible support to the West Bengal Government to fulfil people's aspirations and also to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic.

NARENDRA MODI
PRIME MINISTER

All credit goes to the Bengal tigress for the win. The prime minister, Union home minister, ministers from the Centre and several states descended on WB to defeat Banerjee. But she defeated all these forces...

UDDHAV THACKERAY
MAHARASHTRA CHIEF MINISTER

Congratulations to @MamataOfficial Mamata Banerjee on her spectacular victory over the forces of communalism and intolerance... The BJP has met its match in Bengal, and lost.

SHASHI THAROOR
CONGRESS LEADER

Neither will I congratulate Mamata Banerjee... nor do I wish to say I 'respect' the people's verdict... sincerely think people of Bengal made a historic mistake by not giving BJP a chance... by electing this corrupt, incapable, dishonest government and a cruel lady back to power.

BABUL SUPRIYO

In Maharashtra, NCP loses Pandharpur to BJP

Mumbai: In a setback to the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi government, BJP's Samadhan Autade defeated NCP's Bhagirath Bhalke in the bypoll to Pandharpur Assembly constituency in Solapur district. Autade won the seat by a thin margin of 3,733 votes on Sunday.

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"The victory of BJP candidate Autade in Pandharpur is a comment on the corrupt and non-competent MVA government in Maharashtra," Opposition leader in Assembly Devendra Fadavis said. "The public mandate for the

BJP candidate is for development. The people defeated the NCP and conveyed a strong message about MVA's misrule."

State BJP president Chandrakant Patil said, "Instead of celebrating the victory of West Bengal, Shiv Sena and NCP should comment on Pandharpur Mangalvedha by-elections." The BJP's victory shows people are not happy with the state government and its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, he added.

Conceding defeat, Jayant Patil, NCP state president and Irrigation Minister said, "All the parties in the MVA helped us. But we lost the election by a thin margin due to lack of communication in the two tehsils and failure to take everyone along with us from these two tehsils."

Senior NCP leaders and ministers Ajit Pawar, Jayant Patil, Dhananjay Munde, Datta Bharane, NCP legislator Rohit Patil, and others held campaign rallies for the NCP candidate. Shiv Sena minister Gulabrao Patil, state Congress president Nana Patole and other office-bearers had also campaigned for him. BJP leaders such as Fadavis, Chandrakant Patil and local MLAs and MPs campaigned for the party candidate in the constituency. **ENS**

In Gujarat, BJP wins big

Ahmedabad: BJP candidate Nimishaben Suthar won the by-election to the Morva Hadaf seat by 45,649 votes against her nearest rival from Congress Suresh Katara in the results that were declared Sunday.

The by-election was necessitated due to the disqualification of legislator Bhupendrasinh Khant.

In the 2017 Assembly polls, Khant, an independent candidate, had won the reserved Morva Hadaf seat (ST) with a

margin of 4,366 votes against his nearest BJP rival Dindor Vikramsinh Ramsinh.

Morva Hadaf has close to two lakh voters. In May 2019, the Gujarat Assembly Speaker had disqualified Khant saying his caste certificate was invalid. In January, Khant passed away. As counting concluded, Congress's Katara could poll only 21,808 votes against Suthar's 67,457 votes which is nearly 72.4 per cent of the votes. BJP state chief CR Paatil congratulated Suthar. **ENS**



*The Indian***EXPRESS**

FOUNDED BY

RAMNATH GOENKA

BECAUSE THE TRUTH INVOLVES US ALL

CONGRATS ALL, NOW PLEASE GET TO WORK

West Bengal has resoundingly rejected polarising alternative offered by BJP; strong regional leaders will shape pushback to Centre. But for now, task is to fight virus, save lives

FOR PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi, the BJP's failure to win in West Bengal deepens an already sobering moment. As the government he leads at the Centre struggles to meet the challenge of an unprecedented public health emergency, its fumbles and abdications, and the dreadful toll they are taking, are rendered all too visible. What was also conspicuous was that even as the second Covid wave rose and rose, the Prime Minister personally took ownership of the BJP's Bengal poll charge — a campaign bolstered by the immense resources at the command of the Centre's ruling party, a supporting cast of senior party leaders and ministers, and a poll monitor which seemed to be taking cues not from the special challenge of conducting an important election amid a pandemic, but from the powers-that-be.

It has been evident for some time now that the BJP underperforms in the states in comparison to its firm hold on the Centre. This has been driven home, starting with the election the BJP strikingly lost to the JD(U)-RJD Mahagathbandhan in Bihar 2015. It has been argued that PM Modi is more popular than his party and that the BJP's lesser performance in the states points to the weakness of its state leadership, or to the arithmetic rigged up by its political opponents. There is truth in that analysis. Yet the West Bengal verdict cannot be entirely explained by an argument that insulates the PM's considerable popularity and appeal from the BJP's assembly failures and incapacities.

Because in Bengal, much more than in other BJP campaigns in states, the might of the PM's impressive political capital was brought into play. In Bengal, the PM taunted the CM directly: "Didi o Didi". Sure, given that it had started with a paltry three seats in the outgoing assembly, the BJP has still covered a long distance. It has shifted the centre of Bengal's politics to the right, made the contest bipolar. Having said that, however, its spectacular failure to match up to its special hype makes West Bengal, today, the state that was wooed by the PM and that said no.

MAMATA BANERJEE'S LANDSLIDE win against the tremendous odds stacked against her — she has lost in Nandigram, but she was the face of the TMC in practically every seat — is a testament to her prowess as a politician, her unputdownable resilience. At the end of two terms in power, she was faced with anti-incumbency. Reports from the ground captured the accumulated resentments among the people over the corruptions and thuggeries of TMC cadres, many of whom had earlier crossed over from the Left and the Congress, and some of whom, on this election eve, migrated to the BJP.

Yet, Banerjee's emphatic victory shows that, when it came to a choice between a flawed incumbent and a polarising political alternative, the voters of Bengal chose the former. That *poriborton* is not a slogan to be appropriated, but earned. It also underlines that anti-incumbency is no infallible law of political nature. In fact, Pinarayi Vijayan's return to power in a state that has traditionally seen an alternation underlines the firming up of a relatively recent phenomenon, after the collapse of the Congress system and the onset of multi-party competition: Pro-incumbency.

THAT THE TMC win in Bengal was helped by the Congress-Left collapse in the state could point to a rearranging of the format of national-level political competition: On the other side of the battlelines from the Modi-BJP, will be the regional parties. The might of the BJP could now be taken on by a sum of the states. After all, regional players share the victory podium with the BJP in this round — the BJP has won Assam, Banerjee has triumphed in Bengal, Vijayan has led a Left that looks more like a Kerala party to a second successive term, and the Stalin-led DMK has come to power in Tamil Nadu.

While Banerjee's win is notched directly against the BJP, the victories of Vijayan, cast as an anti-Modi figure, and even Stalin, are likely to shore up the claims of the regional players to offer an alternative to the Modi-BJP nationally — given the Congress's evident unwillingness and inability.

Reports of the demise of the Congress no longer seem exaggerated. It was in the reckoning against the incumbent BJP in Assam, the other pole in the bipolar contest with the Left in Kerala, and it had a government in Puducherry. It has lost all three, and in addition, been decimated in Bengal, where its alliance with the Left and the newly formed Indian Secular Front was overlooked by the voters comprehensively.

But if the Congress is the older player, wilfully paralysed by its own infirmities, the AIADMK's credible showing in Tamil Nadu has announced a transition to the new and, hopefully, a democratic deepening. The AIADMK's credible showing under the leadership of Edappadi K Palaniswami points to the passing of the baton not just in the AIADMK after it lost its supreme Jayalalithaa, but also to a politics less beholden to the charismatic personality.

IN 2015, AFTER the famous Mahagathbandhan victory against the BJP in Bihar seemed to arrest the BJP's juggernaut, the Opposition lost little time in frittering away the political possibilities it had opened up. The victories of regional players now may not have an enduring effect either. Whether they do or not, however, is a question for the future. For now, those who have won have no time to waste even for savouring victory.

For the new governments in Assam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry, the immediate challenge is to fight Covid. They must use all their political capital, rally all their resources to win. The battle has been won, a larger and longer battle lies ahead.

FREEZE FRAME

E P UNNY



SUHAS PALSHIKAR

SELDOM WOULD ONE be analysing the outcome of a round of elections while facing deaths and suffering on a scale that victories and defeats make no sense. Of course, the democratic practice of elections needed to go on, but the Election Commission owes us an explanation for the protracted schedule in West Bengal (except that it suited the ruling party at the Centre). Some damage could have been avoided if the elections concluded a fortnight earlier and restrictions were imposed on mass campaigning. So, in the backdrop of what is happening in the country and what the irresponsible campaigning may bring to these states in the near future, the election outcomes need to be seen with absolute sobriety. The outcomes have humbled a mighty party no doubt, but the humiliation that the pandemic will continue to cause is something that the new governments will do well to attend single-mindedly.

Politically, too, only a sober reading can help us make sense of the outcome. Understandably, there will be considerable jubilation in the anti-Modi camp. Given the increasing strength of the BJP, the value of TMC's victory cannot be overstated. Like the Mahagathbandhan victory in Bihar in 2015, the TMC win now can be a focal point for politics against the BJP. However, this is where both sobriety in reading the outcome and maturity in building on it might be badly needed, but, alas, found wanting.

It must be remembered that while the outcome (particularly in West Bengal) has fallen far short of the BJP's boast, the party has not done badly either. It has retained Assam, almost managed to breach the cosy bipolarity of Kerala by consistently polling over 10 per cent vote, and, above all, in West Bengal, it is now the only force to take on the TMC in the future.

Yes, it is important that a state party has fought back the full might of the BJP and the central government. But it would be naive to ignore the expansion of the BJP in West Bengal. The BJP increased its vote share from 10 per cent in 2016 to 40 per cent in 2019 and then, retained almost all of that after two more years. Now, the Trinamool Congress will be ruling West Bengal with a notice served to it. Add to this scepticism about the democratic commitment of the TMC and the outcome begins to look only like a pyrrhic respite from complete takeover by the BJP. It will be an ex-



AKHIL RANJAN DUTTA

THE BJP HAS had the upper hand in every election in Assam since the party won big in the state in 2014 Lok Sabha elections. It won seven and nine (out of 14) Lok Sabha seats in the state in 2014 and 2019 elections respectively, while registering leads in 69 assembly segments in both the elections. In the 2016 assembly elections, the BJP won 60 seats, while the "rainbow alliance" it led succeeded in 86 constituencies. In the 2019 general election, the NDA led in 82 assembly segments. The alliance seems set to repeat the same tally in the 2021 polls.

The BJP has achieved this victory through multiple strategies. It manufactured social perceptions, implemented competitive populist schemes and brought almost all mainstream tribal ethnic outfits into its fold. During the first wave of the pandemic, the BJP regained the political legitimacy it had lost during the period of the CAA enactment through initiatives such as the Arogya Nidhi. By exempting the three Sixth Schedule council areas — the Bodo Territorial Council (BTC), the Karbi Autonomous Council and the Dima Hasao from the purview of the CAA — the BJP government succeeded in luring away many ethnic nationalist organisations from the anti-CAA movement. While the two new regional political parties — the Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Rajior Dal (RD) — centred on the anti-CAA sentiments, the BJP limited the anti-CAA fervour to a section of the Assamese

Trinamool win can be a focal point for anti-BJP politics, but Opposition needs clarity about intent



With its defeat in Kerala and failure to wrest back Assam, the Congress has yet again lost an opportunity to be a node around which non-BJP politics could take shape. In this sense, we are likely to witness a rehash of the 1989 moment when state parties played a pivotal role (though, back then, there still was a larger but loosely structured party called the Janata Dal). As state parties are rushing to congratulate Mamata Banerjee for her feat, the moot question is whether she has the skill to coordinate these disparate non-BJP forces or does she only symbolically represent the spirit of the fight against the BJP.

How BJP Retained Assam

A populist welfare agenda, smart alliances, polarisation helped the party win



speaking non-tribal population. The victory of Akhil Gogoi, president of the RD, is more a reflection of the peoples' wrath against his extended imprisonment. Meanwhile, the grand alliance forged by the Congress with the AIUDF, the Left, the BPF and a few other smaller regional parties failed to mitigate inner and intra fighting among the parties and produce a common minimum programme.

The BJP consolidated its base by foregrounding developmentalism, accompanied by hyper populism. The decades-long work by the RSS had turned the tea tribes, particularly in upper Assam, to BJP supporters. The community received the highest patronage from the incumbent government. The number of beneficiaries under various schemes such as the "Orunodai" under the National Food Security Act also increased substantially. It also launched new and innovative schemes for different segments of society. Not a single segment of society remained untouched by the populist beneficiary schemes, including girls and women belonging to the minority Muslim community. The BJP's Sangkalpa Patra 2021 is a case in point. The BJP also successfully engineered the perception that Narendra Modi stands for all-inclusive development.

The BJP also popularised the theory of civilisational threat emanating from the East Bengal-origin Muslims. It targeted the East Bengal-origin Muslims, particularly the AIUDF,

aggregated expectation that the TMC will change its style of internal functioning or governance. The embers of violence and hatred will dot the political skies of the state, giving little opportunity to any civilised competition. What the West Bengal outcome suggests is a possible shift, where one could see a new non-BJP configuration shaping up.

This possibility is strengthened by the inability of the Congress to begin its comeback. There are many excuses for this, but the unwillingness of Congress to address organisational issues on an urgent basis is the root cause for its inability to bounce back. With its defeat in Kerala and failure to wrest back Assam, the Congress has yet again lost an opportunity to be a node around which non-BJP politics could take shape. In this sense, we are likely to witness a rehash of the 1989 moment when state parties played a pivotal role (though, back then, there still was a larger but loosely structured party called the Janata Dal). As state parties are rushing to congratulate Mamata Banerjee for her feat, the moot question is whether she has the skill to coordinate these disparate non-BJP forces or does she only symbolically represent the spirit of the fight against the BJP.

There are at least two more points of introspection for the opponents of the BJP. One is the BJP's second consecutive victory in Assam despite the negative atmosphere it had to face on account of the CAA-NRC issue. Overcoming that negativity was not easy, but the BJP managed to retain power. Similarly, despite its expected failure to make many gains in Kerala, the BJP can draw satisfaction from the fact that it has contributed to the rupture in the predictable alternation in that state between LDF and UDF. Of course, this has happened also because of the consistently good record of the LDF government in handling crisis after crisis in the past five years. But let us not forget the defensive stance both the Congress and LDF had to take on the Sabarimala issue and one realises how the BJP's presence is producing a chum in public discourse in the state.

Looking at Assam, West Bengal and Kerala, an interesting pattern about the BJP's entry and entrenchment in new states emerges. In 2014, it was mainly a party of west and north (plus central) India. Since then, it has entered a number of new states by finding ways to

combine regional identity with Hindutva. This has not meant the dilution of Hindutva but its diversification and hence greater acceptability. Second, in terms of competitive politics, it has first sought to disrupt the rhythm and framework of state-level competition by both bringing in an all-India rhetoric and the image of a supreme leader. Once the rhythm is disrupted, it diminishes the state-level forces either by opposition or by coalition. Only then the ideological intervention begins. By setting aside the Congress in Odisha and the Left in West Bengal, the BJP ensured that it is now located at a position of advantage in these states. The only state where this is yet to happen is Tamil Nadu. In all other states, the BJP has altered the framework of competition or the framework of polemic, or both.

Apart from this homogenisation (notwithstanding the superficial state-specificity that this model allows), the larger and more challenging dimension of the BJP's politics has always been its majoritarianism. A populist style of politics and authoritarian practices are only the entrées about which much scholarship and commentary is being spent. Both these are not exclusive characteristics of the BJP either. What has historically distinguished the BJP and continues to distinguish it from all other parties is the project of majoritarianism. In Assam, the BJP did not require it this time but has already manoeuvred a space on that basis; it is extending that project in Kerala with much caution due to demographic constraints, but in West Bengal it explicitly brought forward this project. That is why its limited success there is a shrill warning bell, just as its inability to win power produces a sigh of relief.

Unfortunately, the many state leaders who are currently busy congratulating Didi are conveniently unaware of this lurking danger to democratic politics. In the absence of clarity on why they oppose the BJP, the non-BJP parties will be doing a great disservice to the democratic character of our politics even if they choose to come together to form a non-BJP front. More than anything else, this limitation of opposition politics requires a sober reading of the outcome.

The writer, based in Pune, taught political science and is currently chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics

the main political outfit of the community. The BJP's strategist Himanta Biswa Sarma brought in the theory of "65 per cent vs 35 per cent", that is the 65 per cent of the indigenous Assamese people were under threat from 35 per cent Muslims, mostly migrant Bengali-speaking Muslims. This narrative surely impacted the voter psyche in Upper Assam, the epicentre of the anti-CAA resistance, which accounts for over 45 assembly seats.

The party built a strategic alliance with almost all the mainstream political outfits of tribal ethnic groups and the AGP. The Bodoland People's Front (BPF) was replaced by the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) as the key NDA ally in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). It sustained its alliance with the mainstream Rabha and the Tiwa ethno-political outfits and also co-opted the mainstream leadership of the Mising community. To pacify the discontent of the six OBC communities over the failure of the Union government to grant them ST status, the state government awarded three of those communities — Motoks, Morans and the Koch Rajbongshis — non-territorial ethnic councils through legislations in December 2020. All these contributed to the BJP's success.

The writer is professor and head of the department of political science, Gauhati University

countries also, she said.

DEMONETISED?

WILL RS 100 notes be demonetised? Will the income tax raids be stepped back and the bonds scheme be reopened? Or will the Finance Minister come out with a supplementary budget? These are the questions being asked and discussed in the trade and industry circles in the wake of the failure of the bearer bond scheme, which is reported to have mopped up only Rs 340 crore as against the target of Rs 1,000 crore. Businessmen have started worrying about the likely measures that the government may take to retaliate.



MAY 3, 1980, FORTY YEARS AGO

BIHARSHARIF

THE BIHAR GOVERNMENT today invoked a "special emergency scheme" to deal with the situation in the troubled areas of Bihar Sharif, rocked by group clashes in the last three days leaving 11 people dead and 113 injured. An official spokesperson said the government was making arrangements to prevent further escalation of trouble in the area. Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra held a high-level meeting with senior officials and reviewed the situation. While the indefinite curfew continued for the second day, the government issued shoot-at-sight orders in case of violence. Ten companies of the Border Security Force,

Central Reserve Police and Bihar Military Police were patrolling the town round the clock.

RESERVATION

THE PRIME MINISTER Indira Gandhi today expressed the view that the policy of reservation could not continue forever; though it would have to be followed for many more years. She hoped that the progress of the Harijans, the adivasis and the backward classes would be so rapid that there would be no need for reservation. She admitted that there was poverty in the country. But it was no use harping on the point that India was poor. Poverty existed in developed

THE IDEAS PAGE

Virus in the system

Poorly designed empirical and scientific systems, excessive centralisation and a failure of execution are to be blamed for the current Covid crisis. Scientists, bureaucrats and the political class must answer



MILIND SOHONI, ALAKHYA DESHMUKH

THE COVID-19 EPIDEMIC has come back with a vengeance. As per official data, we now have over three lakh cases and 3,000 deaths every day. In most cities across India there is great demand for ICUs and critical care beds, a shortage of oxygen and hoarding of key medicines. Other shortages may emerge as the days go by.

Our top scientists and bureaucrats have claimed that the second wave was indeed expected and we were prepared. But the planning was confounded by two factors: First, a more infectious mutation of the virus, and second, the people, for being “arrogant” and not following COVID discipline. Our media wants to pin the blame on politicians for their rallies, the Kumbh and for not working together. But we argue that this is a routine failure of our centralised scientific and administrative bureaucracy common to other areas of development.

We often compare ourselves with Europe or the US. A visit to the webpage of the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), US gives us several important facts, state-wise, about the epidemic there, diligently collected by many university researchers. For example, we learn that the current hospitalisation demand is about 15 per 100,000 population and the mortality is 6 per cent and dropping. The median hospital stay is five days for a non-ICU patient and 14 days for an ICU-patient.

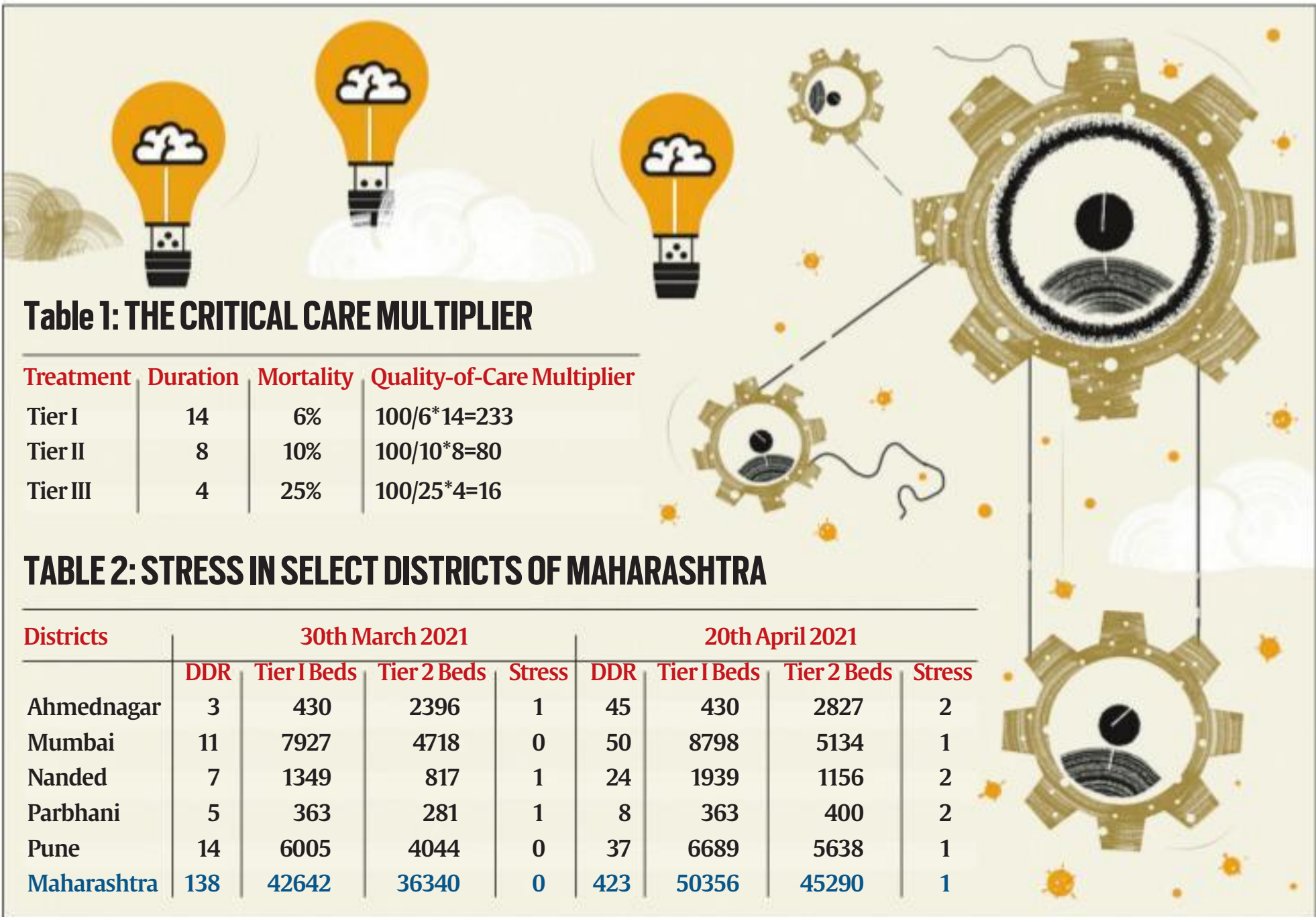
None of these clinical facts are known for India. And yet, they are crucial for managing the epidemic. As an example, let us analyse what happened in Maharashtra between March 30 and April 20, 2021, close to the current peak.

COVID-19 care in Maharashtra is broadly organised as tier I consisting of large private hospitals, and well-equipped public hospitals in main cities, tier II of smaller private and public hospitals dotted across the state, and tier III of community or home care. This roughly matches the hierarchy given by the central ministry. Critical care is provided by tier I hospitals, and to some extent, tier II hospitals.

Let us now relate mortality with the availability of critical care beds for severe patients. Inspired by the CDC of the US, let us use indicative values for key parameters and compute a Quality-of-Care Multiplier (table 1). This tells us that we should expect roughly one death per day from a 250-bed tier I critical care hospital, but three deaths from a 250-bed tier II hospital. Tier III is essentially a denial of service for a severe COVID patient.

For any hospital, computing the basic quality-of-care multiplier, that is, recording the mortality and duration of care is basic statistics. In fact, this, along with the number of beds in each tier, defines the preparedness of the district or the city. For example, Nanded’s official preparedness on April 20 was 1,939 tier I beds and 1,156 tier II beds. To its credit, Maharashtra has been both transparent about preparedness and responsive to rising demand.

Given the daily death rate (DDR), it is now easy to estimate hospital utilisation and clas-



C R Sasikumar

sify the stress level in a district. We label it as white (0), if all patients get tier I care, grey (1) if some have transitioned into tier II with a higher mortality, and finally black (2) if it has dropped into tier III, effectively a denial of service. Table 2 displays these results for a few districts of Maharashtra as on March 30 and on April 20, 2021. The DDR is computed as a 7-day average.

We see that districts degraded from white (0), to grey (1) and finally to black (2). Maharashtra did increase tier I capacity by 18 per cent and tier II by 24 per cent, but the epidemic was faster. Though Pune and Mumbai saw more deaths, they were also better off. Rural districts of Parbhani and Ahmednagar continue to be poorly provisioned. Severe patients from here must either migrate to neighbouring white (0) and grey (1) districts or retreat into home care. Moreover, as tier I capacity is exhausted, anxiety rises as only poorer quality tier II hospitals are available. The supply chains of these hospitals are weak leading to shortages of oxygen and drugs. Hoarding of services becomes endemic and mortality rises. This chain of events has been reported in many districts of Maharashtra.

Thus, key parameters and a planning approach do reveal the geography of the epidemic and help predict shortages. And yet, our scientific agencies have not come up with any quantitative norm for preparedness or guidelines for states to follow, let alone more sophisticated lifesaving services such as bed allocations or ambulance dispatch softwares.

Let us come to oxygen availability. Assuming a critical care consumption of 15 kg per patient per day, the current India-wide demand of 4,000 MT indicates that about 2,60,000 patients are under critical care. Assuming tier II care, this gives us about 3,000 deaths every day coming just from these hospitals. This amounts to two deaths per million per day, a number routinely seen across the world and even many parts of India in the first wave. In fact, a peak rate of five deaths per million per day should have

As late as August 18, 2020, when the first wave was in full swing, the Supreme Court accepted the statement of the Solicitor General of India that no special plan was required. It is only now that it has asked the Centre for a national plan on oxygen and vaccinations and the states for an affidavit stating their health infrastructure. Hopefully, these will have the required granularity.

been adopted as a planning objective in our National Disaster Management Plan. That would have quickly revealed that the national capacity of 7,000 MT was not adequate and urgent measures were required.

But there may well be no such National Plan for the epidemic. As late as August 18, 2020, when the first wave was in full swing, the Supreme Court accepted the statement of the Solicitor General of India that no special plan was required. It is only now that it has asked the Centre for a national plan on oxygen and vaccinations and the states for an affidavit stating their health infrastructure. Hopefully, these will have the required granularity.

Thus, what we see is the usual problem of poor design of empirical and scientific systems, excessive centralisation and a failure of execution. Fixing this is the job of our sarkari scientists and bureaucrats — an elite salaried class which our politicians did not hire and cannot fire.

Compounding this is the absence of research. Do micro-containment zones work? How does Kerala manage to keep its death rate so low? Is mass-testing of non-symptomatic people a good idea? And broader questions: Are our railway coaches any safer today? Or our classrooms? These should have been answered over the last one year. We have over 3,000 eminent scientists and professors in our elite institutions, with the best students at their disposal. But they have yet to step out of their campus to work, suo moto, on live problems and provide answers. Unless they do this, they will serve neither science nor society.

Thus, it is unfair to blame our people for their anxieties or solely our politicians for their folly. The real problem all along has been an outdated administrative system, and a knowledge elite who have soaked up prestige, but not delivered the facts. They are the biggest hurdle between us and a material society with a modern accountable state.

Sohoni teaches at IIT Bombay and Deshmukh is a freelance researcher

WHAT THE OTHERS SAY

“The people of this country need to be told why the world’s most notorious militant was found in a Pakistani town, and how foreign forces managed to carry out a complex operation, by violating our territorial sovereignty, and escape without being detected.” —DAWN

Congress must stop jibes at jabs

Ten years of UPA rule saw India’s vaccine security severely undermined. Now, in Opposition, party’s attacks on vaccine manufacturers are baseless



HIMANTA BISWA SARMA

INDIA IS GOING through its biggest crisis since Partition. This is a crisis that India is collectively experiencing with other countries and responding collaboratively. We can defeat this crisis only when people of competing ideologies and backgrounds stand united. Unfortunately, the Congress party’s leadership has launched a frontal assault on domestic vaccine manufacturers and scientists. Their constant attack to discredit and delegitimise the hard work of Indian talent will scare other entities who would want to develop or manufacture vaccines in the country. Hence, we must isolate fact from fiction, misinformation from information.

Within a year, less than 12 countries in the world have been able to develop their own vaccine. India is in that elite club. Never before in its history has India had the capability and resources to do this. Irrespective of political ideology, how can any objective Indian not appreciate this achievement?

I struggled to find a single dose of praise by Rahul Gandhi or his party for our vaccine manufacturers and scientists. His primary attack these days is on the price of the vaccine and those who are producing it. And this is where he gets it completely wrong.

The Congress takes great pride in the pulse polio vaccination programme. No doubt they deserve credit. But how long did it take them to achieve results? Twenty-six years. And the expectation from the Modi government is to complete COVID vaccination in less than two years from when the virus broke out. It is a challenge never attempted before and there is no doubt the PM, his government and our country will rise to it.

It is naïve to compare India’s vaccination programme with any country’s. India needs to procure at least twice the doses purchased by America, 100 times the purchase made by Israel to vaccinate its citizens.

What is the essential ingredient needed to achieve a vaccination programme of this scale? Producing a large number of vaccines in a short period. For this, both public investment and private initiatives are needed. Once there are sufficient vaccines in the market, economies of scale would kick in and dramatic price reduction would begin. We saw the same pattern playing out last year when we had to conduct a huge number of COVID tests in a short period. In early 2020, my ministry was purchasing antigen test kits for Rs 400, today we are buying them for Rs 80. Similarly, an RT-PCR test was over Rs 4,000 initially and is now at Rs 500 in Assam. Despite high costs then, governments across the country procured tests and tested scores of people for free.

It is this logic that Rahul Gandhi chooses to ignore and instead targets vaccine producers. Any vaccine manufacturer would need extensive funds for R&D and trials and there is no guarantee that this investment will pay off. The Modi government has decided to fin-

ancially support Bharat Biotech via grants to aid this cost and is now offering advanced credit to both the Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech. Yet the funding requirements are huge.

Given the magnitude of this crisis, both these companies have decided to offer a cheaper price for government contracts compared to private contracts. It is this price variation which the Congress is distorting. Those who can’t afford vaccines will get free vaccines either from the Gol pool or state governments. Those who can afford to pay will purchase the vaccines from the private sector, and funds raised will be used by vaccine companies for further R&D and production. Eventually, as more vaccines are produced, economies of scale will ensure that both the price of government and private contracts will reduce.

What is more troubling is the Congress’s track record of encouraging domestic production of vaccines. In 2008, the UPA government took an unexplained decision to shut three government-owned vaccine manufacturers — BCG Vaccine Laboratory (Chennai), Pasteur Institute of India (Cooberoo) and Central Research Institute (Kasauli).

It is unclear at whose behest that Congress shut down three premier public vaccination units. The employees of these units had alleged they were shut down because of pressure from foreign manufacturers. This strange order had a catastrophic impact on India’s vaccine security and the government’s Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) became completely dependent on private and foreign suppliers.

Luckily, the Supreme Court took notice of this ill-intentioned order and these three institutes were re-opened in 2012. This monumental blunder and the Congress government’s attempts to push foreign vaccines — as pointed out through a PIL filed by a former health secretary — had then forced the Delhi High Court to direct the Centre in 2010 to formulate a national vaccine policy. Despite raps from the courts for not procuring enough government-made vaccines, in 2014 less than 3 per cent of vaccines the Centre had purchased came from PSUs.

In 2013, Bharat Biotech had developed a vaccine, Jenevac, for encephalitis. But the Congress government preferred to import Chinese vaccines. Similarly, despite domestically available vaccines for rotavirus, the UPA chose foreign suppliers. In 2014 the Modi government came to power and immediately included four Indian-made vaccines into the UIP. That gave a huge impetus to the domestic vaccine industry and helped in developing the COVID vaccine in such a short time.

I have no hesitancy in saying that 10 years of UPA rule have had an adverse impact on our vaccine security.

The least we expect of our friends in the Opposition is to give us concrete suggestions. Let them debate over how many can get vaccinated in the shortest possible time; let them offer us ideas on how governments can catalyse this historic effort. Casting needless aspersions on pricing and motives does not help anyone, particularly the Congress.

The writer is a senior BJP leader and a minister in the outgoing Assam government. The BJP won a second term on Sunday

Keeping to the left in Kerala

The CPM had a convincing narrative and a master narrator



J PRABHASH

IN TERMS OF political grammar, the 2021 Assembly election will go down in the history of Kerala as one which has changed the very common sense of its electoral politics. At the core of this common sense lay the reluctance of the people to offer a second consecutive term to a government. The only time Kerala breached this was in 1977 when a Congress coalition won a second term. Now it is the turn of communists to create history.

The election also proved that the primary art of politics is power seeking. The chemistry of election, hence, shifted towards the physics of grabbing power, sans ideology. All the three fronts, therefore, harped on freebies rather than debating any worldview. This was safety-net politics at its best. The nature of alliances and the preparedness of parties to accommodate opportunistic politicians also stands testimony to this. Efforts were also afoot to lure each other’s coalition partners. Thus parties and alliances remained borderless, encouraging free traffic of disgruntled elements.

The verdict shows that the Kerala electorate has overwhelmingly voted for the LDF — it won 99 seats, eight more than its previous tally. That it has swept 10 out of 14 districts shows the comprehensive nature of its victory. Among the constituents, the CPM’s performance is most impressive

with 68 seats.

The greatest setback in this election is for the UDF. For the first time in the history of Kerala it failed to defeat an incumbent government. It got just 41 seats, six seats less than in 2016. Out of this, the Congress share is 22 and that of IUML 15. The BJP came a cropper this time as it lost even the lone seat it held. The initial reading is that the LDF has cut into the social base of the Congress substantially, and the BJP to a lesser extent.

People always look at politics in a way that makes sense to them. They may choose political facts they can define and understand and reach certain conclusions. This time what weighed with the people was not scams, corruption, Sabarimala or investigations by central agencies. Instead, they saw in Pinarayi Vijayan a crisis manager, a strong leader who measures up to the event, whether the flood or the pandemic.

And the LDF knew too well the story it wanted to tell the people and who should be its master narrator. For the first time in the history of Kerala, the CPM projected one leader, Pinarayi Vijayan, eclipsing all others including its central leadership. Like a democratic supremo, he handled the campaign single-handedly. It was not for nothing that *Deshabhimani*, the CPM mouthpiece, described him as Captain. It was a personality cult at its best. Whether it would augur well

for the party or democracy is too obvious to be left to anybody’s guess.

Welfare measures and development works undertaken by the government too helped to enhance its image. Not only that, but it also convinced the people about what it did through advertisements, slogans, songs, and the effective use of social media.

Further, the realignment of political forces also worked to the Left’s advantage. With the induction of KCM and LJD into its fold, it became a rainbow coalition of 11 parties as against the eight-party coalition led by the Congress, most of whom are splinter parties/groups. The competition was not between equals.

Besides, the Congress seemed not to know the story it wanted to tell. Neither could it agree upon the master narrator. It was a cacophony of sounds with little organisational prowess and monetary resources. While it concentrated on exposing the lapses of the government, it failed to effectively counter the Left move to play on the insecurity of the minorities by ascertaining that the real fight this time in Kerala was between the LDF and the NDA. This ultimately resulted in a sizeable number of minority votes swinging towards the LDF even in UDF strongholds.

The results clearly show that in the brave new world of Kerala politics, power

is the new religion. The fact that the UDF has lost this race will be disastrous for its very survival as a major actor in state politics. The results will definitely fuel inter-party and intra-party feuds in the UDF, leading to a clearance sale of political turncoats. The front will also suffer further depletion in terms of coalition partners who would desert it the moment they sense political wilderness for themselves. The rejuvenation of UDF depends on the readiness of the Congress to address its organisational weaknesses.

Without doubt, the election has also completed the transformation of CPM from an ideological party to an electoral force. For quite some time, it has been clear that the Pinarayi government has been shedding ideological pretensions at the altar of political expediency. Now that he has created history by being the only CPM chief minister in Kerala to lead the party to power for a consecutive second term, his hold over the party and the government will be beyond reproach. Interestingly, what is left of the Left in Kerala today is not the Left as an imagination or a dream, but just another political force with its own set of cold political calculations.

The writer was professor of political science, University of Kerala

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SCIENTIFIC TEMPER

THIS REFERS TO the article, ‘In this hour of Covid crisis, let science talk’ (IE, May 2). It invokes the idea of “scientific temper” coined by Nehru in 1945, which was endorsed in the Constitution, enjoining that it should be the duty of every citizen to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of enquiry. But, unfortunately, we built a culture in which the scientific method lost its significance. Had the efforts to develop scientific temper not been undermined, we would not have seen COVID-19 as the “endgame” during early March and the deadly second wave.

G Javid Rasool, Lucknow

NO DEFENCE

THIS REFERS TO the article ‘No time for partisanship’ (IE, May 1). It is appalling to see the blatant defensiveness adopted by the apologists of this government when it comes to taking ownership of the pandemic crisis. The author is quick to imply a political motive behind all critiques of the government. However, what is completely missed is that a large proportion of those who have expressed resentment at the government’s handling of the COVID crisis are individuals with sound academic background and a balanced reading of the situation or the common man who

has engulfed in the quagmire. The citing of the PM’s laurels in the face of democratic questioning further reinforces the oligarchical fashion in which the Centre functions.

Dr Kushal Banerjee, New Delhi

LACK OF AWARENESS

THIS REFERS TO the editorial ‘SOS’ (IE, May 1). The first reason for India’s mental health crisis is lack of awareness and sensitivity about the issue. People still consider it a “taboo” subject and there is a serious shortage of mental health care workforce in India.

Sayed ur Rahman, Mirzapur village, Darbhanga

FT quotes Adar: Dose shortage to go on till July

ENSECONOMICBUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

AS INDIA fights the second wave of Covid-19 and a crippling shortage of vaccines, Serum Institute of India (SII) chief executive Adar Poonawalla has said the shortage of vaccine would continue through July.

According to a 'Financial Times' report, Poonawalla has said that production of vaccines is expected to increase in July from about 60-70 million doses a month to about 100 million.

The shortage comes at a time when India has opened vaccination for all adults from May 1.

The report quoted Poonawalla saying that the authorities did not expect to confront a second wave back in January when new Covid-19 cases had declined. "Everybody really felt that India had started to turn the tide on the pandemic," he was quoted as saying.

Defending his firm, Poonawalla told the newspaper that SII had been maligned by politicians and critics over the vaccine shortages.

"I've been victimised very unfairly and wrongly," he told the newspaper, adding that he had not boosted capacity earlier because "there were no orders, we did not think we needed to make more than 1 billion doses a year".

Earlier on Saturday night, the Serum CEO posted on Twitter: "Had an excellent meeting with all our partners & stakeholders in the U.K. Meanwhile, pleased to state that COVISHIELD's production is in full swing in Pune. I look forward to reviewing operations upon my return in a few days."

SII is producing the Covid-19 vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University, and has supplied 90 per cent of the vaccine doses that have been given to Indian nationals so far.

IN BRIEF

Gujarat cases dip; Hardik tests positive

Ahmedabad: Gujarat on Sunday reported a decline in the number of fresh coronavirus infections and fatalities. A total of 12,978 new cases were recorded on the day, which is the lowest since April 22, when 13,105 cases were reported. Gujarat reported 153 Covid-related deaths in the previous 24 hours. Gujarat Congress working president Hardik Patel, meanwhile, tested positive for the infection Sunday. While the maximum caseload — 4,744 cases and 27 deaths, were reported from Ahmedabad, Surat saw a dip — 1,883 cases and 13 deaths. **ENS**

UP: Doc assaulted by patient's kin

Lucknow: Chaos prevailed at a hospital in Bareilly after doctors denied admission to a patient allegedly over the unavailability of oxygen on Saturday evening. Family members of the patient and others attacked hospital staff including the doctor, police said. The situation came under control when police arrived and intervened in the matter. An FIR has been lodged against one named and seven unidentified persons on various charges of rioting and voluntarily causing hurt. A non-cognizable report has also been filed against hospital authorities for allegedly attacking the patient's family member. **ENS**

Three docs held over bribe for bed

Pune: The police on Sunday arrested three doctors for allegedly taking Rs 1 lakh from the family of a Covid-19 patient for a ventilator bed at the civic-run Auto Cluster Covid hospital at Chinchwad in Pune district. The accused face charges of extortion and cheating. Police identified the three doctors as Dr Pravin Jadhav from the Auto Cluster hospital, Dr Sachin Kasbe and Dr Shashank Rale of Padmaja Hospital in Walhekarwadi. **ENS**

In Bhopal, official Covid toll in April is 109, but over 2,500 at pyres, graves

Reflects larger trend; staff at crematoriums, graveyards struggle to cope with rush of bodies

IRAM SIDDIQUE
BHOPAL, MAY 2

IN THE month of April, the official Covid death toll in Bhopal district was 109. Records accessed by *The Indian Express* from the three crematoriums and one kabristan designated for Covid deaths in the district show that besides the 109, 2,567 bodies were laid to rest under the Covid protocol from April 1-30.

Records show that the four facilities together also managed 1,273 other, non-Covid, deaths during this period. In contrast, records maintained by these facilities show they laid to rest an estimated 500 bodies in pre-Covid April 2019.

This matches the pattern playing out in parts of the country where the official death toll captures only a slice of the havoc caused by the pandemic — the Covid protocol is used for confirmed or suspected cases.

Three days ago, *The Indian Express* reported that in Delhi,



Wood collected for pyres at Bhadbhada Vishram Ghat in Bhopal. Iram Siddique

data from 23 key crematoriums and cemeteries maintained by civic bodies show that from April 18 to April 27, as many as 3,049 died of Covid — and, an almost equal number of deaths (3909) were of those suspected to have had Covid.

Overall, Bhopal has six crematoriums and four kabristans. The four Covid-designated facil-

ities are Bhadbhada Vishram Ghat, Subhas Nagar Vishram Ghat, Bairagarh Ghat and Jhada Kabristan. Bairagarh was added to the list only on April 20 following a severe space crunch in the other two ghats.

Authorities at the crematoriums and kabristan said they were struggling to cope with the rush of bodies.

"Our crematorium is in a bad shape with gloves and PPE kits strewn all around, and our staff is overworked. The municipal corporation should at least ensure sanitisation and cleaning of the crematorium ground," said Somraj Sukhwani, manager, Subhas Nagar Vishram Ghat, which is run by Shri Vishram Ghat Trust-Bhopal.

"We have run out of space and manpower. The eight boys tasked with digging graves are unable to keep up with the number of bodies coming in. The graveyard committee gets a JCB twice a week to dig graves in advance, which are then levelled by the boys when a body comes in," said Rehan Golden, president, Jhada Kabristan committee.

"There were 170 non-Covid burials in April, which is an unusually high number since our monthly average is around 60. We suspect that a lot of Covid deaths are coming as natural deaths," he said.

Confirming the surge, Arun Chaudhary,

Bhadbhada Vishram Ghat, said they have a separate area for Covid cremations where the bodies that come wrapped as per the Covid protocol are laid to rest.

Asked about the toll recorded at the three crematoriums and graveyard, Dr Prabhuram Chaudhary, Minister for Public Health and Family Welfare, told *The Indian Express*: "The state has no interest in hiding the figure of deaths. Perhaps many are suspected cases that have been cremated with Covid protocol. Such incidents have come to light before as well."

Additional Chief Secretary (Health), Mohammad Suleman, said: "In fact, if there is a spike in deaths, it is all the more important for it to be conveyed to people so that they get vaccinated. As of now, only 26 per cent of beds in Covid care centres, mainly for isolation, are occupied. If anyone who has tested positive comes to the Covid centre, at least their needs can be met with if their condition worsens."

TRACKING THE SECOND SURGE

427

DAYS SINCE PANDEMIC BEGAN

NEW CASES: 3,54,114

ACTIVE CASES: 34,11,936

TOTAL VACCINATION: 15,68,16,031

DAILY DEATHS

3,315

TOTAL DEATHS

2,18,857

WEEKLY CFR

1.55%

OVERALL CFR

1.45%



TESTS TODAY: 18,05,537 | TOTAL TESTS: 29,19,47,876
WEEKLY POSITIVITY: 20.58% | OVERALL POSITIVITY: 6.82%

STATES REPORTING MOST CASES

STATE	NEW CASES	ACTIVE CASES	WEEKLY POSITIVITY	TOTAL VACCINATION
■ Maharashtra	56,647	6,68,353	22.46%	16,322,336
■ Karnataka	37,733	4,21,456	21.70%	9,782,183
■ Kerala	31,959	3,39,736	24.75%	7,428,920
■ Uttar Pradesh	30,857	2,95,752	14.34%	12,720,794
■ Andhra	23,920	1,43,178	18.32%	6,700,248

STATES REPORTING MOST DEATHS

STATE	TODAY'S DEATHS	TOTAL DEATHS	WEEKLY CFR	OVERALL CFR
■ Maharashtra	696	72,390	1.34%	1.89%
■ Delhi	407	16,966	2.12%	1.99%
■ Uttar Pradesh	288	13,162	1.25%	1.55%
■ Karnataka	217	16,011	1.65%	1.38%
■ Chhattisgarh	199	9,009	1.67%	1.65%

Note: Data as on May 2; vaccination numbers as of May 1. Deaths include those caused by comorbidities.

To fight virus, Punjab, others take lockdown, curbs route

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
CHANDIGARH, MAY 2

TWO DAYS after Punjab CM Amarinder Singh ruled out a lockdown, Punjab on Sunday imposed stricter Covid curbs by shutting down all the shops, except those selling essential items, till May 15.

The shops selling essential items, including chemists, those selling milk, bread, vegetables, dairy, poultry, and mobile repairs shops will be allowed to remain open. There are no curbs on the nursing homes and laboratories, latest guidelines issued by Home Secretary Anurag Aggarwal said.

The government has appealed to farmers protesting against the Centre's farm laws not to organise protest marches and restrict presence to token numbers at toll plazas, petrol pumps and malls.

The guidelines also state that all four-wheelers will not be allowed to seat more than 2 passengers. No pillion riders on scooters/bikes, except those from the same family, will be allowed. Vehicles carrying patients to hospitals are exempted.

All government offices and banks will work at 50 per cent strength. Nobody will be allowed to enter the state by air, rail or road without a Covid-negative report, not more than 72 hours old, or vaccination certificate of at least one dose, over two weeks old.

Sabzi mandis will be allowed

HARYANA IMPOSES 1-WEEK SHUTDOWN

Chandigarh: The Haryana government Sunday decided to impose a week-long lockdown across the state beginning Monday. The state reported its highest single-day deaths — 145 — on Sunday. The decision was announced by state's Health Minister Anil Vij on his Twitter handle. Authorities were yet to release detailed guidelines of exempted categories by late Sunday evening. **ENS**

to open only to wholesalers, who would have to ensure social distancing and all other Covid protocols.

Villages have been asked to organise thikri pehras to ensure night curfew and weekend curfew orders are complied with.

Religious places also will be closed at 6 pm.

The government has also decided that it will mandatorily conduct RT-PCR test of rerhiwallas and vendors.

Punjab has already imposed night and weekend curfew in the state. The curfew starts at 6 pm and ends at till 5 am. There is a complete lockdown on Saturday and Sundays and only shops selling essential items are allowed to open.



A home delivery executive rides down a deserted street in Ludhiana's Ghumar Mandi market on Sunday. Gurmeet Singh

RSS affiliate calls for cheaper drugs, higher vaccine production

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

RSS AFFILIATE Swadeshi Jagran Manch has asked the government to take immediate steps to increase the production of Covid-19 vaccines by allowing more companies to manufacture them. It has sought a reduction in the prices of medicines commonly used in the course of Covid-19 treatment, such as Remdesivir.

SJM also criticised Bill Gates' recent comment against sharing intellectual property rights on vaccines with developing countries. "This is nothing but yet an-

NEW COVID CARE FACILITY IN MUMBAI

Health workers wheel in an oxygen tanker into the Bharat Scouts and Guides Hall in Mumbai's Shivaji Park on Sunday. The hall was converted into a 20-bed hospital. *Ganesh Shirsekar*

PM reviews use of PSA plants, gaseous oxygen 13 Oppn leaders call for free mass vaccination

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi Sunday chaired a meeting to review the usage of gaseous oxygen for medical use.

The Centre had said earlier that it was identifying industrial units which produce gaseous oxygen of the requisite purity and is shortlisting those closer to centres of demand to establish temporary Covid care centres near them.

On Sunday, the Prime Minister Office in a statement said that a pilot study for five such facilities had already been initiated.

"This is being accomplished

through PSUs or private industries operating the plant & co-ordination of Centre & state governments. It is expected that around 10,000 oxygenated beds can be made available in a short period of time by making temporary hospitals near such plants. State governments are being encouraged to set up more such facilities with oxygenated beds to deal with the pandemic," a PMO statement said.

On Sunday, the process of converting existing Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) nitrogen plants for the production of oxygen was also discussed during the review. According to the statement, the PM also reviewed the progress of the setup of the PSA plants.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MAY 2

HOURS AFTER the Assembly election results, leaders of 13 opposition parties — including the Congress, Left and Trinamool Congress who had fought bitterly in West Bengal — on Sunday came together to ask the Central government to launch a free mass vaccination drive across the country in view of the surge in Covid cases.

In a joint statement, senior leaders like Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee and CPM general secretary Sitaram Yechury asked the central government to

pay attention to ensuring uninterrupted flow of oxygen supplies to all hospitals across the country.

"The budgetary allocation of Rs 35,000 crore for the vaccination programme must be utilised for this," the leaders said.

The other signatories to the statement were former PM and JD(S) leader HD Deve Gowda, NCP chief Sharad Pawar, Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren, DMK supremo MK Stalin, BSP chief Mayawati, SP leader Akhilesh Yadav, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, Left leaders Yechury and D Raja and Farooq Abdullah on behalf of the Jammu Kashmir Peoples' Alliance.

AFTER THE SURGE, THE SLIGHT DIP

Maharashtra: Dip in daily cases, fatality rate at 1.49%

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, MAY 2

MAHARASHTRA RECORDED 56,647 fresh Covid-19 cases and 669 deaths on Sunday. It was a dip in daily cases compared to Saturday when the state had reported 63,282 cases.

The state's total tally has reached to 47.22 lakh, with 1.49 percent fatality rate.

According to the data released by the state health department, Pune has recorded the highest 4,621 cases and nine deaths in the past 24 hours across the state, following 4,194 in Pimpri-Chinchwad with 53 deaths.

The data also shows that Pune region, which includes Solapur and Satara, recorded the highest 15,776 cases. The total number of recovered patients in the state has gone up to 39.81

lakh on Sunday, from 39.30 lakh patients on Saturday.

Mumbai recorded 3,672 fresh cases and 79 deaths on Sunday. However, the city conducted 28,636 tests, about 9,000 less than the number of tests conducted on Saturday. Despite fewer tests, more people tested positive, taking up the day's positivity rate to about 13 percent.

On Friday, Mumbai's positivity rate dipped below 10 percent for the first time in the past one-and-a-half month.

"The number of people tested is less since it was the weekend. Also, since the recovery rate is increasing, it means the spread of the virus has slowed down," said a BMC official.

Mumbai has 57,342 active cases, while the overall growth rate of cases has dipped to 0.66 percent and the doubling rate has crossed 100 days.

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, MAY 2

THE UTTAR Pradesh government on Sunday announced it would launch a mega Covid testing campaign in villages across the state from May 4 To contain and end the Covid surge in rural areas to end the Covid surge in rural areas and protect villages "at any cost". The decision was taken at a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Adityanath.

The chief minister said rural areas had been a matter of huge concern and the government would have to protect villages from the pandemic. Last month, senior health officials had confirmed that unlike the first wave — when only one-fourth of the cases were from rural areas — around half of the latest infections are being reported

from villages.

"We have to protect villages from Covid infection at any cost. There is a need for special vigilance towards the villages. In such a situation, a massive campaign of Covid testing should be conducted in all the 97,409 revenue villages of the state," Adityanath told officials at the meeting.

While the Covid caseload in UP continued to be high, Sunday brought some relief to the health system in the state as the active caseload dropped below three lakh for the first time in six days.

The patient count was 2,95,752, with UP reporting 30,983 new cases and 36,650 recoveries in 24 hours. The recovery rate at present is 76.47 per cent. The state health bulletin reported 290 Covid-related fatalities in 24 hours, which pushed up the toll to 13,162.

other manifestation of corporate greed to profit from worst pandemic of the century," it said.

"The country needs nearly 195 crore doses to cover at least 70% of the population. This cannot be fulfilled by the two companies alone. There is an urgent need to bring more manufacturers to start the production. To facilitate the technology transfer, Government has to take measures to overcome the intellectual property barriers including patent and trade secret," SJM said in a statement.

It urged the government to treat all medical products required to respond to Covid-19 as

a "global public good".

"There is an urgent need to invoke measures like ceiling of the prices of these medicines. The prices of vaccine announced by both companies for the state government procurement and private hospitals are exorbitant and affect the acceleration of vaccination in the country. Unreasonable profit for medicines and vaccines are unjustifiable in all circumstances, especially in a pandemic," SJM said.

In the case of medicines required to treat coronavirus infections, the outfit said the government must use safeguards in the Patents Act to bring prices down.

12 The World

TOP OF THE WORLD



At the site of the blaze in Kabul Sunday. AP

AFGHANISTAN

Roaring tanker fire kills 7 in Kabul

AS EERING blaze that roared through dozens of fuel tankers on the northern edge of the Afghan capital of Kabul killed seven people and injured 14 others, the Interior Ministry said Sunday. There was no immediate indication of whether it was an accident or sabotage. Investigators were combing through the area, authorities said. **AP**

GERMANY

50 cops injured in Berlin riots

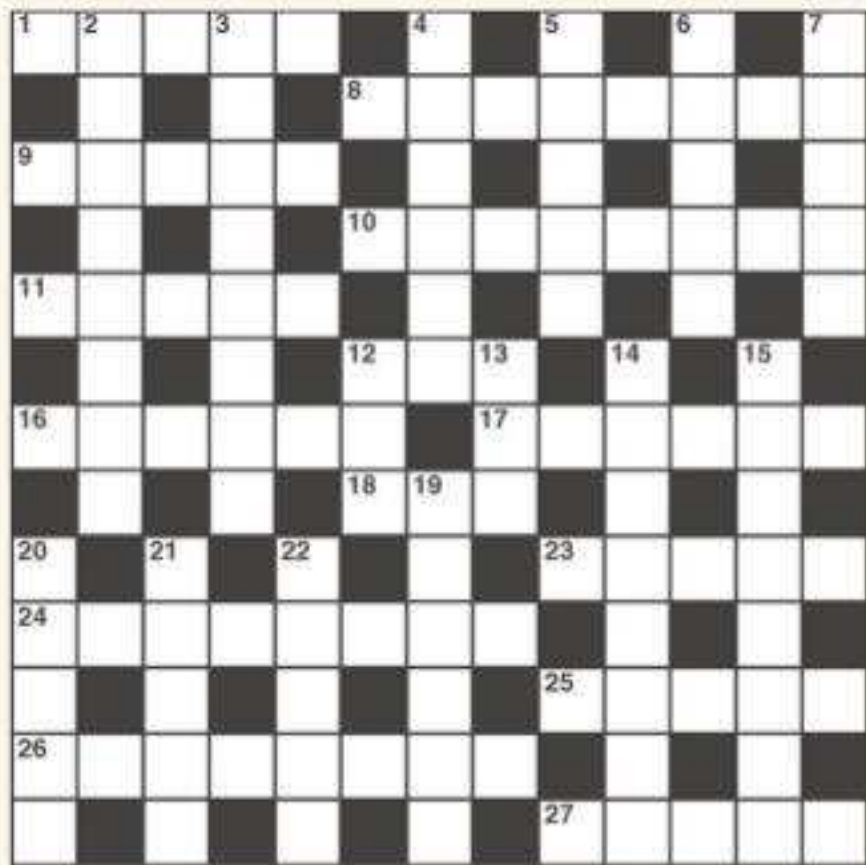
MORE THAN 50 police officers were injured and over 250 protesters were detained after traditional May Day rallies in Berlin turned violent, the German Police Union said Sunday. More than 20 different rallies took place in the German capital on Saturday, and all but a few were peaceful. **AP**

EL SALVADOR

Crisis after House votes out judges

LAWMAKERS ALIGNED with Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele voted to remove the top judges of the country's supreme court. But just minutes after the vote, the judges ruled that the action was illegal, setting up a clash of the country's top powers. **REUTERS**

CROSSWORD 4419



ACROSS

- Quiet individual excelled (5)
- Each girl has to be cast in supporting part (5,3)
- I am a long time getting the likeness (5)
- We are its ruin, so to speak (2,4)
- What's turned out to be a cut of a scythe (5)
- It may besweet oat-ornot (3)
- High spirits (6)
- Draw some crude pictures (6)
- Nigerian tribesman reflecting native charm (3)
- Fast ships (5)
- None here is sane (3,5)
- Begins with writers on love (5)
- Not to be taken as shy (8)
- Prompt about going on day-shift (5)

Solutions Crossword 4418: Across: 1 Alleviated, 6 Cold, 10 Tempo, 11 Dog kennel, 12 Nuisance, 13 Throb, 15 Animate, 17 Scamper, 19 Reefers, 21 Pierrot, 22 Roast, 24 Identify, 27 Underdone, 28 Pilau, 29 Dash, 30 Stretch out. **Down:** 1 Asti, 2 Limousine, 3 Viols, 4 Andante, 5 Eagles, 7 Owner, 8 Deliberate, 9 Test case, 14 Fairground, 16 Aperture, 18 Portfolio, 20 Spin out, 21 Precede, 23 Aides, 25 Topic, 26 Suit.

JUMBLED WORDS

Given below are four jumbled words. Solve the jumbles to make proper words and move them to the respective squares below. Select the letters in the shaded squares and jumble them to get the answer for the given quip.

What delights us in visible beauty is the ____ - Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach (9)

GNEII



SABIN



ABCHLN



AELRBV



SOLUTION: GNEII, BASIN, BLANCH, VERBAL
Answer: What delights us in visible beauty is the invisible.



4 ASTRONAUTS BACK IN RARE NIGHT SPLASHDOWN

Support teams work around the SpaceX Crew Dragon Resilience spacecraft shortly after it splashed down on Sunday. SpaceX safely returned four astronauts from the International Space Station, making the first US crew splashdown in darkness since the Apollo 8 moonshot. The capsule parachuted into the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Florida, just before 3 am. *NASA via Reuters*

8 reported killed as Myanmar protests aim to ‘shake the world’

REUTERS

MAY 2

MYANMAR SECURITY forces opened fire on some of the biggest protests against military rule in recent days on Sunday killing eight people, media reported, three months after a coup plunged the country into crisis.

The protests were coordinated with demonstrations in Myanmar communities around the world to mark what organisers called “the global Myanmar spring revolution”.

“Shake the world with the voice of Myanmar people’s unity,” the organisers said in a statement.

Streams of demonstrators, some led by Buddhist monks, made their way through cities and towns across the country, including the commercial hub of Yangon and the second city of Mandalay, where two people were shot and killed, the Mizzima news agency reported.

Lull over, Myanmar remains in crisis

A BRIEF lull in anti-coup protests, and a period of what appeared to be more restraint from the security forces seem to have come to an end as Sunday witnessed the largest demonstrations in the country in recent days, and the killing of

EXPLAINED

eight protesters. The lull had begun around the time of an ASEAN meeting in which the junta chief promised to reduce violence. But the renewed shooting of protesters suggests that little progress has been made towards ending the crisis.

Three people were killed in the central town of Wetlet, the Myanmar Now news agency said, and two were killed in different towns in Shan State in the northeast, two media outlets reported. One person was also killed in the northern jade-mining town of Hpakant, the Kachin News Group reported.

Reuters could not verify the reports and a spokesman for the ruling junta did not answer calls seeking comment.

In some places civilians with crude weapons have battled security forces, while in central areas military and government facilities that have been secure for generations have been hit by rocket attacks and a wave of small, unexplained blasts.

There have been no claims of responsibility for the explosions.

The state-run broadcaster in its evening bulletin on Saturday gave details of at least 11 explosions over 36 hours, mostly in Yangon.

State TV says Iran agrees deals to free prisoners, US denies report

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, MAY 2

THE UNITED States on Sunday immediately denied a report by Iranian state-run television that deals had been reached for the Islamic Republic to release US and British prisoners in exchange for Tehran receiving billions of dollars.

It wasn’t immediately clear if the report represented a move by the hard-liners running the Iranian broadcaster to disrupt negotiations with the West amid talks in Vienna on Tehran’s tattered nuclear deal.

It also wasn’t known if there had been any ongoing negotiations with the West over frozen funds and prisoner exchanges, both of which accompanied the 2015 atomic accord.

Even after an initial American denial, an anchorwoman on Iranian state TV still repeated the announcement.

“Some sources say four Iranian prisoners are to be released and \$7 billion are to be received by Iran in exchange for releasing four American spies,” the anchorwoman said.

Nepal: PM Oli to seek vote of confidence

YUBARAJ GHIMIRE

KATHMANDU, MAY 2

WITH DISCONTENT rising within the ruling Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist Leninist and in the Opposition, Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has decided to face a vote of confidence on May 10.

The decision was made during a Cabinet meeting held on Sunday.

It comes after Oli had long refused to seek a vote of confidence even as former allies withdrew their support and pulled their ministers from Oli’s Cabinet.



ITALY

COLOSSEUM To GET NEW STAGE

A project to build a high-tech stage in the Roman Colosseum will allow visitors a central viewpoint from within the ancient structure “to see the majesty of the monument”, Italy’s culture minister said. He announced a \$22 million contract to build the retractable structure that will restore the traditional “arena” for combat for gladiatorial shows in ancient Rome.

AstraZeneca admits Latin American vaccine delay; Mexico looks for US help

DAVE GRAHAM & ADRIANA BARRERA

MAY 2

MEXICAN PRESIDENT Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said on Friday the United States would probably send his country 5 million more doses of AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine, as the company admitted production in Latin American had suffered multiple setbacks.

Mexico is struggling with behind-schedule local AstraZeneca production and shortfalls in deliveries from foreign suppliers and has asked the US to help with more vaccines. The request is in addition to some 2.7 million AstraZeneca doses Washington sent to Mexico in March.

“It’s probable that they’ll help us with a loan, while the AstraZeneca plant in Mexico gets up and running,” Lopez Obrador said at a regular news conference.

Under a deal reached last year, the mAbXience laboratory in Argentina manufactures the active ingredient of the vaccine and ships it for bottling to a factory in Mexico owned by a company called Liomont. The shots are to be delivered across Latin America.

Argentina has delivered cargos of the active ingredient to Mexico, but Liomont’s commercial production has slipped from an original target of March. In a statement shared with Reuters on Friday, AstraZeneca said deliveries of the shots would now begin before the end of June.

AstraZeneca said it regretted the setbacks, which it attributed to limited access to critical supplies, lower-than-expected process yields from initial vaccine batches, and longer times to meet internal “site qualifications” for those batches. **REUTERS**



A woman receives a dose of AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine, during a mass vaccination programme in Monterrey, Mexico, last month. *Reuters*

Israel bans travel to India, six other countries

Jerusalem: Israel has temporarily barred its citizens from travelling to India and six other countries, citing high Covid-19 infection rates there.

A joint press release issued by the Prime Minister’s Office and the Health Ministry on Friday said that

Israelis will not be allowed to travel to Ukraine, Brazil, Ethiopia, South Africa, India, Mexico and Turkey. This regulation will come

into force on May 3 and will remain in place until May 16.

Non-Israelis will be able to travel to these countries, provided they plan to stay there permanently, the press release said.

The regulation will not be applicable to those who stay at airports in transit in one of these countries for a time period of up to 12 hours while waiting for a connecting flight. **PTI**

Thailand sees second day of record-high virus deaths

THAILAND’S HEALTH Ministry on Sunday reported 1,940 new coronavirus cases, while deaths hit 21 for a second day, the highest daily number of fatalities since the pandemic began.

Thailand largely controlled the virus early in the pandemic through shutdowns and strict bor-

der controls. But a third wave that began in early April includes the highly transmissible B.1.1.7 variant and has accounted for about half of its cases and deaths.

Sunday’s numbers brought the country’s total confirmed infections since the pandemic began last year to 68,984. **REUTERS**

OVER THE HEDGE by Michael Fry & T Lewis



CALVIN & HOBBS by Bill Watterson



MARVIN by Tom Armstrong



SUDOKU 4460

Difficulty Level 4s

Instructions
To solve a Sudoku puzzle, every digit from 1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows and in each of the nine boxes.

Difficulty Level

1s = Very easy; 2s = Easy; 3s = Medium; 4s = Hard; 5s = Very Hard; 6s = Genius



SOLUTION SUDOKU 4459



DAY TODAY

BY PETER VIDAL

ARIES (Mar 21 - Apr 20)

Aries You're still in a stronger position than many people, even if it doesn't feel like it, and should therefore survive any mini-crises this week, including the occasional financial wobble. Your best qualities are your determination and refusal to give in to obstacles.

TAURUS (Apr 21 - May 21)

Taurus Other people often seem reluctant to tell you the whole story. Mind you, if you don't know what's going on you'll be less vulnerable to bouts of gossip and back-stabbing over the coming week. In fact, you should be in a fairly secure position, able to talk your way out of almost any corner, however tight.

GEMINI (May 22 - June 21)

Gemini By all accounts you are about to become even more secretive than ever. Just why this should be so is not exactly clear, but it could be that other people are not yet able to understand your version of the facts. Perhaps you should try to explain yourself better.

CANCER (June 22 - July 23)

Cancer You may resolve to be still more sociable, and relish that growing confidence which enables you to provide entertainment and pleasure for other people. Keep an eye on the main chance, but realise that if you go your own way, you might lose valuable support. But, then, you'll also free yourself from people who have been holding you back.

LEO (July 24 - Aug 23)

Leo All eyes must be on worldly ambitions, including professional aspirations, but also community responsibilities. You'll gain great satisfaction out of seeing other people do well from your efforts. You might even be able to talk your way to the top with an emphasis on style and appearance, leaving the real substance and content until later.

VIRGO (Aug 24 - Sept 23)

Virgo Your stars are beginning to look quite extraordinarily adventurous, and you may be about to break out of an emotional straight-jacket and try something new. Listen well to partners' advice, for even if they sound muddled at first, there's some good common sense in amongst the vague promises.

LIBRA (Sept 24 - Oct 23)

Libra There are signs that partners could be becoming increasingly irascible, but never fear. Such bouts of irritation will have their turn, but will pass, and whoever gives you a hard time over the coming few days could end up feeling rather shamefaced.

SCORPIO (Oct 24 - Nov 22)

Scorpio You can afford to relax a little. However, as long as planetary tensions are maintained, you could come under intense emotional pressure to reform your domestic arrangements. Someone you've known for rather a long time could come up with a stunning proposal at any moment.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov 23 - Dec 22)

Sagittarius The most lively planetary patterns occur in regions of your horoscope slightly detached from your own priorities. You may therefore begin to imagine that the grass is greener on the other side, but by the same token you are also avoiding troubles that are afflicting other people.

CAPRICORN (Dec 23 - Jan 20)

Capricorn Creative influences are astounding, which is obviously excellent for all who move in artistic fields. The pay-off for everyone born under your sign should be steadily rising romantic passions, so almost anything could happen in the emotional department.

AQUARIUS (Jan 21 - Feb 19)

Aquarius Your family situation is now looking increasingly changeable. Other people should be allowed the maximum freedom to manoeuvre, while you in your turn must have the courage of your convictions. You never know - you might reach an agreement that suits everyone.

PISCES (Feb 20 - Mar 20)

Pisces Keep talking. And at all costs make sure that other people understand exactly what you are saying. Actually, this will be more difficult than you think, so you'll have to spell out every last tiny detail and punctuation mark. It will be well worth the effort.

13ECONOMY

SECOND SURGE IMPACT CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Covid infects ATC, power grid ops as staff, kin fall sick

PRANAV MUKUL & ANIL SASI

NEW DELHI, MAY 2

AT LAST count, nearly one in every five air traffic controllers at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport — the country's largest — was out of action, either directly or indirectly affected by Covid-19. Officials at POSOCO — India's electricity grid manager — have alluded to a "worrying shortage" of operators, including those manning some control rooms. These are some of the critical infrastructure operations that could be potentially at risk from the second surge that the country is witnessing.

According to Health Ministry data, as of Sunday morning, there were 33,49,644 active Covid cases in India, an increase of 80,934 over the previous day.

A senior officer involved with POSOCO said there was a "worrying shortage" of operators, adding a similar shortage of trained, experienced manpower handling power plant control rooms has also been cited, with community-level infection spread resulting in entire batches or shifts being forced to quarantine if either one of them, or their family members, gets infected. "Most of these are involved in operations that cannot be handled outside the control room, however trained a personnel is," the officer said.

"There are very few reserves, given that a shift of 10 may have only small number as back-up. With entire shifts gone in one go, there is a problem. The situation is being handled for now, but there is a concern," the officer said. This is more worrying since across a number states, electricity system operators are running a power network with an increasing share of renewables, thereby increasing the level of supervision required on a day-to-day basis.

In response to a set of queries by *The Indian Express*, a spokesperson for the Airports Authority of India (AAI) said 85 of 402 air traffic control officers (ATCOs) at Delhi airport were either Covid-19 positive themselves, including asymptomatic, or have an immediate family member affected. Further, 16 of 112 ATCOs at Ahmedabad airport were also affected. Air traffic controls across the country, including at privatised airports, is managed by AAI.

"While there are rules capping the number of hours each controller can be on duty, there is no doubt additional workload. At Delhi ATC, we have shut down 1 or 2 channels to manage the shifts. At one point, there were even discussions about calling those people on duty who themselves didn't have Covid but someone in their family did. But there was opposition to this plan, and ultimately it was shot down," a source at Delhi ATC said.

A senior government offi-



Nearly one in every five air traffic controllers at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport is out of action, either directly or indirectly affected by Covid. *File*

cial, who spoke on condition of anonymity, downplayed any concerns of disruption in ATC operations arising from the increase in caseload, saying currently, "we are operating only 30-40 per cent of our capacity".

Taking cognisance of the threat to frontline crew in the aviation industry, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), in an order dated April 27, noted "in view of rising number of Covid-19 cases, the DGCA has reviewed the conduct of BA test of all aviation personnel". For ATC operators, the aviation safety watchdog has mandated randomised breathalysers test before commencement of duty at each station on a daily basis.

Furthermore, in a letter written to chief secretaries of all states on the same day, Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary, Civil Aviation (Additional Charge) wrote: "It is understandable that the crew, engineers, air traffic controllers, technicians, ground staff and frontline workers in aviation face significant risk in discharging their duties". "To ensure the sector continues to render essential services to the nation, it is imperative that the aviation work force is covered on priority in the vaccination program," he added.

In the response, the AAI spokesperson also said: "Whole country is facing challenging situation due present sudden rise of Covid-19 cases across the country. However, learning from the past experience of Covid-1st wave, AAI is fully geared up to ensure continuity of air traffic operations by strictly following Covid protocol, sanitization of ATC Units, vaccination of ATCOs and keeping additional ATC manpower as standby to meet any immediate operational requirement. We are confident that our airport operations would continue to be smooth".

UP TO 6-MONTH COOLING PERIOD FOR RENEWAL

As claims rise, insurers go slow on covering Covid-recovered

GEORGE MATHEW

MUMBAI, MAY 2

WITH THE daily number of Covid cases rising steeply, insurance companies are refusing to give health cover to persons recovered from Covid-19 and are asking them to wait up to six months for renewal of policies.

Most insurers are iffy about onboarding customers who have just recovered from Covid, said an insurance sector official. "As a result, insurers have put a cooling off period of 3-6 months after Covid detection," he said.

The delay in renewals has come amid reports that insurers are refusing to pay up in many cases despite the directive of the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) that hospital bills under the 'cashless system' will have to be settled within two hours of discharge. "There are even complaints that some insurers are refusing to issue new Covid policies to persons without any illness fearing a spurt in claims," said a source.

According to government data, there are 1.87 crore confirmed Covid cases in the country, of which 1.53 crore have recovered. These people may have to wait for some time before getting themselves covered again. "A cooling off period is to ensure that customers have recovered completely, (and they) are not experiencing any immediate side effects of the infection and are in optimum health at the policy proposal stage. As most Covid survivors



Free Covid test in Chandigarh on Saturday. *Kamleshwar Singh*

only experience mild symptoms, availing insurance cover should not be a problem," said Anand Roy, managing director, Star Health and Allied Insurance.

"This means one can buy a health insurance policy only after 3-6 months of having turned Covid negative. Given the rate at which Covid is spreading right now, it's advisable for all to get a health insurance plan now, and don't wait, because in case one gets Covid, it will become difficult to get the health insurance plan immediately," said Amit Chhabra, head-health insurance, Policybazaar.com.

The second Covid wave has led to an unprecedented surge in new infections. "Given the lack of clarity around the severity and virulence of this mutant, it is advisable to stay safe, take precautions and have yourselves covered under the umbrella of health insurance. Considering the rapid spread of new variants of Covid-19, it is hard to say anything about the long-

term effects of it," Chhabra said.

According to Roy, Covid-19 is a new disease and there is yet a lot we need to understand about this illness in ascertaining long-term effects on a person's health. "In the past, we've seen patients who have recovered from Covid-19 experience a reinfection or have other complications. This is exacerbated when the patient has comorbidities. Underwriting of such proposals is more case specific, individuals with or without comorbidities, extent of treatment and sequel of Covid," Roy said.

Meanwhile, insurance companies settled only 54 per cent of the claims received from the customers who have taken Covid health insurance as of March 2021. Of total claims of Rs 14,608 crore under the Covid health insurance schemes, insurers settled only claims worth Rs 7,900 crore, which is 54 per cent of the amount claimed by the insured people.

On top of this, while 9,96,804 people made claims as of March

\$7.44 BN

Amount raised by Indian firms from the foreign market in the same period a year ago

\$5.35 bn came in through the approval route of the external commercial borrowings (ECB), of the total borrowings during March 2021

\$3.88 bn was raked in via the automatic route of raising funds from international markets

No money was raised through the rupee denominated bonds (RDB) or the masala bonds, as was the case in the year-ago period as well

MARKET WATCH

FPIs TURN NET SELLERS AFTER 6 MONTHS

New Delhi: Snapping their six-month buying spree, foreign investors turned net sellers in April and pulled out Rs 9,659 crore from domestic equities, spooked by the intense second wave of coronavirus and its fallout on the economy. **PTI**

With change in vaccine procurement policy, Budgetary allocation likely to see tweaks

States, pvt channels to do 50% procurement

SUNNY VERMA

NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE CENTRE'S Budgetary allocation of Rs 35,000 crore for Covid-19 vaccine in 2021-22 is coming under question after it decided to procure only 50 per cent of the total supply, leaving the remaining to be purchased by states and private channels at market prices. In determining the Budgetary allocation for vaccine, the Finance Ministry initially estimated requirement of a total of 290 crore vaccine shots for the entire population, after taking into account two shots per individual and also the vaccine that is wasted during the entire process.

Now, with the Centre procuring 50 per cent of the total requirements, at a price of Rs 150 per jab, its total cost for 145 crore shots could come to Rs 21,750 crore. However, this does not take into account any booster shots that may be required and any increase in price of vaccines for the Central government as well. Government officials said they are not yet clear whether there will be any savings from the Budgetary allocations on vaccines even after changes in the government policy. In fact, the fund requirement, they said, could be even higher than Rs 35,000 crore as the situation evolves, including the possibility of providing booster doses, vaccine prices increase and wastage rates.

"We arrived at this Budgetary allocation after detailed study and examination. See, we have about 135 crore people, and with two vaccine shots required for each one and taking the vaccine wastage into account, our internal understanding is that nearly 290 crore vaccine shots will be required. Even if the central government procures 50 per cent of the required vaccines, and we don't know yet if booster shots will be required, they may be needed, the costs involved may even be higher than Rs 35,000 crore," sources in the Finance Ministry said.

"One also needs to keep in mind price escalation that we may need to factor. We have to see as things evolve. The FM (Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman) has said the government is committed to providing more funds if needed for the vaccines. Whether there will be any

EXPLAINED Key factors

The fund requirement, sources said, could be even higher than Rs 35,000 crore as the situation evolves, including the possibility of providing booster doses, vaccine prices increase and wastage rates.

savings on account of procurements by states and private parties, we are not sure. We are working to ensure successful vaccination for all and provide funds for any booster shots that may be required as well. But, we believe after reasonable internal assessment that vaccine procurement costs will exceed Rs 35,000 crore, keeping these factors in mind," they said.

As per new policy, from May 1, the vaccine supply are divided into two baskets: 50 per cent for the Centre, and 50 per cent for the open market. Through the second — non-government of India — channel, state governments, private hospitals, and industries that have facilities to administer the vaccine, will be able to procure doses directly from manufacturers. From Saturday in order to vaccinate anyone, including those in the priority group of age 45 years or older, private hospitals will have to procure supplies directly from the open market.

Possible requirement of booster shots, price increases and wastage are three key elements that impact the Budgetary requirements of the government for the inoculation drive. The country's overall wastage rates of Covid-19 vaccine had hovered around 13.5 percent in early March, before coming down to around 6.5 percent in April. But the wastage of vaccines within states also varies.

In April, India witnessed the highest demand for vaccines in a month with 90.50 million doses administered by 6.30 pm on Friday, compared to 50.60 million doses in March, 10.05 million in February and 3.71 million in January, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

India Inc's foreign borrowings jump 24% to \$9.23 bn in Mar

India Inc's external commercial borrowings jumped by over 24 per cent to \$9.23 billion in March this year, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) data showed



Manufacturers take onus, shut plants to combat virus surge

ENSECONOMICBUREAU

NEW DELHI, MAY 2

EVEN AS state governments are still contemplating complete shutdowns, manufacturers have started announcing shutdown of their plants in the wake of rising Covid cases. While Hero MotoCorp on Saturday announced an extension of its shutdown of plants by six more days till May 9, JCB India, a leading manufacturer of earthmoving and construction equipments, on Friday announced a 10-day pause across all its manufacturing facilities in India, beginning May 1.

Maruti Suzuki India, last week, announced the advancing of its June maintenance shutdown to May and close production in all factories between May 1 and May 9. All the three are in-

Kotak calls for 'curtailing activity'

New Delhi: While urging for highest-level response to address rising Covid cases, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) president Uday Kotak said safeguarding lives was of utmost priority and nationwide maximal response

measure was called for to cut the transmission links.

He said: "At this critical juncture when toll of lives is rising, CII urges the strongest national steps including curtailing economic activity to reduce suffering." **ENS**

dustry leaders. While Hero MotoCorp is the largest two-wheeler manufacturer in the country, Maruti Suzuki and JCB are leaders in their segment. Industry insiders say many more companies are contemplating shutting production for a week, keeping in mind safety of their employees and to help break the chain and spread of coronavirus. Among others, MG Motor and

Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India have also announced temporary suspension of production at their respective facilities. Toyota Kirloskar Motor, too, has undertaken scheduled annual maintenance programme across both its plants from April 26 to May 14.

JCB India cited the rising number of Covid cases for this temporary suspension of production across its facilities at Ballabgarh,

Pune and Jaipur.

"We have decided to pause manufacturing operations for 10 days, starting 1st of May 2021... It is important to break the chain of the infection. Most of our employees in our offices are already working from home and this temporary pause of manufacturing activities will further help in lowering the active number of cases in and around our manufacturing facilities," said Deepak Shetty, CEO and MD, JCB India.

The company, however, said it has built sufficient inventory levels to support demand for its products during this period.

Last week, Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India announced temporary shutdown of its four manufacturing plants for 15 days with effect from May 1, 2021.

MG Motor India, too, had last week announced shutdown of its

facility in Halol, Gujarat for seven days — from April 29 to May 5.

While Hero MotoCorp had halted plant operations temporarily in a staggered manner for four days from April 22-May 1, citing rapid escalation in the spread of Covid-19 across the country, on Sunday it announced to extend the plant closure till May 9.

"In keeping with its commitment to the safety and welfare of its people and to break the chain of the spread of Coronavirus, Hero MotoCorp has decided to extend the shutdown at its manufacturing facilities across India, its Global Parts Center (GPC) in Neemrana and the R&D facility — the Centre of Innovation and Technology (CIT) in Jaipur by another six days till May 9, 2021. The plant operations will resume on May 10," the company said.

Industry insiders say while

many companies in the medium- and small-scale industry have also taken decision to shut down their plants temporarily, many more companies are contemplating such a decision.

While the Central government has maintained that it would not go for a full-scale lockdown as both lives and livelihood are important, the sharp rise in Covid cases across the country has forced many companies to take their own call and are going for plant shutdowns for the safety of their employees.

Many feel that the governments decision to allow vaccination of all adults is a good decision and it will help them continue with their manufacturing unhindered once their workers (mostly falling in the age group of 20 and 45) get vaccinated.

BRIEFLY

RBI supervision

Mumbai: The RBI has decided to review and strengthen the Risk Based Supervision of the banking sector to enable financial sector players to address the emerging challenges.

SBI chief on rate

New Delhi: SBI will try to keep interest rates benign as long as possible with a view to supporting growth, Chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara said. He added as the lockdown was not pan-India, one will have to wait and watch to assess Covid impact on the banking sector. **PTI**

Rising engineering, gems shipments help exports jump to \$30.2 bn in Apr

ENSECONOMICBUREAU

NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE COUNTRY'S exports in April jumped nearly three-folds to \$30.21 billion on account of healthy growth in key sectors including engineering, gems and jewellery, and petroleum products, even as trade deficit widened to \$15.24 billion, according to Commerce Ministry's preliminary data released on Sunday.

The country's merchandise exports were to the tune of \$10.17 billion in April 2020. Trade deficit in that month was \$6.92 billion. Imports too rose by over

Trade deficit widens to \$15.24 billion

three-folds to \$45.45 billion last month as against \$17.09 billion in April 2020. "India's merchandise exports in April 2021 were \$30.21 billion, an increase of 197.03 per cent over \$10.17 billion in April 2020 and an increase of 16.03 per cent over \$26.04 billion in April 2019," the ministry said in a statement.

In percentage terms, the growth rate in exports and imports are at record high, mainly due to base-effect. Due to the

COVID-19 pandemic induced lockdown last year, exports shrank by a record 60.28 per cent in April 2020. In March this year, exports grew by 60.29 per cent to \$34.45 billion.

In April 2021, oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.65 billion in the corresponding month last year.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive growth in April include gems and jewellery, jute, pharmaceuticals, carpet, handicrafts, leather, electronic goods, oil meals, cashew, engineering, petroleum products, marine products and chemicals.

Late fee waived for delayed filing of Mar, Apr GSTR-3B

ENSECONOMICBUREAU

NEW DELHI, MAY 2

THE GOVERNMENT has waived late fee for delayed filing of monthly return GSTR-3B and tax payment for the months of March and April and also reduced interest rate for late filers.

The Finance Ministry in a statement said it has provided several relief measures in view of the challenges faced by taxpayers in meeting the statutory and regulatory compliances under the Goods & Services Tax (GST) law due to the outbreak of the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic. Taxpayers with a turnover of over Rs 5 crore have been given 15 days extra time to file monthly summary return GSTR-3B and pay taxes without paying any late fees.

CHENNAI METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Thalamuthu Natarajan Building, No.1, Gandhi Irwin Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008.

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (REOI) – Second Call
 (Consulting Services – Individual Selection)

Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA), Government of Tamil Nadu has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of the Tamil Nadu Housing and Habitat Development Project. CMDA now invites eligible individual consultants / specialists to indicate their interest in providing the services for the below mentioned assignments under the Tamil Nadu Housing and Habitat Development Project.

Climate Resilience and Environmental Specialist

The detailed REOI and Terms of Reference are available in the websites - www.cmdachennai.gov.in and www.tenders.tn.gov.in. The Expression of Interest (EOI) shall be submitted and the last date and time for submission of EOI is **17.05.2021 upto 3.00 p.m.** The EOI shall be sent to the Member Secretary, Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, Thalamuthu Natarajan Building, No.1, Gandhi Irwin Road, Egmore, Chennai - 600 008, Tamil Nadu, India.

e.mail: cmdaprocurement@gmail.com.

Member Secretary,
Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority

DIPR/407/DISPLAY/2021

BRIEFLY

Six Tokyo Games torch staffers positive

Tokyo: Six people who helped with Japan's Olympic Torch relay were diagnosed with COVID-19, bringing the total number of participants in the event who got the coronavirus to eight, organisers said. The six people, who included a man in his 20s and another man in his 30s, helped on the relay in the southern prefecture of Kagoshima on April 27, Tokyo 2020 said in a statement late on Saturday. All of them assisted with traffic control and wore masks, with three of them doing so in the city of Amami and the other three in the city of Kirishima, said the organisers. Earlier last month, two other people who helped with the torch relay on the southern island of Shikoku were diagnosed with COVID-19, including a police officer in his 30s who guided traffic in Kagawa prefecture. The Tokyo 2020 organisers urged people to comply with COVID-19 guidelines.

Former national selector Rungta succumbs to Covid

Jaipur: Former BCCI selector and Rajasthan captain Kishan Rungta died of COVID-19 at a hospital in Jaipur. He was 88. The veteran administrator tested positive for the virus last week and died on Saturday. "Former Rajasthan first class cricketer and ex-national selector Kishan Rungta has died of COVID-19," a BCCI source confirmed to PTI. Rungta served as a national selector from Central Zone in 1998. He played 59 first class games between 1953 to 1970, scoring 2717 runs. His late elder brother Purushottam was a BCCI treasurer in the 1970s. Purushottam's son Kishore

Osaka loses to Muchova in Madrid

Madrid: Second-ranked Naomi Osaka is out of the Madrid Open as Karolina Muchova won 6-4, 3-6, 6-1 in the second round on Sunday. Muchova eased through the deciding set to earn her third win against a top 10 opponent this year. The 20th-ranked Czech was a semifinalist at the Australian Open, which was won by Osaka in February. "It was a tough match today, but we had some preparation," Muchova said. "I was ready to play with all I had today, and to use all the weapons I could and (do) what I can." Osaka was coming off a quarterfinal loss to Maria Sakkari in Miami. "On the third set I felt I just started off really bad and I couldn't afford to do that," Muchova next faces 16th-seeded Sakkari, who defeated Anett Kontaveit 6-3, 6-1. Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 7-5, while fifth-seeded Aryna Sabalenka defeated Daria Kasatkina 6-3, 6-3.

AGENCIES

Buttler adds to Sunrisers' misery

Englishman smashes ton as Rajasthan Royals get vital victory over rudderless Hyderabad

SYNOPSIS

■ Buttler's strength and Mustafizur's subtlety swamp Hyderabad

SANDIP G
MAY 2

SHEER POWER could be sheer bliss. Jos Buttler proved it with a thunderous hundred that provided a much-needed fillip for the flailing Rajasthan Royals. His knock fuelled them to 220/3, a total Sunrisers Hyderabad fell short by 55 runs. For the latter, with erstwhile skipper David Warner left out of the XI, there simply was no one to turn on the power when it was required, like Buttler, and subsequently find themselves clutching at straws to keep their campaign alive.

Buttler's strength

At his absolute peak, few contemporary batsmen could thrill like Buttler with his incredible combination of timing, muscle and improvisation. For the first 33 balls of his most murderous knock in the IPL yet — arguably one of the most destructive in the league's history — the Englishman looked far from his finest. He scratched, stuttered, and scraped to 35 off 33 balls.

But off the next 31, he was a notch above his own lofty peak, reeling out an eye-popping 89 runs, as he fused extreme power with extreme precision.

Some of Buttler's strokes made one wonder whether he was indeed playing cricket, or embedding the principles of hockey or tennis into it. Like the scoop he unfurled against Khaleel Ahmed, when he hunkered down and just lifted it over the 'keeper's head. More evident was his fondness for tennis, when he unleashed an array of ferocious cuts and slaps, that flung off his bat like ferocious forehands, so frighteningly fast that fielders froze in their posts. Before they could move a muscle, the ball blurred past them like an apparition. Buttler has a reverse-sweep that he himself likens to a backhand cross-court only the craftiest of squash players could pull off. And he sets himself at the crease like a baseball player.

Once he realised that he was unable to time the ball as well as he would like, or as gorgeously as his partner Sanju Samson was managing, he decided to impart more muscle into his shots. When Buttler does that, his back foot goes a bit deeper in the crease and the front foot moves forward a bit. It sets up his base to harness all the power he possesses, which allied with his quick hands, is a terrifying proposition for bowlers.

Buttler chose his bowlers wisely, rather than getting intoxicated with his muscle power. He neutered Bhuvneshwar Kumar (19 off 13 balls) and Rashid Khan (8 off 12) with caution; against the rest, he threw caution to the winds. Sandeep Sharma was cudgelled for 40 runs off 15 balls; Mohammad Nabi for 20 off five balls, and Vijay Shankar bled 18 off seven balls. It's this intelligence and clarity that shone as brightly as the strokes, making Buttler one of the finest readers of the game around.

Here, Sunrisers Hyderabad's newly-appointed skipper Kane Williamson missed a trick by bowling out Khan inside 11 overs. Though it could have been all different had Shankar not misjudged Buttler's miscued waft at long-on off Khan's bowling. He was just on seven then.

On his shoulders, Rajasthan soared. From homing in on a middling total of 160 or thereabouts — they were 77 for 1 at halfway stage — they rocketed to a massive score. Buttler cleared the rope eight times with an array of awesome strokes. Some faded into the third tier of the Gautam Gambhir Stand, some settled into the Virat Kohli Pavilion. He launched into orbit deliveries that were almost perfect yorkers. He demolished anything that was fractionally short. Length, line, variations, pace, nothing mattered, as Buttler turned into an unstoppable boundary-spitting machine.

Mustafizur's subtlety

Since his debut year in the IPL, when he plucked 17 wickets and played a remarkable role in his then franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad's title triumph, Mustafizur has sunk without a trace. Between then and now, he featured in only eight games and missed two seasons entirely.

Impeded by injuries, even Bangladesh seem to have lost faith in him. But on Sunday, he illustrated that his vaunted craft has not deserted him and it's just a matter of stitching together a few games before he retraced his lost ground. He was in full flow at the Kotla, troubling batsmen with his cutters, slower balls and yorkers. A master of disguise, his variations are hard to decipher.

So Manish Pandey committed too early into a flick, one of his staple strokes. The change of pace was so masterfully disguised that the batsman could not make any last-minute adjustment. The strike came at a ripe moment, when Sunrisers had raced to 57 in six overs. An off-cutter then accounted for Nabi, who had blazed to 17 off five balls. Apart from the three wickets, Mustafizur conceded just 20 runs in four overs, commanding an economy rate of just 5 runs when bowlers conceded an average of 10 runs an over on a reasonably flat surface.

BRIEF SCORES: Rajasthan Royals 220/3 (Buttler 124 off 64 balls, 11x4, 8x6; Samson 48 off 33, 4x4, 2x6) beat Sunrisers Hyderabad 165 for 8 (Pandey 31 off 20 balls, 3x4, 2x6; (Mustafizur 3-20, 12 dots), (Morris 3-29, 8 dots) by 55 runs

POINTS TABLE

TEAMS	M	W	L	PT	NRR
DC	8	6	2	12	0.547
CSK	7	5	2	10	1.263
RCB	7	5	2	10	-0.171
MI	7	4	3	8	0.062
RR	7	3	4	6	-0.190
PBKS	8	3	5	6	-0.368
KKR	7	2	5	4	-0.494
SRH	7	1	6	2	-0.623



Jos Buttler smashed 11 fours and eight sixes in his 124-run knock off 64 balls.

Sportzpics for IPL

Shaw-Shikhar continue to sizzle as Capitals subdue Kings and move atop table

SYNOPSIS

■ Dhawan anchors Delhi's chase after stand-in-captain bails Punjab out of trouble

VISHAL MENON
MAY 2

Stand-in-captain Mayank Agarwal's (in pic) unbeaten 99 gave Punjab Kings some hope at the halfway stage. However, his seventh half-century for the franchise went in vain after yet another excellent knock from Shikhar Dhawan — a sparkling 47-ball 69 — that helped Delhi ace the 167-run chase with 14 deliveries to spare and climb to the top of the points table.

Dhawan anchors Delhi's chase

After a thunderous match-winning essay — a 49-ball 92 — against Punjab Kings a fortnight ago, Dhawan had provided a peek into his mindset and the changes he has brought about in his game. "It was a conscious effort from my side to improve my strike rate. Started taking more risks. Not afraid of changes, always open towards it. Not scared of getting out as well. Have worked on a few shots. My slog shot has improved a lot. It was there earlier as well, but now I play it more freely. I'm more relaxed now," the left-hander had said.

Two weeks later, against the same opponents, Dhawan anchored another perfectly-timed run-chase for Delhi Capitals with a sumptuous knock. Prithvi Shaw's pyrotechnics may have propelled them to 63/0 in the Powerplay. But with 56 needed off seven overs, it was Dhawan's aggressive approach that gave the scoreboard the required impetus. The opener targeted leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi in particular, pummelling him for two sixes and a boundary over the mid-wicket fence.

Stand-in captain bails Punjab out of trouble



With 161 runs from six games, Agarwal had been subdued in IPL 2021 so far. Coming into Sunday's match, the additional responsibility of leading Punjab Kings in the absence of regular skipper KL Rahul, out with acute appendicitis, would have only amplified the pressure. The start was far from ideal, with opener Prabhsimran Singh and Chris Gayle departing inside the Powerplay. It was a monumental struggle for Dawid Malan on his IPL de-

but, as the No.4 batsman failed to rotate strike and penetrate the infield, as the top-ranked T20I batsman does for England. This robbed the stand-in-captain of the strike. Nevertheless, the duo stitched a 52-run third-wicket alliance. Malan's exit to Axar Patel for 26, and Deepak Hooda's run-out two deliveries later, pegged Punjab back. At 90/4 in 14 overs, a score of 150 seemed a distant dream.

But at the opportune moment, Agarwal stepped up. Having meandered to a 32-ball 37 till then, he decided to take charge. The 30-year-old kick-started his assault with a fearsome pull off Kagiso Rabada, and followed it up with a boundary and a six against Ishant Sharma in the subsequent over. Agarwal brought up his half-century off 37 deliveries. In the interim, he survived a reprieve, dropped by Lalit Yadav at backward point. The opener continued in his merry ways, drilling three fours and a six in the final over against Avesh Khan to finish unbeaten on a 58-ball 99, his belligerent stroke-play vaulting Punjab to 166/6. Delhi's pacers were guilty of pitching it in the slot, which allowed Agarwal to stay low and loft the ball into the stands with ease.

BRIEF SCORES: Punjab Kings 166/6 (Mayank Agarwal 99* off 58 b, 8x4, 4x6, Kagiso Rabada 3/36, 6 dots) lost to Delhi Capitals 167/4 in 17.4 overs (Shikhar Dhawan 69* off 47 b, 6x4, 2x6, Prithvi Shaw 39 off 22b, 3x4, 3x6) by 7 wickets.

How Pollard knocked the wind out of CSK's sails

SRIRAM VEERA

MAY 2

CHASING 219 for victory, Mumbai Indians seemed down for the count at 81/3 with almost 10 overs gone. Rohit Sharma, Quinton de Kock and Suryakumar Yadav had been dismissed with Chennai Super Kings spinners Ravindra Jadeja and Moeen Ali tightening the screws. The asking rate had reached well over 15 runs an over when Kieron Pollard decided to take matters into his own hands. His assault got the better of Captain Cool Mahendra Singh Dhoni as Mumbai scripted a memorable heist.

What was Chennai's plan for Pollard?

The timeout at the end of the 14th over was a frenetic affair in the Chennai camp. Skipper MSDhoni, head coach Stephen Fleming, bowling consultant Eric Simons and bowling coach L Balaji — all were involved in intense chats with the bowlers. At that stage, Mumbai still needed 89 from 36 balls but Pollard had looted 36 runs in the last two overs to trigger concern in the Chennai camp. Talking heads bobbed around.

The question was: where to bowl to Keiron Pollard?

There had been only one expensive over from a seamer — Lungi Ngidi - by then with the South African bleeding 14 runs in the over just before the timeout. The other one was the 13th bowled by Ravindra Jadeja, which kickstarted Pollard's mayhem. Interestingly, Jadeja had tried bowling well outside the off-stump twice and saw the ball being bashed over his head for two sixes. Ngidi had bowled at the stumps, a slower one and a length delivery, but both disappeared over the boundary. The consensus after the discussion in the timeout sensed to



Kieron Pollard scored a 34-ball 87 to take MI over the line off the last ball of the match against CSK. Sportzpics for IPL

be to bowl well outside the off-stump.

Has that line of attack worked before against Pollard?

Yes. Pollard likes to stay beside the ball, at times outside the leg-stump, and try to swing it to the arc between long-off and long-on. Resultantly, he has had problems reaching out to legally-wide deliveries outside off. He has either sliced them for catches or not managed to pile up the boundaries. Chennai used to deploy Dwayne Bravo for that line of attack against Pollard but he wasn't in the playing XI for Saturday's game. He would run on to the field to have a private chat with Dhoni during the mayhem, though.

So, did Chennai try it?

Yes. Immediately after that timeout, Shardul Thakur went for that line of attack. The execution, though, went awry. The first ball slipped out as a wide delivery. The second was close enough for Pollard to thump it to the straight boundary. The third was wide enough but overpitched and allowed Pollard to hold his balance and just free his arms at it for a

boundary. So, Thakur went for the wide yorker next but it was too wide, and the umpire extended his arms again. The next ball was not far from the off-stump and Pollard edges the heave to the third man boundary. Thakur gave up that line and went for the short ball, and had to stare at the deep midwicket boundary where the ball ended up. So, 23 runs had come off that over in which the well-outside-off strategy was attempted.

What happened next against Pollard?

In the 17th over, Sam Curran had two balls at him. One was a well-executed wide yorker that the batsman could only dig out for a single. The other was a ball on the legs which Pollard didn't put away. That over went for just two runs and also saw the fall of Krunal Pandya. Now, Mumbai needed 48 from three overs.

Is there any other perceived weakness in Pollard?

Leg-spin and pacy bouncers have been considered Pollard's weaknesses in the past, though he hasn't necessarily fallen too many times to bouncers. Quality leg-spinners have troubled him, but Chennai didn't possess one on the day.

What happened in the final over from Ngidi?

By this time, Chennai bowlers had abandoned the well-outside-off plan and Ngidi was gunning for yorkers. Two slipped out as full tosses and disappeared for a four and a six. The bowler nailed one good yorker — on the last ball when two runs were needed — but by then Dhoni perhaps didn't have enough confidence in him to have the deep midwicket closer to cut off the second run. Pollard stabbed the yorker in that region to run two. Also, non-striker Dhawal Kulkarni had left his crease early — it would have got Ravichandran Ashwin into the act were he the bowler — and completed the second without much fuss.

REUTERS

LONDON, MAY 2

MANCHESTER UNITED'S Premier League match against Liverpool was postponed on Sunday after United fans forced their way into the stadium and stormed the Old Trafford pitch to protest against the club's owners — the Glazer family.

"Following discussion between the Police, the Premier League, Trafford Council and the clubs, our match against Liverpool has been postponed due to safety and security considerations around the protest today," United said in a statement after the game was called off.

"Discussions will now take place with the Premier League on a revised date for the fixture." Liverpool issued a statement saying they were in full agreement with the decision. An hour after the scheduled 1530 GMT kickoff, both sets of players were still stuck in their hotels. The Lowry Hotel, where United's players were preparing for the match, was also the scene of a large anti-Glazer protest.

Around 200 United fans took to the pitch, some letting off flares and others carrying posters calling for the Glazers to end their ownership of the club they bought in 2005. The match was being played behind closed doors due to COVID-19 restrictions but that did not stop chaotic and ugly scenes inside and outside Old Trafford.

Media representatives covering the game, including Reuters, were kept outside as the stadium was locked down after the fans had been removed.

In a statement the Premier League said: "Following the security breach at Old Trafford, the Manchester United versus Liverpool game has been postponed.

"This is a collective decision from the police, both clubs, the Premier League and local



Around 200 Manchester United fans took to the pitch, some letting off flares and others carrying posters calling for the Glazers to end their ownership.

Reuters



authorities. The security and safety of everyone at Old Trafford remains of paramount importance. We understand and respect the strength of feeling but condemn all acts of violence, criminal damage and trespass, especially given the associated COVID-19 breaches." There was no word on when they match would be played. Second-placed United needed a win to prevent Manchester City being crowned champions on Sunday.

While the protest had been planned and was largely peaceful, it descended into chaos as infiltrated the stadium. Hundreds of fans also gathered outside the ground, letting off green and gold flares — the colours of United's shirts when they were formed as Newton Heath and adopted by those who have regularly protested against the club's hierarchy.

Mounted police moved in to try to clear the areas outside the stadium and there were some isolated incidents with bottles and barriers being thrown. The planned protest fol-

lows United's initial decision to join a European Super League along with five other English clubs. The plans for that breakaway league fell apart within days due to widespread opposition.

Former United defender Gary Neville, who was a fierce critic of the club's decision to join the Super League, was in the ground as part of the Sky Sports commentary team. "The reason why those thousands and thousands of fans came today is because they have had enough. They have had enough," Neville said. "We can make the story today about the disturbances and I think that needs to be covered but the story should be about the Man Utd fans. They have had enough. It will be very difficult in the next few months."

Speaking ahead of the protest, United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said: "It's important that the fans' views are listened to and we communicate better. My job is to focus on the football side and that we have the best possible team."