

OTHER STORIES

ALL MINISTERS
HOLD REVIEW
MEETINGS

From Page 1

The minister said based on the instructions of the Chief Minister, all ministers held reviews in their respective districts and would be constantly monitoring the situation. Referring to excess use of medicines, the minister said patients' anxiety and doctors' excess use of medicines or oxygen had been leading to artificial scarcity which the task force was keen to arrest.

Apparently to lift spirits of Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, who received a flak from the High Court, the IT minister said the former had been making determined efforts to control the spread of the virus and provide best medicare to people.

FM TELLS CENTRE
OF STRAIN DUE TO
PATIENTS

From Page 1

The finance minister brought to the notice of Dr Harsh Vardhan about the influx of thousands of Covid patients from the neighbouring states leading to shortage of oxygen and essential medicines in the state. The Centre should allocate oxygen and Remdesivir and other essential drugs based on the influx of patients from outside instead of pro rata population basis, he said.

The minister sought enhanced allocation of oxygen from 450 MT to 600 MT and supply the same from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra instead of far-off Odisha to save turnaround time. The Remdesivir allocation should be increased to 20,000 per day, he said, adding that two lakh testing kits also should be made available to the state every day. The state also needed 1.29 crore vaccines out of which 13 lakh should be arranged immediately, he said.

ETALA SEEKS
SUPPORT OF
'LIKE-MINDED' CADREDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

In a fresh political development, Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MLA and ousted minister Etala Rajendar met some of the like-minded leaders on Wednesday and sought support for his next political move.

Rajendar called on TRS Rajya Sabha MP D. Srinivas at his residence in MLA Colony at Banjara Hills and discussed with him almost for two hours about the political development which resulted in his removal from the state Cabinet. He also is understood to have discussed taking on Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao and other ministers who made him suffer for political gains.

Rajendar sought support from D. Srinivas as the latter knew well about Chandrashekar Rao's strategy. Incidentally, Srinivas has been maintaining distance from the Chief Minister as well as the TRS for the last three years.

Sources said Etala was taking feedback and asking advice from seniors like D. Srinivas on how to face Chandrashekar Rao and defeat the TRS in the next Assembly elections. He also is understood to have discussed with D. Srinivas on launching a new party and sought suggestions on joining another party to fight against Chandrashekar Rao.

After meeting Srinivas, Etala also met his son and BJP MP D. Arvind and discussed his political future. Etala is likely to meet the BJP MP again soon to discuss some important issues.

The disgruntled TRS MLA also met former TRS minister and present BJP leader A. Chandrasekhar at his residence located near D. Srinivas' home. Chandrasekhar who worked in the TRS earlier came out of the party as he was unhappy with the Chief Minister's working style.

Rajendar later met former RTC chairman and ex-MLA from Ramagundam Somarapu Satyanarayana and sought his support in his political voyage.

Sources said the BJP leader had an issue with former MP Vivek Venkataswamy in recent times and was not interested in continuing in the BJP.

He is said to have expressed solidarity with Rajendar in his fight against Chandrashekar Rao and the TRS.

Army, Railway hosps to
turn into Covid centres

Young medicos to help in dealing with Covid-19 patients

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Union minister of state for home G. Kishan Reddy on Wednesday said central government will be converting all Army and Railway hospitals in Telangana and other states into Coronavirus-treatment centres.

He was speaking after inspecting the Cantonment Hospital in Bolarum to examine whether it could be transformed into a vaccination and Covid-treatment facility.

The union minister said services of the retired defence and paramilitary medical personnel could be utilised for dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic. Young medicos too could help in dealing with heavy rush of virus-affected patients after a 15-day training. Such medicos will be given weightage when they apply for regular jobs.

Kishan Reddy advised opposition leaders to give constructive suggestions without criticising the government and creating obstacles in treatment of patients affected by the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Malkajigiri



Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of State of Home Affairs visits Cantonment Hospital in Bolarum, Secunderabad on Wednesday. — DC

MP and TPCC working president A. Revanth Reddy requested the union minister to speed up conversion of Bolarum Hospital into a Covid-treatment centre.

The Congress MP said that in the past 15 days, his team has worked tirelessly

for setting up infrastructure in Bolarum Hospital. He himself has allocated ₹1 crore from his MP's fund for the hospital to treat Coronavirus patients belonging to his constituency.

Revanth Reddy appealed to Kishan Reddy to

speed up setting up of an oxygen unit at Bolarum Hospital. The MP said several people have come forward and donated money to develop Bolarum Hospital for treating people living within the Malkajigiri Lok Sabha constituency.

System for soldiers at high altitude

From Page 1

According to an official press release issued here on Wednesday, this system was developed by Defence Bio-Engineering & Electrical Laboratory (DEBEL), Bengaluru of DRDO for soldiers posted at extreme high-altitude areas.

The system is indigenously developed for operation in field conditions and is robust. It can be effectively used to treat Covid-19 patients.

With the sanction of PM CARES funds, 1,00,000 manual and 50,000 automatic OxyCare systems along with non-rebreather masks are being procured. Two variants of the system

● **WITH THE sanction of PM CARES funds, 1,00,000 manual and 50,000 automatic OxyCare systems along with non-rebreather masks are being procured. Two variants of the system have been configured.**

The basic version consists of a 10-litre oxygen cylinder, a pressure regulator-cum-flow controller, a humidifier and a nasal cannula.

The oxygen flow is regulated manually based on the SpO2 readings. In the second configuration, the oxygen cylinder is equipped with electronic controls which automati-

cally regulates the oxygen flow through a low-pressure regulator and a SpO2 probe.

The system optimises the consumption of oxygen based on the SpO2 reading of the patient and effectively increases the endurance of portable oxygen cylinders.

The threshold SpO2 value for initiating flow from the system can be adjusted by the health staff. A display is provided for continuously monitoring the SpO2 levels.

Workload and exposure of healthcare providers is considerably reduced by eliminating the need for routine measurements and manual adjustments of oxygen flow. The

automatic system also provides suitable audio warning for various failure scenarios including low SpO2 values and probe disconnections.

The non-rebreather masks are integrated with the OxyCare systems for efficient use of oxygen which results in saving of oxygen by 30-40%.

The non-rebreather masks need to be changed for every patient. These OxyCare systems can be used at homes, quarantine centres, covid care centres and hospitals.

The DRDO has transferred the technology to multiple industries in India which will be producing the OxyCare systems.

28,898 Covid
patients in hosp.BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

As many as 16 of Telangana's 33 districts on Wednesday reported an increase in Covid19 cases while the other districts registered dips in the infection numbers. On the official daily chart, the state record 4,723 new cases and 31 more deaths while 5,695 Covid-19 patients have recovered from the disease.

According to the state health department, there were as many as 59,133 active Covid-19 cases in the state. Some 28,898 such patients were listed on the health department's bed availability status website, they being treated in government and private hospitals on Wednesday. This is close to 29,235, the number of Covid-infected people either in isolation centres or at homes this day.

The districts that reported a decrease in infections were Adilabad, Jagtial, Kamareddy, KB-Asifabad, Mahbubnagar, Medak, Medchal-Malkajigiri, Nalgonda, Narayanpet, Rajanna-

Siricilla, Ranga Reddy, Sangareddy and the Warangal rural and urban districts. Though the cases in the GHMC areas did show a dip — from 756 on Tuesday to 745 on Wednesday — Hyderabad district itself was missing from the list of districts that reported fewer cases on Wednesday. This is because the state health department never released Covid data for Hyderabad but only for the GHMC aream of which Hyderabad city is a part.

The districts that reported an increase in cases on Wednesday were Bhadradi Kothagudem, Janagaon, JS Bhupalapalli, Jogulamba Gadwal, Karimnagar, Khammam, Mahbubabad, Mancherial, Mulugu, Nagarkurnool, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Peddapalli, Siddipet, Wanaparthy, and Yadadri Bhongir.

The total Covid-19 deaths in the state stood at 2,834, and infection number at 5,11,711 on Wednesday while the number of people who have recovered was 4,49,744, the department said in its daily Covid bulletin.

FICCI FLO LAUNCHES COVID CARE CELL FOR
EMOTIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELINGDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

FICCI FLO, Hyderabad, on Wednesday launched a Covid Care Cell for fighting the second wave of Covid-19, which has badly affected lives of people.

The FLO cell will help the virus-affected in getting emotional and psychological counseling from experienced doctors. It will enable people to access verified food services for their nutritional needs. The cell will also address problems of all 800 members of FLO and 4,000 of their family members as well.

After discussions with Narayanpet district collector Hari Chandana Dasari, FICCI FLO Hyderabad provided PPE kits, masks, and other requisite material for people affected by

Coronavirus in the district.

About 14 cartons containing medical supplies like 500 PPE suits, 2,000 N95 masks and so on have already been sent to Narayanpet district headquarters. The second consignment consisting of biscuits, sanitiser dispensers and other food material are ready for dispatch.

FLO has also launched a dedicated portal in association with FICCI, Hyderabad chapter, FTCCI and Kalakriti India for reaching out to additional people affected by Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Hyderabad FLO chairperson Uma Chigurupati, the Covid Care Cell will initially help FICCI and FLO members and their families. Thereafter, it will start helping all others who approach it for help.

TERMINAL LIVER
PATIENT GETS
NEW LEASE OF
LIFE AT KAMINENIDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

A 45-year-old man from Coimbatore got a well-functioning liver after a transplant at the Kamineni Hospital, with a team led by Dr Rajasekhar Perumalla, director, hepatobiliary and transplant surgery. The liver was procured through the Jeevandan cadaver transplantation programme of Telangana.

The recipient had multiple comorbidities according to the team at the hospital, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension and recurrent encephalopathy.

He subsequently developed chronic non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, an advanced form of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), with typical symptoms of swelling of the abdomen and severe infection, leading to liver failure.

"Covid added to the complexity of the already highly demanding procedure of liver transplants," said Dr Perumalla. "As he had no compatible blood group donor from the family, he registered for a cadaver organ under the Jeevandan programme in February, and was waiting for a suitable organ", he added.

● **THE RECIPIENT had multiple comorbidities according to the team at the hospital, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension and recurrent encephalopathy.**

DEVOTEES
URGED NOT TO
COME OUT FOR
PRAYERS

From Page 1

Home minister Mahmood Ali and AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi appealed to the common Muslims not to come out of their houses to perform Id prayers at masjids as the government had not permitted congregational prayers. They appealed to the Muslims to perform prayers at their houses. Meanwhile, CEO of Wakf Board Shah Nawaz Qasim issued a circular directing all Mutawallis and managing committees to strictly follow the instructions given in the GO. Any deviation in the matter will be viewed seriously and action will be initiated against the concerned.

Moulana Anwaar Ahmed of Jamia Nizamia clarified that performing the Id prayers at homes were not permissible in the Sharia, so people can perform the Chasht or Ishraq prayers (special morning prayers) at their residence instead of Id prayers.

There is infuriation among common Muslims over not allowing them to perform Id prayers even in local masjids.

Many people have expressed their dissent over the decision of the government to ban Id prayers in masjids. Many religious scholars have also expressed their displeasure and said performing Id prayers at homes was not permissible by the Sharia.

Moulana Abdur Raheem Khurram said during the relaxation period, Id prayers can be performed complying with the SOPs of Covid-19. Ulemas had allowed performing Id prayers in more than one session in the Masjids to avoid the huge crowd. He asked the government to reconsider its decision.

TWO TIMS DOCS
TRANSFERRED
TO RIMSBALU PULIPAKA DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Two senior resident doctors working at the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (Tims) at Gachibowli in the city were, in a swift action, transferred to the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences in Adilabad on Wednesday.

The two doctors, Dr Arundhati, a senior resident (community medicine), and Dr Wasey Wasim Kabir, a senior resident in general medicine, were shifted to RIMS "with immediate effect, on administrative grounds," according to the transfer orders issued by Dr Vimala Thomas, Director of Tims.

The transfer of the two doctors led to a flurry of activity in the doctors' fraternity here with some saying they were made to pay the price for raising issues with the hospital management about poor infrastructure and patient care.

The transfer of the doctors, however, did not go well with the Telangana Senior Residents Doctors Association (TSRDA) which condemned the decision and demanded immediate revocation of the transfer orders and reposting of the doctors with immediate effect. "If the order is not revoked, we will boycott duties until justice is done to both senior residents," the association said. Joining the TSRDA, the TS Junior Doctors Association said if the orders were not revoked, then it too would be announcing a plan of action. Both organisations said the two Tims' doctors were transferred because they questioned lapses in administration of the hospital, and patient care.

STORIES OF HOPE

Oxygen concentrators
provided during CovidDC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Coming to the aid of patients who are in need of oxygen concentrators, Hyderabad-based Shyam Bharose Seva Samithi has provided as many as 66 concentrators to the people who were in need of it.

"Oxygen has become an essential commodity during the pandemic. The shortage of oxygen in hospitals and other medical facilities is posing a big problem to those who are in the process of recu-

peration from Covid-19. That is why we have begun giving out oxygen concentrators to the people in need of it," Sanjeev Agarwal, a member of the Samithi told this newspaper.

One of the beneficiaries of their oxygen drive, Naveen Kumar said, "I needed an oxygen concentrator for my mother who was affected with the disease. So, when I approached the Samithi, they readily gave me a concentrator to help my mother."

Apart from handing out

concentrators, the group also plays an active part in providing food to the needy and destitute.

"During the pandemic, we have seen people, especially those who are economically backward, struggling for one square meal a day. So, we began giving them meals at Koti and in other old age homes across the city. At Koti, we serve food to 200-odd people on a daily basis. We provide them, basic vegetarian food," said Sanjeev Agarwal, a member of the Samithi.



Members of Shyam Bharose Seva Samithi helping people by providing free food during Covid.

Friends in need, with help in hand

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

As the Covid-19 pandemic is spreading its tentacles across the globe faster and more viciously during its second surge, a group of youngsters in this part of the globe is using social media for a good cause. They are using social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram to reach out to voluntary groups to help them with medicine, bed allotments, and even food.

One such group of volunteers is Fresh Serve, serving healthy, nutritious and free food to over a 100 people in just 10 days across the city. Five youngsters, between the age group of 19 and 25, have taken it upon themselves to provide food to Covid positive families since the beginning of May.

"We started helping our friends and families when

the second wave of pandemic hit us. Some of our friends had started home kitchens to prepare meals for needy people. From there, we thought there must be several others, who are facing troubles in cooking or ordering food. So, we put in some money from each of our pockets and posted a message in social media asking people to reach out to us," said Rahul Shah, a 23-year-old entrepreneur, part of the Fresh Serve volunteer group.

Other members of the initiative include 19-year-old college students Samhitha Tera, Nithyashree Kalyan, Gayatri Kommera, and 25-year-old Sagar Gupta.

"We are based at Madhapur, and set up a home kitchen at Kompally where we are operating at the moment. Some of our friends usually come forward to help with the delivery of food. Other

times if no one is free, we use delivery and pick up services online, also free of cost for those in need," Shah added.

Some of the beneficiaries of this correspondent spoke to appreciated the initiative, saying that the service was hassle-free and put to rest their concerns over cleanliness, hygiene and safety. "Both my husband and I have been Covid positive. Due to this, other members of our family have been suffering too. Rahul and his team agreed to give us service free of cost and it has been a great help," said Vidya, a beneficiary at Kondapur.

Another beneficiary, Ranjith Dontamsetti at Manikonda added that he came to know about the service from social media and it helped his family too. "It is so encouraging to see how young adults are coming together to give back to



Group of volunteers — Fresh Serve, serving healthy, nutritious and free food during Covid.

society in such difficult times. Social media has been of great help. I think a collaborative data bank of these home kitchens and services should be made to help people in

need," he said. 'Fresh Serve' has been providing help in and around Kompally, Tarnaka, Gachibowli, Begumpet, Banjara Hills, Habsiguda among others.

OTHER STORIES

WEDDING
VIDEOGRAPHERS
SEEK EXEMPTION

Khammam: Khammam district photographers and videographers association has urged the government to allow them to shoot marriage functions during the lockdown. Association district president Vemuluri Nagaraju Devara, who met Commissioner of Police Vishnu Warrior on Wednesday, said that the photographers and videographers suffered loss of livelihoods due to the lockdown last year. Now again, they were staring at a severe crisis in view of the lockdown situation.

PEOPLE THROG
HOSPS EVEN IN
LOCKDOWN TIMING

Adilabad: Many people are thronging hospitals for a medical check-up with some of them complaining of Covid symptoms even as the first day of lockdown was being enforced in the old Adilabad district on Wednesday. The state government gave an exemption for the hospitals from the lockdown. Even police are allowing the patients who wanted to go to the hospital for a health check-up. Police are patrolling the main roads and monitoring the lockdown after 10 am. It is learnt that some people are still going out on health grounds, saying they are going to either hospitals or testing centres.

CHIEF WHIP GREET
NURSES ON GLOBAL
NURSES' DAY

Warangal: Government Chief Whip Dasyam Vinay Bhaskar greeted nurses working at the Government Maternity Hospital in Hanamakonda on the occasion of International Nurses' Day on Wednesday. He was all praise for risking their lives to serve the sick even during this catastrophic time. "The efforts of the nurses who are forced to stay away from their family members to serve the people are invaluable. The services provided by doctors, medical staff and nurses at a time when the corona epidemic is gripping the world are unforgettable. I really bow my head to the nurses who are showing such courage in the current crisis. Nurses are at the forefront of dealing with the Coronavirus and are showing great will," he said.



Adilabad Municipal chairman, Jogu Premender inspects the installation works of LPG Gas based crematorium to burn the Covid bodies, on the outskirts of the Mavala Grampanchayat in Adilabad district on Wednesday.

LPG gas-based
crematoriums come
up for Covid victims

**DC CORRESPONDENT
ADILABAD, MAY 12**

In addition to procuring more emergency medicines like Remdesivir, ventilators, oxygen, and adding beds, there is an urgent need to install LPG gas crematoriums during the pandemic. The state government is installing LPG double-burner crematoriums on a war-footing, especially for Covid bodies in the districts. Commercial LPG gas cylinders will be used at these crematoriums. Bodies of Covid dead are kept in line as more and more bodies are arriving every day. The Directorate of Municipal Administration of Telangana has issued orders asking municipalities to instal LPG gas-based crematoriums to meet the growing demand. They are first being installed in districts where government and private hospitals are treating Covid patients. As part of this, they are coming up in Warangal, Karimnagar,

Day-1 lockdown peaceful in TS

Medical experts say it is best for people to follow norms, remain indoors

**PILLALAMARRI
SRINIVAS | DC
ADILABAD, MAY 12**

Main roads wore a deserted look on Day One of lockdown in Adilabad, Nirmal, Mancherial and Komaram Bheem Asifabad districts. Police have been deployed at main centres to check movement of people, bikes and vehicles.

Authorities could be seen verifying whether people coming out are going to hospitals or attending to emergency services.

Barricades have been erected on main roads to restrict movement of people and vehicles as part of enforcing the lockdown.

The same situation was witnessed a year ago. Police erected tents at identified places on main roads for monitoring the situation.

People mostly remained confined to their homes after purchasing essential commodities and vegetables in the morning. Vehicular movement has drastically come down from Day One itself.

Police, however, remained lax on the first day with people. But they have been warning them of strict action in case they come out without any authorised reason.

Many people said they are trying to adjust the lockdown which, they feel, has been imposed suddenly.

They say they will have to manage and complete their shopping needs during the curfew-relaxation time. Medical experts say it will be in the best interest of people themselves that they strictly follow the lockdown and remain confined indoors. This would check Coronavirus from spreading further.

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(Left)Telangana Chowk circle in Karimnagar (Right) Gandhi gunj in Nizamabad wears a deserted look due to strict enforcement of lockdown on Wednesday.

CP stringently warns
violators of lockdown

**DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 12**

Khammam Police Commissioner Vishnu S Warrior said that people should not come out of their homes after 10 am without any valid reasons. He said the lockdown was being implemented strictly and warned of stringent action against those flouting the norms. He said the government

imposed a lockdown till May 21 to check the Covid-19 and the people should cooperate and stay at home during the curfew time. They can make use of the relaxation window in the morning to make any purchases and run their errands. All shops and businesses would be opened during this time.

The CP said that vehicular movement was being restricted and check-posts

set up at various places to check the entry of vehicles. Only those involved in essential services would be allowed to move about. Special passes would be issued through the e-pass system for emergency travel. He said the police would take stern action against the violators under the Disaster Management Act and the relevant sections of IPC.

INDUR WEARS
DESERTED LOOK
AMID LOCKDOWN

**DC CORRESPONDENT
NIZAMABAD, MAY 12**

The first day of lockdown was total and peaceful in the undivided Nizamabad district on Wednesday. Police strictly enforced lockdown norms in towns and villages. To prevent the spread of second wave of Covid-19, the state government declared a 10-day lockdown from May 12 onwards.

Police Commissioner Kartikeya, Nizamabad ACs Are Venkateshwarlu and Prabhakar Rao (traffic) and others supervised security arrangements during the lockdown.

Nizamabad bus station, which is alighting point for Telangana-Maharashtra bus services, wore a desert look after 10 am.

Except exempted services like medical and health and agriculture, all business establishments shut shutters. Police teams verified the credentials of people moving after relaxation timings of 6-10 am. People rushed to purchase groceries and vegetables during the relaxation period.

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Covid vaccination drive
hit by lockdown curbs

**NARENDER PULLOOR | DC
NIZAMABAD, MAY 12**

Restrictions due to lockdown have adversely affected Covid-19 vaccination drive in Nizamabad and Kamareddy districts on Wednesday. Due to lack of transportation and fear of police, beneficiaries have refrained from visiting vaccination centres. As a result, the target of vaccinations could not be reached in both districts.

Medical and health department had set a target of 4,200 Covid-19 vaccine doses on May 12, but only 465 or 11 per cent people could reach for getting their vaccination. In Kamareddy district, of

2,900 vaccination doses, only 1,368 or 47 per cent could be administered.

Significantly, before the lockdown day, 2,960 of targeted 2,900 or 102 per cent people had got vaccinated. Though state government has declared that administration of Covid-19 vaccinations will continue as usual even during the lockdown, beneficiaries are unable to reach the primary and urban health centres for getting vaccinated because of strict implementation of lockdown.

Authorities, however, maintain that it is enough if beneficiaries show to police their identity proof and Covid-19 vaccination time slot.

They will then be allowed to reach their vaccination centres.

Meanwhile, 1,795 tests have been conducted in Nizamabad district on Wednesday and 255 of them tested positive for Covid-19. In Kamareddy district, 942 people have been tested. Their results are awaited.

Roads and buildings minister V. Prashanth Reddy reviewed the Covid situation in Nizamabad and Kamareddy towns on Wednesday. He said Remdesivir and other medicines are available to Covid-19 patients in both the districts. Oxygen beds are also vacant in government hospitals, he maintained.

Dist area hospital at Mulugu
faces severe oxygen crunch

**DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 12**

The district area hospital treating Coronavirus patients is faced with a risk of oxygen deficiency. Due to the devastating effect of the second wave, more than 100 positive cases are being reported every day for the past 15 days.

Hospital beds are filling up and most of the patients are in need of oxygen. As a result, the need for timely oxygen replenishments is rapidly increasing. With supplies on the fall, there is a risk of shortage in the coming days.

Around 160 beds have been set up at the hospital for Covid-19 patients. Of these, 100 are for general treatment and 60 beds are provided with oxygen lines. With the rise in respiratory problems due to the second wave of Corona across the district, there is an increasing need for oxygen.

At Eturunagaram and Venkatapuram (Nuguru) community health centres (CHCs), eight oxygen beds each were set up but patients are being sent to Mulugu due to the unavailability of doctors to provide emergency medical services. Covid-19 patients from Regonda and Ganapuram mandals of Jayashankar Bhupalpally district are also coming to Mulugu for treatment.

Under the present conditions, 30,000 litres of oxygen is being consumed daily at the hospital. Each cylinder has a capacity of 1,000 litres



Minister Satyavathi Rathod inspects a quarantine centre set up at Tribal Welfare Bhavan at Bandarupalli in Mulugu mandal on Wednesday.

—BY ARRANGEMENT

CP INAUGURATES COVID ISOLATION
CENTRE FOR POLICE AT KAZIPET

**DC CORRESPONDENT
WARANGAL, MAY 12**

Warangal Police Commissioner, Tarun Joshi said complete assistance to overcome Coronavirus to the police personnel and their family members would be provided at the new isolation centre inaugurated by him at Kazipet on Wednesday. He said the isolation centre would be useful to those police personnel who cannot isolate themselves from their family members. In addition to

and each time 30 cylinders are brought from Warangal and even Hyderabad.

District Collector Krishna Aditya has taken an initiative to source cylinders from Hyderabad as there was a shortage of cylinders in Warangal recently. Hospital sources say it costs around Rs 1 lakh per day. It will be difficult to provide oxygen to

everyone if all the beds are filled in a single day. The central government has recently allotted 51 oxygen generation plants to the state. One of them is going to be set up on the Mulugu hospital premises. Site inspection by engineers to install the machinery was carried out a few days ago. All hopes are now pinned on the plant to overcome the oxygen shortage.

MINISTER FOR
MORE ISOLATION
CENTRES IN
RURAL AREAS

Warangal: Minister for women and child welfare Satyavathi Rathod on Wednesday reviewed the facilities being provided to Coronavirus patients in Jayashankar Bhupalpally district and Mulugu.

Speaking to the officials of various departments, she advised them to set up as many isolation centres as possible in villages as it became a challenging task for the poor to access timely medical care. Everyone with Covid-19 symptoms should be tested and medication given immediately. In addition, patients should be provided psychological reassurance by visiting them, she said.

Pointing out that there are some difficulties with procuring important drugs which are under the control of the central government, she said Chief Minister K. Chandrababhai Rao spoke to the owners of the respective companies to address the issues. "The spread of Covid should be assessed in villages and preventive measures should be taken to mobilise and motivate the people. Officials must note the areas where people may gather in large numbers during the four hours of relaxation and take appropriate action to avoid crowding," she said, urging officials to work in coordination.

LEAKY ROOF LETS RAIN WATER FLOOD
NEW BUS STATION IN KHAMMAM

**DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 12**

Roof-plates of the roof of the newly opened bus stand on Bypass Road fell amid a brief rainfall, exposing the lapses in the construction within two months of its inauguration.

Rain water filled the sitting space for passengers as water leaked from the roof's iron sheets. Notably, transport minister Puvvada Ajay Kumar, claiming that the erection of the bus stand was a prestigious government project, had monitored the works and brought municipal administration minister K.T. Rama Rao for its inauguration.

There are 32 platforms on the new bus stand built at a cost of ₹17.5 crore, complete with food court and a commercial complex. The government had allocated eight acres of NSP land for the project.

Former minister Tummala Nageswara Rao had proposed the bus stand on Wyr Road, but this was not accepted.

There was also a demand to use the old bus stand for the district services, but the governmental func-

tionaries did not give any weight to the people's plea. Local activists and businessmen had pointed out that several hospitals existed near the old bus stand and it was convenient for the people coming from rural areas for hospital visits if the old bus stand remained operational.

A contractor from Hyderabad bagged the project and he took more than three years to complete it. Officials placed orders for expensive bonsai plants by spending lakhs of rupees from the exchequer. Several of these trees are failing to survive.

RTC official O Solomon said the construction work was still going on and some plates of the roof-ceiling fell amid the rain.

The opposition parties alleged defective construction and funds mismanagement. CPI-M Two Town secretary Y. Vikram demanded an inquiry on the defects in the construction.

The government claimed it to be a top class bus stand, a first of its kind in the history of RTC. What does the minister have to say on this now," he asked.

LIFT PADDY
DAMAGED DUE
TO RAINS,
URGES AIKMS

**DC CORRESPONDENT
KHAMMAM, MAY 12**

All India Kisan-Mazdoor Sabha (AIKMS) has demanded that the state government immediately lift the paddy that became wet due to the rains and pay compensation to the farmers who lost their crops to unseasonal rains.

AIKMS district president M. Nageswara Rao said that gales and rains in various parts of Khammam district damaged various crops including paddy. Mangoes in huge extent were felled by massive gales. Paddy and chili that were on thrashing floors were hit by the rains. The paddy brought by the farmers to the procurement centres was also hit by the rains. And traders and other agencies were not making sales and keeping the farmers wait for days on end, said the AIKMS leaders.

● **MANGOES IN huge extent were felled by massive gales. Paddy, chili that were on thrashing floors were hit by the rains.**

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WHEREAS, The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Union Bank of India under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (Act 54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) of the Act read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notice dated 30.01.2020 calling upon the borrower **Shri/ M/s. Syed Mahamood Mohinuddin** to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs. 15,33,491/- (Rupees Fifteen lacs thirty three thousand four hundred ninety one only)** within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the entire amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this the 11th day of May 2021 of the year.

The Borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of Union Bank of India for an amount **Rs. 11,90,545/- (Rupees Eleven lacs ninety thousand five hundred forty five only)** and interest thereon.

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SHORT TAKES

J&K OFFICIAL BEATS UP PEOPLE, INVITES PUBLIC IREYUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR MAY 12

A video of a senior government official thrashing citizens in an attempt to enforce the lockdown necessitated by the current wave of the Covid-19 in north-western Baramulla district has shocked people of Jammu and Kashmir and beyond and sparked anger among netizens, many of whom demanded his sacking or, at least, stripping him of the present assignment.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Baramulla, Muhammad Ahsan Mir, can be seen in the video which went viral beating up an elderly woman and man with a stick and even kicking the latter and also threatening another woman resident in the main town of Baramulla for defying the 'Corona curfew'.

Many people soon took to social media platforms to condemn the ADC's behaviour and demand action against him. Senior journalist Mufti Ishaq tweeted "He should get a sack immediately. This is an unruly behaviour. His way of dealing with people will rub on to his subordinates and they are likely to unleash terror on people. He is a very bad example to be a J&K government interface. Isolate him. A bad apple can spoil a basket."

ODISHA TO GIVE JAB TO NON-ID PROOF HOLDERSAKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 12

The Odisha government on Wednesday decided to administer Covid-19 vaccine to vulnerable people who don't possess any identity proofs.

In a letter to all the collectors and Municipal Corporation Commissioners, additional chief secretary to the government, P. K. Mohapatra, asked to immediately identify such persons and bring them under the inoculation process.

"In all the phases of Covid-19 vaccination drive, it has been prescribed that the beneficiary must register in the COWIN portal. The beneficiary has to register in the portal with one of the seven prescribed ID proofs. However, some vulnerable groups of citizens may not possess any of the seven prescribed identity cards. Such vulnerable persons may not be denied for Covid-19 vaccination for absence of identity proof. Hence, there is a need to provide special consideration for Covid-19 vaccination of the vulnerable population, as these beneficiaries are also at risk of exposure to Covid-19 infection," Mr Mohapatra wrote in the letter.

"Such groups of people include nomads (including sadhu/saints from various religions), prison inmates, inmates in mental health Institutions, citizens in old age homes, roadside beggars, people residing in rehabilitation centers/camps and any other identified eligible persons, aged 18 years or more, and not having any of above prescribed individual photo ID cards", the official said.

103-YEAR-OLD GANDHIAN FIGHTS COVID BATTLE

Bengaluru, May 12: Eminent Gandhian and freedom fighter H. S. Doreswamy has won the Covid-19 battle at the ripe old age of 103 and is returning home.

"I developed symptoms five days ago but there were no complications as such. Yet, I decided to get admitted because I have respiratory problems. Now, I am getting discharged," the centenarian told PTI on Wednesday.

According to him, he got admitted to Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research (SJICSR), a government-owned autonomous hospital.

Sources close to him said the director of the Jayadeva Institute Dr C. N. Manjunath, an eminent cardiologist and the son-in-law of former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda, personally monitored the treatment for Doreswamy.

Born on April 10, 1918, Harohalli Srinivasiah Doreswamy took a plunge into the freedom struggle by taking part in the Quit India movement and was jailed for 14 months from 1943 to 1944. The Gandhian had also participated in the Mysuru Chalo movement to compel the Mysuru Maharaja to accede to the Indian State post-independence.

Delhi blames Bharat Bio for vax shortage

Sisodia says pharma firm refused to supply required doses after reserve stock of vaccines exhaustedBHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday alleged that Bharat Biotech has refused to supply the required doses of its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin to Delhi.

Addressing a press conference, Sisodia said that Delhi had asked for total 1.34 crore doses of two Covid vaccines - 67 lakhs each of Covaxin and Covishield. However, Bharat Biotech informed the Delhi government of its inability to supply the said doses as it is "making dispatches as per directives of concerned government officials".

Sisodia claimed that it was obvious that Bharat Biotech was talking about central government officials.

"They further wrote, 'We sincerely regret that we cannot make any additional supplies as required by you'. I do not know how much is being supplied to other states but they have written to us that they cannot provide to Delhi because they have to supply as per the central government order," the deputy CM said.

Manish Sisodia said that Delhi has run out of its reserve stock of vaccines.

Our reserve stock has been exhausted. The centres administering Covishield vaccines are functioning but we have had to close the centres administering Covaxin. So, we have had to close down more than 100 centres across 17 schools," Sisodia said.

The deputy chief minister and AAP leader urged the Centre to stop all vaccine-related exports and allow more companies to produce the doses.

"The Centre should act as the government of a country. They should carry out their responsibility and stop all exports," he said. Sisodia also said that the Centre must import vaccine doses from across the globe and make them available to state governments.

ASSAM SHUTS ALL OFFICES IN URBAN AREASMANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MAY 12

A day after the approval of the state cabinet, the Assam government on Wednesday announced strict containment measures by shutting down of all offices, religious places and weekly markets for 15 days in urban and semi-urban areas of the state, besides imposing curfew from 2 pm to 5 am as Covid-19 cases in the state continue to surge ahead dangerously.

On Tuesday, 6,258 new cases and 85 fatalities were reported, both of which are biggest single-day spikes so far since the first wave of the pandemic struck. The test positivity percentage on Tuesday shot above 9 percent. On the other hand, 4,409 patients were discharged from hospitals on Tuesday. The total number of cases reported in the current month till Tuesday stood at 51,306 while 531 patients have lost their lives in these first 11 days of the month.

Issuing a new set of guidelines for the urban and semi-urban places in the periphery of 5 km of municipal areas, Assam chief secretary Jishnu Barua told reporters, "Complete lockdown is an option, but we are going gradually in a phased manner. We hope these measures will work in the next two-three days." As per the restrictions notified by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), weekly haats, bazaars, educational institutions and all government and private offices have been ordered to shut for the next 15 days.



Nurses pose for a picture on the occasion of International Nurses Day, at NMMC Covid-19 care centre, Navi Mumbai, on Wednesday.

— PTI



New Delhi workers install an oxygen plant for a temporary Covid Care Centre at Ramli Ground, near LNJP Hospital in Delhi on Wednesday.



Family members mourn the death of a Covid-19 victim, at Patna Medical College and Hospital in Patna, on Wednesday.

— PTI

V-P NAIDU LAUDS CONTRIBUTION OF NURSES

New Delhi, May 12: Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday lauded nurses for rendering untiring and selfless service during the Coronavirus pandemic, and described them as a critical link in India's health infrastructure.

"On International Nurses Day, I compliment our nurses for rendering untiring, selfless service to the people. They have been at the forefront during this pandemic, being a critical link in our health infrastructure," the Vice President Secretariat tweeted quoting Naidu.

International Nurse Day is celebrated on May 12 to mark the birth anniversary of social reformer and founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale.

The day is also observed to appreciate the contributions of nurses to the society around the globe.

"Let us all express our gratitude to them for their invaluable contribution in advancing the health and well-being of the people," Naidu said.

— PTI

DOOR-TO-DOOR JAB WOULD HAVE SAVED MANY: HCSHAHAB ANSARI | DC
MUMBAI, MAY 12

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the Central government to reconsider its current protocol that doesn't allow door-to-door vaccination. The court also said that had the government incorporated such a policy earlier, it could have saved lives of senior citizens and specially-abled persons who were unable to visit vaccination centres.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Girish S. Kulkarni was hearing a PIL filed by city-based lawyers Dhruvi Kapadia and Kunal Tiwari, seeking directions to the Centre, the Maharashtra government and the BMC to provide door-to-door vaccination facility for people over 75 years of age, the specially-abled and the bed-ridden.

Cong. slams Centre over lack of vaccines

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI MAY 12

The Congress on Wednesday hit out at the Centre over the lack of vaccines. Taking to twitter, Party General Secretary Ms. Priyanka Gandhi said, "India is the largest vaccine-producing country."

The BJP government marked 'Tika Utsav' on April 12, but did not make arrangements for providing vaccines and in 30 days there was an 82 per

cent decline in our vaccinations." The central government had marked 'Tika Utsav', a vaccination drive between April 11 and 14, with an aim to vaccinate the maximum number of eligible people against coronavirus amid a surge in cases. She also shared a graph showing that India was behind countries like the US, the UK, Turkey and France in terms of vaccinating citizens. She further said, "Modi ji went to vaccine factories, also got photo-

graphs clicked, but why did his government place its first order for vaccine doses only in January 2021? The United States and other countries placed orders with Indian vaccine companies long ago. Who will take responsibility for this?"

Several state governments have had to reschedule their vaccination plans due to slow availability of vaccines. In states like Maharashtra the emphasis has been to provide the second dose to

people who have already taken the first dose. While several other states delayed the vaccination for the population in the age bracket of 18 to 44 years so that the second doses of 45 years and above could be completed. Meanwhile some states like Uttar Pradesh have already rolled out a global tender for vaccines while others are contemplating doing so.

The Congress has also attacked the Centre for levying high GST on products crucial in the fight

against Covid-19 and sought an exemption for vaccines, Remdesivir and oxygen concentrators. The party also demanded that the government should provide exemption not only on the final product but also on the raw material being used. The Congress along with several other opposition parties have demanded an immediate convening of the GST Council meeting to rationalize taxation on the products essential to combating Covid 19.

Inoculation drive in hosps on hold

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

Paucity of vaccines in the national capital has forced several government and private hospitals to stall the inoculation drive. While some hospitals as a last resort had to discontinue the vaccination drive last week, with the shortage of vaccines availability, it has become a herculean task for several hospitals management to deal with the crisis.

According to officials, though there has been a shortage of vaccine in the city, the city hospitals

have the capacity to vaccinate more people. On Wednesday, the Delhi Government received 2,67,790 doses of Covishield vaccine for people in the 18 to 44 years age group. It has become a concern for hospitals like Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, Fortis Health Care and others to continue the inoculation drive.

As per an official from Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, the Covid vaccination drive can't be expanded as it is getting only 200 doses of Covishield every day.

Didi: Import more foreign vaccine

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 12

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to "speedily import vaccines" to match the massive demand in the country. She also urged the Prime Minister to allow reputed global Covid-19 vaccine producers to open their franchise operations in the country to tackle the scarcity of antidotes.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also informed Mr Modi that her government would provide the international giants land and support for their fran-

chise operations, even by the national players in the case, for bulk production of the vaccines.

Ms Banerjee told the PM, "It seems, however, that the production (and hence, the supply and distribution) of vaccines in the country is extremely inadequate and insignificant in the context of the

massive needs of the people at large. About 10 crore people in West Bengal and 140 crore people in the country need vaccination, here and now, but only a microscopic percentage has been covered."

Ms Banerjee underlined that vaccination, according to experts, is the "real antidote" as the country battles an aggressive second wave of infections.

"With the aid of scientists and experts it is possible to identify the reputed and authentic manufacturers... and it is possible for us in this country to speedily import vaccines from those ends across the world. I urge you to embark upon this endeavor

without any further delay," Ms Banerjee wrote. Liberal, proactive and discerning import of vaccines is the paramount need today, she stressed.

Ms Banerjee added, "Also, it may kindly be considered if we could encourage the world players to open up franchise operations in our country. Even the national players could be inspired to go for the franchise mode for bulk production of vaccines. We, in West Bengal, are ready to provide land and support for any manufacturing/ franchise operation for authentic vaccine manufacturing. I would request you to kindly consider the proposition."

— PTI

JAB | SAFETY

Pregnant women make antibodies after vaccination and transfer them to babies

Vaccines don't damage placenta: Study

New Delhi, May 12: Covid-19 vaccines may be safe during pregnancy, suggests a study that found no evidence of injury to the placenta in pregnant women who received the preventive.

The first-of-its-kind study, published on Tuesday in the journal Obstetrics & Gynecology, adds to the growing literature that Covid-19 vaccines are safe in pregnancy.

"The placenta is like the

black box in an airplane. If something goes wrong with a pregnancy, we usually see changes in the placenta that can help us figure out what happened," said Jeffery Goldstein, assistant professor at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in the US.

"From what we can tell, the Covid vaccine does not damage the placenta," Goldstein said.

The researchers noted that there is a lot of vac-

cine hesitancy, especially among pregnant people.

"Our team hopes these data, albeit preliminary, can reduce concerns about the risk of the vaccine to the pregnancy," said study co-author Emily Miller, assistant professor at Northwestern University.

The study authors examined the placentas from 84 vaccinated patients and 116 unvaccinated patients who delivered at a hospital in Chicago, US.

Most patients received

vaccines — either Moderna or Pfizer — during their third trimester.

Last year, the same team published a study that found placentas of women who tested positive for the Covid-19 virus while pregnant showed abnormal blood flow between mother and baby in utero.

Pregnant patients who want to get vaccinated to avoid contracting the disease should feel safe doing so, Miller said.

"We are beginning to

move to a framework of protecting foetuses through vaccination, rather than from vaccination," Miller said.

In April, the scientists published a study showing pregnant women make Covid antibodies after vaccination and successfully transfer them to their foetuses. "Until infants can get vaccinated, the only way for them to get Covid antibodies is from their mother," Goldstein said.

The placenta is the first

organ that forms during pregnancy. It performs duties for most of the foetus' organs while they are still forming, such as providing oxygen while the lungs develop and nutrition while the gut is forming. According to the researchers, the placenta manages hormones and the immune system, and tells the mother's body to welcome and nurture the foetus rather than reject it as a foreign intruder.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

IRAN CLASH KILLS 2 GUARD TROOPS, 7 MILITANTS

Tehran: Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard forces on Tuesday killed seven militants and dismantled their cell in the country's northwest near the border with Turkey, Iran's state-run *IRNA news agency* reported. Two Guard members were also killed in the shootout.

IRNA said the "group of terrorists" had snuck into Iran illegally from Turkey. The clash took place around noon in the city of Salmas in Iran's West Azerbaijan province, according to the report.

The city is located about 650 kilometers (400 miles) northwest of the capital, Tehran. The area has seen occasional fighting between Iranian forces and Kurdish separatists as well as militants linked to the extremist Islamic State group.

In November, unknown gunmen killed three and wounded two Iranian border guards in the province.

SUDAN FORCES DISPERSE PROTEST; TWO KILLED

Cairo: Two protesters were killed when Sudanese security forces dispersed a demonstration late Tuesday in the capital of Khartoum, a local medical group said.

The violence broke out when dozens of protesters made their way late in the day to the sealed-off area outside the military's headquarters to commemorate a deadly break-up of a protester camp two years ago. The protesters have demanded justice for those killed in the 2019 violence. Security forces closed off major roads and streets leading to the government and military headquarters in Khartoum ahead of the protests.

The Sudanese doctors' committee said security forced fired live bullets and tear gas to disperse the protesters, killing at least two people and wounding more than 15 others, some of them in critical condition. The committee is the medical arm of the Sudanese Professionals' Association, which spearheaded the popular uprising that led to the military's ouster of Omar al-Bashir in April 2019.

CHANCELLOR PROBED OVER LYING TO MPs IN AUSTRIA

Vienna: Austria's Sebastian Kurz said on Wednesday that he was being investigated over possible false statements to a parliamentary committee probing corruption, in the latest headache for the conservative chancellor.

"I wish to inform you that... prosecutors have opened an investigation against the head of my office," Bernhard Bonelli, "and against me", Kurz told reporters before a cabinet meeting.

Kurz denied any wrongdoing, saying: "I always answered all (the committee's) questions truthfully." Prosecutors confirmed in an email that the investigation had been opened after several complaints were made to them.

The offence of lying under oath carries a prison term of up to three years.

The investigation comes after the opposition Social Democrats (SPOe) and NEOS parties accused Kurz of not telling truth in front of the committee of MPs, who are investigating the fallout from the so-called "Ibizagate" scandal that brought down Kurz's previous government in 2019.

KREMLIN IMPOSES CUTS AT U.S. EMBASSY

Moscow: Under Kremlin orders, the U.S. Embassy has stopped employing Russians, forcing the embassy to cut its consular staff by 75 per cent and limit many of its services.

The order went into effect on Wednesday, bringing the sharply deteriorating U.S.-Russia relationship to an intensely personal level. Because of the cuts, the embassy can offer only very limited services, such as considering "life-and-death" visa applications. That leaves Russian businessmen, exchange students and romantic partners adrift because they won't be able to obtain visas. Even Americans will be unable to register their newborns or renew their passports.

For Anastasia Kuznetsova, a 20-year-old engaged to marry a Californian, it's a crushing blow. She had already spent about two years seeking a fiancée's visa. The notoriously laborious process for Russians to get US visas had already been slowed by Covid. "I felt destroyed, much more depressed than I was before," said Kuznetsova.

Israel PM declares emergency in Lod

Netanyahu visits Tel Aviv suburbs as cops accuse Arab residents of causing riots

Jerusalem, May 12: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday declared a state of emergency in the central city of Lod as police accused Arab residents of waging "wide-scale riots".

Netanyahu's statement came after an Israeli Arab was killed in Lod the previous night as violence soars between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

According to a photographer, Netanyahu himself went to the city, which is in the suburbs of economic hub Tel Aviv near the Ben Gurion airport, to call for calm.

The city of 77,000 people, including 47,000 Jewish Israelis and 23,000 Arab Israelis, had been the scene of violent clashes on Monday, the local police confirmed.

But on Tuesday evening, as protests multiplied across East Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and also Israeli Arab cities, the situation degenerated in Lod, police said.

"Wide-scale riots erupted by some of the Arab residents and endangering communities," the police said in a statement.

"Vehicle were burnt and damage caused to property." The government said reinforcements had been deployed after Israeli media reported that three synagogues and several businesses were set on fire in Lod.

"Sixteen border police platoons (have been) mobilised in areas in order to deal with the violence," the police added.

There were also violent scenes in Israeli Arab areas including Acre, Wadi Ara and Jisr A-Zarga, where eight people were arrested, police said.

Weeks of tensions boiled over when Israeli riot police clashed with crowds of Palestinians at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque, on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Nightly clashes since then at the compound, which is holy to both Muslims and Jews, and elsewhere in east Jerusalem have left at least 700 Palestinians injured.

On Tuesday Palestinian militants Hamas and the Israeli army traded the heaviest fire for several years, with rockets fired at Tel Aviv after an Israeli strike destroyed a tower block in Gaza.

— AFP

● Weeks of tensions boiled over when Israeli riot police clashed with crowds of Palestinians at Al Aqsa mosque.



Palestinians wave the Hamas flag during the funeral of Rashid Abu Ara, 16, who was killed during clashes with Israeli troops in village of Aqaba near Nablus, in the north of the occupied West Bank, on Wednesday.

Fear of 'war' looms over Israel

Tel Aviv, May 12: Relentless rocket fire and rioting in mixed Jewish-Arab towns fuelled growing fears on Wednesday that deadly violence between Israel and Palestinians could spiral into "full-scale war".

Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz vowed more attacks on Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in Gaza to bring

“total, long-term quiet” before considering a ceasefire.

Gaza militants have launched more than 1,000 rockets since Monday, said Israel's army, which has carried out hundreds of air strikes on Islamist groups in the crowded coastal enclave of Gaza.

The most intense hostilities in seven years have

killed at least 53 people in Gaza, including 14 children, and six in Israel, including an Israeli soldier and one Indian national, since Monday.

Three Palestinians were killed in West Bank clashes. And at least 230 Palestinians and 100 Israelis have been wounded.

The bloodshed was triggered by weekend unrest

at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque compound, which is sacred to both Muslims and Jews.

As world powers voiced growing alarm and the UN Security Council readied for another emergency meeting on the bloody crisis, the UN Middle East envoy Tor Wennesland warned that "we're escalating towards a full-scale war".

Hamas: Gaza City commander killed

Gaza City (Gaza Strip), May 12: Militant group Hamas confirms that its Gaza City commander was killed in an Israeli airstrike, the highest-ranking militant killed since the 2014 war in the Palestinian territory.

Earlier, Israel's internal security agency said that a series of airstrikes had killed Bassem Issa and several other senior Hamas militants.

The army released a statement on Wednesday, saying that it carried out a complex and first-of-its-kind operation. Those targeted, it said, were a key part of the Hamas General Staff and considered close

India expresses concern over Palestine violence

United Nations, May 12: Amid escalating tensions between Israel and Palestinian militants, India has expressed deep concern at clashes and violence in Jerusalem's Temple Mount as well as over evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods." He said India calls on both sides to avoid changing the status-quo on the ground.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti tweeted that in the UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday on the escalation in East Jerusalem, he said that

establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

The resolution also reiterates its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory and that it fully respect all of its legal obligations in this regard.



Boris Johnson

DESPITE COURT ORDER, UK PM IGNORES DEBTS

London, May 12: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whose personal finances are under scrutiny after several scandals, has failed to pay a small debt nearly seven months after a court order, documents showed Wednesday.

An online database of civil county court judgments in England and Wales showed Johnson has yet to settle the debt of 535 (\$757, 624 euros) following a ruling on October 26 last year.

The judgment, confirmed and first reported by the fortnightly satirical and news magazine *Private Eye*, does not reveal details about the nature of the debt or the creditor. Johnson is named as the debtor and lists his address as 10 Downing Street — the home of prime ministers since 1735 and one of the country's best-known residences.

Taliban seizes Afghan district before ceasefire

Kabul, May 12: The Taliban have seized a district from Afghan government forces on the outskirts of Kabul, ahead of a three-day ceasefire agreed between the warring sides, officials said.

Nerkh district is around 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the Afghan capital in neighbouring Wardak province, which has long been used by militants as a gateway to reach Kabul and launch deadly attacks.

Violence has soared since May 1 when the US military began formally withdrawing its last remaining troops, as peace efforts between the Taliban and the Afghan government have stalled.

"Security and defence forces made a tactical retreat from the police headquarters of Nerkh district," Interior Ministry spokesman Tareq Arian said.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, said the insurgents had captured the area on Tuesday, adding that their fighters had seized the police headquarters and an army base.

The Defence Ministry on Wednesday said it would launch an offensive to win back the district, home to more than 60,000

● VIOLENCE HAS soared since May 1 when the US military began formally withdrawing its last remaining troops, as peace efforts between the Taliban and the Afghan government have stalled.

people. "Commando reinforcements are on their way," said Fawad Aman, a spokesman for the defence ministry.

Large swathes of Wardak and neighbouring Logar province have been controlled or contested for years by Taliban fighters and have served as a strategic staging ground for militants hoping to enter Kabul.

The main highway that connects Kabul to southern Kandahar province — the former Taliban stronghold and the scene of intense fighting in recent weeks — goes through the district.

Taliban fighters have been encircling major Afghan urban centres, spurring speculation the militants are waiting for the Americans to withdraw before launching all-out assaults on Afghan cities.

China, Russia using digital tech to sabotage, steal: UK

London, May 12: It is important to win the "hearts and minds" of like-minded countries such as India to prevent countries like China and Russia from filling the multilateral vacuum and misusing digital technology to steal and sabotage, UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab warned on Wednesday.

In a keynote speech at the CyberUK Conference 2021 organised by the UK's National Cyber Security

● WE HAVE got to win hearts and minds across the world for our positive vision of cyberspace as a free space, said Raab.

Centre (NCSC), the Cabinet minister issued a stark warning of all too real attacks on democracy as he announced GBP 22 million in new funding to support cyber capacity building in vulnerable

countries in Africa and the Indo-Pacific.

We invited ministers to join the (G7) meeting from India, Australia, South Korea, South Africa and Brunei, the current ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) chair; because we wanted to broaden the group of like-minded countries cooperating on cyber, Raab said.

We have got to win hearts and minds across the world for our positive vision of cyberspace as a

free space, open to all responsible users and there for the benefit of the whole world. And frankly, we've got to prevent China, Russia and others from filling the multilateral vacuum, he said.

The minister made reference to a clash between authoritarian and democratic states playing out in cyberspace at the moment, with malicious cyber-actors the "industrial-scale vandals of the 21st century".

RISKY | LIVING Urban areas are always exposed to climate change disasters

Cities fail to adapt to climate change: Report

Paris, May 12: Hundreds of cities have no climate adaptation plans in place despite rising threats like floods, heatwaves and pollution, according to a report on Wednesday that said this could put 400 million people at risk across the world.

Fast-expanding urban areas are home to more than half the population of the planet and are increasingly exposed to climate-fuelled disasters, economic shocks and health crises as the world warms, with fears that vulnerable communities

will be hardest hit.

CDP, a global non-profit that collects data disclosed by companies, cities, states and regions on environmental impact, analysed over 800 global cities and found that 43 percent do not yet have a plan to adapt to the challenges of climate change.

With more and more people drawn to live in urban areas, CDP estimated that by 2030 around 400 million people will be living in poorly prepared cities.

"The urgent need to act and have adaptation measures in place to keep the

● WITH MORE and more people drawn to live in urban areas, CDP estimated that by 2030 around 400 million people will be living in poorly prepared cities.

citizens safe, is increasing together with (the growing urban population)," said Mirjam Wolfrum, CDP's Policy Director for Europe.

She said that 93 per cent of the cities included in

the report were facing "significant threats", while 60 percent highlighted "substantive" water security issues.

The top five hazards are flash and surface flooding — including from rising sea levels — heat waves, rainstorms, extreme hot days and droughts, she said, adding that air pollution is also a major health concern.

Ongoing adaptation strategies in the municipalities that reported to CDP include tree planting (20 percent), flood mapping (18 percent) and

developing crisis management plans like evacuation systems (14 percent).

With cities responsible for some 70 percent of global emissions, the report said urban centres are also looking at schemes like increasing the use of renewable energy and improving green spaces, transport infrastructure and recycling.

Under the 2015 Paris climate deal, countries agreed to limit global heating to 2 degrees Celsius, with a less damaging target of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

DECCAN Chronicle

13 MAY 2021

Be grateful for ideas, don't cast them in partisan light

The abject failure of the Union government in anticipating, and preparing the nation for, the second wave of the pandemic Covid-19 seems to have unsettled the ruling dispensation with its leading lights jeering at every criticism, instead of offering an answer. The practical suggestions former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had listed in his letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi were met with an uncharacteristically scornful reply by health minister Harsh Vardhan. And now the letter BJP president J.P. Nadda has written to Congress president Sonia Gandhi in reply to the Congress Working Committee's criticism that the Centre has abdicated its role in fighting the pandemic is another example.

As the principal Opposition party, the Congress would be failing in its job if it does not call out the lapses of the government and force it to correct its course. The government needs to answer it but the BJP has chosen to do the job, seeing it as a political issue. It hardly is.

The BJP president's letter essentially questions the credentials of the questioner, instead of rebutting the points in a way that behoves the ruling party. To the criticism about the shortage of vaccines, Mr Nadda says state governments had demanded decentralisation of the vaccination programme. This is specious because it is not the entry of the states in the market that has created the shortage; it's the complete lack of planning by the Centre, which went to the town about launching the "world's largest inoculation drive", that has created the present situation where the states are forced to wind up their vaccination camps for shortage of doses. The shortage was felt even before the third phase of vaccination, to be taken up by the states, started. The states never wanted to pay twice or four times the price the Centre pays the vaccine manufacturers for each dose; nor did they ask for organising a competition with one another and the private sector for vaccines. Now several states, including those ruled by the BJP, are forced to float global tenders for sourcing the vaccine.

The BJP president says the Opposition parties were less appreciative of the achievements of Indian scientists in developing the vaccine. Everyone will join Mr Nadda when he says the vaccine that is made in India should be a matter of national pride but his overplaying the nationalistic cap will be unacceptable. True, there were sceptics even in the scientific community when the authorities concerned cleared the India-made vaccine for emergency use without waiting for the scientific process to get completed. Mr Nadda gives a partisan tilt to the call for adherence to the scientific process. This is unfair.

The Congress' criticism that India is witnessing a "grave calamity" was in fact shared by Mr Nadda's former colleague in the Union council of ministers, Santosh Gangwar, who put it on record in his letter to Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath. Mr Gangwar was only reflecting what millions of Covid-19 patients and their dear ones have been feeling. The BJP must realise that shooting the messenger hardly helps solve issues.

Is it time to free Rajiv killers?

The clamour for the release of seven Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convicts is bound to grow. The change in government in Tamil Nadu has given fresh impetus to what is already a state-wide push to see those involved in the periphery of the LTTE plot to kill a Prime Minister of India be freed as they have been incarcerated for close to 30 years now — May 21 will mark the 30th anniversary of the sombre event that shook the nation. The killing itself had come straight out of a Frederick Forsyth novel with belt bomber Dhanu activating the device while pretending to greet Rajiv Gandhi in Sriperumbudur when he was on a campaign visit.

The Centre has been steadfast in its refusal to countenance the release of the prisoners for life, some of whose death sentences were commuted to life. The rationale for the refusal to consider several pleas, an Assembly resolution and a Cabinet decision to recommend that they be freed on compassionate grounds has been that those associated with the killing of a Prime Minister of the land cannot be sown any mercy. The breach of security taking a PM's life — Rajiv was a former PM at the time as he had refused to try to retain his post though Congress was returned as the single largest party after the 1989 polls — was considered a national affront that hurt even more as the conspiracy was hatched outside India.

The Tamil Nadu governor, acting obviously on orders from the Centre, sat on the matter of freeing many who had spent their entire youth in jail, including for the possibly innocent act of procuring a nine-volt battery for the detonator. The LTTE was subsequently decimated after a civil war that lasted over 25 years and Rajiv Gandhi's wife and children had also forgiven the killers. The sentiment in Tamil Nadu is overwhelmingly in favour of the prisoners' release but it is complicated as it involves foreigners. Whether cold-blooded conspirators in assassinating an Indian PM deserve any mercy when they should be in prison for life is another matter.

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Subhani



Will Beijing return the remains of 1962 hero?

Claude Arpi



In recent months China has given a lot of publicity to several new war memorials which have come up in Tibet; this mushrooming is probably due the Galwan incidents in which the People's Liberation Army lost some 45 men and officers in July 2020, although this information is still a state secret within China (it took months for Beijing to finally admit four Chinese had died in the brawl with Indian troops).

On May 6, *China Tibet Net* published pictures of the Lhoka (Shannan) Martyrs' Cemetery. This sub-district of the Tibet Military Region (TMD) faces the northern borders of Bhutan and the western part of the McMahon Line, north of the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

The article says: "Among the green pines and cypresses is the solemn Shannan Martyrs Cemetery, where are buried [the martyrs] of the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, the Tibetan rebellion, the Sino-Indian border self-defence counter-attack, and the socialist revolution and construction in Tibet."

More than 700 soldiers are said to be buried there.

Tibet's so-called "peaceful liberation" should be read as the invasion of the Roof of the World; the Tibetan "rebellion" is the Tibetan masses' uprising against the occupiers in March 1959 while "the self-defence counter-attack" is the treacherous attack against India in October 1962.

Along with the memorial, "sculptures, manuscripts, pictures, certificates of merit, military medals... all cultural relics, silent and sacred, telling the infinite loyalty and love of revolutionary martyrs to the motherland and people."

Similar memorials can be found in Gar and Tsanda (in Ngari Prefecture (Western Tibet), in Rima (north of Kibithu in Lohit Valley) and of course in Lhasa and Shigatse; the most important one is Kanxiwar Memorial on the Highway 219 (Aksai Chin road) in Xinjiang, which pays homage to the hundreds of Chinese soldiers who lost their life in the battle of Rezang-la in November 1962.

While there is nothing wrong in China honouring its soldiers, it is shocking that Beijing has never returned the remains of Subedar Joginder Singh, Param Vir Chakra, who died in Tibet in November 1962. What happened to Joginder Singh? In the morning of October 20, 1962, a JCO of the Assam Rifles posted at Bumla, north of Tawang, noticed some 1,000 labourers, with digging implements; they came protected by Chinese soldiers. The JCO rushed to inform the nearby platoon of a possible danger.

Nothing happened till 4.30 am on October 23, when suddenly the Chinese started firing with mortars and anti-tank guns to destroy Indian bunkers built south of the international border, and soon 600 Chinese attacked the Assam Rifles post, which was quickly overrun, though after inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

Subedar Joginder Singh of 1 Sikh Regiment was posted a few hundred metres away. According to the official report of the 1962 War: "The enemy attacked the forward platoon position of 'D' Coy [Company] of the Sikhs at the IB [Inspection Bungalow] Ridge, at about 5:00 hrs with the objective of capturing 'Twin Peaks'. As the climb from the bed of the nullah to the platoon position was steep,

the Sikhs were able to inflict heavy casualties to the Chinese, compelling them to retire."

Joginder Singh immediately asked for more ammunition, but by that time the enemy had cut the communications with the company headquarters. Joginder Singh fought like lion, he was badly wounded in the process and then taken prisoner.

The citation for the PVC gave more details: "In this fierce action, the platoon lost half of its men but not the will to fight. Subedar Joginder Singh, despite a wound in the thigh, refused evacuation. His platoon also refused to yield any ground to the enemy. The last wave of the Chinese attack, which was more determined and more forceful, followed next. Now the platoon had very few men left to fight. Subedar Joginder Singh, therefore, manned a light machine gun and killed a large number of enemies. But he could not stem the tide of the enemy advance single-handed."

The Chinese continued advancing with little concern for the casualties."

The report concluded: "While in the enemy's custody he died because of his wound. He was awarded the PVC (posthumously) for his bravery."

Joginder was very badly wounded. When a few days later he arrived at the PoWs' camp near Chongye in central Tibet, Chinese doctors immediately suggested an amputation (he was also suffering from frostbites), which the brave subedar refused; his chances of being promoted to *Subedar-Major*, the senior-most rank for a JCO (junior commissioned officer) would be jeopardised.

The report concluded: 'While in the enemy's custody he [Joginder Singh] died because of his wound. He was awarded the PVC (posthumously) for his bravery.'

The Chinese doctors asked the Indian commanding officers in the camp to try to convince Joginder it was necessary if he wanted to survive. But the Indian officers failed to do so and soon after Joginder passed away. This was sometime in November 1962.

Ironically, it is at Bumla, the place where Joginder fought so well, that the first wounded jawans were repatriated by the Indian Red Cross on December 15.

In his memoirs, one of the COs remembered that on March 23, 1963, the PoWs were informed that Maj. Gurdial Singh of the Rajputs, who was in the camp, was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra. At the same time, they probably heard of the PVC for Joginder Singh.

The officer noted: "On 26 March 1963, the commandant of the camp called us to tell us we were going to be returned to India via the mainland." He further recalled: "Before leaving the PoW camp, we asked the Chinese to take us to the graves of our soldiers who had died in our camp. There were seven of them, including Subedar Joginder Singh, who had been awarded the highest gallantry award, the PVC. We were told by the Chinese that he had refused to have his toes, which were affected by frostbite [and bullet wounds], amputated... He [had] died of gangrene."

Incidentally, a war memorial has recently been constructed to honour the PVC awardee at Bum La; it was inaugurated by Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu, with Joginder's family and Army representatives present. It is a first step in the right direction, but it is time for New Delhi to ask the Chinese government to repatriate to India the mortal remains of the brave Sikh soldier as well as his six other companions still buried in Tibet.

It would only be late justice.

The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

LETTERS

LOCKDOWN

Lockdown is not the solution to Covid-19. We must step up production of vaccines and oxygen for patients. Scientist and scholars or doctors must come forward to save the lives of peoples. It is the responsibility of citizens to save themselves and one another.

M.A. Khan
Hyderabad

VACCINATION CHAOS

The vaccination programme in India is completely flawed and biased. Many people above the age of 45 who got their first dose are left in the lurch without accountability. The CoWIN portal allows booking a vaccination appointment but the government is not in a position to supply vaccine as per demand. The irony is it is not ready to admit or clarify when we will get our second dose. Adding to the confusion, they are suggesting walk-ins for the second dose. Every vaccination centre looks like a mela. Making senior citizens wait in the scorching heat without any social distancing and without any information is ridiculous. Why not give dates and time slots for the second dose?

B. Raghunadha Rao
Hyderabad

BLACK MARKETING

Why are state governments and Centre not able to stop black marketing of health facilities and medications like remdesivir and oxygen supplies? The Supreme Court must step in and order punishment of culprits and send them to jail under non-bailable conditions.

A. Joseph
Hyderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN

DECCAN Chronicle

Increased share for Telangana

NEW DELHI, MAY 12.

Telangana might get a greater share of the States development funds.

This was understood here today after the high level talks the State leaders, Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi, Chief Minister and Mr. J. Chokka Rao, Regional Committee Chairman had with the Prime Minister and the Planning Minister.

The Chief Minister, it is understood, has agreed to the Regional Committee Chairman's plea for the 40 per cent share if it could be provided without sacrificing the needs of the other backward region, Rayalaseema.

Ashwani Kumar



Amid grief as Covid surges, India needs divine mercy!

Driven by a compelling need to unburden an unbearable sense of grief, this article is also a supplication for divine mercy in these calamitous times. It is about the moral impoverishment of an ancient society and wanton abandonment of empathy, that is an essential condition of our coexistence.

Proud citizens of a resurgent nation that seeks a place on the high table of global politics have been reduced to beggary — begging for a gasp of breath, a ventilator, a hospital bed and medicines, a chance to be vaccinated on a non-discriminatory basis, transportation of the sick and the deceased, sources of information for medical relief and, above all, a cylinder of oxygen to buy time in a hope to live, have robbed us of our innate dignity which defines our humanity. The trauma of seeing a loved one slip away gasping for breath while struggling to hold on to life, wanting to live, is a burden too heavy to carry, and I should know, having lost my wife to lung failure. That she did not go due to lack of oxygen seems like a divine benediction today.

And we die a thousand deaths suffering the loss of our soul every time dignity is wounded, when the dead do not find space in cremation grounds, when bodies are piled one upon the other waiting to be cremated even as unending funeral pyres test the boundaries of our grief, when the helpless die in rickshaws, scooters and makeshift ambulances outside hospital gates for want of oxygen or hospitalisation — alone and in the cold without family or friends, when the nearest and dearest ones are forced to turn away or when nurses steal critical drugs to profiteer over human misery. When an elderly patient gives up his bed to save the life of a younger person or when the allocation of a ventilator depends on the age of the patient, we know what we are or have become — a savage society.

How else can we respond to Sahir Ludhianvi's damning interrogatory: "Kahan hain, kahan hain muhafiz khudi ke" (Whither the sentinels of honour), except by way of humble repentance for our moral, political and societal excesses? Living with the thought of dying alone with no one to

hold our hand in the last moments, not able to feel the warmth of those who are integral to our lives... remains a mourning in perpetuity.

Loneliness, as Mother Teresa had reminded us, is about the feeling of being unloved. Thoughts about the futility of human relationships and about the dispensability of those who define us have added to an unprecedented sense of aloneness. Gulzar's poignant verse depicting a decline in human togetherness even in normal times has an added resonance today: "Zindagi yun hai basar tanha, kafil saath aur safar tanha" (Life lived alone, surrounded by a crowd). And now we are compelled to be alone even in death. Hopefully, this will not be the life we want for the generations to come. Wailing mothers, grieving children and the helplessness of marginalised people mock our politics and proclaim a failure of the dignitarian promise of our national charter. Our "raucous" democracy remains enthrallled with electoral triumphs and the vanquishing of political opponents even as the nation's soul is scarred

beyond all recognition. The political parties are complicit in their failure to prevent large gatherings, protest movements or religious congregations — all of which are responsible for the pandemic's massive surge across the country. Our exalted institutions of democracy, including Parliament, the Election Commission and even the Supreme Court, have failed the nation. Despite its celebrated jurisprudence on human rights issues, our highest court's inability to issue binding judicial dictats against the holding of massive electoral rallies during the time of a pandemic is wholly inexplicable considering the indisputable evidence that huge physical gatherings compromise the social distancing norms and the legally enforceable Covid-related protocols. An eloquent newspaper headline about a high court sums up in varying degrees the unintended but failure nevertheless, of our constitutional institutions. It reads: "High court hearing, plea to get ICU bed, man dies in wait". (*Indian Express*, May 1)

Clearly, in matters of life and death, judicial inaction cannot be passed off as

The writer is a former Union law minister

quick BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	48,690.80	-0.96
Nifty 50	14,696.50	-1.04
S&P 500*	4,103.24	-1.18
Dollar (₹)	73.42	-0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.78	-0.12
Euro (₹)	89.10	0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,074	229 0.48
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.54	1.44
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.010	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.668	0.044

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Nod for ₹18,100 cr PLI scheme for battery storage

New Delhi: The government approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for promoting battery storage at an estimated outlay of Rs 18,100 crore. With the objective to promote the 'Make in India' initiative, the National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage is expected to attract investment of Rs 45,000 crore, information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said.

EU economy to expand, bouncing back from slump



Brussels: The European Union economy is set to bounce back this year after the deep Coronavirus recession and member states are forecast to have recouped the ground that they had lost by the end of next year. In its latest forecast, the EU's executive commission said that growth in the 27-nation bloc is predicted to expand by 4.2% this year, a significant uptick from a February prediction of 3.7%.

\$376 mn outflow in India-focussed offshore, ETFs

New Delhi: India-focused offshore funds and exchange-traded funds (ETFs) witnessed a net outflow of \$376 million in three months ended March 2021, making it the twelfth consecutive quarter of withdrawal, according to a Morningstar report released on Wednesday. This was markedly lower than the net outflows of USD 986 million registered during the quarter ended December 2020.

SoftBank sets record with \$17.7bn profit

Tokyo: SoftBank Group Corp. reported a \$17.7 billion fourth-quarter profit, setting a new record for Japan thanks to an unprecedented windfall from its investment business. The net income was 1.93 trillion yen in the three months ended March 31, according to a filing by SoftBank on Wednesday. That's the highest ever for a listed Japanese company in any quarter dating back to 1990.



Food basket inflation at 2%; manufacturing surges

Inflation eases, IIP up

FC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

With the easing of food prices, India's retail inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index or CPI, slowed to 4.29 per cent in April 2021, while industrial output, measured by the Index of Industrial Production or IIP, grew 22.4 per cent in March 2021 as compared to 16.7 per cent in the same period a year-ago, government data showed on Wednesday.

The CPI data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, however, showed that inflation in the food basket was 2.02 per cent in April, down from 4.87 per cent in the preceding month. The consumer retail inflation was predicted to cool to 4.2 per cent in April, just above



the RBI's 4 per cent target and down from March's four-month high of 5.52 per cent, according to a Reuters poll which was taken over the past week.

Meanwhile, the industrial output, or IIP, on the whole grew 22.4 per cent in March 2021 as compared to 16.7 per cent in the same period a year-ago. Despite the massive spread of Covid-19 across

the country in its second wave, industrial activities were not hampered to a great extent.

A separate data, released by the National Statistics Office, also showed that the manufacturing sector output surged 25.8 per cent in March 2021. "Besides, mining output too climbed 6.1 per cent and power generation increased by 22.5 per cent in March. The IIP had shrunk by 18.7 per cent in March 2020," it showed.

As per the data, during 2020-21, the IIP contracted 8.6 per cent compared to 0.8 per cent contraction in 2019-20. Industrial production has been hit due to the Covid-19 pandemic since March last year when it contracted by 18.7 per cent.

The IIP had registered a growth of 5.2 per cent in February last year.

IEA SAYS OIL GLUT GONE EVEN AS DEMAND FORECAST CUT ON INDIA

GRANT SMITH
MAY 12

The International Energy Agency said the supply glut created by the global pandemic has cleared, even as demand suffers a blow from a resurgence of the virus in India.

Surplus oil inventories in developed nations are now just a small fraction of the levels seen when demand collapsed last year; with output cuts by OPEC and its allies draining the excess, the IEA said on Wednesday. Still, the agency sees a temporary setback for global consumption as infections rock India, before the recovery resumes later in the year.

"Bloated world oil inventories that built up during last year's COVID-19 demand shock have returned to more normal levels," the IEA said in its monthly report. "But India's COVID crisis is a reminder that the outlook for oil demand is mired in uncertainty. Until the pandemic is brought under control, market volatility is likely to persist."

Oil markets have extended their recovery as fuel consumption roars back in China and the US, buoying crude prices to about US\$69 a barrel in London. — Bloomberg

U.S. REVERSES TRUMP JAB, REMOVES XIAOMI FROM BLACKLIST

May 12: The US Defence Department will remove China's Xiaomi Corp from a government blacklist, a court filing showed, marking a reversal by the Biden administration of one of Donald Trump's last jabs at Beijing before exiting office.

The court filing said the company and the US government would agree to resolve their ongoing litigation, bringing to an end a brief and controversial spat between the hardware company and Washington that had further soured Sino-US ties.

A Xiaomi spokeswoman said the company is watching the latest developments closely, without elaborating.

Shares in the company jumped over 6 per cent in Hong Kong as news of the decision spread. The company's share price has tumbled roughly 20 per cent since it was placed on the blacklist in January in the waning days of the Trump administration.

The defence department did not immediately comment. A justice department spokeswoman declined to comment.

The department had designated the firm as having ties to China's military and placed it on a list that would restrict US investment in the company.

Xiaomi went on the offensive by filing a lawsuit against the US government, calling its placement "unlawful and unconstitutional" and denying any ties to China's military. — Reuters

Job postings decline yearly, sequential fall

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 12

Amid the second wave of the pandemic, online job postings saw a decline in April, both against March 2021 as well as lockdown-hit April 2020.

The employment index saw a decline in job posting activity in April 2021 compared to the previous month by 3 per cent. Overall job postings have declined by 4 per cent year-on-year in April 2021 compared to April 2020, Monster.com said.

The job postings for entry-level roles have declined by 5 per cent month-on-month in April 2021 against March 2021. The decline in postings is due to the onset of the second wave of the pandemic leading to lockdowns, Monster.com reported.

Industries that exhibited the highest decline in job postings compared to the previous month include engineering, cement, construction, iron and steel, which declined 15 per cent, retail 14 per cent, FMCG, food and packaged food 12 per cent and logistics, courier/ freight/ transportation 12 per cent.

Meanwhile, industries such as travel and tourism declined 52 per cent, education 34 per cent, engineering, cement, construction, iron/ steel 26 per cent as of April 2021 compared to April 2020.

Online job postings in Delhi were down 1 per cent and Mumbai 2 per cent in April compared to March. Cities like Baroda



with a 10 per cent decline and Jaipur with 5 per cent have been the most impacted sequentially.

However, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai reported significant increase in the number of job postings year-on-year and marginal growth month-on-month. Agro-based industries, chemicals/ plastic/ rubber, paints, fertilizer/ pesticides and printing/ packaging recorded good growth over April 2020. Software and hardware, telecom and shipping and marine too saw growth in April.

"The second wave of the pandemic and various intensities of lockdowns across the country have impacted hiring activity. However, hiring activity in cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai indicate a positive uptick, and year-on-year growth across certain sectors and functions have been witnessed. These are positive indicators that we are better equipped to face the impact this year compared to April 2020," said Sekhar Garisa, CEO of Monster.com.

FMCG industry grows record 9.4%

New Delhi, May 12: The Indian FMCG industry has recorded a 9.4 per cent growth in the January-March quarter of 2021, helped by a consumption-led growth and value growth by increased prices of products, especially of staples, said data analytics firm Nielsen.

The rural market continued to perform with strong growth of 14.6 per cent during the period and the metro markets have registered a positive growth after two quarters.

Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry sales growth from the tra-

ditional trade channels jumped to double digits, while growth in e-commerce normalised down to single digits in the January-March quarter.

"FMCG industry in India has built growth momentum by growing at 9.4 per cent in the quarter ending March 2021 after growing at 7.3 per cent in the previous quarter (October-December 2020), over the same quarter of the previous year," said FMCG Snapshot for Q1 2021 released by NielsenIQ's Retail Intelligence team.

NielsenIQ South Asia

Lead Diptanshu Ray said: "This is backed up by staples, essential non-foods and indulgence categories." He cautioned that the beginning of the second quarter may bring some new dimensions, as the situation is dynamic.

"Now that lockdowns have resurfaced, and with last-mile delivery boost up, the e-commerce channel will continue to be dynamic," it said.

According to the report, metros have registered a growth of 2.2 per cent in the January-March quarter after two-quarters of decline. — PTI

New Covid-19 lockdowns hit vehicle sales: Siam

MICHAEL GONSALVES
PUNE, MAY 12

The Covid-19 pandemic induced partial lockdown in several states hit sales of cars, SUVs, vans, bikes and scooters during April as showrooms remained shut while those open wore a deserted look.

On Wednesday the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers or Siam said passenger vehicles sales in April fell 10 per cent at 2,61,633 units compared with 2,90,939 units sold in March 2021. No year-on-year comparison

data is available due to total national lockdown in April 2020 which led to zero sales in that month.

Sales of two-wheelers also fell 33 per cent last month at 9,95,097 compared with 14,96,806 units sold in March.

While sales of three-wheelers dropped 57 per cent at 13,728 units, the all categories of vehicles plunged 30 per cent at 12,70,458 units.

While showrooms remain shut in most parts of the country, automakers have been forced to advance their maintenance

shutdown by a month to May due to a number of business disruptions.

Maruti Suzuki, Hero MotoCorp, Honda Cars, Honda Motorcycles and Scooter, Toyota Kirloskar, MG Motor, Yamaha and Mahindra & Mahindra announced temporary plant closures. Other companies like Tata Motors are rationalising output as per demand.

Since retail off-take has been impacted, automakers are trying to avoid a pile of inventory by cutting back on production.

The lockdown has hit the supply chain involving component supplies.

"Supply chain related production challenges continue with the lockdown restrictions in many parts of the country. The demand has been clearly impacted by the second wave of Covid-19, both in terms of low consumer sentiments and closure of dealerships due to lockdown restrictions," Rajesh Menon, Director General at Siam, said.

On May 10, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association or

FADA also reported lower sales during April based on the vehicle registration data sourced from the regional transport offices.

When compared to the previous month of March, FADA said in April 2021 total vehicle registrations were down 28.15 per cent at 11,85,374 units versus 16,49,678 units.

Passenger vehicle registrations were down 25.33 per cent at 2,08,883 units in April, as against 2,79,745 units in March this year, while those of 2W declined by 27.63 per cent at 8,65,134 units, as against

11,95,445 in the previous month, it pointed out.

Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, UP, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Goa are some of the states that have announced full lockdowns, putting automotive sales in the non-essential category. "The first nine days of May have seen extremely lean sales due to lockdown announced by a majority of states. Even where dealerships are open, the walk-ins have dropped to 30 per cent and customers are delaying their decision," FADA said.

DIIs stake in Nifty 500 at 14.3%

Mumbai, May 12: As foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have increased their holding in the domestic stocks, domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have been net sellers, and their stake in Nifty-500 stocks declined to a seven-quarter low of 14.3 per cent in the March 2021 quarter, shows a brokerage analysis.

On an annualised basis, the overall FPI ownership in Nifty-500 stocks rose 160 bps to 22.3 per cent in the March quarter from 20.7 per cent in March 2020, while that of DIIs

declined 50 bps to 14.2 per cent from 14.7 per cent in March 2020.

On a quarterly basis, the same FPIs saw a 20 bps decline from the December 2020 quarter, and DIIs witnessed decline by 10 bps, show data from domestic brokerage Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

In the March quarter, while foreign portfolio investors pumped \$7.3 billion into domestic equities, domestic institutional funds saw a net outflow of \$3.2 billion. It indicates that vastly divergent

sequential trends are seen between FPI and DII purchases of equities, it said.

While FPIs increased weights in two-thirds of the sectors (telecom, metals, consumer durables, realty, and cement), DIIs trimmed weights on these sectors in particular and the overall market in general between the December and March quarters.

The overall FPI ownership in Nifty-500 grew 160 bps year-on-year to 22.3 per cent while DII holdings were down 50 bps down year-on-year to 14.3 per cent, — PTI

PALM OIL'S RISE TO HAVE WIDE IMPACT

May 12: The meteoric rise in palm oil prices to record levels is poised to inflate costs for everyone from restaurants to confectionery and cosmetic manufacturers, and could potentially change consumption patterns.

The world's most consumed edible oil is found in products as diverse as chocolate, pastries, soaps, lipstick and biofuel, and is widely used in Asian restaurants. The tropical oil has surged more than 120% in the past year and burst through 4,500 ringgit (\$1,091) a tonne to a record on Wednesday.

"The rise in prices to all-

time highs is bound to affect consumer habits," said Gnanasekar Thiagarajan, head of trading and hedging strategies at Kaleesuwari Intercontinental. "Consumption is expected to go down, and if this uptrend in prices is maintained, there could be a shift in food habits that could altogether change food preferences."

The world's top importer is India followed by China, and the largest producer and user is Indonesia. In Europe and the US, the oil faces headwinds over concerns that its cultivation causes deforestation. — Bloomberg

GOOD TIMES

Once-in-a-decade opportunity sees new highs; BSE IT Index rises 101%

IT, metal, small-cap focused funds top MFs' harvest

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 12

The last one-year period has brought bumper returns for mutual fund investors, that is seen once in a decade.

No less than 14 schemes have returned more than 100 per cent during the last one year period. Even the largest funds managed by HDFC Mutual Fund and ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund falling in the safer hybrid category balanced advantage fund have generated 40 to 60 per cent returns compared to around 60 per cent returns given by almost all large cap equity

funds. Mid-cap equity funds return range between 59 and 78 per cent while the small-cap equity funds have turned the table this year with 80-100 per cent or more in return for most of the funds in the sub-category.

Said Ravi Singhal, vice chairman, GCL Securities, "Such opportunities come once in ten years. After the 2008 financial crisis, select mutual funds had displayed similar performance in 2009. Otherwise, in general, one should not expect more than 15-20 per cent yearly return from the stock market and equity-orient-



ed mutual funds."

"The BSE IT index has given a 101 per cent return in the last one year. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, IT stocks were investors choice, as these companies are getting mammoth deals. Owing to

reasons such as an increase in the Work From Home (WFH), change in business tactics, use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), cloud, online advertising and social media, increase in internet consumption and many more, the IT sector remained an outperformer. Looking at these factors, IT stocks will remain agile during the pandemic," Singhal said.

The BSE Metal Index has given an outstanding return of 182 per cent in last one-year period.

"Due to the low-interest rates, metal demand has increased significantly across the world. As per

recent data, home sales in the USA have remained the highest since 2007. Moreover, rising housing and infrastructure demand in China will further augment the metal demand. These factors are helping the metal sector to outdo this excellent performance for one more year," Singhal said.

Small cap companies have displayed fairly good performance, the BSE small cap index return was at 99.51 per cent in the last one year.

"Due to the COVID-19 challenge, a limitation in boundaries is helping the small cap companies. Owing to a new taxation

system, small companies are finding it easier to fight with large companies. On account of fewer imports from China due to the cold war situation and border tussles, small cap companies are immensely benefiting," Singhal said.

The IT sector funds with over 100 per cent return as on April 27, include ICICI Prudential Technology Fund (154%), Tata Digital India Fund (113%), Aditya Birla Sun Life Digital India Fund (113%).

The small-cap funds include Quant Small Cap Fund (175%), Kotak Small-cap Fund (114%), Nippon India Small-cap Fund (102%).

SHORT TAKES

NZ 'keeper Watling to retire after WTC

Wellington: New Zealand wicket-keeper batsman BJ Watling on Wednesday announced that he will end his over-decade-long career in all forms of cricket after the World Test Championship final against India next month. New Zealand will also play two Tests against hosts England before the WTC final against India in Southampton from June 18. The 35-year-old has been a stalwart of the Test side since debuting in 2009 as an opener, going on to establish himself as a world-class keeper-batsman and claiming numerous records in his 73 Tests to date. The Northern Districts gloveman had been pondering his options for a while. "It's the right time," said Watling. The announcement of Watling's retirement was also expedited by his expected omission from the player contracts list. — PTI

Perera appointed Sri Lanka skipper

Colombo: Wicketkeeper-batsman Kusal Perera was on Wednesday named Sri Lanka's ODI captain with Kusal Mendis as his deputy for the away series against Bangladesh this month. Perera, who has represented Sri Lanka in 101 ODIs, 22 Tests and 47 T20Is, takes over the reins from Dimuth Karunaratne who has been dropped along with Angelo Mathews and Lahiru Thirimanne. — PTI

Squad: Kusal Perera (capt), Kusal Mendis (vice-capt), Danushka Gunathilaka, Dhananjaya Silva, Pathum Nissanka, Dasun Shanaka, Ashen Bandara, Wanindu Hasaranga, Isuru Udana, Akila Dananjaya, Niroshan Dickwella, Dushmantha Chameera, Ramesh Mendis, Asitha Fernando, Lakshan Sandakan, Chamika Karunaratne, Binura Fernando, Shiran Fernando.

Need competitions before Oly: Neeraj

Mumbai: The training has gone along just fine but Olympic-bound star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Wednesday said he is desperate for some competition ahead of the Tokyo Games given that two years have simply been "wasted" because of injury and the Covid-19 pandemic. The 23-year-old, who is being seen as a strong medal hope in Tokyo, said he has been coordinating with the Sports Authority of India to get some competition exposure. "I am trying to give my 100 per cent in training and have been training as I used to do before. The focus on training is good and it is happening well. But I am in need of competitions and we are trying for it," he said. "It has been over two years that I haven't played international competitions," added Neeraj. — PTI

RP Singh loses his father to Covid-19

New Delhi: Former India cricketer Rudra Pratap Singh lost his father to Covid-19 on Wednesday. The 35-year-old left-arm pacer from Uttar Pradesh informed about the death of his father Shiv Prasad Singh on twitter. "It is with deepest grief and sadness we inform the passing away of my father, Mr Shiv Prasad Singh. He left for his heavenly abode on 12th May after suffering from Covid. We request you to keep my beloved father in your thoughts and prayers. RIP Papa," he tweeted. RP Singh represented India in 14 Tests, 58 ODIs and 10 T20 Internationals before hanging his boots in September 2018. — PTI

Semenya held for reckless driving

Cape Town: Olympic champion Caster Semenya was sentenced to 50 hours of community service for speeding while driving in South Africa, prosecutors said on Wednesday. The runner was arrested last Thursday and released on \$35 bail, the National Prosecuting Authority said in a statement. Semenya appeared in court in the capital, Pretoria, on Friday and pleaded guilty to the offense, the NPA said. She faces a second court hearing in August when authorities will report back on whether she completed her community service. The 30-year-old Semenya is a two-time Olympic and three-time world champion over 800 meters whose career has been halted by contentious rules regulating the natural level of testosterone in female runners. — AP

ALL-ROUND VALUE

Bowling coach says Shardul has proven himself with the bat too

New Delhi, May 12: India bowling coach Bharat Arun on Wednesday said Shardul Thakur has what it takes to be the fast-bowling all-rounder that the team has needed ever since Hardik Pandya's back injury restricted his role with the ball. Pandya was not included in the Test team for the tour of England as he "was not in a position to bowl", according to the BCCI.

Arun said that while the selectors will have the last word on finding the next set of options, Thakur has certainly made a case for himself.

"It is more of a selectors' job to find them and then we can develop those all-rounders. Shardul has proved he can be an all-rounder. What he did in Australia was fabulous," Arun said.

Pandya last played Test cricket for India in 2018, during the tour of England. He has been battling a back injury since 2019 and recently, during the IPL, also picked up a shoulder niggle.

Arun agreed that finding someone as good as Pandya would be a very tough job.

"I wish you could just wish and develop bowlers like that. Hardik is an outstanding talent, but unfortunately, he had to undergo a back operation and then it's not very easy to come back after that," he said.

"He bowled against England, I thought he did a really good job. But, to sustain that we need to manage him well and build on his strength," he added.

The two-Test old Thakur was mighty impressive in the only longest format game he played in the away series against Australia.

— PTI



A file photo of India bowling coach Bharat Arun (left) with Shardul Thakur.

Dravid picked Aussie brains: Greg

Sydney, May 12: Rahul Dravid picked Australian brains to create a talent identification system better than Australia in India, the legendary Greg Chappell has said, lamenting the current lack of a similar structure in his own country that was "one of the best at developing young players."

"Chappell said that both India and England have

overtaken Australia as the best in recognising young talent and providing them a platform to succeed.

"India have got their act together and that's largely because Rahul Dravid has picked our brains, seen what we're doing and replicated it in India and with their much larger (population) base," told Chappell cricket.com.au.

Dravid is the Director of Cricket Operations at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. He was the head coach of India A and India under-19 cricket teams between 2016 and 2019.

Chappell, one of the finest batsmen to have played the game, cautioned that talented Australian cricketers might find their careers at

crossroads because of the domestic structure.

"Historically, we've been one of the best at developing young players and keeping them in the system, but I think that's changed in the last couple of years. I'm seeing a bunch of young players with great potential who are in limbo. That's unacceptable. We cannot afford to lose one player." — PTI

BARCA TITLE HOPES HANG BY A THREAD

Madrid, May 12: Lionel Messi scored a brilliant volley but Barcelona's title hopes could be over, with a 3-3 draw away at Levante on Tuesday giving Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid the chance to pull away at the top of La Liga.

Another slip could prove decisive given Atletico will move four points clear of Barca with two games left if they can win away at Real Sociedad on Wednesday. Real Madrid will edge two points ahead of Ronald Koeman's side if they win away on Thursday at Granada. There are certainly no guarantees in what has been a frenetic and thrilling title race in recent weeks, with all of Spain's four contenders stumbling down the final stretch. — AFP

UEFA BEGINS LEGAL BATTLE WITH REBELS

Lausanne, May 12: UEFA on Wednesday initiated disciplinary proceedings against Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus, the three clubs yet to renounce the aborted European Super League project.

European football's governing body has appointed disciplinary inspectors to conduct an investigation regarding a potential violation of UEFA rules by the clubs "in connection with the so-called 'Super League' project", it announced.

"Further information regarding this matter will be made available in due course."

UEFA last week said it would take "appropriate action" against the three clubs who still support the proposed Super League, a competition that would guarantee its founding members involvement every season, instead of having to qualify. — AFP



A file photo Saina Nehwal.

Saina, Srikanth to miss Games

New Delhi, May 12: Star Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth's chances of booking berths for Tokyo Olympics are all but over after the world body on Wednesday cancelled the last qualifying event in Singapore due to the coronavirus-related travel restrictions.

The tournament organisers Singapore Badminton Association (SBA) and Badminton World Federation (BWF) jointly agreed to cancel the Singapore Open scheduled for June 1-6.

The Singapore Open, a Super 500 event on the BWF World Tour, was the last tournament offering Race To Tokyo ranking points inside the Olympic qualifying window.

"In the interests of all players, tournament personnel and the local community's health and safety, the event has been cancelled. BWF can confirm the tournament will not be rescheduled," the BWF said in a statement.

"All attempts were made by the organisers and BWF to provide a safe tourna-

ment environment for all participants. However, rising Covid-19 cases globally led to complex challenges in managing inbound travel."

The BWF said it will issue a further statement.

The chances of London Olympics bronze-medallist Saina and Srikanth qualifying for the Olympics had hinged on the Singapore Open after the Malaysian Open (May 25 to 30) was postponed on May 7.

After the postponement of the Malaysian Open, Badminton Association of India (BAI) had reached out to the world body, seeking clarity on the qualification scenario for its shuttlers. With Singapore suspending all flights from Covid-ravaged India, it was always going to be a difficult task for the Indian players, to travel to the country for the last qualifier.

Indian shuttlers who have already made the cut for the Olympics include P. V. Sindhu, B. Sai Praneeth and the men's doubles pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. — PTI

OLYMPICS CANCELLATION DEMANDS GROW LOUDER

Tokyo, May 12: A full-page newspaper ad says Japanese will be "killed by politics" because the government is forcing them to endure the pandemic without vaccines. More than 300,000 people have signed a petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be canceled. And a swimming star has faced pressure to drop out of the games. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, meanwhile, has caused anger and confusion by repeatedly vowing to skeptical lawmakers that the Olympics will be safe, even as some hospitals struggle to find beds for the sick and dying and a state of emergency was extended on Wednesday to more places in Japan.

Public frustration has even targeted Japanese swimming star Rikako Ikee who tweeted recently that she has received messages that "pained her heart" by urging her to oppose the Olympics and not attend.

Meanwhile, Japan plans to vaccinate its Olympic athletes before the Games, a move that would place them ahead of the general population as the government faces pressure over a slow rollout. — AP

TT loses a legend and brave fighter

NEHA SURANA | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 12

The Indian table tennis fraternity on Wednesday expressed shock and sorrow at the demise of Arjuna awardee V. Chandrasekhar. Chandra, as he was fondly called, passed away due to Covid-19-related complications here on Wednesday. He was 63 and is survived by his wife and son.

A three-time national champion, Chandra was a stylish player with a huge fan following during his playing days. As a coach, Chandra played a key role in grooming champions such as S. Raman and G. Sathiyam. His academy in Chennai has produced many a quality player.

Sathiyam, who trained under Chandra for 14 years, said his demise felt like a personal loss. "My family was pretty close to him. I have a lot of memories which I will cherish forever. When I found out he was hospitalised, I kept calling to check on his health. He was fine for a few days but I think things went out of control in the past two days," said Sathiyam.

Veteran paddler Sharath Kamal said the sport had lost a legend. "It's a very



V. Chandrasekhar

tough loss for the fraternity. Had he continued playing, he would have brought more laurels to the country. But what happened to him was really unfortunate," said Sharath.

Chandra's life turned upside down in 1984 after he underwent a botched knee surgery at a private hospital. His brain suffered damage, he lost control over his limbs and spent more than a month in a near-coma state. His valiant legal fight against the hospital made the headlines and he won the lawsuit later.

Raman hailed Chandra as a "fighter". "A multi-talented person before medical negligence reduced him to fight for survival. As a player he fought against the system. Remained a fighter till the very end, battling tooth and nail with Covid," said Raman, who coaches Sathiyam now.



A Manchester City fan celebrates his club's EPL triumph. — AFP

PROLIFICITY!

Manchester City are English champs for 3rd time in 4 seasons

London, May 12: Manchester City were crowned Premier League champions for the third time in four seasons after Manchester United crashed to a 2-1 defeat against Leicester on Tuesday.

Pep Guardiola's side are 10 points clear of second placed United and have wrapped up the title with three games to spare.

In the midst of a gruelling run of three games in five days, United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer effectively handed the title to arch rivals City by picking a weakened team with 10 changes.

With many of City's players watching on television, Luke Thomas' 10th minute volley put Leicester ahead before Mason Greenwood equalised five minutes later.

Caglar Soyuncu's towering header in the 66th minute ensured City could pop the champagne corks for a title party that has seemed inevitable for months.

City were denied the chance to celebrate on Sunday when Chelsea won 2-1 at the Etihad



This has been a season and a Premier League title like no other. This was the hardest one. To come through this season, with all the restrictions and difficulties we've faced, and show the consistency we have is remarkable. It is relentless.

— PEP GUARDIOLA
Manchester City manager

Stadium, while United kept them waiting with a victory at Aston Villa on Sunday.

But the delay was only temporary and City, who also won the League Cup in April, can finally savour a title triumph that is all the sweeter given the obstacles they have overcome this term. "This has been a season and a Premier League title like no other. This was the hardest one," Guardiola said. "We will always remember this season for the way we won. I am so proud to be the manager here and of this group of players."

"They are so special. To come through this season, with all the restrictions and difficulties we've faced, and show the consistency we have is

remarkable. It is relentless," the jubilant City boss added.

Treble-chasing City's seventh top-flight title could be the prelude to an even greater triumph on May 29 when they face English rivals Chelsea in their first ever European Champions League final match.

Drained by the late finish to last season and ill-prepared due to the subsequent lack of a proper pre-season, City were slow out of the blocks.

After a dismal 1-1 draw against lowly West Bromwich Albion in December, City had won just five of their opening 12 Premier League games. It was the worst start to a season of Guardiola's managerial career, prompting the Spaniard in the startling

MOST TITLES (EPL ERA)

Manchester United	13
Chelsea	5
Manchester City	5
Arsenal	3
Blackburn Rovers	1
Leicester City	1
Liverpool	1

admission that he didn't like his team. A coronavirus outbreak in the squad added to Guardiola's problems in December.

Having surrendered the title meekly to Liverpool the previous season, it seemed City were heading for a period of regression. But Guardiola masterminded such a superb recovery that City turned the title race into a procession, giving him three Premier League crowns to go with three La Liga trophies with Barcelona and three at Bayern Munich.

Following the West Brom game, City powered to 21 successive victories in all competitions, a record for an English top-flight club, including a 4-1 rout of Liverpool at Anfield. — AFP