

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | WEDNESDAY 12 | MAY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 36°C
Min: 23°C
Rainfall: 3%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 29
Tithi: Pradhamai
Star: Karthikai
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm
Yamagandam: 7.30 am to 9 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.31 am
Luhar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.19 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 7.40 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.37 PM

SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM

MOONRISE TODAY 6.17 AM

MOONSET TOMORROW 7.58 PM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+3,25,375)	(+3,678)
2,33,17,414	2,53,705

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+29,272)	298
TN: 14,38,509	16,178

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

16,00,84,748

DEATHS

33,24,986

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES

219

uorlometers.info

Docs warn against cow dung ‘therapy’ to boost immunity

Ahmedabad: Doctors in Gujarat have warned against a so-called ‘cow-dung therapy’, saying smearing of cow dung on the body does not give protection against coronavirus but may cause other infections including mucormycosis. A small group of people has been visiting a cow shelter run by Shree Swaminarayan Gurukul Vishwavidyia Prathisthanam (SGVP) here to take the therapy, believing that it increases immunity against COVID-19.

New vaccine blocks novel coronavirus in animal study

London: A new vaccine candidate has proven effective in protecting monkeys and mice from the novel coronavirus and its variants that first emerged in the UK, South Africa and Brazil, as well as related bat coronaviruses that could potentially cause the next pandemic, according to a study.

COUNTER

POINT



People have learned to live with Corona... now, they need to learn to live without oxygen!



CITY | 2

Don’t buy my books, CS tells officials



US accepts Pfizer shot for 12-15 year olds

SPORT | 8

Osaka raises doubts over Olympics



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Glitch in oxygen supply kills 26 patients in Goa

Health minister admits to shortage in supply

Panaji, May 11: Goa health minister Vishwajit Rane on Tuesday said 26 Covid-19 patients died at the state-run Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in the early hours and sought an investigation by the High Court to find out the exact cause.

Mr Rane said these fatalities occurred between 2 am and 6 am “which is a fact”, but remained evasive about the cause.

Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who visited GMCH, said the gap between the “availability of medical oxygen and its supply to Covid-19 wards in the GMCH might have caused some issues for the patients” even as he stressed that there is no scarcity of oxygen supply in the state.

Speaking to reporters, Mr Rane admitted the shortfall in the supply of medical oxygen at the GMCH as of Monday.

“The high court should investigate the reasons behind these deaths. The HC should also intervene and prepare a white paper on oxygen supply to the GMCH, which would help to set the things right,” the health minister said after chief minister’s visit to the GMCH.

He said the medical oxygen requirement of the facility as of Monday was 1,200 jumbo cylinders of which only 400 were supplied.

“If there is a shortfall in the supply of medical oxygen, the discussion should be held about how to bridge that gap,” he said.

Earlier in the day, Mr Sawant, donning a PPE kit, visited Covid-19 wards in the GMCH where he met patients and their relatives. “There are issues over the availability of oxygen in these wards which need to be sorted out,” he said. He announced the setting up of a ward-wise mechanism to ensure a smooth supply of medical oxygen. — *PTI*



A tank with 2.5 tonnes of oxygen arrives at Kanyakumari Medical College Hospital on Tuesday.

— *PTI*

States run out of jabs, plan to float global tenders

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, MAY 11

With state governments running out of both varieties of vaccines and having to either shut down vaccination centres or ration them, several states and Union territories, including Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha, are planning to float global tenders to procure vaccines and ramp up the inoculation drive. Many of them blamed the Centre for the shortage and said that its new policy is forcing states to compete with each to procure vaccines rather than help each other.

The Maharashtra government indicated on Tuesday it would buy vaccines from the global market to cater to its needs. Delhi’s deputy chief minister Manish

Covid numbers dip; test norms revised

VINEETA PANDEY IDC

NEW DELHI, MAY 11

Some respite seems to be in sight from the daily sharp rise in Covid-19 cases as India on Tuesday recorded nearly 3.30 lakh fresh cases – a decline of about 30,000 after nearly two months of tormenting spike. Though 3,876 fatalities were recorded, the recoveries on Tuesday were higher than the new cases. The national posi-

tivity rate at present is 21 per cent and the active caseload has come down to 37.15 lakh.

Given the shortage of testing kits, the Union health minister has issued ‘revised testing strategy’ under which RT-PCR tests will be rationalised. The new policy says RT-PCR testing must not be repeated in any individual who has tested positive once either by RAT or RT-PCR.

Sisodia too said the AAP government will float a global tender for procuring vaccines.

While the Odisha government formed committees

for global e-tendering process, the Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh governments also decided to procure vaccine through global tenders.

Share vaccine formula: Kejri

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, MAY 11

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal also wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over vaccine shortage on Tuesday, saying the Centre should share the vaccine formula of the two manufacturers with other capable pharmaceutical companies to scale up production in the country.

Mr Kejriwal said the entire country can be provided a “safety cover” by allowing more companies to manufacture the vaccines on a war footing ahead of the third wave of the pandemic. He said the Centre can also terminate the monopoly on vaccine production through the patent law.

There are two vaccine makers in the country currently – Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India – which are manufacturing Covaxin and Covishield respectively.

‘Priority to those who got 1st dose’

DC CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, MAY 11

The Centre on Tuesday asked states and UTs to ensure all beneficiaries who have taken the first dose are prioritised for the second doses during the vaccination drives.

The decision came as huge crowds were reported at several places after the government opened vaccination for the 18-plus population.

According to the Centre’s Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy, Covid-19 vaccination is free at government vaccination centres that receive doses from the Centre for eligible population groups comprising healthcare workers, frontline workers and people above the 45 years of age. However, states and private hospitals have to procure vaccines to immunise persons in the age group of 18 to 44 years.

Fruit shops can open till noon

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, MAY 11

The government on Tuesday added fruit vendors to the list of those who are allowed to do business till 12 noon during the 14-day lockdown, imposed in the state to curb the spread of Coronavirus in its second wave.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin who reviewed the implantation of the lockdown with various trade organisations also decided to allow pharmacies selling indigenous medicine to function during the lockdown period.

Another decision was to permit industries to open for a day for maintenance during the lockdown. The government has also decided to set up a 24X7 helpline for sorting out the hitches faced by continuous process industries manufacturing essential items and had been given exemption from the lockdown.

from the Al-Aqsa compound.

By Tuesday morning, Hamas and other Gaza militants had fired more than 200 rockets. That included a barrage of six rockets that targeted Jerusalem, some 100 kilometres away.

It set off air raid sirens throughout Jerusalem, and explosions could be heard in what was believed to be the first time the city had been targeted since a 2014 war.

— *AP*

CM meets law min, A-G on freeing Rajiv case convicts

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR

| DC

CHENNAI, MAY 11

Hopes on the release of the seven people including Perarivalan, who are languishing in jail for 30 years after being convicted in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, revived on Tuesday with Chief Minister M.K. Stalin discussing with advocate-general R. Shanmugasundaram the question of letting them off.

As the news of the meeting at the Chief Minister’s residence, in which law and prisons minister Raghupathy also participated, broke, social media was agog with people expressing the hope that the DMK government would at last do what the previous regime could not.

DMK’s electoral ally MDMK had made the demand on Monday. Thol Thirumavalavan, general secretary of another ally, VCK, also demanded that the DMK government release them.

MDMK general secretary Vaiko wrote to Mr Stalin saying that Perarivalan, Murugan and Santhan were languishing as death-row convicts and that Nalini Ravichandran, Robert Payas and Jayakumar had lost their youthful years in jail.

Vaiko claimed that they had not committed the crime and urged Mr Stalin to ensure their release, pointing to the Supreme Court order to that effect.

The Supreme Court had said in November, 2020, that the delay in taking a call by the Governor Banwarilal Purohit was extraordinary. Soon after that, the DMK and PMK had openly asked the then AIADMK government to put pressure on the Governor to pass the order



Chief Minister M. K. Stalin arrives for oath taking at Kalaivanar Arangam in Chennai on Tuesday .

— *DC*

Appavu unanimous choice for speaker

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, MAY 11

The newly-elected members of the 16th assembly were sworn in on Tuesday by pro-tem Speaker Pitchandi, who presided over the session at the third floor hall of the Kalaivanar Arangam where the House has been meeting after the break out of Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chief Minister was the first to take oath as assembly secretary S.K. Sreenivasan read it out, with the pro-tem Speaker by his side. Mr Stalin took the oath in the name of conscience, and was followed by other ministers, who came to the lectern on

on the release.

The cabinet resolution recommending the release was passed on September 9, 2019, and has been pending with the Government since then.

The Supreme Court raised the question over the delay in the Governor’s

the basis of their seniority in the party. After the ministers, former chief minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami, who is the AIADMK legislative party Leader, took the oath in the name of god. BJP’s legislative party leader Nainar Nagendran, too, took the oath in the name of God. Five members, including ministers S.S. Sivasankar and M. Mathivendan did not take the oath on Tuesday. The ministers, apart from former minister C. Vijayabaskar are reportedly down with Coronavirus infection. The AIADMK members Vaithilingam and Esaki Subbiah, also did not attend the session. ■ **P2**

decision when it heard a mercy plea of Perarivalan, now 46-years-old. His release has been a popular demand in the state for decades, particularly after a police officer who investigated the case suggested that he was prosecuted erroneously. ■ **P2**

WB Guv to fly to violence-hit areas

RAJIB CHOWDHURI IDC

KOLKATA, MAY 11

A day after blaming the Mamata Banerjee government of not arranging his visits to the post-poll violence-hit areas of West Bengal and vowing to go ahead with his plans, Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday said that he would fly in a Border Security Force (BSF) helicopter for his tour, starting with Shitalkuchi

in Coochbehar from May 13. “Governor West Bengal Jagdeep Dhankhar will be leaving Kolkata by BSF helicopter on May 13 to visit post poll unprecedented violence affected areas @MamataOfficial #Sitalkuchi and other places in Coochbehar to connect with sufferers,” he tweeted in the evening.

The North Bengal district topped the list in the Governor’s itinerary as

four BJP workers lost their lives in a volley of attacks allegedly by the Trinamul Congress workers soon after the Assembly election results were announced on May 2. Among the four, two each were killed at Shitalkuchi and Dinhata. Both the assembly seats were also won by the BJP this time.

Significantly the TMC supreme, ordered a criminal investigation department (CID) probe into the killings of four villagers in a shooting by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on April 10.

Though the CID summoned six CISF personnel including two officers to appear at its headquarters for their questioning about the firing, none of them turned up, according to sources. It is now planning to send fresh summons to them.

ED BOOKS CASE AGAINST FORMER MAHA HOME MIN

New Delhi, May 11:The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a criminal case under the anti-money laundering law against former Maharashtra home minister Anil Deshmukh, official sources said on Tuesday.

They said the case registered under sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) has been filed after studying a recent CBI FIR that was filed against Mr Deshmukh.

The central probe agency may now summon Mr Deshmukh for questioning apart from others, they said.

The ED case comes about after the CBI first carried out a preliminary enquiry, followed by filing a regular case, on the orders of the Bombay High Court that asked it to look into the allegations of bribery made against Mr Deshmukh by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Param Bir Singh.

Meanwhile, the Maha Vikas Aghadi allies NCP and Congress the move as the politics of revenge and said the action was aimed at diverting the people’s attention from “failure” of the Modi government in tackling the pandemic. The NCP accused the BJP of trying to defame the state government as well as the party. Maharashtra Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant alleged the ED case reflects the “dangerous politics” being pursued by the Modi government. — *PTI*

Nine children among 22 killed in Israeli air strikes in Gaza

Jerusalem, May 11: Palestinian militants launched dozens of rockets from Gaza and Israel unleashed new air strikes against them early Tuesday, in an escalation triggered by soaring tensions in Jerusalem and days of clashes at an iconic mosque in the holy city.

Twenty-two people, including nine children, were killed in Gaza overnight, most of them in Israeli strikes. More than 700 Palestinians were hurt

in clashes with Israeli security forces in Jerusalem and across the West Bank in 24 hours, including nearly 500 who were treated at hospitals. The Israeli military said six Israeli civilians were hurt by rocket fire Tuesday morning.

This round of violence, like previous ones, was fuelled by conflicting claims over Jerusalem, home to major holy sites of Islam, Judaism and Christianity. The rival national and religious nar-

ratives of Israelis and Palestinians are rooted in the city, making it the emotional core of their long conflict.

One of the flashpoints in the Old City has been the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, the third holiest site of Islam and the holiest site of Judaism. Another driver of Palestinian anger has been the threatened eviction of Palestinian families from homes in an east Jerusalem neighborhood by Israeli settlers.

With dozens of rockets flying into Israel throughout the night, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with top security officials and warned that the fighting could drag on, despite calls for calm from the US, Europe and elsewhere.

Hamas, the militant group ruling the Gaza Strip, fired dozens of rockets Monday evening, setting off air raid sirens as far as Jerusalem. The barrage came after Hamas had given Israel a deadline to withdraw forces



Flares rise after an Israeli forces strike in Gaza City, Tuesday.

— *AP*

OTHER STORIES

Appavu, Pitchandi good choice for speaker, dy speaker

FROM P1

DMK member M. Appavu and Pitchandi became the unanimous choice for speaker and deputy speaker, respectively, as no other nominations were filed during the period allotted for it, between 10 am and 12 noon.

The speaker and the deputy speaker would be sworn in on Wednesday after which the House would adjourn. The next session, which would be the budget session, would begin after a gap of seven to 10 days.

Mr Palaniswami and the AIADMK coordinator O. Panneerselvam, who fought on Monday over the post of leader of the legislative party, sat next to each other on the front row of the opposition bench and were seen exchanging pleasantries.

The Congress, which is the third biggest party in the House, is yet to finalise its leader in the house, though the MLAs came into the assembly as a group.

BJP MLAs met at their party headquarters in T Nagar and left for the session together after meeting their state president L. Murugan.

PMK leader G.K. Mani and other MLAs of the party called on the Chief Minister at his chamber in the assembly.

Hitherto, the Assembly would nominate an additional member belonging to the Anglo-India community. But now that the Centre had abolished the practice, there would be no nomination this time and the House would function with just the 234 elected members.

Arivu's mom pins hope on Stalin

From P1

Perarivalan's mother Arputham Ammal had been waging a fight for the past 30 years against her sons' conviction. When she tweeted a congratulatory message to Mr Stalin on his taking over as Chief Minister, supporters of the cause replied to her saying that her dream would come true under DMK rule.

The popular demand for the release of all the seven persons, including Nalini, had been raised repeatedly as they had already spent 30 long years in jail. Even former chief minister J. Jayalalithaa had assured to let them off.

However, her untimely death led to the issue being put on the backburner by the AIADMK. Even after the government passed the resolution, the Governor did not act on it. The Supreme Court questioning the delay in the decision too did not have an impact on the Governor.

6 held for hacking advocate to death

D C CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, MAY 11

Police arrested six persons in connection with the murder of an advocate Gopi Kannan at Tiruchy on Tuesday.

Police said a six-member gang came in two-wheelers intercepted the advocate Gopi Kannan who is assisting his daughter to learn cycling near his residence at busy Beemanagar in the city on Sunday and attacked him with deadly weapons and fled.

Police formed special teams to nab the culprits.

Preliminary inquiries revealed that the reason behind the murder was said to be retaliation, in which the deceased Gopi Kannan who was a brain behind the murder of Hemand Kumar over the local temple festival dispute, here in 2018.

A case is still pending against the deceased and six others in this regard.



BJP MLAs on the way to the Assembly on Tuesday.

— DC



Salem MLA Edappadi K. Palaniswami outside the Assembly.

— DC

Anti-Sterlite agitators to observe 10-day online fast from today

A ARUL PALANI | DC CHENNAI, MAY 11

In view of the third anniversary of the killing of 13 persons during the anti-Sterlite agitation in Thoothukudi, the rights activists will observe a 10-day-long relay fast from May 12 online in various countries demanding justice for the victims.

The global action against Vedanta is being organised by the Anti-Sterlite People's Movement with solidarity from Tamil Nadu Vanigar Sangangalin Peravai (Federation of Tamil Nadu Merchants Associations), Chennai Climate Action Group, Let India Breathe, Young People for Politics, People's Watch, Human Rights Defenders Alert, Yugma Network, Chennai Solidarity Group and fishermen organisations from Thoothukudi.

Designed for democracy during lockdown, the innovative stay-at-home satyagraha allows people to register online (via JustAction.cc) to observe fast between May 12 to 22 to underscore demands to the new government of Tamil Nadu to prosecute Vedanta, withdraw cases against protestors, expedite enquiries into the human rights violations relating to the police excesses on and after May 22, 2018.

They have demanded the government to shut the plant permanently, prosecute Vedanta and its directors for fraud and violation of environmental

They have demanded the government to shut the plant permanently, prosecute Vedanta and its directors for fraud and violation of environmental laws and identify and take action against police persons responsible for the killings

laws and identify and take action against police persons responsible for the killings. They have also demanded the government to withdraw all cases filed against Thoothukudi residents to cover up the state's collusion with Vedanta and complicity in the violence and demanded the Justice Aruna Jagadeesan committee to examine witnesses online to expedite the probe into the Thoothukudi killings.

"We are convinced that the new government will do whatever is necessary to bring normalcy to Thoothukudi. Despite fraud, pollution, unlicensed operation and causing a massive gas leak, the previous government refused to register even a single case against Vedanta. On the contrary, it opened fire and killed innocent protestors and registered cases against 71 people for demanding a clean air", they said.

"The new Chief Minister M.K. Stalin may

take necessary steps to prosecute Vedanta and its directors for offences under environmental laws and the Indian Penal Code. This would go a long way in comforting the city that had lost 15 lives," they said.

On May 22, 2018, police opened fire on citizens protesting against the Sterlite industry and 13 people, including a 17-year-old girl, were killed and hundreds injured in the violence that followed. Later, the copper smelter was shut down by the state government. However, no policeman had been booked for the deaths, injuries, illegal detention and torture. Designed for democracy during lockdown, the innovative stay-at-home satyagraha allows people to register online (via JustAction.cc) to observe fast between May 12 to 22 to underscore demands.

The activists have appealed to the people to join the fast online in solidarity with the demands of the people of Thoothukudi. The 10-day-long protest culminating in the Global Day of Action aims to expose Vedanta's environmentally and socially irresponsible behaviour in every location it operates.

On 14 May 2021, representatives from Vedanta-impacted communities in Talwandi Sabo, Punjab, Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, and Chingola, Zambia, will speak about Vedanta's environmental and social track record in their communities.



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin takes oath in the Assembly at Kalaivanar Arangam on Tuesday.

— DC

Don't buy my books, chief secy tells officials

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, MAY 11

Chief Secretary V. Iraianbu has urged officials not to buy books authored by him for schools or for presenting them to guests at government functions as long as he continued in the present post.

A prolific writer, apart from being an essayist and motivational speaker, 58-year-old Iraianbu has 102 titles under his name. He has penned books mostly in Tamil and a few in English, touching a wide range of subjects.

He has written on Tamil literature, love, marriage, education, self-respect, happiness, nostalgia, separation, cleanliness, sleep and a plethora of other issues the concern human life.



He has also penned self-help books on subjects like training for the civil services, 'Steps to Super Students' and Management Concepts in Tirukkural, besides on the greatness of 'our identity.'

Not only have his books won many awards, at least 50 scholars have done research into his books and obtained PhD degrees. Some of his own research papers on Tamil literature presented in international meets had earned him

encomiums, too.

In a press release on Tuesday, he said that he wrote those books with the excitement of a child gathering sea shells on the beach as though they were pearls. They were written after office hours and during holidays, based on his knowledge and experience, he clarified.

Now that he held the key position in government, he had issued an order to the School education department not to purchase his books for students since it may be construed that he put pressure on them to buy his titles, he said.

Also he said that there was a government order issued in 2006 recommending the presentation of books instead of bouquets to guests at government functions and added that his books should not be

gifted in such events.

Besides, he warned officials who violate the order and buy books authored by him at government expenses that the money would be recovered from them.

All through his career as an IAS officer, Iraianbu had left his mark at the various jobs he held. When he was the Secretary of Information and Publicity he introduced the system of e-mailing press releases to reporters.

It was when he held the post that the presentation of books instead of bouquets to honour guests at government functions was introduced.

His books are sold through book stores across the State and are also make available in online platforms like Amazon and Flipkart.

Fishers decide not to venture into sea

DC CORRESPONDENT NAGAPATTINAM, MAY 11

There was an overwhelming response towards the fishermen of eight fishing hamlets including Akkaraipettai, Keechan Kuppam and Kallar of Nagapattinam district from the general public, for their decision not to venture into the sea till total lockdown ends in the third week of May.

Realising the gravity of the situation and to support the government in its preventive measures, the fishermen of these fishermen hamlets have decided not to venture into the sea till the lockdown is over and have anchored their boats.

41 contract Covid in remote tribal village in Gudalur

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MAY 11

As many as 41 persons, including 31 tribespeople, tested positive for Covid-19 in a remote tribal hamlet in Gudalur taluk in the Nilgiris border. But, they resisted the efforts of the officials to shift them to nearby hospitals.

It was high drama at Mukkati Soladai tribal hamlet, dominated by the Paniya tribes, near Gudalur on Monday as the health and other officials spent hours to make the tribes understand the severity of the Covid-19 infection and convince them to move to the hospital at Gudalur.

Sources said that a few days ago nearly half-a-dozen residents of Soladai tribal hamlet, who tested positive for Covid-19, mingled with other residents in the hamlet during a cultural gathering

Sources said that a few days ago nearly half-a-dozen residents of Soladai tribal hamlet, who tested positive for Covid-19, mingled with other residents in the hamlet during a cultural gathering. Following this the health department team held a

camp in the hamlet and found 35 more people infected.

When the official teams rushed to the Soladi hamlet on Monday to shift the tribes who tested positive to the hospital, they resisted the move and wanted to be treated at their homes. However, the officials convinced them to shift to the nearby hospital. The tribesmen in this hamlet who generally avoid hospitalisation would treat for any ailments with folk and herbal medicines. This time, they were under the impression that they had contracted severe cold and there is no need for hospitalisation.

Spotted deer found dead near Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 11



A spotted deer was found dead on the Mudichur road in Old Perungalathur on Tuesday morning. Residents of the area noticed the carcass of the deer near a private hospital in the Mudichur road and alerted the Peerkankaranai police and the Forest department.

The local police and the forest department staff visited the spot to establish the exact cause of the

deer's death. It is suspected that the deer have been chased and bitten by dogs as its body bore injuries. Spotted deer or chital (Axis axis) are found abundantly in forests at Guindy, Vandalur and the campus of Madras Christian College.

The Forest department officials sent the carcass of the deer to a Veterinary hospital in the city for an autopsy to know the exact cause of the animal's death.

A case has been registered and an investigation is underway.

HC pulls up civic officials for lethargic attitude in discharging duties

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 11

The Madras high court has pulled up the officials of the Greater Chennai Corporation for their lethargic attitude in discharging their duties properly.

Passing interim orders on a petition filed by D.Stephen, which sought to execute further action pursuant to the stop work notice issued against unauthorised construction put up by two private parties in Nerkundram, a division bench comprising Justices R.Suresh Kumar and P.D.Audikesavalu directed the authorities to file an



action taken report, by giving the details as to what action they have taken from November 16, 2016 till date. Also if no such action has been taken and after November 16, 2016 notice nothing has been moved, then who is responsible for such inaction and whether

any action has been taken on the official concerned or not, also should be spelt out. In this regard, the Executive Engineer concerned of the Chennai corporation shall file an explanatory affidavit before this court on or before June 7, 2021, the bench added.

When the case came up for hearing on May 5, 2021, the standing counsel for the Chennai Corporation sought one day time to file a report regarding action taken with regard to the allegations made by the petitioner against two private parties for unauthorised constructions. Accordingly, on May 6, 2021

the standing counsel filed a report.

After perusing the report, the bench specifically asked the standing counsel as to whether any action has been initiated pursuant to the stop work notice issued on November 16, 2016. However, the standing counsel submitted that official concerned was transferred due to which further action was not taken and very recently, the Engineer concerned died.

The bench said who was the Engineer? When he died? Who was the official concerned who was transferred? Nothing has been stated in the report. Moreover absolutely no rea-

son whatsoever has been stated in the report as to why no further action has been taken pursuant to the Stop Work notice for the past nearly about five years. The various provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act make it abundantly clear the set of procedures to be adopted by the planning authorities like the corporation if any unauthorized construction was noticed. Once stop work notice was issued, the corporation thought that, their job was over, without pursuing anything, as no further follow up action has been taken till date. "Only this kind of lethargic attitude or dealing the issue like this in

cavalier manner by the officials and staff concerned of the planning authorities like the corporation creates so many issues in town planning", the bench added. The bench said though urbanization has become inevitable in this country and every day expansion of urban areas were moving faster, great care must be taken by the planning authorities and whenever this kind of unauthorised constructions were coming up, they must see at the initial stage itself and that should be prevented by using the power which has been conferred on them by virtue of the provisions of the Act. But practically, no

such vigilant and initial actions were taken or executed by the corporation officials or the staff concerned who were working in the planning department and ultimately if the construction was completed to several floors or multi-floor construction was taken place, at one point of time, if it was come to the notice of the public or any person with public concern, who would bring to the notice of the planning authorities like the Corporation. The corporation authorities also as if they have no knowledge of such construction, they will simply issue a stop work notice or lock and seal notice, but no further per-

suasive action would be taken in most of the cases, the bench added.

The bench said this kind of attitude on the part of the corporation has created embarrassment almost everyday before this court, as many number of such litigations to remove such unauthorized constructions were pouring in. "This court though time and again has given very stringent orders and directions, the attitude on the part of the planning authorities does not appear to have changed. This case is one of the classic example for such a situation that we are facing everyday", the bench added.

SHORT TAKES

MUMBAI COP WAZE
NOW DISMISSED
FROM SERVICE

Mumbai, May 11: Suspended Assistant Police Inspector Sachin Waze, arrested by the NIA in the case of an explosives-laden SUV found near industrialist Mukesh Ambani's house and the murder of businessman Mansukh Hiran, was on Tuesday dismissed from police service, an official said. The order terminating Waze's service was issued by Mumbai Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale, said a spokesperson of the city police. A 1990-batch officer of the Maharashtra cadre, Waze (49), also known as an "encounter cop", was suspended after his arrest by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in the SUV-cum-murder case on March 13. "Waze, now lodged in jail, was reinstated in the Mumbai police in June 2020 after being suspended for 16 years in a case related to alleged custodial death of Khwaja Yunus, an accused in the Ghatkopar bomb blast of 2002. Post-reinstatement, he was appointed the head of the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU), an elite branch of the Mumbai Crime Branch. As the CIU head, he was handling a slew of high-profile cases, including the fake TRP case, fake social media followers case, the DC car finance scam and the Ambani security scare case (in which he is now an accused), the official said.

MP REPORTS
SIX FUNGAL
INFECTION CASES

DC CORRESPONDENT
BHOPAL, MAY 11

Madhya Pradesh has reported six black fungus infection cases, a post-Covid-19 development in some patients, in the last 24 hours.

While four people suffering from black fungus infection have been admitted to state government-run Hamidia hospital, called Mucormycosis in medical terms, on each contracting the infection has been admitted to AIIMS, Bhopal and a private hospital here in the last 24 hours.

Doctors in the Hamidia hospital removed an eye of an elderly woman who has recovered from Covid-19 a couple of weeks ago following the fungal infection.

The patient suffered swelling in one of her eyes following the infection and the infected eye was removed in a surgery, head of department of ENT of Hamidia hospital Dr Smriti Soni said.

Doctors in AIIMS, Bhopal removed nine teeth and a part of the upper jaw bone of a man suffering from the infection, in a surgery.

He had recovered from Covid-19 two weeks ago and the infection was detected in his nose last week.

Another patient suffering from the infection has been admitted to a private hospital here. Early detection of infection in a person in the post-Covid-19 situation can be done through nasal endoscopy which helps in removal of fungus easily without harming the patient, experts say.

RAHUL ASKS MODI
TO REMOVE HIS
TINTED GLASSES

New Delhi, May 11: Attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the Covid situation in the country, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said he should remove his rose tinted glasses through which he can see nothing but the Central Vista project.

The Congress has been demanding that the project, including a new Parliament building and a new residence for the prime minister, be dropped and the money be used on improving medical facilities and infrastructure in the country.

"Countless dead bodies flowing in the rivers. Miles of lines in hospitals. Robbed people of their right to life. PM, take off those rose tinted glasses through which nothing is seen except the Central Vista," Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi.

The former Congress president also asked people to join the 'SpeakUpToSaveLives' campaign to strengthen the fight against Covid-19.

and urged them to provide a helping hand to the needy in these distressing times.

Gandhi shared a video of a little over a minute on the shortage of oxygen, ventilators, ICU beds and vaccines and people scrambling to get them.

The Congress has set up a control room at the All India Congress Committee headquarters and Pradesh Congress Committee offices to help people.

Nadda questions Cong
conduct during Covid

■ Saddened by conduct of Congress, only did wrong politics during pandemic, says Nadda in letter to Sonia

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

A day after the Congress Working Committee blamed Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government for mishandling the Covid-19 crisis, BJP president J.P. Nadda, in a letter to Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Tuesday, said he was "saddened but not surprised by the conduct of the Congress during these challenging times" as it "did not do the right thing, instead only did wrong politics" over the global pandemic. In a four-page letter, Mr Nadda said under Mr Modi, "India's fight against Covid is driven by unwavering belief in the principles of science, support to innovation, trust in our Covid warriors and cooperative federalism", while pointing out that the conduct of top Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, "will be remembered for duplicity and pettiness". He also added, though, that there are "certainly a few members of your

(Congress) party who (like several other selfless citizens) are doing commendable work in helping people, (but) their hard work gets eclipsed by the consistent negativity spread by the more senior members of the party". Mr Nadda also accused Congress leaders, including a chief minister, of trying to actively create vaccine hesitancy during the "once-in-a-century" pandemic. Mr Nadda accused the Congress of "misleading people, creating false panic and even contradicting their stands just based on political considerations".

Hitting back over the criticism of his party for holding huge poll rallies in April even as Covid-19 cases surged across the nation and also over the construction of the Central Vista project, Mr Nadda said the Congress leaders too held massive election rallies in Kerala, causing a spike in the Covid cases and were now "grandstanding" about poll rallies elsewhere. Responding to the CWC's

charge of the Modi government abdicating its responsibilities on vaccinations, Mr Nadda alleged there seemed to be a "communication gap between the Congress Party and the states it shared power" as in April, the Congress top brass were seeking decentralisation of vaccinations.

"Even when the second wave was on the rise, your party's leaders were happier being seen at super-spreader political events in North India where there was no regard for masks or social distancing. This is not the era when such information can be erased from public memory," wrote Mr Nadda.

The BJP leader said the Centre had so far distributed 16 crore vaccines to the states and 50 per cent of them were being provided even now free of cost, and asked Mrs Gandhi if the states where her party was in power would also give free jabs to people as those ruled by the BJP and its allies have done. He also said the poor

had been provided with food and DBT (direct benefit transfer) distribution.

Mr Nadda said the Modi government had engaged with all stakeholders, including CMs, in fighting the pandemic, and former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda had also acknowledged that.

On the Congress' allegation about the BJP government mishandling the crisis, Mr Nadda wrote: "There are other aspects that also need greater thought. For instance, the data from February and March would reveal which states had failed to track the rising cases. Why are mortality rates in states such as Punjab so high? These are questions you must ask your own chief ministers."

Defending the ongoing Central Vista project, he said there is a "new trend" in the Congress to put all the blame on this while noting that the need for a new Parliament building had been raised during the tenure of the Congress-led UPA government.



ASI Rakesh Kumar of Delhi police assists in performing the last rites of people at the national capital's Lodhi crematorium amid the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic, in New Delhi, on Tuesday. Kumar, 56, claims he has performed last rites of more than 50 bodies and assisted in the cremation of at least 1,100 bodies at the crematorium, and postponed his daughter's wedding amid this crisis.

—PTI

Congress sets up 5-member
group to evaluate poll debacle

New Delhi, May 11: The Congress on Tuesday set up a five-member group headed by former Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan to evaluate the party's performance in the just-concluded assembly polls, and another team under senior leader Ghulam Nabi Azad Covid to coordinate its Covid-19 relief work.

It comes a day after party chief Sonia Gandhi proposed, at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC), the formation of a group to assess the party's losses in

Kerala, Assam, West Bengal and Puducherry.

"The Congress president has constituted a group to evaluate the results of the recently concluded assembly elections, with immediate effect. Ashok Chavan will be the chairman and other members of the group are Salman Khurshid, Manish Tewari, Vincent H Pala and Jothi Mani," an official statement from AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said. The group will submit its report within two weeks, the communication further said. The Congress

chief had on Monday said the party has to put its house in order by facing reality and drawing lessons from the "serious setbacks". The Congress President on Tuesday also set up another 13-member task force, chaired by senior party member and former Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad for Covid relief work. "Congress President has constituted a Covid-19 Relief Task Force to coordinate the relief activities of the Congress Party with immediate effect.

—PTI

Maha may discontinue vax for 18-44 age group

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MAY 11

Facing acute scarcity of Covid vaccines, the Maharashtra Government has decided to suspend the vaccination drive for the 18-44 age group temporarily. The vaccines procured for this age group will now be used for giving second dose to 45 plus beneficiaries.

"There is a dearth of vaccines due to which we are considering holding off the vaccination drive temporarily for the 18-44 age group. So we will be giving vaccines right now only to 45-plus people. Administering the second

ond dose is a priority now," said State Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Tuesday.

The decision has been taken in the wake of the inadequate supply of vaccines for 45-plus beneficiaries by the Union Government. Efficacy of the vaccine is largely affected if the second dose is not administered within the stipulated time period, he added.

According to Mr Tope, nearly five lakh 45-plus people in Maharashtra are awaiting the second dose of Covaxin vaccine. However, presently there are only 35,000 doses of Covaxin avail-

● **THERE IS** a dearth of vaccines due to which we are considering holding off the vaccination drive temporarily for the 18-44 age group. So we will be giving vaccines right now only to 45-plus people. Administering the second

able in the state. Besides, the State Government had procured 2.75 lakh Covaxin doses for the 18-44 age group. All these doses will now be used only for giving second dose to 45-plus beneficiaries.

The instructions have been

dose is a priority now," said State Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Tuesday.

● **MAHARASHTRA TOPS** the Covid vaccination drive in the country with the highest number of 1.84 crore doses administered so far.

issued accordingly to all the vaccination centres in the state. For this, we will have to slow down the vaccination drive for the 18-44 age group. A discussion has been held with Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray and a final deci-

sion will be taken after holding talks with the Task Force, said the minister.

Maharashtra tops the Covid vaccination drive in the country with the highest number of 1.84 crore doses administered so far. The state has also continued to witness a decline in its daily Covid cases in recent days.

On Tuesday, it registered 40,956 cases new cases, taking the number of active cases to 5,58,996, whereas 71,966 patients were discharged. Besides, 793 deaths were registered in the day, taking the death toll to 77,191. The recovery rate in the state is 87.67 per cent.



People violating social distancing norms and other Covid-19 protocols at Charminar in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

—PTI

Assistant registrar
of IIT-Kanpur
commits suicide

Kanpur (UP), May 11: The assistant registrar of the IIT here allegedly committed suicide at his official residence on the institute campus on Tuesday, police said. The body of Surajit Das (40) was found hanging in his room at his official Type-III accommodation on the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) campus, Commissioner of Police Asim Arun said. Prima facie it appears to be a case of suicide, he added.

A probe has been launched to explore all possible angles, officials said, adding that no suicide note has been found. Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), West Sanjiv Suman said Das, who hailed from Assam, was working in the office of dean of faculty affairs. He was stated to be fighting depression for long and was taking medicines for 10 years, the officer said. Das slipped into severe depression after his 18-month-old youngest son tested positive for COVID-19 recently, he added. Das allegedly hanged himself with a rope early in the morning. His wife, Bulbul, found him hanging after she woke up in the morning. The neighbours alerted the securitymen, who took Das to a hospital, where the doctors declared him brought dead.

—PTI

—PTI

12-yr-old boy killed
in grenade blast

Tinsukia (Assam), May 11 : A 12-year-old boy was on Tuesday killed in a grenade blast, which was suspected to have been triggered when security forces "mistakenly dropped" the explosive, in Tinsukia district of Assam, a senior police officer said.

The victim, identified as Sujoy Hajong, was riding a bicycle when he found a grenade lying on the road at Hajong village in Jagun police station area of the district, he said.

—PTI

Modi talks to
Bhutanese
counterpart

New Delhi, May 11 : Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with his Bhutanese counterpart Lotay Tshering on Tuesday as the two leaders noted that the coronavirus crisis has further highlighted the special friendship between the two countries. The Bhutanese prime minister expressed solidarity with the government and the people of India in their efforts against the recent wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Modi conveyed his sincere thanks to the people and the government of Bhutan for their good wishes and support, it added. "Discussed the pandemic situation with my friend Lyonchen @PMBhutan, and conveyed appreciation for the solidarity and prayers expressed by the leaders and people of Bhutan.

—PTI

EXPERTS | SAY

Dreze points relief measures are not even being discussed like last year

‘India heading towards serious livelihood crisis’

New Delhi, May 11: India might be heading towards a "serious livelihood crisis" as the situation seems to be worse this time for the working class amid the Covid crisis and local restrictions by states already add up to something close to a nationwide lockdown, according to noted economist Jean Dreze.

In an interview, he also said the government's target to make India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 was never a "feasible target" and was just to pan-

der to the "super-power ambitions" of the Indian elite.

About the impact of the second wave of Covid on the Indian economy, the eminent economist said the situation today is not very different from what it was around this time last year as far as working people are concerned.

"The economic consequences of local lockdowns may not be as destructive as those of a national lockdown. But in some respects, things are worse this time for the

working class," he opined.

Further, the eminent economist said the fear of infection is more widespread and that will make it hard to revive economic activity.

"Despite mass vaccination, there is a serious possibility that intermittent crises will continue for a long time, perhaps years.

"Compared with last year, many people have depleted savings and large

debts. Those who borrowed their way through last year's crisis may not

be able to do it again this time," he observed.

Dreze also pointed out that last year there was a relief package and today relief measures are not even being discussed.

"On top of all this, local lockdowns may give way to a national lockdown relatively soon. In fact, they already add up to something close to a country-wide lockdown.

"In short, we are heading towards a serious livelihood crisis," he said.

On how the government could have missed seeing

the second Covid-19 wave coming, Dreze said the Indian government has been in denial all along.

"Remember, the government refused to admit about any 'community transmission' of Covid for a long time, even as recorded cases were counted in millions.

"When an early analysis of official data exposed the collapse of health services, the government retracted the data," he said. He pointed out that misleading statistics have been routinely invoked to

reassure the public that all is well. "Denying a crisis is the surest way to make it worse. We are now paying the price of this complacency".

India has been reporting more than three lakh new Covid cases daily in recent weeks and the death toll due to the infection is also rising. Noting that India is also paying the price of a long history of neglect of the health sector, especially public health, Dreze said nothing is more important than health for the quality of life.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

UZBEKISTAN JAILS ANTI-CORRUPTION BLOGGER

Tashkent: A court in Uzbekistan has sentenced a blogger known for speaking out on corruption to 6.5 years in jail on extortion and libel charges, his lawyer said on Tuesday.

The case of Otabek Sattoriy, a popular video blogger from the southern town of Termez in the Central Asian country, was widely viewed as a test for authorities who according to rights groups have been clamping down on free speech ahead of a leadership election in October.

A court in the southern Surkhondaryo region sentenced Sattoriy to six years and six months in jail on Monday, lawyer Umidbek Davlatov said, calling the verdict “completely unfair” and pledging to appeal.

“We don’t know for the moment on what precise basis the court ruled to send him to jail,” Davlatov said by telephone.

THAILAND SEEKS HUMANITARIAN FIX FOR JAILED SCRIBES

Bangkok: Thailand said on Tuesday it was seeking a “humanitarian” solution for three Myanmar journalists arrested after fleeing across the border to escape a junta crackdown.

The trio’s employer — the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) — and the Thai foreign correspondents’ club urged the authorities not to deport them, warning their lives could be in danger if they returned to the coup-hit country.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, triggering a mass uprising as large swathes of the population take to the streets to demand democracy.

The junta has responded with force — shooting protesters, arresting suspected dissidents in night raids, and targeting journalists and news outlets by shutting them down.

Thai authorities on Tuesday confirmed the arrests, while foreign ministry spokesman Tanee Sangrat said they were seeking a way out of the case.

TEXAS COPS SHOOT MAN FOR FIRING GUN IN HOME

Lancaster (US): Officers in a Dallas suburb fatally shot a man firing a gun in a home on Monday, hours after he was released from a hospital where he had a mental health evaluation.

Officers were dispatched to a home in Lancaster on Sunday night after receiving a report of a man refusing to let a woman leave. They found Kalon J. Horton, 29, who appeared to be intoxicated and in an altered mental state. He was taken to a hospital for evaluation and was later released, according to a police statement.

On Monday, police in the city about 16 miles (26 kilometers) south of downtown Dallas received a shooting report and arrived to find Horton firing a gun in a different home occupied by two children, police stated.

Police Chief Samuel Urbanski said officers confronted and shot Horton, who was later pronounced dead at a hospital. He said the others in the home were not injured. Urbanski said the shooting remained under investigation.

OZ PLANS BIG DEFENCE, SECURITY INVESTMENTS

Canberra: The Australian government released a big-spending economic plan for the next fiscal year on Tuesday that includes hefty investments in defence and national security as relations with China worsen.

The government plans to spend 270 billion Australian dollars (USD 212 billion) over the next decade on upgrading defence capabilities to “promote an open and peaceful Indo-Pacific,” Treasury Department documents say.

This includes A\$747 million (USD 585 million) to upgrade four military training areas in the Northern Territory where U.S. Marines have a temporary base. The government announced in March that it would begin building its own guided missiles in close collaboration with the United States.

The A\$1 billion (USD 784 million) project would produce the first Australian-manufactured missiles since the 1960s.

The government also plans to spend A\$1.3 billion (USD 1.02 billion) over a decade to enhance the ability of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation.

US accepts Pfizer shot for 12-15 year olds

It is a way to protect adolescents before they go back to school; vaccination to begin on Thursday

Washington, May 11: US regulators on Monday expanded the use of Pfizer’s Covid-19 vaccine to children as young as 12, offering a way to protect the nation’s adolescents before they head back to school in the fall and paving the way for them to return to more normal activities. Shots could begin as soon as Thursday, after a federal vaccine advisory committee issues recommendations for using the two-dose vaccine in 12- to 15-year-olds. An announcement is expected Wednesday.

Most Covid-19 vaccines worldwide have been authorised for adults. Pfizer’s vaccine is being used in multiple countries for teens as young as 16, and Canada recently became the first to expand use to 12 and up. Parents, school administrators and public health officials elsewhere have eagerly awaited approval for the shot to be made available to more kids. “This is a watershed moment in our ability to fight back the Covid-19 pandemic,” Dr Bill Gruber, a Pfizer senior vice president who is also a pediatrician, said.

The Food and Drug Administration declared that the Pfizer vaccine is safe and offers strong protection for younger teens based on testing of more than 2,000 US volunteers ages 12 to 15. The agency noted there were no cases of Covid-19 among fully vaccinated adolescents compared with 16 among kids given dummy shots. More intriguing, researchers found the kids developed higher levels of virus-fighting antibodies than earlier studies measured in young adults. The younger teens received the same vaccine dosage as adults and had the same side effects, mostly sore arms and flu-like fever, chills or aches that signal a revved-up immune system, especially after the second dose.

Pfizer’s testing in adolescents “met our rigorous standards,” FDA vaccine chief Dr Peter Marks said.



Queen Elizabeth II reads the Queen’s Speech on the the Sovereigns Throne, as Britain’s Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (right) listens, in the House of Lords chamber, during the State Opening of Parliament at the Houses of Parliament in London on Tuesday, which is taking place with a reduced capacity due to Covid-19 restrictions. — AFP

England, N. Ireland, Scotland record zero Covid-19 deaths

United Kingdom, May 11: England has recorded zero daily Covid deaths for the first time since July, in a situation welcomed by experts who said it reflected the impact of lockdowns and vaccination against the disease.

Monday marked the first time since 30 July last year that no deaths within 28 days of positive Covid test were reported in England, following Monday 3 May’s

report of a single death by the same metric. No deaths were recorded in Scotland or Northern Ireland on Monday. However, four Covid-related deaths were recorded in Wales.

While experts cautioned that the figures were only one measure of Covid-related deaths, and were often affected by time lags in reporting, they said the declining death toll was promising.

“Having a vaccine authorised for a younger population is a critical step in continuing to lessen the immense public health burden caused by the Covid-19 pandemic,” Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech recently requested similar authorisation in the European Union, with other countries to follow.

The latest news is welcomed for US families struggling to decide what activities are safe to resume when the youngest family members remain unvaccinated. “I can’t feel totally comfortable because my boys aren’t vaccinated,” said Carrie Vittitoe, a substitute teacher and freelance writer in Louisville,

Rowland Kao — a professor of epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh who contributes to the Spi-M modelling subgroup of Sage, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies — said the fall in deaths reflected the impact of vaccination. “There is always a higher recording of deaths in the second half of the week ... but overall it is good news,” he said.

— Agencies

Kentucky, who is fully vaccinated, as are her husband and 17-year-old daughter. The FDA decision means her 13-year-old son soon could be eligible, leaving only her 11-year-old son unvaccinated. The family has not yet resumed going to church, and summer vacation will be a road trip.

— AP

CHINA WARNS BANGLA OVER JOINING U.S.-LED QUAD ALLIANCE

Dhaka, May 11: China has warned Bangladesh against joining the US-led Quad alliance, saying that Dhaka’s participation in the anti-Beijing “club” would result in “substantial damage” to bilateral relations.

The unusual warning from Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming came weeks after visiting Chinese Defence Minister Gen. Wei Fenghe emphasised to Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid that Beijing and Dhaka should make joint efforts against powers from outside the region establishing a “military alliance” in South Asia and practising “hegemonism”.

“Obviously it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four (Quad) because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship, Ambassador Li said at a virtual meeting organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh on Monday.

— PTI

Moscow, May 11: At least nine people including eight pupils were killed on Tuesday after two unidentified attackers opened fire at a high school in the central Russian city of Kazan, news agencies reported.

“Eight school children and a teacher were killed,” a source told the *Interfax news agency*. Ten more people were injured.

Spokespersons for police and the emergencies ministry refused to comment. News agencies reported that two unidentified people had carried out the shooting and one, a 17-year-old, had been detained.

Images broadcast on state television from the scene showed dozens of people outside the school building with fire services and police vehicles lining nearby streets.

A source told the *Interfax news agency* that a second shooter had barred himself in on the fourth floor of the building.

The *TASS state news agency*, citing sources in the emergency services,



Ambulances seen at the scene of a shooting at School No. 175 in Kazan, the capital of Russia’s republic of Tatarstan, on Tuesday. — AFP

said that 10 people had been injured and were rushed to hospital.

“I was in class, I first heard an explosion, then gunshots,” TASS quoted a teacher as saying.

The city administration was cited as saying that children were evacuated from the school and that

security had been bolstered at other educational facilities in the city.

Another source cited by the RIA Novosti agency said they had heard an explosion and could see smoke rising from the building.

Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov had

arrived at the scene of the shooting, news agencies reported.

Russia has relatively few school shootings due to normally tight security in education facilities and the difficulty of buying firearms legally, although it is possible to register hunting rifles.

— AFP

S’Pore cannot shut borders: Parliament

Singapore, May 11: Singapore is on a “knife’s edge” with Covid-19 cases that could go either way over the next few weeks, but the country cannot completely shutdown its borders as it is not self-sufficient and need to maintain supply lines and global connections to survive, two senior minister told lawmakers on Tuesday.

Singapore is now reopening its borders gradually to allow safe travel in limited numbers, with the necessary safeguards in place to ensure public health considerations are addressed.

— PTI

HONG KONG NOT TO MANDATE VAX FOR DOMESTIC STAFF

Hong Kong, May 11: Hong Kong officials dropped a plan to mandate foreign domestic workers be vaccinated against the coronavirus, after hearing international criticism the move would be discriminatory.

Most of Hong Kong’s approximately 370,000 domestic workers come from Indonesia and the Philippines, both severely impacted by the pandemic. Hong Kong officials initially proposed the mandate after a foreign domestic worker tested positive for a coronavirus variant in April, with an unknown source of infection. Another worker arriving from the Philippines had also tested positive for a variant.

Those findings prompted the city to order domestic workers to be tested for the virus at the end of April. The plan for mandatory vaccinations was dropped after officials assessed public health needs and the potential legal issues, Hong Kong leader said.

— AP

MAN CHARGED FOR MISUSING COVID LOANS

Irvine (US), May 11: A Southern California man has pleaded not guilty to charges he obtained USD 5 million in federal Coronavirus-relief loans for phony businesses and then used the money for lavish vacations and to buy a Ferrari, Bentley and Lamborghini, prosecutors said on Monday.

Mustafa Qadiri, 38, was arrested last week on suspicion of scheming to defraud the Paycheck Protection Program, which was implemented last year to help small businesses struggling during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Qadiri, of Irvine, pleaded not guilty on Friday to multiple charges including bank fraud, wire fraud, aggravated identity theft, and money laundering, according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Prosecutors said Qadiri submitted fraudulent PPP loan applications to three banks on behalf of four companies that didn’t actually exist.

— AP

Nine killed, 10 injured in high school shooting in Russia

CHANGING CURVE

As per 7th census, nation recorded increase of 5.38% from 2010

Chinese population rises at slow pace

Beijing, May 11: China’s population grew at its slowest pace to reach 1.41178 billion, keeping its status as the world’s most populous country amid official projections that the numbers may decline from next year, leading to labour shortages and a fall in consumption levels, impacting the country’s future economic outlook.

According to the seventh national population census released by the Chinese government on Tuesday, China’s population in all the 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities reached 1.41178 billion up by 5.38 per cent or 72.06 million from 2010. The figures do not include

Hong Kong and Macao. “Data shows that China’s population has maintained slow growth in the past decade,” Ning Jizhe, head of the National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS) told the media here while releasing the census results.

China has conducted a national census every 10 years since the 1990s. The country’s population on the mainland has reached 1.41178 billion, up by 5.38 per cent or 72.06 million from 2010, the latest census data shows. As China faced population decline, India, whose population was pegged around 1.366 billion in 2019 is projected to surpass China as

the world’s most populous country around 2027, according to a

UN report released in June, 2019.

— PTI

THE TAMILNADU HANDLOOM WEAVERS' CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD.,
Co-optex Head Office, "Balasundaram Buildings",
350, Pantheon Road, Egmore Chennai- 600 008.

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

1. Name of the Work and Tender Ref. No. : Supply of Manpower to Co-optex in TamilNadu on Annual rate Contract Basis.

1. Coimbatore (Package-I)-T.No-01/2021-22	2. Cuddalore (Package-II)-T.No-02/2021-22
3. Chennai (Package-III) -T.No-03/2021-22	4. Madurai (Package-IV)-T.No-04/2021-22
5. Salem (Package-V)-T.No-05/2021-22	6. Thanjavur (Package-VI)-T.No-06/2021-22
7. Tirunelveli (Package-VII)-T.No-07/2021-22	8. Vellore. (Package-VIII) -T.No-08/2021-22

2. EMD Rs.50,000/- for each Package

3. Last date and time for Submission of Tender : Package 1 to 4 Up to 3.00 P.M on 26.05.2021
Package 5 to 8 Up to 3.00 P.M on 28.05.2021

4. The Tender document can be downloaded at free of cost from the website
www.cooptex.gov.in/cooptex-corporate/www.tntenders.gov.in
DIPR/ 1529 /TENDER/2021

Chief General Manager

DECCAN Chronicle

12 MAY 2021

Get moving on vaccines as Indian lives do matter

The Union government's contention before the Supreme Court that its vaccine policy was made after several rounds of consultation and discussion with experts, state governments and vaccine manufacturers and hence calls for no judicial "interference" flies in the face of facts that are in the public domain. And the suggestion that the court was making "overzealous, though well-meaning" intervention reflects the government's attempt to play the victim card.

The court is grappling with a question as to why the Union government and the state governments get the vaccines at differential prices with the states paying almost double what the Union government does when the ultimate beneficiaries are the citizens of India. In layman's words, what makes the Centre force the state government to cough up more money to the vaccine manufacturers to inoculate the most productive segment of the population, that is those aged between 18 and 45 years, is the question on hand. That the Centre placed large purchase orders as the reason for cheaper price is hardly convincing as the states, put together, will have to make a similar-sized order.

India claims to host the world's largest vaccine manufacturing unit but the government lost precious time in helping it augment its production facilities to meet the home requirements

The principal scientific advisor to the government has already warned of a third wave of the pandemic, and experts are saying in unison that vaccination is the most effective tool to stop it from wreaking havoc. The US government is planning to lift public health restrictions on July 4 by which date its plans to administer at least one dose to at least 70 per cent of the population. In India, launching the world's largest vaccination programme, the government aimed at inoculating the frontline health workers in the first phase as it is a safeguard against the threat they face at their workplace. A couple of months later, the Election Commission of India ensured that all those officials who were part of the election process in four states and one Union territory were administered two doses of the vaccine. It is more than evident that being vaccinated is a precondition in these times of a devastating pandemic for the people to stay alive and go about earning their daily bread. It is a right available to every person, guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution. The court's efforts must be seen as an attempt to hold the government accountable to the Constitution, which is its mandate, and not as interference.

The government's plea that the current need for vaccination was both "emergent and urgent" does not appear to reflect the whole truth. India claims to host the world's largest vaccine manufacturing unit but the government lost precious time in helping it augment its production facilities to meet the home requirements. While the US government worked closely with manufacturers there and gave them funds in advance, the Serum Institute of India, which manufactures AstraZenaca's Covid-19 vaccine, was waiting for a similar help this April.

A free universal vaccination programme is one of the best tools to remove the threat to life, and hence is a right of every citizen. The government should, instead of questioning the motive of those who question its non-action, get into the action mode. Indian lives matter.

Uncertainty looms in Nepal

The defeat of Nepal Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli in a confidence vote last Monday is reflective of the tenuous political situation in the Himalayan state that can be exploited by China, which has been actively meddling in Nepal's affairs since the last general election in 2017 which brought Mr Oli to power in a power-sharing deal with Pushp Kumar Dahal Prachanda of the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist.

While Mr Oli has lost the confidence of the House, his Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) remains the largest single political formation in the House. It is not considered unlikely that he would seek to manoeuvre various parties in the Pratinidhi Sabha (Lower House) to join him in a coalition under his leadership, although Nepali Congress, the main Opposition party, has rebuffed an approach.

Mr Oli first built up his nationalist credentials by mounting a cartographic coup against India by incorporating changes in the India-Nepal boundary (Kalapani area) through a constitutional amendment that was passed unanimously since no party wished to run the risk of being seen as less than nationalist. This would have pleased Beijing, the other power in contention in Nepal's affairs.

After strengthening his position on the map issue, Mr Oli's power-hunger led him to renege on internal arrangements made with Mr Prachanda to rotate the Prime Minister's post with the CPN (Maoist) leadership. Faced with the prospect of loss of support in the House, he dissolved Parliament with the connivance of President Bidya Kumari Bhandari and called for fresh elections. This unpopular move was thwarted by the Supreme Court. The PM was thus faced with a no-confidence motion.

The fragile internal political situation in land-locked Nepal can render it helpless in dealing with the Covid pandemic, and drive it into the arms of Beijing. New Delhi needs to keep a careful watch on the unstable state of affairs. Negative developments in Nepal have a bearing on India's security.

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KAUSHIK MITTER
Editor

R. MOHAN
Resident Editor

K. SUDHAKAR
Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:
Chennai: SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748

Coimbatore: 77 Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256

Hyderabad: 56, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4. Fax: (040) 27805256

Bengaluru: 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55

Visakhapatnam: Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Roadway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax: (0891) 2755285

Vijayawada: No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/2555287, Fax: (0866) 2555234

Rajahmundry: Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618

Anantapur: Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904

Nellore: Survey No. 527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/82, Telefax (0861) 2348580

Karimnagar: Survey No. 1341, Vavilalappally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878) 2228908; Telefax: (0878) 2220433

Kochi: No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408

Kozhikode: No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001 Fax: 0495 4019018

Thiruvananthapuram: St Joseph Press Thycad post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/6/7, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. HSD-348/2006-088s

Subhani



Amid pandemic, Britain, EU eye India trade deals



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

On the face of it, the time hardly seems propitious for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to reach out to his foreign friends. His ruling Bharatiya Janata Party has suffered electoral setbacks in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh and been reprimanded by the courts. People blame his government for the mix of complacency and inefficiency that aggravated the fearsome second wave of Covid-19. But stricken India desperately needs the emergency medical aid that is pouring in from several richer countries.

Britain is one of them. Prime Minister Boris Johnson needs a treaty with India, especially after Brexit, and also to highlight the failure of his predecessor, Theresa May, to secure one. Undaunted by a series of setbacks, he bubbles that the "Enhanced Trade Partnership" and the "memorandum of understanding on India-UK Migration and Mobility Partnership" that he and Prime Minister Modi had endorsed on May 4 "mark the beginning of a new era in the UK-India relationship".

Britain sees India as an Indo-Pacific partner in the great game of countering China. Britain is also the country with which India interacts most intimately at many levels. As Mr Johnson put it without inquiring too closely into the downside, "a living bridge" unites the two countries. Given that demographic link, British public opinion reacts swiftly and spontaneously to domestic Indian developments like the 1984 Sikh carnage, the Gujarat communal killings in 2002, constitutional changes in the former Jammu and Kashmir state, and the Citizenship Amendment Act.

That is only natural.

Britain's 2011 census recorded 1,451,862 Indian-origin persons, accounting for 2.3 per cent of the population. Migration has long been a contentious issue, and British-Indians are particularly curious about the new deal's provision for employment for 3,000 young Indian professionals annually, in return for New Delhi taking back Indian illegals in Britain.

Identifying and repatriating these illegals is bound to cause friction. If the "noblest prospect" which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!", to quote Samuel Johnson, the flight to Heathrow airport is beaten in attractiveness only by the flight to New York for many aspiring Indians. Very few Indians who go nowadays to a Western country to study ever return to the motherland, with its bleak employment opportunities.

The phenomenon isn't exclusively Indian. A special British scheme to facilitate the import of chefs from Bangladesh for so-called "Indian" restaurants at once attracted floods of Bangladeshis whose only aim was to migrate to the West. The scheme was quickly abandoned.

When migration was discussed during Theresa May's 2016 visit to India, London claimed that as many as 100,000 Indians lived illegally in Britain. New Delhi disputed this figure, throwing in the counter-argument that tens of thousands of young Indians who go to Britain to study are denied job opportunities there. Another charge was that Britain is about the only country in the world that counts post-graduate Indian students staying on for a year or two's practical training as migrants.

Indians felt especially

aggrieved when visa rules for Chinese students were greatly liberalised. One obvious explanation lies in the old saying: "Money talks!" With £8.63 billion in Chinese investment in the UK (with some of them being in public utility undertakings) and around 800 Chinese companies employing 71,000 people in the UK, Beijing could demand concessions. Moreover, Beijing's rigid controls guaranteed that all its students and trainees would sooner or later be recalled. Britain was not afraid of becoming a vast Chinatown.

The repatriation of Indian "illegals" is supposed to facilitate the legal movement of students and professionals and enhance cooperation in addressing illegal migration. But the late and much maligned right-wing British politician, Enoch Powell, was not alone in warning that "rivers of blood" would flow unless non-white immigration was checked. London is so acutely conscious of sensitivity about Commonwealth citizens from Asia and Africa that even Clement Attlee's Labour government back in the 1940s quietly set up a committee to examine how the British Nationality Act of 1948, which granted colonialists the right to enter, live and work in Britain, could be revised without creating a huge uproar.

Apart from a series of agreements on climate change, technology and pharmaceuticals, the Narendra Modi-Boris Johnson negotiations had finalised Indian investment worth £1 billion to create over 6,500 jobs in Britain. The other significant outcome was a commitment by both sides to begin trade talks this year to "negotiate a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement", remove

Mr Johnson probably hopes that Britain will upstage the European Union and sign an FTA with India first

trade barriers, and double bilateral trade by 2030.

The partnership deal will lift all export barriers on goods ranging from British apples to medical devices and open up India's legal services to British firms. In return, Britain agreed to improve access to its fisheries and nursing sectors.

Mr Johnson probably hopes that Britain will upstage the European Union and sign an FTA with India first. Negotiations with the EU, which started in 2007, have been stalled since 2013 but were resumed on May 8 when the 16th India-EU virtual summit was held at Porto, Portugal. India was represented by Mr Modi and the EU by Charles Michel, European Council president, and Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, besides all the 27 member countries. The unsurprising news was that they decided to restart talks on trade, investment protection and geographical indications.

The major sticking points in the India-EU negotiations — tariffs on automobiles, wines and spirits, restrictions the on free movement of professionals, data security status for the IT sector, market access and waiver of patent rights on Covid-related innovations — are important but are not explosive like migration. Ironically, Saturday's summit host, Portugal's Prime Minister Antonio Costa, is an "Overseas Citizen of India."

Many assume that the presence of three ethnic Indians (Rishi Sunak, Priti Patel and Alok Sharma) in important positions in Mr Johnson's Cabinet will make it easier for other immigrants. But it's a worldwide trend for those who have boarded the gravy train diligently to ward off any newcomers. As home secretary, Priti Patel has already acquired a formidable anti-immigrant reputation.

The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author

LETTERS

FACELIFT LIBRARY

It was really unfortunate that the prestigious Anna Centenary Library, built in 2010 during the DMK regime, was neglected by the previous AIADMK government for reasons of political animosity. It is a pity that the state-of-the-art library wasn't upgraded for long, both in terms of functional facilities and procurement of new books, in spite of the fact that reportedly sufficient funds were allotted for the upkeep of the library. Many will know that in 2011, the former and late Chief Minister Jayalalitha decided to convert the ACL into a super speciality paediatric hospital, and shift the library to the DPI campus in Nungambakkam. But, since her decision sparked a widespread outrage from educationalists, writers, students, and all alike, she had no option but to rescind her decision. With DMK having come back to power now, one can certainly look forward to the library getting upgraded soon in every aspect and restored to its original glory.

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

HUGE LOSS

The demise of veteran Communist leader and former Minister K.R. Gowri Amma, signals the end of an eventful epoch in the annals of Kerala politics. The doyen of the Communist movement in Kerala and one of the founding leaders of the CPI(M) in 1964, the late leader who epitomised the principles of simple living, high thinking and wide reading, was the ideal practitioner of the Communist ideology. A towering leader of impeccable integrity who maintained probity in public life, Gowri Amma would be remembered for her unflinching commitment to the ideology she believed in and ability to maintain close rapport with the masses communicating with them as one among them. The late leader established and carved a niche for herself at a time when the entry of women into active politics was unthinkable in a patriarchal and male-dominated society in Kerala during the 1950s.

B. Suresh Kumar,
Coimbatore

Dilip Cherian
Dilli Ka Babu



As deaths rise, Covid deals a body blow to the steel frame

India's fabled "steel frame" only creaking or is it screaming? The coronavirus pandemic surge has devastated big cities including the capital and brought the healthcare system to its knees. India has now been recording the highest number of new coronavirus cases in the world and the death toll is mounting.

The second wave of the pandemic has spared no one, not even the elite administrative services that are charged with oiling the wheels that run the nation. According to sources, more than 100 senior officers, including IAS, IPS, IRS and others, have lost their lives to Covid. The news of the deaths of senior babus including Bihar chief secretary Arun Kumar Singh and three of his 1985 batchmates — former CBI director Ranjit Sinha, former secretary, department of land resources, R. Buhiril and serving director of the panchayati raj department in Bihar and many others — has got the babus rattled.

Further, the president of the UP IAS Association Deepak Trivedi and additional secretary of health in Bihar R.S. Chowdhury too died, both within a week. In recent weeks, nearly two dozen top babus across central government ministries and departments, including the health ministry, have tested positive for the coronavirus.

The severity of the epidemic has hit home. When even the powerful in the land are not safe and anxious about their health and that of their families, they are pushing the panic button. The "System", normally a bulwark against the vicissitudes of fate that often visit upon the citizenry, has collapsed this time. It must be a novel experience for the nation's elite administrators. Clearly, the old trusted "networks" and reliable connections have failed.

Naturally, none of them can say this openly but India's once-fabled "steel frame" has bent and buckled

in the face of the pandemic headwinds. The creaking is audible, even if it actually feels like screaming.

MAMATA BRINGS BACK COPS TRANSFERRED BY EC

After her hard-fought victory in the recently concluded state Assembly elections, West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee is busy setting her house in order. This has primarily meant that she is bringing back a large number of senior IPS officers who had been transferred by the Election Commission during the campaigning. Sources say that within hours of taking oath for the third consecutive time, Didi brought back senior IPS officer Virendra as director general of police. Virendra will be retiring this month. Similarly, Vivek Sahay has been reinstated as director of security.

Sources say that the state government has decided to clean up the mess in police administration and

issued transfer orders to a large number of IPS officers whose role during the election period has been seen as not only doubtful but in violation of norms.

However, the return to "normalcy" may take longer. After reports about the violence that erupted in certain parts of West Bengal after the elections, the ministry of home affairs has deputed a team of top home ministry officials led by an additional secretary-level officer to undertake a fact-finding exercise in the state to assess the "ground situation". This again is likely to set off a fresh round of friction between Didi and the Centre.

EC SPLIT DOWN THE MIDDLE

The Election Commission (EC) is split down the middle over its response to the censure by the Madras high court on its role in conducting elections during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The EC has approached the Supreme Court against the cen-

sure, but its petition was swiftly rejected. One of the panel's counsel has resigned stating that his "values are not in consonance with the EC's".

After Sunil Arora's retirement as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on April 12, the three-member Commission has Sushil Chandra as CEC and Rajiv Kumar as Election Commissioner. The position of the third EC is vacant.

Many remember what happened the last time when there was a schism within the Election Commission. In the 2019 general elections, the then Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa had opposed the clean chit given to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former BJP president Amit Shah on charges of violating the election model code of conduct. We all know how that went.

Share a babu experience! Follow dilipthecherian@Twitter.com. Let's multiply the effect.

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49161.81	-0.69
Nifty 50	14850.80	-0.61
S&P 500*	4,144.59	-1.05
Dollar (₹)	73.34	0.02
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.65	-0.28
Euro (₹)	89.22	-0.003
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,308▼212	0.44
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.32	0.00
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.008	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.616	0.014

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Moody's cuts India growth forecast to 9.3%

Moody's Investors Service slashed India's growth forecast for the current financial year to 9.3 per cent, from the 13.7 per cent projected earlier, on account of the negative impact of the Covid second wave. India is experiencing a severe second wave of coronavirus infections which will slow the near-term economic recovery and could weigh on longer-term growth dynamics, the rating agency said.

Ruchi Soya to acquire biscuits biz from Patanjali



Ruchi Soya Industries announced the acquisition of biscuits business from Patanjali Natural Biscuits Pvt Ltd in a slump sale at ₹60.02 crore. The company, in a regulatory filing, said its board on May 10 approved the signing of a Business Transfer Agreement in this regard with the PNBPL. The acquisition will be completed in the next two months, it added. The sale consideration is payable in two tranches.

HUL to provide 4,000 oxygen concentrators

Hindustan Unilever Ltd said it will provide 4,000 oxygen concentrators to India to address the acute shortage of medical oxygen. Under its Mission HO2PE, HUL will send 4,000 concentrators to the worst affected cities which includes Delhi, Lucknow, Bengaluru, etc, it said. "Patients can avail of this service by calling the Mission HO2PE helpline number and request for oxygen concentrators," it added.

3 private telcos add new users in February

India's largest telecom operator Reliance Jio widened its mobile subscriber base to 414.9 million in February, with healthy addition of 4.2 million users, as it managed a comfortable lead in the market, according to TRAI data. In fact, all three private operators Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea added subscribers during the month, as per Telecom Regulatory Authority of India.



■ New dividend rules for top 1,000 firms

Sebi makes policy on dividend a must

New Delhi, May 11: To strengthen corporate governance practices and disclosure requirements, Sebi has notified new rules, including that top 1,000 listed firms will have to formulate a dividend distribution policy.

The regulator has also put in place a framework in relation to applicability, constitution and role of the Risk Management Committee (RMC) and eased norms for re-classification of a promoter as a public shareholder, according to a notification dated May 5.

In addition, the regulator has asked listed firms to make available audio and video recordings of analyst and investor meets on their websites as well as stock exchanges within 24 hours or before the next trading day and also notified rules regarding Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BSSR).

Sebi has amended Listing of Obligations and Disclosure Requirements (LODR) rules and the new rules have come into effect from May 5.

In a notification, Sebi said the requirement for formulation of dividend distribution policy by the existing top 500 listed entities has been extended to the top 1,000 listed entities on the basis of market capitalisation.

The other listed entities can disclose their dividend distribution policies on a voluntary basis on their websites and provide



a web-link in their annual reports.

In addition, requirement to constitute the RMC has been extended to the top 1,000 listed entities by market capitalisation from the existing top 500 listed entities.

The RMC needs to have a minimum three members with the majority of them being members of the board of directors, including at least one independent director.

The quorum for a meeting of the RMC needs to be either two members or one third of the members of the committee, whichever is higher, including at least one member of the board of directors in attendance.

"The meetings of the RMC shall be conducted in such a manner that on a continuous basis not more than 180 days shall elapse between any two consecutive meetings," as per the notification.

The role of the RMC has been specified which includes formulation of a

detailed risk management policy and monitoring its implementation; periodic review of such policy; review of the appointment, removal and terms of remuneration of the chief risk officer (if any).

Further, the regulator has rationalised the existing framework pertaining to reclassification of promoter/ promoter group entities.

This includes exemption from existing requirements, in cases of reclassification pursuant to an order of the regulator under any law in line with existing exemption already available in cases of resolution plan approved under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.

The exemption has also been provided from the requirement of seeking approval of shareholders in cases where the promoter seeking reclassification holds shareholding of less than one per cent, subject to the promoter not being in control, Sebi said.

PROMOTERS PLEDGED STAKE DIPS TO 1.64% FROM 2.09%

Mumbai, May 11: Faster-than-expected recovery from the pandemic induced disruptions and the resultant improvement in balance sheets in the second half of FY21 have helped India Inc promoters to redeem their pledged shares, according to a brokerage analysis.

The pledged holding of the BSE-500 index shows that the value of pledged promoter holdings as a percentage of promoter holding declined to 1.64 in the March quarter from 2.09 in the December 2020 quarter, according to a Kotak Institutional Equities analysis.

When looked at from a percentage of the overall promoter shareholding and the pledged holding, GMR Infrastructure (72.8), Omace (63.8) and Sterling & Wilson (53.7) were leading the chart. Companies with the highest promoter pledged holdings as of March 2021 include Suzlon Energy (88.5 per cent), Future Consumer (88.4) and Max Financial Services (88.4), GMR Infrastructure (72.8), and Omace (63.8).

Similarly, there was a widespread decline in pledged promoter holdings in almost all the Nifty-50 companies, except for IndusInd Bank where it increased.

However, it has to be kept in mind that pledging of shares does not necessarily imply that a company or a promoter is under financial stress.

—PTI

US duty on jewels to hit jobs in India: Exporters

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 11

The proposed retaliatory import duty of 25 per cent by the US on certain gems and jewellery products imported from India will lead to large scale job losses and shift of business to China and Mexico, pleaded the exporters in a virtual multi-jurisdictional hearing by the United States Trade Representative (USTR).

"The gem and jewellery industry employs over four million people who are from the non-agrarian sector and who are not highly educated but are exceptionally skilled in jewellery making techniques. If businesses become infeasible due to the imposition of this import duty, this will adversely impact jobs and lead to large-scale unemployment," Suvankar Sen of Senco Gold impressed upon the USTR.

The USTR has proposed 25 per cent import duty on certain products, including 17 jewellery items, imported from India in retaliation to the two per cent digital services tax or Google tax levied by the Indian government on non-resident digital companies.

"The perception of injustice would lead to real-life consequences such as loss of jobs and livelihoods and a shift of business to countries such as China and Mexico," said Colin Shah, chairman of Gems and Jewellery Export

Promotion Council.

"The timing could not have been worse for imposing this tariff on Indian jewellery exporters, who are already reeling under the impact of the pandemic," he added.

According to Rajeev Pandya of SEEPZ Gems and Jewelry Manufacturers Association, the withdrawal of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) led to a decline in India's market share by 28 per cent to 22 per cent in 2013 while China's share increased from 18 per cent to 25 per cent. The new proposed duty will have similar consequences, he said.

Recommending a multi-lateral solution, RV Anuradha, Partner, Clarus Law Associates said that pursuing a unilateral action undermines and weakens the Dispute Settlement System under WTO.

Markets tumble on inflation fears

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, MAY 11

Indian equity market corrected after four sessions of gains in line with global market on expected US inflation spike fear and US Fed's monetary policy tightening sooner than later which led to overnight sell off in the technology sector stocks in the US market.

Nasdaq Composite index was down 1.34 per cent on Tuesday night too at the time of going to press

after falling 2.34 per cent on Monday on rising inflation and soaring global commodity prices.

The Sensex closed 340.60 points or 0.69 per cent down at 49,161.81 making a partial recovery from intra-day dip by over 600 points to 48,988.18 and gap down opening at 49,066 on weak global cues.

The Nifty-50 index closed at 14,850.75 down by 91.0 points or 0.61 per cent.

However, the broader market was quite resilient with BSE Mid-cap index

up 0.60 per cent and BSE Small-cap index up 0.80 per cent. PSU stocks were in big demand as BSE PSU index gained 2.44 per cent BSE CPSE index gained 3.16 per cent. "Rising inflation threatens the long-term revenue outlook of tech stocks. The run-up in commodity prices has stoked fears of the US Federal Reserve tightening its monetary policy much sooner than expected," said Deepak Jasani, head of retail research, HDFC Securities.

Amitabh Bachchan can't resist Malkist

May 11: INBISCO India, a subsidiary of global food and beverage giant Mayora, has roped in film industry legend and icon Amitabh Bachchan as its brand ambassador for its flagship brand Malkist.

Headquartered in Hyderabad, INBISCO India offers unique and highly differentiated brands like KOPIKO—candy made with real coffee extracts, Choki Choki, Go Choco Rollz and Wheelz, in the confectionery category, Malkist, Coffee Joy and AttiBix in the biscuits category, and CHAIKO—a candy made with real tea extracts.

The latest ad campaign showcases Mr Bachchan in a series of TV commercials endorsing the brand's new positioning "Malkist Can't Resist". The campaign also features Anikha Surendran who rightly represents the target audience.

The campaign highlights the uniqueness of the cracker, which is made with delicious 14 crunchy layers and innovative toppings.

On his association with the brand Mr. Bachchan



said, "I found the whole concept of Malkist's crunchy layered crackers and cheesy cream topping so unique, that I had to taste it! And since then I really haven't been able to resist it!"

Business NOTE

Achyut Kasireddy, MD, INBISCO India, commented, "Malkist is a much differentiated cracker with each biscuit made out of 7 layers, which makes it very crunchy... The new TVC highlights Malkist's proposition as crunchy crackers with cool toppings, which even Mr. Amitabh Bachchan can't resist!"

FLIPKART TO ADD 5 WAREHOUSES FOR GROCERY BIZ

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 11

In order to strengthen its grocery supply chain infrastructure in the backdrop of lock-downs in several states, Flipkart plans to add over eight lakh square feet of space through five new fulfilment centres over the next three months.

The five new fulfillment centres will come up in Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Coimbatore and Hyderabad. This will enable the company to handle over 73,000 grocery orders per day and provide its customers safe and seamless access to order daily essentials through quick and contactless doorstep delivery. Currently, Flipkart serves close to 64,000 orders a day.

"Our new grocery supply chain infrastructure will help us serve more customers in the country who can order daily essentials seamlessly and avail of contactless delivery. We are also continuously engaging with brand and marketplace partners to ensure stock availability across the country," said Smrithi Ravichandran, vice president, grocery, Flipkart.

HUL's Sudhir to join Godrej as MD

New Delhi, May 11: FMCG major Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) on Tuesday said Sudhir Sitapati will take over as its managing director and CEO in October this year.

Sitapati is presently executive director, foods and refreshments, at Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL).

His appointment would be effective from October 18, 2021, following which Nisaba Godrej, who is currently the chairperson and managing director, will serve as executive chairperson, GCPL said in a regulator filing.

"The Board of Directors at its meeting held today, appointed Sudhir Sitapati as the managing director & CEO of the company for a period of five years with



Sudhir Sitapati

effect from October 18, 2021, subject to the approval of the shareholders in the ensuing Annual General Meeting," it said.

On Monday, HUL had informed that Sitapati is stepping down. Srinandan Sundaram was named as his replacement.

According to the Godrej group firm, the appointment of Sitapati, who has spent 22 years at HUL, will

enable GCPL to leverage his significant experience in building sustainable and profitable businesses to guide the growth strategy going forward.

Last year in June, Vivek Gambhir had stepped down as the MD and CEO of GCPL. Nisaba Godrej, who was then executive chairperson, had assumed additional charge as MD and CEO.

Commenting on the development, Nisaba Godrej said, "I am delighted to be welcoming Sudhir to Godrej. His significant experience and passion for building sustainable and profitable brands and businesses aligns very strongly with our purpose at GCPL. Sudhir's value-based leadership also makes him a great fit with the Godrej culture."

MFIs send SOS to RBI on Covid

New Delhi, May 11: The microfinance industry has sought additional support, including an extension of the emergency credit line, from the Reserve Bank of India to combat the challenges arising out of the second COVID-19 wave.

Sa-Dhan an association of the microfinance sec-

tor, in a letter to the RBI, asked for the Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme 3.0, emergency credit line, special liquidity facility in addition to the recently announced support measures by the central bank.

Just when we were coming out of the effects of the first wave of the pandemic, the second wave

has descended on us with a vengeance.

In view of the fresh challenges brought on by the pandemic, Sa-Dhan executive director P. Satish said MFIs may be supported with an emergency credit line of up to 25 per cent of their outstanding with their lending banks.

—PTI

BAD TIMES

Infection among staff halves Apple phone's production in India

Covid hits Foxconn's iPhone output in India

Bengaluru, May 11: Production of the Apple iPhone 12 at a Foxconn factory in India has slumped by more than 50 per cent because workers infected with Covid-19 have had to leave their posts, two sources told Reuters.

The Foxconn facility in the southern state of Tamil Nadu produces iPhones specifically for India, the world's No.2 smartphone market.

Tamil Nadu is one of the worst hit states in the second coronavirus wave engulfing India. Officials imposed a full lockdown in the state from Monday, closing public transport and shuttering shops, to try slow surging infections.

More than 100 Foxconn employees in the state have tested positive for Covid-19 and the company has enforced a no-entry ban at its factory in the capital of Chennai until late May, one of the sources said.



"Employees are only allowed to leave but not to enter the facility since yesterday," the person said. "Only a small part of output is being kept."

More than 50 per cent of the plant's capacity had been cut, both sources said, declining to be named as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

"They did not specify the plant's capacity and it was unclear how many workers were at the facility, which provides dormitory accommodation for employees.

Taipei-based Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics maker and a major supplier to Apple, said a small number of employees at one of its facilities in India tested positive for Covid-19 and the company was providing them with support, including medical assistance.

"Foxconn places the health and safety of our employees as our highest priority and that is why

we have been working closely with local government and public health authorities in India to address the challenges that we and all companies are facing in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis," it said in a statement to Reuters.

Foxconn's shares fell as much as 6.2 per cent after the Reuters report. The stock closed down 5.31 per cent, outpacing a 3.8 per cent fall in the broader market on concerns about rising Covid-19 cases in Taiwan.

India has benefited from Apple's move to shift some areas of production from China to other markets as it navigates a trade war between Washington and Beijing, with Apple announcing in March it had started the assembly of the iPhone 12 in India.

—Reuters

"The quantum of redemption was almost the same as last month, the fund mobilised was lower than that in March suggesting some of the investors would have preferred to stay on the sidelines until more clarity emerges around the impact of the second wave of the pandemic on the economy. Additionally, few investors would have also held back their investments in anticipation of market correction given the ongoing concerns," Himanshu Srivastava, associate director (Research), Morningstar India said. "The flows during April 2021 were driven by liquid, overnight and money market schemes on the fixed income side, thematic/sectoral schemes and arbitrage and dynamic asset allocation schemes in the equity and hybrid segment," N S Venkatesh, CEO, AMFI said.

SHORT TAKES

Anand to feature in Covid fundraiser

New Delhi: Five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand and four other Indian Grandmasters will play simultaneous online exhibition matches against other chess players on Thursday to raise funds for COVID-19 relief work in the country. Any player who has a Chess.com blitz or FIDE standard rating of under 2000 can play with former world champion Anand by donating \$150 and with the other four GMs by paying \$25 as registration amount. Donations will also be accepted during the exhibition matches to be broadcast on Chess.com at 19:30 IST. The website said it will match all donations up to a total of \$10,000. All the proceeds from the simultaneous exhibitions involving Anand, Koneru Humpy, Dronavalli Harika, Nihal Sarin and Praggnanandhaa Rameshbabu will go to RedCross India and the Checkmate COVID initiative of the All India Chess Federation (AICF). — PTI

Pacer Bumrah gets vaccinated

Mumbai: India's star pacer Jasprit Bumrah and women's national team opener Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday said they received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Joining the duo was veteran wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik. All three cricketers posted pictures of themselves on their respective social media accounts while urging everyone to get inoculated. Several of his teammates, including skipper Virat Kohli, Cheteshwar Pujara, Ajinkya Rahane, Umesh Yadav and Ishant Sharma, had got their first jab in various vaccination centres across the country. Head coach Ravi Shastri was the first from the Indian cricket team to receive the vaccine. He got his first jab in the first week of March. — PTI

Don't break Covid protocols: Rijiju

New Delhi: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday cautioned Indian sportspersons against breaking COVID-19 protocols of foreign countries while travelling for training or competition. Rijiju posted the comment while wishing Olympic-bound shooters a successful trip to Croatia, for which they left earlier in the day. "Safe journey! Never break the COVID-19 protocols of other countries. Focus on training, take care and stay safe. Will provide all necessary support to our athletes and the coaches. All the best," Rijiju tweeted. The remark came in the backdrop of Bengaluru FC's AFC Cup play-off against Eagles FC in Male being postponed after the visiting team had to tender an apology for violating quarantine protocols in the host city. Maldives sports minister Ahmed Mahloof had asked BFC to leave the country. — PTI

Fulham relegated from top flight

London: Relegation, promotion, and now relegation again. Fulham's rollercoaster ride between the top two divisions of English football has taken the London club back out of the Premier League, their fate sealed by losing to Burnley 2-0 on Monday. Fulham joined Sheffield United and West Bromwich Albion in going down to the Championship, wrapping up the Premier League's relegation battle at the earliest ever stage with three rounds still to go. "I'm bitterly disappointed, I'm hurt, I'm gutted," said Fulham manager Scott Parker, who also presided over the team's relegation two seasons ago when he was in charge on an interim basis. — AP

Westbrook sets record in NBA

Los Angeles: Russell Westbrook wrote his way into NBA history on Monday, bagging the 182nd triple-double of his career to break Oscar Robertson's 47-year-old record. Washington Wizards star Westbrook, who had equaled Robertson's record of 181 triples on Saturday, sealed his record-breaking triple with 8min 33sec remaining in Monday's 125-124 defeat to the Atlanta Hawks. — AFP

TWO-HORSE RACE

Dhawan, Pandya in contention to lead second-string team

New Delhi, May 11: Veteran opener Shikhar Dhawan and flamboyant allrounder-turned specialist batsman Hardik Pandya will be locked in a two-way fight for India captaincy if Shreyas Iyer doesn't get fit in time for the white-ball tour of Sri Lanka in July. India's limited overs specialists will be playing three T20 Internationals and as many ODIs in the island nation during the second half of July, when big guns like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be in England for a marquee five-match Test series.

"It is still not clear if Shreyas will recover fully and will be match-fit in time for tour of Sri Lanka. Normally, a surgery of this scale along with rest, extensive rehab and training to get back in shape takes around four months," a senior BCCI source privy to selection matters said on conditions of anonymity.

"In case Shreyas was available, he would have been the automatic choice for captaincy."

It's only logical that the two contenders for captaincy are 35-year-old Dhawan, who has had good "one and half IPLs" in last two seasons and Pandya junior, who is one of the most accomplished match-winners.

"Shikhar has had two very good IPL including this curtailed one and being the senior most among those who are available for selection, he is a very strong contender. Also he has been a solid performer for India for past eight years," an official said.

As far as Hardik is concerned, his reputation as a white-ball match-winner can't be discounted either. "Hardik hasn't been regularly bowling for MI or India in recent times. However, he is the man with x-factor and among options available. He is miles ahead of his peers in terms of being an impact performer," the official said. — PTI

JUVENTUS ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING RONALDO

Rome, May 11: With their nine-year reign in Serie A ended and club president Andrea Agnelli roundly criticised for his role in the aborted European Super League, Juventus now risk missing out on next season's Champions League.

Juventus were knocked out of Italy's top four last weekend following a 3-0 home defeat by AC Milan, leaving coach Andrea Pirlo's position increasingly under threat entering the final three games. Juventus last missed out on the Champions League in 2011 while Cristiano Ronaldo, the competition's all-time leading scorer with 134 goals, has featured in every edition since 2003.

Failing to qualify would see Juventus lose out on roughly 80 million euros, jeopardising their ability to retain Ronaldo and afford his reported pre-tax annual salary of 54 million euros.

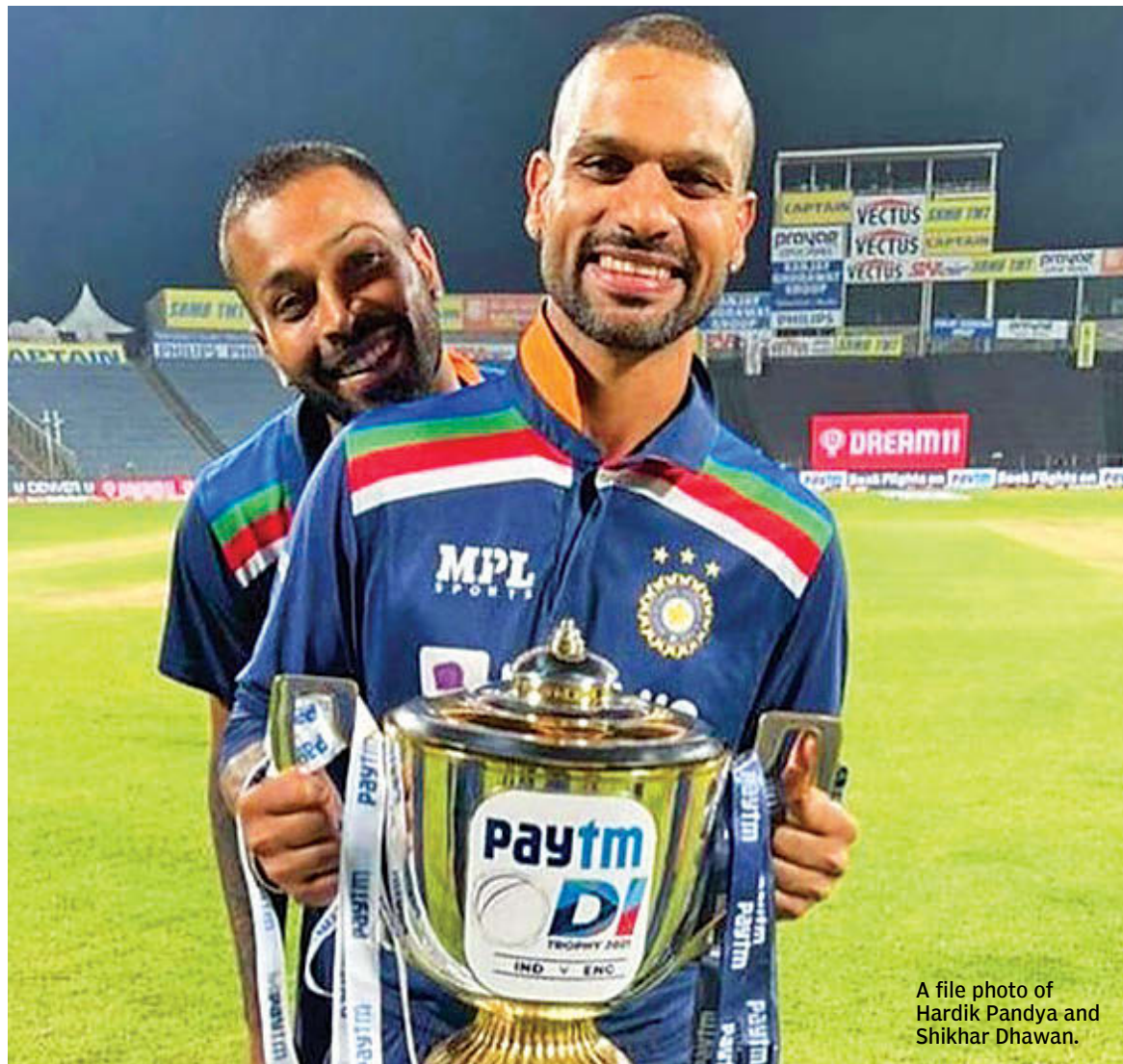
It would likely spell the end of Ronaldo's Turin spell, who despite turning 36 in February is the leading scorer in Serie A this term with 27 goals. That could though free up opportunities for others to emerge. — AFP

MCC says bamboo bats will be illegal

London, May 11: The Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) has shot down the idea of bats made from bamboo, saying it would be "illegal" under the current set of rules governing the game.

The guardians of the laws of cricket, however, said they will deliberate on the matter during their laws sub-committee meeting.

According to a study by Darshil Shah and Ben Tinkler-Davies from the University of Cambridge, bats made from bamboo



A file photo of Hardik Pandya and Shikhar Dhawan.

A FEW INDIANS DIDN'T LIKE RESTRICTIONS: PAMMENT

Auckland, May 11: Mumbai Indians fielding coach James Pamment has claimed that some senior Indian players did not like being subjected to restrictions inside the currently-suspended IPL's bio-bubble but it felt completely safe till the time cases from participating teams hadn't come to light.

Pamment did not elaborate on his assertion about the Indian players and did not take any names either. The IPL was

suspended on May 4.

"Some of the senior Indian guys don't like being restricted and told what to do," he was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*.

"But we did feel safe, at no point did we feel the bubble would be compromised... We felt the travel was always going to be a challenge," he said.

The New Zealander, a former Northern Districts coach, said he and the MI players started to feel apprehensive shortly before the competition

was halted.

"It was when cases started to come with the teams. They were a little more fearful, a little more apprehensive," said the 52-year-old, who returned home on Saturday.

"Chennai (CSK) announced their cases and we'd played Chennai at the weekend, so straight away, the dynamic changed. I certainly noticed from within my group. I'd spend most of my time with the Kiwis and the Aussies, their

mindset had changed.

"We started to get Indian guys in our environment whose families were sick. There were bereavements as well and we were taking a bit of a cue from those guys who were saying 'no, we want to carry on' and the messages were coming back that this is a good distraction."

Pamment said at no stage did he feel his health was going to be put in jeopardy within the bubble set up by MI at a Mumbai hotel. — PTI

No England stars for IPL phase 2

London, May 11: England have a busy international schedule from June onwards and the players are unlikely to be available for the remainder of the suspended IPL if the T20 tournament is rescheduled this year, says ECB Director of Cricket Ashley Giles.

The IPL was suspended last week after multiple COVID-19 cases inside its bio-bubble. There are two windows for the T20 event to be resumed this year — one is in the second half of September and before the T20 World Cup (October-November) and the other is after mid-November.

But England's top players will be in action at both times. They have tours to Bangladesh and Pakistan in September and October, while they will compete with Australia at the Ashes right after the T20 World Cup.

"We're planning on involvement of England players in England franchises in the suspended IPL. "None of us knows what a rearranged IPL looks like at the moment, where it's going to be or when. But from when we start this summer against New



England's Sam Curran (left) and Moeen Ali represent Chennai Super Kings in IPL.

— Twitter

There were 11 Englishman in various franchises in the suspended IPL.

"None of us knows what a rearranged IPL looks like at the moment, where it's going to be or when. But from when we start this summer against New

Zealand, our programme is incredibly busy," Giles said.

"We've got a lot of important, high-profile cricket including the T20 World Cup and the Ashes. And we're going to have to look after our players." — PTI



A study by University of Cambridge suggests bats made from bamboo are economically sustainable.

be recognised as a wood, this would still be illegal under the current law, which bans lamination of

the blade, except in junior bats."

The researchers found the bamboo bat to be "stiffer, harder and stronger than those made of willow, although more brittle" and also supposed to have a larger "sweet spot, closer to the toe of the bat."

"The sweet spot on a bamboo bat makes it much easier to hit a four off a Yorker for starters, but it's exciting for all kinds of strokes," Shah had said in the report. MCC, however, said it

needs to tread carefully to ensure that the balance of bat and ball remains intact. "MCC's role as Guardian of the Laws includes maintaining the balance between bat and ball, and any potential amendments to the Law would need to carefully take this into consideration, particularly the concept of the bat producing greater power."

The apex body said it will discuss the matter as finding alternatives to willow in a relevant issue. — PTI

COVID | SCARE

Doubts raised over Olympics

Tokyo, May 11: Japanese superstar Naomi Osaka has admitted she is "not really sure" the coronavirus-hit Tokyo Olympics should go ahead, as doubts grow about the Games just weeks before the opening ceremony.

The four-time tennis Grand Slam winner joined fellow Japanese player Kei Nishikori in raising concerns as Tokyo and other parts of Japan remain under a virus state of emergency.

A top politician also warned that Japan still had to make a "careful decision" about whether to hold the Games, which have scant public support, according to opinion polls.

Scrapping the 2020 Olympics, postponed last year as the pandemic advanced, is an idea that has never quite gone away, despite repeated assertions from officials that they will proceed.

A survey by a leading Japanese daily released on Monday found 59 percent of respondents want the Olympics cancelled, underlining persistent public concerns over the risk of infections.

Osaka, Japan's biggest sports star and a major gold-medal prospect, said "to be honest, I'm not really sure", when asked if the Olympics should take place as planned.

"I'm an athlete, and of course my immediate thought is that I want to play in the Olympics," the four-time Grand Slam winner told the *BBC*.

"But as a human, I would say we're in a pandemic, and if people aren't healthy, and if they're not feeling safe, then it's definitely a really big cause for concern."

Nishikori said there "def-



Naomi Osaka

I would say we're in a pandemic, and if people aren't healthy, and if they're not feeling safe, then it's definitely a really big cause for concern

— NAOMI OSAKA
Japanese tennis star

initely should be a discussion" on whether Tokyo should plough ahead.

"I don't know how much they are thinking about how they are gonna make (a) bubble, because this is not like 100 people," he said.

Nadal 'not sure'

World number three Rafael Nadal admitted he is unsure if he will take part in the Summer Olympics.

"In a normal world, the Olympic Games were always my main priority. In the current world, the Olympic Games are still a priority, but things have changed. We have been for almost year-and-a-half under this pandemic and the only thing I can say it is that I take the decision based in a short term," Nadal said.

Olympic officials insist the Games can still be held safely and have released rulebooks they say will ensure the biggest international event since the pandemic began does not spread the virus.

— AFP

TORCH RELAY PULLED OFF STREETS IN JAPAN

Tokyo, May 11: The Tokyo Olympic torch relay is being pulled off the streets in Hiroshima prefecture as COVID-19 cases rise in Japan barely 10 weeks before the opening ceremony. Hiroshima Governor Hidehiko Yuzaki said that a ceremony next week without the relay is likely to still take place. This is at least the sixth change to the relay — from rerouting to cancellation — in the last several weeks.

Organizers warned before the relay began that changes and delays were expected in the face of the pandemic. "It is certain there will be no relay on public streets since we are all trying to reduce going out, and how to do the ceremony without the relay on the streets is still being discussed with the organizers," Yuzaki.

The relay began on March 25 in northeastern Japan and is to end on July 23 at the opening ceremony of the Olympics. Tokyo and other areas are under a state of emergency until May 31.

— AP



Indian shooters Elavenil Valarivan (left) and Sanjeev Rajput take a selfie.

— Twitter

Indian shooters leave for Croatia

New Delhi, May 11: The Olympic-bound Indian shooting team on Tuesday left for Croatia for a two and a half months training-cum-competition tour, its final tune-up to the upcoming Tokyo Games.

With coaches and support staff in tow, a 13-member Indian shooting team took off for Croatian capital Zagreb, where it will undergo a training camp before leaving for Osijek to take part in the European Championships (May 20 to June 6) followed by the combined ISSF World Cup (June 22 to July 3).

"Team India takes off in 20 mins. Bon Voyage. Get the nose to the ground and work hard for your inevitable success team," Raninder Singh, president

of the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) tweeted just before the team's departure.

The two Olympics bound skeet shooters Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Mairaj Ahmad Khan will be based in Italy.

The Indians, including Gurjoat Singh Khangura, took part in the ongoing shotgun World Cup in Lonato, where they could not make the final of the men's skeet event on Monday.

The team left in a chartered flight arranged by the NRAI. After the stint in Croatia, the team will directly leave for Tokyo to participate in the Olympics, beginning on July 23.

— PTI