

NELLORE | FRIDAY | 14 MAY 2021

Forecast: clear.
Max/Min
temp. 38/29 °C

Mumbai: The Maharashtra government on Thursday announced the extension of Covid induced restrictions till 7am on June 1. Any person coming from anywhere in the country will have to carry a negative RT-PCR report to enter in Maharashtra by any mode of transport. Maharashtra on Thursday reported 42,582 new positive cases.

Report on Page 4

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

A vendor displaying the Semiya at One Town Panja centre on the occasion of Ramzan in Vijayawada on Thursday. *Deccan Chronicle* wishes its readers Id Mubarak.

— G. NARAYANA RAO

The incident happened on Wednesday night at a hill in the Kundoli proposed reserve forest in the Kathiatoli range, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Amit Sahay said.

"The area is very remote and our team could reach there on Thursday afternoon. It was found that carcasses were lying in two groups. Fourteen were lying atop the hill and four were found at the bottom of the hill," he said.

IN BRIEF

WOMAN DELIVERS
BABY AT COVID-19
TESTING CENTREDC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, MAY 13

A 25-year-old woman delivered a baby while waiting for the Covid-19 test at primary health centre at Simhachalam in Visakhapatnam city on Thursday. Reports said Chintada Lakshmi, a native of old town in Visakhapatnam, has been eking out her living by working as a daily wage earner in the agency area of Simhachalam. She came in an auto rickshaw for getting Covid-19 test at the primary health centre and suddenly developed labor pains.

She later delivered a female baby. In charge of the primary health centre and deputy civil surgeon Dr Madhavi and health staff took her inside the hospital delivery room and provided the initial treatment. She was later shifted to King George Hospital for better treatment. Both the woman and her baby were found to be healthy.

The news of delivery at the testing centre queue line became viral in the social media. Minister for Health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas (Nani) made an inquiry into the incident by calling up district medical and health officer Dr P. Suryanarayana and enquired about the incident. The minister later appreciated the alertness of the primary health centre medical staff for responding to the incident.

● **SHE CAME** in an auto rickshaw for getting Covid-19 test at the primary health centre and suddenly developed labor pains. She later delivered a female baby. She was later shifted to King George Hospital for better treatment. Both the woman and her baby were found to be healthy.

GOVT NURSES BODY
DEMAND SUSPENSION
OF CIRCLE INSPECTORDC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 13

Government Nurses Association leaders have condemned the attack on a nurse and her husband who works in the 108 Emergency service, by a circle inspector and some women police and sought their suspension.

GNA state president G. Santhi Bhavani and secretary S. Kotamma said Rajamahendravaram Three Town circle inspector Durga Prasad illegally detained staff nurse Hemalatha and her husband while they were returning home from work and beat them up.

Hemalatha was working in the medical and health department and her husband in the Emergency 108 services at Rajamahendravaram.

The GNA leaders said CI Durga Prasad forcibly stopped the couple at Quarry market in Rajamahendravaram on Wednesday, the International Nurses Day, and dumped them into the police vehicle. Inside the van, the CI brutally beat the husband.

Hemalatha informed the cops about their jobs and the exemption they have for travel during the curfew time but the CI went on to detain the couple at the police station. There, the CI and the women police once again beat the couple.

The nurses' leaders lamented that the police attack on the nurse and her husband on International Nurses Day was condemnable in the strongest terms.

They noted that nurses are rendering yeoman services by risking their lives in Coronavirus times. Unmindful of this, the police were inhumanly harassing and beating them up. The GNA leaders urged the police authorities to take the CI and other cops to task by suspending them from service.

ENVIRONMENT | FIRST

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, MAY 13

The union ministry of environment and forests has constituted the Andhra Pradesh State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) under the chairmanship of retired IAS officer P. Venkatarani Reddy. Dr Thatiparthi Bairagi Reddy, Professor of Environmental Sciences, Andhra University, is made

a member. Special Chief Secretary (Environment and Forest) will be its member-secretary. The chairman and the members shall hold office for a term of three years with effect from May 12, 2021. The SEIAA has recommended a 15-member state-level expert appraisal committee (SEAC) under the chairmanship of Prof G.V.R. Srinivasa Rao from the civil engineering department of Andhra

University. Dr Dinesh Sankar Reddy Registrar (VC), Professor of Chemical Engineering, NIT, Tadepalligudem, Prof G. Gnana Mani, a retired Professor of Zoology, Andhra University, Prof U. Shameem, Chairman of BoS, Dept. of Zoology, Andhra University, Dr Kiranmai, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Biotechnology, Vikrama Simhapuri University, Prof C. Sasidhar, Professor of

Civil Engineering, JNTU, Anantapur, Prof N. Siva Prasad Reddy, Director (Academics), Brindavan Institute of Technology & Science, Kurnool, Prof D. Bharathi, Professor, Dept. of Bio Sciences & Sericulture, Sri Padmavathi Mahila Viswa Vidyalayam, Katamneni Venkata Ramana, Head of Mining Dept. Government Polytechnic, Narsipatnam, Dr M. Sunandana Reddy, Associate Professor, RGM

College of Engineering & Technology (Autonomous), Nandyal, Matli Chandra Sekhar, Professor, Head of Department of Civil Engineering, NIT, Warangal, Dr G. Madhavi, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, Sri Venkateswara University, Prof K. Thyaga Raju, Professor of Biochemistry, SV University, Dr Gummalla Prasanthi, Professor, Vijaya Institute

Pharmaceutical Sciences, Vijayawada, are appointed as members. Chief Environmental Engineer, Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board, is made the member-secretary of the committee. This committee will review and accord permissions to any of the establishments, mines, factories, big ventures and will overview all the development activities regarding the environmental issues.

Emergency care



A Covid patient brought in an ambulance gets treatment outside a private hospital at Prahaladapuram in Visakhapatnam on Thursday.

— P. NARASIMHA MURTHY

Active Covid-19 cases
cross 2L mark in state

Death toll crosses 9,000 mark; EG sees highest no. of cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 13

Andhra Pradesh crossed 2 lakh mark in total Coronavirus active infections and 9,000 mark in total Covid-19 deaths on Thursday, with 22,399 new Coronavirus infections and 89 new deaths reported from the state. Coronavirus tests were conducted on 96,446 samples, of which 22,399 were found to be Covid positive. As many as 18,638 patients recovered in the past 24 hours. The total Covid-19 cases in the state reached 13,66,786, comprising

2,01,042 were active cases and 11,56,666 were recoveries. The total Covid-19 deaths were 9,077.

The single-day highest number of 3,372 new cases was registered in East Godavari district, followed by Chittoor with 2,646 new infections, Guntur 2,141, Anantapur 2,080 and Visakhapatnam 2,064 new infections. Nellore district reported 1,589 new Coronavirus infections, West Godavari 1,576, Prakasam 1,489, Kadapa 1,447 and Kurnool 1,365 new Covid-19 infections. Krishna district registered 910

new Coronavirus infections, Vizianagaram 896 and the single-day least number of 824 infections was reported in Srikakulam district.

As many as 11 Covid-19 deaths each were registered in the past 24 hours in Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram districts, followed by nine deaths each in East Godavari and Chittoor districts, eight each in Krishna and Prakasam eight each in Chittoor, seven in Srikakulam, six in Guntur, five in Nellore, four each in Kadapa and West Godavari and three Coronavirus deaths in

Anantapur district.

East Godavari continues to be on the top in the total number of Covid-19 cases in AP State with 1,73,371 cases followed by Chittoor with 1,48,460, Guntur 1,27,993, West Godavari 1,15,168, Visakhapatnam 1,06,110, Anantapur 1,05,673, Nellore 99,280, Kurnool 97,242 and Srikakulam registered a total of 90,220 cases.

The total number of Covid-19 cases in Prakasam district was 87,418, while Kadapa registered 78,233, Krishna 73,479 and Vizianagaram with 61,243 cases.

HOSP SEIZED FOR
TREATING PATIENTS
WITHOUT NODDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 13

District-level flying squad seized a private hospital known as Auditya General Hospital located at Sundaraiah Bhavan Road in Ongole on Thursday for treating Covid-19 patients without any permission from the government.

The flying squad conducted a raid after they received complaints about charging exorbitant prices for remdesivir injection on Thursday.

The team was taken aback when the person running the hospital, Avula Srinivasa Reddy disclosed they are admitting Covid-19 patients though they don't have any permission to treat them.

He also admitted that he is charging heavily for treatment and also for Remdesivir injection after obtaining the same from outside.

Flying Squad members Panduranga Prasad, AD, Drug Control wing, Dr T. Venkateswarlu, RIMS, T. Ashokvardhan, DSP and Vigilance and Enforcement department special team carried out the raid under the supervision of K.S.S.V. Subba Reddy, Regional Vigilance and Enforcement Officer.

The officials said they would submit a report to the Collector of Prakasam district for further action.

Covid-19 cases drop by
half in Srikakulam distDC CORRESPONDENT
SRIKAKULAM, MAY 13

Positive cases abruptly dropped by half registering 824 cases during the last 24 hours in Srikakulam district. Health officials said 4,939 samples were collected and of them 824 tested positive. It was hovering between 1500 to 2,000 during the last one week. They said 13,174 patients were in home isolation, 931 in Covid Care Centre and 1861 were undergoing treatment in various

hospitals. Around 1,732 were discharged during the last 24 hours.

A senior official said that hectic efforts to contain the spread of the virus has been yielding desired results.

Initially, shops were closed after 6 pm and later it was brought down to 2 pm and now the government has imposed partial lockdown. The sudden spurt in positive cases and deaths instilled a sense of fear among the people forcing them to follow the Covid protocol.

Meanwhile, the district collector J. Niwas held a teleconference with the officials on Thursday and took stock of the situation. He asked them to increase the tests in places like Amadalavalasa, Palasa and Vajrapukotturu mandals where maximum cases were being reported. He also suggested the officials increase the fever survey all over the district and visit the patients who were getting treated in home isolation.

Separate transport for
Covid-19 suspects soonDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 13

Industries Minister and legislator representing Atmakur segment, Mekapati Goutham Reddy was baffled when Atmakur DSP K. Venkateswar Rao told the minister about people with Covid-19 symptoms traveling in public and private transport vehicles mingling with others in Atmakur division.

The DSP disclosed this during a review on the Covid-19 situation in Atmakur division through virtual mode by the minister on Thursday. Reacting to the informa-

tion, Goutham Reddy directed the Revenue Divisional Officer A. Chaitravashini to arrange a call centre and separate vehicles to take Covid-19 suspected patients to testing centres and confine them to their homes till the results are given.

The minister underlined the need to keep a close watch on private labs which are not posting the Covid-19 test results online reacting to a complaint by Atmakur Municipal Commissioner Ramesh Babu.

Goutham Reddy assured the Commissioner that he would talk to the Collector to

resolve the issue pertaining to the paucity of funds to dispose of the bodies of Covid-19 patients.

He also promised to arrange 150 remdesivir injections and 10 to 15 oxygen concentrators from Med Tech in Visakhapatnam, besides 100 oxygen cylinders on daily basis from Gudur.

He elicited information on the treatment at 100 bedded government hospital in Atmakur from RMO Dr Usha Sundari. Goutham Reddy called for coordinated efforts to contain the Covid-19 infection and offer effective treatment to the patients.

Washermen ostracised
for seeking higher wagesD. SIVA RAMI REDDI | DC
KURNOOL, MAY 13

Washermen from around 40 families in Karimaddela village of Gadivemula mandal were ostracised by villagers as they demanded a hike in wages for washing dirty clothes. About 40 families eke out a living washing clothes in the village, which has a population of 5000. Trouble began when the washerman demanded enhancement of annual maintenance from ₹6,000 to ₹10,000.

As a consequence, villagers ostracised them and for the last one month they are being denied access to NREGS, hotels, and even mineral water plants. Field officer of NREGS, Gokari

said he was informed by the village elders that work should not be allotted to them.

“Based on their diktat, I sent them back and informed the same to my higher authorities,” he said.

Sarpanch Pullaiah Sunkanna said that of the 1,285 households in the village, many are finding it difficult to pay even the existing amount as most of them do not have regular sources of income and they depend on the national rural employment guarantee scheme.

“We have told them that we are paying the highest annual amount to them compared to neighboring villages. Yeeraguntal villagers pay just ₹4,000 per

household while at Gadivemula it is ₹5,000,” the sarpanch said.

He said that they had given three village volunteer posts to rajakas and have always included them in every government scheme granted to the village.

“But they were misled by Left parties, who have been creating discord among the villagers,” he said.

Panyam MLA Katasani Rambhupal Reddy said that the problem has been solved as the villagers have agreed to hike the annual pay to ₹7,000. Both parties agreed to the terms and conditions and they have given an undertaking that they will not seek unfair increases nor would they boycott work, Reddy said.

CJI recalls his
reporter days

From page 1

The CJI referred to his own, first-hand experience when he, for a brief period, worked as a reporter for a Telugu newspaper before embarking on a legal career.

Recalling his brief association with the media before joining the legal field, CJI Ramana said: “The media faces great challenges in reporting. I was a journalist for a brief time. That time we did not have car or bikes. Newspaper managements discouraged accepting any conveyance from the organisers of events. I too encountered difficulties as a journalist.”

The Supreme Court had, by an order of September 26, 2018, permitted the live streaming of court proceedings in cases of constitutional and national importance. However, the live streaming of sensitive cases was excluded.

The virtual event for the launch of the app to help the media cover court proceedings without coming there physically following the second wave of Covid-19 was also attended by Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, A.M. Khanwilkar and Hemant Gupta. Justice Chandrachud heads the court's e-committee credited with putting in place the infrastructure for court hearing via video conferencing since March last year. Justice Chandrachud attended the virtual event via

video conferencing even though he tested positive for Covid-19 on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, Justice Chandrachud said: “We hope that this facility will keep you all safe. Journalists are exposed so much to the outside world. I hope this is a part of the many steps which will be taken by the Chief Justice of India in the near future.”

He shared the news that all the six people who had developed the mobile app are down with Covid-19 but continued with their work despite being confined to their homes.

Justice Gupta cautioned the media that the “links given to you are (to be) used in a bona fide manner, and unauthorised persons (should) not use it. It will not be fair to the institution”.

On the Covid-19 pandemic affecting the judiciary at all levels across the country, CJI Ramana said: “As per the data available, 2,768 judicial officers and 106 judges of high courts have tested positive. We are yet to receive the data from two major high courts. A total of 34 judicial officers and three high court judges have lost their lives battling this pandemic.”

BHUMANA CONDUCTS
LAST RITES FOR
COVID-19 VICTIMSDC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, MAY 13

Tirupati legislator B. Karunakar Reddy once again performed last rites for the seven unclaimed bodies of Covid victims, along with Muslim JAC members, at Harischandra Graveyard in Tirupati on Thursday.

Karunakar Reddy had arranged last rites for 21 unclaimed bodies lying in the mortuary of Ruia Hospital in Tirupati on May 5.

Speaking to media persons after lighting the pyres as per tradition, the MLA lamented that the deadly Coronavirus was claiming thousands of lives every day and people were so scared that they were even not claiming the bodies of their near and dear from the hospitals, if they had died of Covid-19. He said his friends and followers disposed of 600 bodies after forming a JAC to arrange cremation to for abandoned bodies of Covid-19 patients last year.

The MLA said, “My intention behind participating in the funerals is to instill confidence among people to give a respectable send-off to their kin who succumbed to Covid-19 and I consider this as a sacred ritual.”

IndianOil
CIN - L23201MH1959GOI11388

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

IndianOil proposes to engage with interested parties to make comprehensive study for demand assessment/sales potential of fuel and non-fuel products at various way state amenities advertised by NHAI/Govt. Agencies.

Parties may visit the <https://ioil.com/Talkouts/SupplierNotices.aspx> section of our website <https://ioil.com> for more information.

Punjab State Power Corporation Limited
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001
Corporate Identification Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813,
Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact Number: 96461-18774)

Tender Enquiry No. MQP-176/2021-22/PO(M)	Dated: 11.05.2021
--	-------------------

Chief Engineer/Metering, C-3, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala, invites E-tender for Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, Reading, Analysis and 1 year O&M of 114 number Power Quality Meters complying to IEC 61000-4-30 Class A. For detailed NIT and tender specification, please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 11.05.2021 from 01:00 PM onwards.

NOTE: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>

C-186/21 RO No PR-Advt. No :- 76155/12/251/2021/14533

**FOR SALE
AUTOMOTIVE
COMMERCIAL**

TRUCK WITH body for sale Ashok Leyland 2009 & Tata 2010 in good running condition. Contact 9000300386 (HYMM/2122/C01194)

**EDUCATIONAL
DISTANCE EDUCATION**

✓ **NO ADVANCE Fee.**
Contact For: **B.Tech./ Engineering Diplomas in-Mechanical Engineering/ Electrical /EEE/ IT / Electronics & Communication / Information Technology / Civil / Refrigeration/ Diary Engineering/ Textile -from Government Universities/ Boards. ECA guidance - IQAS/WES available. Students please no call. Admission Guidance. Engineering Education Service. Lucknow, Mumbai.**

Email:engg.educationservice99@yahoo.com
MOB : 7753069493.
(HYMM/2122/C01195)

**MATRIMONIAL
GROOM WANTED
CHRISTIAN**

FAIR/ SLIM B.Tech, MBA, 5.3, 26, good looking working ADP seeks protestant born-again believer PG, good job. Whatsapp photo, biodata 9 4 9 0 1 6 6 4 6 8 . (A/2122/C00107)

NOTICE

Readers are advised to make appropriate enquiries while responding to advertisements in these columns. Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. does not vouch for any claims made by the Advertisers. The Printer, Publisher, Editor and Owner of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Ltd. shall not be held responsible / liable for any consequences, in case such claims are found to be false.

SHORT TAKES

SALARY OF K'TAKA MINISTERS FOR COVID RELIEF FUND

Bengaluru, May 13: The Karnataka government has ordered depositing one-year salary of State Ministers in the Covid Relief Fund.

This was decided by the State Cabinet a few days ago.

The order was issued on May 11 and would come into effect retrospectively from May 1 for a year.

The order was given on the direction of Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa.

The State has been reporting 40,000-50,000 Covid infections daily resulting in about six lakh active cases.

This has led to shortage of oxygen, hospital beds, and essential drugs.

The government has imposed a lockdown-like restriction from May 10 to May 24 to contain the spread of the virus.

NAXAL COUPLE SURRENDERS FOR COVID TREATMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAIPUR, MAY 13

A Maoist couple, who tested positive for Coronavirus, surrendered in north Bastar district of Kanker in Chhattisgarh, police said on Thursday.

Arjun Tatti and his wife Laxmi Padda, members of Medki Local Operation Squad (LOS) functioning under north Bastar division of Maoists, surrendered before police in Kamdeta BSF camp under Koyelibeda in Kanker district late on Wednesday.

"The Naxal couple deserted their unit owing to illness and approached the police for medical treatment. Both of them tested positive for coronavirus and were admitted to Covid care hospital in Kanker for treatment", Bastar range inspector general of police Sunderraj P told this newspaper.

According to him, 40-50 Naxals in south Bastar have contracted the virus as per the inputs received by the police.

"Due to strict vigilance at interstate and inter district border areas by security forces, Naxals are not getting medicines and other logistic supply", he added.

Police intelligence suggested that several top Maoist leaders of Bastar such as Rajesh, a divisional committee member and Sujata and Savitri, members of Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee of Maoists have contracted the virus.

"We have received inputs that several senior Maoist leaders have contracted Coronavirus", Mr Sunderraj said.

ODISHA URGES CENTRE TO GIVE 25L VAX DOSES

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO JDC
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 13

Odisha health minister Naba Kishore Das on Thursday urged the Centre to immediately provide 25 lakh doses of Covid vaccines to expedite the ongoing inoculation that has been seriously hit due to inadequate supply of the life-saving injections.

"I urge the Union government to immediately provide at least 25 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines so as to regularise the immunisation process. As many as 22 lakh people are awaiting the second dose of vaccine. In fact, I have already formally placed the demand before Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan during a discussion on the Covid situation on Wednesday," Mr Das said.

Other than the vaccines, Mr Das also demanded oxygen cylinders, Rapid Antigen Test kits, PPE kits and masks.

"We have enough oxygen but not cylinders and hence, we need 30,000 cylinders," he said.

Mr Das informed that the Union health minister has assured him to take Odisha's demand seriously.

The Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan had on Wednesday held a meeting with health ministers of seven states and one Union Territory and reviewed the progress of the Covid-19 vaccination drive.

On Thursday, Odisha again crossed 10, 000 mark in single-day Covid spike with 10, 649 people testing positive for the contagious disease and 19 deaths. The fresh positive cases took the state's cumulative count to 57, 6297. Similarly, the cumulative death count climbed to 2,251.

Of the new cases, 5,965 infections were detected from quarantines centres while 4,684 were local contacts.



A critical Covid-19 patient being shifted to the Hallet Hospital in Kanpur, on Thursday.



People buy sweets and new clothes on the eve of Id-ul-Fitr at Jama Masjid market, in Sadar Bazar during Covid-19 lockdown in Gurugram, on Thursday.

NCP ALLEGES FRENCH CITIZENS IN INDIA GIVEN MODERNA VAX

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MAY 13

Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik has sought an explanation from the Centre claiming French citizens and their relatives are being given Moderna vaccine despite only three vaccines permitted in India. Why the Centre cannot procure the vaccine for the people of India if the French Embassy can, he asked.

"Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V are the 3 Vaccines that are permitted in India by our government. According to information received by me, the French Embassy in India has procured the vaccine @moderna.tx and is inoculating their citizens and their relatives at Navi Mumbai with the help of @ApolloHosMumbai," Mr Malik tweeted on Thursday.

"Question arises, how can a non-permitted vaccine be allowed to be administered? If they can get it, why can't Indian government get it for our citizens too. The government and the Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan must clarify," he added.

"While only three companies are allowed to vaccinate in India, are the French nationals being given the Moderna vaccine as a special case? Even the Indian relatives of these nationals have also been vaccinated with Moderna," said Mr Malik, who is a minority affairs minister in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra.

Commenting on his allegations, senior BJP leader Pravin Darekar accused him of creating a sensation. "Nawab Malik has the habit of blaming the Centre. The companies have made a provision for the embassy employees of that respective country. They are taking care of their citizens and employees," he said.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope demanded that the Union government float a single global tender of Covid vaccines on behalf of all the states to avoid "unhealthy competition".

NHRC issues notice over bodies in Ganga

52 bodies were found in Ujiyar, Kulhadia, Bharauli ghats

New Delhi, May 13: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, after receiving complaints about several bodies found floating in the Ganga river in the two states.

"It (NHRC) has issued notices to the chief secretaries of both the states and the secretary, Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, today calling for action taken report within four weeks," its statement noted.

According to residents in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh, at least 52 bodies were seen floating at the Ujiyar, Kulhadia and Bharauli ghats in the Narahi area. Similar

● **NHRC SAID** that it seems the public authorities have failed to take concentric efforts in educating the masses and checking the immersion of half-burnt or unburnt bodies into the Ganga.

reports of bodies floating in the Ganga have come from Bihar.

In its statement, the NHRC said that it seems the public authorities have failed to take concentric efforts in educating the masses and checking the immersion of half-burnt or unburnt bodies into the Ganga.

India has been badly hit by the second wave of coronavirus infections and cremation grounds

and burial grounds across the country have been overburdened.

The NHRC's statement said, "The practice of disposal of dead bodies in our sacred river Ganga is clearly in violation of guidelines of the National Mission for Clean Ganga project of the Ministry of Jal Shakti."

It said it received a complaint dated May 11, 2021, based on several media reports, wherein apprehensions were expressed that these bodies floating in the Ganga were of Covid-19 victims.

The complaint noted that the disposal bodies in such a manner may seriously affect all those persons who are dependent on the Ganga for their day-

to-day activities, the NHRC mentioned.

"It (complaint) further stated that even if these dead bodies were not of Covid victims, then such practice/incidents are shameful to the society as a whole as that amounts to violation of human rights of even deceased persons," the NHRC added.

India added 3,62,727 new coronavirus infections in a day taking the Covid-19 tally of cases to 2,37,03,665, while the death toll rose to 2,58,317 with 4,120 daily fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday. The active cases have increased to 37,10,525 comprising 15.65 per cent of the total infections. — PTI

BIHAR EXTENDS LOCKDOWN TILL MAY 25

NAYEAR AZAD JDC
PATNA, MAY 13

The Bihar government has extended the lockdown till May 25 to stop the surge in Covid - 19 cases in the state.

The decision was taken during a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday.

"The impact of lockdown in the state was reviewed during a meeting with ministers and officials. The positive effect of the lockdown is visible. Therefore, it has been decided to extend the lockdown in Bihar for the next ten days from May 16 to 25", tweeted chief minister Nitish Kumar after the meeting.

The lockdown was imposed in Bihar on May 4 after the Patna High Court stepped in and slammed the state government over its handling of the Covid-19 crisis. Bihar has been witnessing a surge in Covid cases. According to reports, the death toll went up to 3,503 on Wednesday after 74 people succumbed to the viral infection.

No entry in Maharastra without negative RT-PCR

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, MAY 13

The Maharashtra government on Thursday announced the extension of Covid induced restrictions till 7am on June 1. Any person coming from anywhere in the country will have to carry a negative RT-PCR report to enter in Maharashtra by any mode of transport.

Maharashtra on Thursday reported 42,582 new positive cases taking the total number of active cases 5, 33,294. While 850 new deaths were reported on Thursday raising a total fatality in state 78,857. Maharashtra is among the states that account for 82.51 per cent of the total active cases in the country, officials said.

The state government order said that the restrictions will remain in force till June 1. "Any person entering the state of Maharashtra by any mode of transport will have to carry a negative RT-PCR test report, which will have to be issued from upto a maximum of 48 hours before the time of his entering into Maharashtra," the order added.

It also said that all restrictions enforced as per earlier orders for people arriving from places of sensitive origin will be applicable to anyone arriving from any part of the country into the state.

"In the case of cargo carriers, not more than two people (driver and cleaner/helper) may be allowed to travel in the same (those vehicles). If these cargo carriers are originating from outside the state (Maharashtra), these may be allowed to enter into the state with a negative RT-PCR test which will have to be issued from upto 48 hours before the time of entry into Maharashtra and which will be valid for seven days," the government order said.

The order also allowed the personnel engaged in airport and port services to use the local trains, mono rail and metro services. It also gave some relaxations to dairy industries. "Milk collection, transport and processing may be allowed without restrictions though its retail sale be allowed subject to restrictions imposed on shops dealing with essential items or

through home delivery," the order said.

The lockdown-like restrictions have been imposed in the state from April 5. The restrictions were further tightened on April 15 with Section 144 of the CrPc, banning assembly of five or more people, imposed in the entire state. However, even after a month, the Covid cases in some parts of the state are still increasing.

The state, which has consistently reported a high number of Covid infections and remains the worst affected state in the country due to the second wave of the pandemic, added 46,781 new cases on Wednesday and 816 related deaths. On Tuesday, the state reported 40,956 cases while on Monday, 37,236 new cases were logged by the state.

State health minister Rajesh Tope cautioned that some districts in the state have still been reporting high numbers of cases and therefore are a cause of concern for the government. "We need to focus on these districts more. The positivity rate is still not below 10 per cent".

UP: 14 docs resign over harassment

Unnao (UP), May 13: Fourteen doctors working at community and primary health centres in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao have tendered their resignation alleging misbehaviour and mental harassment by administration officers.

The doctors, however, assured that they will not let their Covid-related work be affected till talks are going on with the district magistrate and the chief medical officer over the resignations.

The fourteen doctors, who are in-charge of CHCs and PHCs here, submitted their resignation letters at the CMO office on Wednesday evening.

They also forwarded a copy of their resignation letters to the additional chief secretary (Health), director general (Health) and other senior officers.

"We will not fight under the banner of Provincial Medical Services (PMS) association. This is our

fight. The DM and CMO misbehave with us even after we have been working in limited resources in rural areas for the past one year. Instead of cooperating, administration officers misbehave with us," Dr Sanjiv alleged.

"Our work is being reviewed by the sub divisional magistrate (SDM) and block development officer (BDO) level officers," he added.

The agitated doctors claimed that their salaries were also withheld several times.

However, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Ashutosh Kumar refuted all the claims and said all the doctors have returned to their work.

"We don't talk like that. We all will work together," Kumar said.

Meanwhile, the doctors said they will decide on the future course of action after meeting the chief medical officer and the district magistrate in the evening.

Cong. attacks PM on Covid-19 crisis

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 13

Congress on Thursday once again lashed out at the center over the Covid related issues in the country. In a tweet in Hindi Congress leader Mr. Rahul Gandhi said, "The prime minister is also missing, along with vaccines, oxygen and medicines."

In the last couple of weeks the Congress has been targeting the Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi over the 'destruction caused by Covid' in the last couple of weeks. Several Congress leaders individually and along with other opposition parties have written to Mr. Narendra Modi on ways to tide over the present crisis but are critical that no response is coming from him.

Meanwhile Congress General Secretary Incharge of Uttar Pradesh Ms. Priyanka Gandhi said the

● **RAHUL** said, Modi is also missing, along with vaccines, oxygen and medicines.

situation in Uttar Pradesh is 'inhuman and criminal' and demanded a judicial probe headed by a High Court judge into the several instances of bodies found floating in the Ganga in many parts of the State.

She tweeted, "What is happening in U.P. is inhuman and criminal. The government is busy image building while people are suffering unimaginably. There must be an immediate judicial enquiry headed by a High Court judge into these events." She also accused the governments of under-reporting of Covid cases and deaths. She added, "Bodies are floating in the Ganga in Ballia and Ghazipur. Reports are coming in of mass burials on the banks of the river in Unnao. Official numbers from cities like Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Jhansi and Kanpur appear to be grossly under-reported."

GREAT | MOVE

Aims to use state's resources and manpower to manage Coronavirus pandemic

C'garh govt suspends its 'Central vista' project

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
RAIPUR, MAY 13

Amid mounting pressure by the Congress on the Union government to suspend the Central Vista project, Chhattisgarh government on Thursday announced that it was suspending all major projects, including the construction of a new Raj Bhavan, state legislative Assembly and the official residence of chief minister in Nava Raipur.

The tenders for two projects worth Rs 363 crore for the construction of a new state legislative Assembly building have been cancelled with immediate effect by the Congress state government led by

chief minister Bhupesh Baghel.

To focus the state's resources and manpower in managing the raging Coronavirus pandemic, the state government has also decided to take stringent austerity measures while announcing free education and scholarships for children who lost their parents due to the coronavirus pandemic in Chhattisgarh.

"Our citizens - our priority. Foundation stone for the construction of the new Assembly building, Raj Bhavan, chief minister's residence, residence of ministers and senior officials, and a new circuit house was laid before the start of Corona. Today, all these construction works

have been stopped in these times of crisis," Mr Baghel tweeted.

Chhattisgarh has 1,22,798 active Covid-19 cases, while the cumulative number of deaths in the state stands at 11,094, according to the Union health ministry.

"In view of the circumstances arising in the state due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Chhattisgarh government has stopped construction works of all major projects with immediate effect and also decided to take even more stringent measures for austerity," a press release issued by the Chhattisgarh government said.

Accordingly, ongoing works on construction of new Raj Bhavan, state legislative Assembly, official

residences of chief minister, other ministers and senior officers in Nava Raipur have been suspended, the press release said.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony for these projects was performed on November 25, 2019.

"The chief engineer of the Public Works Department has issued orders to the concerned contractors to stop the construction work of the new Raj Bhavan, new CM house, new houses of ministers and officers and new circuit house in Nava Raipur," the press release said.

The state government has instructed all the departments that, like the previous year, austerity should be exercised in the

financial year 2021.

Mr Baghel also announced that his government will provide free education and scholarship to children who lost their parents due to the coronavirus pandemic in Chhattisgarh.

"The Chhattisgarh government will now bear the entire expenditure of the education of children who have lost their parents due to coronavirus during this financial year."

Also a scholarship of ₹500 per month will be given to such children studying from standard first to eighth and ₹1,000 per month for children from standard ninth to 12th," a separate press release issued by the state government said.



Police officers patrol as security beefed up on the eve of id-ul-Fitr, during Covid-induced curfew, in Bhopal on Thursday.

SHORT TAKES

LANKA: INDIAN FAMILY HELD FOR FLOUTING LAWS

Colombo: Four members of an Indian family, including two children, have been arrested for allegedly entering Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula illegally and violating the local immigration and the quarantine laws, police said on Thursday.

The family, which consists of a 61-year old woman, her 34-year-old daughter and her two children, said they had entered Sri Lanka on May 6 with the help of fishermen.

Ajith Rohana, the deputy inspector general of police, said the members of the family were arrested at Gurunagar area in Jaffna for their illegal stay in the country and violating the immigration and quarantine laws.

They had arrived from India on May 6 on an Indian boat halfway and had travelled the rest of the way aboard a Sri Lankan fishing boat, Rohana said.

DEATH OF STUDENT IN CHINA TRIGGERS PROTEST

Taipei: It was a call no parent wants to receive. On Mother's Day, around 9 pm, a woman in Chengdu in southwestern China was told that her son, who she had dropped off at school just hours ago, had died. Distraught, she went to Chengdu No. 49 Middle School immediately, but could not even enter the school grounds, she wrote in a series of Twitter-like Weibo posts on Monday that were shared hundreds of thousands of times this week.

Her account disputing both the police and local government's account of her 16-year-old son's death has touched a nerve, becoming one of the most discussed topics on Chinese social media this week. One related hashtag #ChengduNo.49Middle# racked up more than 1.5 billion views alone on Weibo.

People online called for justice for the mother and questioned the actions of the school, police and local authorities. On Tuesday night, videos of a protest in front of the school circulated. People clutching white flowers shouted "the truth!"

S.TAIWAN LOSES POWER AFTER PLANT FAILURE

Taipei: An equipment failure caused an outage at a power plant in southern Taiwan on Thursday, triggering rolling blackouts across the island affecting millions of people.

The outage in Kaohsiung trapped at least one person in an elevator and disrupted a daily briefing being given by government officials on the island's pandemic situation. Taipower, the government-run electric company, launched the rolling blackouts at 3 pm and said emergency repairs were underway. The outages affected 8.46 million households, Taipower said.

In Yilan county, one person was trapped in an elevator, the government-backed Central News Agency said. In Hsinchu, 150,000 households lost power. In the southern city of Tainan, 14 districts were affected. President Tsai Ing-wen issued a statement saying that "everyone can rest assured" and that the government was handling the situation. She said an investigation would be conducted into the cause of the outage.

UK: ROYAL MAIL TO ISSUE STAMPS FOR PRINCE PHILIP

London: The UK's Royal Mail will issue a set of special stamps in memory of Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II who passed away aged 99 last month.

A sheet of four black and white stamps, which are now available to pre-order, show Britain's longest serving escort to a British monarch in different stages of his life.

The first design features a portrait of the duke as a young man, taken by photographer Baron. The second depicts Prince Philip at the passing out parade of his son, Prince Andrew, at Dartmouth Naval College in Devon. Another stamp shows the duke at the Royal Windsor Horse Show. The final and most recent image is a portrait snapped by photographer Terry O'Neill.

"Throughout adulthood, the Duke of Edinburgh dedicated himself to the service of this country, the Commonwealth and to the many causes he was involved with," said Simon Thompson, chief executive of Royal Mail.

The stamps, officially on sale from June 24.

US vax beat strain found in India

Observation based on latest data about variant and three major vaccines approved in the US

Washington, May 13: Covid-19 vaccines approved by the United States like Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson have effectiveness against the B1617 variant of the virus that is predominant in India, which is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the pandemic, a top American health official said.

The observation is based on the latest data about the variant and the three major vaccines approved by the United States, said Dr Francis Collins, Director of National Institute of Science. "The data is coming in, and it looks very encouraging that the US-approved vaccines, the Pfizer, the Moderna, the J&J, do have effectiveness against this variant called B1617," Collins told the media.

"It's a little less effective in that case than some of the others, but it looks like it ought to be good enough to make Americans protected. And that's really a good thing to hear," he said in response to a question.

Early this week, the World Health Organisation classified the B1617 SARS-CoV-2 variant, which was first detected in India, as a variant of concern. The WHO said that evidence showed B1617 was more transmissible.

— PTI

INDIAN COVID-19 STRAIN REACHES LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas (US), May 13: The Las Vegas area has been added to places in Nevada where authorities have detected cases of a potentially worrisome strain of the Coronavirus first detected in India.

The Southern Nevada Health District reported on Tuesday that a woman in her 20s who had not travelled recently and was not vaccinated against Covid-19 tested positive for the variant subtype. She didn't require hospitalisation. A district spokeswoman said on Wednesday that there were no additional cases to report.

Eight other cases of the variant were previously identified in northern Nevada, including four confirmed last week in the Reno area.

— AP



Joe Biden

BIDEN TO BEEF UP FEDERAL CYBERSECURITY

Richmond, May 13: President Joe Biden has signed an executive order meant to strengthen US cybersecurity defences in response to a series of headline-grabbing hacking incidents that highlight how vulnerable the country's public and private sectors are to high-tech spies and criminals operating from half a world away.

The order signed on Wednesday will require all federal agencies to use basic cybersecurity measures, like multi-factor authentication, and require new security standards for software makers that contract with the federal government. Officials are hoping to leverage the federal government's massive spending power to improve security across all types of software.

The order comes as the administration has been grappling with its response to a massive breach by Russia of federal agencies and ransomware attacks on private corporations. Hit by a cyberattack, the operator of a major US fuel pipeline was forced to shut down service.

— AP



Worshippers stand on circles marked on the ground to help people maintain social distancing during religious ceremonies at the Catholic shrine in Fatima, Portugal on Thursday. Due to Covid-19, the shrine has limited to 7,500 pilgrims that can be present during the celebrations of May 12 and 13.

— AP

US Cong. urges to boost aid to India

Washington, May 13: Fifty-seven US Congressmen have written to President Joe Biden, urging him to bolster America's Covid-19 assistance to India.

The sharp increase in cases has overwhelmed India's healthcare system. We must do our part to quell the virus everywhere it persists, the law-

makers said in a letter to Biden on Wednesday.

We are extremely concerned with regards to India's deadly Covid-19 second wave. India is now the epicenter of the Covid-19. Today, marked India's deadliest day, with 4,205 deaths reported, carrying the total number of confirmed deaths to more than 250,000, said the letter

initiated by Congressman Brad Sherman, the Democratic Chair of the Congressional India Caucus.

In the letter, the Congressmen relayed to the administration that India remains in need of additional medical equipment, supplies and other vital resources to emerge from this crisis.

They requested the

administration to provide oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators, oxygen generator plants, cryogenic oxygen tanker/container, Remdesivir, Tocilizumab and ventilators/BiPAP to India.

It is also in the US interest that everyone in India be vaccinated, the Congressmen wrote.

— PTI

Oz signs deal for 25mn Moderna vax

Canberra, May 13: Australia has reached a supply agreement for 25 million doses of Moderna Covid-19 vaccines, the US-based biotechnology company and the prime minister said on Thursday.

The deal included 10 million doses of the vaccine against the ancestral strain to be delivered in

2021 and 15 million doses of an updated variant booster to be delivered in 2022, Moderna said in a statement.

The vaccines have yet to be approved by the Australian regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration. Pfizer and AstraZeneca are the only other Covid vaccines approved for use

in Australia. All three vaccines require two doses.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that he expected the first Moderna vaccines to arrive in Australia in the last three months of 2021. The 15 million booster doses would deal with possible future variants of the virus, he said.

We're now well into the phase of dealing with what's coming next because the pandemic's not going anywhere, Morrison told *Perth Radio 6PR*.

Moderna vaccines would help Australia achieve its aim of inoculating all willing Australian adults within a population of 26 million by the end of 2021.

— AP

Italy fines Google 100 million euros

Rome, May 13: Italy's anti-trust authority said Thursday it had fined Google more than 100 million euros (\$120mn) for shutting out a rival's smartphone app offering recharging of electric vehicles.

The authority said Google, whose Android operating system and Google Play app store dominate the Italian market, had abused its market position by blocking an Enel X app for users of electric vehicles.

The regulator added it would require Google to make Enel X's app available on Android Auto, which mirrors features of an Android device, such as a smartphone, on a car dashboard screen.

The fine of 102,084,433.91 euros is for a violation of article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which regulates monopolies and issues involving restriction of competition.

Italy found Google did not allow Enel X Italia to develop an Android Auto-compatible version of its JuicePass app. JuicePass offers services relating to recharging electric vehicles.

— AFP

COSMOS | DRAMA

Pre-flight training to be documented by Channel One of Russia

Russia to send crew to ISS for first space movie

Japanese billionaire to travel to ISS

Moscow, May 13: Russia's space agency said on Thursday it was sending an actress and a director to the International Space Station in October to make the first feature film in space.

"Filming will take place at the International Space Station. The start of the expedition is scheduled for October 5, 2021 from the Baikonur cosmodrome on the Soyuz MS-19 manned transport spacecraft," Roscosmos said in a statement.

Actress Yulia Peresild, 36, and director Klim Shipenko, 37, will undergo special training, including tests on a centrifuge and flights in zero gravity, starting no later than 1 June.

Their pre-flight training will be documented by one of Russia's main TV channels, Channel One, which will also be involved in producing the film.

The film's working title is "Challenge" and will be in the genre of a "space drama", Roscosmos said, without providing details about the plot of the film or Peresild's role.

Roscosmos said in September the movie will aim to "popularise Russia's space activities, as well as glorify cosmonaut profession".

The film will be co-produced by Dmitry Rogozin, the head of Russia's space agency, with the ambition of making Russia the first country to shoot a film in space.

— AFP

Moscow, May 13: Japanese billionaire entrepreneur Yusaku Maezawa and his assistant Yozo Hirano will be the next tourists to travel to the International Space Station (ISS), Russia's space agency Roscosmos said Thursday.

Maezawa and Hirano will travel aboard a Russian "Soyuz MS-20 spacecraft that is scheduled for launch on December 8, 2021 from the Baikonur cosmodrome" in Kazakhstan, the agency said in a statement.

Maezawa, 45, who made his fortune in online retail, also plans to partic-



Yusaku Maezawa

ipate in a 2023 mission around the moon aboard a Starship spacecraft of SpaceX, the Roscosmos rival of US billionaire

As the time accorded by the President gradually runs out and the deadline approaches, it can well be assumed that Oli is all set to make a comeback, emerging victorious in this Game of Thrones, as the country grapples with unprecedented rise in Covid-19 cases and corresponding fatalities as the second wave of the pandemic rages on, *The Himalayan Times* newspaper commented.

Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda" held a meeting on Thursday at the former's residence at Budhanilkantha in the

outskirts of Kathmandu to discuss the formation of the new government.

Similarly, Prime Minister and chairman of ruling CPN-UML Oli and dissident leader of the party Madhav Kumar Nepal held a meeting in an attempt to make the last effort to patch up their differences.

After Prime Minister Oli withdrew action taken against four dissident leaders for working against the party, 28 lawmakers close to the dissident leader withdrew their decision to resign en masse from the House of Representatives, that would pave way for Deuba to stake a claim for the prime minister's post.

— PTI

NEPAL HOSPITALS STOP ADMITTING VIRUS PATIENTS

Kathmandu, May 13: Patients in Nepal are gasping for breath, as authorities said that they were facing an acute shortage of medical oxygen due to which 16 people infected with Covid-19 died recently, according to media reports.

The deadly virus has so far infected 413,111 people and claimed 4,084 lives in the country, which has a population of approximately 29.5 million.

The government on Wednesday asked private hospitals to instal their own oxygen plants to meet the need of oxygen within 15 days, the *Himalayan Times* reported.

According to the decision, all private hospitals with more than 100 beds will have to instal their own oxygen plant and the government will provide the necessary support for this purpose.

The Ministry of Health and Population said it was hospital's responsibility to set up their own oxygen plants.

— PTI

COVID-19 CASES DROP BY HALF IN UNITED KINGDOM

London, May 13: The number of people infected with the Coronavirus in England fell by almost half over the past month marking the lowest level of Covid-19 cases since last year, according to new statistics released in London on Thursday as UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said "cautious steps" were being taken on the virus variant first identified in India.

The Imperial College London-led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) study comes as it emerged that the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) is holding a review meeting on Thursday to discuss the Variant of Concern (VOC) first identified in India.

During a primary school visit in north-east England on Thursday, Johnson admitted the VOC named B.1.617.2 "has been spreading" and the UK wants to "grip it".

— PTI

Mr. Giri signed the proclamation providing for the immediate takeover of the state administration within minutes of the Union cabinet's decision to endorse the recommendation of the Governor.

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48690.80 -0.96
Nifty 50	14696.50 -1.04
S&P 500*	4,112.51 1.22
Dollar (₹)	73.42 -0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.78 -0.12
Euro (₹)	89.10 0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,468▼14 0.03
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	67.28 -2.94
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.010 0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.674 -0.029

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Builders hope for recovery in 2nd half of 2021

The demand for luxury homes has slowed down during the last one-and-a-half months due to the second wave of Covid-19 but real estate developers and consultants are hopeful that sales will pick up once the situation normalises as it happened last year. Despite Covid wave, prices of luxury residential properties are likely to remain stable and may even rise slightly due to limited supply, they said.

Airtel fixed line, enterprise users to get quick service



Airtel fixed line and enterprise subscribers will soon be migrated to Amdocs' system for more rapid delivery of new digital customer experiences, according to a statement. The telecom company said seamless migration of Airtel wireless postpaid customers to Amdocs modern digital-business system, which enables the telco to quickly create and launch new digital services for customers.

Embassy invests in Pi Labs fund for proptech cos

Realty firm Embassy Group on Thursday said it has invested in venture capital firm Pi Labs' new fund that puts money in proptech startups. Founded in 2014, Pi Labs was the first venture capital firm in Europe to exclusively invest in proptech companies. Embassy has joined Pi Labs as a limited partner in its current Fund 3, the Bengaluru-based firm said. The company did not disclose the amount it has invested in the fund.

TVS picks Robert as CEO of Norton Motorcycle

TVS Motor Company on Thursday said it has appointed Robert Hentschel as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of iconic British brand Norton Motorcycle, which it acquired last year. Hentschel replaces John Russell who steps down from his role as an interim CEO. Besides, Vittorio Urciuoli has been named as the Chief Technical Officer (CTO) of the Solihull-based motorcycle brand.



Interest shows a better demand scenario for gas 14 bidders slug it out for KG-D6 gas supply



New Delhi, May 13: As many as 14 users across sectors slugged it on a third-party electronic platform for seven-and-half hours to secure natural gas supplies from the eastern offshore KG-D6 block before the oil-to-chemical (O2C) unit of Reliance Industries Ltd bagged most of the supplies, sources said.

Reliance Industries Ltd and its partner BP Plc of the United Kingdom, who are bringing a second set of gas discoveries in their Bay of Bengal KG-D6 block, had offered 5.5 million standard cubic metres per day (mmscmd) of additional gas in the auction for a flexible tenure of between three and five years.

Gas users' companies like Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Reliance O2C, GAIL Gas, Adani Total Gas Ltd, Torrent Gas, Torrent Power and gas trading companies like GAIL, Shell and IGS were locked in the intense bidding war on the e-auction that happened on May 5, sources in the Reliance-BP consortium said.

At the end of the intense bidding war, Reliance O2C walked away with three mmscmd of supplies, offering better prices than competitors, they said.

India Gas Solutions (IGS) - a gas sourcing and marketing joint venture of Reliance and BP - bagged another 1 mmscmd, while IOC got a similar volume.

The remaining volume was picked by Adani Gas

ONGC WAIVES MARKETING MARGIN BUT REFUSES TO LOWER GAS PRICE

New Delhi, May 13: ONGC has agreed to do away with charging users a marketing margin on the gas it plans to produce from its KG basin field but refused to lower the minimum rate, according to tender documents.

ONGC, India's top oil and gas producer, last month sought bids for the sale of initial 2 million standard cubic meters per day of gas from its KG-DWN-98/2 block (KG-D5).

The company asked bidders to quote a rate linked to prevailing Brent crude oil prices. It fixed the floor or minimum rate at 10.5 per cent of the three-month aver-

age Brent crude oil price. On top of it, the firm sought \$0.20 per million British thermal unit.

Potential bidders however opposed the levy of the marketing margin as well as the "high" floor price.

Responding to queries raised by bidders, ONGC said the floor price cannot be changed but the marketing margin is being dropped.

"Change in Reserve Gas Price (floor rate) is not agreed. However, considering requests from various bidders, the levy of marketing margin of \$0.20 per mmBtu over and above contract price is removed," the company said. — PTI

(0.15 mmscmd), IRM Energy (0.10 mmscmd), GAIL (30,000 cubic meters per day) and Torrent Gas (20,000 cubic metres per day). This is the third auc-

tion that Reliance-BP conducted on a third party independent platform approved by the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH). The online

web-based electronic bidding platform of CRISIL Risk and Infrastructure Solutions Ltd (CRIS) was also used for e-auction in February this year as well as in 2019.

In the three auctions, Reliance-BP has sold around 18 mmscmd of domestic gas from new fields in the KG-D6 block, which would help substantially reduce reliance on imported LNG, the sources said.

In the May 5 auction, Reliance-BP had asked bidders to quote a price linked to Platts JKM (Japan Korea marker), the liquefied natural gas (LNG) benchmark price assessment for spot physical cargoes.

The intense competition indicates a preference for domestic gas vis a vis LNG for Indian consumers.

At current prices, the discovered price translates into a price of about \$9 per mmBtu, but the buyers will be required to pay only the cap or ceiling price that the government has set for such fields.

The government sets a cap or ceiling rate at which natural gas from difficult fields like deepsea can be sold.

This cap for the period April 1, 2021, to September 30 2021 is \$3.62 per mmBtu.

With the return of demand, international rates have rebounded, which will reflect in the prices in the second revision due on October 1. — PTI

Covid fails to dampen PE, VC interest in India

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 13

The second wave of the pandemic has not been able to affect the enthusiasm of private equity and venture capital funds as investments continued to grow for four straight months of 2021.

PE/VC investments in April 2021 stood at \$7.5 billion, which were 6.5 times the value recorded in the lock-down hit April 2020 at \$1.1 billion. The April 2021 investments were also 37 per cent higher compared to \$5.5 billion in the previous month of March.

In the past four months of 2021, there has been a sequential increase in investments from \$1.6 billion in January to \$7.5 billion in April.

Technology was the top sector to grab \$3.1 billion, followed by e-commerce with \$1.5 billion. E-commerce also saw the highest monthly investment value in the past 31 months. The financial services sector received \$614 million and media and entertainment \$515 million.

"The revival in PE/VC investments has been driven by an increase in large deals valued over \$100 million. Of the 41 large deals recorded in the first four months of 2021, 32 were in the past two months. While Covid resilient sectors like pharma, healthcare, edutech, online media, SaaS, Technology and IT/ITeS continue to see good traction in both value and volume of PE/VC deals, there has been a significant uptick in the value and volume of investments in the e-commerce sector,"

FPI INVESTMENT IN EQUITY RISES 7% TO \$552B IN MARCH QUARTER

New Delhi, May 13: The value of foreign portfolio investor (FPI) holdings in domestic equities reached \$552 billion in three months to March 2021, a surge of 7 per cent from the preceding quarter, according to a Morningstar report.

This was largely on the back of robust net inflows from FPIs, coupled with a strong performance of the Indian equity markets. "As of the quarter ended March 2021, the value of FPI investments in Indian equities stood at \$552 billion, which was considerably higher than the \$518 billion recorded in the previous quarter," the report noted.

As of March 2020 quarter, the value of FPI investments in Indian equities was \$281 billion.

However, the contribution of overseas investors to domestic equity market capitalisation

dropped marginally during the period under review to 19.9 per cent from 20.1 per cent in the December quarter.

Offshore mutual funds form an important component of total foreign portfolio investment, apart from other large FPIs, such as offshore insurance companies, hedge funds, and sovereign wealth funds.

During January-March 2021, FPIs invested a robust \$7.64 billion in Indian equities. In relative terms, it was much lower than the net inflows of \$19.21 billion recorded in the previous quarter, but in absolute terms, it is a significant amount, nonetheless, the report pointed out.

According to the report, positive domestic and global factors ensured that the interest of foreign investors in the Indian equity markets remains intact. — PTI

Exits also were quite active in April. April 2021 recorded 13 exits worth \$2.7 billion, almost 23 times the value of exits in April 2020 at \$117 million and 25 per cent higher than the value recorded in March 2021 at \$2.1 billion.

said Vivek Soni, Partner and National Leader, Private Equity Services, EY.

Exits also were quite active in April. April 2021 recorded 13 exits worth \$2.7 billion, almost 23 times the value of exits in April 2020 at \$117 million and 25 per cent higher than the value recorded in March 2021 at \$2.1 billion. Secondary exits in April 2021 were highest at \$2.1 billion across three deals. Exits worth \$7 billion in the first four months were 17 per cent higher than the total value recorded last year.

DUCATI DRIVES IN NEW MODELS OF STREETFIGHTER

New Delhi, May 13: Italian superbike maker Ducati on Thursday launched new versions of Streetfighter V4 and V4 S in India priced at ₹19.99 lakh and ₹22.99 lakh, respectively (ex-showroom Delhi).

The two models now come with a BSVI compliant engine which churns out 208 HP of power.

"The Streetfighter V4 embodies the spirit of a mean beastly super naked, that is loaded with performance to back it up," Ducati India managing director Bipul Chandra said.

The motorcycle was much awaited by enthusiasts and Ducati fans alike, he added.

"We are excited that it is finally available in India for everyone to experience," he noted.

It said that bookings were open across all Ducati dealerships in Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Kochi, and Chennai. — PTI

Eli Lilly allows 3 Indian cos to make Covid drug

DRL, MSN Labs, Torrent to make Baricitinib

New Delhi, May 13: Drug firm Eli Lilly and Company on Thursday said it has inked voluntary licensing agreements with three Indian drug firms — Torrent Pharmaceuticals, Dr Reddy's and MSN Laboratories — to expedite the availability of Baricitinib for treatment of Covid patients in India.

The company has issued additional royalty-free, non-exclusive voluntary licences to Dr Reddy's, MSN Laboratories and Torrent Pharmaceuticals, who will be collaborating

with Lilly to accelerate and expand the availability of Baricitinib in India. Eli Lilly and Company said in a statement.

"These three additional voluntary licensing agreements will ensure high-quality manufacturing and accessibility of Baricitinib during this pandemic improving the local treatment options available to positively impact the lives of people who are currently battling Covid in India," it added.

The company on Monday had announced

signing voluntary licensing agreements with Sun Pharma, Cipla and Lupin. Eli Lilly has received permission for restricted emergency use by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation, for Baricitinib to be used in combination with Remdesivir for the treatment of suspected or laboratory-confirmed Covid-19 in hospitalised adults requiring supplemental oxygen, invasive mechanical ventilation, or extracorporeal membrane oxygenation, the statement said. — PTI

LUPIN JUMPS INTO BLACK WITH ₹1,216 CR PROFIT IN FY21

New Delhi, May 13: Drug maker Lupin on Thursday reported an 18 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit at ₹460 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2021, driven by robust sales across domestic and international markets.

The Mumbai-based company had reported a net profit of ₹390 crore in the

January-March quarter of 2019-20.

The company's total income from operations, however, declined to ₹3,783 crore during the fourth quarter, as compared to ₹3,846 crore in the corresponding period of FY20, Lupin Ltd said.

For the entire 2020-21 fiscal, the drugmaker posted a consolidated net profit of

₹1,216 crore. The company had reported a net loss of ₹269 crore in the 2019-20 financial year. Total income from operations for the last fiscal stood at ₹15,163 crore, as compared to ₹15,375 crore in 2019-20.

The company said its board has recommended a dividend of ₹6.5 per equity share of the face value of ₹2 each. — PTI

Nasscom seeks waiver from FCRA regulations

New Delhi, May 13: IT industry body Nasscom on Thursday said that it has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking a temporary relaxation in the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) norms and further liberalisation of vaccine import to navigate through the deadly second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Terming data as strategic ammunition available for managing the pandemic, the IT industry body said insights and analytics from Covid tracking and vaccination data could play a key role in decision making and early warning signals.

All these steps, Nasscom said, will enable the industry to "do more and act

faster to help the country navigate the second wave and be better prepared to deal with future waves".

Nasscom said while the vaccination regime has been liberalised, the availability of vaccines — particularly for the private sector — continues to be "very challenging".

"While we are attempting to source available vaccines in India, we request the government to provide emergency use authorisation for all WHO-approved vaccines Pfizer, Moderna, J&J, and others that have gone through stringent approval process globally, to ensure there is no vaccine divide in the country," the industry body said in a statement. — PTI

LABOUR FORCE SHRANK IN INDIA, SAYS CMIE



SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 13

The number of employed people fell by 7.35 million in April over March as the labour force shrank and the unemployment rate went up due to the second wave of the pandemic, finds CMIE.

The number of employed people in India fell from 398 million in March to 390.79 million in April — a decline of 7.35 million within a month.

Shrinkage of the labour force and rise in unemployment among those looking for jobs contributed to the decline. The labour force shrank by 1.1 million in April 2021 to 424.6 million compared to 425.8 million in March.

Labour Participation Rate fell for a third consecutive month in April and was the lowest since the nation-wide lockdown month of May 2020. The lockdowns imposed in some of the states to curb the second wave could have denied people from seeking employment and caused a fall in labour participation, finds Mahesh Vyas, CEO, CMIE.

However, despite this smaller labour force looking for employment, a greater proportion failed to find jobs. As a result, the unemployment rate shot up from 6.5 per cent in March to 8 per cent in April. Count of the unemployed who was willing to work and was actively looking for work but unable to find any expanded by 6.2 million from 27.7 million in March to 33.9 million in April.

Most of the job losses are from the agricultural sector, which is not impacted by the lockdowns. Of the 7.35 million people who lost employment in April, six million losses were from the agricultural sector.

SHORT TAKES

Lukaku fined for birthday party

Milan: Romelu Lukaku has been fined along with three Inter Milan teammates after a party in the early hours of Thursday morning to celebrate the Belgium forward's birthday which broke Covid-19 restrictions. Lukaku, Achraf Hakimi, Ivan Perisic and Ashley Young were among a group of 24 people celebrating his 28th birthday in a Milan hotel after the Inter's 3-1 league win over Roma, *Gazzetta Dello Sport* reported.

Police were called with all present receiving fines for breaking coronavirus rules, *Gazzetta* said. According to Lukaku's entourage, the former Manchester United forward went out with friends, but had not organised the party. Lukaku scored the final goal against Roma to bring his tally to 22 in the league this season, six behind Cristiano Ronaldo. — AFP

Serena beaten in 1,000th match

Rome: Serena Williams' 1,000th tour-level singles match ended in defeat as she marked her return to action with a 7-6 (6), 7-5 loss to Nadia Podoroska in the second round of the Italian Open. The eighth-seeded Williams, who hadn't played since the Australian Open, rallied from a break down twice in the opening set on Wednesday and saved the first three set points she faced in the tiebreaker before Podoroska converted her fourth. "It's tough to have a first match on clay. It was definitely kind of good to go the distance and to try to be out there, but clearly I can do legions better," said Williams. Defending champion Simona Halep was forced to retire with a left calf injury in the second set of her match against fellow former No. 1 Angelique Kerber. Halep was leading 6-1, 3-3 before her injury. — AP

Djokovic sweeps into Italian last 8

Rome: World number one Novak Djokovic swept into the Italian Open quarter-finals on Thursday with a straight sets wins over Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in front of spectators who were allowed to watch in the Foro Italico for the first time. The five-time Rome champion won through 6-2, 6-1 in 1hr 10min against the 48th-ranked Spaniard with the venue filled to 25 per cent of capacity. "It was not good, it was great. I missed the crowd," said the 33-year-old Serb. "It was nice to see them back." After losing his opening service game, Djokovic powered back with five breaks of serve, outclassing his rival, despite a late fightback, to seal the win on his sixth match point. — AFP

Oz players may return home soon

Male, Maldives: A group of Australian cricketers, coaches and players-turned-commentators, currently stranded in Maldives, may return home in a chartered flight on Sunday, though they are still waiting confirmation from their government, according to a report. A group of 38 Australians, including 14 players, left for Maldives on May 6 after the suspension of IPL 2021 as their government had banned flights from India till May 15 due to surge in Covid-19 cases there. "Under plans currently being thrashed out..., the group of 38 would be able to take a charter flight out of the Maldives via Malaysia to Sydney on May 16, where they would then serve their mandatory 14-day quarantine period," a report in *ESPNcricinfo* said. — PTI

Hockey legends kin to get ₹5 lac

New Delhi: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday announced financial support of ₹5 lakh each for the bereaved families of former hockey players M.K. Kaushik and Ravinder Pal Singh, who recently lost their lives to Covid-19. Both Kaushik and Singh were a part of India's 1980 Olympic gold-winning team. "We've lost two hockey greats to Covid. MK Kaushik ji & Ravinder Pal Singh ji's contribution to Indian sport will always be remembered," Rijiju wrote on his twitter handle. "As a gesture of support, the Sports Ministry is handing over ₹5 lakh each to the bereaved families. We stand with them in this hour of grief." India lost the revered stars on last Saturday. — PTI

Atletico on in Spain

Atletico on the cusp of La Liga glory after Sociedad win

Madrid, May 13: Atletico Madrid held their nerve to beat Real Sociedad 2-1 on Wednesday and move within touching distance of winning La Liga.

Yannick Carrasco and Angel Correa made a dominant first half count for Atletico, who retreated in the second and were left hanging on after Igor Zubeldia blasted in for La Real with seven minutes left.

When the final whistle blew, Diego Simeone jogged up the tunnel at the Wanda Metropolitano, punching the air as he went, fully aware how important this result could prove.

"We were excellent in the first half but the suffering was unnecessary when we had so many chances," Simeone said.

Outside, Atleti fans had gathered to cheer and sing throughout a nervy contest and when victory was confirmed, fireworks filled the sky.

"We thank all those who are outside tonight and all those who can't come because of everything that is happening," said Atletico captain Koke. "We could hear them outside when we needed them in the last 10 minutes."

Victory puts Atletico four points clear of Barcelona in the table and five ahead of Real Madrid, with Zinedine Zidane's side playing their game in hand away at Granada on Thursday.

It also raises the possibility of Atletico winning the title in the penultimate round on Sunday when they play at home to Osasuna.

Another victory this weekend would knock Barca out of the race regardless of what the Catalans do against Celta Vigo while Real Madrid would also concede if they had not taken six points from Granada and Sunday's trip to Athletic Bilbao.

Sevilla, in fourth, had earlier edged past Valencia 1-0 but they can no longer overtake Atleti, given their six-point deficit and a losing head-to-head record with the leaders. Youssef En-Nesyri scored his 26th goal of the season at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

The four-horse race is reduced to three and after weeks of various twists and turns, Atletico suddenly appear to have a route to the trophy.

In terms of the table at least, this game against fifth-placed Real Sociedad was their toughest remaining fixture, although Real Valladolid could well be fighting for survival on the final day. — AFP



Atletico Madrid's Angel Correa (left) vies for the ball with Martin Zubimendi of Real Sociedad in their Spanish League match in Madrid on Wednesday. — AFP

Rowe exploits Jorginho blunder as Arsenal win

London, May 13: Thomas Tuchel admitted Chelsea's 1-0 defeat against Arsenal was a "wake-up call" after Emile Smith Rowe punished Jorginho's blunder to dent the Blues' bid to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Midfielder Jorginho was guilty of a woefully misplaced back-pass that ended with Gunners youngster Smith Rowe slotting home early in the first half at Stamford Bridge.

Tuchel's side were bereft of quality in the final third as they succumbed to only a third defeat in their 26 matches in all competitions.

Chelsea remain in fourth place, but their bid to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish is now on a knife edge.

They sit six points clear of fifth placed West Ham, who have a game in hand, and seven ahead of sixth placed Liverpool, who could be the biggest threat with two games in hand. "I don't know how

MILAN RUN RIOT TO KEEP THEIR CL CHANCES ALIVE

Milan, May 13: Ante Rebic scored a hat-trick and Theo Hernandez a double as AC Milan thrashed Torino 7-0 on Wednesday to keep their push for a return to the Champions League for the first time since 2014 on track.

The battle for elite European football remains tight with just three points separating second-placed Atalanta and Juventus in fifth.

Atalanta moved back second ahead of Napoli with a 2-0 win over relegation candidates Benevento.

The Bergamo side are equal on points with Milan, with Napoli a further two points adrift in fourth.

"Until you cross the finish line, you can't give up on anything," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli whose final two games are home against Cagliari and away to Atalanta. — AFP

Arsenal would have scored if we didn't give it to them. We scored more or less an own goal, a total gift," Tuchel said.

PSG MAKE IT TO FRENCH CUP FINAL

Paris Saint-Germain squeaked past Montpellier 6-5 on penalties in Wednesday's

French Cup semi-final to keep alive their hopes of ending the season with silverware.

Spot kicks were required after the two sides were all square at 2-2 after normal time in Montpellier.

"It was a real cup tie, they're never easy," said PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino. — AFP

CL FINAL MOVED FROM TURKEY TO PORTUGAL

Paris, May 13: UEFA announced on Thursday that the Champions League final between Manchester City and Chelsea had been moved from Istanbul to Porto, Portugal.

The match on May 29 has been switched to the Estadio do Dragao to allow English spectators to attend as travel between the UK and Turkey is suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier, European football's governing body announced up to 6,000 supporters from each club will be able to attend.

"We accept that the decision of the British Government to place Turkey on the red list for travel was taken in good faith and in the best interests of protecting its citizens from the spread of the virus but it also presented us with a major challenge in staging a final featuring two English teams," UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said.

UK citizens returning from red list countries are required to quarantine for 10 days. — AFP

India remain No.1 in Test rankings

Dubai, May 13: India remained the number one Test side after the annual update of the ICC team rankings, released on Thursday.

India head the table after gaining one rating point for an aggregate of 121, having accumulated 2,914 points from 24 matches.

Virat Kohli's men are closely followed by their World Test Championship final opponents, New Zealand, with a rating of 120. The Kiwis have garnered 2166 points from 18 Tests and gained two rating points.

India's 2-1 win over Australia and 3-1 win over England over the past year and New Zealand's 2-0 series wins over the West Indies and Pakistan have helped them keep ahead of the pack.

According to an ICC statement, the latest annual update eliminates results of 2017-18.

The latest update rates all matches played since May 2020 at 100 per cent and those of the previous two years at 50 per cent.

England (109 rating) have climbed a place to third at the expense of Australia (108 rating), down to fourth now.

England's jump came

● **India's 2-1 win over Australia and 3-1 win over England over the past year and New Zealand's 2-0 series wins over the West Indies and Pakistan have helped them keep ahead of the pack.**

after their 0-4 defeat to Australia in 2017-18 was dropped from the rankings.

Pakistan (94) have gained three points but remained at fifth spot, while West Indies (84), who beat Bangladesh 2-0 and drew 0-0 with Sri Lanka in series played this year, have jumped two places to sixth, their best position since 2013.

South Africa (80) and Sri Lanka (78) have dropped a rung each to seventh and eighth positions respectively, followed by Bangladesh (46), who have lost five points and Zimbabwe (35), who gained eight points.

India and New Zealand will square off in the inaugural World Test Championship final at Southampton's Ageas Bowl from June 18 to 22. — PTI

PAINE HINTS AT GIVING UP CAPTAINCY AFTER ASHES

Melbourne, May 13: Australian Test captain Tim Paine has hinted at stepping down from the position if his team manages to defeat England in the Ashes series this year and backed former skipper Steve Smith to succeed him.

The 36-year-old Paine has been under intense scrutiny after Australia were beaten 1-2 by an injury-ravaged India in a home Test series earlier this season. Paine said that debacle was partly because his team got distracted by India's "nig-gling".

Smith was Australia's captain before being forced to step down in 2018 owing to his role in the ball-tampering scan-

dal. "He's probably a bit like me when I was at the start of my captaincy journey in Tasmania — he was thrown into a very big role at a very, very young age and he probably wasn't quite ready for it," Paine was quoted as saying by *news.com.au*.

"But by the time I came in he was growing into that role and getting better and better. Then obviously (in) South Africa events happened and he's not doing it anymore. But yeah I would support him getting that job again," he added.

Paine also hinted that he might step down from captaincy if Australia can beat England in the Ashes later this year. — PTI

WOMEN'S | CRICKET

Powar replaces Raman as coach

New Delhi, May 13: Former spinner Ramesh Powar on Thursday replaced W.V. Raman as the Indian women's cricket team's head coach, regaining the position more than two years after he was sacked following a bitter fallout with ODI captain Mithali Raj.

The 42-year-old was recommended by the Madan Lal-led Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) after interviewing eight candidates, including Raman.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announces the appointment of Mr Ramesh Powar as the Head Coach of Team India (Senior Women)," a BCCI statement read.

The others in fray were former India wicketkeeper Ajay Ratna and four female candidates.

It remains to be seen how Powar works alongside Mithali, who had accused him of bias after the Harmanpreet Kaur-led T20 team dropped the veteran batter for the all-important World Cup semifinal against England.

Mithali, in a letter to the BCCI after the event, had alleged that Powar "was out to destroy and humiliate" her. Powar had hit back asserting that Mithali "threw a lot of tantrums and created chaos in the team".

After being removed from his position in the women's team, Powar proved himself as a coach and earlier this year, led Mumbai to the Vijay Hazare Trophy. — PTI

SHAFALI, RADHA READY TO MAKE WBBL DEBUTS

New Delhi, May 13: Indian batting sensation Shafali Verma is set to make her Women's Big Bash League debut with two-time champions Sydney Sixers later this year.

The 17-year-old is expected to be joined by left-arm spinner Radha Yadav, who is currently in talks with the Sydney Sixers franchise.

"Shafali's deal is done, it will be announced when the Women's Big Bash schedule is released. Radha is also in talks with the Sydney Sixers," a BCCI source said.

The teenager's father was also required to sign a consent form as Shafali is still a minor.

Shafali joins the trio of T20 skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (Sydney Thunder), opener Smriti Mandhana (Brisbane Heat) and all-rounder Veda Krishnamurthy (Hobart Hurricanes), which has featured in the WBBL.

The world number one batter in ICC women's T20I rankings will also be turning up for Birmingham Phoenix in the inaugural edition of The Hundred — the 100-ball domestic competition of the England and Wales Cricket Board later this year. — PTI

Srikanth holds on to slim Oly hopes

New Delhi, May 13: Left stranded after the final three Olympic qualifiers were cancelled, Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth still harbours "some hope" of making it to the Tokyo Games, his faint optimism resting on the world body's assurance of a statement on the qualification process.

Former world No. 1 Srikanth and Saina Nehwal were all but out of contention after the Badminton World Federation on Wednesday cancelled the last qualifying event in Singapore due to the Coronavirus-related travel restrictions.

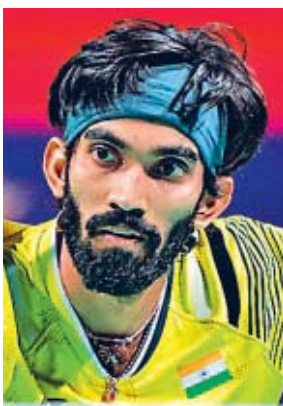
The cancellation of the Singapore event (June 1-6) was after Malaysia Open and India Open had to be shelved due to the health crisis.

The BWF however, said it "will issue a further statement on Tokyo Olympics qualifying at a later date."

"I could have qualified if I had participated in the qualifiers but there is nothing much I can do about it now. Just waiting to see what BWF says about this whole qualification things, so yeah holding on to some hope," Srikanth said.

There is no tournament scheduled till August and Telangana too has gone into a lockdown. Srikanth said he would now take a break from training.

Asked if BWF could have



Kidambi Srikanth

done anything differently, Srikanth said: "Now we can say a lot of things because the tournament is not happening but we really don't know what is happening between the organisers and BWF.

"So, I don't know what else can be done, may be BWF can communicate things better to players." With no events lined-up, Olympic-bound shuttlers such as P. V. Sindhu, B. Sai Praneeth and men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, too have decided to take some time off.

"Definitely disappointed that all the three events got cancelled. I have been training for 7 weeks but now just training without purpose makes no sense," world No. 15 Praneeth said. — PTI

Negative public opinion is no threat to Olympics

Geneva, May 13: The IOC has downplayed concerns over Japanese public opinion calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled, before its virtual news conference was interrupted by an activist protesting the Games.

The news conference on Wednesday followed a monthly meeting of the International Olympic Committee's executive board held amid a state of emergency in Tokyo to curb surging Covid-19 cases. Polling in Japan also persistently suggests people want the July 23-August 8 Olympics to be called off, having already been postponed by one year.

"We listen but won't be guided by public opinion," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said, adding "everything is telling us ... that the Games can go ahead and will go ahead."

Adams stood in for his boss, IOC president Thomas Bach, whose planned visit to Japan next week was called off Monday after states of emergency in Tokyo and other regions were extended through May.

The final question of the news conference, held by video call, was offered to a reporter from Yahoo Sports.

TOKYO-BOUND RACE WALKER IRFAN +VE

New Delhi, May 13: Olympic-bound race walker K. T. Irfan is among five elite track-and-field athletes who have tested positive for Covid-19 at the Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

The tests were conducted last Friday and those who returned positive have been kept under quarantine.

"At least five elite athletes have tested positive for Covid-19 when tests were conducted on Friday. They have been kept isolated from others," a source at the SAI Centre said.

The source said another race walker could also have tested positive but this could



K. T. Irfan

not be confirmed.

"4 male players and 1 female player and 4 support staff tested positive for Covid-19," a SAI source stated.

Irfan had qualified for the Tokyo Olympics way back in 2019 after finishing fourth in the 20 km event of the Asian Race Walking Championships in Nomi, Japan. — PTI

Instead, an activist appeared on the screen holding up a black and white banner opposing the Tokyo Olympics.

"No Olympics anywhere, No Olympics anywhere," he said, before using a profanity and adding "No Olympics in LA., No Olympics in

Tokyo," before the line was cut. The 2028 Olympics will be held in Los Angeles.

Adams made light of the interruption noting if Bach had been present it "probably would have made that stunt a little bit more interesting." — AP

