



UK DEFENDS DELAY IN  
ADDING INDIA TO  
TRAVEL BAN RED LIST

P10



FUEL FLOWS



PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION

FRAUGHT TAKEOVER

EXAM AND  
CHAMPIONSHIPS  
FOR BHAKER

P6 P12

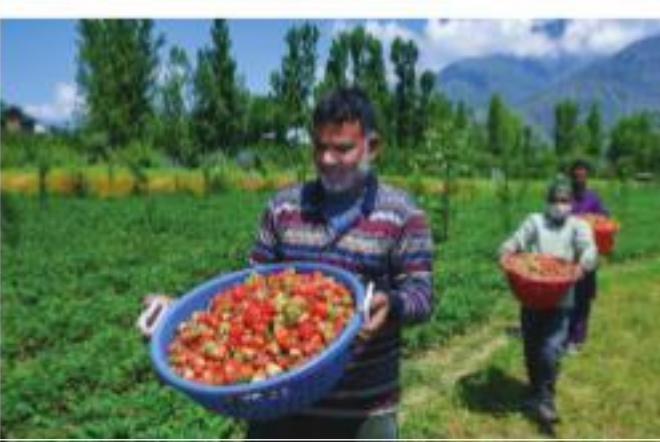


WEATHER

Partly cloudy sky with a chance of thunderstorms. Maximum and minimum temperature most likely to be around 38 °C and 24 °C respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL	
Max. 70%	Min. 22%
TEMPERATURE	
Max: 39.6°C (-1)	Min: 21.7°C (-5)
SUN RISES	SUN SETS
05:29 hrs	19:06 hrs
MOON RISES	MOON SETS
08:10 hrs	22:10 hrs

THUMBNAILS

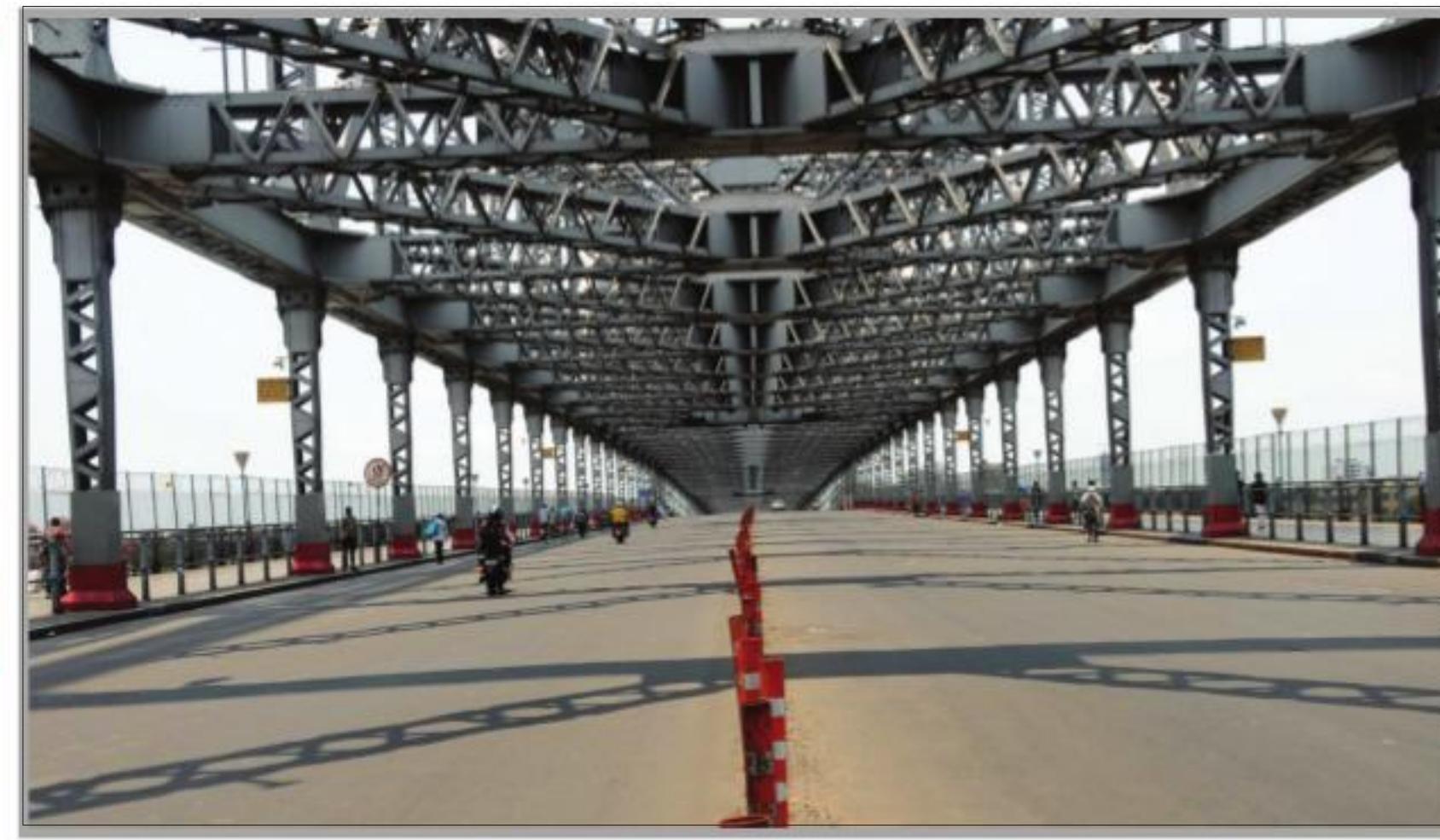


Farmers carrying freshly-picked strawberries from their farm during ongoing Covid-induced lockdown. In Srinagar on Sunday. AGENCIES

Congress MP Rajeev Satav passes away:  
Congress leader and Rajya Sabha member Rajeev Satav died on Sunday, days after recovering from the coronavirus infection, hospital sources said. Satav (46) was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Pune after testing coronavirus positive last month and was on ventilator support. After recovering from Covid, he was diagnosed with Cytomegalovirus infection and his condition became critical. (P5)

Israeli strikes kill 42, topple buildings in Gaza:  
Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 42 people Sunday, medics said, making it the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and the territory's militant Hamas rulers nearly a week ago, as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signaled the fighting would rage on despite international efforts to broker a cease-fire. He told the nation in a televised address that the attacks were continuing at full force and will take time. (P9)

DESERTED LOOK



Howrah bridge during the first day of a 15-day lockdown in Bengal on Sunday. BHASKAR MALLICK

Active cases decline; positivity rate drops

SNS & PTI  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

India's Covid-19 active cases count has decreased to 36,18,458 with a net decline of 55,344 cases being recorded in the active caseload in a span of 24 hours, while the daily positivity rate dropped to 16.98 per cent, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

The total active caseload now comprises 14.66 per cent of the country's total infections, it said.

Ten states—Karnataka, Maharashtra, Kerala, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh—cumulatively account for 74.69 per cent of the country's total active cases, the ministry said. A declining trend in the positivity rate is also observed which has dropped

51L doses for states in next 3 days

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

More than 1.84 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with states and UTs, while nearly 51 lakh doses are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days, the Union Health Ministry said on Sunday.

The Centre has so far provided more than 20 crore vaccine doses

to 16.98 per cent (16 May) from 24.47 per cent recorded on 3 May, it said.

India's cumulative recoveries have reached 2,07,95,353 with 3,62,437 patients recuperating in a span of 24 hours.

Ten states account for 70.94 per cent of the new

(20,28,09,250) to states and UTs free of cost, it said.

Of this, the total consumption, calculated based on average up to 14 May, including wastage, is 18,43,67,772 doses.

"States with negative balance are showing more consumption (including wastage) than supplied as they have not reconciled vaccines they have supplied to Armed Forces," the ministry said.

PTI

recoveries.

**Delhi cases:** Delhi today recorded 6,456 fresh Covid infections and 262 fatalities while the positivity rate dropped to 10.40 per cent, the lowest in over a month, according to the Delhi government's latest health bulletin. With this, the total

FACT FILE

TOTAL CASES  
**2,46,84,077**

ACTIVE CASES  
**36,18,458**

NEW CASES  
**3,11,170**

NEW RECOVERIES  
**3,62,437**

TOTAL DEATHS  
**2,70,284**

UNION HEALTH MINISTRY FIGURES AS OF 8:00 A.M.  
SUNDAY 16 MAY 2021

number of cases in the city has risen to 13,93,867 and the death toll to 21,506, the bulletin said. See P2

PTI

# Govt issues SOPs on Covid control in rural regions

Advises 30-bedded CCC where home isolation not feasible

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

Delhi govt extends lockdown despite downward trend

As rural areas see a rise in Covid-19 cases, the Centre on Sunday issued new guidelines for containment of the virus advising that peri-urban and rural areas plan a minimum 30-bedded Covid Care Centres for asymptomatic cases with comorbidities or mild cases where home isolation is not feasible.

Provision of Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits should be made at all public health facilities including Sub-centres or Health and Wellness Centres and Primary Health Centres, the Union Health Ministry said.

Noting that besides urban areas reporting a large number of cases, a gradual ingress is now being seen in peri-urban, rural and tribal areas as well, the ministry released the 'SOP on Covid-19 Containment and Management in Peri-urban, Rural & Tribal areas' to enable communities strengthen primary level healthcare infrastructure at all levels to intensify Covid response.

It said Covid Care Centres (CCC) can admit a suspect or confirmed case but should have separate areas for suspected and confirmed cases with preferably separate entry and exit for each.

Symptomatic cases can be triaged at village level by tele-consultation with Community Health Officer (CHO), and cases with comorbidity or low oxygen saturation should be sent to higher centres.

The SOP recommended developing a system of providing pulse oximeters and thermometers on loan to families with a confirmed case of Covid through ASHA/ Anganwadi workers and village-level volunteers.

"Home Isolation kit shall be provided to all such cases which should include medicines such as Paracetamol 500 mg, Tab. Ivermectin, cough syrup, multivitamins (doctor-prescribed) besides a detailed pamphlet indicating precautions to be taken," the SOP stated.

ral of samples to nearest Covid-19 testing laboratory, in accordance with ICMR guidelines.

CHOs and ANMs should be trained in performing Rapid Antigen Testing. Depending upon the intensity of surge and number of cases, as far as feasible, contact tracing should be done as per Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme's (IDSP)'s guidelines, it stated.

"Nearly 80-85 per cent Covid-19 cases are asymptomatic/ mildly symptomatic. These patients do not require hospitalisation and may be managed at home or in Covid care isolation facilities," the SOP stated.

As monitoring of oxygen saturation is important, it is desirable for each village to have adequate number of pulse oximeters and thermometers.

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Covaxin effective against India, UK Covid-19 strains: US-based study

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

Bharat Biotech on Sunday said its Covid-19 vaccine 'Covaxin' has been found to be effective against coronavirus strains found in India and the UK.

Citing a study published in peer-reviewed medical journal *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, the Hyderabad-based vaccine major noted that vaccination with Covaxin produced neutralising titres against all key emerging variants tested, including B.1.617 and B.1.1.7, first identified in India and the UK, respectively.

The study was conducted in collaboration with the National Institute of Virology and Indian Council of Medical Research, it added.

"Covaxin gets international recognition yet again, by scientific research data published demonstrating protection against the new variants. Yet another feather in its cap," Bharat Biotech co-founder and Joint Managing Director Suchitra Ella said in a tweet. She also tagged PMO India, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, among others, in the tweet.

**2nd Covishield dose:** The Union health ministry on Sunday clarified that already booked online appointments for second dose of Covishield vaccine will remain valid and the same will not be cancelled on Co-WIN platform.

It, however, said requisite changes have now been done in the Co-WIN digital portal, as a result of which further online or on-site appointments will not be possible if the period after first dose date for a beneficiary is less than 84 days. The Centre has widened gap for the Covishield vaccine to 12-16 weeks. PTI

## Tauktae ploughs through coastal belt; 4 dead

SNS & PTI  
BENGALURU/AHMEDABAD/PANAJI, 16 MAY



► Tauktae which has taken the form of a "very severe cyclonic storm" is likely to intensify further during the next 24 hours and reach the Gujarat coast on Monday evening.

► Gale-force winds, heavy rainfall and high tidal waves swept the coastal belt of Kerala, Karnataka and Goa

Source: IMD

Force (SDRF) have been deployed in the state.

Maharashtra too was bracing for impact as the Met department predicted heavy to very heavy rains at isolated places in north Konkan, Mumbai, Thane and Palghar and extremely heavy rainfall in Raigad on Monday.

Four deaths have been reported from Karnataka's

Sunday morning. Power supply in a majority of areas of Goa was disrupted as hundreds of electric poles were uprooted due to the high-speed winds, state Power Minister Nitesh Cabral said.

In Karnataka, over 70 villages in seven districts have been affected by the cyclone.

Home Minister Amit Shah also reviewed with CMs of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and the Administrator of Daman & Diu and Dadra Nagar Haveli, their preparedness to deal with the situation arising out of cyclone Tauktae.

The Home Minister took stock of the steps taken to maintain health facilities in the areas and directed the State Administrations, District Collectors to make adequate power back-up arrangements in all Covid hospitals, vaccine cold chain and other facilities.

More reports Page 4

## Congress leaders dare arrest after crackdown on PM critics

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY



Arrest me too.  
Modi ji, why did you send our children's vaccines abroad?

RAHUL GANDHI

The challenge was posed after a few people were arrested by Delhi police for putting up posters in the national capital on the vaccine issue

why did you send our children's vaccines abroad?

The challenge was posed after a few people were arrested by Delhi police for putting up posters in the national capital on the vaccine issue.

The Delhi Police also registered a number of FIRs and arrested people for posting

posters critical of the PM. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh dared the Prime Minister and home minister to arrest him, saying he was putting up such posters on his compound wall. "Putting up critical posters against PM is now a crime? Is India run by the Modi Penal Code now? Is the Delhi Police so jobless in the middle of a raging pandemic?" he asked.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said questions will be asked from the Prime Minister if people don't get vaccines, medicines and oxygen they desperately need. "I dare you to arrest me. Where is my vaccine, where is my oxygen? We will continue to ask questions," he said while alleging people are being arrested for asking questions".

"Covaxin gets international recognition yet again, by scientific research data published demonstrating protection against the new variants. Yet another feather in its cap," Bharat Biotech co-founder and Joint Managing Director Suchitra Ella said in a tweet. She also tagged PMO India, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, among others, in the tweet.

The Central Pollution Control Board and the Central Water Commission were also involved in the Jal Shakti Ministry review.

It was decided in the meeting that a suitable awareness generation program needs to be taken up against the ill effects of dumping of bodies in the Ganga.

Mishra said that there was need to strengthen enforcement, maintain vigil, to take proactive action to facilitate and support the families for cremation of dead bodies and asked State missions to specifically report on this. If needed, Project

Boards were directed to improve and make more frequent water quality monitoring in consultations with the health department.

The CPCB was assigned the task of over-all monitoring and giving guidance to state pollution control boards.

## Vacancies in SC, HC: Govt awaits collegium proposal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

The Supreme Court has seven vacancies, two high courts are functioning without regular chief justices and two high court chief justices are set to retire in the next one and a half months, a government functionary said.

He said the government is awaiting recommendations from the apex court collegium to fill up the slots.

The first vacancy in the Supreme Court arose following the retirement of Justice Ranjan Gogoi in November 2019 as the Chief Justice of India (CJI). Subsequently, a few more vacancies arose in the top court following the retirements of justices Deepak Gupta, R

## Provide dignified cremations: Centre to UP, Bihar govts

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

The Centre has directed the Uttar Pradesh and Bihar governments to prevent dumping of dead bodies in Ganga and to ensure their "safe disposal," while providing support for "dignified cremations."

Following media reports of dumping of Covid-19 affected human bodies, partially burnt or decomposed corpses, in the Ganga and its tributaries, Jal Shakti Ministry Secretary Pankaj Kumar reviewed the situation with the state governments and sought to know actions being taken by them.



Elected representatives are denied the opportunity to express their views on Covid-19

SHANKAR GHOSH, BJP MLA, SILIGURI

# Delhi lockdown extended for another week to control virus

CM says gains made in combating Covid could not be given up by allowing relaxation of any curbs; lockdown imposed on 19 April has been extended, for the 4th time, till 24 May morning

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

The Delhi government today extended the Covid-induced lockdown in the city for another week till 24 May in a bid to bring the Covid-19 situation further under control. All the restrictions already imposed will remain unchanged like the suspension of Metro Rail services till further orders.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal told media persons during a visit to GTB Hospital that

the continuance of the lockdown in the city for the fifth week was necessary to consolidate the gains made so far as also to bring the number of coronavirus cases down to a new low. Experts have advised that the positivity rate, now at around 10 per cent, must be brought down to less than 5 per cent.

Kejriwal said the gains made so far in combating the deadly coronavirus wave in the national capital—which was



completely overwhelmed by the ferocious Covid storm that battered its healthcare system pushing it to the brink of collapse—could not be allowed to be lost due to any relaxations now.

"But we do not want the gains made in the past few days that battered its healthcare system pushing it to the brink of collapse—could not be allowed to be lost due to any relaxations now.

The lockdown imposed on April 19 has been extended for the fourth time till May 24 morning. It was scheduled to end at 5 am on May 17.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), in an order issued today, stated that the lockdown has been extended till 5 am on May 24 to contain the spread of the coronavirus and to break its chain of transmission.

The restrictions imposed under the lockdown, including suspension of Metro train services, will remain in force

till May 24 morning.

"There is no relaxation as of now and all the restrictions that were enforced in this week will continue," the CM said.

He said that Delhi has recorded around 6,500 Covid cases in past 24 hours and positivity rate has further gone down to nearly 10 per cent.

"I hope there will be more recoveries from Covid in the next one week," Kejriwal said.

He said his government has written to the Centre and two companies in the country for Covid vaccines but there was no indication about their delivery.

Kejriwal also said the Delhi government got ready a 500-bed ICU facility in the main Ramlila Maidan near LNJP Hospital and another 500-bed ICU facility outside GTB Hospital in a record time of 15 days. He thanked the engineers and others engaged in the task for their appreciable achievement.

These 1000 additional ICU beds will relieve the pressure on Delhi's healthcare system, he added.

AAP owns up to pasting posters critical of Modi over Covid vaccination, alleges arrest & harassment of workers by cops

PTI

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

The AAP on Sunday owned up to putting up posters in many parts of the city criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the shortage of COVID-19 vaccine, and said that its several workers were arrested and hundreds were being "harassed" by Delhi Police.

Senior AAP leader Durgesh Pathak said the police action will not deter the party and it will put up similar posters across the city and the country on a campaign mode.

"The AAP is behind these posters. I am behind the posters. Arrest me and our MLAs but do not harass poor people who paste posters for a meagre payment," Pathak said in a press conference.

The Delhi Police has registered 25 FIRs and arrested as many people for allegedly pasting the posters, reading "Modiji humare bacchon ki vaccine videsh kyun bhej diya (PM why did you send vaccines meant for our children to foreign countries)", in several parts of the city amid the coronavirus-induced lockdown.

The FIRs were registered under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code and other relevant sections, including section 3 of the Prevention of Defacement of Property Act, across various districts of the Delhi Police, officials had said.

"Delhi Police under the central government is registering FIRs and arresting people when they are questioning why vaccines meant for them and their children were given to other countries by the Prime Minister and the BJP government," he said.

Several AAP workers from Mongolpuri, Ghonda, Karawal Nagar, Rithala and other parts of the city have been arrested. Also nearly 500 volunteers are being "harassed" by making them sit for hours at various police stations in this connection, he charged.

Delhi is facing vaccine shortage, with Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and other AAP leaders blaming the BJP-ruled Centre for exporting the doses abroad for "image management".

Who does vaccines mean for our children to other countries for event management? Sisodia tweeted on Sunday.

Earlier on the day, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said that his government has written to the central government and two manufacturers but there was no indication of vaccine supply as yet.

## Delhi govt will take all steps to check black fungus: CM

PTI

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said the Delhi government will take all necessary steps and precautions to check cases of black fungus or mucormycosis in the city.

The fungal infection is caused by a group of moulds known as mucormycetes present naturally in the environment.

Recently, several states, including Delhi, have reported a rise in the number of black fungus cases among people recovering from COVID-19.

"For the black fungus (cases), the Delhi government will take all the steps and precautions necessary," Kejriwal said in a statement.

Capital adds 6,456 Covid cases, 262 deaths; positivity rate dips to 10.4 pc



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ARE CARRIED  
FREE OF COST  
ON OUR WEBSITE

## Delhi's Qutab Garh village struggles for Covid tests, medicines despite deaths

IANS

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

Delhi's Qutab Garh village, where nearly 50 residents have lost their lives due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is still struggling to get proper testing facility to detect the deadly virus and timely medication to treat its victims.

Located in Saraswati Vihar tehsil of northwest Delhi district, Qutab Garh's residents said the second wave of the coronavirus seems to have gone on a killer spree in the village in the last two months.

With this, the total number of cases in the city has risen to 13,93,867 and the death toll to 21,506, the bulletin said.

This is the third consecutive day when Delhi has recorded less than 10,000 cases.

However, the lower number of new cases could be due to relatively fewer tests, 62,059, conducted the previous day.

Delhi had reported 6,430 cases yesterday, the lowest since April 7, with medical experts describing the protracted lockdown as the main factor behind the dip.

Delhi had reported 8,506 cases on Friday, 10,489 on Thursday, 13,287 on Wednesday, 12,481 on Tuesday, and 12,651 last Monday.

At 10.40 per cent, today's positivity rate is the lowest since April 11 when it stood at 9.4 per cent, according to government data.

The positivity rate was 11.32 per cent yesterday, 12.4 per cent on Friday, 14.24 per cent on Thursday, 17 per cent on Wednesday, 17.8 per cent on Tuesday, and 19.10 per cent last Monday. The national capital had recorded its highest positivity rate of 36.2 per cent on April 22.

Delhi had recorded 337 Covid deaths yesterday, 289 on Friday, 308 on Thursday, 300 on Wednesday, 347 on Tuesday, and 319 last Monday, according to official figures.

Today's Covid cases were detected out of altogether 62,059 tests, including 45,094 RTPCR/CBAAT/True Nat tests, the bulletin stated.

A total of 9,706 people recovered from Covid in Delhi over the last 24 hours. There are currently 62,783 active cases in the city and 39,211 of these patients are under home isolation, the bulletin said.

Over 13.09 lakh people have recovered from this contagious, deadly viral infection so far, it stated.

Of the 24,144 hospital beds meant for coronavirus patients in the city, 7,895 are vacant at present, according to the bulletin.

The Covid situation has been improving in Delhi with the number of cases and positivity rate going down steadily over the past few days.

However, earlier in the day, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal extended the ongoing lockdown in the city till May 24, saying the gains made so far in combating the coronavirus cannot be lost due to relaxations now.

The varsity had opted for an online open book examination for the final-year post-graduate and undergraduate stu-

Delhi state average of 871. The literacy rate is 84.46 per cent (male 91.58 per cent and female 76.40 per cent).

However, its residents are deprived of easily accessible Covid testing facilities and medicines with proper instructions of a seasoned doctor of any government or any reputed private hospital despite the pandemic.

Most of the residents of Qutab Garh told IANS that "almost every house has more than two patients suffering from fever and cough, and many of them have all the Covid-19 symptoms".

"But only a few could manage to go for Covid-19 tests."

Harjeet Pal, who is in his 50s, told IANS that "there are

one government hospital in Ferozpur Bangar area and two Delhi government dispensaries in the radius of 5 km but the crowd gathering at these spots might be a virus spreader".

"So, most of the people avoid visiting these government facilities to get themselves tested at any government facility where huge crowd is seen everyday standing in long queues," said Siddheshwar Prashad, another resident, whose three family members have mild fever for almost a week now.

Prasad said if there is facility in the village, he would be the first person to get his family tested for Covid as it would be a safe option.

He said that over 50 to 55 people in the village have lost their lives due to Covid, they have decided to avoid visiting outside the village.

## DUTA requests for alternative mode of evaluation for students

PTI

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

dents, despite opposition from students and teachers.

In a letter addressed to acting vice-chancellor P C Joshi, the DUTA said that considering the damage caused by the second wave of COVID-19, the university should review its decision regarding examinations.

"With the kind of damage which families have suffered, we feel that the university should review the decision regarding examinations for the terminal semester/year students. The alternate mode adopted for the continuing students may be extended to the terminal semester students as well, it said.

Earlier this month, DU had

announced to postpone the final-year and final semester exams by 15 days.

The exams were supposed to begin from May 15 but will now begin from June 1. They will be in online mode and held in the open book format.

The teachers' body said that the university should use its energy in declaring pending fifth semester/year results so that students can get degrees on time.

The university should pursue the matter with the UGC (University Grants Commission) and MoE (Ministry of Education), if so required, the letter reads.

The teachers' body also said that the students across colleges

and courses were not in a position to submit the internal assessment (IA) given their mental stress and family situations, and demanded this deadline to be relaxed further.

The body said that many teachers are still in the grip of COVID-19 and are finding it difficult to meet the deadlines. They also request that the suspension of classes be continued for another 15 days.

The academic calendar for the continuing students issued in 2020 says that the vacation period starts on May 28. As the body demanded a revised schedule for the deadlines of submissions of IA and examination schedule.

## 'Delhi running out of Covid vaccines'

PTI

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

lakh vaccine doses for age group, of which 41.68 lakh have been administered, Atishi said.

After Sunday evening, the city will have only one day of Covaxin stock and five days of Covishield doses left. We appeal to the central government to make more vaccines available for this category immediately, she said.

The capital has received 8,17 lakh doses for the 18-44 age group so far, of which 5.25 lakh have been used till Sunday morning.

Since there are no Covaxin doses left for this category, all such



left, she said.

We appeal to the Centre to provide more doses of Covaxin and Covishield. If Covaxin cannot be arranged, more doses of Covishield should be given to keep the inoculation drive going at this pace, she said.

A total of 44.90 lakh doses have been administered in Delhi so far, according to the latest vaccination bulletin released by the government.

The Delhi government had received over 1.73 lakh doses of Covishield on Saturday.

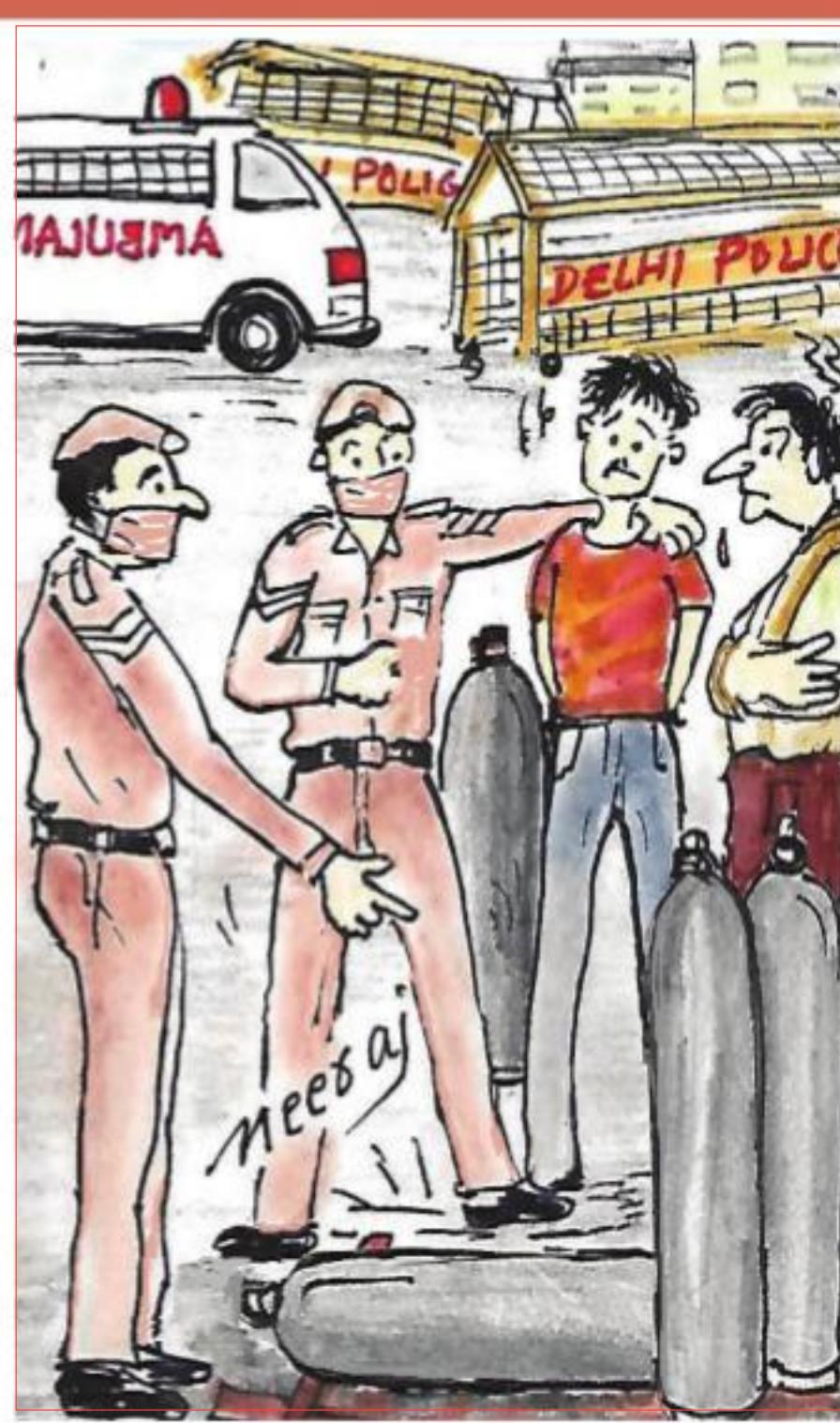
A government panel has recommended increasing the gap between two doses of Covishield COVID-19 vaccine to 12-16 weeks.

Those whose vaccination is due this month will not be administered the vaccine and will only be given the dose according to the new guidelines, a government official said.

Healthcare workers, frontline staff and those aged above 45 are being vaccinated at 470 centres, whereas beneficiaries in the 18-44 age group are being inoculated at 353 centres.

## HEALTHCARE COLLAPSE

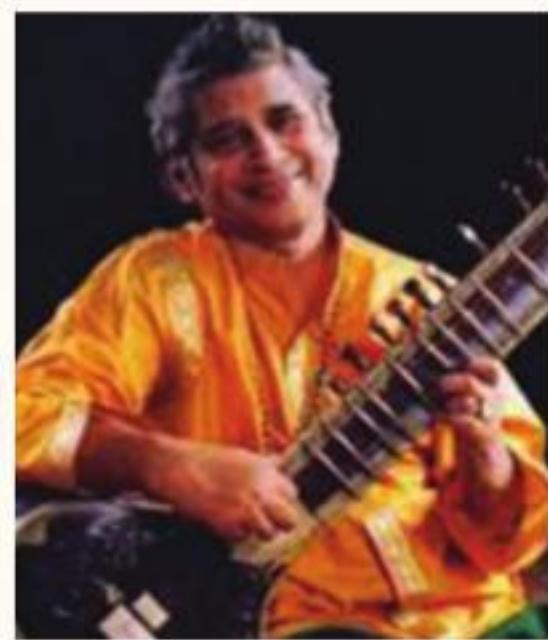
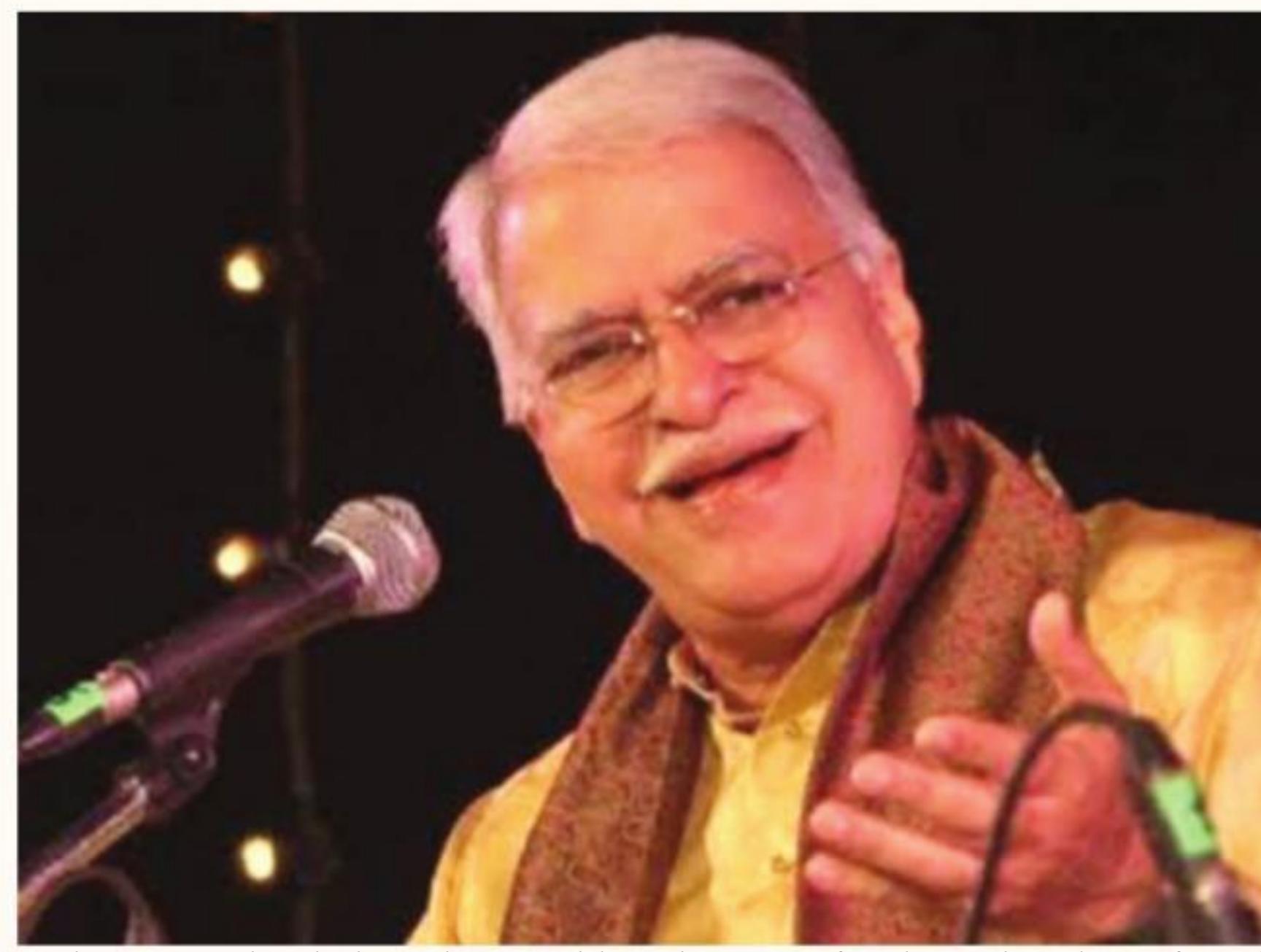
Delhi has suffered much from Covid-19. While the pandemic made the national capital run for cover, it also let it see itself in a mirror. Delhi saw what it was, and not how it looked. People ran for hospital beds from one corner of the city to another, only to learn later that beds were available only in the "black market." There were citizens of the metropolis who considered the pandemic an opportunity to make quick money, and were offering to "arrange" beds at a price. Taxis charged Rs 50,000 or more for a "round-trip" of all hospitals in the city to "help" people locate a hospital with a bed for their ailing relatives. Much of these journeys were a waste of time as most hospitals on the taxi routes did not have ICU beds or beds with oxygen facilities. When people did not find suitable beds in Delhi, they hired cabs for Panipat, Sonipat, Panchkula, Chandigarh, Mohali, Bathinda, Ludhiana and Amritsar. Earlier people came to Delhi for treatment from these places, and other parts of the country, and now Delhi'sites were travelling hundreds of kilometres away for the same purpose. Medicines and critical equipment too were in short supply, and it appeared this was because the administration had failed to guess how far the cases would rise. While there were reports confirming this, police were simultaneously making arrests and seizures which gave another story. People were selling the life-saving Remdesivir at huge prices. Those who lost their relatives while awaiting treatment, wondered whether the deaths were avoidable if they had found the medicines in time. A group was found black-marketing in Delhi. Tocilizumab Covid injections stolen from a government dispensary in Faridabad. The city had a good view of itself in the tragedy that overwhelmed it in the last one year. Anti-social elements took full advantage of the shortage of medical oxygen supplies in the city hospitals. Busting a few rackets, police exposed this. Some people went to the extent of selling re-painted fire-extinguishers as oxygen cylinders. Police arrested three persons from Alipur



for doing exactly this. Incredible as it may sound, a seizure of 532 fire extinguishers was made, and these had been painted to look like oxygen cylinders! A few days before this, police arrested four persons including two brothers of Janakpuri and seized 115 oxygen concentrators from them. They were selling them at Rs 1.10 lakh each. More such rackets came to light in the next few days when raids were made at posh restaurants in Lodi Colony and Khan Market. Several hundred oxygen concentrators were seized. Each oxygen concentrator was said to be fetching Rs 70,000 to their suppliers. The Crime Branch was asked to probe the case. The Covid crisis exposed the city had only a few ambulances fitted with ventilators or other emergency equipment. The private ambulance services believed the pandemic was an opportunity of a lifetime, and fleeced the needy as much as possible. Not just hospital beds, ambulances or critical equipment, the city did not have enough crematoria or burial grounds for the last rites of the Covid-

dead. Visits to the crematoria used to be solemn occasions where one bid farewell to one's loved ones. Certainly, these were not the places where one had to enter after obtaining a valid "token" for the final rites. People were told not to bring bodies for cremation without pre-fixed "appointments." Often wood was not available in a sufficient quantity to burn the bodies. Parking lots were added to the cremation spaces to clear the rush for cremations. Not just for the living, Covid had exposed the lack of infrastructure even for the dead. While there was no end to depressing news, several incidents showed the city had kind souls too willing to help others without reward. A report brought out the story of a 56-year-old Delhi Police ASI Rakesh, father of three, on duty at Lodhi Road crematorium since 13 April, having helped in performing the last rites for hundreds of bodies. He had lit the pyres himself for over 50 of them. His Covid "duties" left no choice for him but to postpone his daughter's marriage that was fixed earlier.

# Rest in peace, maestros!



The ongoing pandemic has been ruthless and relentless in its second phase of devastation. There is not a family unaffected, nor a friend spared, from this unrelenting, ruthless "March of Death". Delhi has lost three of its eminent citizens, who adopted this city by choice and enriched its cultural environments like none other. Pandit Rajan Mishra, scion of the Benaras Gharana of Hindustani Classical Music, along with his brother Pandit Sajan Mishra moved to the city in the late 1970s and did not look back since then. Setting up home "Swaranjan" at Ramesh Nagar in West Delhi, the vocalist brothers took the world of classical music

by storm and charmed generations of music lovers not only by their enviable repertoire of Khayal and Bhajans but also by dint of their loving nature, a true product of what the iconic and quintessential 'Benarsi' stands for. The Padma Bhushan and Sangeet Natak Academy Awards that came their way, among so many other prestigious awards, were but minor embellishments in their ultimate musical quest. What a monumental tragedy that the city failed to provide Rajan ji the necessary wherewithal when he was gasping for his last breaths. Debrabrat Chaudhuri, more affectionately known as "Debu da" in New Delhi, moved to the Capital even earlier, in the 1960s from Calcutta. A gifted sitarist and pupil of Ustad Mushtaq Ali Khan of the Senia Gharana, Debu worked hard to establish himself as a front-ranking sitarist in an age dominated by the likes of Pt. Ravi Shankar, Ustad Vilayat Khan, Pt. Nikhil Banerjee and Ustad Abdul Halim Jaffer Khan. He did not restrict himself only as a performer on All India Radio but took to teaching and established almost single-handedly the Faculty of Music and Fine Arts of Delhi University of which he was the Dean till the early 1990s. His humble home at Chittaranjan Park was a melting pot of eminent Delhi musicians and

musicologists like the legendary Naina Devi ji, Dr. Sumati Mutatkar, the Dagar Brothers, Ustad Shafaat Ahmed Khan and many others. A Padma Bhushan recipient, he handed down his art to his only son Prateek, who followed his father's footsteps to become the Head of the Music Department of Delhi University. It was the cruel hand of fate which snatched away both father and son within a space of six days last week, after moving from pillar to post for a hospital bed, leaving the Delhi cultural scene much the poorer and with a sense of shame that as a people of this capital city we failed to save these precious lives with timely help and succour.

## SERVING HUMANITY

At a time when most people are indoors amid the second wave of Coronavirus, many members of the Sikh community are out on the streets of Delhi doing what they do best — serving humanity. Volunteers of Sikh gurdwaras and various Sikh organisations are everywhere in the capital, providing every possible help to Covid patients. When the oxygen crisis was at its peak in Delhi earlier

this month, different Sikh organisations got busy in bringing O2 from far-away places for the people of Delhi. They started giving oxygen free to the people in parking areas, parks and other public places at a time when it was not available even in the "black market". The Sikh volunteers were not concerned about the fact that they could also get infected by going close to a Covid patient. "We have been taught since childhood to serve humanity even at the

cost of our lives. Be it any kind of tragedy — natural disasters or the Coronavirus pandemic, we have always served the people with love and will continue to do so. I cannot let the fear come in my way of helping people during a crisis," a young Sikh volunteer said. Several gurdwaras have taken 'langar' or community kitchen outside the four walls of the gurdwara premises to home-deliver food to Covid patients and their families, who are unable to

cook at home. To ensure the safety of volunteers during food distribution, the gurdwaras are providing them personal protective equipment (PPE) kits, sanitisers and other essentials. Several major gurdwaras have created bed-spaces to accommodate patients who were being turned away by hospitals. Maybe, it's time for other voluntary organisations and NGOs to learn from the Sikh institutions and do their bit in grappling with the crisis.

## TAILPIECE

The loud wailing of sirens by hospital ambulances sends shivers down your spine these days, especially if the vehicle halts in your immediate neighbourhood," a youngster recently wrote to his WhatsApp group friends.

Contributed by: Bhaskar Roy, Deepak Razdan and Ashok Tuteja

# India

## 1,074 die of Covid in HP over 4 weeks

2nd Covid wave in HP proves to be deadlier; average age of its victims who have died since April dips to 59-60

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 16 MAY

The raging second coronavirus wave has proved to be more fatal in Himachal Pradesh with more than 50 per cent of 1,074 Covid deaths being reported in the last four weeks. The state with the average age of the deceased coming down to 59-60 years as compared to earlier average age of 62.2 years.

A total of 124 Covid deaths had been reported in the state till 14 May due to Covid since March 2020 when the first case was reported in the state, while 1,074 deaths alone had been reported in the last four weeks.

"Among deceased, 1,337 (61.2 per cent) are male while 848 (38.8 per cent) are female patients and the mean age of the people who had died since the start of pandemic is 62.2 years," Dr Nipun Jindal, mission director, HP National Health Mission said.

Jindal said among the total deaths, comorbidities were present in 1,196 (54.7 per cent) persons while 989 persons (45.3 per cent) didn't have any comorbidities.

The majority of co-morbidities include cases of dia-



betes mellitus 594 (49.6 per cent), hypertension 528 (44.1 per cent), chronic kidney disease 119 (9.9 per cent) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 89 (7.4 per cent).

The highest number of deaths i.e. 613 had been recorded in Kangra district, he said, adding around 88 per cent of deaths occurred in those persons in the age group of 45 years and above.

He further stated that 8 patients had died in the age

group of below 15 years, 29 in 16-29 years age group, 222 in 30-44 years age group, 860 in 45-74 years age group and 474 in above 75 years age group in the state. "The average age of the people who have died due to the Covid-19 in the past four weeks is around 59-60 years.

If this is compared to the mean age of people dying in the whole pandemic which is 62.2 years as on today, the data shows that comparatively younger people are dying in

the second wave," he stated. He added the number of people dying due to Covid earlier was that of persons with co-morbidities but now the number of deaths of non-co-morbid patients was steadily increasing.

"This may be due to the vaccination which was prioritised for the people for 45 above age group persons with co-morbidities and this leads us to conclude that there is the need to increase vacci-

nation to prevent Covid related mortality," he added.

He added that Himachal had a fatality rate of 1.42 per cent with the present recovery rate coming down to 73.4 per cent which was around 98 per cent till 28 February.

Meanwhile, the HP government has notified 48 Covid dedicated hospitals to provide better health facilities to the patients in government and private sector in the state, a state government official said today. He said the Covid dedicated hospitals were providing all the required facilities for the treatment of corona patients.

"Adequate number of oxygen cylinders, Remdesivir injections, oxygenated beds, ICU beds and life saving medicines have been made available in these hospitals and more than one lakh patients have benefited through these hospitals till date.

Besides, as many as 5,895 D-type oxygen cylinders and 1,839 B-type oxygen cylinders while 3,989 Remdesivir injections are available in the state," he said. The official also said that the number of Covid beds available in various districts was around 3,291 including 264 ICU beds, 2,324 oxygenated beds and 703 common beds.

Currently, 207 patients are in ICUs, 1,900 on oxygenated beds and 189 on general beds, he added.

## Nadda flags off 17 medical vans for HP for Covid care

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 16 MAY

Bharatiya Janata Party national chief J P Nadda along with Union minister of state for corporate affairs and finance Anurag Thakur on Sunday flagged off 17 mobile medical vans (units) carrying supplies to tackle the COVID surge in Himachal Pradesh.

Nadda said the 17 mobile medical units were part of Saansad Mobile Swasthya Seva, an initiative launched by Anurag Thakur three years ago to provide accessible rural healthcare services to people in his parliamentary constituency Hamirpur. "These vans will cater to 12 districts of the state and strengthen the hands of the local COVID relief efforts by providing 3 lakh 3-ply masks, 50,000 N-95 masks, gloves, face shields, oxygen masks, PPE kits, oxygen regulators, nasal cannula and NRM," he added.

Nadda further stated that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Anurag Thakur had been working to provide resources and relief in Himachal Pradesh since the COVID pandemic began.

Anurag Thakur said these medical resources will strengthen relief efforts in Himachal and save lives. "The initiative began three years ago and has provided free medical tests and treatment



to over 5.5 lakh people with over 65 per cent women availing the health facilities.

These units continued to provide services even during the Covid period with the help of a motivated team of doctors, nurses and lab technicians," he added.

HPBJP chief Suresh Kashiyap thanked Nadda and Anurag Thakur for this move in this difficult time of COVID and said Thakur had been ensuring swift customs clearance for Covid relief materials so that it reaches beneficiaries on time.

"CBI has brought down its clearance time to 8-10 minutes and there have been a few instances where Thakur himself has taken to coordinating clearances through the night, receiving SOS calls," he added.

sons who have booked their schedule to come to the vaccination center as per their schedule only, to avoid unnecessary crowds at these centers. He also urged them to observe COVID appropriate behaviour at the centers and vaccination will be given only to those who have booked their schedule on the COWIN portal beforehand.

## Vaccination for 18-44 to begin in HP from today

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
SHIMLA, 16 MAY

Over 21,000 persons in the age group of 18-44 years have registered for Covid vaccination drive for 18-44 years age group which will start from Monday in Himachal Pradesh.

A state government official said 213 vaccination centers had

been established in the state for inoculating eligible persons in the 18-44 years age group.

"Togetherselves registered

and for booking, appointment sessions were published on COWIN portal throughout the state on 15 May and 21,090 persons booked their schedule till now," he added.

He appealed to all the per-



A medical worker inoculates a dose of the corona vaccine at a vaccination centre in Bengaluru on Sunday.

AGENCIES

**Prison shooting:** A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking direction for a CBI or NIA probe, supervised by the top court, into the alleged killing of three under-trial prisoners in UP's Chitrakoot district jail. PTI

**Heavy rains lash Kerala:** The water level in many dams across Kerala showed a rising trend on Sunday even as cyclone Tauktae moved away from the state's coast after wrecking havoc. The IMD has issued orange alerts on Sunday in Ernakulam, Idukki and Malappuram. PTI

**Tug vessel in distress:** Another tug vessel, Coromandel, with nine occupants hit the rocks off Kaup coast on Sunday, sources said. The Indian Coast Guard is making efforts amid raging waves to rescue the crew after they sent a video message seeking help, Coast Guard Karnataka commander DIG S B Venkatesh said. PTI

## ISIS ideology: NIA conducts searches in TN over social media posts

CHENNAI, 16 MAY

The NIA on Sunday carried out searches at four locations in Tamil Nadu's Madurai in connection with a case relating to incriminating Facebook posts by an extremist advocating the ideology of the Islamic state terror group and fundamentalist organisation Hizb-Ut-Tahrir, an official said.

The case pertains to uploading some incriminating posts on Facebook by Mohammad Iqbal, a Madurai resident, who was arrested in December last year, he said.

In the social media posts, Iqbal, an extremist, advocated the ideology of the ISIS terror group and Hizb-Ut-Tahrir, a fundamentalist organisation, the official of the premier investigation agency said.

The posts on the Facebook page titled 'ThoongaVizhigal Rendu' in Kazimar Street was uploaded by Iqbal for denigrating a particular community, the official said, adding they were designed to incite communal disharmony amongst different religious groups, in a manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order.

The searches were conducted at Kazimar Street, K Pudur, Pethaniyapuram and Mehaboob Palayam in Madurai district.

During the operation, 16 digital devices, including a laptop, hard disks, mobile phones, memory cards, SIMs, pen drives and many incriminating books/pamphlets/documents have been recovered, the official said.

Further investigation in the case continues, he added. PTI

## Centre increases O2, vax quota for T'gana

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD, 16 MAY

The Centre has agreed to increase the quota of oxygen, Remdesivir injections and supply of vaccines for Telangana after the state stopped inter-state ambulances, particularly those from Andhra Pradesh on the plea that its resources were limited.

Telangana had cited its limited stock of oxygen and critical drugs to stop admission of patients from other states in private hospitals in Hyderabad as the allocation from the Centre was hardly enough to meet the needs of local residents.

It was only after the High Court stepped in that the state relented and allowed the ambulances stranded at Telangana-Andhra Pradesh border after the death of two patients. Following this Union railway minister Piyush Goyal spoke to chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao on instructions of Prime minister Narendra Modi.

According to the chief minister's office the allocation of oxygen was increased by 200 MT while that of Remdesivir was almost doubled. He also assured that more vaccines would be sent to the state with priority given to those requiring second doses.

### Funeral expenses

Andhra Pradesh government has sanctioned Rs 15,000 on death of each Covid-19 patient towards meeting funeral expenses. The order that was issued today came after the state government decided to make treatment free.

for all Covid patients under its health scheme Arogyashri in private hospitals.

The state government issued an order today granting permission to the district collectors to sanction Rs 15,000 to meet the funeral charges of every Covid-19 patient in the year 2021-22.

There are reports of families of Covid patients being fleeced in crematoriums by staff or being charged exorbitantly to ferry the bodies for performing the last rites.

After cases of bodies of Covid patients being dumped on roadside surfaced the state government decided to extend monetary help towards meeting funeral expenses. The state, currently enforcing partial lockdown to tackle the pandemic, might go for total lockdown due to a continuing spike in cases.

### Raghu Rama

YSRCP rebel Raghu Rama Krishna Raju who was lodged in Guntur jail will be re-examined by the physicians of a private hospital to establish whether the injuries on his feet were inflicted by police while he was in custody.

The High Court gave its direction after the medical board headed by Superintendent of Guntur General Hospital submitted that those were not external injuries. However, the state had opposed the direction saying the private hospital was owned by TDP.

The arrest of the Narsapuram MP on charges of sedition and creating disharmony among religious groups has been opposed by all Opposition political parties.

## Tauktae hits 73 villages in K'taka

4 deaths reported; 318 people evacuated so far and 298 people are taking shelter in 11 relief camps

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
BENGALURU, 16 MAY

**W**ith Cyclone Tauktae wreaking havoc in the coastal and surrounding districts of Karnataka, four deaths have been reported in the state so far, officials said on Sunday.

According to a situation report by Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority officials on Sunday morning, 73 villages, 17 talukas in seven districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Shivamogga, Chikmagalur and Hassan have been affected by the cyclone in the past 24 hours.

The rainfall was accompanied by gale winds speed reaching 70 to 80 km/hour, gusting at times upto 90 km/hour along and off Karнатaka coast, it said.

Heavy to extremely heavy rainfall was observed over six districts, three coastal districts (Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Uttara Kannada) and three Malnad districts (Shivamogga, Kodagu and Chikmagalur) in the past 24 hours.

The rainfall was accompanied by gale winds speed reaching 70 to 80 km/hour, gusting at times upto 90 km/hour along and off Karнатaka coast, it said.

Among the four deaths reported so far one each are from Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Chikmagalur and Shivamogga, officials said.

While one fisherman who went to tie his boat died in Uttara Kannada as he got hit by another boat, a person died in Udupi due to electricity mishap. One death each were reported in Chikmagalur and Shivamogga due to house collapse and lightning, respectively.

A total of 318 people have been evacuated so far, as per the situation report, and 298 people are currently taking shelter in 11 relief camps.

Damages to a total of 112 houses, 139 poles, 22 transformers, 4 ha of horticulture crops have been reported.

Meanwhile, chief minister B S Yediyurappa on Sunday asked in-charge ministers of coastal districts and deputy commissioners there to visit

the affected areas and carry out rescue and relief works.

The chief minister has directed the officials to call the ministers concerned or him directly if need of any emergency assistance from the state government, it said.

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The rainfall was accompanied by gale winds speed reaching 70 to 80 km/hour, gusting at times upto 90 km/hour along and off Karнатaka coast, it said.

Heavy to extremely heavy rainfall was observed over the state mainly over coastal and Malnad districts last night.

There has been coastal erosion due to rough seas along the coast, roads along the shore have been damaged, the report said, there has also been uprooting of trees due to gale winds and damage to poles and transform-

ers. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned light to moderate rainfall at most places, with heavy falls at isolated places in the coastal and adjoining ghat districts of the state on Sunday.

Home minister Basavaraj Bommai has said, around 1,000 trained personnel from fire force, police, coastal police, home guards, SDRF have been deployed in the three coastal districts.



A tree collapsed due to strong winds during the formation of cyclone Tauktae, in Panjim, on Sunday. IANS

## Cyclone causes disruption in Goa, one dead

PANJAI, 16 MAY

One person was crushed under an uprooted tree, as normal life was thrown out of gear due to the Cyclone Tauktae with heavy rains and gusty winds causing heavy damage across the state, which has suffered from a major power outage for several hours now. According to power minister Nilesh Cabral, feeder electrical lines from other states have been damaged, which has resulted in a severe power outage. Fire and Emergency Services personnel are on the process of clearing roads and repairing

electricity cables which have been damaged by the uprooted trees.

The Goa branch of the Indian Meteorological Department has predicted that the severe cyclonic storm will last till 17 May with wind speeds in the range of 100 to 175 km per hour. IANS

## TENDER

### HIMACHAL PRADESH NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed item rate tenders are hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, Hamirpur Division HPPWD, Hamirpur in form No. 6 & 8, on behalf of Governor of H.P. for the following works from the contractors of appropriate class enlisted with HP.PWD. The tender shall be opened in the presence of the contractors / firms or their representative who wish to be present.

#### TIME SCHEDULE OF TENDER:-

1. Date and time of receipt of application for tender form:- 29.05.2021 up to 4.00 P.M.

2. Date and time of issue of tender form :- 03.06.2021 up to 3.00 P.M.

3. Date and time of receipt of tenders:- 04.05.2021 up to 10.30 A.M.

4. Date and time of opening of tenders:- 04.06.2021 at 11.30 A.M.

The request for issue of tenders should be on the PRESCRIBED APPLICATION FORM which can be obtained from the office of undersigned and tenders will be issued to only those contractors who qualify the criteria after the scrutiny of application forms by the Committee constituted for this purpose.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Estimated cost	EMD	Time Limit	Cost of tender	Eligible class of contractor
1.	Restoration of rain damages Baru Hamirpur via Anu road Km. 0/0 to 6/250. (SH:- P/L 80mm thick Interlocking concrete block pavement at RD. 05/095 to 05/632.6)	98066.00	2000.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
2.	Missing C.D. on Daruhi Burnwar road Km. 0/0 to 02/090. (SH:- C/O 900mm R.C.C. Hume Pipe culvert at RD. 01870 with wing wall)	98984.00	2000.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
3.	C/O missing CD for improvement of NH-70 Kaloor Kohla Nadau Tili Bilvakeshwar road from Km. 0/0 to 10/360. (SH:- C/O Cement concrete pavement parapets and U-Shape drain leg No.-03 Km. 0/110 to 0/160)	99842.00	2000.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
4.	A/R & M/O various roads under Kehdoo Section. (SH:- Dressing of berms).	50,400.00	1100.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
5.	Improvement of Lambtoo to Nutra via Dugli Dabbera road Km. 0/0 to 5/0. (SH:- C/o Retaining wall with W-Metal Crash Barrier at RD 1/615 to 1/633)	302683.00	6100.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
6.	C/o link road from Dhamrai Hamirpur road to Middle School Bagru km 0/0 to 1/200. (SH:- C/o Protection work and drain at various RDs). under SCSP.	296774.00	6000.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
7.	Balance work of old MPW Training School in the Academic Block under Campus Radha Krishnan Medical College Hamirpur (H.P.). (SH:- Providing and laying 60mm thick interlocking paver block, Breast Wall, Edge Wall & Grating over newly constructed U-Shape Drain).	402439.00	8100.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
8.	A/R & M/O Circle at Hamirpur. (SH:- Balance work of C/o Composite stone masonry wall along the approach road to circle).	276811.00	5600.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
9.	Restoration of rain damages on Mair to Town Bhari road km 0/0 to 5/0. (SH:- Construction of Retaining wall at RD 1/40 to 1/45 & Retaining wall at RD 1/800 to 1/808).	373792.00	7500.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
10.	A/R & M/O link road to village Dhatal km 0/0 to 1/200. (SH:- Construction of breast wall at RD 0/722 to 0/737 and V-Shape drain km 0/0 to 0/390).	268142.00	5400.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
11.	A/R & M/O Hamirpur Jahu road. (SH:- Providing and laying 25mm thick mastic asphalt over bridge: (a) Jamli Khad bridge, (b) Tropka Khad, (c) Mulana Khad, (d) Gudwin Khad (e) Lambloo Khad bridge and A/R & M/O Gesota Kehdoo road. (SH:- Providing and laying 25mm thick Mastic Asphalt over Gesota Khad bridge and A/R & M/O Harson Langon road. (SH:- Providing and laying 25mm thick Mastic Asphalt over Gudwin Khad bridge).	370032.00	7400.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
12.	Restoration of rain damages Mulana Chhneor via Trind road km 0/0 to 1/975. (SH:- Laying of CC pavement at RD 1/840 to 1/930 & Retaining wall at RD 1/800 to 1/808).	99,578.00	2000.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
13.	Repair and maintenance of various bridges in Nadaun Sub-Division (Section Rail). (SH:- Providing and laying 25mm thick Mastic Asphalt over Range Rail on Kohla road at RD 0/153 to 0/176 and Patta Jalan Kohla road at RD 2/705 to 2/735).	172578.00	3,500.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
14.	Repair and maintenance of various bridges in Nadaun Sub-Division (Section Nadaun). (SH:- Providing and laying 25mm thick Mastic Asphalt over bridge on Man Khad on Kohla to C.H.C. Nadaun road at RD 2/400).	446096.00	9,000.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
15.	Restoration of rain damages on link road Shankar Sohr road km 0/0 to 3/165. (SH:- Construction of retaining wall at RD 1/285 to 1/299 and 1/299 to 3/14 R.H.S.).	396933.00	8,000.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
16.	Construction of link road from Barda More near Guga Mandir to Main village Khaghal km 0/0 to 0/350. (SH:- Construction of PCC retaining wall at RD 0/200 to 0/215).	77,341.00	1600.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
17.	Repair and maintenance of (i) Bridge over Churni Nullah near Jhanjali Neri Kamali Baileta road. (ii) Bridge over Kunah Khad on Jhanjali Neri Kamali Baileta road. (iii) Bridge over Riyalan Nullah on Masiliana Kuswar road. (SH:- Providing and laying 25mm thick mastic asphalt wearing course).	37957.00	7600.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D
18.	Special repair of Sanskrit Sadan at Jhanjali in Distt. Hamirpur. (H.P.). (SH:- Providing and fixing M.S.B. sheet ceiling in Porch, replacement of damaged gutter and fixing of broken glass etc.).	173047.00	3500.00	One Month	350/-	Class -D

1. The earnest money in the shape of National Saving Certificate, Time deposit account in any of the post office in HP / FDR of any bank duly pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, Hamirpur Division, HPPWD., Hamirpur must be accompanied with the application for receipt of tender form along with cost of form. Tender application received without earnest money will be rejected.

2. The contractors / firms should possess the following documents (photo copy to be attached with application for obtaining the tenders documents):



*The loyal and obedient Union health minister will flatly deny any shortage of vaccines*

**FORMER UNION MINISTER AND SENIOR CONGRESS LEADER P. CHIDAMBARAM**

TAKING A JIBE AT HEALTH MINISTER HARSH VARDHAN OVER THE SHORTAGE OF VACCINES



UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath arrives to address media during his visit to Primary Health Center of village Chhaprauli in Gautam Budh Nagar on Sunday. ■ AGENCIES

**IED diffused:** Security forces on Sunday defused an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) that was planted by terrorists in Pulwama district to target the troops. Intense search operation has been launched to nab the terrorists. The Army and police on Saturday recovered 10 kgs gelatin sticks and arrested some. ■ SNS

**Pak drone spotted:** A suspected Pakistani drone was seen hovering along the International Border (IB) here, prompting security forces to launch a massive search operation to check if it had dropped anything inside the Indian territory, officials said on Sunday. ■ PTI

**Tigress found dead:** A radio-collared tigress was found dead in Madhya Pradesh's Panna Tiger Reserve, a senior forest official said on Sunday. This is the fourth tiger death reported from the state in 10 days. ■ PTI

**Free WiFi:** The railways has enabled free WiFi at its 6000th station as the facility went live at Hazaribagh town of Jharkhand. The first WiFi facility at the Mumbai Railway station in 2016, reaching its 5000th station, at Midnapore in West Bengal. ■ PTI

## Double mutant variant responsible for Covid surge in Jammu: NCDC

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
JAMMU, 16 MAY

As Jammu division registered 237 Covid-19 related deaths in past six days, the New Delhi-based National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) said that the B.1.617 variant is responsible for surge of the virus in the Union Territory.

Following death of about 106 infected patients in the Government Medical College (GMC) of Jammu in the past five days, the samples were sent to NCDC for further investigation.

The GMC said that as per the recent sequencing data analysis of Covid-19 patients received from NCDC, B.1.617 variant is responsible for the surge in Covid-19 cases in Jammu division of J&K UT.

Principal and Dean of GMC Dr. Shashi Sudhan Sharma said, "The Department of Microbiology at GMC is coordinating with NCDC New Delhi for routine sequencing of positive sam-

# PM speaks to CMs of UP, Pondy Chhgarh, Rajasthan on Covid

Stresses the need for Centre and states to work together to save people from Covid second wave

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday spoke to the chief ministers of four states, including Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath, over Covid-19 management measures and vaccination drive.

Besides Uttar Pradesh CM, the Prime Minister, in a telephonic conversation, also discussed issues of pandemic with Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel, Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot and Puducherry CM N. Rangasamy. The PM told the states that the Centre would continue to cooperate in the fight against Covid-19 pandemic which so far has infected 2,46,84,077 people across the country, including 36,18,458 active cases and 2,70,284 deaths.

The PM also suggested the state to notify the Centre from time to time, whatever the need may be. He also discussed on cases of corona infection, recovery rate, number of ICU beds, treatment resources in Covid hospitals and availability of oxygen.

Modi further stressed the need for the Centre and the states to work together to save the people from the second wave of the deadly disease that infected 3,11,170 new people and claimed 4,077 lives in last 24 hours.

The CMs briefed the Prime Minister about the recovery rate, corona curfew, temporary covid hospital, public awareness campaign, vaccination and availability of oxygen plants in their states.

The PM assured the CMs of these states that the Central government will provide all possible help to them in this hour of crisis. Prime Minister Modi emphasised on increasing the rate of vaccination.

Since the third Covid wave has accelerated, Prime Minister Modi constantly make

calls to the chief ministers almost every day and takes information about Covid situation and treatment facilities in these states.

**Over 20 cr vaccine given to states/UTs free of cost**

Over 20 crore vaccine doses have been provided to states/UTs free of cost by the Centre so far and more than 1.84 crore doses are still available with them to administer to people, an official statement said on Sunday.

According to the Health and Family Welfare Ministry statement, the states/UTs will get about 51 lakh doses in next three days as vaccination forms an integral component of the comprehensive strategy of the government for containment and management of the pandemic.

"Government of India has been supporting the nationwide vaccination drive by providing Covid Vaccines free of cost to the States and UTs, in addition to several efforts to ramp up its production and supply," it said.

It said that implementation of the Liberalised and Accelerated Phase 3 strategy of Covid-19 vaccination has started from 1 May, and under it, every month 50 per cent of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be procured by the Centre, which would continue to make these doses available to the states/UTs totally free of cost as was being done earlier.

The Centre has so far provided more than 20 crore vaccine doses (20,28,09,250) to states/UTs free of cost. Out of this, the total consumption, calculated based on average up to May 14, including wastage is 18,43,67,772 doses (as per data available at 7 p.m. on Saturday). More than 1.84 crore vaccine doses (1,84,41,478) are still available with the states/UTs.



People visit a crowded market during relaxation hours from Covid-induced lockdown, in Hyderabad on Sunday. ■ AGENCIES

## Women offer prayers to 'Corona Mai' in UP

**INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE**  
VARANASI, 16 MAY

Women in the villages of Varanasi and Kushinagar have now defied the Corona virus and have started worshipping 'Corona Mai' to lessen her fury and save people from dying.

The women, on Sunday, lined up to offer prayers to 'Corona Mai' in Kushinagar district.

In Varanasi, women are coming together in groups on the Ghats to offer prayers and appease the 'Corona Mai'.

Surili Devi of Kushinagar said that they would offer prayers for 21 days to appease the 'Corona Mai' and were confident that the pandemic would recede.

When asked who prescribed them this spiritual method to check the deadly virus, she said, 'A number of pandits have said that we should offer



prayers to stop the Corona virus.'

She said that everyone was confident that the prayers would work and Corona would go away from their villages.

Women who are lining up to pray for hours, are not maintaining social distancing.

"When we are praying to Corona Mai, there is no need for anything else. The Corona Mai will bless us and cure people," said Ishwari, another devotee.

## Chidambaram questions govt on fall in daily vax jabs

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

Former Union minister and senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram on Sunday questioned the Narendra Modi government on the decline in the numbers of daily vaccination while taking a jibe at Health Minister Harsh Vardhan over the shortage of vaccines.

"Why is the number of vaccinations administered going down every day? It was only 11,60,000 doses on Friday, bringing down significantly the daily average of May. It is a far cry from the 42 lakh doses administered on 2 April. The only reason and explanation is shortage of vaccines." Chidambaram said.

Vardhan earlier reviewed public health response to Covid-19 and progress of vaccination in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. ■ TANS

## NEWS IN SHORT



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma monitoring Covid-19 patients at Guwahati Medical College and Hospital. ■ AGENCIES

**HP mobile medical unit:** BJP national chief J P Nadda along with Union minister Anurag Thakur on Sunday flagged off 17 Asptal mobile medical vans (units) carrying supplies to tackle Covid pandemic in Himachal Pradesh. "These vans will cater to 12 districts and strengthen the hands of the local COVID relief efforts by providing 3 lakh 3-ply masks, 50,000 N-95 masks, gloves, Face shields, oxygen masks, PPE kits, oxygen regulators, nasal cannula and NRM," Nadda added. ■ SNS

**Second batch Sputnik-V reaches Hyderabad:** As many as 60,000 doses of the second batch of Russia's Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik-V on Sunday landed at Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad, Dr Reddy's Laboratories said. "Please to share that the consignment that arrived today in Hyderabad contains 60,000 doses of the second dose component of the #SputnikV vaccine. Samples from the consignment will be sent for release to the Central Drugs Laboratory," the drug maker tweeted. ■ PTI

**Remdesivir drug:** Anti-viral drug Remdesivir would be made available directly to private hospitals to avoid overcrowding in places designated for its prescription based sale by state authorities to the kin of Covid-19 patients, the Tamil Nadu government said here on Sunday. Effective 18 May, a facility would be made available to private hospitals to register their drug requirement in a portal and only their representatives should collect the medicine from sale depots. ■ PTI

**Peoples Conference on Covid-19 vaccine:** J&K Peoples Conference has termed the paucity of Covid-19 vaccines in Kashmir extremely worrying, stating that if immediate remedial measures aren't taken, the scarcity of vaccines can put the lives at risk. PC general secretary Imran Reza Ansari highlighted how health centers are battling vaccine shortage and that many centers have been closed due to unavailability of vaccines. Ansari said 208 jabs were administered to the people in Kashmir in the last 24 hours while as in Jammu it is 2,000 in 48 hours. ■ SNS

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of passengers that the cancellation period of following earlier announced cancelled trains due to operational reasons, has been extended upto 24.05.2021 as under:-

### EXTENSION OF CANCELLATION OF UNRESERVED MEMU/EMU EXPRESS TRAINS

#### Train No. & Name

04184/04183 Delhi Jn - Tundla Jn - Delhi Jn MEMU Special Express
04417/04418 Hathras Qilah - Delhi Jn - Hathras Qilah MEMU Special Express
04427/04428 Hathras Qilah - Hathras Jn - Hathras Qilah MEMU Special Express
04415/04414 Aligarh Jn - New Delhi - Aligarh Jn EMU Special Express
04420/04419 Ghaziabad - Mathura Jn - Ghaziabad EMU Special Express
04444/04443 New Delhi - Ghaziabad - New Delhi Special Express

For any other information passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

### GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY OF DELHI LABOUR DEPARTMENT, 5-SHAM NATH MARG, DELHI-110054

#### PUBLIC NOTICE

The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979 Act is applicable to every establishment in which five or more inter-State migrant workmen are employed.

All principal employers employing (or have employed during last 12 months) the workers through outsourcing are required to mandatorily register with Labour Department through e-district portal of Govt of NCT of Delhi on the link: <https://edistrict.delhigovt.nic.in/>.

Every interstate migrant workmen shall be issued passbook by the contractor containing details of employment and shall be provided other benefits as provided in the Act. Please fulfil your obligation towards these migrant workers and also furnish details of Migrant Workers to the Labour Department for their benefit.

Labour Department has made operational Shramik Helpline (155214) where a migrant workman can seek assistance and guidance. Sh. Gurmukh Singh, Joint Labour Commissioner (Ph. No: 01125492133 and email: [labdclsw@gmail.com](mailto:labdclsw@gmail.com)) is Nodal Officer in respect of Migrant Workmen and can be contacted for redressal of any grievance.

DIP/Shabdarth/0062/21-22

Labour Commissioner

### BEAST OF BURDEN



A woman walks with her horse along the deserted Dal Lake during strict lockdown imposed in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday. ■ AGENCIES

## No new virus strain behind spate of Covid-19 deaths in AMU, says senior JNMC official

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

ALIGARH, 16 MAY

Genome sequencing of Covid-19 samples has not found any new coronavirus strain behind the infection around the AMU campus, universities said Sunday as another member of their fraternity died.

Professor Abu Qamar, 75, the former dean of the Faculty of Medicine in the Jawaharlal

Nehru Medical College and Hospital died here on Sunday of Covid-19, JNMC Principal Shahid Ali Siddiqui said.

At least 38 AMU teachers, including 17 serving ones, have died of Covid or Covid-like symptoms in the last one month, triggering doubts if any new deadly strain of the virus has been in circulation on the AMU campus.

These doubts also prompted the varsity's JNMC authori-

ties to send Covid-19 samples from the AMU campus and its neighbouring Civil Lines area for genome sequencing to the CSIR-Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in New Delhi.

No new strain of coronavirus has been detected in samples sent for genome sequencing to the CSIR in New Delhi, said a senior JNMC official, in a relief to the hospital's beleaguered staff.

Rajeev Satav was only 46 years old. He rose from the grassroots to holding many responsibilities in a short time due to his unfailing dedication, sincerity and hard work," she said.

Satav (46) was undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Pune after testing coronavirus positive last month and was on ventilator support.

The last rites of the Congress MP will be performed at his ancestral town Kalmunnai in Maharashtra's Hingoli district on Monday, an official said. Satav was born in Pune in September 1974. He was a member of the

leader with huge potential who embodied the ideals of Congress. It's a big loss for us all. My condolences and love to his family," tweeted Rahul Gandhi.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi described Satav as a rising star of the party who was known for his unfailing dedication and sincerity. She said it is also a personal loss for her.

Rajeev Satav died on Sunday morning. He was admitted to the hospital on April 22 with Covid-19 symptoms and was on ventilator support.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi condoled his demise and said it was a big loss to him. "He served as the Indian Youth Congress president, AICC secretary and the party's Gujarat

tested Covid-19 positive and was hospitalised.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi condoled his demise and said it was a big loss to him.

"I'm very sad at the loss of my friend Rajeev Satav. He was

in-charge, she added.

Satav, who hails from Maharashtra's Hingoli district, also leaves behind two children aged 11 and 16.

"Anguished by the passing away of my friend from Parliament, Shri Rajeev Satav Ji. He was an upcoming leader with much potential. Condolences to his family, friends and supporters. Om Shanti," tweeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

## Fraught takeover

For all the grandstanding on Friday in Kathmandu's Sheetal Niwas, the swearing-in of KP Sharma Oli as Prime Minister yet again reaffirms that he is a great survivor in a fractured polity. That fracture has been exposed through the process of dissolution and restoration of the House. The irony of the occasion must be that he is back in the saddle five days after he lost the confidence motion in the House of Representatives, which he had dissolved on December 20. Since then, Nepal has been lunging from crisis to crisis, and as yet there is no indication of a mending of fences between Mr Oli and the other leader of a faction of the Communist Party of Nepal, Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda. Stability in the Himalayan country has been a scarce commodity and arguably Mr Oli now has a better opportunity to display his leadership qualities in the fight against the pandemic, almost relentless across the world. In parallel to the swearing-in ceremony at the presidential palace, hundreds of ordinary citizens had queued up to get hold of one of life's essentials - oxygen. The Prime Minister is said to have skipped the part in the oath where he, as the head of government has to vow to serve the people in accord with the Constitution and the law. Immediately after assuming office, he told his ministers that there is no shortage of beds, an inaccurate statement given that doctors for the past few weeks have been saying that hospitals have run out of beds as well as oxygen and they cannot admit new patients.

There can be no cavil against Mr Oli's reappointment as it has been effected in accord with the Constitution. But it would be signal service to the nation at this juncture if he is riveted to the pandemic that has overwhelmed the country. Nepal on Friday logged 8,467 new coronavirus cases, with 203 deaths. Across the country, coronavirus afflictions have reached 439,658. It has now become apparent that the Oli administration's spectacular failure led the country to such a situation. For when the cases were declining, Oli and his supporters waxed eloquent with the claim Nepal had won the battle against the virus.

Quite palpably it hasn't. Despite being one of the first countries in the world to launch a vaccination drive, Nepal's inoculation programme has hit a snag. The country has not been able to import new consignments amid a blame-game and corruption allegations between the health minister, government officials and "local agents". Mr Oli was so engrossed in saving his chair that his administration did not explore options. The country was heavily reliant on India for vaccines; but the second wave has confounded India and it is looking to the international community for assistance. Nor for that matter has Nepal explored possibilities with China. Mr Oli's inheritance is fraught.

## Fuel flows

There was a collective sigh of relief in the United States of America on Friday with the breaking news that the Colonial Pipeline, so-called, had resumed operations. Swiftly did President Biden pledge an "aggressive response" to the cyber-attack that temporarily shut down the pipeline and warned gasoline stations on Thursday not to engage in what he called "price gouging" as motorists waited for fuel to start flowing back. "Do not, I repeat, do not try to take advantage of consumers during this time," Biden said at the White House. "Nobody should be using this situation for financial gain. That's what the hackers are trying to do. That's what they're about, not us. That's not who we are." The closed pipeline had posed a fresh set of risks to a presidency still in its early stages and not least in the midst of the pandemic. The administration realised it needed to react decisively to fix the problem and ward off Republican critics who were eager to compare Biden to Jimmy Carter, whose presidency more than four decades ago was plagued by a nationwide gas shortage. In the immediate aftermath of Donald Trump's presidency, Joe Biden stepped into the White House as a crisis manager.

He is acutely aware that the possible economic damage from spiking gas prices could jeopardise his agenda and the Democrats' control of Congress. The President assured the nation that he expected the pipeline to resume normal operations by next week and stressed the importance of improving the durability of US infrastructure as part of his \$2.3 trillion jobs plan. While he said the government would take action to stop future cyberattacks, he declined to comment on whether the Colonial Pipeline had paid a ransom. In what is seemingly a clean chit to the Kremlin, he said: "We do not believe the Russian government was involved in this attack, but we do have strong reason to believe that the criminals who did the attack, are living in Russia. We're also going to pursue a measure to disrupt their ability to operate. And our Justice Department has launched a new task force, dedicated to prosecuting ransomware hackers to the full extent of the law."

The administration had been highlighting its efforts to deliver gas to service stations in the affected areas. After ransom-seeking hackers shut down the pipeline last Friday, Biden's team realised the risk of 45 per cent of East Coast gas being unavailable as lines of vehicles began to snake around service stations and drivers loaded up on as much fuel as possible.

The President said on Thursday that the "extraordinary measures" being taken had been enough to fill the fuel tanks of 5 million vehicles in the past few days. Most particularly, service stations in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia had run out of gas. Fuel is flowing again; and this is the parable to be drawn by the cyber-attackers.

# The Gender Gap

The larger vision must be to put women at the core of the developmental process, from the planning to the implementation level. When we prioritize solutions that help women, all people benefit



India has slipped 28 places to rank 140th among 156 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021, becoming the third-worst performer in South Asia. The country had ranked 112th among 153 countries in 2020. Among India's neighbours, Bangladesh ranked 65, Nepal 106, Pakistan 153, Afghanistan 156, Bhutan 130 and Sri Lanka 116.

Gender remains a critically important but largely ignored lens to view development issues across the world. Gender inequality is not only a pressing moral and social issue but also a critical economic challenge. India has a larger relative economic value at stake in advancing gender equality. However, despite significant gains, some gaps remain. Although India has narrowed the divide between men and women in the primary education and health sectors, it doesn't measure well in other major development metrics.

Gender equality has become a highly publicised development goal, but data shows how slow progress has been. The pandemic has magnified the burden of unpaid care work, a responsibility that weighs far more on women than on men.

Women face several constraints that are imposed on them by social institutions, that is, laws, norms, traditions, and codes of conduct that have existed in societies for centuries. Social institutions are the most important single factor determining women's participation in economic activities outside the household.

The subjugation and undervaluing of women is at the root of every social problem that we're trying to solve. Local cultures still allow husbands to place tight restrictions on their wives' mobility and decision-making power. Social conditions haven't changed much: Girls rarely claim their share of an inheritance and are encouraged to give it to men in their family. We are still living in a patriarchal society, where men control the resources so as to be able to control women. The need to do much more to prevent them from doing that.

We know from history that even the most deeply entrenched gender norms can be changed - and that when this is done, economic opportunities for women and their families grow. Unless we all push for greater equality, women will not have the opportunity to reach their full potential, nor will the communities in which they live.

Hence, empowering women is the solution to many problems on a global level, right from poverty. We need to apply a gender

equity lens to build a more equitable, just, and resilient world. The new-age mantra is: If you want to lift up humanity, empower women. It is the most comprehensive, pervasive, high-leverage investment you can make in human beings. Societies that take the effort to empower women show better development indices, are better governed, more stable and are less prone to violence. On the other hand, societies that limit women's educational and employment opportunities and stifle their political voices, are poorer and more prone to corruption.

Development is more than just economic growth or poverty alleviation; it's about helping people reach their full potential. Increased economic opportunity and reproductive choices help women, and their families, thrive. Despite broad recognition of this principle, many societies pursue development paths that are disadvantageous to women. In India, women face enormous challenges stepping out to work: widespread violence; lack of safe public transit; limited child-care facilities and poor work conditions. The pandemic has deepened these vulnerabilities. It is essential to enable women to fulfil their human capability and for their families and societies to realise their full potential. Every safe, educated, healthy and empowered female has the potential to transform her family, community, economy, and society.

Women are commonly married young, quickly become mothers, and are then burdened by stringent domestic and financial responsibilities. On average, women spend about twice as much time as men doing the unpaid work that makes life possible for everyone, like cooking, cleaning and caring. As a result, women have no time to finish their education, or learn new skills. The fact that the potential of so many women is going unrealised is a tragedy - but it's also an opportunity. Girls and women aren't just the faces of poverty; they're also the key to overcoming it.

We have for long made paternalistic decisions to "protect" these women, thereby eliminating their ability to solve the issues they face. Why can't they decide for themselves how to manage their situation? Why can't we equip them to decide how they take their decisions? The key levers for change, from the ground up, are clearly female education and

access to income. Women experience barriers in almost every aspect of work, including whether they have paid work at all; the type of work they obtain or are excluded from; the availability of support services such as childcare; their pay, benefits, and conditions of work; insecurity of their jobs and access to vocational training. Women play a critical, though invisible role in the rural economy. Any successful attempt to build sustainable livelihoods cannot leave them behind. When combined with the process of institution-building, women-led institutions have proven that they can support their communities in times of need.

It is essential to recognise that women's vulnerabilities are embedded in social, economic and political processes. The current gaps in development serve to reinforce them. Sustainable development processes can empower grassroots women to transform the living conditions of their families and communities, and enable them to reverse these vulnerabilities. Economic empowerment is a crucial aspect of any significant push to

make women full and equal participants in their communities. There is a growing recognition among development experts of the need to link economic empowerment to programmes that address women's empowerment in a more fundamental way. Overcoming gender inequality will not result from specific isolated programmes, but from a comprehensive approach that involves multiple sectors and stakeholders. They need new tools to create their own paths. They need opportunities that can overcome economic, cultural and gender barriers. Multi-sectoral cooperation is needed to create breakthrough ideas and solutions to break down economic, social and technical barriers.

Empowering women is a long and challenging journey that requires organizing, capacity building, leadership promotion, training and helping women become more economically empowered. Women need to be enabled to reflect on their situation, made to understand and realize their own dignity and their rights, and finally empowered to build coalitions by sharing experiences and framing agendas with other women in similar conditions.

While closing the gender gap is imperative for overall well-be-

ing of society, it can have a more profound impact on agriculture. Today, for example, women typically work on smaller, less productive plots of land than men, and often lack access to the best seeds, fertilizer, credit, and training opportunities. Illiteracy restrictions on agency and mobility limited land ownership all conspire to reduce rural women's access to farm financing. The drudgework that goes into cultivation is mostly done by women. They till the land, sow the seeds, de-hull the grains, attend to livestock and above it all, they also act as primary caregivers to their family. Banks could devise specific loan programmes for crops that are traditionally grown by female farmers - such as groundnuts or sunflowers. The tragedy is that most of them don't own the land they till. Hence they are deprived of economic and social security. Geographically isolated, without formal bookkeeping or credit histories, this vast archipelago of women farmers has been beyond the reach of bankers.

Women are far more likely than men to spend the money they have under their discretion on the education of their children, the healthcare of their family and on improving their housing. Women usually bear the greater brunt of poverty yet they can be important drivers of growth and progress and powerful agents of change.

The larger vision must be to put women at the core of the developmental process, from the planning to the implementation level. When we prioritize solutions that help women, all people benefit. It is therefore imperative that development interventions are steered through a gender lens. We need clear gender-related metrics and targets in monitoring programmes and their outcomes.

There is now increasing realisation that gender dynamics is not just a women's problem. Engaging women alone is not enough. To make real progress, we need to engage men as well. Society must see the bigger picture, which is to say that by including men in the conversations, we are broadening their understanding and awareness. If we are serious about empowering women, then men must be part of the conversation. Men can be role models, allies and activists, and have a powerful role in shaping future generations.

For all interventions, the fundamental logic is plain: If we are going to end poverty, we need to start with women. They are the ones who have the grit to lift families out of the pit. People who have pioneered successful social programmes recognised this potential and sought to evoke it.

A MEMBER OF THE **ANN**  
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

**ASIAN VOICES**  
Stop playing  
blame game

There is a lot of brouhaha over the government's claim that it influenced the World Health Organization (WHO) decision to approve the emergency use of China's Sinopharm vaccine; the WHO is reported to have denied this claim. Government propagandists cannot resist the temptation to perform foot-in-the-mouth stunts that embarrass their masters beyond measure. However, the real issue is not how the WHO approval was granted for Sinopharm, or any other vaccine for that matter. The issues that warrant public attention are whether enough vaccine stocks will be available; how effective the jabs will be against the new variants of coronavirus, and how to face the socio-economic issues caused by the pandemic.

Thankfully, some vaccine stocks are arriving here while the pandemic transmission and death toll are increasing steadily although there is a shortage of AstraZeneca vaccine for booster doses. Inoculation is a prerequisite for beating the virus, and given the ever-worsening health crisis, one does not have the luxury of picking and choosing vaccines, especially in respect of the first dose.

If the people (as well as the government) had behaved responsibly during the recent festive season, they would have been able to wait until the arrival of the vaccines of their choice. On the other hand, all Covid-19 vaccines currently in use have been found to be highly effective in preventing severe disease and hospitalisation although their efficacy rates are said to vary.

The WHO says everyone has to get the Covid-19 jab fast, and the world must strive to attain global herd immunity through vaccination as soon as possible if the transmission of the virus is to be curbed. WHO lead scientist Dr. Maria Van Kerkhove has,

## The Island

in the weekly epidemiological update, said, "We do not have anything to suggest that our diagnostics or therapeutics and our vaccines don't work." This may be some good news in these troubled times, but the situation is far from rosy. One should not lose sight of the fact that Dr. Kerkhove, on Monday, announced that the WHO had changed its classification of the B.1.617 coronavirus variant first found in India last October from a 'variant of interest' to a 'variant of concern'; it has already spread to several countries including Sri Lanka and is wreaking havoc.

Some scientists are of the view that certain coronavirus variants may have the potential to evade antibodies induced by natural infection or vaccination. This, however, does not mean that one should not get inoculated. Instead, one ought to realise that one should not lower one's guard simply because of the ongoing vaccine rollouts. Nothing should be left to chance in fighting the virus. One should bear in mind WHO chief scientist Dr. Soumya Swaminathan's wise counsel as regards India.

Dr. Swaminathan is reported to have said that the Indian variant is not vaccine resistant, but India has to depend on its tried and tested public health and social measures to curtail the transmission of the pandemic in addition to boosting its national vaccination drive. This, we believe, is applicable to Sri Lanka as well. Hence, measures such as the ban on interprovincial travel are welcome albeit long overdue. The government has apparently begun to take expert opinion seriously. If such travel restrictions had been imposed during the recent April holidays, the transmission of the virus could have been reduced to a manageable level.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

## Maldives attack

SIR, The attempted assassination of the former Maldives president and the current speaker of its parliament Mohamed Nasheed underscores the rising threat of terrorism and extremism in the Indian Ocean country.

The former president was in a critical state but is now improving. A strong voice in the fight against climate change, Nasheed is an outspoken proponent of democratic and secular values. Consequently, he has many enemies, who would want to eliminate him.

Maldives is known to be an idyllic paradise but behind this image lie several grave problems such as religious extremism and drug trafficking.

The country has suf-

fered at least two major terrorist attacks linked to religious extremism. In 2007, a blast in a park in Male, and a little over a year ago, the Islamic State (IS) carried out multiple bomb attacks at Mahibadhu harbour. What is very disturbing is the fact that many Maldivians have gone with their families to Syria and Iraq to fight alongside IS terrorists.

Indeed, Maldives has the highest per capita number of jihadis who fought in these two war torn countries. Several of them returned home to indoctrinate others. Some of the ruling Maldivian Democratic Party's allies are known to have links with extremists. Their statements and activities are providing fertile ground for

religious extremism to thrive. India should keep a close watch on the happenings in Maldives.

Yours, etc., Shovanl Chakraborty, Kolkata, 13 May.

### DYSFUNCTIONAL

SIR, I took my first dose of Covishield on April 1 from Surbhi Hospital in Noida. I

received an SMS confirming the jab and was able to download my certificate. I took my second dose on April 29 from Icare Clinic in Noida. But as of today, I have received neither an SMS nor am I able to download my certificate from the Cowin site. In both cases, the vaccination centers were private hospitals and so I paid Rs 250 for each shot. Undoubtedly, the two shots are very

useful medically but officially, I would be considered liable without proper documentation. The system seems to be dysfunctional at every level.

Yours, etc., Animesh Rai, Noida, 11 May.

### SHUN GENERALISTS

SIR, "Killed by procedure" by Devendra Saksena (12 May) is really a document to be analysed thoroughly by the

Niti Aayog and politicians as well. So long as the bureaucracy, the legacy of colonial times, prevails, good governance remains a pie in the sky. It's not unusual that a bureaucrat sent for a sabbatical to Holland to learn dairy farming is transferred to the fisheries department on his return. It is customary that an IAS officer is supposed to know everything under the sun. The abject failure of the generalists during the ongoing pandemic calls for a complete overhaul and a new specialized medical cadre needs to be introduced.

All senior domain specialists may be considered to head departments. Politicians who depend on bureaucrats should be given a short shrift.

Yours, etc., Basudeb Dutta, Santipur, 12 May.



### POLITICAL GAMES

SIR, The BJP President has accused Sonia Gandhi of spreading false panic and negativity. The people do not need anybody else to tell them how bad the situation is. From running around to get an oxygen cylinder or a much-needed hospital bed or medicine, the citizens have experienced it all. The politicians can fight their political battles, but the citizens are fighting for their own lives and the lives of their loved ones!

Yours, etc., Anthony Heniques, Mumbai, 12 May.

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SHASHI BAKSHI

**E**n as the global financial system and currency market are in transition again, India plans to table its Central-bank backed Digital Currency (CBDC) policy in the next parliamentary session. What are the challenges and solutions to avoid another good-intentioned but flawed legislation?

Cryptocurrency has rightly captured the imagination of many. Its value comes from decentralisation, control, and traceability: decentralisation through avoiding the banking system for each transaction; control through international transactions quicker than the snail-paced financial systems of SWIFT; traceability since blockchain enables a network of ledgers that are continuously recording transactions and nearly impossible to eliminate.

The challenge is that most of the current non-CBDC cryptocurrencies are being fuelled as an investment option. And even as an asset class, their price volatility is susceptible to high-profile speculators in the absence of an underlying intrinsic value. Cryptocurrencies are getting established as some sort of pop culture that people fear missing out on.

A year ago, the Supreme Court shot down the government's efforts to ban non-CBDCs. Arguments against non-CBDCs are similar to arguments against cash such as hawala and illicit trade considerations. But an aspect the government has to consider is that it cannot monopolise money since it has been commoditised.

While Fiat currency [government regulated conventional currency not pegged to value of a commodity such as gold or silver] and CBDC can act as a legal tender, non-CBDC should be left to their fate as an alternate, convenient, and futuristic currency with ease of transaction. This is in the spirit of competition and to encourage technological advancements.

Non-central bank regulated digital currency gives consumers the freedom of an alternate transaction medium. This argument is similar to consumers having an alternative to purchasing fuel from a private player such as Reliance even though the government heavily regulates fuel prices.

It would seem medieval of our government not to encourage a technological advancement that has created a digital barter system by the people, for the people, and of the people. The

## A way ahead for India's digital currency law



flaws, risks, and speculative natures of some CBDCs are not very different from some assets available on equity, derivative, commodity, and debt markets. Hence, governmental regulations are a better alternative than criminalizing non-CBDCs. This would include demanding access to the traceability of transactions from the non-CBDCs who wish to operate in India.

The government can also choose to continue application of GST on the 'Good,' which is the non-CBDC currency, and the 'Service,' which is the transaction support by the exchanges. But this would come with a caveat

that a similar GST would apply to the CBDCs as well. For the volatility associated with non-CBDC, the government cannot afford the same and needs to safeguard CBDC from it.

Hence, I propose that the Digital Currency Bill, 2021, should peg CBDC to the Indian Rupee, thereby providing an underlying intrinsic value to the asset. The combination of not banning non-CBDC and launching CBDC pegged to INR will provide the digital currency world a currency with intrinsic value and might help us strengthen the value of the rupee in the real world.

The current inefficiencies of the dated and corrupt banking system motivate people to move away from the fiat currencies. Take the example of banks going bust because of over-exposure to Non-Performing Assets (NPA). The separation of banking services from lending services is one of the many reforms needed.

The lending services should be a separate entity like credit card, insurance, or investment. People should have the option of parking their fiat currency in banking services which would not provide returns but will also be free of the risk of going bust. Banks

can charge the customers an annual nominal fee for banking services.

On the other hand, the lending services of the bank can encourage customers with a risk-taking outlook to park their savings for returns in this entity's accounts as an investment. Banks can use this parked money for lending services.

The future of currency would be incomplete without a definitive way forward on our dated banking system, cash currency, and taxation.

The writer is a management and political consultant and currently Senior Principal with Accenture Strategy.



IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

## Oasis, Here and Now

**F**or a couple of weeks, I was a house guest of friends in the California bay area. Over the weekend, they offered to take me to any out-of-the-city site I wanted to see. I opted for the Asian Art Museum, famous for its collection of Sikh and Madhubani art and its ancient Buddha statue, excavated from Sultanganj when the British laid rail lines in India.

We had a leisurely trip, enjoying sights on the way. When we arrived at the museum, we found – what we had neglected to check earlier – it was closed. We were crestfallen. I was chastened, realizing I may not again get to visit the place. We had come all this way, what else could we do? Then we noticed a sign a few hundred yards away.

A tea garden! We sauntered in. It was an astounding discovery. An oasis in the middle of a bustling city.

During the World Fair of 1894, as a part of the International Expo, a Japanese tea garden was built in the Golden Gate Park in California. It is the oldest public Japanese garden in the US, masterfully landscaped, three acres of plant, water and rocks inspired by Buddhist and Shinto themes. When the Fair ended, in agreement with the city masters, Makoto Hagiwara, a Japanese emigré and professional gardener, designed and modified the temporary exhibit into a permanent tea garden and became its official caretaker.

He looked after the garden for thirty years. He poured his money and passion into creating a garden of utmost perfection. He tripled the size of the garden and imported from Japan plants, birds and koi fish. He even secured the ornamental wooden

gate of the Japanese pavilion when the 1915 Panama Pacific International Expo closed. After he died, his daughter Takano Hagiwara and her children scrupulously maintained the garden.

Shamefully, when anti-Japanese feelings gripped the US during World War II, Takano and her family were evicted from their home. They were shipped, along with 10,000 innocent Americans of Japanese origin, to an internment camp. Even when the war ended, the Hagiwaras were not allowed to return to their home or paid any compensation. Reportedly, their home was destroyed, along with a precious Shinto shrine. Rabid authorities even renamed the garden an 'Oriental' tea garden. Much later, a plaque made by Ruth Asawa, known for her elegant metal sculptures, was placed in acknowledgment of the Hagiwara family's remarkable contribution.

I did not know any of this when I walked into the garden. I confess I am seldom fond of the gardens I encounter usually. People stuff all the plants and flowers they like in a limited space; everything looks crowded, the onlooker is overwhelmed rather than pleased. It seems a blatant defiance of architect Mies van der Rohe's classic principle of Less is More. What a difference this garden was!

Everything was artfully selected and placed in its rightful place. All seemed just perfect. There was ineffable elegance in its delicacy and economy. The garden had a network of pathways, each thoughtfully dispersed. There were arched drum bridges, charming pagodas, cherry blossom trees and serene koi ponds. There were native Japanese plants all over, with a tranquil Zen garden. The imaginative configuration of rocks and water provided a calm ambiance. The grass and

stonework and waterfalls completed the picture. The bonsai trees offered a gentle finishing touch.

I stood there. Ambed a short while. And stood again. It was electrifying in the speed with which the garden took away your cares and concerns. I stood there and breathed calm. I felt at peace with the world. There were balance and flow everywhere.

We walked some more, and then walked over, fittingly, to the tea house.

I ordered the matcha set, which includes matcha tea that is served in the tea ceremony and the red bean paste daifuku. The matcha, brewed in the traditional concentrated way had a mildly bitter taste and exactly matched the sweet daifuku. Others had jasmine, hojicha, sencha and green tea along with rice cakes, kuzumochi, and bean paste pancakes, dorayaki.

Then we walked out of the quiet Japanese dream in the heart of San Francisco.

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com

NO 28915



I suddenly remembered that I had had the same feeling when I sat, silently, in the sanctuary of the Kopan monastery in Nepal, waiting to see the Rimpoche. I was at peace even before I met him. I remembered also that, on the way out, I read a Tibetan proverb:

"To live well, eat half, walk double, laugh triple and love without measure."

The writer is a Washington-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com

100 YEARS AGO

### OCCASIONAL NOTE

A book which was first published in America in 1904, and which has since then run through several editions, gives full information about the highly scientific methods of food inspection and food analysis which are practiced in the United States, mainly, it would seem, in connection with the Department of Agriculture. For the detection of the various substances which are used for the preservation of milk the tests are extremely delicate. It is said, for example, that if formaldehyde has been used for this purpose, by the use of the ferric chloride test the presence of even one part of formaldehyde in 250,000 parts of milk can be detected, if the test is applied before the milk turns sour. The results of the analysis of special foods that are advertised are sometimes curious. A food which was advertised to contain the nutrient equivalent of the whites and yolks of a dozen eggs was found to consist almost entirely of pure tapioca starch with a little common salt and colouring matter. A form of food adulteration that is practiced openly in the United States is the coating of polished rice with glucose and tallow, ostensibly as a protection against dust and the ravages of insects. The law sanctions the practice on the condition that the coating is declared on the label and directions for its removal are also given.

### NEWS ITEMS

### CENSUS ACT PROSECUTION IN BIHAR

At the High Court before Sir Dawson Mille, Chief Justice, and Mr. Justice Coutts, an application was made by Mr. P.K. Sen, barrister-at-law on behalf of Rai Saheb Kailash Chunder Das, Registrar of the Bihar and Orissa Government Secretariat. The application prayed for the issue of a rule on the District Magistrate of Patna to show cause (1) why proceedings under Section 10(A) of the Indian Census Act against the Rai Saheb should not be quashed; or (2) why the case against him should not be transferred from the file of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Patna to some other court. After discussion, their lordships ordered that the application for quashing the proceedings should not be allowed, and that the application for a transfer should not be made to that court but to the District Magistrate first.

### PROSANNO COOMAR TAGORE BATHING GHAT

A largely-attended meeting of the Hindu community was held to protest against the manner in which the Prosanno Coomar Tagore Ghat is being reconstructed by the Port Commissioners. Mr. P.N. Tagore, who presided, said that the ghat for more than half a century had been found adapted to its purpose and hundreds of thousands of Hindus had found it most convenient, not only for their daily ablutions and washings, but also for religious and ceremonial purposes. It had been found the most suitable spot on the river for the immersion of holy images, the performance of post mortem rites and for purifying baths on Yogas and eclipses. The Bathing Ghat was an act of interference with the religious susceptibilities of the Hindu public and opposed to all hygienic and aesthetic principles.

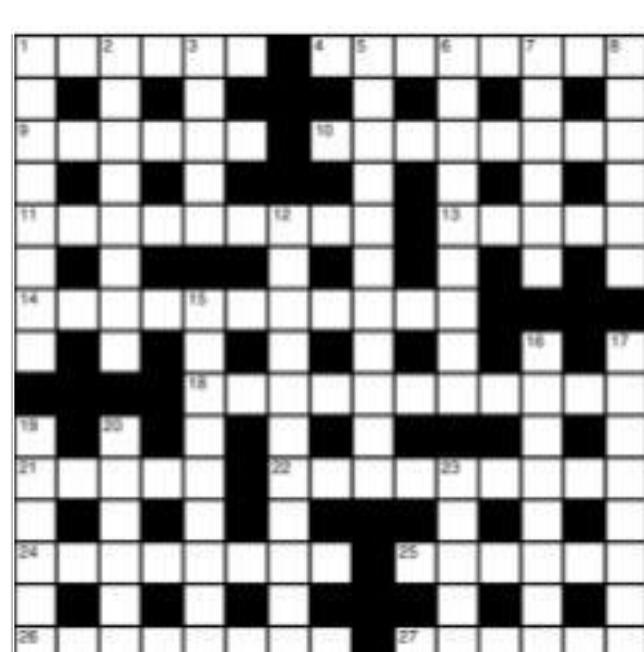
### GOVERNMENT SCHOLARSHIPS TENABLE ABROAD

In view of the expanding needs of the province in various spheres of national life, it is desirable that as many Indians should be sent abroad for training as can be done consistently with the demand for such men, and with the financial resources of the province. H.E. the Governor has now decided to appoint a committee to examine and report on the question of Government scholarships tenable abroad. The committee will examine the question of the number of scholarships that should be offered every year, the terms on which and the subjects of study for which they should be offered. Mr. de la Fosse, Director of Public Instruction, will be chairman of the committee.

### INCOME TAX COMMITTEE IN CALCUTTA

The Director of Information issues the following communiqué:- A local committee will sit shortly in Calcutta to make inquiries and recommendations in regard to the amendment of the Income Tax Act, 1918, more particularly with reference to the method of assessing mercantile profits. The various interests likely to be affected have already been addressed direct, but the committee will be glad to consider any suggestions from other sources for the amendment of the Act that are received not later than May 23, and also to examine any person whose name and address are received by that date. All communications should be addressed to the Chairman of the Income Tax Committee, Finance Department, Writers' Buildings, Calcutta.

CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- 1 A Sikh on vacation engaged by, for instance, leisurely walk (6)
- 4 A belief in reform around Sweden is likely (8)
- 9 A second seabird on the back of a liner, say (6)
- 10 What initiates disquiet about fellow in computing etc for certain (8)
- 11 Bodies not disposed to make a useful contribution (2,4,3)
- 13 Bottle stocked by finer vendors (5)
- 14 Captain altered course in fit of severe anxiety (5,6)
- 18 Fine writing graphically
- 21 Where one might see polar bears waiting in readiness? (2,3)
- 22 Father messed up a penny when grabbing good item in the kitchen (6,3)
- 24 Caught a place for surgery in the US lacking a medical tube (8)
- 25 Disruption where one might play volleyball? About right (6)
- 26 Rule out contralto appearing in opening passage (8)
- 27 South American dictators, not a model of industry, are lecherous types (6)

#### DOWN

- 1 Fail to keep appointment with last of mandarins in Whitehall etc (5-3)
- 2 Essential matter overlooked by group as key moment in a court? (3,5)
- 3 See eye to eye with a native of Corfu largely (5)
- 5 A tune played with levity as a possible result (11)
- 6 Wild prank in sea, not a feature of yachting? (9)
- 7 British comedienne dropping very old sitcom actor (6)
- 8 Former partner leads number wanting hotel in English city (6)
- 12 Traditional site for an engagement? (11)
- 15 Inventor discussed French symbol (9)
- 16 Hype in a rogue when seizing power produces moment of revelation (8)
- 17 Only just how one measures rainfall? (2,6)
- 19 Reportedly, pull top thing for protecting a boot (6)
- 20 Man in Rome regularly toured showing patience, perhaps (6)
- 23 Film critic on TV once snubbed opera (5)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)



Agri-tourism is instrumental for employment generation and economic improvement especially in these pandemic times.

ADITYA THACKERAY  
MAHARASHTRA TOURISM MINISTER

## THUMBNAILS

**M-cap of companies plummets:** Eight of the top-10 most valued companies witnessed a combined erosion of ₹1,13,074.57 crore in market valuation last week, with Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys and HDFC Bank emerging as the worst hit. Among the top-10 most valued companies, only Reliance Industries Limited and State Bank of India managed to book gains on a weekly basis. During the holiday-truncated trading week, the BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 473.92 points or 0.96 per cent. PTI

**Covid-19 change in cash usage:** The pandemic has brought about a behavioural change in usage of cash with people withdrawing larger amounts from ATMs but preferring to make digital modes to make payments, said experts. The ferocity of the second wave of the covid pandemic has scared people, forcing them to withdraw larger amounts from the ATMs with a view to avoid frequent visits. The money thus withdrawn is mostly held for emergency use and often payments are being made through UPI and other digital modes. PTI

**Windlas Biotech files draft papers for IPO:** Windlas Biotech Ltd has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator Sebi for an initial public offer that includes a fresh issue of Rs 165 crore. Besides the fresh issue, there will be an offer for sale of shares. The company is into domestic pharmaceutical formulations contract development and manufacturing business. PTI

**Krsnaa Diagnostics files IPO:** Krsnaa Diagnostics Ltd has filed draft papers with capital markets watchdog Sebi to raise funds through an initial share sale. The IPO comprises fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 400 crore and an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 94,16,377 shares by its existing shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP). PTI

**L&T delivers oxygen generating units:** Larsen & Toubro said that it has delivered the first two oxygen generating units to hospitals in Surat, Gujarat. The company in a statement said that SMIMER Hospital and the New Civil hospital both received the first of the 22 O2 generators capable of producing 700 litres per minute of oxygen. PTI

**Route Mobile new CEO:** Route Mobile (UK) Ltd, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Route Mobile Ltd, on Sunday said it has appointed John Owen as the chief executive officer (CEO) of its Europe and Americas operations. He will be based in the London office. The appointment, effective immediately, marks a new chapter in Route Mobile's exciting journey as the company embarks on an ambitious of growth. PTI

For the second consecutive year, sales of air conditioners (ACs) and refrigerators have been hit during the peak season of April and May due to the localised lockdowns and restrictions on account of surging Covid cases in the country. The pandemic situation has forced companies to recalibrate their target and go for pre-Covid (2019) sales number without being too aspirational.

Leading players in the segment including Voltas, Daikin, Blue Star, Panasonic and Haier reported almost 75 per cent dip in April sales this year when compared with the same month of 2019 performance.

# Cairn identifies \$70 bn assets to recover dues from govt

Cairn remains open to continue constructive dialogue with Govt to arrive at a satisfactory outcome

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

**U**K's Cairn Energy has identified \$70 billion of Indian assets overseas for potential seizure to collect \$1.72 billion due from the government.

The assets identified range from Air India's planes to vessels belonging to the Shipping Corporation of India, and properties owned by state-owned banks to oil and gas cargoes of PSUs, three people familiar with the matter said.

These assets are across several jurisdictions, they said without giving further details.

Cairn plans to move courts in the US to Singapore for seizure of the assets in absence of Indian government's refusal to honour an international arbitration award. "The Indian government naturally will challenge such seizure but to save the assets it may have to pawn money equivalent to the value of assets in some financial security such as bank guarantee. The court will return such a guarantee



to India if it does not find merit in Cairn's case. But the surety will be passed on to Cairn if the court finds that India had failed to honour its obligation," a source said.

Cairn has got an international arbitration award which overturned levy of retrospective taxes and ordered New Delhi to return the value of shares it had sold, dividends seized and tax refunds withheld to recover such taxes registered in the US, UK, France, the Netherlands, Singapore, Mauritius, Canada's Quebec province, Japan and UAE.

Now it has started moving

its assets in the US such as airplanes, immovable assets and bank accounts to recover the amount it was awarded by the arbitration tribunal.

The move is similar to a court in the British Virgin Islands ordering in December last year that hotels in New York and Paris owned by Pakistan International Airlines would be used to settle a claim against Pakistan's government by a Canadian-Chilean copper company.

Crystallax International Corp had brought a similar lawsuit to attach property of Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA), the state-owned oil company of Venezuela, in Delaware couple of years back after the Latin American country failed to pay the firm \$1.2 billion that an arbitration tribunal had ordered to pay in lieu of the 2011 seizing gold deposits held and developed by the firm.

While the finance ministry has so far not commented on the Cairn move, sources said India will take all necessary steps to defend against any such "illegal enforcement action".

Cairn on 14 May filed a lawsuit in a New York court to get Air India recognised as the alter ego of India and that "it should be held jointly and severally responsible for India's debts, including from any judgment resulting from recognition of the award."

Once a court recognises Air India as the alter ego of the Indian government, Cairn can seek attachment or seizure of

courts to get a declaration that state-owned entities are alter egos of India and they should be held liable for discharge of the arbitration award in absence of the government making payments.

Cairn has got an international arbitration award which overturned levy of retrospective taxes and ordered New Delhi to return the value of shares it had sold, dividends seized and tax refunds withheld to recover such taxes registered in the US, UK, France, the Netherlands, Singapore, Mauritius, Canada's Quebec province, Japan and UAE.

Now it has started moving

India, they said, will contest the move on grounds that the government has challenged the arbitration award in the appropriate court in The Hague and it is confident that the award will be set aside.

Sources said the government has also engaged a counsel team which is ready to defend against any enforcement action.

While they maintained that neither the government nor any PSU has received any such notice, people aware of the Cairn lawsuit said the case has been brought only on Friday and notices in due course will come to the concerned authorities.

The sources said as and when any such notice is received, the government/concerned organisation shall take all necessary steps to defend against "any such illegal enforcement action".

"Cairn is taking the necessary legal steps to protect shareholders' interest in the absence of a resolution of the arbitral award," a company spokesperson said commenting on the issue.

On the earnings front, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, Indian Oil Corp, Havells, Hindalco and Federal Bank are some of the prominent names who will be announcing their results during the week along with several others, Mishra added.

The quarterly earnings from Canara Bank, JK Tyre & Industries, Havells India, JK Lakshmi Cement, JSW Steel

and State Bank of India will also be watched by investors this week.

"Going forward, market will track the pace of vaccination, trajectory of active cases curve and management commentary of companies," Shibani Kurian, senior executive vice-president and head (equity research) at Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Co, said. Investors would also track the Wholesale Price Index-based inflation data to be announced on Monday.

Samco Securities Head (Equity Research) Niral Shah said, "Indian indices have shown sturdiness despite the increasing number of cases. However, sustainability at higher levels seems difficult if the situation aggravates."

She added that in addition, this fear of inflation flourishing in developed markets may continue to trickle down to India and keep domestic bourses under pressure. "Stock-specific volatility due to quarterly earnings cannot be ruled out." During the holiday-truncated last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 473.92 points or 0.96 per cent.

## CBIC starts special drive to clear pending GST refund claims by month-end

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

by all Central Tax formations during the period from 15th May 2021 to 31st May 2021 for processing and disposal of all pending GST refund claims on priority," it said.

The CBIC further said that the GST law provides 15 days for issuing acknowledgement or deficiency memo and total 60 days for disposing of refund claims without any liability to pay interest.

"It is, however, expected that all Central Tax formations will take up all the pending GST refund claims for processing on priority and endeavour to dispose them of much earlier than the statutory time limits, preferably before a period of 30 days from the date of receipt of the refund application," the CBIC added.

It is expected that during this special drive, all GST refund claims, pending as on May 14, shall be disposed of

by 31 May, 2021.

The tax officers will coordinate with the major trade and industry associations (especially those that cater to exporters and MSMEs) for the assistance and handholding of taxpayers, including for submission of required documents (if a claim is pending for want of a required document) / reply to notice, etc.

The CBIC also asked taxmen to ensure that communication with taxpayers is done through the GST portal, or if need be, through email using the official email ID of the officer.

All communication with taxpayers must be done through the GST portal, or if need be, through email using the official email ID of the officer. The Special Refund Disposal Drive should be widely publicised among the trade and industry.

In a bid to ensure timely support to depositors of stressed banks, the government may bring amendment to DICGC Act in the monsoon session with the objective to provide account holders easy and time-bound access to funds to the extent of the deposit insurance cover.

Last year, the government raised insurance cover on deposit five-folds to Rs 5 lakh with a view to provide support to depositors of ailing lenders like Punjab and Maharashtra Co-operative (PMC) Bank. Following the collapse of PMC Bank, Yes Bank and Lakshmi Vilas Bank too came under stress leading to restructuring by the regulator and the government.

Once the Bill becomes the law, it will provide immedi-

ate relief to thousands of depositors who had their money parked in stressed lenders such as PMC Bank and other small cooperative banks.

As per the current provisions, the deposit insurance of up to ₹5 lakh comes into play when the licence of a bank is cancelled and liquidation process starts.

DICGC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, provides insur-

ance cover on bank deposits.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Budget speech in February said the government had approved an increase in the Deposit Insurance cover from ₹1 lakh to ₹5 lakh for bank customers last year.

"I shall be moving amendments to the DICGC Act, 1961 in this session itself to streamline the provisions, so that if a bank is temporarily unable to fulfil its obligations, the depositors of such a bank can get easy and time-bound access to their deposits to the extent of the deposit insurance cover.

As per the current provisions, the deposit insurance of up to ₹5 lakh comes into play when the licence of a bank is cancelled and liquidation process starts.

It could not be presented in the Budget session due to the spread of second wave of Covid-19 pandemic.

## GDP growth may be below nine per cent due to 2nd Covid wave

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
KOLKATA, 16 MAY

FY22," it said.

According to the study, the majority of respondents expect the lockdown announced by several states will stay till May end.

Altogether, 54 per cent of the people, who participated in the survey, believe that the lockdown is a solution to the current Covid-19 situation in the country, it said.

Little more than three-fourth of the respondents feel that the current lockdown is not as stringent as the restrictions imposed last year, it added.

Another rating agency CRISIL said India's GDP growth is likely to drop to 9.8 per cent in a moderate scenario, assuming the second wave of coronavirus disease peaks by May end.

The growth may slip further to 8.2 per cent in this severe situation.

SBI to sell three NPA accounts

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

The State Bank of India will sell three bad accounts to asset reconstruction companies or other financial institutions next month to recover dues of over Rs 235 crore, according to a sales notice.

In terms of the bank's policy on sale of financial assets, in line with regulatory guidelines, SBI said it has placed Heavy Metal and Tubes Ltd, Khare and Tarkunde Infrastructure Pvt Ltd and Elize International Ltd for sale to recover a total of Rs 235.32 crore.

Heavy Metal has outstanding debts of Rs 116.91 crore to the bank, Khare and Tarkunde owe Rs 99.84 crore and Elize International Rs 18.57 crore.

The bank has set the reserve prices for these NPA accounts for sale at Rs 27.50 crore, Rs 15 crore and Rs 8 crore, respectively.

## Go Airlines might face turbulence from possible floating-rate plane leases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY



ing and fixed-rate leases but the airline anticipates that future leases could be based on floating rates.

The airline, which announced rebranding itself from 'GoAir' to 'Go First', expects to add eight new aircraft in fiscal 2022 and 14 in the next financial year ending March 31, 2023. These planes will be part of the order placed for 98 A320 neos. Currently, the carrier's fleet has a mix of A320 neos and A320 ceos.

While noting that its indebtedness could adversely affect its business, Go Airlines said that it might be required to switch over to floating-rate leases for planes in the future.

"All our 55 aircraft as of March 31, 2021, are under operating leases under fixed-rate leases and we may be required to obtain floating-rate leases for future aircraft leases. As a result, a significant increase in interest rates may increase our obligations under

any floating-rate leases and may adversely impact our results of operations," as per the DRHP.

As of April 19, 2021, the company's aggregate indebtedness on a consolidated basis stood at Rs 8,160.09 crore.

According to the DRHP, the brand 'GoAir' and certain related trademarks, are registered in the name of Go Holdings, in which one of the promoters Jehangir Nusli Wadia has 99 per cent stake.

During the re-branding transition period and thereafter, it might use trademarks/service marks, that primarily consist of the terms 'Go', 'GoAir' and 'Fly Smart'.

As per the DRHP in March 2021, Go Holdings made two applications to the Registrar of Trade Marks, for registration of two word marks used exclusively by our company, namely 'Go Airlines'.

The economic recovery is beginning to lose steam with infection rates scaling record highs. Almost seven out of 10 respondents expect GDP (growth) to be below nine per cent for

the second wave of coronavirus disease peaks by May end.

The growth may slip further to 8.2 per cent in this severe situation.

## Sales of AC & cooling products again hit by pandemic

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, 16 MAY

For the second consecutive year, sales of air conditioners (ACs) and refrigerators have been hit during the peak season of April and May due to the localised lockdowns and restrictions on account of surging Covid cases in the country.

The pandemic situation has forced companies to recalibrate their target and go for pre-Covid (2019) sales number without being too aspirational.

Leading players in the segment including Voltas, Daikin, Blue Star, Panasonic and Haier reported almost 75 per cent dip in April sales this year when compared with the same month of 2019 performance.

Moreover, May 2021 has been a complete washout so far for them.

On top of the present situa-

tion, consumer sentiment has been further hit amid reports that there may be a third wave of the pandemic, which further dampens chances of a recovery in sales of compressor-based cooling products such as ACs, refrigerators etc, as people are

preferring to keep expenses on hold till the time Covid situation improves.

Leading AC maker Voltas said it was expecting a double-digit growth this fiscal but now the second wave and subsequent restrictions have led to a recalibration of targets.

"Initially while budgeting, we had a lot of aspirations to grow more than double dig-

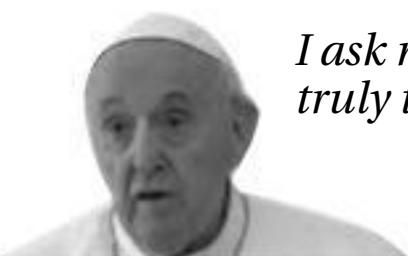
its but now due to the first quarter getting washed out, our endeavour will be to catch up with last year," Voltas MD and CEO Pradeep Bakshi said.

Expressing similar views, Daikin Airconditioning India MD & CEO Kanwal Jeet Jawa said: "If we are able to achieve what we have done in 2019, that would be good enough."

Sales in April this year were 80 per cent of those clocked in the corresponding month of 2019 as only first 15 days of the month were good in terms of activities. May is looking like a complete washout and June could be 75 per cent of 2019, Jawa said.

Panasonic India and South Asia President and CEO Manish Sharma said the sale of AC started in March on a positive note, but due to the sudden

surge in the number of cases in the second wave and most of the states imposing partial lockdowns, summer sales are being hit.



I ask myself: this hatred and vendetta, what will it bring? Do we truly think that we can build peace by destroying the other?

POPE FRANCIS

DENOUNCING THE SPIRAL OF VIOLENCE BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

The Statesman  
NEW DELHI, MONDAY 17 MAY 2021

09

# Israeli strikes topple buildings, kill 42 in Gaza

The Gaza Health Ministry said 16 women and 10 children were among those killed, with more than 50 people wounded, and rescue efforts are still underway

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
GAZA CITY, 16 MAY

Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City flattened three buildings and killed at least 42 people Sunday, medics said, making it the deadliest single attack since heavy fighting broke out between Israel and the territory's militant Hamas rulers nearly a week ago.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signaled the fourth war between Israel and Palestinians in Gaza would rage on despite international efforts to broker a cease-fire.

In a televised address, Netanyahu said Sunday evening the attacks were continuing at full-force and will take time. Israel wants to levy a heavy price from Gaza's militant Hamas rulers, he said, flanked by his defense minister and political rival, Benny Gantz, in a show of unity.

The Gaza Health Ministry said 16 women and 10 children were among those killed, with more than 50 people wounded, and rescue efforts are still underway.

Earlier, the Israeli military



Palestinian rescuers search for survivors under the rubble of destroyed residential buildings following deadly Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City, on Sunday. AP

said it destroyed the home of Gaza's top Hamas leader, Yehiyeh Sinwar, in a separate strike in the southern town of Khan Younis. It was the third such attack in the last two days on the homes of senior Hamas leaders.

Israel appears to have stepped up strikes in recent days to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas as international mediators try to broker a cease-fire.

But targeting the group's leaders could hinder those efforts. A US diplomat is in the region to try to de-escalate tensions, and the UN Security Council is set to meet Sunday.

The latest outbreak of violence began in east Jerusalem last month, when Palestinian protests and clashes with police broke out in response to Israeli police tactics during Ramadan and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palesti-

nian families by Jewish settlers.

A focal point of clashes was the Al-Aqsa Mosque, a frequent flashpoint that is located on a hilltop compound that is revered by both Muslims and Jews.

Hamas fired rockets toward Jerusalem late Monday, triggering the Israeli assault on Gaza.

The turmoil has also spilled over elsewhere, fueling protests

## Israel targets top Hamas leader's home

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
GAZA CITY, 16 MAY

The Israeli military said on Sunday it targeted the home of Gaza's top Hamas leader after nearly a week of heavy airstrikes and rocket fire into Israel from the territory ruled by the Islamic militant group.

Brig. Gen. Hidai Zilberman, an army spokesman, told Israel's army radio on Sunday that the military targeted the home of Yehiyeh Sinwar, the most senior Hamas leader inside the territory, who is likely in hiding along with the rest of the group's upper echelon.

His home is located in the town of Khan Younis, in

southern Gaza Strip. The military said it also targeted the home of Sinwar's brother. It was not clear if the two shared a family residence.

Hamas and the Islamic Jihad militant group have acknowledged 20 fighters killed since the fighting broke out Monday, while Israel says the real number is far higher.

Hamas and other militant groups have fired some 2,000 rockets into Israel since last Monday, when tensions over a flashpoint holy site in Jerusalem and the threatened eviction of dozens of Palestinian families from a nearby neighborhood boiled over.

Israel has carried out

hundreds of airstrikes across the impoverished and blockaded territory and brought down a number of high-rise buildings, including one that housed The Associated Press' Gaza office.

The latest round of fighting is the worst since the 2014 Gaza war has killed at least 145 Palestinians in Gaza, including 41 children and 23 women. Eight Israelis have been killed, including a 5-year-old boy and a soldier.

Early on Sunday, Israeli warplanes struck several buildings and roads in a vital part of Gaza City. There has been no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

Hamas' upper echelon has gone into hiding in Gaza, and it is unlikely anyone was at home at the time of the strikes. Hamas' top leader, Ismail Haniyeh, divides his time between Turkey and Qatar, both of which provide political support to the group.

Hamas and the Islamic Jihad militant group have acknowledged 20 fighters killed since the fighting broke out Monday. Israel says the real number is far higher and has released the names and photos of two dozen alleged operatives it says were "eliminated."

An Egyptian diplomat said Israel's targeting of Hamas political leaders would complicate cease-fire efforts.

The diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the closed-door negotiations, said Cairo is working to broker an end to the fighting, as are other international actors. The Egyptian diplomat said the destruction of Hamas' rocket capabilities would require a ground invasion that would "inflame the whole region."

## Islamic nations slam Israel - and each other's ties to it

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
DUBAI, 16 MAY

A league of Muslim nations on Sunday demanded that Israel halt attacks killing Palestinian civilians amid heavy fighting between it and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, even as fissures between countries over their recognition of Israel emerged.

A statement by the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation hewed closely to previous ones issued by the Saudi-based group, including backing the decades-old call for Palestinians to have their own nation with East Jerusalem as its capital.

However, recent normal-



ization deals between Israel and some nations in the group as well as their own concerns about Hamas saw diplomats at points instead criticize each other.

The massacre of Palestinian children today follows the purported normalization, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said. This criminal and genocidal regime has once again proven that friendly gestures only aggravate its atrocities.

The past week has seen some of the worst violence across Israel and the Palestinian territory since the 2014 war in Gaza, with militants launch-

ing missiles and Israel pounding the blockaded coastal strip home to 2 million people with heavy fire. At least 188 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza with 1,230 people wounded. Eight people in Israel have been killed.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation statement called on Israel to respect Muslims' access to Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam, as well as stop settlers from forcibly evicting Palestinian families from their homes. The plight of the Palestinian people is the bleeding wound of the Islamic world today, Afghan Foreign Minister Mohammad Haneef Atmar said.

But the videoconference meeting saw some delegates instead turn their fire toward countries like Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates, Muslim nations which reached normalization deals last year to recognize Israel. While Egypt and Jordan earlier reached peace deals, supporters of the Palestinians criticized the new countries for recognizing Israel before the formation of an independent Palestinian state. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu joined Zarif in criticizing the normalization, though Israel maintains diplomatic ties with Ankara.

have been killed in Gaza, including 52 children and 31 women, with 1,225 wounded. Eight people in Israel have been killed, including a 5-year-old boy and a soldier.

The military said on Sun-

day it struck Sinwar's home and that of his brother Muhammad, another senior Hamas member. On Saturday it destroyed the home of Khalil al-Hayek, a senior figure in Hamas' political branch.

## Pope urges peace, unity

ROME, 16 MAY

Pope Francis celebrated a special Mass for the people of Myanmar following the country's military takeover, praying on Sunday for peace, unity and for God to set us free from evil's power.

He urged the country's small Christian community to keep the faith, work for peace and avoid conflicts to turn big. AP

## Turkey eases Covid-19 restrictions

ISTANBUL, 16 MAY

Turkey's interior ministry on Sunday lifted a full lockdown shifting to a less-restrictive program that still involved curfews on weeknights and weekends.

The ministry called the steps that apply from Monday to 1 June a gradual normalization.

Shopping malls will be able to reopen. Some businesses will remain closed, including gyms and cafes, but restaurants may offer take away and home delivery. AP

## 'Shouts, a hurried evacuation, and then the bombs came'

FARES AKRAM  
GAZA CITY, 16 MAY

afternoon, then working through the night.

I hurried downstairs and saw my colleagues donning helmets and protective vests. They were shouting: "Evacuation! Evacuation!"

The Israeli military, I would learn later, had targeted our building for destruction and offered up a brief advance warning: They had taken out three buildings so far this week, warning residents and occupants sometimes minutes beforehand to get out. Hurriedly, I was told: You have 10 minutes. What did I need? I grabbed my laptop and a few other pieces of electronics.



What else?

A coffee mug given me by my daughter, now living safely in Canada with her sister and my wife since 2017. A certificate marking five years of employment at AP. I started

On Friday, an airstrike destroyed my family farm on the northern edge of Gaza. And now, my Gaza City office — the place that I thought was sacrosanct and would go untargeted because both AP and al-Jazeera's offices were located on its top floors is a pile of rubble and girders and dust.

Nearby, our building's owner was on the phone with the Israeli military officer who had told him to get the place evacuated. The owner was to leave. I put on my helmet. And I ran.

After the most unsettling of days in the community, I am home now. I wish I could say I am safe here, but I can't. In Gaza, there is no safe place.

ty, steeled for what was next. My intrepid video colleagues tended to their live shot.

Then, in quick succession, a small drone airstrike, followed by another and another. And then three powerful airstrikes from F-16s.

At first, it looked like layers of something collapsing. I thought of a bowl of potato chips, and what might happen if you slammed a fist into them. Then the smoke and dust enveloped everything. The sky rumbled. And the building that was home to some people, an office to others and both to me disappeared in a shroud of dust.

In my pocket, I still had a key to a room that no longer existed. Dust and pieces of cement and shards of glass scattered everywhere. What we knew so well was gone.

Our building was gone and would not be coming back. You must realize: We journalists, we are not the story. The priority for us is not ourselves. It is to tell the stories of other people, those who are living their lives in the communities we cover. I said to myself: This is history, and there are more stories to tell. And like always, as the world shakes around us, it is up to us to figure out how. (Associated Press)

## LEISURE

### 10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



**CROSS**

- 1 Author (6)
- 4 Consider (5)
- 8 Become less warm (4,4)
- 9 Clock face (4)
- 10 Shattered pieces (11)
- 11 Area of hard skin (6)
- 14 Adulterate (6)
- 16 Tree with pale bark (6,5)
- 20 Pronounce indistinctly (4)
- 21 Locate exactly (8)
- 22 Brawl (5)
- 23 Impudent (6)
- 23 Dirty, DOWN
- 23 Cross, DOWN
- 23 Swords, DOWN
- 23 Belt, DOWN
- 23 Rockbene, DOWN
- 23 Chemistry, DOWN
- 23 Hit, DOWN
- 23 Sett, DOWN
- 6 Contests, DOWN
- 7 Heat, DOWN
- 12 Cockeye, DOWN
- 14 Relieve, DOWN
- 15 Vestry, DOWN
- 16 Hair, DOWN
- 18 Other, DOWN
- 19 Convenient (5)

**DOWN**

- 1 Golf clubs (5)
- 2 Enmity (3,4)
- 3 Era (5)
- 5 Invest (5)
- 6 Spectacles (7)
- 7 Innate (6)
- 12 Release from blame (7)
- 13 Sonnent (6)
- 15 Product identifier (3,4)
- 17 Big (5)
- 18 Cluster (5)
- 19 Convenient (5)

**SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD**

1 Joyce, 13 Cross, 23 Dirty, 23 Cross, 23 Swords, 23 Belt, 23 Rockbene, 23 Chemistry, 23 Hit, 23 Sett, 6 Contests, 7 Heat, 12 Cockeye, 14 Relieve, 15 Vestry, 16 Hair, 18 Other, 19 Convenient.

By arrangement with The Independent. Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required

### BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker



### RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson



### DADDY DAZE/John Kovaleski



### NEED TO KNOW

#### HOSPITALS

- AIIMS 26588500, 26588900
- Moolchand Medcity (formerly Hospital) 42000000 & 24-hour Chemist Shop 42000047
- Vidyasagar Institute for Mental and Neuro-Sciences 26924300, 26924304
- Batra Hospital & Medical Research Centre 29051280, 29958747
- Deen Dayal Upadhyay 25496320, 25494403
- Guru Tegh Bahadur 23717473, 23325320

#### RAILWAY INQUIRY

- General Inquiry: 139
- Toll Free Nos. 1800125151
- SMS Inquiry Nos. 57886, 54959, 5676747

#### ROADWAYS INQUIRY

- ISBT (General Inquiry): 23868836, 23865181
- Haryana Roadways: 23861262, 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 43513186
- Himachal Roadways 23717473, 23325320

#### FLIGHT INQUIRY

- AIR INDIA Flight Inquiry and Reservation 08001801407
- INDIGO AIRLINES New Delhi City Office 43513185, Call Centre 09910383838, 18001803838, Reservation 45313186; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513186; Indigo Airlines Airline 43513186

#### PORT ROADWAYS

#### FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

#### SCRABBLE® BRAND

#### YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION BY JUDD

#### RACK 1 = 98

#### RACK 2 = 61

#### RACK 3 = 28

#### RACK 4 = 62

#### JUDD'S TOTAL = 249

#### PAR SCORE 175-185

#### BY JUDD



*This data confirms the effectiveness of the vaccination campaign and the need to achieve high coverage to end the emergency*

ITALY'S NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HEALTH PRESIDENT SILVIO BRUSAFAERRO

AS COVID CASES DRAMATICALLY DROPPED IN ITALY

## WEATHER

CITY	MAX (°C)	MIN (°C)
SINGAPORE	31	26 R
HONG KONG	32	28 H
TOKYO	26	20 H
LONDON	16	07 R
DUBAI	38	27 S
SAN FRANCISCO	14	10 H
NEW YORK	23	14 S
MOSCOW	28	17 S

S=sunny, CL=clear,  
H=hazy, R=rainy...

## THUMBNAILS



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off from Kennedy Space Center on Saturday. The rocket is carrying a fleet of Starlink communications satellites. AP

Global Covid caseload tops 162.1 million: The overall global Covid-19 caseload has topped 162.1 million, while the deaths have surged to more than 3.36 million, according to the Johns Hopkins University. The current global death toll stood at 3,364,761. AP

Nine killed in Pakistan shootout: At least nine people were killed and five others seriously injured in a shootout between two rival groups in Pakistan's Sindh province, local media reported on Sunday. IANS

6.1-magnitude quake strikes Japan: An earthquake measuring 6.1 on the Richter scale struck off Japan's Hokkaido prefecture on Sunday. The tremor occurred at 12.24 p.m. (local time). IANS

20 million first Covid vaccinations: France has administered the first doses of Covid-19 vaccines to 20 million people, reaching its target, said Prime Minister Jean Castex. IANS

# UK defends delay in adding India to 'red list' travel ban

Around 20,000 travelled between India and the UK before red list ban; 122 detected with variant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, 16 MAY

The UK government came under strong criticism on Sunday for not adding India to the red list travel ban at the same time as Pakistan and Bangladesh in early April, which is feared as a major factor behind a rapid spike in cases of Covid-19's B1.617.2 variant first identified in India.

Downing Street said it had taken a precautionary action to ban travel from India on 23 April, six days before the B1.617 variant was put under investigation and two weeks before its highly transmissible subtype, B1.617.2, was labelled a Variant of Concern (VOC).

According to latest Public Health England (PHE) data, around 20,000 people travelled between India and the UK before the red list ban and around 122 of them arriving from Delhi and Mumbai between late March and April 26 were detected with the VOC.

Prior to India being placed



on the red list in April, anyone coming to the UK had to test negative and quarantine for 10 days," a UK government spokesperson said.

However, the Opposition Labour Party attacked the government for a delay in acting when the variant first emerged at the end of March.

This was not inevitable. They should have put India on the red list.

We've had this three-week period in which thousands of people have returned from India, including probably hundreds of cases of the vari-

ant, said Yvette Cooper, senior Labour MP and Chair of the Commons Home Affairs Committee.

When they did finally add India to the red list two weeks after they'd added Pakistan on 9 April they gave travellers four days' notice to rush back.

Why didn't they introduce additional testing for those travellers before they were able to get on public transport home, she questioned.

The UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's planned visit to Delhi at the end of April, which was cancelled as the sec-

ond wave of the pandemic surged in the country, is being cited by many as among the reasons for the delay in adding India to the red list despite higher infection rates per million than its neighbouring countries.

It comes as PHE revealed that cases of the B1.617.2 variant being tracked and traced in the community had more than doubled in a week to hit 1,313 cases this week.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock admitted the VOC identified in India spread much more rapidly and may soon become the dominant variant in the country but also highlighted that based on the cases in the hotspot region of Bolton in north-west England, the indications are that those who are unvaccinated are more susceptible to hospitalisation.

He revealed that 18 people currently in hospital due to the B1.617.2 VOC have not had any dose of the Covid-19 vaccine even though they are eligible and urged all eligible over-38s to come forward for their jabs.

Because of the speed of transmission of this one, it can really spread like wildfire amongst the unvaccinated groups hence we need to get as many people vaccinated as possible, particularly among those who are most vulnerable to ending up in hospital," he said.

The minister reiterated that the government feels it is the right thing for the lockdown easing roadmap to go ahead as planned for now, with Monday's further easing of rules set to go ahead.

A UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock admitted the VOC identified in India spread much more rapidly and may soon become the dominant variant in the country but also highlighted that based on the cases in the hotspot region of Bolton in north-west England, the indications are that those who are unvaccinated are more susceptible to hospitalisation.

"We need to be cautious, we need to be careful, we need to be vigilant and we've said at each step we will look at the four tests that we have," Hancock said. "We've always said we want this to be cautious, we really want it to be irreversible. New variants are one of the biggest risks to this opening, he said.

## Some aren't ready to give up masks despite new CDC guidance



ASSOCIATED PRESS

BIRMINGHAM, 16 MAY

might contract the virus and pass it along to others, though the risks of both are greatly reduced for those who are fully vaccinated.

Denise Duckworth was among the unmasked as she strolled through a revived French Quarter in New Orleans, where jazz musicians and tourists have returned to the streets.

"I've always been against masks, and I think all their rules have been hypocritical, and they've been confusing," said Duckworth, visiting from Kansas City, Missouri.

Like most others, Duckworth wasn't wearing a face mask on an upbeat on Friday that made the Quarter feel more normal than it had in months. Alex Bodell of Ithaca, New York, stood out in the crowd because of the black mask covering his nose and face, but he was more at ease than that way.

"I certainly feel a lot more comfortable, and I think I'm enjoying myself a lot more here than I expected, still are, too."

With Covid-19 cases on the decline after more than 580,000 deaths and with more than a third of the US population fully vaccinated, millions are deciding whether to continue wearing face masks, which were both a shield against infection and a point of heated political debate over the last year.

People have myriad reasons for deciding to stop, or continuing to wear, a mask. Many are ready to put aside the sadness, isolation and wariness of the pandemic. Ditching face masks even ones bedazzled with sequins or sports team logos is a visible, liberating way to move ahead. Yet others are still worried about new virus variants and the off-chance they

## Austria's Kurz cleared in perjury case

VIENNA, 16 MAY

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz expects to be charged but eventually cleared in an investigation into whether he gave false testimony to a parliamentary commission, he said, ruling out the idea of resigning if indicted.

The investigation by anti-corruption prosecutors, made public, last week poses a stiff political challenge for the conservative Kurz, who governs in coalition with the Greens.

The 34-year-old has painted himself as the victim of opposition parties trying to trap him into saying something that could be construed as perjury before the commission.

## 18 American states ending mask mandate

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, 16 MAY



Eighteen states in the US and some major-label businesses have announced plans to end Covid-19 mask mandates either immediately or in the weeks to come, but others such as California, New York and New Jersey are moving forward with caution.

Many Americans went mask-less in public on Friday for the first time in months, a day after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) relaxed its guidelines on face coverings for people who have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19, reports Xinhua news agency.

The changes came as more than one third of Americans are fully vaccinated, and the daily number of new cases slipped below 35,000, the

lowest since September 2020. Businesses large and small are also grappling with how to adapt to the CDC's surprise guidance.

Some of the nation's largest retailers said that they have no immediate plans to change their policies and would continue requiring both customers and workers to wear masks on the premises, according to local media reports.

Other businesses said they are re-evaluating their protocols.

Walt Disney World located in Orlando, Florida announced on Friday that masks and face coverings for guests would be "optional in outdoor common areas" at the resort starting on Saturday.

Grocery chain Trader Joe's became the first prominent US retailer on Friday to drop its mask policies for vaccinated

shoppers. It was followed by Walmart, the country's No. 1 retailer with more than 4,700 stores, which said in a memo to employees that vaccinated customers can shop without masks.

Fully vaccinated employees will be able to work without masks as of May 18, although workers who haven't been fully vaccinated will still need to wear masks.

The company also said it is giving \$75 of bonuses to vaccinated workers as "a thank you for getting vaccinated", but employees will need to provide a proof of inoculation to get the money.

"While progress against the pandemic is being made, Americans eager to enjoy spring weather are receiving mixed messages about masking," CBS News said in a report on Saturday.

## Refugees arriving in US unlikely to exceed cap set by Trump

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SAN DIEGO, 16 MAY

President Joe Biden, under political pressure, agreed to admit four times as many refugees this budget year as his predecessor did, but resettlement agencies concede the number actually allowed into the US will be closer to the record-low cap of 15,000 set by former President Donald Trump.

Refugee advocates say they are grateful for the increase because it's symbolically important to show the world the US is back as a humanitarian leader at a time when the number of refugees worldwide is the highest since World War II. But they're frustrated, too, because more refugees could have been admitted if Biden hadn't dragged his feet.

"About 10,000 to 15,000 is what we're expecting," said Jenny Yang of World Relief,

adding that Biden's inaction for months after taking office in January was "definitely problematic".

"That delay meant not being able to process refugee applications for four months. We weren't able to rebuild for four months, so it really was unfortunate," Yang said.

Biden first proposed raising the cap to 62,500 in February in a plan submitted to Congress, but then refused to sign off on it for two months before coming back April 16

and suggesting he was sticking with Trump's target.

Democratic allies and refugee advocates lambasted him, saying he was renegeing on his campaign promise to the face of bipartisan criticism over his handling of an increase in unaccompanied migrant children at the US-Mexico border.

To be clear: The asylum process at the southern border and the refugee process are completely separate immigration systems. Conflicting the

## DARE DEVIL



Japanese Kabuki actor Ebizo Ichikawa performs "Sanbaso" during a ceremony to mark 100 days to go until the opening of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, that have been postponed to 2021 due to the Covid outbreak, in Tokyo on Sunday. AP

## Sharks use Earth's magnetic field as a GPS: Scientists

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORLAND, 16 MAY

Sharks use the Earth's magnetic field as a sort of natural GPS to navigate journeys that take them great distances across the world's oceans, scientists have found.

Researchers said their marine laboratory experiments with a small species of shark confirm long-held speculation that sharks use magnetic fields as aids to navigation behavior observed in other marine animals such as sea turtles.

Their study, published this month in the journal Current Biology, also sheds light on why sharks are able to traverse seas and find their way back to feed, breed and give birth, said marine policy specialist Bryan Keller, one of the study authors.

We know that sharks can



respond to magnetic fields," Keller said. We didn't know that they detected it to use as an aid in navigation ... You have sharks that can travel 20,000 kilometers (12,427 miles) and end up in the same spot.

The question of how sharks perform long-distance migrations has intrigued researchers for years. The sharks undertake their journeys in the open ocean where they encounter few physical fea-

tures such as corals that could serve as landmarks.

Looking for answers, scientists based at Florida State University decided to study bonnethead sharks, a kind of hammerhead that lives on both American coasts and returns to the same estuaries every year.

That finding is compelling, said Robert Hueter, senior scientist emeritus at Mote Marine Laboratory & Aquarium, who was not involved in the study.

Hueter said further study is needed to find how the sharks use the magnetic fields to determine their location and whether larger, long-distance migrating sharks use a similar system to find their way.

The question has always been: Even if sharks are sensitive to magnetic orientation, do they use this sense to navigate in the oceans, and how? Keller said the study could help inform management of shark species, which are in decline.

A study this year found that worldwide abundance of oceanic sharks and rays dropped more than 70% between 1970 and 2018.

Researchers say the bonnethead's reliance on Earth's magnetic field probably is shared by other species of sharks, such as great whites, that make cross-ocean journeys.

## Pipeline operator: Normal ops have resumed

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA, 16 MAY

The operator of the nation's largest gasoline pipeline, hit on 7 May by a ransomware attack, announced on Saturday that it has resumed "normal operations," delivering fuel to its markets, including a large swath of the East Coast.

Georgia-based Colonial Pipeline had begun the process of restarting the pipeline's operations on Wednesday evening, warning it could take several days for the supply chain to return to normal.

"Since that time, we have returned the system to normal operations, delivering millions of gallons per hour to the markets we serve," Colonial Pipeline said in a tweet on Saturday. Those markets include Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, South

fairly soon," she said.

Some stations were still out of gas in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Saturday. Driver Jerome Barnes told CBS17 the shortage has made him more conservative with his trips.

"I'm not going places I don't need to go," he said. "I'm not visiting people. I'm watching where I'm driving. I'm doing everything different right now."

Some drivers responded angrily on Facebook, on Saturday to a post by ABC-13 in Asheville, North Carolina, about the pipeline resuming normal operations. Several said the majority of gas stations still did not have fuel and those that did receive deliveries were quickly selling out.

# North-East

## Belying popular perception

OKEN JEET SANDHAM

Former Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal's fate having the top job for the second term was sealed when the Bharatiya Janata Party did not announce a chief ministerial candidate before the 2021 Legislative Assembly election. Speculation was rife about the same and expectedly, Himanta Biswa Sarma -- former minister of finance, planning and development, health and family welfare, education and public works department in the previous Cabinet -- took oath as the new CM last week.

The BJP rallied behind the versatile Sarma as he was, quite literally, the most powerful figure in the erstwhile Sonowal government. They entrusted him with leading the party including the distribution of tickets to candidates. Around 80 per cent of BJP candidates, who have won in the 2021 election, are Sarma loyalists. That fact made him a sure shot for the CM's chair.

Many political pundits in the media outside the North-east have given credit to Sarma for the BJP's resounding victory in Assam's 2016 and 2021 elections. It would be wrong to say so as fact remains that the BJP won in 2016 mainly because of the anti-incumbency factor against the Congress Party regime of Tarun Gogoi, who had ruled the state for three consecutive terms since 2001. Interestingly, Sarma, a strong leader in the then Congress Party government, had rebelled against Gogoi and tried to overthrow him as CM. He subsequently defected to the BJP in 2015.

Sarma knew in 2016 that he could not become CM as he was not yet close to the BJP's top brass, be it in Assam or at the Centre. On the other hand, Sonowal, already in the good books of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was seen as a promising politician by people in the North-east. When Sonowal formed the government in 2016, however, Sarma was appointed his number two Cabinet minister with lucrative portfolios including finance. It became the turning point for Sarma as he got the opportunity to create a political ground where he could land safely as head of the next BJP government in 2021. The possibility was common knowledge among many BJP leaders both in Dispur and New Delhi.

In a broader sense, crediting Sarma for the party's growth in the North-east and deeming him instrumental for the BJP forming governments in Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura are also quite far-fetched. By way of an example, Manipur went to polls in 2017 when people there, including those in the BJP, hardly knew about him. The party had won 21 seats while the ruling Congress Party gar-



Himanta Biswa Sarma at his first Cabinet meeting as CM last week

**It would be wrong to credit  
Himanta Biswa Sarma,  
Assam's new chief minister,  
as the main architect for the  
Bharatiya Janata Party's rise  
in the North-east**

BJP. The newly floated Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party and the BJP shared seats in a 40:20 ratio and it was a masterstroke by Rio. The ruling NPF, headed by TR Zeliang, won 26 seats, again five short of a simple majority. The NDPP won 18 seats, the BJP 12 but the NDPP-BJP-led coalition with other non-NPF MLAs, including the lone Independent, formed the government.

In fact, the BJP had won seven seats in the 2003 Nagaland Assembly polls and became the second-largest party in the NPF-led Democratic Alliance of Nagaland government, thereby ending the Congress Party regime of SC Jamir. Since then, the BJP kept winning Assembly elections in Nagaland in 2008, 2013 and 2018 -- it has been part of ruling coalitions in the state for the last 18 years and counting.

Even in Tripura, the BJP-Indigenous People's Front of Tripura coalition won 43 seats in the 2018 Assembly elections due to the anti-incumbency factor against the Communist Party of India (Marxist) government, headed by Manik Sarkar, who had been ruling the state for 20 years. Before Sarkar, Dasarath Deb of the CPI (M) was the CM from 1993 till 1998.

Mizoram is a non-BJP government, while the National People's Party-led coalition with two BJP MLAs formed the government in Meghalaya. The BJP's landslide victory in the 2019 Arunachal Pradesh Assembly polls was largely because of leaders like Pema Khandu and Kiren Rijiju, and not Sarma.

Also warrants mention here that the BJP has been at the helm of affairs at the Centre when Assembly elections have been conducted in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. PM Modi himself attended several election rallies in these states. It is, however, undeniable that Sarma was the architect of the BJP's resounding victory in the 2021 Assam Assembly election. As already stated, he exploited the unprecedented clout he had gathered ever since becoming a part of the Sonowal government in 2016.

The flip side is that the wings of Assam's new CM are seemingly clipped. Sarma has many issues to resolve and the Congress Party-led grand alliance is still a formidable force with 50 MLAs. His popularity is likely to go down in other states of the North-east as he starts attending to Assam's issues alongside the Central government grappling with the health crisis.

The future of Sonowal, still seen as a clean BJP leader, is in a cloud though with many speculating that he may get a Rajya Sabha seat or a ministerial berth in Sarma's Cabinet.

The writer is editor, North East Press Service, Kohima

### PLUS POINTS

**Borgohain no more**



One of the most celebrated Assamese journalists, editors and litterateurs of recent times, Homen Borgohain passed away on 12 May from post-Covid-19 complications at the age of 88. The leading intellectual was treated successfully for his infection of the novel coronavirus and had even returned a negative test for the virus.

Borgohain is survived by his wife Nirupama (Tamuli), an illustrious author-journalist herself, two sons, and a host of relatives and well-wishers. He has a huge volume of admirers and followers in the region.

Besides editing an Assamese daily *Niyomita Barta* and a health magazine called *GNRC Swasthya*, the Sahitya Akademi Award recipient also hosted a series of interactive programmes on *NewsLive* television channel. A prolific writer with an extraordinary command over the language, Borgohain was also president of Asom Sahitya Sabha, the state's apex literary body, for its Dibrugarh session (2001-2002).

Borgohain authored more than 10 novels and many non-fiction books apart from columns in the media on various relevant issues. Some of his literary creations include *Pita Putra, Soudor Puteke Nao Meli Jay, Halodhiya Choraye Baodhan Khai, Astaraag, Subala, Matysagandha, Nisangota, Atmanandhan, Moar Hriday Ekhon Juddhakshetra* and *Moar Sangbadik fibon*.

Born in 1932 at Dhakuakhana in eastern Assam, Borgohain did his schooling in native localities and later arrived in Guwahati to study at Cotton College (now a university). He graduated from the prestigious institution and joined the government as a civil service officer. But he soon left the job and ventured into the world of journalism.

Borgohain's first assignment was as editor of an Assamese newsweekly named Nilachal. Later, he edited several publications like *Nagarik, Asom Bani, Ajir Dainik Batori, Sutradhar, Satyori, Amar Asom* etc. For some time, he also worked as a correspondent at the Bengali newspaper *Ajkaal*.

-Nava Thakuria

### Phom recognised



Naga conservationist, Nukhu Phom has won the prestigious Whitley Award 2021 for his work, "Establishing a biodiversity peace corridor", says a report in the Dimapur-based *Morung Express*. He is among six winners, including Lucy Kemp from South Africa, Pedro Fruet from Brazil, Kini Roesler from Argentina, Iroro Tanshi from Nigeria and Sammy Safari from Kenya.

The Whitley Award is one of the world's leading prizes for grassroots conservation and every year, six projects are recognised with funding, training and profile. To celebrate the six 2021 winners, Paula Kahumbu from Kenya, an online ceremony was hosted last week.

Phom, along with Bibhuti Lahkar from Assam, were the only Indians to feature in the list of 15 candidates that was announced in February this year. The top 15 candidates were identified based on their incredible work with communities to safeguard wildlife, habitats and the future of society.

Giving a landscape view in its website, the Whitley Awards noted that unpreceded biodiversity, climate and health emergencies are unfolding around us, threatening the future of all life on Earth. "We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take action: as world leaders prepare to renew environmental commitments at the forthcoming biodiversity COP15 and climate COP26 summits. Whitley Award winners are the grassroots changemakers turning political ambitions into a green reality," it stated.

Earlier, on being shortlisted, Phom told the *Morung Express* in an exclusive interview that it would mean a lot for the country, for the North-east and especially for the people of Nagaland if he were to be recognised in the final list of winners.

## Undertaking discreet relief work

**Moreh in Manipur – like many border towns and villages of the North-east – is bearing the brunt of Myanmar's political crisis**



### NINGLUN HANGHAL

Even as communities in Manipur were told not to welcome people fleeing from the military crackdown in Myanmar, it is impossible to follow that instruction. Simply because for inhabitants in border areas, specifically the town of Moreh in South-east Manipur, those from just across the international border are their kin or part of the same clan. They cannot "turn their backs" on relatives.

In the aftermath of unrest and uproar in the neighbouring country over the military coup on 1 February this year, the Union ministry of home affairs wrote to Mizoram, Nagaland,

Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh – the states bordering Myanmar – in early March asking the governments to take appropriate action against the influx of refugees. The MHA reiterated that India is not a signatory to the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol. Therefore, they were required to check the "illegal" influx.

According to the Centre's advisory, the Manipur government directed deputy commissioners of the four border districts – Ukhral, Churachandpur, Tengnoupal and Chandel – to turn away citizens of Myanmar. Later, as local sentiments turned, the state government retracted its dictat. But it advised district authorities and civil society groups

to not open camps to provide food or shelter for refugees. It also asked them to immediately stop the Aadhaar enrolment exercise in the state.

Meanwhile, the MHA expressed its deep concern in a statement and said that it was monitoring the situation closely. It went on to add that India has always been steadfast in its support for the process of democratic transition in Myanmar but believed that the rule of law must be upheld.

India shares a 1,643 kilometre border with Myanmar and the border states on the other side are Sagaing, Chin and Kachin. In both countries, border areas are inhabited by ethnic communities – largely Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kuki, Mizos, Nagas, Gorkhalis

and Tamilians. The displaced population from Myanmar seeking shelter in the North-east, particularly Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland, are mainly from the Saigang and Chin regions.

There has been human contact and activity, both social and economic, since time immemorial in those areas and it continued even after Independence in both countries. Thus, cross-border movement becomes an obvious conduit in political crises as well.

This is not the first instance of displaced people from Myanmar entering villages in India's North-east. During events like the 1962 coup, 8888 uprising or the 2007 saffron revolution, hundreds of people from that country took refuge in the four North-eastern states.

After the February coup this year, hundreds of Myanmar's citizens are fleeing into Manipur's border villages again, particularly those in Tengnoupal and Chandel. Most prominently, Myanmar people have flocked into Moreh and its adjoining villages seeking refuge. While Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga has openly welcomed them, the situation is not so in Manipur. Nevertheless, local philanthropists and tribal organisations in Moreh are extending help and making room for refugees.

By providing a roof over refugees' heads or sharing whatever they have, people in Moreh and nearby villages are not only answering the call of kinship or clanship. There are historical and commercial ties involved as well. Even so, residents of Moreh are in a Catch-22 situation – neither can they set up relief camps nor turn away those who are knocking on their

doors, almost begging for shelter.

Although Good Samaritans are working discreetly, it is an "open secret" as local people would call it. Donations and aid have been mobilised locally with rations coming from Moreh and essential items being supplied from other areas in Manipur. Music concerts have also been held to raise funds for the displaced.

That said, many local people and philanthropists expect more influx in the coming days. They are apprehensive of a severe humanitarian crisis, especially on the health front, given the lack of infrastructure and facilities in the small town.

In the absence of centralised and systematic relief work, there is no accurate estimate of the number of refugees taking shelter in Moreh and its adjoining villages. Rough estimates put the figure at anything from 500 to 1,500 people till April.

Moreh is an important part of India's Act East policy. With the second wave of Covid-19 being so severe, the town is staring at an uncertain future. Economic activity has been suspended for more than a year now.

In addition to the pandemic, the latest political crisis in Myanmar has also exacerbated commercial woes. Most people in the area have transited from their traditional agriculture and taken up livelihoods as traders, labourers or transporters with their lifeline being border trade, which was booming in the last couple of decades.

Given this situation, local people are now also burdened with the additional responsibility of taking care of their relatives and friends from across the border. The question is, how long can Moreh feed the hundreds of refugees taking shelter in its homes? Perhaps, it is time for the Union government to reconsider its refugee policy.

The writer is a freelance journalist based in Imphal and Dimapur

**HUSSEY FINALLY LEAVES**

Having recovered from COVID-19, Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey (photo, left) left for Australia on Sunday via Doha, a top official of the IPL franchise said. Following an RT-PCR test, the former Australia batsman had returned negative for COVID-19 on Friday, paving the way for his departure in the early hours of Sunday.

For more updates [www.thestatesman.com](http://www.thestatesman.com)

**THUMBNAILS**

**India eyes tour:** The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September. India, who have played only one series amid the COVID-19 pandemic, tour England next month to play their First Test in seven years besides three ODIs and as many T20s.



**Athletics gold:** Indian high jumper Tejaswin Shankar has claimed a gold medal at the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, USA. Representing Kansas State University, Tejaswin cleared 2.28 metres on Saturday, making a facility record.

**Bhaker to write BA exams while shooting in European Championships****PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

NEW DELHI, 16 MAY



Inside her hotel room in Croatian capital Zagreb, India's Olympic medal holder Manu Bhaker (in photo) is juggling shooting-related activities and studies.

However, a day before the Tokyo-bound Indian shooting contingent hits the range for its first training session in Croatia, Bhaker's pistol will give way to a pen and the shooting gear to her study materials, as she logs in for her BA fourth semester exam.

A student of political science in the Delhi University's prestigious Lady Shri Ram College for Women, the champion shooter's exams start on May 18 while the European Championship in Osijek, in which the Indian team will compete as a guest invitee, begins two days later, from May 20.

"I will manage both, as I have done in the past. At least I don't have competition on days I have my papers, so it's manageable," Bhaker said.

While the Bhakers consider

er studies very important, shooting competitions are a priority for one of India's biggest medal hopes at the Tokyo Olympics.

"This is the year of the Olympics and I am fully focussed on how to give my best and do my country proud," said Bhaker, a gold medallist at the Youth Olympics, ISSF World Cup and Commonwealth Games.

Her father, Ramkishan Bhaker, added, "She is very serious about her studies but if there is a clash between her competition and exams, then she chooses sports."

According to the DU guidelines, sportspersons who have represented India in competitions, recognised and funded by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, are given direct admission without sports trial.

Ramkishan, a chief engineer at the merchant navy, has played a major role in giving his daughter the initial impetus needed to launch her career in the sport.

Along with the ammunition, shooting gear and coronavirus-related travel essentials, Bhaker travelled to Croatia with her books to prepare for the exams, and will send her answers using the mobile scanner after she has written them all.

The 19-year-old Bhaker has

been selected for three events in the upcoming Tokyo Olympics, scheduled to be held from July 23 to August 8.

She will be fielded in both the women's 25m pistol alongside the experienced Rahi Sarnobat, and in her pet 10m air pistol event with Yashaswini Singh Deswal. Bhaker will also represent India in the mixed team 10m pistol along with Saurabh Chaudhary.

After the continental event, the Indian shooters will compete in the ISSF World Cup, slated to be held in same city, Osijek, from June 22 to July 3.

The 13 Olympic-bound Indian shooters, seven coaches, five physios and a two-member video crew landed in Zagreb in a chartered flight on Tuesday, after which they were received by the Croatian shooting federation and the country's world number three rifle shooter Peter Gorsa.

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**Them again: Djokovic and Nadal to meet in Italian Open final****AGENCIES**

ROME, 16 MAY

**M**aybe the new generation of tennis players isn't quite so ready to end the eras of Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal.

Titles for Stefanos Tsitsipas and Alexander Zverev in the Monte Carlo Masters and Madrid Open, respectively, raised speculation again that the Big Three including 39-year-old Roger Federer was expiring.

Well, again, not yet.

Djokovic, who turns 34 in a week, and Nadal, who turns 35 next month, won a total of three matches over younger players on Saturday and will renew their record-setting rivalry in the Italian Open final on Sunday exactly two weeks before Roland Garros starts.

Rafa and I had a little laugh today in the locker room after I won against Tsitsipas, Djokovic said.

We kind of joked around



about, you know, that the old guys are still not giving up.

(Nadal) said somewhere a few days ago that Roger, him and I are old. But I disagree with him. We're showing some different, fresh energy.

They took vastly different paths to the final.

Djokovic regained his cool after throwing his racket off

the court to beat Tsitsipas 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 in a grueling, rain-delayed quarterfinal that began on Friday.

Then the top-ranked Serb returned a few hours later against local favorite Lorenzo Sonego and wasted a late break and two match points in the second set of a 6-3, 6-7(5), 6-2 victory in his second

match of the day.

In all, Djokovic spent nearly five hours on court.

First of all I need to recover. I don't have much time, Djokovic said.

Hopefully I'll have fresh legs, because that's what I'll need to play against Rafa.

Nadal kept his time on court to a minimum by ending the

surprising clay-court run of big-serving American Reilly Opelka by 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.

I played the match that I had to play, Nadal said. I had two breaks (in) two sets. That's a positive thing for me. (Being) in the final again here means a lot.

A day earlier, Nadal eliminated Zverev in straight sets.

In terms of preparation for Roland Garros, I consider the job done, Nadal added. Tomorrow is not at all preparation. ... (It's) a final, an important one, and I want to be competitive.

Djokovic and Nadal have met an Open-era record 56 times, with Djokovic leading the series 29-27. Their previous meeting came in last year's French Open final, where Nadal won in straight sets. It will be the sixth time they meet in the Rome final, with Nadal holding a 3-2 edge.

Definitely my biggest rival of all time, Djokovic said.

Even after all we have been through in our careers, there is still this excitement when

we have to face each other. That's going to be the case as long as we play each other on this level.

And I'm really glad that we're showing that we're not backing off on the Next Gen attacks.

Nadal has won the Italian Open a record nine times, while Djokovic has five titles at the Foro Italico.

The women's final will feature French Open champion Iga Swiatek against 2019 Rome champion Karolina Pliskova.

Swiatek also had to play twice on Saturday. First, she eliminated two-time Rome champion Elina Svitolina 6-2, 7-5 then she beat 17-year-old Coco Gauff 7-6(3), 6-3.

Pliskova reached her third consecutive Rome final by outlasting Petra Martic 6-1, 3-6, 6-2.

The 6-foot-11 (2.11-meter) Opelka hadn't dropped a set this week and threatened early against Nadal with a series of huge forehands. But Nadal saved four break points

in the fourth game of the match then broke in the next game to take control.

Djokovic fought back from breaks of his serve in each of the final two sets against Tsitsipas.

I'm just really, really glad to overcome this challenge, Djokovic said.

"It's probably the toughest match of the year for me so far.

Sonego was backed by a loud crowd when he rallied past seventh-ranked Andre Rublev 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 to reach his first Masters semifinal. Their match was washed out Friday.

Fans were allowed to fill 25% of capacity as part of the Italian government's reopening plan.

Against Djokovic, Sonego urged the crowd to get louder in the key moments but ultimately Djokovic's experience paid off as the Serb gained a measure of revenge after getting routed 6-2, 6-1 by the Italian in Vienna last year.

**BCCI match referee Rajendra Jadeja dead**

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

RAJKOT, 16 MAY

Former Saurashtra pacer and BCCI match referee Rajendra Jadeja has died due to COVID-19, the Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA) said on Sunday.

Jadeja was 66 years old.

"Everyone at SCA are deeply saddened on the untimely demise of Rajendra Jadeja, one of the most remarkable yesterday cricketers of Saurashtra. He left for heavenly abode today early morning fighting a hard battle against COVID-19," the SCA said in a statement.

Rajendra Jadeja was one of the finest right-arm medium pacers and a remarkable all-rounder. He played 50 first-class matches and 11 List A games, taking 134 and 14 wickets respectively in a 12-year period between 1975-1987.

He scored 1,536 runs in first-class matches and 104 runs in List A cricket.

Indian cricket team's head coach Ravi Shastri, who has played office and zonal cricket with the former medium pacer, expressed his condolences.

**Kohli is best batsman in world, will always remember him: Paine****PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**

MELBOURNE, 16 MAY



Virat Kohli seems to have left an indelible mark on Australian Test captain Tim Paine, who says he will "always remember" the Indian skipper for being the world's best batsman, capable of also getting under the opposition's skin with his competitiveness.

Kohli and Paine have had a fiery rivalry which goes back to India's 2018-19 tour of Australia. Their on-field spats were an interesting subplot during the historic showdown in which India became the first Asian country to win

a Test series Down Under.

For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love

to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world, the 36-year-old Paine said on the 'Gilly

and Goss' podcast.

"He (Kohli) is challenging

to play against and he can get

under your skin because he

is so good and he is so comp-

titive.

"But yeah, for me from

where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago, He is certainly someone I will always remember," he added.

Interestingly, last year

Paine had said that Kohli is

"just another player" in the

Indian team who "doesn't really

bother me".

He had also stated that the

Australian team "loves to hate"

the superstar for his awe-

inspiring abilities with the bat.

Paine, after the stunning loss in 2018-19, endured another debacle earlier this year when an injury-ravaged Indian team, which did not have Kohli after the opening Test, upstaged the Aussies in the Tests for a second successive tour.

He had recently caused a flutter by stating that his side was distracted by the Indian team's "niggling" during this year's series.

Paine had to clarify that he wasn't making

excuses for the loss after drawing criticism for his comments.

That "something" includ-

ed shadow batting, watching TV and playing video games in the evenings of the day. Even

making his morning cup of tea helped him prepare for the game.

"I felt the anxiety for 10-12

years, had many sleepless

nights before a game. Later on

I started accepting that it was

part of my preparation. The

I made peace with times I was

not able to sleep in the night.

I would start doing some-

thing to keep my mind com-

fortable."

That "something" includ-

ed shadow batting, watching

TV and playing video games

in the evenings of the day. Even

making his morning cup of tea

helped him prepare for the

game.

"Making tea, ironing my

clothes also helped me prepare

for the game. I would pack my

bag the day before the game,

my brother taught me all of it

and it became a habit. I followed

the same drill even in the last

match I played for India," said

the 48-year-old, who retired