

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 1 | JUNE 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 34°C  
**Min:** 22°C  
**Rainfall:** 1%

## ASTROGUIDE

**Pilava:** Vaikasi 18  
**Tithi:** Sashti  
**Star:** Avittam  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:** 9 am to 10.30 noon

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.23 am  
**Luhar:** 12.11 pm  
**Asar:** 3.30 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.31 pm  
**Isha:** 7.49 pm

**SUNSET TODAY** 6.42 PM  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW** 5.58 AM  
**MOONRISE TODAY** 10.43 PM  
**MOONSET TOMORROW** 12.29 AM

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+1,14,662)	(+2,479)
2,81,61,668	3,31,607

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+27,936) 478  
TN: 20,96,516 24,232

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,12,41,328

### DEATHS

35,61,150

COUNTRIES  
AREAS WITH  
CASES 219

worldometers.info

### WhatsApp names grievance officer for India

**New Delhi:** WhatsApp has named Paresh B Lal as its grievance officer for India on its website. The move comes in the backdrop of the new IT rules coming into effect last week that require significant social media intermediaries - those with other 50 lakh users - to appoint a grievance officer, nodal officer and a chief compliance officer. These personnel are required to be resident in India. — PTI

### Juhi Chawla moves Delhi HC against 5G technology

**New Delhi:** Actress-environmentalist Juhi Chawla Monday approached the Delhi High Court against the setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country, raising issues related to the radiation impact on citizens, animals, flora and fauna. The plea, which claims that these 5G plans threaten to provoke serious, irreversible effects on humans and permanent damage to the earth's ecosystems, came up for hearing before Justice C Hari Shankar who transferred the lawsuit to another bench for hearing on June 2. — PTI

## COUNTER POINT



**Yes! I found it. That relief package is from this tiny island in Antarctic Ocean!**



## CITY | 2

**Hopeful of vaccination gaining traction, says HC**



## WORLD | 5

**UK in early stages of third wave, warns PIO scientist**

## SPORT | 8

**Swiatek off to winning start**



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# Central Vista work can go on, says Delhi HC

■ ₹1 lakh cost on petitioners seeking stay of construction

**New Delhi, May 31:** Describing the Central Vista project as “vital and essential”, the Delhi High Court on Monday allowed construction work on the project to continue and imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh on the petitioners for their “motivated” plea. The court said the legality of the project was already upheld by the Supreme Court. It added that even the Delhi Disaster Management Authority allowed it to continue, workers were already present at the site and, therefore, “we see no reason to stop the work”. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh dismissed the plea seeking to halt the project during the coronavirus pandemic, saying the petition was “motivated” and “not a genuine PIL”. It imposed a cost of Rs 1 lakh on the petitioners. The court said under the contract awarded to the Shapoorji Pallonji Group, work had to be completed by November 2021 and, therefore, it should be allowed to continue. The plea for



An artist's impression of the Central Vista project that will house the new Parliament House, a new common Central Secretariat as well as offices and residences of the Prime Minister and Vice President.

halting the work was moved by Anya Malhotra, a translator, and Sohail Hashmi, a historian and documentary filmmaker. The two had contended in their PIL that the project was not an essential activity and can be put on hold for time being. The project entails construction activities on Rajpath and the surrounding lawns from the India Gate to the Rashtrapati Bhawan,

according to the petition, filed through advocates Gautam Khazanchi and Pradyuman Kaistha. The project envisages building a new Parliament House, a new residential complex to house offices and the prime minister and the vice president. It will also have new office buildings and a Central Secretariat to accommodate various ministries' offices.

— PTI

## NOT A VANITY PROJECT, ASSERTS UNION MINISTER

**New Delhi, May 31:** Slamming the opposition, Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Monday said a false narrative is being created over the Central Vista redevelopment plan and asserted that it is not a “vanity project”, but a necessity.

Hitting out at 60 former bureaucrats over their open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi against the project, Puri said, “They are not educated fools, but they are a disgrace to the country.” Citing some parts of the letter during a press conference, Puri, whose ministry is executing the Central vista redevelopment project, said these former civil servants have alleged that the government is building a new parliament building because of “superstitious beliefs”.

## CAN'T, WON'T RELEASE CHIEF SECRETARY: DIDI

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MAY 31**

In a dramatic twist to the tug-of-war between the Centre and the state over the state Chief Secretary, the 1987-batch IAS officer Alapan Bandyopadhyay on Monday took retirement and was immediately appointed chief adviser to chief minister Mamata Banerjee for three years. H.K. Dwiwedi, who was the state home secretary, has become the new state Chief Secretary while B.P. Gopalika has been appointed as the state home secretary. Caught in a tug-of-war between two governments — at the Centre and the state — Mr Bandyopadhyay, who had got a three-month extension last week but was summoned for deputation by the Centre four days later, was due to retire on Monday. Mamata's tough stand prompted the Centre to explore its options to initiate departmental proceedings against Mr Bandyopadhyay for defying its order to report at North Block in New Delhi.

# Sasikala spoke to AMMK cadre, says AIADMK

**G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, MAY 31**

Can V K Sasikala, the erstwhile confidante of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, recapture the AIADMK as it is widely speculated after the audio of a telephonic conversation she had with a follower was leaked in social media?

While this question looms large over the State's political landscape, the AIADMK's deputy coordinator K P Munusamy clarified that the reported conversation was between Sasikala and a cadre of the AMMK, the breakaway faction headed by her nephew TTV Dhinakaran.

Munusamy told the media in his native Krishnagiri district on Monday that no AIADMK cadre had sought out Sasikala and it was she who had called the particular ‘cadre’ and spoken to him. However, it is learnt that Sasikala is getting letters



V.K. Sasikala

at her home in Chennai from ‘Jayalalithaa loyalists’ who invite her to lead the party.

Sasikala, too, is said to have called up about 500 persons both in the AMMK and AIADMK and assured them that she would come to ‘save’ Jayalalithaa's party.

Also there is reported to be a feeling among a section of AIADMK members that Sasikala could possibly bring in the much needed cohesion in the AIADMK, whose vote bank had split in the just concluded election with the AMMK taking away a



K.P. Munusamy

good slice of it.

Some low level leaders even suggest that the AIADMK lost in 31 seats only because the AMMK had taken away their votes, suggesting they should have won those constituencies by being together.

Though the AIADMK-led NDA would not have been able to get a majority in the Assembly even if those 31 seats, whichever ones they are, had landed in their kitty, a talk is gaining ground in the AIADMK that leaving out the AMMK was a mistake.

■ P3

# GDP grew by 1.6 per cent in Q4 of fiscal 2020-21

**DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 31**

India's economy grew 1.6 per cent in the January-March quarter, continuing its recovery phase after the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. The economy had grown 0.5 per cent in the October-December quarter.

According to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Monday, “GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in Q4 of 2020-21 is estimated at ₹38.96 lakh crore, as against ₹38.33 lakh crore in Q4 of 2019-20, showing a growth of 1.6 per cent.”

In the fourth quarter, the government data further suggests that there was a 43 per cent growth in the sale of commercial vehicles, 27 per cent growth in private vehicles, cargo handled at major seaports had risen by 6.8 per cent and net tonne-kilometres (freight) handled by railways increased by 16.9 per cent.

It also claimed that consumption of steel grew 25.2 per cent in the fourth quarter, while cement production was up by 5.2 per

**43 %** growth in the sale of commercial vehicles

**27 %** growth in private vehicles

**6.8 %** more cargo handled at major sea ports

**16.9%** increase in freight handled by railways

The demand in rural India has been resilient. Earlier last year, rural India continued to aid the economy while urban India fought the initial wave of covid-19. The agriculture sector has been a silver lining, clocking consecutive growth. Annual numbers signify a revival in demand. The second wave is likely to have hit some of the recoveries, and it will have some impact on the economy.”

— **Krishnamurthy Subramanian**  
Chief Economic Advisor

cent. The manufacturing sector grew 5.8 per cent in the January-March quarter.

Reacting to the Q4 GDP numbers, Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) Krishnamurthy Subramanian said there had been a marginal improvement in the FY'21 GDP. “The demand in rural India has been resilient. Earlier last year, rural India continued to aid the economy while urban India fought the initial wave of covid-19. The agriculture sector has been a silver lining, clocking consecutive growth,” Subramanian said.

“After the quarter one numbers were released,

we had said things will get better from here and had predicted growth. It is heartening to know those projections have held. Annual numbers signify a revival in demand. The second wave is likely to have hit some of the recoveries, and it will have some impact on the economy,” the CEA added.

Separately, higher tax collections helped arrest fiscal deficit (excess of government expenditure over revenue) at 9.3 per cent of the GDP in FY21 as against 9.5 per cent projected previously and 3.5 per cent estimated when the Budget was presented in February 2020.

## SC CONCERNED OVER REPORTS ON KIDS, RURAL INDIA EXPOSURE IN THIRD COVID WAVE

**New Delhi, May 31:** Concerned over reports that kids and rural India may be exposed more in the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court Monday asked the Centre whether any study on these aspects has been conducted. The top court also asked the Centre about its responsibility on the regulation of prices of vaccines and said it has seen “prices of Remdesivir and

some other medicines hitting the roof”.

“Has any study been carried out by any government for the rural areas. We have been told that children will be exposed in the third wave and that rural areas will be affected. We want to know the vaccination policy for that too,” said a special bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud, L Nageswara Rao and S Ravindra Bhat.

Hearing a suo motu case on management of COVID situation in the country, the top court highlighted the “digital divide” between rural and urban India and questioned the Centre over mandatory registration on CoWIN App for COVID-19 vaccination, saying the policy makers must “have ears on ground” to effectively deal with the “unprecedented” pandemic crisis.

# Consider enhancing medical scheme limit, Madras HC tells TN government

**Chennai, May 31:** The Madras High Court has left it to the Tamil Nadu government to consider enhancing the threshold limit for receiving Covid-19 treatment under the Chief Minister's comprehensive health scheme. “Since this is a matter of policy, it is left to the state to consider whether the upward revision of the minimum threshold limit

would be appropriate,” the first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said on Monday. The plea appears to be reasonable, the bench said and hoped that the threshold of Rs 72,000 per year would be substantially increased to allow a larger number of families to avail of the benefit under the scheme.

The bench was disposing of a PIL from one D I Nathan praying for a direction to the state government to devise a scheme to bring all private nursing homes, polyclinics and hospitals under their control, admit and provide free treatment effectively to the coronavirus affected people under the scheme. The petitioner contended that

the ceiling of Rs 72,000 per annum is too low since even on the basis of the minimum wages payable to an unskilled worker, the annual income of his family will exceed the minimum eligibility threshold. So he pleaded for a direction to raise the ceiling, so that the scheme can cover a larger number of persons.

— PTI

# Will decide in 2 days on exams, Centre tells SC

**New Delhi, May 31:** The government will take a final decision within the next two days on whether to conduct class 12 board exams amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court was informed on Monday. Attorney General K K Venugopal said this before a bench of Justices A M Khanwilkar and Dinesh

Maheshwari which said if the Centre decides to depart from the last year's policy, wherein the remaining board exams were cancelled due to the pandemic, then it must give “tangible reasons” for it. “No issue. You take the decision. You are entitled to it. If you are departing from the policy of last year, then you must

give tangible reasons for it,” the bench told Venugopal. Observing that the last year's decision was taken after deliberations, the apex court said, “If you are departing from that policy, please give us good reasons so that we can examine it.” The bench was hearing a plea seeking directions to cancel the class 12 exams of

the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) amid the pandemic situation.

During the hearing conducted through video-conferencing on Monday, the Attorney General told the bench, “The government will take a final decision

within the next two days. We are hoping that your lordships will give us time till Thursday (June 3) so that we can come back with the final decision”. Venugopal said that last year, board exams for some papers were over before the COVID-19 induced national lockdown was imposed in March 2020.

— PTI



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## SHORT TAKES

## Three held for stealing ₹7 lakh from supermarket

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

A three-member gang has been arrested by the city police for allegedly stealing ₹7 lakh from a supermarket in Royapuram, the police said on Monday.

According to the police, the complainant S.Sahul Hameed (40) from Porur, runs a supermarket along with his friends in the Royapuram area. He told police that on May 22, he locked the store and went home as usual. However, when he came back the next morning, he found ₹7,36,000 stolen from the cash counter. A case was registered by the Royapuram police and they began an investigation into the theft.

Police said on analysing the footage of CCTV cameras installed near the store, three young men were seen breaking into the supermarket. Police traced the accused and arrested them on Monday.

The arrested were identified by the police as, L. Madan (20) of Vysarpadi, G. Gopinath (19), of Kosapettai, D.Vishwa(19) of Vysarpadi. The police said during interrogation, they confessed to the crime.

The police said they recovered ₹2,59,300 stolen cash, a gold chain, three silver anklets and a two-wheeler from the accused. Police said all the arrested has many theft cases against them in city police stations.

## Man murdered in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

A 24-year-old man was killed by a gang in Peerkankaranai near Tambaram in the wee hours of Monday, the police said.

The deceased person has been identified as Vignesh, a resident of Bharathi Nagar in Peerkankaranai. He was a car driver.

According to the police, the incident happened at around 1 am on Monday, when Vignesh was walking to his house from his friend's place. When a three-member gang wielding iron pipes and wooden logs intercepted him. The victim began running, however, the gang chased and attacked him brutally. They fled the spot, as the locals started to gather after hearing the screams. Vignesh suffered severe injuries to his head.

Peerkankaranai police were alerted. Vignesh was shifted to the Rajiv Gandhi Government hospital, where he passed away in the morning. A case has been registered by the police and investigations are on to nab the assailants.

Police said that Vignesh used to live in Thiruvalluvar street in Peerkankaranai, where he got into frequent arguments with a gang, headed by one Mani. They suspect that the gang might have murdered him owing to the previous enmity.

## Puducherry logs 627 new cases

**Puducherry, May 31:** The union territory of Puducherry reported 627 new coronavirus cases during the last 24 hours taking the overall tally to 1,04,453, a senior official of the Department of Health and Family Welfare Services said on Monday.

The 627 new cases were identified at the end of the examination of 7,001 samples projecting a test positivity rate of 8.96 per cent, Director of Health and Family Welfare Services S Mohan Kumar said. —PTI

## Hopeful that vaccination is gaining traction, says HC

## Second surge of pandemic appears to have subsided: Bench

J.STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

The Madras high court has expressed its hope that the vaccination drive and the awareness drive to administer vaccines are kept up and the superstitions and the unsubstantiated myths built around the vaccine are dispelled.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy adjourned to June 7, 2021, further hearing of a suo motu proceedings initiated by it pursuant to the newspapers reports relating to alleged shortage of oxygen and drug Remdesivir and another batch of PILs relating to Covid-19.

The bench said the second surge of the pandemic appears to have subsided in both the state and the Union Territory. Status reports filed on Monday indicate increased number of beds and ready availability of both oxygen-supported beds and non-oxygen beds.

"It is only hoped that the additional facilities are not discontinued for the next few months and, even if it costs a bit more, they are maintained if only to ensure that the dearth that was faced during the second surge is not repeated. The oxygen supplies to the state and the Union Territory have been augmented", the bench added.

The bench said the only area of concern appears to be the availability of vaccines and the report filed by the Union indicates the allotment of vaccine free of cost to the State and the Union Territory, and the quantities that the state and the Union Territory would procure upon payment. Earlier, the Union's commitment to ensure that 216 crore doses of vaccine were available by the end of the year has been recorded. It was hoped that the target was met sooner, rather than later, the bench added.

The bench said the several aspects highlighted in the status reports, includ-

## TAKE INITIATIVE TO VACCINATE ALL HOMELESS PERSONS: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

The Madras high court has expressed its hope that the authorities take the initiative to ensure that all homeless persons, pavement dwellers and others, who may not have any registration or other documents are administered the vaccine upon assessing their health conditions.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy was passing further interim orders on a PIL filed by M.Muruganantham, which sought a direction to the authorities to take immediate steps to vaccinate the homeless people and to

## DON'T CROWD HOSPITALS, HC TELLS MINISTERS, MLAS

"All concerned, including the hospitals and clinics that the MLAs visit for the purpose of looking into the conditions there at or to oversee the treatment provided, should maintain the Covid protocol at all times. It sometimes happens that despite the person leading the team advising others not to accompany, the enthusiasm cannot be checked. There may be a need, at times, to restrict the number of persons accompanying legislators and the like while they go on their visits", the bench added.

protect them from infection of coronavirus, without demanding production of any identity cards of theirs, as they are

homeless and protect their lives.

The bench said even if it was for the selfish interest of the rest of the popula-

tion which may be better placed, it was necessary to vaccinate all, since those who were not vaccinated may be a risk to the others. However, at present, vaccines were not available in adequate quantities. "It is hoped that all municipal corporations and municipalities and like bodies take the initiative to ensure that all homeless persons, pavement dwellers and others who may not have any registration or other documents are administered the vaccine upon assessing their health conditions", the bench added. Asking the state to file a status report on such aspect, the bench adjourned to June 28, 2021, further hearing of the case.

## Animal husbandry dept to feed stray animals on IIT campus

J.STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

Pointing out the submission of the committee, appointed by the court that there are several stray animals on the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Chennai campus, but the fate and state of such animals cannot be ascertained, the Madras high court has asked the animal husbandry department to enter the premises of IIT after giving prior notice, under the authority conferred by this court to feed the stray animals on IIT campus and ascertain the health of the animals, if necessary.

"The authorities at IIT, Chennai, are requested to cooperate. At any rate, it is hoped that the IIT authorities are taking care of the stray animals on campus", said the first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar

Ramamoorthy while passing further interim orders on a petition filed by V.E.Shiva, which sought a direction to the authorities to take necessary steps to ensure that the stray animals are provided with food and water in this Covid 19 pandemic.

The bench said it was reported by the committee that a sum of Rs 10 lakh was granted from the funds available to the Governor for the immediate procurement of food for stray animals. The orders were to be placed today. In the meantime, the animal husbandry department has been feeding the stray animals with whatever resources available. Several animal lovers have also joined in, but the lockdown conditions do not permit people to come and do more. "It is hoped that the state releases Rs 9.2 lakh sought for the immediate purpose of feeding stray dogs, cattle, cats, horses

and even elephants. This is only a temporary measure and will not be continued after the lockdown. This is necessary because during the lockdown, there is hardly any food for the animals and little scope for even scavenging," the bench added.

The bench said it appears that 650 kgs of skimmed milk powder have been received by way of a donation, but the same may not be appropriate for feeding stray animals. The committee, accordingly, seeks permission for diverting such skimmed milk powder packets to the homeless and the needy. The committee was accorded such permission and the members of the committee should ensure that the deserving people get the packets to the extent it may not be needed for feeding the stray animals, the bench added and posted to June 4, further hearing of the case.

## ‘Check if Covid protocol is followed in Renault-Nissan’

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

The Madras high court has asked the state government to arrange for a senior official from the Directorate of Industrial Safety to visit the Sriperumbudur factory of Renault-Nissan by 10 am on June 1, 2021, to ascertain whether Covid protocol is maintained at the factory.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy was passing further interim orders on a petition filed by the Workmen of Renault-Nissan (India) Pvt.Ltd.

The bench said the management and the workers

at the Renault-Nissan India Pvt Ltd manufacturing facility at Sriperumbudur were in conversation, but several unresolved issues remain. It was the assertion of the petitioning workers that the employer cannot avail of the exemption to the lockdown without complying with the attendant conditions of maintaining Covid protocol, particularly social distancing. According to the workmen, the distancing norms cannot be maintained in the production procedure adopted by this employer, particularly in the assembly line, the bench added.

The bench said it appears that a member from the Directorate of

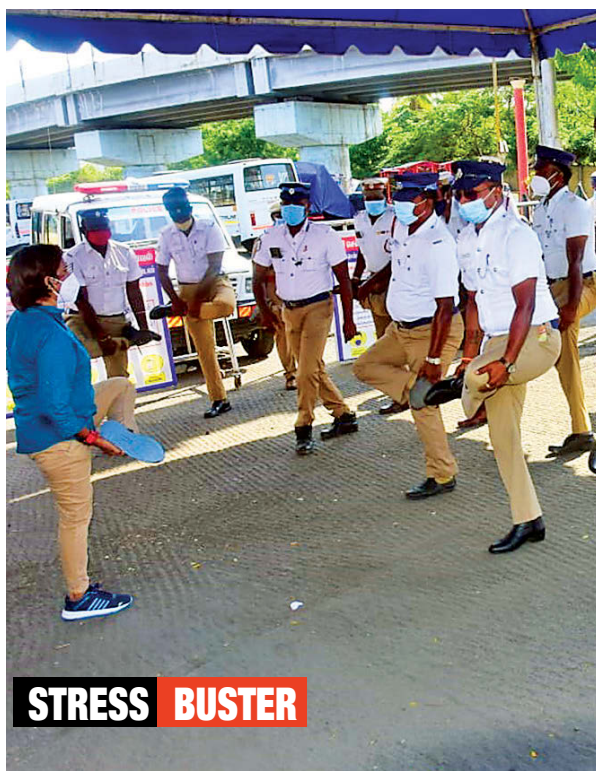
Industrial Safety paid a visit to the factory on May 26, 2021, but the factory was closed on that day. The workmen have not reported for duty today in protest against the perceived non-adherence to the Covid protocol by the employer. The employer, however, maintains that all precautionary steps have been taken and the employer was open to any surprise or other inspection by an appropriate government official to ascertain whether Covid protocol was maintained at the factory, the bench added.

The bench said the advocate general representing the state was requested to arrange for a senior official from the Directorate

of Industrial Safety to visit the Sriperumbudur factory of Renault-Nissan by 10 am on June 1, 2021. "It is hoped that after the day off today, the workmen will resume their duties tomorrow, so that the inspection may be made and representatives of the workmen may interact with the government official concerned, along with the representatives of the management, to check the relevant parameters and arrive at some form of solution", the bench added.

The bench said it was hoped that all safety norms were in place and there was no compromise on such account to keep up the production at the factory. The distancing

norms have to be maintained without exception. For such purpose, the management and the workmen should continue their discussions to arrive at a reasonable solution in course of the week. It will be open to the management or the workmen to request the government official concerned to be present during the discussions to mediate between the two sides, if necessary. "It is hoped that an amicable resolution would be reported to the court when the matter appears next on June 4, 2021. The employer should indicate the number of workmen infected, including the details of how many are in hospital and how many are at home", the bench added.



Traffic police do some breathing and mind relaxing exercises before starting their duty at Anna Nagar arch signal on Monday. —DC

## 4,576 cases booked, 2,697 vehicles seized

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

The police have registered a total of 4,576 cases for lockdown violations and seized 2,697 vehicles on Sunday.

The complete lockdown that came into effect in the state from May 10 has been extended till June 7 and as per the orders from the City Police commissioner Shankar Jiwai, a total of 153 checkpoints, at the borders of each police station's limit, were set up. These points were barricaded only policemen allowed only

those with valid reasons and relevant documents to move around.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, the traffic police registered 3, 113 cases against those who were roaming around for any valid reason and a total of 546 vehicles were seized.

The Law and Order police also registered 1,463 cases and seized 2,151 vehicles, including 2,052 two-wheelers. A total of 2,771 cases were registered against people for not wearing masks and 302 for not following personal distancing.

## Full lockdown shows positive results in south

M. ARULOLI | DC  
TIRUNELVELI, MAY 31

The full lockdown, a bitter pill administered by the state government since May 16, has shown positive results in the southern districts, where the daily case-load went down by around six percent on May 30.

The number of daily discharge from the hospitals in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Kanyakumari and Tenkasi districts too increased by 9.88 percent as against 7.19 percent on the first day of the total lockdown on May 16.

The new cases in Kanyakumari district came down to 912 on May 30, from 1,030 cases registered on May 16. The case-load in Tirunelveli and Tenkasi for the past one week continued to be below 500, while the tally in Thoothukudi district went down by around 250 on May 30 against 914 cases 15 days ago.

"As the number of new cases is going down and discharge rate is increasing, the problem of oxygen bed shortage is not so acute now," said a health department official, who added that Kanyakumari district had 47 per cent (412) oxygen beds availability on May 30.

The availability of oxygen beds in Thoothukudi district on May 30 was 38.34 per cent, and 79 per cent and 65 per cent respectively in Tirunelveli and Tenkasi districts.

"The dip in the positivity rate in the southern districts attributed to the curfew, however, would continue only if the people don't let their guard down against Covid spread," said Thoothukudi district collector K. Senthil Raj, who requested the people to continue their cooperation with the administration in the fight against corona.

## Two lakh doses of Covishield arrives in Chennai airport

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

Tamil Nadu on Monday received two lakh doses of Covidshield. The consignment arrived at the

Chennai airport at around 2 pm on Monday from Mumbai on an Indigo airlines flight. Sources said the vaccines were to be administered at three private hospitals in the city.

## Off-centre

## Super spreaders at Ooty work site

The official Covid-19 spread prevention team members were shell-shocked when they found that norms like wearing face masks and physical distancing were not followed by farm labourers at a carrot cleaning centre in Mullikorai near Ooty.

When the officials inquired further, they found that the owners of the cleaning centre had brought a couple of migrant labourers from the containment zones in Kandal. The startled officials sealed the carrot cleaning centre and imposed a fine on its management.

—B. Ravichandran

## Free biryani along with job

A group of youngsters in Chennai has come up with a creative strategy to get more people take the Covid-19 vaccination. With the help of an NGO, the group is giving free biryani to people who get the jab in Kovalam. They are also giving free weekly prizes such as mobile phones, gold coin, mixer, grinder, scooter etc. The gifts are distributed based on a lucky draw. Three welfare trusts - STS Foundation, managed by Kovalam youngsters, CN Ramadas Champions Development Trust, and 1992 Don Bosco School alumni group in Chennai have pooled in money to organise the drive. Free vaccines to the camp are being supplied by the Chengalpet district collectorate.

—Sindhiya Samuel

## Mobile groceries service launched

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

Groceries and provisions will be made available through mobile shops and also delivered at the doorsteps from Tuesday as the government has given permission to a total of 13,700 vends across the 15 zones in Chennai to supply them during the total lockdown period.

Since the total lockdown has been extended till June 7, groceries, condiments and provisions would be sold through vans, auto rickshaws and push carts by the local shops between 7 am and 6 pm.

The same system would be in force in the other cities and municipalities in the State

and in villages the local bodies would give due permission for the mobile business in their jurisdiction.

In Chennai, 347 supermarkets have been allowed to do door delivery by taking orders online or over telephone and 2197 shops and 7728 small time grocers would sell their goods through the mobile shops on the streets.

Launching the scheme at Otteri on Monday, State Health Minister Mu Subramanian also spoke about the ongoing vaccination programme in the State. He said 83 lakh persons over the age of 45 had already been vaccinated.

As of now there was only a stock of 5 lakh doses of vacci-

nation and it would not be adequate to continue the programme for long since 1.04,000 vaccinations were carried out on a daily basis now, as against the 61,000 doses administered during the AIADMK regime, he said.

Calling up BJP leaders like Vanathi Sreenivasan and L. Murugan to prevail upon the Centre to supply vaccines to the state on an urgent basis, he asked them to stop blaming the State government for everything.

He denied that the government had ignored Coimbatore in its vaccination drive and said that next to Chennai, Vanathi Sreenivasan's city was the one that got maximum doses of vaccine.



Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd staff in Gopalapuram check the 13 grocery items the Tamil Nadu government has decided to provide in the corona relief kits for 2.11 crore family cardholders in the state this week. —DC







## SHORT TAKES

## SIX MORE BODIES FOUND FLOATING IN GANGA

Fatehpur (UP), May 31: Six more bodies of suspected Covid-19 victims were found floating in the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh, an official said on Monday. Fatehpur Sadar Tehsil Sub-Collector (SDM) Pramod Jha said he was informed about the bodies floating in the river on Sunday morning, following which a search operation was launched. Six decomposed bodies were recovered from the river, he said. Later in the day, a team of doctors performed the last rites at Bhitora Ganga Ghat as per the Covid guidelines, the SDM said.

## ALIGARH HOCH TRAGEDY: DEATH TOLL RISES TO 36

Aligarh (UP), May 31: The toll in the Aligarh hooch tragedy climbed to 36 on Monday with 11 more deaths being confirmed by the district authorities amid apprehension that it may rise further.

Viscera samples of 35 other people, who are suspected to have died after consuming spurious liquor, have been sent for examination to confirm the cause of death, Chief Medical Officer Dr Bhanu Pratap Kalyani said.

Former Samajwadi Party MLA from Aligarh Zameerullah Khan produced before the media the families of 12 people who he claimed died over the past three days after consuming the spurious liquor and whose post-mortem was not conducted. He demanded that the state government provide compensation to all such families.

## 'TOBACCO KILLS OVER 1.3 MN EVERY YEAR'

New Delhi, May 31: Smokers face a 40-50 per cent higher risk of severe diseases and death from Covid-19, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Monday highlighting that over 1.3 million fatalities are attributable to tobacco use every year in India, which is an avoidable socio-economic burden impacting the country's development.

These remarks were made by Vardhan as he chaired an event to mark the World No Tobacco Day and led the pledge by everyone present to abstain from tobacco, a health ministry statement said.

According to the WHO study titled Economic Costs of Diseases and Deaths Attributable to Tobacco Use in India, it has been estimated that the economic burden of diseases and deaths attributable to tobacco use of tobacco in India was as high as ₹1.77 lakh crore.

## KARNI SENA OBJECTS TO TITLE 'PRITHIVIRAJ'

Jaipur/Mumbai, May 31: The Shree Rajput Karni Sena, which had organised protests over the release of Sanjay Leela Bhansali's *Padmaavat* citing distortion of facts, has focused its attention on the upcoming Akshay Kumar starrer *Prithviraj* and is demanding that the title be changed.

The organisation, a fringe group that takes up issues related to the Rajput community, wants that the title of the Yash Raj Films historical drama should reflect the greatness of the last Hindu emperor Prithviraj Chauhan. Just naming it Prithviraj does injustice with his glory, it said while warning of protests over the issue.

The filmmakers have made the film on the great king Prithviraj Chauhan who was the last Hindu emperor and a great Rajput king. How can the name of the film be kept just Prithviraj? The title should have the full name, *Mahipal Singh Makrana*, said national president of the Shree Rajput Karni Sena.

He said the Karni Sena's Mumbai team, led by Dilip Singh, had filed a complaint with the Mumbai Police last week, raising objections over the title, but no FIR had been registered yet.

There was no response from the production house when reached for a comment.

In March last year, Karni Sena members, led by Makrana, had disrupted the shooting of *Prithviraj* on the outskirts of Jaipur.

According to Makrana, filmmakers should give due respect to historic personalities when they make biopics.

## Security matters



Commandos of the Urban Commando Wing under the Anti-Terrorist Squad practice hostage rescue operation drill in Kochi on Monday.

— PTI

## India no longer to import single-engine helicopters

Centre issues a list of 108 items which will not be imported anymore

PAWAN BALI | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The defence ministry under Rajnath Singh on Monday notified second negative list (now called as Second

Positive Indigenisation List) of 108 weapons and equipment which will not be imported by defence forces as part of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' endeavour of the Modi government.

This second list is planned to be implemented progressively with effect from December 2021 to December 2025.

The first negative list notified in August last had barred import of 101 defence items from specified dates, starting December 2020.

"Great news for Indian Defence Industry. With 101 items notified in August 2020 and 108 items notified now, 209 items not to be imported by Armed Forces from specified dates," (sic) tweeted defence secretary Ajay Kumar.

The second list has 108 items including single engine helicopters, Next Generation Corvettes, Air Borne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) systems, Tank Engines, Medium Power Radar for Mountains, and Medium Range Surface to Air

Missile Weapon Systems among others.

The defence ministry said that the notification of the second list will give further boost to indigenisation with active participation of public and private sector for fulfilling the twin objectives of achieving self-reliance and promoting defence exports.

All the 108 items will now be procured from indigenous sources as per provisions given in Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020.

India is one of the world's largest arms importer.

To give a push to Make-in-India in the defence sector, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman last year had announced hiking FDI in defence manufacturing to 74 per cent from 49 per cent under automatic route to encourage major foreign defence companies to set up factories in the country.

The defence ministry has also bifurcated the capital procurement budget between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes.

The second list lays special focus on weapons and systems which are currently under development or trial and are likely to translate into firm orders

## Lt-Gen Pande to helm Eastern Army Command

DC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MAY 31

India's only tri-service military theatre command Andaman and Nicobar Command has got a new commander, Lt Gen Ajai Singh who will take over the charge on Tuesday.

The incumbent Lieutenant General Manoj Pande will take over the Eastern Command of the country and is a harbinger of the larger similarly planned theatisation of Navy and Air Force capabilities.

Under the Lieutenant General Pande's command, during this last one year, the ANC significantly enhanced its operational preparedness and successfully conducted a number of major tri-service operational exercises, BrahMos missile firing

and joint exercises with foreign navies.

The Command also conducted a unique joint operational exercise during the visit of President Ram Nath Kovind in March. Lt-Gen. Singh, the new commander of ANC is a fifth generation army officer, with family service of over 162 years since September 13, 1858.

He is pursuing a PhD on "Emerging Trends in China-Pak Relations with reference to CPEC and its implications for India". He has also authored three key studies including, the initial draft of the Army's "Land Warfare Doctrine, 2018", the "Army HQ Reorganisation Study, 2019" and an important Operational Study conducted in 2020.

list recognise the potential of local defence industry, but it will also invigorate impetus to domestic research and development by attracting fresh investment into technology and manufacturing capabilities.

The defence ministry said that not only does the

will take over the role next year.

Foreign ministers including external affairs minister S. Jaishankar, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi and Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov are among those expected to participate in the meeting in which they may discuss finalisation of outcome documents at the meeting.

India is the current BRICS Chair and China

cooperation.

This comes ahead of a BRICS summit to be convened by India later this year which will see the participation of the top leaders of the five nations including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

India is the current BRICS Chair and China

attempt to undermine its unique culture and indigenous lifestyle is unacceptable. Anyone who upholds Constitutional values should register a strong disagreement against the actions of the administra-

tor of Lakshadweep, the Chief Minister urged.

Setting aside their political differences, members of the ruling CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front and the Congress-headed United Democratic Front unanimously backed the resolution, except some amendments suggested by the latter.

The hard-hitting resolution alleged that attempts were being made to impose "saffron agendas" and "corporate interests" by destroying the unique way of life of Lakshadweep people.

The implementation of the agenda, rolled out in

LT. GEN. PANDE will be the senior most officer in the Army when Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane retires next year.

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## Delhi unlock: New woes for factories

New Delhi, May 31: As the Covid lockdown restrictions were eased in Delhi, factory owners on Monday opened their establishments after six weeks with many grappling with shortage of labourers and raw materials, and fearing losses due to slump in production.

After a strict lockdown for six weeks since April 19, the Delhi government allowed industrial manufacturing and construction work in the city from Monday as part of its phased unlock process.

However, since the majority of the workforce had left for their native places fearing the unprecedented second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic, and the markets yet to open for supply of raw material, the industrialists said they can only calculate their losses.

"We have only been able to enter the factory and that is it. There is no way we can start work," said Neeraj Sehgal, owner of Sehgal Doors in the Mayapuri industrial area.

"Only 20 per cent workers are here and there is no raw material because the government has not

allowed the industrial use of oxygen, which is essential to make steel doors," said Sehgal, who makes fire-rated doors and steel doors.

And since the rules deny the use of oxygen for industries, the price for raw material has skyrocketed.

"What we were buying earlier for ₹55 per kg is now available at ₹90 per kg. An increase of 65 per cent, can you believe this," lamented Sehgal, who is also the general secretary of Mayapuri industrial area welfare association.

The pending electricity and water bills have only added to his woes.

As per an order issued by the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on May 29, the workers and employees at manufacturing units and construction sites will be required to carry e-passes for movement during the ongoing lockdown that has been extended to June 7.

Another industrialist, Ashok Gupta of Jugmug Shoes in Udyog Nagar, Peeragarhi, was bogged down by not being able to get e-passes for his workers.

## 35% of India's Covid toll logged in 1 month

New Delhi, May 31: India reported more than 88.82 lakh Coronavirus infections in May alone during the raging second wave of Covid-19, accounting for 31.67 per cent of the over 2.8 crore cases reported in the country so far and making it the worst month of the pandemic.

The month of May also saw 1,17,247 fatalities due to the disease, which is around 35.63 per cent of the total 3,29,100 deaths recorded so far.

The daily cases peaked on May 7 when the country registered 4,14,188 infections in a span of 24 hours, while daily deaths

were the highest on May 19 with India reporting 4,529 fatalities.

The daily new cases remained below three lakh since May 17 and the country has recorded less than two lakh daily new cases for four consecutive days. The active cases had peaked on May 10 at 37,45,237.

India reported the lowest daily new infections of 1,52,734 in 50 days, taking India's total tally of cases to 2,80,47,534, while the active caseload has further declined to 20,26,092, according to the Union health ministry data updated at 8 am on Monday.

— PTI

## Odisha govt prepares for third wave

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 31

The Odisha government has started its preparation to avoid any kind of eventualities during the much apprehended third wave of Covid-19.

According to state additional chief secretary (ACS) Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra, the state government was emphasising on strengthening medical facilities and ramping up tests to deal with the pandemic

"Some experts have opined about the possible third wave of the pandemic. The state government is fully prepared for the situation. On an urgent basis, Oxygen PSA and liquid oxygen plants will be set up in all the district headquarters hospitals and medical colleges in the next two and half months. We will also set up more paediatric beds in the hospitals as children may be more vulnerable to the disease," Mohapatra informed on Monday.

## India, France set up 'oxygen bridge'

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 31

France and India have

"set up an oxygen bridge across the Indian Ocean to bring several rotations of liquid oxygen donated by French multinational Air Liquide", the French Embassy announced on Monday, adding that France is doubling the Covid-related support to India following a phone call between French

President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week on May 26.

France said it was carrying out the largest solidarity operation undertaken by it so far since the beginning of the pandemic which "reflects the long-standing, two-way solidarity between France and India, which lies at the heart of our strategic partnership".

France also declared it would deliver at least

twice as many oxygen generators plants as the eight already delivered earlier this month and that a special cargo flight with 10 such units would reach India mid-June and that another flight would follow after that. The French Embassy pointed out that each of these French-made, high capacity plants produces 24,000 litres of oxygen per hour non-stop and can make a 250-bed Indian hospital oxygen self-reliant for a

dozen years.

In a statement, the French Embassy in New Delhi said that on the directions of President Emmanuel Macron, France is bringing in additional support to India to continue fighting the second wave together. "France and India have set up an oxygen bridge across the Indian Ocean to bring several rotations of liquid oxygen donated by French multinational Air Liquide."

## POLITICAL | PLAY

Kerala is first state to come up with a resolution to support the people of the Union Territory

## Kerala passes resolution for recall of L'dweep administrator

Thiruvananthapuram, May 31: Expressing solidarity with the people of Lakshadweep, the Kerala Legislative Assembly on Monday unanimously passed a resolution demanding the recall of island administrator Praful Khoda Patel and requesting the immediate intervention of the Centre to protect the lives and livelihood of the islanders.

With this, Kerala has become the first state in the country to come up with a resolution to support the people of the union territory over the recent developments.

An archipelago located

in the Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep is witnessing protests by local people for some days over the recent actions and administrative reforms being implemented by Patel.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan moved the government resolution, the first such motion in the 15th state Assembly, reminiscing the historic and cultural bond between Kerala and Lakshadweep and criticising the Centre for allegedly trying to destroy the natural democracy there.

Stating that the future of Lakshadweep is a matter of concern, he said any

● CHIEF MINISTER Pinarayi Vijayan moved the government resolution, the first such motion in the 15th state Assembly, reminiscing the historic and cultural bond between Kerala and Lakshadweep and criticising the Centre for allegedly trying to destroy the natural democracy there.

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tor of Lakshadweep, the Chief Minister urged.

Setting aside their political differences, members of the ruling CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front and the Congress-headed United Democratic Front unanimously backed the resolution, except some amendments suggested by the latter.

The hard-hitting resolution alleged that attempts were being made to impose "saffron agendas" and "corporate interests" by destroying the unique way of life of Lakshadweep people.

The implementation of the agenda, rolled out in

the name of reforms, began with the painting of coconut trees with saffron colour and it has now grown to the level of destroying the traditional habitat, life and natural relationships of the island dwellers, it alleged.

Steps have been taken to bring in the Goonda Act in the island where the crime rate is exceptionally low, it said.

Pointing out that the authorities also aimed at destroying their traditional livelihood of fishing, the resolution said tents, where the fishermen's boats and nets are kept, have been rampantly

destroyed.

Through the attempt to exclude beef, which is part of the natural diet of the people of the territory, the Sangh Parivar agenda of banning cow slaughter was being implemented through the backdoor, it alleged.

Thus, the administrator has taken the lead in annihilating the indigenous life and culture of the people of a territory inch by inch, the brief resolution further charged.

Criticising the Centre's act of giving the administrator special powers to intervene into the affairs of various government

departments, Vijayan said it amounted to undermining the island's natural democracy by deploying officials of their choice.

"The recent developments in Lakshadweep should be seen as a laboratory of the Sangh Parivar agenda. They are attempting to change the culture, language, lifestyle and food habits of people of the country in tune with their ideology," the Chief Minister alleged.

Strong resistance should be raised against this bid to enslave people of a territory to "corporate interests and Hindutva politics", he said.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

FRENCH POLICE  
DETAIN FUGITIVE  
EX-SOLDIER

**Paris, May 31:** French police on Monday detained in south-west France a former soldier who fled into a forest after firing on the security forces in an incident that sparked a massive manhunt, officials said.

The government's top official in the Dordogne region, Frederic Perissat, told a press conference in Le Lardin-Saint-Lazare that the suspect was shot and wounded by police, and had been taken into custody. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Twitter that the man had been "neutralised" and praised the security forces for their actions.

ATLANTIC CROAKER  
SOLD FOR RS 72  
LAKH IN PAK

**Islamabad, May 31:** A Pakistani fisherman has sold a rare 48-kg Atlantic croaker fish for a whopping Rs 72-lakh (\$46,706), in one of the costliest seafood transactions in the country, according to a media report on Monday. Boatman Sajid Haji Ababakar caught fish off the coast of Gwadar in Balochistan province on Sunday, the *Dawn* newspaper reported. An auction was held and the highest bid was settled at Rs 86.4 lakh. "However, we settled for Rs 72 lakh following our tradition of discounts," Ababakar said. Deputy Director for Fisheries, Gwadar, Ahmed Nadeem said he had never seen a fish fetch a such a high price. The fish is in great demand in Europe and China for its meat and use of skin and bones in medical sciences.

"Some fish are expensive because of their meat. But this species (large croaker fish) has a high demand because parts of it are known for their use in medicine and surgery," said Abdul Rahim Baloch, marine biologist and Assistant Director, Environment Development Authority, Gwadar.

INVESTIGATORS  
PROBE GHOSN IN  
LEBANON

**Beirut, May 31:** French investigators started interrogating former Renault-Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn Monday in Lebanon, where he has sought refuge since a dramatic escape from Japan, a court source said. The source said that Ghosn, his defence team, a Lebanese prosecutor sitting in on the hearing and the visiting French judges entered the hall at the Court of Cassation where the interrogation over alleged fraudulent activities got under way.

A separate Lebanese judicial source said Ghosn would be interrogated for five days, every day from 10:00am (0700 GMT) until 6:00pm (1500 GMT) with a lunch break.

The 67-year-old faces scrutiny from French investigators centring on alleged improper financial interactions with Renault-Nissan's distributor in Oman, payments by a Dutch subsidiary to consultants and parties organised at the Versailles Palace.

Ghosn — who holds French, Lebanese and Brazilian passports — was arrested in Japan in 2018 on suspicion of financial misconduct.

GUNMEN ABDUCT  
STUDENTS IN  
NIGERIA

**Lagos, May 31:** A large number of students were abducted Sunday and one person was killed at a school in Nigeria's north central Niger State, a police spokesman said.

Nigerian media, including the independent Channels TV, said about 200 students were abducted at the Salihu Tanko Islamic School in Tegina in the local government area of Rafi.

Wasiu Abiodun, the Niger state police spokesman, confirmed the incident, though without giving a number for those abducted. He said the abduction was carried out by armed bandits on board motorcycles in their numbers. The gunmen fired indiscriminately and abducted a yet to be ascertained number of children, he said, adding that the gunmen shot one person dead in the process.

All tactical teams have been mobilised to rescue the victims and the police will ensure that the children are rescued unhurt, he said. The incident is the latest in a series of mass abductions in Nigerian schools by gangs who collect money for ransom. The worst incident this year occurred at the Government Girls Secondary School Jangebe in February, when 279 girls were abducted and later released.

Many schools have been forced to close due to the frequent incidents.

Regional bloc  
suspends Mali

**Accra, May 31:** West African leaders suspended Mali from their regional bloc Sunday over what they said amounted to a coup last week, Ghana's foreign minister said after an emergency meeting to address the political crisis in Mali.

The bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, "is worried about the security implications for West Africa because of the continued insecurity brought about by the political upheavals in that country," Foreign Minister Shirley Atkoror Botchwey said.

At the end of their summit, the heads of state of the ECOWAS member nations demanded that Malian authorities immediately release former transitional President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane, who are being kept under house arrest. In their statement, the leaders condemned the arrests by Mali's military, which they said violated mediation steps agreed to last September, a month after a coup d'etat led by the same man who has now again taken power in Mali, Col. Assimi Goita. ECOWAS also

called for a new civilian prime minister to be nominated immediately, a new inclusive government to be formed and the 18-month transition of power leading to February 2022 elections to be carried out, saying a monitoring mechanism will be put in place to assure this.

In addition, the statement said, the head of the transition government, the vice president and the prime minister should not under any circumstances be candidates in the planned February 27 presidential election.

ECOWAS urged all international partners, including the African Union, the United Nations, and the European Union, to continue to support the successful implementation of the transition in Mali. The heads of state expressed "strong and deep concerns over the present crisis in Mali, which is coming halfway to the end of the agreed transition period, in the context of the security challenges related to incessant terrorist attacks and the Covid-19 pandemic with its dire socio-economic impacts," the statement said. — AP

Cyprus: Far-right  
party gains big

**Nicosia, May 31:** The far-right ELAM party and a centrist splinter group made big gains in Cyprus' parliamentary election on Sunday as a sizeable chunk of supporters appeared to have turned their back on the top three parties amid voter disenchantment with traditional power centres.

With 100 per cent of votes counted, ELAM garnered 6.78 per cent of the vote — a 3 per cent increase from the previous election in 2016 — to edge out the socialist EDEK party by the razor-thin margin of around 200 votes. The centrist DIPA — made up of key figures from the centre-right DIKO party which has traditionally been the third biggest party — gained 6.1 per cent of the vote. The centre-right DISY emerged in first place with 27.77 per cent of the

vote, 5.4 per cent more than second-place, communist-rooted AKEL.

But the parties respectively lost 2.9 per cent and 3.3 per cent of their support from the previous election.

"The result isn't what we expected," AKEL General-Secretary Andros Kyprianou told a party rally. "We respect it and we'll examine it carefully to draw conclusions, but we can now say that we failed to convince (our supporters)."

Analyst Christoforos Christoforos said the results indicate a "very big failure" on the part of both DISY and AKEL to rally more supporters by convincing them of the benefits of their policies.

A last-ditch appeal by the DISY leadership limited a projected 5 per cent voter loss to 3 per cent. — AP

Envoy to return  
after wife hits 2

**Seoul, May 31:** Belgium will bring home its ambassador to South Korea amid public anger over his wife's alleged assault of two employees at a shop in Seoul.

The Belgium Embassy said the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sophie Wilmes, decided it was in the best interest of bilateral relations to end Ambassador Peter Lescouhier's tenure this summer. He has been the envoy in Seoul for three years.

The embassy didn't provide a specific date on when Lescouhier's term will end or name a replacement. While Lescouhier served his country with dedication, "the current situation doesn't allow him to further carry out his role in a serene way," the embassy said.

The Belgian government also waived the diplo-

matic immunity of Lescouhier's wife, Xiang Xueqiu, so that she could be investigated by South Korean police, the embassy said in a Facebook post.

However, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said her immunity was only partially waived and she still had protection from criminal trials or punishment.

Lescouhier earlier this month issued an apology on behalf of his wife, saying in an Instagram video that she "might have had her reasons to be angry at the way she was treated in that shop but committing physical violence is totally unacceptable."

The embassy said Xiang has privately apologised to the employees. Xiang reacted angrily when an employee asked about the jacket she was wearing, suspecting that it could have been stolen. — AP

UK in early stages of third  
wave, warns PLO scientist

Prof Gupta urges PM Boris to delay the June 21 reopening of the country

**London, May 31:** An eminent Indian-origin scientist advising the British government has warned that there are signs that the UK is in the early stages of a third wave of Coronavirus infections and urged Prime Minister Boris Johnson to delay the planned June 21 reopening of the country by a few weeks, according to a media report on Monday.

Professor Ravi Gupta of the University of Cambridge, who is a member of the government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag), said although new cases were "relatively low" the B.1.617 variant of the Covid-19 had fuelled "exponential growth", the BBC reported.

On Sunday, the UK reported more than 3,000 new Covid infections for a fifth day in a row. Prior to this, the UK had not surpassed that number since April 12. Gupta also called on Prime Minister Johnson to delay the planned June 21 reopening of the country by "a few weeks".

The UK's overall Covid-19 caseload and death toll currently stood at 4,499,939 and 128,043, respectively. Prof Gupta said the UK was already in a third wave of infections and at least three-quarters of cases were the new variant first discovered in India. "Of course the numbers of cases are relatively low at the moment — all waves start with low numbers of cases that grumble in the background and then become explosive, so the key here is that what we are seeing here is the signs of an early wave," he said. — PTI

TRAVEL CURBS  
REDTURN IN  
CHINA PROVINCE

**Beijing, May 31:** China on Monday re-imposed anti-Coronavirus travel controls on its southern province of Guangdong, announcing anyone leaving the populous region must be tested for the virus following a spike in infections that has alarmed authorities.

Guangdong, which borders Hong Kong, recorded 20 new confirmed cases, all contracted locally, in the 24 hours through midnight Sunday. Guangdong's numbers are low compared with many places in the world, but the rise has rattled Chinese leaders.

People leaving Guangdong by plane, train, bus or private car after 10 p.m. on Monday must present results of a nucleic acid test. — AP



People queue for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine during the first mega Covid-19 vaccination at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday.

— AFP

S'pore PM: Virus to keep  
infecting people for years

**Singapore, May 31:** Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Monday the deadly Coronavirus will not disappear completely and will keep infecting people for years to come, urging citizens to carry on with their lives in this "new normal" while promising to reopen the country's borders.

Addressing the nation on the government's Covid-19 plan, Lee said the pandemic will remain with the humankind and become endemic.

"One day this global pandemic will subside. But I do not expect Covid-19 to disappear. It will remain with humankind, and become endemic. The virus will continue to circulate in pockets of the global population for years to come. This also means we will see small outbreaks of

the disease from time to time in Singapore as well," he said.

"In this new normal, we will have to learn to carry on with our lives even with the virus in our midst. Our aim must be to keep the community as a whole safe, while accepting that some people may get infected every now and then. Just as we do with the common flu or dengue fever, which we now manage through public health measures and personal precautions. And in the case of the flu, with regular vaccinations too," he said.

Lee said many countries were still struggling to fully bring the pandemic under control or, much less, eliminate it. "Even as we tackle our Covid-19 situation, the pandemic rages on around us," said Lee.

India has suffered a huge surge of new cases, although their numbers are now coming down while in Southeast Asia, many countries have not started vaccinations in a big way, and may see more spikes in the next few months, he said.

Malaysian cases have been rising, and they are just entering a nationwide full lockdown. Even places that have kept Covid-19 well under control, like Taiwan, Australia and Vietnam, have recently experienced outbreaks, Lee said. "Covid-19 vaccinations will not entirely prevent you from getting Covid-19. But the vaccination makes this much less likely. And, if you do get sick despite being vaccinated, you are less likely to become very ill," he said. — PTI

Virus spreads to nursing  
homes in Melbourne

**Melbourne, May 31:** Authorities say a Covid-19 cluster in Australia's second-largest city has spread to nursing homes.

Victoria state began a seven-day lockdown on Friday due to a cluster in its capital Melbourne.

State health authorities on Monday announced 11 new cases. A second staff member and a 90-year-old

resident of the Arcare Maidstone Aged Care facility in Melbourne were among the new infections. The first infected staff member was reported on Sunday.

The second staff member had also worked at the BlueCross Western Gardens nursing home in Melbourne last week and had not been vaccinated. The

BlueCross facility has gone into lockdown after the news.

Health Minister Martin Foley described the cluster spreading into aged care homes as a "very great concern to the Victorian government." The vast majority of Victoria's 820 Coronavirus deaths have been in nursing homes. — AP

## Record virus cases in Thailand

**Bangkok, May 31:** Thailand reported a record number of new Coronavirus cases on Monday as the governor of Bangkok announced an easing of some restrictions in effect for more than a month including people visiting parks for exercise.

Thailand has been fighting to deal with a virus

surge that began in early April in a group of nightclubs in Bangkok and has since spread around the country. The Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration reported a record 5,485 new cases, of which 1,953 were in prisons.

Confirmed deaths increased by 19 to bring the total to 1,031 since the pan-

demic began last year.

The total number of confirmed cases has now risen to 159,792, of which 82% occurred during the latest surge. Many of the cases are concentrated in prisons, housing for construction workers, factories, slums and low-income housing areas.

Officials have in some

cases been criticised for allowing companies to isolate and quarantine workers inside factories.

Bangkok, which has been a hot spot, reported 1,356 of the cases on Monday. CCSA deputy spokeswoman Apisamai Sirangsang said the capital currently has 45 clusters to deal with. — AP

STAY AWAY The EU poured 3 billion euros into security tech research following refugee crisis in 2015-16

## Post pandemic, Europe migrants to face digital fortress

**Peplo (Greece) May 31:** As the world begins to travel again, Europe is sending migrants a loud message: Stay away!

Greek border police are firing bursts of deafening noise from an armoured truck over the frontier into Turkey. Mounted on the vehicle, the long-range acoustic device, or "sound cannon," is the size of a small TV set but can match the volume of a jet engine. It's part of a vast array of physical and experimental new digital barriers being installed

and tested during the quiet months of the coronavirus pandemic at the 200-kilometre (125-mile) Greek border with Turkey to stop people entering the European Union illegally.

A new steel wall, similar to recent construction on the US-Mexico border, blocks commonly-used crossing points along the Evros River that separates the two countries. Nearby observation towers are being fitted with long-range cameras, night vision, and multiple sensors. The data will be sent to

control centres to flag suspicious movement using artificial intelligence analysis. "We will have a clear pre-border picture of what's happening," Police Maj. Dimonsthenis Kamargios, head of the region's border guard authority, told the *Associated Press*.

The EU has poured 3 billion euros (\$3.7 billion) into security tech research following the refugee crisis in 2015-16, when more than 1 million people — many escaping wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan — fled to Greece and on to

other EU countries.

The automated surveillance network being built on the Greek-Turkish border is aimed at detecting migrants early and deterring them from crossing, with river and land patrols using searchlights and long-range acoustic devices. Key elements of the network will be launched by the end of the year, Kamargios said.

"Our task is to prevent migrants from entering the country illegally. We need modern equipment and tools to do that." Res-

earchers at universities around Europe, working with private firms, have developed futuristic surveillance and verification technology, and tested more than a dozen projects at Greek borders.

AI-powered lie detectors and virtual border-guard interview bots have been piloted, as well as efforts to integrate satellite data with footage from drones on land, air, sea and underwater.

Palm scanners record the unique vein pattern in a person's hand to use as a

biometric identifier, and the makers of live camera reconstruction technology promise to erase foliage virtually, exposing people hiding near border areas. Testing has also been conducted in Hungary, Latvia and elsewhere along the eastern EU perimeter.

The more aggressive migration strategy has been advanced by European policymakers over the past five years, funding deals with Mediterranean countries outside the bloc to hold migrants back and transforming the EU border-

er protection agency, Frontex, from a coordination mechanism to a full-fledged multinational security force. But regional migration deals have left the EU exposed to political pressure from neighbours.

Earlier this month, several thousand migrants crossed from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in a single day, prompting Spain to deploy the army. A similar crisis unfolded on the Greek-Turkish border and lasted three weeks last year. — AP



## DECCAN Chronicle

1 JUNE 2021

# Propaganda fails in face of Covid crisis

In the aftermath of the suffering caused by the second wave of Covid, Prime Minister Narendra Modi might have been expected to apply balm in his monthly ‘Mann ki baat’ radio programme last Sunday even as he exhorted the nation to put fight together against the deadly virus. Instead, he chose to be propagandistic, as usual bombastic, diversionary, and for the most part irrelevant to the context of the present day. He was anything but contrite. In this respect, the PM’s approach was fundamentally at odds with the propaganda play that RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat laid out for him in order to win the trust of the country in these most trying of circumstances.

The RSS leader had commenced his address, winding up the four-day long “Positivity Unbounded” sessions promoted by his outfit, with words that expressed sorrow at the nation-wide tragedy that unfolded before us. He then held the “people” responsible (presumably for being careless about Covid protocols), and also the administration and “the government”. Only after pointing fingers did Mr Bhagwat speak of the need for “collective effort” to overcome the crisis. After this pep talk, it was evident that the RSS-BJP cadres across the country would fan out to apply the healing touch and engage in “sewa” or service. BJP president J. P. Nadda directed his party “not to celebrate” two years of the second Modi government but to throw themselves into the field to help those in need. Such exhortation is important when the “sewa” is meant to yield future electoral and political benefits. But the leader of the government did little more than self-promotion in his nationwide address last Sunday.

Showing scant sense of occasion, Mr Modi spoke of rural electricity connections, infrastructure, financial inclusion, availability of domestic water connections, “new confidence of peace and development” from the northeast to J&K, better farm yields in the year. He spoke of giving a “befitting reply(sic) to those who conspire against us” and not compromising on national security. This in fact appears out of line as even now Chinese soldiers remain parked deep inside our side of our perceived boundary. As distinct from Mr. Bhagwat and Mr Nadda, he was clearly grandstanding on the second anniversary of his second term. Few governments in a democracy might venture to do that.

In the backdrop of the severe shortage of medical oxygen which brought forth unprecedented scenes of suffering on a magnified national scale, eliciting the pity of the world, the PM boasted that India was now producing ten times the oxygen than it does in normal times. He did not pause to reflect that the grave crisis was self-inflicted as official recommendations regarding enhancing oxygen supply were consistently disregarded for more than a year. The PM cited offering free food grains to 800 million poor people as a signal achievement. For May and June this year, the additional amount of five kilograms per month — made necessary by utter economic dislocation and job losses — amounts to roughly ₹32/ per head- and there are no pulses in this pack, only rice or wheat. This alas is the real measure of Modi’s India. Is there much to write home about?

## Tejpal case: Don’t judge victims

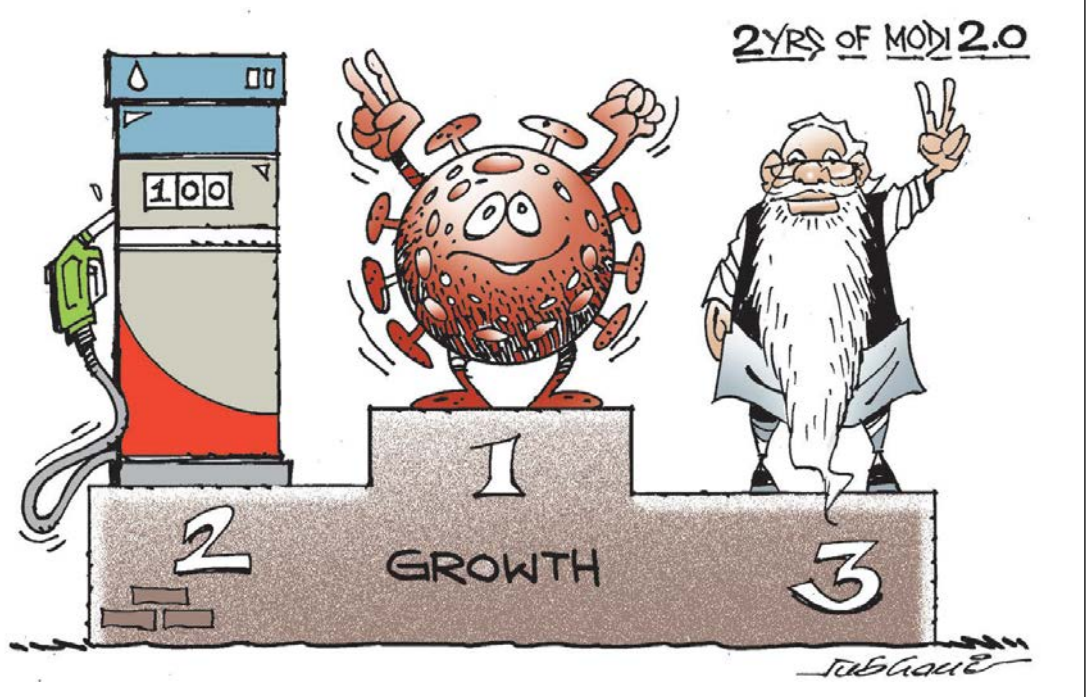
The Goa government’s decision to appeal against a palpably poor judgment acquitting Tarun Tejpal of rape and pressing for an early hearing in the Bombay high court is to be welcomed. The verdict, delivered by a woman judge, was shockingly stereotypical of warped thinking that it went beyond being just bad in law. This was a clear instance of victim shaming as the complainant was described in the judgment as “smiling and looked happy, normal, in good mood,” in photographs taken shortly after the alleged assault. The tone was accusatory as the judge recorded - “She did not look disturbed, reserved, terrified or traumatised in any way even though this was immediately after she claims to have been sexually assaulted.”

The investigation itself may have been shoddy, too long drawn and the prosecution apparently not competent in arguing against a defence typically loaded against victims and exonerating those accused of rape. In the aftermath of the Nirbhaya gang rape, the laws were rewritten in 2013 to specify that failure to physically resist was not evidence of consent. What does not get ready recognition is that sexual harassment, which can work at various levels, can go beyond physical molestation and that a woman could be at the mercy of the power and domination of a man who is her superior at work.

In a male-dominated society misogynistic rulings are not rare. But this verdict went well beyond misogyny, straying often as it did into slander. There have been any number of rulings by the top court stating clearly that assumptions or facts about a woman’s sexual history or character are not relevant. The standard of proof needed in a rape case, with the burden of proof devolving mostly upon the victim, is extremely high, which is why many may be getting away. The day a sexual harasser is punished for his intention as revealed in circumstantial evidence will represent true emancipation of women who are invariably at the receiving end. And that is when more victims will come forward to complain against sexual assaults.

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Subhani



# To improve India’s image, govt needs a reality check



K.C. Singh

External affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar’s five-day visit to the United States needs closer examination, not for what was publicly articulated but their real intentions. In the middle of the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, the considerations must have been really weighty.

US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken tweeted that the two leaders had a productive discussion on “regional security and economic priorities to include Covid-19 relief efforts, the India-China border situation and our support for Afghanistan”. The tweet ended by saying that as friends the two nations will address these “areas of shared concern”. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan, who also met Mr Jaishankar, emphasised people-to-people contacts and shared values as the foundation of the US-India partnership, and finally listed three issues: “pandemic elimination, leading on climate change and support for an open and free Indo-Pacific”. The emphasis on Covid-19 by both close advisers to President Joe Biden assumes significance. The rest are only a reiteration of the usual subjects on the US agenda, including China.

President Biden’s foreign policy priorities, as adumbrated from the start of his presidency, are: China, climate change, US withdrawal from Afghanistan despite a paltry face-saver and reaffirmation of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Now, the Israel-Palestine standoff has got added due to the sudden outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East. Mr Blinken not even being in Washington for much of Mr Jaishankar’s stay in the US capital underscores the sudden importance of the Mideast crisis. They met literally on the last day of Mr Jaishankar’s visit.

Mr Jaishankar in turn

described his meeting with Mr Blinken as having “further solidified our strategic partnership and enlarged our agenda of cooperation”. Ignoring the usual hyperbole, it’s unclear how the agenda has “enlarged” when all the issues are old. India has been cautious to prioritise, keeping in mind the need not to provoke China, while working with the US and its partners in the four-nation Quad and carefully balancing India’s traditional ties with Russia with closer US engagement. Mr Jaishankar also met the defence secretary, US trade representative and congressional leaders, but there was no contact with either President Biden, who has been known to “drop by” when key ministers are at the White House to meet the NSA, or Indian-origin vice-president Kamala Devi Harris, with whom Mr Jaishankar has had differences during the Trump presidency over India’s handling of Kashmir.

What then was the real purpose behind the visit, as indeed its timing? Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government have been on the backfoot since the BJP’s embarrassing defeat in West Bengal and the Covid-19 second wave, which the government clearly did not foresee or simply ignored despite warnings. To Mr Modi’s consternation, he has also lost face internationally, damaging his carefully nursed post-Godhra image as a statesman. The government seriously erred in resting its Covid handling strategy on the premise that neither the Kumbh Mela nor the endless election rallies would exacerbate the lingering pandemic. The vaccination strategy was tailored to this assumption, with increased vaccine supply, treble the current production capacity of the two indigenous manufacturers, becoming available only after August. The aim was to

ratchet up the daily vaccination rate in the period September-December to 10 million jabs a day, to in theory vaccinate the entire 45-plus and bulk of the over-18 population before the Uttar Pradesh election in February next year.

This tendency to have even our health policy bend to electoral priorities rather than medical science has proven disastrous. A C-Voter survey indicates that for the first time since the PM assumed office seven years ago those dissatisfied with his performance exceed those who are satisfied. With pictures of overflowing cremation grounds and even bodies dumped in the Ganga or buried along its banks, and the international media carrying those pictures on their front pages, the government’s immediate need was twofold — get an emergency supply of vaccines to bridge the gap till September and mend the Prime Minister’s shattered image.

Mr Jaishankar began his visit to address these two issues in particular. But instead of facing the editorial boards of major newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, he chose the easier option of a calibrated chat at a think tank to answer the critics of his government. Unlike someone like late PM Atal Behari Vajpayee who would have allowed an urbane Jaswant Singh leeway to meet the media halfway to allay their concerns, Mr Jaishankar simply dug in stubbornly.

He went on the offensive on the Modi government being portrayed in a “certain way”. In a tweet I asked if the minister understood whether this “way” was actually the media simply speaking truth to power? Which is their right, if not their

duty, in a democracy. The US state department released its 2020 Report on Religious Freedom on May 12, as the BJP-appointed administrator of Lakshadweep was busy imposing the Hindutva agenda on the Muslim-majority islands.

The minister may pummel the Indian media all he wants, but such actions bring international focus back on whether India under today’s BJP any longer shares “values” with the US? Mr Jaishankar’s other agenda item was the emergency procurement of vaccines, out of the 80 million doses the US promised to release for international use. Two hurdles are in the way.

One, some AstraZeneca stock is feared contaminated during production and thus needs an audit. Two, the US may not divert the bulk to one nation, to maintain equity and its image. Interestingly, not a word was heard about the US pressing for a waiver at the World Trade Organisation on intellectual property.

In the coming days, America’s willingness to bail out India will be known. *Global Times*, the Chinese government’s English mouthpiece, is taunting that Mr Jaishankar’s US visit was just “fanfare” and “blank checks”.

The US will help but may extract greater alignment with its interests in the Indo-Pacific against China, on climate change and trade.

It may also force India to curtail its Russian arms purchases, especially the S-400 missile system. The US would also want India to not rock the boat in Afghanistan and meet Pakistan halfway on Kashmir. Meanwhile, the US is silent on restoring the Generalised System of Preferences, revoked by President Trump. Thus, the vaccines may come at a strategic cost, as global hegemony don’t run charities. Mr Modi’s image is another matter, to recover which he needs more than aggressive wolf ministers. He needs a reality check.

*The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.*

## LETTERS

### SECRET WEDDING

The British Prime Minister Boris Johnson married his fiancée Carrie Symonds in a secretly planned wedding at Westminster cathedral by creating a new record that he became the first British Premier who has married while in office nearly in 200 years. Maybe after his recovery from Covid, he would have thought of a novel idea of “unite together” to beat the pandemic. Will this idea help in any way the Premiers of other countries’ to keep themselves free from the virus would be interesting to watch and who knows some prospective ones may follow events closely for any turnout in their favour.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

### SALUTE TO STALIN

According to the report, Stalin meets patients, docs in Covid ward the TN chief minister met Covid patients and doctors inside the Covid ward while wearing a PPE suit in the ESI hospital in Coimbatore. This is not some routine task for any CM to undertake. It requires not only immense boldness and fearlessness but also a deep sense of dedication of service to the people and a care for their well-being. After a long pause, Tamil Nadu has got a humane CM in Stalin who cares for the people. One can just imagine what a morale booster it would have been for the doctors, nurses and other hospital staff when the CM, in PPE attire, walks into the Covid ward. This is bound to stimulate them to act with more vigour.

Manoharan Muthuswamy, Chennai

### POT CALLING KETTLE BLACK

This refers to the Congress party listing out seven blunders of our Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, who has been toiling day and night during his seven-year tenure as Prime Minister for the welfare of the poor. It is a shame that instead of extending him a helping hand, the opposition party is tarnishing the image of our nation. In fact, it is aptly that the Congress, who ruled the country for more than five decades, never took any pains to uplift the poor. The wounds of their five-decade tenure are yet to be healed. No doubt former Congress Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, nationalised the banks to uplift the suffering poor with her pet slogan “Garibi Hatao”, which in turn turned out to be the elimination of the poor and allowing the middle man to flourish. During their tenure they sanctioned loans to Vijay Mallaya and Nirav Modi, etc. which they never repaid and escaped the clutches of law in our country. Less said about the Sikh massacre and spate of scams during their tenure the better. This is nothing but the pot calling the kettle black.

Sugata Tripathi, Kolkata

Pervez Hoodbhoy



# Why are Arabs powerless? It’s not guns; ideas rule the world

FOR a terrible 11 days in May, the world watched hellfire rain upon the world’s largest open-air prison camp, otherwise known as Gaza. The dazed, bleeding survivors crawling out of the rubble of collapsed buildings have experienced this before. Everyone knows this tragedy will repeat. In faraway Arab cities, people glumly watched the unhindered, televised bombing by Israeli jets. But the most they could manage was a few toothless resolutions and a few impotent slogan-chanting demonstrations trampling upon the Israeli flag.

What makes Israel with nine million people a Goliath of biblical proportions? Equally, notwithstanding their fabulous oil wealth, why are 427 million Arabs the pygmies of international politics? Before Israel — which has almost zero natural resources — the Arab kings and sheikhs can only bow their heads.

Blame the West if you want and, in particular, America. Indeed, from 2000-2019 armaments supplied to Israel by the Western powers (US, UK, France, Spain, Germany) are documented at a

hefty \$9.6 billion. But within that 20-year period the same document shows this amount is dwarfed by arms sold by the same suppliers to Saudi Arabia (\$29.3bn), UAE (\$20.1bn), Egypt (\$17.5bn), Iraq (\$9.1bn), and Qatar (\$6bn). And yet these expensive weapons will provide little protection if Israel ever chooses to attack the Arab lands again. While the nine-country Saudi-led coalition has created a humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, it is failing dismally against the ragtag Iran-supported Houthis forces.

Okay, so then let’s blame Palestine’s ill-fortune upon Arab disunity. There’s truth in this: Arabs are indeed bitterly divided. But when were they not? From about AD-634 to AD-750 is the only period in history when they stood together. Then, after Nasser won the Suez War against Britain, Arabs united again for a brief, euphoric moment. But this unity did nothing to avert their crushing defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, that which forever changed borders. And while friends and activists for Palestine would love to see Patah and Hamas patch up their differences, doing so will not change things funda-

mentally. The secret of Israel’s strength is not hidden in its weaponry. Instead, this still-expanding and still-colonising apartheid settler state uses the same magic that enabled just a handful of 18th-century Englishmen to colonise the entire Indian subcontinent.

That weapon was a system of organised thought based upon a rational and secular approach to life, a modern system of justice, and a new set of social relations. This was sustained and enhanced by Enlightenment-era education that de-emphasised rote learning of the scriptures, was this-worldly and future-oriented, and which focused upon problem-solving skills using systematic, scientific thinking.

In a nutshell, imperialist conquests showed that brains would rule over brawn: a stark truth that got still starker with time. But where are brains produced? Obviously in the womb but it’s in schools, colleges and universities where minds are shaped and sharpened. Hence, these days everyone and their uncle rush to one single conclusion: fix education and this will level the playing field, greatly diminishing or perhaps ending the inequalities of

power. That’s so much easier said than done. To have buildings and classrooms with teachers is one thing but to coax the potential out of a student is altogether different. With their vast wealth, Arab countries have built impressive university campuses with well-equipped laboratories and well-stocked libraries. They have even imported professors from America and Europe. Yet, the needle has barely flickered so far. That’s because attitudes towards learning take forever to change; and only if they are somehow forced to change. Pakistan follows the Arab model as best as it can, and no university has a bookshop, a centre for students that hums with open debate and discussion, or a theatre where classic movies are screened. Looking for a philosopher or a high-grade pure mathematician will be in vain. For 20 years, papers and PhDs have been churned out at a frantic rate. But I suspect many of the country’s “distinguished national professors” with hundreds of research publications would be judged unfit to teach in a high-end Israeli high school for lack of scholarship.

The problem is not genetics – Arabs

have a brilliant past and may be just as smart as Ashkenazi Israelis. But the two groups have different attitudes towards success and different role models. The Ashkenazi child wants to be Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, John von Neumann, George Wald, Paul Samuelson, Gertrude Eliot, Ralph Lauren, George Soros, or a thousand other such names that fill textbooks on physics, philosophy, technology, medicine, and business. Compare this with the Arab boy who wants to be Salallahuddin Ayubi. We live in a cruel world which, of course, we must try our best to make less cruel and more humane. But making a socially just world requires much more than condemning oppressors and crying with the oppressed. Instead, the weak must be made stronger. That strength does not derive from oil or nuclear bombs. Instead, it springs from the human brain, but only when that superb gift of nature is appropriately tutored and trained within a system of secular values that cherishes and rewards logical thinking, questioning and creativity.

By arrangement with Daun



## quick BITES

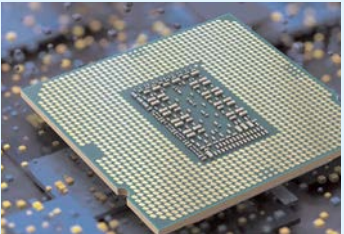
INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,937.44	1.00
Nifty 50	15,582.80	0.95
S&P 500*	4,204.11	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.62	0.24
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.93	0.18
Euro (₹)	88.49	0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,860.318	0.66
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.22	0.73
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.022	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.581	0.00

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

### Global tax deal unlikely till Oct, says OECD official

A full global deal to overhaul taxation rules and make multinationals pay more in countries where they operate may not be achieved until October, the chief of the OECD said on Monday. Speaking in Paris, Angel Gurría said a “180-degree change in the position of the United States” has accelerated the talks, making an outline of a deal possible at a meeting of G20 finance officials in July.

### Global chip supply shortages likely to end in 2 yrs: Intel



Intel on Monday said it could take a couple of years to address the supply shortage in the semiconductor ecosystem that is witnessing huge demand for tech products, accelerated by the Covid pandemic. Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger noted that the work and study-from-home trends during the pandemic have led to a “cycle of explosive growth in semiconductors” that has placed strain on global supply chains.

### Monetisation to gather pace in road sector: Crisil

Asset monetisation in the roads sector will see an acceleration as EPC companies in this space pursue growth and is also aided by various government initiatives, domestic rating agency Crisil said on Monday. It said that the healthy order book position of the road EPC companies, which stands at over three times revenue at present, is expected to improve further supported by new project awarding momentum.

### Cognizant set to expand vaccine centres for staff

Cognizant on Monday said that it will spend \$8.5 million for Covid relief funding to vaccinate more than 6.5 lakh associates, their families, support teams. The company said its vaccination drive for associates and families, which was launched in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Gurgaon, has been expanded to 100 vaccination centres across 40 cities. The company said it will cover the costs of vaccines.



Control on expenses beat Covid blues

## Listed firms post superlative profits

SANGEETHA G.  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

Listed companies, which have already published their results, have registered more than a 200 per cent growth in profits in the March 2021 quarter following a tighter control on expenditure. This would be the third consecutive quarter of superlative profits, according to CMIE.

The companies grew their top-line by 14.7 per cent in the March 2021 quarter against the same quarter last year. But net profits expanded by 212.4 per cent. In the March 2021 quarter, 935 companies have booked a profit of ₹1.58 lakh crore.

The companies managed to book superlative profits because of higher growth in profit margin. Compared to a 0.2 per cent profit margin in the March 2020 quarter, the companies managed to clock a 10.8 per cent margin in the March 2021 quarter, the highest rise in recent years.

In the March 2021 quarter, financial services companies saw a 2.1 per cent increase in the top-line and a 2.1 per cent fall in total expenses as a result, net profits expanded by 65 per cent.

In the same quarter, non-finance companies saw top-line expand by 18.6 per cent and total expenses grow by a much lower 8.9 per cent. As a result, net profits grew by 295 per cent. The share of non-



finance companies in total profits of the corporate sector increased from 73 per cent in the quarter ended September 2020 to 78 per cent in the quarter ended March 2021.

Further, the companies controlled expenses in spite of a significant increase in raw material costs. In the March 2021 quarter, non-finance companies saw their top-line grow well. But, this growth was accompanied by an increase in raw material costs. However, a tighter control on other costs delivered high profits during the quarter.

Manufacturing companies recorded a 22.9 per cent increase in net sales during the quarter ended March 2021. Growth in raw material expenses was close at 18.6 per cent. But the companies kept other expenses in much greater control. Wages grew by 10.3 per cent and

other expenses shrunk by 1.8 per cent. Overall operating costs of manufacturing companies grew by 11.9 per cent although raw material expenses grew by 18.6 per cent. Further, interest costs declined by 20.2 per cent. The much lower growth in or shrinking of costs of manufacturing companies helped them see a 610 per cent increase in profits.

“Nearly three-fourths of the listed companies are yet to declare their financial performance during the March 2021 quarter. These companies collectively made profits of about ₹25,000 crore in the September and the December 2020 quarter each. Assuming similar orders of magnitude to continue, total profits by listed companies could touch ₹1.8 trillion in the March 2021 quarter,” said Mahesh Vyas, the chief executive officer of CMIE.

## EPFO allows 2nd PF advance now

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Keeping in view the raging second wave of the pandemic, the labour ministry on Monday said that the members of Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) can now avail a second non-refundable advance from their EPF accounts. Earlier, there was only a one-time advance available for the EPF members.

The decision comes at a time when the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has made the financial position of many employees precarious and more difficult than the first wave.

“In such trying times, EPFO endeavours to lend a helping hand to its members by meeting their financial needs. The members, who have already availed of the first Covid-19 advance, can now opt for a second advance also. The provision and process for the withdrawal of the second Covid-19 advance are the same as in the case of the first advance,” the ministry said in a statement.

“Under this provision, non-refundable withdrawal to the extent of the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to member’s credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, is provided,” EPFO said.

“Under this provision, non-refundable withdrawal to the extent of the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to member’s credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, is provided. The members can apply for a lesser amount also,” it added.

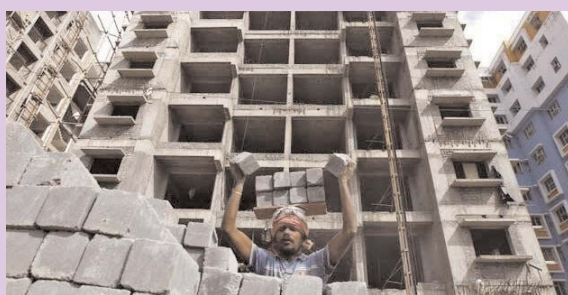
“The Covid-19 advance has been a great help to the EPF members during the pandemic, especially for those having monthly wages of less than Rs 15,000. As on date, EPFO has settled more than 76.31 lakh Covid-19 advance claims thereby disbursing a total of ₹18,698.15 crore,” it added.

## BIG | MOVES Housing secretary wants Amazon-like platform for housing Real estate to cross \$1 trillion by 2030, says official

New Delhi, May 31: The size of real estate sector is projected to cross \$1 trillion by 2030, housing and urban affairs secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said on Monday.

“In 2019-20, real estate sector contributed nearly seven per cent to our GDP. Its total contribution was to the tune of \$200 billion to our GDP... And projections are that by 2030 this number is going to cross \$1 trillion,” Mishra said. He also noted that real estate is an important sector for the economy with around 11 per share in the total employment numbers.

The secretary was speaking at a virtual event to launch Housing Price Index, created by realty



portal Housing.com and Indian School of Business (ISB) in association with industry body NAREDCO.

“By 2030, when we are projecting our economy to go up to \$10 trillion, nearly 10 per cent of that will come from the real estate sector itself,” he added.

Mishra said the sector is

## Bulls take Nifty to all-time high

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MAY 31

Upward market momentum continued for the seventh consecutive session taking the Nifty-50 index to a new all-time high, even as post-market hour economic data showed that the economy has contracted by 7.3 per cent in FY 2020-21.

The Nifty-50 index gained 147.15 points or 0.95 per cent to close at a new all-time high of 15,582.80, while the Sensex gained 514.56 points or one per cent to close at 51,937.44.

The forward-looking equity market is more focused on brightening prospects of economic recovery as fresh Covid cases have fallen consistently after crossing over four lakh cases in early

Since we are in an uncharted territory, there is no historic level to consider as a next resistance, but taking a few ratios into consideration, there is no major level visible before the magical figure of 16,000 for the Nifty-50

— SAMEET CHAVAN  
Analyst, Angel Broking

May to over 1.52 lakh cases last Sunday, according to equity market analysts.

“The Nifty rose for the seventh consecutive session reaching and closing at fresh record highs. It has closed the month of May with a 6.5 per cent gain almost matching the February gains. The con-

tribution to this rise was broad-based on May 31,” said Deepak Jasani, head-Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

The top five gainers on the Nifty-50 were JSW Steel (3.25 per cent), ICICI Bank (3.00 per cent), Reliance Industries (2.80 per cent), Bharti Airtel (2.36 per cent), and Tata Steel (2.13 per cent).

On Monday, the last day of the month of May, foreign portfolio investors turned net buyers by ₹2,412 crore, while the domestic institutions also purchased shares worth Rs 179.78 crore.

Overall FPIs were net sellers in May but the latter half of the month saw an aggressive buying as the dramatic rise in Covid during the first half was followed by a

steep decline. “Bulls discarded the myth ‘Sell in May and go away,’” said Angel Broking.

“Since we are in an uncharted territory, there is no historic level to consider as a next resistance, but taking a few ratios into consideration, there is no major level visible before the magical figure of 16,000 for the Nifty-50,” said Sameet Chavan, analyst, technical and derivatives at Angel Broking.

PNB Housing Finance board approved a capital raise proposal of ₹4,000 crore led by the international private equity firm Carlyle and as the exchanges were informed, the PNB Housing Finance stock hit the 20 per cent upper circuit and closed up 19.99 per cent.

## Coronavirus eats into Indian economy, GDP shrinks 7.3%

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

As expected, India’s economy or gross domestic product (GDP) has contracted by 7.3 per cent for the fiscal year 2021, because of Coronavirus-induced lockdowns and prolonged restrictions on the operation of several sectors like hospitality, entertainment, tourism, etc.

The 7.3 per cent contraction is the worst-ever economic performance that India has witnessed in over four decades as it had wiped out the economic growth achieved in the previous one-and-a-half year. It shrunk the Indian economy back to the size that it was in the middle of 2018-19.

However, India had seen two consecutive quarters of GDP expansion after witnessing two consecutive quarters of contraction earlier in the fiscal.

According to the government data released by National Statistics Office (NSO) on Monday, “Real GDP or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at Constant (2011-12) Prices in the year 2020-21 is now estimated to attain a level of ₹135.13

While the annual economic contraction was expected, experts are concerned about a mere 1.6 per cent growth during the fourth quarter as they believe it indicated that “all is not well” with the economy. But the government is hopeful of a speedy revival of the economy

lakh crore, as against the First Revised Estimate of GDP for the year 2019-20 of ₹145.69 lakh crore, released on January 29, 2021. The growth in GDP during 2020-21 is estimated at -7.3 per cent as compared to four per cent in 2019-20,” it said in a release.

The third-quarter GDP growth had turned positive, registering 0.5 per cent growth (revised upwards from 0.4 per cent earlier) after a sharp contraction of nearly 24 per cent and 7.5 per cent in the first and second quarter, respectively. In the fourth quarter, the economy grew 1.6 per cent.

While the annual economic contraction was expected, experts are con-

cerned about a mere 1.6 per cent growth during the fourth quarter as they believe it indicated that “all is not well” with the economy and its fiscal health. But the government is hopeful that there will be a speedy revival of the economy soon.

Reacting to the Q4 GDP numbers, Chief Economic Advisor Krishnamurthy Subramanian said there had been a marginal improvement in the FY’21 GDP. “The demand in rural India has been resilient. Earlier last year, rural India continued to aid the economy while urban India fought the initial wave of covid-19. The agriculture sector has been a silver lining, clocking consecutive growth,” Subramanian said.

“After the quarter one numbers were released, we had said things will get better from here and had predicted growth. It is heartening to know those projections have held. Annual numbers signify a revival in demand. The second wave is likely to have hit some of the recoveries, and it will have some impact on the economy,” the CEA added.

## Core sectors grow 56% in April over low base effect

FC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

On the back of a low-base effect, eight core sector industries in the country registered a 56 per cent growth in April 2021, according to the government official data released on Monday.

The eight infrastructure sectors — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity — had contracted by 37.9 per cent because of the national lockdown imposed by the government in April 2020.

The data, however, showed that the sequential decline in core sector output stood at 15 per cent in April on account of the second wave of the virus.

“This high growth rate in April 2021 is largely due to low index base in April 2020 consequent to the low industrial production across all sectors caused

by the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19 last year. The month-over-month production of eight core industries, as captured by ICI, declined by 15.1 per cent (P) in April 2021 compared to March 2021(P) due to the emergence of the second wave of infectious Covid-19,” the official data said.

The RBI in its annual report also acknowledged the impact of the second wave on the economic recovery process. However, it said that the impact may not be as harsh as in the first wave.



## MUTUAL FUNDS TAKE ETF, INDEX FUND ROUTE TO SKIP SEBI RULE

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MAY 31

More and more mutual fund houses are now taking exchange-traded fund (ETF) and index fund routes to launch new products ever since market regulator Sebi decided to link the salaries of the fund house staff to the performance of the funds that they manage.

However, ETFs, index funds, overnight funds and existing close-ended schemes are exempted from this rule.

Out of a total of 25 draft offer documents that Sebi received in the month of May, 13 are either exchange traded funds or index funds and close to half a dozen ETFs and index funds have already hit the market since the Sebi circular was issued.

Kotak Mutual Fund on Monday announced the launch of Kotak Nifty 50 Index Fund — a large-cap index fund based on the popular Nifty-50 index.

“This fund will invest in 50 large-cap companies represented in the Nifty 50 index in the same weight,” Kotak Mutual Fund said.

The NFO opens on May 31 and closes on June 14, 2021. A similar new fund offer launched by Aditya Birla Sun Life Mutual Fund called Aditya Birla Sun Life Nifty 50 Equal Weight index Fund opened for subscription on May 19 and closes on June 2, 2021.

## CAPGEMINI TO USE ERICSSON’S SOLUTIONS FOR 5G LAB IN INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Capgemini on Monday said that it has tied up with Ericsson to accelerate the deployment of 5G solutions.

As part of this collaboration, the company has deployed Ericsson’s 5G Industry Connect solution at its 5G Lab in Mumbai which will enable industry innovation, experimentation and deployment of 5G and Edge technologies for clients across industries.

According to Ashwin Yardi, CEO, India, at Capgemini: “The Capgemini 5G Lab offers a ‘ready to use’ platform for our customers to ideate, innovate and deploy use cases as they adopt new technologies which will enable them to accelerate their digital transformation journey towards Intelligent Industry.”



## SHORT TAKES

## Zidane criticises Real in open letter

**Madrid:** Zinedine Zidane resigned as Real Madrid coach because he felt the Spanish club no longer had any confidence in him, he wrote in an open letter on Monday. "I'm leaving because I feel the club no longer has the faith in me I need, and doesn't offer me the support to build something in the medium or long term," the Frenchman wrote in the letter published in the daily AS. "I am a born winner and I was here to win trophies, but beyond this there are human beings, emotions, life and I have the feeling that these things have not been valued, that it has not been understood that this is also how the dynamic of a great club is maintained. But everything I built on a daily basis, what I brought to the relationship with the players... Has been forgotten," he said. — AFP

## Draw vs Qatar not my best: Sandhu

**Doha:** India goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu says the memorable goalless draw against Asian champions Qatar, in the FIFA World Cup qualifier in September 2019, is not his greatest performance till date. According to him, he has performed his best, surprisingly, in a 0-4 loss to Iran in a 2018 World Cup qualifier at a packed Azadi Stadium in Tehran, and during a match against China in China. "Almost everyone I speak to always makes me remember about the Qatar match. But if you ask me, that isn't my best performance so far. I understand that in the Qatar match, we got a result — and hence, it will always stay a highlight," Gurpreet told the All India Football Federation. — PTI

## Barca sign up Aguerro from City

**Barcelona:** Barcelona announced on Monday that they had agreed to sign Sergio Aguerro on a deal until 2023, after the Argentina forward quit Manchester City following a decade at the Premier League club. In a statement, Barca said that Aguerro will become their player once his contract with Manchester City expires at the end of next month, adding that there is a buy-out clause "set at 100 million euros (\$122 million)". The 32-year-old's signing for Barca comes two days after he missed out on winning the Champions League with City, Pep Guardiola's side losing this season's final to Chelsea. His final appearance for City was as a substitute for Raheem Sterling late in the final in Porto as the newly-crowned Premier League champions tried in vain to win Europe's top prize for the first time. — AFP

## Sharma finishes among top 10

**Forso, Denmark:** Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma registered his first top-10 finish on the European Tour in 18 months with his Tied eighth-place result at the Made in Himmerland event here. His last top-10 on the European Tour was in November 2019, when he was T-7 place at the Turkish Airlines Open. He had a similar result at the Italian Open a month before that. Sharma's 68 in Denmark came with four birdies after settling for pars in his first 10 holes on the final day. With 10 places up for grabs for the US Open in June, Sharma needs to finish in Top-10 of a mini-series list to get one of the slots. — PTI

## Suns bounce back to even series

**Los Angeles:** Chris Paul overcame an injured shoulder and Jae Crowder busted out of a playoff slump on Sunday as the Phoenix Suns took a 100-92 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers, who lost Anthony Davis to another injury. Paul had 18 points and nine assists, while Crowder delivered 17 points as half a dozen players finished in double figures for the Suns, who clawed their way level at 2-2 in the Western Conference playoff series against the reigning NBA champions. — AFP

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## PLAN FOR FUTURE

## T20 World Cup, FTP cycle to come up for discussion at ICC board meet

**New Delhi, May 31:** The BCCI will ask for one month's extension to decide on hosting the T20 World Cup in India amid the looming Covid-19 threat when the all-powerful ICC Board holds a virtual meeting on Tuesday to discuss a host of other issues as well.

While earlier, it was decided that BCCI president Sourav Ganguly will attend the meet in person, it is learnt that now he will be present virtually and will only leave for the UAE on Wednesday to have discussions on the organisation of IPL with Emirates Cricket Board.

There are no concrete outcomes expected at the meeting and after July 1, the BCCI will hold another SGM. The ICC is likely to make a formal announcement of its final decision during its annual conference that starts on July 18.

While the remainder of the IPL has been shifted to the United Arab Emirates between September 15 to October 15, the Indian cricket board doesn't want to let go the opportunity of hosting the global T20 event, which also has Emirates as back-up hosts.

"The Covid-19 cases are reducing but obviously it is still not a situation where we can firmly commit to hosting the World T20. Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah are right in asking for one month's time to decide," a senior BCCI source privy to developments said on conditions of anonymity.

## FTP CYCLE 2023-31

The Futures Tours & Programme Cycle for the next eight years between 2023 to 2031 will also be discussed with provision for the flagship ICC events apart from the bilateral series.

"Obviously due to the pandemic, every cricket board has lost money and the bilateral events are the way forward to recover the costs. In any case, currently rested ICC CEO Manu Sawhney's proposal of a marquee ICC event every year was red flagged by the 'Big Three' much earlier.

"They need to look after the financial health of their boards," the official further added.

Also the future of the World Test Championship will also be discussed. — PTI



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly (left) and secretary Jay Shah in this file photo. — BCCI

## IPL-returned Aussies are home

**Sydney, May 31:** Amid hugs, tears of joy and relief, Australia's jumbo IPL contingent comprising players, support staff and commentators on Monday reunited with their family members after serving a 14-day hotel quarantine here.

The 38-member Australians landed in the country two weeks ago after a stopover in Maldives due to travel ban from Covid-ravaged India.

The highlight of the day was premier fast bowler Pat Cummins exiting the hotel and reuniting with his pregnant partner Becky Boston, a video of which was uploaded on Twitter by well-known Australian sports journalist Chloe-Amanda Bailey.

"Video of the day! After eight weeks away for the IPL, Pat Cummins finally leaves hotel quarantine and reunites with his pregnant partner Becky. All the feels!" Bailey tweeted alongside the video.

## OZ PLAYERS AVAILABILITY IN IPL YET TO BE DISCUSSED: CA

**Melbourne, May 31:** Cricket Australia on Monday said it's yet to start discussions on whether Australian cricketers would compete in the IPL when the T20 league re-commences in the UAE in September.

Nick Hockley, who was confirmed as CA chief executive on Monday after performing the duties in an interim role, said a decision on IPL can wait as Australian players were just reunited with their families after completing a two-week hotel quarantine.

"Once we get back together as a group that (IPL) is something we'll obviously need to discuss," Hockley was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo.

"Our players returning from the IPL have only today come out of quarantine, so our first priority is to make sure they are reunited with their families. We have a tour to prepare for in the West Indies," he added.

Hockley said the players will regroup at the National Cricket Centre (in Brisbane) in a couple of weeks before the West Indies tour and that would be the time to refocus. — PTI

Besides Cummins, batting maestro Steve Smith, big-hitting all-rounder Glenn Maxwell and the swashbuckling opener Dave Warner were among those who finally embraced their loved ones after nearly eight weeks away from home. Most of them had not seen their families since

heading into the Indian Premier League in early April. They were flown home via a charter flight after the IPL was postponed owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cricket Australia's newly-appointed chief executive officer Nick Hockley said the feeling among the players about going home to be with their families could not be understated.

"We've been texting, and I've spoken to a couple of the broader group, not just the players but there's commentators, match officials and physios," Hockley said.

"They are clearly quite shaken from the experience, very appreciative to be home back here in Australia."

The BCCI paid for the charter flights and accommodation of the Australians in the Maldives and Sydney, and Hockley thanked the Indian board for the manner in which it helped them after the abrupt suspension of the IPL. — PTI

## OSAKA COULD BE BANNED FOR MEDIA BOYCOTT

**Paris, May 31:** Japanese superstar Naomi Osaka was on Sunday threatened with disqualification from the French Open if she persists with her controversial media boycott, officials said.

"We have advised Naomi Osaka that should she continue to ignore her media obligations, she would be exposing herself to possible further code of conduct infringement consequences," said a statement from the four Grand Slam tournaments after the world number two was fined \$15,000.

"Repeat violations attract tougher sanctions including default from the tournament and the trigger of a major offence investigation that could lead to more substantial fines and future Grand Slam suspensions."

Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam title winner and sport's highest-earning female athlete, was sanctioned for refusing to hold a press conference after her opening 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) win over Romanian Patricia Maria Tig.

The 23-year-old had said on the eve of the tournament that she would not carry out any media obligations, claiming news conferences are detrimental to her mental health.

She likened traditional post-match inquests to "kicking people when they're down".

French Tennis Federation president Gilles Moretton had described Osaka's vow of silence as "a phenomenal error". — AFP

## ASIAN | BOXING

## Pooja strikes gold, silver for Panghal

**Dubai, May 31:** Defending champion Pooja Rani (75kg) was the lone Indian woman boxer to strike gold at the Asian Championships while defending champion Amit Panghal (52kg) and Shiva Thapa (64kg) lost gruelling and close final bouts to fetch silver medals here on Monday with the country seeking a review of the former's defeat.

The Olympic-bound Pooja (75 kg), who was competing in her first bout of the tournament after getting a bye and a walkover earlier, dismantled Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan with a clinical performance.

She also earned \$10,000 for her marvellous one-bout show in which Movlonova was simply out of sorts, unable to keep pace with the Indian's intensity.

Panghal lost 2-3 to known nemesis Shakhobidin Zoirov of Uzbekistan in what was a repeat of the 2019 world championship final, which had also ended in Zoirov's favour.

India sought a review of the second round of the bout which Panghal won on a split count but looked to have dominated completely. The result of the review will be known later.

"I dedicate this silver medal to my coach Anil Dhanker. I wish he was here with in Dubai," Panghal tweeted referring to his personal coach.

Thapa (64kg) also lost by the same margin to Mongolia's Baatarsukh Chinzorig, the reigning Asian Games silver-medalist. This was Thapa's fifth successive podium finish at the showpiece and second silver.

Both the contests had the Indian boxers doing most things right but not getting the judges' nod.



Pooja Rani (75 kg) celebrates her 5-0 win against Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan at the Asian Championships in Dubai.

The Panghal-Zoirov clash lived up to the hype with both the Olympic-bound boxers engaged in a fast exchange of punches from the very first round.

Zoirov claimed the opening round. But in the second round, Panghal raised his game by a notch, evading Zoirov's range with his pace and landing his left straights precisely. Zoirov, on the other hand, struggled to connect.

The two went all out in the third round but it was Panghal who was more impressive with his body shots despite an injured eye.

He even had the judges' verdict in his favour for the round but it was not enough to alter the final scoreline. — PTI

## PADDLERS DIYA, SWASTIKA END RUNNERS-UP IN TUNIS

**New Delhi, May 31:** Young Indian paddlers Diya Chitale and Swastika Ghosh's splendid run at the WTT Youth Star Contender ended with a runners-up finish following their 3-11, 6-11, 7-11 defeat against Russia's Natalia Malinina and Elizabet Abraamian in the U-19 girls doubles final in Tunis, Tunisia.

Earlier, the Indian pair made its way into the final, defeating Czech Republic's Linda Zaderova and Croatia's Hana Arapovic in the semifinals.

Diya and Swastika were also impressive in the U-19 singles as both finished their campaigns in the semifinals after suffering identical 2-3 defeats in hard-fought encounters.

Diya made life tougher for Russian paddler Vlada Voronina before losing the thrilling contest 8-11, 11-7, 11-6, 8-11, 7-11. The current junior national champion Swastika too lost to Turkey's Ece Harac 11-8, 4-11, 11-9, 3-11, 6-11 in an intense decider.

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, it was the first international youth event where Indian players were seen in action. — PTI

## VIRUS | EFFECT

## Copa America moved to Brazil

**Asuncion, May 31:** South America's largest football tournament, the Copa America, was moved Monday to Brazil after a Covid-19 surge in Argentina and social unrest in Colombia saw the co-hosts stripped of the right to host the event.

With two weeks to kick-off, South America's CONMEBOL football federation tweeted that "The CONMEBOL Copa America 2021 will be played in Brazil!" and the June 13-July 10 dates were maintained.

CONMEBOL is expected to announce the venues and dates of matches in the coming hours.

Brazil hosted the last Copa America, in 2019. Originally scheduled for last year, the Copa was postponed by 12 months due to the coronavirus epidemic.

New host Brazil is one of the countries in the world worst affected by the outbreak, with the second-highest death toll of over 460,000 so far and more than 16.5 million cases.

It was to have been the first time in its history that the tournament would be co-hosted by two countries, Argentina and Colombia. — AFP

## WC QUALIFIERS SHIFTED FROM CHINA TO DUBAI

**Shanghai, May 31:** Several World Cup football qualifiers scheduled to be played in China were moved to Dubai on Monday over coronavirus infections in the Syria and Maldives teams, the Chinese Football Association said.

Seven Group A fixtures involving China, Syria, Maldives, the Philippines and Guam are affected.

"In view of the recent epidemic infections in the Maldives and Syrian national football teams... They must be strictly quarantined upon entry and cannot participate in the games as scheduled," a CFA statement said.

"According to recommendations from the AFC (Asian Football Confederation), the Chinese FA agreed that the remaining qualifying matches... Will not be held in Suzhou and will be transferred to Dubai and held there," it added. — AFP



Poland's Iga Swiatek returns to Kaja Juvan in their French Open first round match in Paris on Monday. — AFP

## Swiatek starts title defence with win

**Paris, May 31:** Reigning women's champion Iga Swiatek made a winning start to her French Open title defence with a straight-sets victory over Kaja Juvan on Monday, while men's second seed Daniil Medvedev finally reached round two for the first time at Roland Garros.

Poland's Swiatek, celebrating her 20th birthday, saw off her good friend Juvan 6-0, 7-5 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Medvedev, who had lost in the first round in all of his four previous appearances in the tournament, put his poor clay-court form behind him by beating the dangerous Alexander Bublik 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.

The 23-time Grand Slam

## THE RESULTS

**Men's first round:** Cameron Norrie (GBR) bt Bjorn Fratangelo (USA) 7-5, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2; Jannik Sinner (ITA x18) bt Pierre-Hugues Herbert (FRA) 6-1, 4-6, 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-4; Gianluca Mager (ITA) bt Peter Gojowczyk (GER) 6-2, 3-6, 6-4, 7-5; Federico Delbonis (ARG) bt Radu Albot (MDA) 6-1, 2-6, 6-0, 6-1; Filip Krajinovic (SRB) bt Maximilian Marterer (GER) 6-4, 6-1, 7-6 (7/3); John Isner (USA x31) bt Sam Querrey (USA) 7-6 (7/2), 6-3, 6-4; Thiago Monteiro (BRA) bt Francisco Cerundolo (ARG) 6-3, 6-4, 6-3; Steve Johnson (USA) bt Frances Tiafoe (USA) 6-7 (5/7), 3-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-1; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x2) bt Alexander Bublik (KAZ) 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.

**Women's first round:** Hailey Baptiste (USA) bt Anna Blinkova (RUS) 6-1, 6-4; Zarina Diyas (KAZ) bt Heather Watson (GBR) 6-4, 7-5; Elise Mertens (BEL x14) bt Storm Sanders (AUS) 6-4, 6-1; Rebecca Peterson (SWE) bt Shelby Rogers (USA) 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (10/8), 6-2; Iga Swiatek (POL x8) bt Kaja Juvan (SLO) 6-0, 7-5; Madison Brengle (USA) bt Maria Camila Osorio (COL) 7-5, 6-4; Polona Herczeg (SLO) bt Kiki Bertens (NED x16) 6-1, 3-6, 6-4; Harmony Tan (FRA) bt Alize Cornet (FRA) 6-4, 6-4; Marketa Vondrousova (CZE x20) bt Kaia Kanepi (EST) 4-6, 6-3, 6-0.

champion's match against Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania will be played behind closed doors, though, due to a 9pm Covid-19 curfew imposed by the French

government.

Swiatek, who became the first major singles champion from Poland last October, hit 22 winners in an impressive opening to her bid for a

second straight Roland Garros triumph.

## MEDVEDEV ENDS MISERABLE RUN

It is not just in Paris that Medvedev has struggled on clay.

The Russian had lost eight of his previous nine matches on the surface dating back to 2019.

But the two-time Grand Slam runner-up was too strong for Kazakh Bublik, setting up a second-round tie against either Australian wildcard Christopher O'Connell or US player Tommy Paul.

"It was a good match and I've been training really well," said the 25-year-old Medvedev, who lost the Australian Open final to Novak Djokovic in February. — AFP