

**NEW DELHI WEDNESDAY 12 MAY 2021**



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## DELHI AGE | 11

## Dhawan & Pandya in race for leading India on Lanka tour

**Proud how Indians have united in a crisis, we shall overcome, says Bhumi**

— AFP

**Patna:** Former Madhepura MP Pappu Yadav was arrested in Patna on Tuesday for violating Covid-19 protocols during the lockdown. His arrest comes days after he raised the issue of 30 unused ambulances parked in BJP MP Rajiv Pratap Rudy's village. **Full report on Page 3**

## PTI

**Plava:** Uttarayana  
**Tithi:** Vaishakha Shuddha  
Padyami till 3.05 am  
**Star:** Kritika till 2.39 am  
**Varjyam:** 1.05 pm to 2.53 pm  
**Durmuhurtam:** 11.47 am  
to 12.38 pm  
**Rahukalam:** Noon to 1.30 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 7.02 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.32 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 5.50 AM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 7.37 PM**

■ More on Page 2

With state governments running out of both varieties of vaccines and having to either shut down vaccination centres or ration them, several states and Union Territories, including Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha, are planning to float global tenders to procure vaccines and ramp up the inoculation drive. Many



**■ More on Page 3**

In a four-page letter, M. Nadda said under Modi, "India's fight against Covid is driven by unwavering belief in the principles of science, support to innovation, trust in our Covid warriors and cooperative federalism", while pointing out that the conduct of top Congress leaders including Rahul Gandhi "will be remembered for

Given the shortage of  
**Turn to Page 4**

duplicity and pettiness". He also added, though, that there are "certainly a few members of your (Congress) party who (like several other selfless citizens) are doing commendable work in helping people, (but) their hard work gets eclipsed by the consistent negativity spread by the more senior members of the party".

Mr Naidda also accused

**Turn to Page 4**



Since sundown Monday

Two women were killed by rockets fired from Gaza that hit their homes in the southern city of Ashkelon — the first Israeli deaths in the current violence. At least 10 other Israelis have been

After those deaths, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said officials decided to "increase both the strength and rate of the strikes" against militant groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip.

"Hamas will receive a blow now that it didn't expect," he said. —AP



## SHORT TAKES

## No camp at IGI as Covid vaccines not available

**New Delhi:** The proposed Covid-19 vaccination camp which was scheduled to be held at GSD Complex, Indira Gandhi International Airport, Delhi on Tuesday and Thursday, has been cancelled as government authorities have expressed inability to hold these camps due to non-availability of vaccines. An official letter issued by Air India stated: "The proposed Covid vaccination Camp at GSD Complex, IGIA (Delhi) on May 11 and 13 stands cancelled because government authorities have expressed inability to hold these camps due to non-availability of vaccines." However, the fresh dates will be notified once Air India get re-confirmation from government authorities. "Fresh dates will be notified once we get re-confirmation from government authorities," it stated. Meanwhile, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare informed that over 18 crore vaccine doses provided to States/UTs free of cost by the Government of India, so far. "More than 90 lakh doses still available with States/UTs to be administered. Over 7 Lakh doses, in addition, will be received by States/UTs in the next 3 days," the ministry said today.

## 'Fashion designer' woman alleges rape by Delhi man

**Latur, Maharashtra:** A 23-year-old woman, who claims to be a fashion designer based in Pune, has lodged a complaint of rape against a 28-year-old man from Delhi, an official said on Tuesday. The alleged incident had occurred on February 26 night at a hotel in Pune after the accused forced the victim to eat sweets laced with drugs, the official said quoting the FIR. Pune Police has also booked three more persons, including two women, for allegedly blackmailing the victim and circulating her objectionable photos and videos. The complainant alleged the accused extorted gold jewellery from her, police said. As per the FIR, the woman, who hails from Latur, is currently staying in Pune where she is pursuing a computer software course and also working as a fashion designer. All the four accused are residents of Delhi. As per the FIR, the accused sent her objectionable photos and videos to the victim's family members and friends when she warned them of filing a police complaint. Police Inspector Sunil Thopte told PTI over the phone from Pune that they will forward the FIR to senior officers and investigate accordingly. He said police are yet to arrest anybody named in the FIR given the Covid-19 situation in Delhi. An FIR has been registered at Chandan Nagar police station in Pune under various sections of the Indian Penal Code for rape and under the Information Technology Act, 2000. — PTI

## Centre to HC: PIL against Central Vista construction another attempt to stall project

**New Delhi, May 11:** The Centre has told the Delhi High Court that the PIL seeking stay on the construction of Central Vista here amid the raging Covid pandemic was just another attempt to stall the project which has been facing such attempts from the beginning on one pretext or another. The "intentions and motive" behind filing of the plea are evident from the fact that the instant project has been singled out by the petitioners despite several other agencies, including Delhi Metro, carrying out construction activities across the national capital, the Centre has alleged. "The very fact that out of all these construction activities going on simultaneously for different projects by different agencies, the petitioner has chosen to be a public spirited citizen only with regard to one project only speaks volumes about his intentions and motive behind filing the present petition," the Centre's affidavit has contended.

## Rahul asks PM Modi to remove his 'tinted glasses'

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

The Congress has been demanding that the project, including a new Parliament building and a new residence for the prime minister, be dropped and the money be used on improv-

Since the affidavit was not yet on record, a bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jasmeet Singh listed the matter for hearing on May 12.

The court also allowed the early hearing application moved by the petitioners — Anya Malhotra, who works as a translator, and Sohail Hashmi, a historian and



Rahul Gandhi

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

documentary film maker — who have contended that the project was not an essential activity and therefore, it can be put on hold for now during the pandemic.

In the affidavit filed in the court on May 10, the central government has said that the Delhi Disaster Management Authority

(DDMA) has permitted construction activities, during the prevailing curfew, where the labourers are residing on-site.

It has said the workers were engaged well before the imposition of curfew on April 19.

"It is submitted that in the meantime, a Covid compliant facility was installed at the worksite itself, to accommodate the 250 workers who had expressed their willingness to stay put and continue the aforesaid work.

"The facility provides for strict implementation of Covid protocol strictly and also adherence to Covid appropriate behaviour, such as sanitization, thermal screening, physical/social distancing and masking," the government has said in its affidavit.

It has also said that the contractor has provided health insurance to all the concerned workers against Covid-19 and a separate facility for conducting the RT-PCR test, isolation and medical aid has also been set up at the site. — PTI

## Kejriwal bats for vaccine formula sharing

Entire country can be provided 'safety cover' if more companies manufacture Covid vaccines, says Delhi CM in letter to PM

## Delhi will float global tender for Covid vaccines: Sisodia

**New Delhi, May 11:** The Delhi government will float a global tender for procuring coronavirus vaccines, deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia announced on Tuesday, while accusing the BJP-ruled Centre of "forcing" state governments to compete among themselves in the international market for anti-Covid shots.

Addressing an online briefing, Sisodia alleged that the BJP-ruled Centre was forcing the states to compete and fight in the international market for

vaccines. "We will also do it. We have talked to some states. The Delhi government will do it, some other states are preparing for it," Sisodia said about global tender for procuring Covid-19 vaccines.

With a single-day rise of 12,481 cases, Delhi's Covid-19 tally has climbed to 13,48,699, while the death toll due to the viral disease has shot up to 20,010 with 347 more people succumbing to it, authorities said on Tuesday.

— PTI



**Delhi is facing a shortage of vaccines. Some states have not even started inoculation. The vaccine shortage has become a big challenge for the country.**

— Arvind Kejriwal  
Delhi CM

months, he said.

"Delhi is facing a shortage of vaccines. Some states have not even started inoculation because they do not have the required number of doses. The vaccine shortage has become a big challenge for the country," the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supreme said. — PTI

## 'India heading towards serious livelihood crisis'

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

In an interview, he also said the government's target to make India a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25 was never a "feasible target" and was just to pander to the "super-power ambitions" of the Indian elite.

About the impact of the second wave of Covid on the

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

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

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

"Despite mass vaccination, there is a serious pos-

sibility that intermittent crises will continue for a long time, perhaps years.

"Compared with last year, many people have depleted savings and larger debts. Those who borrowed their way through last year's crisis may not be able to do it again this time," he observed.

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

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

down.

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

On how the government could have missed seeing the second Covid-19 wave coming, Dreze said the Indian government has been in denial all along.

"Remember, the government refused to admit about any 'community transmission' of Covid for a long time, even as recorded cases were counted in millions. When an early analysis of official data exposed the collapse of health services, the government retracted the data," he said. — PTI

## Chhota Rajan returns to Tihar after recovering from Covid

**New Delhi, May 11:** Gangster Chhota Rajan, who was admitted at AIIMS here for treatment after he had tested positive for Covid-19, was taken back to Tihar jail on Tuesday following his recovery from illness, officials said.

He was found Covid-19 positive in the Tihar Jail on April 22 and was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) on April 24.

According to a senior police officer, Rajan was brought back to Tihar on Tuesday as he had recovered.



Chhota Rajan

On Friday, the jail administration had dismissed reports claiming that Rajan had died. "News of death of Tihar jail inmate Rajendra Sadashiv Nikalje @ Chhota Rajan s/o Sadashiv Nikalje is wrong," director general (prisons) Sandeep Goel had said.

Rajan, 61, is lodged at the high-security prison since his arrest after deportation from Bali in Indonesia in 2015. — PTI

## On-duty ASI assaulted, 2 brothers held

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

Two brothers were arrested for allegedly manhandling an on-duty assistant sub-inspector of Delhi Police in east Delhi's Kalyanpuri area, officials said on Tuesday.

According to police, assistant sub-inspector Devender and constable Manoj were on patrolling duty in Kalyanpuri Central Market on Sunday. Around 4 pm, they saw a bike and stopped the vehicle for checking. The rider could not show the documents and started arguing with police. Later, Manoj went to the police station to deposit the motorcycle, a senior police officer said.

Meanwhile, the rider of the bike called his accomplices and started assaulting Devender who was present in the market. Some of them threw stones on the ASI and he sustained injury on his right hand, the officer said. He pulled out his service revolver to save himself from the assailants. There was no misuse of service revolver and it was taken out for self defence, police claimed. One of the assailants, identified as Mosin (24), a resident of Gazipur Dairy Farm, was riding the motorcycle. Another was his brother Mehboob (32).

## Appeal for Identification



General public is hereby informed that one person Name: Unknown, S/o: Unknown, R/o: Unknown, Age: About 40 Yrs., Height: 5'6", Sex: Male, Complexion: Wheatish, Face: Round, Built: Muscular, Wearing: Green and White T-Shirt, Blue Shorts and Bare footed, Place of Recovery: Found in unconscious condition on 21.04.2021 in the area of P.S. Hauz Khas, New Delhi and shifted to AIIMS Emergency for treatment

where doctor declared brought him dead.

In this regard DD No. 34-A, Dated 21.04.2021 has been lodged at Police Station, Hauz Khas, New Delhi. Any clue come to notice please inform undersign.

Phone : 011-23014046 (Direct), 011-23015229 & 23015218 ext. 210.  
Web-site : http://cbl.nic.in  
E-Mail ID: cbl@cbl.gov.in  
Fax: 011-23011334  
DP/522/SD/2021  
SHO  
P.S. Hauz Khas, New Delhi  
Ph.: 011-26867878, 26510077

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

It is notified for the information of all concerned that Railways have decided to the change the traction points of the following Rajdhani Express Special trains to New Coochbehar instead of New Jalpaiguri, consequently the timings of these trains will be revised as per following detail:-

Train No. 02505/02506 Dibrugarh - New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special Train			
02505 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Spl.		02506 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Spl.	
Existing Timings	New Timings	Existing Timings	New Timings
22:00 (D)	22:00 (D)	Dibrugarh	03:45 (A)
10:00/10:05	10:00/10:25	New Coochbehar	14:20/14:25
11:40 (Pass)	11:55 (Pass)	Raninagar Jalpaiguri	13:00 (Pass)
12:05/12:30	12:20/12:30	New Jalpaiguri	11:55/12:20
13:38 (A)	13:38 (A)	New Delhi	11:25 (D)

Days of Run: 02505 from Dibrugarh on 17.05.2021 and 02506 from New Delhi on 16.05.2021

Train No. 02503/02504 Dibrugarh - New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Special Train			
02503 Dibrugarh - New Delhi Rajdhani Spl.		02504 New Delhi - Dibrugarh Rajdhani Spl.	
Existing Timings	New Timings	Existing Timings	New Timings
19:55 (D)	19:55 (D)	Dibrugarh	05:30 (A)
10:00/10:05	10:00/10:25	New Coochbehar	14:20/14:22
11:40 (Pass)	11:55 (Pass)	Raninagar Jalpaiguri	13:00 (Pass)
12:05/12:30	12:20/12:30	New Jalpaiguri	11:55/12:20
13:38 (A)	13:38 (A)	New Delhi	11:25 (D)

Days of Run: 02503 from Dibrugarh on 15.05.2021 and 02504 from New Delhi on 14.05.2021

For any kind of information such as detailed Time-Table and stations en route etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or visit Indian Railways website https://enquiry.indianrail.gov.in or NTES App.

All norms of the State and Central Government regarding COVID-19 including Social distancing, sanitization etc., may be followed in the trains and at the Railway stations. All other precautions associated with COVID-19 should also be ensured.

Visit RailMadad website:  
www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in  
Download RailMadad app.  
RailMadad Helpline No.: 139  
Please join us on

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"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

1014/2021



## SHORT TAKES

## T'gana announces 10-day lockdown

**Hyderabad:** The Telangana Cabinet on Tuesday decided to impose a 10-day lockdown beginning May 12 from 10 AM to prevent further spread of Covid, with four hours relaxation in the morning. The chief minister K. Chandrashekar Rao-led cabinet meeting, which was held at Pragathi Bhavan has decided to give a relaxation period from 6 am to 10 am for the people for their general activities and needs, an official release said. Works related to agriculture produce, allied sectors, works undertaken with the agriculture machines, running of rice mills, transport of the paddy and rice, supplying paddy to FCI, fertiliser and seeds shops and manufacturing companies and other agri-based sectors are exempted from the lockdown, it said. "The State Cabinet will meet again on May 20, would review the situation on the continuing of the lockdown and take a decision accordingly," the release said. — PTI

## Committee to study Maratha quota order

**Mumbai:** A committee headed by former chief justice of the Allahabad High Court Dilip Bhosale will study the Supreme Court's order striking down quota for the Maratha community in Maharashtra, state minister Ashok Chavan said here on Tuesday. The eight-member panel led by Justice Bhosale, a former Bombay HC judge, will guide the state government on the future course of action, Chavan added. Other members of the panel include former state advocate general Darius Khambata, senior advocate Rafique Dada and a few serving and former government officials, the minister informed. The committee will submit its report on or before May 31. The apex court on May 5 struck down a Maharashtra law granting quota to Marathas in admissions and government jobs, terming the statute as unconstitutional.

## Punjab: AAP leader killed in road mishap

**Fatehgarh Sahib:** A 30-year-old AAP leader and his two friends were killed when their car collided with a truck in this district of Punjab, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place on Monday night near Maheshpura village of Khamanon sub division. The deceased were identified as Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader from Sangrur's Dhuri Sandeep Singla, and his friends Mandeep Singh Dhindsa (26) and Vijay Goldy (45), police said. Singla and Dhindsa died on the spot while Goldy succumbed to injuries in a hospital. The police has registered a case against the truck driver, said Khamanon Station House Officer Harvinder Singh. — PTI

## Pappu Yadav held for violating Covid rules

NAYEAR AZAD  
PATNA, MAY 11

Former MP from Madhepura and JAP chief Pappu Yadav was arrested in Patna on Tuesday for violating Covid protocols. He was picked up from his residence and was taken to Gandhi Maidan police station. According to the police, "he was arrested for roaming around without any valid permit during the lockdown".

## 95-yr-old Odia wins battle against Covid

AKSHAY KUMAR SAHOO  
KEONJHAR, MAY 11

A 95-year-old woman in Odisha's Keonjhar district has successfully won the battle against Covid-19 after a fight of 15 days. Sushila Bala Pahi, the first woman Zilla Parishad vice-chairperson of the district from 1997 to 2002, is a resident of Thakurpatna village. After she suffered from fever, her swab sample was collected on April 25 for Covid test and the report came out positive.

She was being treated by a team of doctors under the supervision of CDMO Ashok Das. After undergoing treatment for 15 days, the nonagenarian recovered from the deadly disease setting an inspiration for many others.

## ■ MEA: PM Modi may participate in the summit virtually PM will not attend G-7 meet in person due to Covid situation

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not attend the forthcoming G7 summit in person at Cornwall in Britain due to the Covid situation in India, the MEA said on Tuesday. However, there is a possibility that PM Modi may participate in the virtual format.

Meanwhile, PM Modi spoke to his Bhutanese counterpart Lotay Tshering on Tuesday, with the two leaders noting that the "present crisis situation has served to further highlight the special friendship between India and Bhutan."

Speculation is rife that despite the raging Covid crisis in the country, India will find a way for Bhutan to gain access to vaccines in view of the special bilateral ties.

In "response to media queries on the upcoming visit of the Prime Minister to attend the G7 summit at Cornwall in UK," the MEA spokesperson said, "While appreciating the invitation to the



A woman takes a selfie as a medical worker inoculates her with a Covid vaccine dose at Moti Lal Nehru Medical college in Prayagraj on Tuesday. — PTI

Prime Minister by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson to attend the G7 summit as a special invitee, given the prevailing Covid situation, it has been decided that the Prime Minister will not attend the G7 summit in person."

On the conversation with the Bhutanese PM, the MEA said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation on Tuesday with the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Lyonchhen Dr

Lotay Tshering. The Bhutanese Prime Minister expressed solidarity with the government and the people of India in their efforts against the recent wave of Covid-19." The MEA added, "The leaders noted that the present crisis situation has served to further highlight the special friendship between India and Bhutan, anchored in mutual understanding and respect, shared cultural heritage, and strong people to people links."

## PM hails scientists, innovators for fight against coronavirus

**New Delhi, May 11:** On the National Technology Day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said that in any challenging situation, the country's scientists and innovators have always risen to the occasion and over the last year have worked industriously to fight Covid. The National Technology Day (NTD) marks the anniversary of the underground nuclear tests conducted in Rajasthan's Pokhran in 1998. The day celebrates the achievements and contributions of Indians to science and technology.

"On National Technology Day, we salute the hard work and tenacity of our scientists and those passionate about technology," PM tweeted. "We remember with pride the 1998 Pokhran Tests, which demonstrated India's scientific and technological prowess," he said. — PTI

## 'Prioritise vaccinating those due for 2nd dose'

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

The Centre, on Tuesday, asked the states and Union Territories (UTs) to ensure that all beneficiaries, who have taken the first dose, be prioritised for the second doses during the vaccination drives. The decision comes as a huge crowd was reported at several places after the government opened vaccination for the 18 plus population. Amid this, those needing the second dose of vaccines were not getting slots to complete their vaccination process.

During a meeting on the vaccination programme chaired by Union health secretary Rajesh Bhushan and Dr R.S. Sharma, a member of the National Expert Group on Vaccine Administration of Covid-19, it was decided that states can reserve at least 70 per cent of the vaccines supplied to them from the government of India channel (free of cost) for the second dose vaccination while the remaining 30 per cent can be used for the first dose.

"This, however, is indicative. The states



Frontline workers, perform Suryanamaskar after applying cow dung on their body during cow dung therapy believing it will boost immunity to fight against the coronavirus disease at SGVP in Ahmedabad. — PTI

have the liberty to enhance this to as much as 100 per cent," a statement from the health ministry said.

"The states have been informed in a transparent manner in advance about the Covid vaccines being provided to them from the govt of India channel. The visibility for the forthcoming fortnight is conveyed to them in advance to enable better and more effective planning by them."

"The next allocation for the period between May 15 and 31 will be conveyed to them on May 14. It was pointed

out that the states can utilise the information regarding dose allocation for the next 15 days to plan their vaccination sessions," the statement added.

In a communication through their health secretaries, the states were urged to minimise vaccine wastage. While the overall levels have considerably reduced, the Union health secretary pointed out that there were many states that still needed to substantially reduce the wastage by retraining vaccinators to ensure judicious usage of the vaccines.

## 71 bodies fished out from the Ganga in Bihar so far

**Ballia/Ghazipur (UP), May 11:** Bodies were seen floating in the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh's Ballia and Ghazipur districts, according to local residents and the authorities on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, at least 71 bodies were fished out from the Ganga in Bihar's Buxar, which is downstream the two UP districts, triggering suspicion that these could be of Covid patients.

According to Ballia residents, at least 45 bodies were seen floating at the Ujiyar, Kulhadia and Bharauli ghats in the Narahi area.

However, the district authorities did not tell the exact number of bodies found there.

Ballia district magistrate Aditi Singh in a statement said some bodies in bad condition were seen under the Ballia-

**■ A LARGE** number of bloated corpses were seen floating in the river bed in Chausa block of Buxar district on Monday, triggering shock waves

Buxar bridge. She said the Subdivisional Magistrate (Sadar) and the circle officer are probing the matter and the last rites of the dead were performed with due respect. Superintendent of police Vipin Tada said he did not know how many bodies were found.

"The bodies were old. In Bihar, there is a tradition of disposing of dead bodies in the river," he said, adding that seeing the wind direction, it seems the bodies came from Bihar. Meanwhile, bodies

were seen floating in Ghazipur's Gahmar and Bara villages, according to residents there.

Ghazipur district magistrate Mangala Prasad Singh told PTI that they were informed on Monday that bodies were seen floating in the river, following which probe teams were constituted.

"On Monday evening, we spotted a body in Bara village and it was cremated with full respect," he said, adding that their teams are patrolling the villages and urging people to inform the district administration if they are facing any problem in getting the last rites of their relatives performed.

Mr Singh said officials from the Bihar's Buxar had come here and the district administration has launched a probe into the matter.

## Covid-19 claims lives of 10 Naxals, triggers desertion

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, MAY 11

**■ A TWO-PAGE** letter written in Gondri was among the Naxal materials seized during a raid by security forces in the Naxal camp established in Palnar jungle under Gangaloor police limit in Bijapur district

"All the members of the Gangaloor area committee have fallen ill prompting Rajesh 'dada' and Joga to flee", the letter, purportedly written by a junior Maoist leader to his senior woman leader, said.

The letter informed that three senior cadres of Darbha division Nagesh, Sumitra and Anita quit the organisation and fled to their villages.

A Maoist militiaman of the Konta platoon Rupesh fled his unit for fear of contracting the disease.

Similarly section commanders of a battalion of People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) Budharam and Bimla fled their unit.

The letter has also reported that some senior Maoist leaders have fallen sick due to the disease which has been spreading its tentacles to villages in south Bastar very first.

According to the letter, Hunga, commander of Chetana Natya Mandal (CNM), the campaign wing of Maoists, of Darbha division has fallen sick from the unknown disease, while divisional commanders Rajesh, Suresh and Manoj were critically ill.

Five PLGA militiamen Debe, Ganga, Sundru, Munni and Reena have fallen sick.

"Our medical supply network has been disrupted due to frequent raids by security forces. Alternative supply network needs to be explored and activated to reach medicines to the sick cadres urgently", the letter said.

"We have received inputs that Many Naxal cadres and leaders have developed symptoms like Covid-19. At least 10-15 Maoists died of suspected Covid-19 in southern Sukma and Bijapur districts in recent time."

We have offered to arrange medical treatment for them if they surrender before police", Bastar range inspector general of police Sunderraj P told this newspaper on Tuesday.

## 6 'black fungus' cases in MP, 1 patient loses sight

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY  
BHOPAL, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED

General public is hereby informed that one girl namely Preeti D/o Ashok R/o Plot No. 44 Khasra No. 52/12 Near Ambedkar Park, Prahaladpur Banger, Delhi has been missing/kidnapped from the area of PS: Shahabad Dairy, Delhi since 16.04.2021. In this regard, a case FIR No. 0168 Dated 17.04.2021 has been registered at P.S. Shahabad Dairy, Delhi. The description of the missing girl as under.



PREETI

Age: 13 Years, Complexion: Blonde, Height: 4' 3", Face: Round, Built: Medium, Wearing: Orange colour suit, red colour pajami and sleepers in feet. Sincere efforts have been made by the local police to trace out her but no clue has come to light so far. If anyone has any information about the missing/kidnapped girl then please inform P.S. Shahabad Dairy, Delhi at following Tel No./e-mail: c/c@cbi.gov.in and Website: http://cbi.nic.in Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 Fax No. 011-24368639

Sd/- S.H.O.

DP/1005/ON/2021 PS: Shahabad Dairy, Delhi

PH: 011-27821047, 27822206, 27822207

## SEARCH FOR MISSING/KIDNAPPED



Gulfusa

General Public is hereby informed that one girl Namely: Gulfusa, D/o: Ahmad Hasan, R/o: h.No. 3/188, Trilokpur, Delhi has been missing/ kidnapped since 23.04.2021 from the area of P.S. Kalyan Puri, Delhi. In this regard a case vide FIR No. 181/2021 U/s 363 IPC dated 30.04.2021 has been registered at P.S. Kalyan Puri, Delhi. The description of the missing girl are as

under: Age: 16 years, Height: 4' 8", Eyes: Black, Face: Long, Hair: Long & black, Built: Thin, Complexion: Fair, Wearing: Black & white colour top, white colour pant and sandal in her feet. Sincere efforts have been made by local police to trace out the missing girl but no clue has come to light so far. Any person having any information or clue about this missing girl kindly inform to the following.

Website: http://cbi.nic.in E-mail Id - c/c@cbi.gov.in Ph: 011-24368638, 24368641 Fax No. 011-24368639

SHO P.S. Kalyan Puri, Delhi

DP/500/ED/2021 Tel.No. 011-22772251, 8750871830

Govt. of Haryana

Don't Panic, Combat Corona with Appropriate Behaviour

Suggestions to Follow During Home Quarantine

Sh. Manohar Lal, Chief Minister, Haryana

Don't Panic, Combat Corona with Appropriate Behaviour

Maintain Physical Distance & Also Use Masks at Home

Wash Hands Frequently With Soap & Water or Use Sanitizer

Regularly Monitor Your Body Temperature and Oxygen Level

Keep in Touch With Your Doctor & Take Medicines on Time

Follow Respiratory Etiquettes

Dispose off Tissue Paper etc. Properly After Use

Contact Doctor Immediately if You Have Difficulty in Breathing, High Grade Fever or Severe Cough For More Than Five Days

Helpline For Assistance Regarding Covid-19

8558893911 (for Entire State)

1075 (Except Gurugram & Faridabad)

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana

www.prharyana.gov.in @Cmohry @DiprHaryana



SHORT TAKES

TMC leader shot at in Hooghly dist

Chinsurah, West Bengal: A TMC leader was shot at by unidentified miscreants in West Bengal's Hooghly district on Tuesday when he was buying vegetables at a local market, a police officer said. Aditya Niyogi, former vice chairman of Bansberia Municipality, was taken to a nearby hospital in a critical condition, but the doctors there referred him to a clinical establishment in Kolkata, he said. BJP sources claimed the incident was a fallout of factional feud within the ruling party. Denying the charge, TMC MLA and former minister Tapan Dasgupta said, "Saffron party workers carried out the attack, aided by a group of traitors within the Trinamul who have been exposed after the just-concluded assembly elections." Several TMC activists hit the streets in Bansberia during the day in protest against the incident. — PTI

5-member group to study Cong poll rout

New Delhi: The Congress set up a five-member group headed by former Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan to evaluate the party's performance in the just-concluded Assembly polls. It comes a day after party chief Sonia Gandhi proposed at a meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) the formation of a group to assess the party's losses in Kerala, Assam, West Bengal and Puducherry. "The Congress president has constituted a group to evaluate the results of the recently concluded Assembly elections, with immediate effect. Ashok Chavan will be the chairman and other members of the group are Salman Khurshid, Manish Tewari, Vincent H Pala and Jothi Mani," an official statement said. The group will submit its report within two weeks, the communication further said. — PTI

## Nadda slams Sonia Gandhi

■ Continued from Page 1

Congress leaders, including a chief minister, of trying to actively create vaccine hesitancy during the "once-in-a-century" pandemic. Mr Nadda accused the Congress of "misleading people, creating false panic and even contradicting their stands just based on political considerations".

Hitting back over the criticism of his party for holding huge poll rallies in April even as Covid-19 cases surged across the nation and also over the construction of the Central Vista project, Mr Nadda said the Congress leaders too held massive election rallies in Kerala, causing a spike in the Covid cases and were now "grandstanding" about poll rallies elsewhere. Responding to the CWC's charge of the Modi government abdicating its responsibilities on vaccinations, Mr Nadda alleged there seemed to be a "communication gap between the Congress Party and the states it shared power" as in April, the Congress top brass were seeking decentralisation of vaccinations.

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

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

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

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

## 3 militants of LeT dead in Anantnag encounter

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
SRINAGAR, MAY 11

Three Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT) militants were killed in a gunfight with security forces in Vailoo village of Jammu and Kashmir's southern Anantnag district early Tuesday.

The police said that all the slain were local Kashmiris and identified them as Ilyas Ahmad Dar alias Sameer; Ubaid Shafi alias Abdullah and Aqib Ahmad Lone alias Sahil.

A statement issued by it here said that fighting broke out at around 4 am after a joint team of J&K police's counterinsurgency special operations group (SOG), the Army's 19th Rashtriya Rifles and the CRPF on receiving information about the presence of militants in the village laid siege to it.

It said that when the presence of militants in a private house was established, they were given an opportunity to surrender. "However, they fired indiscriminately upon the joint search party which was retaliated, leading to an encounter," it added.

The statement said that the forces rescued all the civilians trapped in the area during gunfire and halted the operation for the time "to ensure safety and safe evacuation of people from the area of gunfight". "Later the operation was resumed and all the terrorists were killed in the ensuing encounter," the police said.

It added that one AK-47 rifle, two pistols and "incriminating materials" were recovered from the encounter site.

## Agencies to keep close watch on BJP netas, their security Centre to keep close eye on Bengal

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 11

A day after Union home ministry decided to provide X-category security over to all 77 BJP MLAs in West Bengal, the Central intelligence agencies, sources said, will also closely monitor threat perception to other senior party functionaries and submit regular updates on the same to the ministry for an "appropriate follow-up action".

There has been considerable tension between the Centre, governor and newly-elected Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal ever since

## 26 Covid patients die in Goa

■ Continued from Page 1

of the facility as of Monday was 1,200 jumbo cylinders of which only 400 were supplied.

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

Mr Rane said a three-member team of nodal officers set up by the state government to oversee Covid-19 treatment at GMCH should give its inputs about the issues to the CM.

Earlier in the day, the CM donning a PPE kit visited Covid-19 wards in the GMCH where he met patients and their relatives. "There are issues over the availability of

## State govts to float global tenders

■ Continued from Page 1

vaccines," Mr Sisodia alleged.

The World Health Organisation, India and South Africa have all called for patents to be temporarily suspended, especially by the US.

According to the Centre's Liberalised Pricing and Accelerated National Covid-19 Vaccination Strategy, Covid-19 vaccination is free at government vaccination centres that receive doses from the Centre for eligible population groups comprising healthcare workers, frontline workers and people above the 45 years of age.



A biker wades through a waterlogged street after a heavy rain in Kolkata on Tuesday. — PRITAM BANDYOPADHYAY

## Tripura govt forms panel to probe attack on Sarkar

Agartala, May 11: A day after Leader of the Opposition in Tripura and former Tripura chief minister Manik Sarkar and some CPI(Marxist) leaders were allegedly attacked, the BJP-led government on Tuesday constituted an inquiry committee to probe the incident and submit its report within 48 hours.

"Chief minister Biplab Kumar Deb has taken step regarding what happened with Opposition leader Manik Sarkar in South district. He has ordered to form an inquiry committee led by south district superintendent of police and submit the report within 48 hours," said statement by the chief minister's office.

Mr Sarkar and other leaders were attacked Monday, allegedly by ruling party cadres, during their visit to CPM activists who were attacked a day ago at Shantirbazar in south district.



Manik Sarkar

The police, however, claimed that unidentified youths had thrown stones but none was injured.

Mr Sarkar, also CPI-M politburo member, said the delegates had gone to the houses of party supporters who were allegedly attacked by BJP goons on Wednesday when they were celebrating the birth anniversary of social thinker Karl Marx before a CPI-M party office.

The delegates were led by Mr Sarkar and the others were the deputy leader of the Opposition, Badal Chowdhury, and others.

The BJP hoodlums showed them black flags and chanted slogans "Go

back Sarkar".

The police allegedly asked the delegates to return in view of the situation.

When the delegates were returning to the main roads the attackers brickbatted them, he said.

Nirupam Datta, the subdivisional police officer of Shantirbazar said none was injured in the incident and the police had to resort to lathicharge to disperse the attackers and provide protection to the CPI-M delegates.

Mr Sarkar alleged that the state director-general of police was informed of the CPI-M leaders' visit in advance but still they were attacked.

"It was a pre-planned attack, which could not have been possible without the indulgence from the state leadership. The law and order had collapsed in the state and attacks on CPI-M party workers are increasing day by day, he said. — Agencies

### Gov to visit clash-hit areas in BSF copter

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
KOLKATA, MAY 11

A day after blaming the Mamata Banerjee government of not arranging his visits to the post-poll violence-hit areas, governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday informed that he would fly in a Border Security Force (BSF) helicopter, starting with

she came back to power with a thumping majority on May 2.

Fearing possible violent retaliation from Trinamul cadre, the Central agen-

### ED registers PMLA case

■ Continued from Page 1

their statements will be recorded by the ED officials," sources said.

The NCP and the Congress alleged that the ED's case against Mr Deshmukh is politically motivated.

"Right from Singh's allegations to the filing of the case by the ED, it is all politically motivated and aimed at defaming him (Deshmukh) by misusing power. It is clear that the BJP is playing politics using the CBI, ED and other Central agencies," NCP spokesman Nawab Malik said.

The Congress dubbed the ED's move as an attempt to cover up the Modi government's "failure" to manage the pandemic by diverting the public attention. "Why had the ED come into picture when there was no money transaction? Actions of Central agencies have become a joke," Congress spokesman Sachin Sawant said.

On March 20, Mr Param Bir Singh on March 20 had written a letter to chief minister Uddhav Thackeray alleging that Mr Deshmukh had asked accused assistant inspector Sachin Waze and ACP Sanjay Patil to collect ₹100 crore for him every month. Of this ₹100 crore, ₹40-45 crore were to be extorted allegedly from hotels, bars and restaurants.

ers in various districts and blocks.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar a few days ago following post-poll violence that killed more than 12 workers of both BJP and Trinamul.

The home ministry had also sent a four-member team to West Bengal to review the law and order situation.

The Central team had concluded that the security situation in the state was "grim" while not ruling out further violence between cadres of different political parties.

## ■ New Assam govt reviews Covid situation Sarma sets up panel for jobs to 1L youths

MANOJ ANAND  
GUWAHATI, MAY 11

The first Cabinet meeting of newly appointed Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here on Tuesday while clearing the detailed Covid action plan, formed a high-power committee headed by finance minister Ajanta Neog to prepare the roadmap for implementation of giving appointment to one lakh unemployed youth of Assam. This was a poll promise of the BJP.

Informing that the Cabinet discussed the Covid situation at length, Industry and transport minister Chandra Mohan Patowary told reporters that the chief minister has also formed another high-power committee headed by minister Ashok Singhal to prepare the plan for waving the loan taken by women from microfinance companies.

Pointing out that the Cabinet has also resolved to ensure strict enforcement of restrictions to bring down the positivity rate, newly appointed health minister Keshab Mahanta ruled out the ongoing rumour of complete lockdown. "Assam chief secretary and director-general of Police will be announcing the Covid Action Plan that the Cabinet has approved, in a



Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma holds first Cabinet meeting in Guwahati on Tuesday after forming the new government in the state.

press conference on Wednesday. We are going to enforce the restrictions to contain the Covid situation from Thursday," said Mr Mahanta after the first Cabinet meeting.

He said that the government was also planning to announce an economic package that could be announced in case further strict steps would be required to take to contain the spread of Covid.

Earlier during the day the chief minister held a meeting with ministers and senior officers to assess the Covid situation in Assam and stressed the need to intensify containment measures. In the wake of escalating numbers, he also directed officers to ensure strict enforcement of restrictions to bring down the positivity rate.

## Maha govt halts Covid-19 doses to 18-44 age group

BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, MAY 11

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

"There is a dearth of vaccines due to which we are considering holding off the vaccination drive temporarily for the 18-44 age group. So we will be giving vaccines right now only to 45-plus people. Administering the second dose is a priority now," said State Health Minister Rajesh Tope on Tuesday.

The decision has been taken in the wake of the inadequate supply of vaccines for 45-plus beneficiaries by the Union Government. Efficacy of the vaccine is largely

affected if the second dose is not administered within the stipulated time period, he added.

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

## Covid cases down by 30K

■ Continued from Page 1

testing kits, the Union health minister has issued 'revised testing strategy' under which RT-PCR tests will be rationalised. The new policy says RT-PCR testing must not be repeated in any individual who has tested positive once either by RAT or RT-PCR and no testing is required for Covid-19 recovered patients in accordance with the discharge policy. The ministry also said the requirement of RT-PCR testing for healthy individuals undertaking inter-state travel may be removed. This comes after almost all states have started insisting for an RT-PCR negative report from incoming travellers. However, the government made it clear that all

## Widening highway to Char Dham

■ Continued from Page 1

Nariman had allowed the width of 5.5 meters. The A-G told the court the ministry has since amended its 2018 circular, noting that the roads are to be used for different purposes, going right up to the India-China border.

Posting the matter for hearing on Friday, the court sought all documents, including its earlier orders, by Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning at the latest.

The matter relates to the Char Dham project to improve access to four

### Boy, 12, killed in grenade blast

Tinsukia, Assam: A 12-year-old boy was on Tuesday killed in a grenade blast in Tinsukia district of Assam, a senior police officer said. The victim, Sujoy Hajong, was riding a bicycle when he found a grenade lying on the road at Hajong village in Jagun police station area of the district, he said. "As he tried picking up the grenade, it went off and critically injured the boy," the officer said. Hajong was immediately rushed to Margherita civil hospital, where doctors declared him brought dead. "We do not know yet how the grenade landed there," he said. — PTI



# THE ASIAN AGE

12 MAY 2021

## Get moving on vaccines as Indian lives do matter

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

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

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

health workers in the first phase as it is a safeguard against the threat they face at their workplace. A couple of months later, the Election Commission of India ensured that all those officials who were part of the election process in four states and one Union territory were administered two doses of the vaccine. It is more than evident that being vaccinated is a precondition in these times of a devastating pandemic for the people to stay alive and go about earning their daily bread. It is a right available to every person, guaranteed by Article 21 of the Constitution. The court's efforts must be seen as an attempt to hold the government accountable to the Constitution, which is its mandate, and not as interference.

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

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

## Uncertainty looms in Nepal

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

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

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

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

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

### THE ASIAN AGE

T. VENKATRAM REDDY  
Editor in Chief

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Subhani



## Amid pandemic, Britain, EU eye India trade deals



Sunanda K. Datta-Ray

Reflections

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

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

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

That is only natural.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

trade barriers, and double bilateral trade by 2030.

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

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

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

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

*The writer is a senior journalist, columnist and author*

### LETTERS

#### RED STAR

The first revenue minister of Kerala and one of the first leaders of the Communist movement in the state, K.R. Gouri Amma, is no more. Gouri Amma passed away at the age of 102. She was heading the Janathipathiya Samrakshana Samithy party. With her candidature to Kerala Assembly elections in 2011, then 92-year-old Gouri Amma had made history. She was the only candidate to contest all the Assembly elections since the state first went to polls in 1957. Because of her courage and positive attitude, she was loved by all.

**K.A. Solaman Alappuzha**

#### NO MORE EXCESSES

**BENGALURU DIRECTOR** general of police Praveen Sood's clarification that there is no bar on the use of vehicles to buy essentials between 6 am and 10 am must cheer citizens, more so the elderly, the sick and the infirmed. The strict lockdown barring people, except those employed in essential services, from plying their vehicles had come under fire from various quarters, including the Opposition Congress and JD(S). Reports of police excesses — caning and meting out harsh punishment — have also come in from several parts of the State. Stung by criticism, city police commissioner Kamal Pant ordered the police personnel not to use lathis but to start legal action.

**N.J. Ravi Chander Bengaluru**

#### GAME-CHANGER

**AS PER RESEARCHERS** in Cambridge University, the bamboo can become a viable alternative to the willow in the manufacturing of the cricket bat. Replacing the scarce willow with bamboo will no doubt be cost-effective and environment-friendly. We should ardently welcome this game-changing innovation after getting the players acclimatised. Bamboo was also shown to have a similar "damping ratio" to willow, meaning that a similar amount of force was transferred to a player's hands when they hit the ball, so players would feel no more vibration.

**Chanchal Nandy Durgapur**

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Dilip Cherian  
Dilli Ka Babu



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### MAMATA BRINGS BACK COPS TRANSFERRED BY EC

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

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

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

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

#### EC SPLIT DOWN THE MIDDLE

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

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

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

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

Share a babu experience! Follow [@dilipthecherian](https://twitter.com/dilipthecherian) on Twitter. Let's multiply the effect.



## SHORT TAKES

## UZBEKISTAN JAILS ANTI-CORRUPTION BLOGGER

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

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

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

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

## THAILAND SEEKS HUMANITARIAN FIX FOR JAILED SCRIBES

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

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

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

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

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

## TEXAS COPS SHOOT MAN FOR FIRING GUN IN HOME

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

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

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

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

## OZ PLANS BIG DEFENCE, SECURITY INVESTMENTS

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

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

This includes A\$747 million (USD 585 million) to upgrade four military training areas in the Northern Territory where U.S. Marines have a temporary base. The government announced in March that it would begin building its own guided missiles in close collaboration with the United States. The A\$1 billion (USD 784 million) project would produce the first Australian-manufactured missiles since the 1960s.

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

## US accepts Pfizer shot for 12-15 year olds

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

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

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

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

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



Queen Elizabeth II reads the Queen's Speech from the sovereign's throne, as Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (right), listens in the House of Lords chamber during the State Opening of Parliament at Westminster in London on Tuesday, as the ceremony was held with reduced numbers due to Covid-19 restrictions.

— AFP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Agencies

## W.H.O. DENIES ‘LYING’ TO ITALY OVER UN REPORT

**Rome, May 11:** A top World Health Organisation official has strongly denied making false statements to Italian prosecutors about a spiked UN report into Italy’s Covid response, doubling down on his assertions in court documents.

Dr Ranieri Guerra, a WHO special adviser, outlined his position in a 40-page response, with a 495-page annex, to prosecutors who placed him under investigation last month for having allegedly made false statements to them when he was questioned November 5.

— AP

## Nine killed, 10 injured in high school shooting in Russia

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

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

Spokespersons for police and the emergencies ministry refused to comment.

News agencies reported that two unidentified people had carried out the shooting and one, a 17-year-old, had been detained.

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

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

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



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

— AFP

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

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

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

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

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

Tatarstan President Rustam Minnikhanov had

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

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

— AFP

## CHANGING CURVE

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

## Chinese population rises at slow pace

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

According to the seventh national population census released by the Chinese government on Tuesday, China’s population in all the 31 provinces,

autonomous regions, and municipalities reached 1.41178 billion up by 5.38 per cent or 72.06 million from 2010. The figures do not include Hong Kong and Macao. “Data shows that China’s population has maintained slow growth in the past decade,” Ning Jizhe, head of the National Bureau of Statistics, (NBS) told the media here while releasing the census results.

China has conducted a national census every 10 years since the 1990s. The country’s population on

● **AS CHINA** faced population decline, India, whose population was pegged around 1.366 billion in 2019 is projected to surpass China as the world’s most populous country around 2027.

the mainland has reached 1.41178 billion, up by 5.38 per cent or 72.06 million from 2010, the latest census data shows. As China faced population decline, India, whose population was pegged around 1.366 billion in 2019 is projected

to surpass China as the world’s most populous country around 2027, according to a UN report released in June, 2019.

According to the data released by the NBS, the new census figures reveal that the demographic crisis China faced was expected to deepen as the population above 60 years grew to 264 million, up by 18.7 per cent last year. “Data shows the aging of the Chinese population has further deepened, and we will continue to face the pressure to achieve

long-term balanced population development,” Ning said. China’s working-age population, or people aged between 16 and 59, stands at 880 million, Ning said, adding the average age of the Chinese population is 38.8, almost the same as the US’ 38, he said.

The growth rate of the population was 0.53 per cent annually on average in the 7th census conducted last year in comparison to 0.57 per cent in the 6th census in 2010 and 1.07 per cent in the fifth census held in 2000.

— PTI



quick BITES

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

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Moody's cuts India growth forecast to 9.3%

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

Ruchi Soya to acquire biscuits biz from Patanjali



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

HUL to provide 4,000 oxygen concentrators

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

3 private telcos add new users in February

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

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New dividend rules for top 1,000 firms Sebi makes policy on dividend a must

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

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

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

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

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

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



a web-link in their annual reports.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROMOTERS PLEDGED STAKE DIPS TO 1.64% FROM 2.09%

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

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

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

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

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

US duty on jewels to hit jobs in India: Exporters

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 11



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Markets tumble on inflation fears

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 11

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Amitabh Bachchan can't resist Malkist

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

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

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

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

On his association with the brand Mr Bachchan



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

Business NOTE

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

FLIPKART TO ADD 5 WAREHOUSES FOR GROCERY BIZ

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 11

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

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

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

HUL's Sudhir to join Godrej as MD

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

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

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

"The Board of Directors at its meeting held today, appointed Sudhir Sitapati as the managing director & CEO of the company for a period of five years with effect from October 18,



Sudhir Sitapati

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

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

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

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

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

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

—PTI

MFIs send SOS to RBI on Covid

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

Sa-Dhan an association of the microfinance sec-

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

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

has descended on us with a vengeance.

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

—PTI

BAD TIMES

Infection among staff halves Apple phone's production in India

Covid hits Foxconn's iPhone output in India

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

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

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

More than 100 Foxconn employees in the state have tested posi-



tive for Covid-19 and the company has enforced a no-entry ban at its factory in the capital of Chennai until late May, one of the sources said.

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

More than 50 per cent of the plant's capacity had been cut, both sources said, declining to be named as they were not authorised to speak to the media. They did not specify the plant's capacity and it was unclear how many workers were at the facility, which provides dormitory accommodation for employees.

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

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

we have been working closely with local government and public health authorities in India to address the challenges that we and all companies are facing in dealing with the Covid-19 crisis," it said in a statement to Reuters. Foxconn's shares fell as much as 6.2 per cent after the Reuters report. The stock closed down 5.31 per cent, outpacing a 3.8 per cent fall in the broader market on concerns about rising Covid-19 cases in Taiwan.

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

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



## SHORT TAKES

## Anand to feature in Covid fundraiser

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

## Pacer Bumrah gets vaccinated

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

## Don't break Covid protocols: Rijiju

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

## Fulham relegated from top flight

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

## Westbrook sets record in NBA

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

## TWO-HORSE RACE

## Dhawan, Pandya in contention to lead second-string team

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

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

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

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

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

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

## JUVENTUS ARE IN DANGER OF LOSING RONALDO

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

Juventus were knocked out of Italy's top four last weekend following a 3-0 home defeat by AC Milan, leaving coach Andrea Pirlo's position increasingly under threat entering the final three games.

Juventus last missed out on the Champions League in 2011 while Cristiano Ronaldo, the competition's all-time leading scorer with 134 goals, has featured in every edition since 2003.

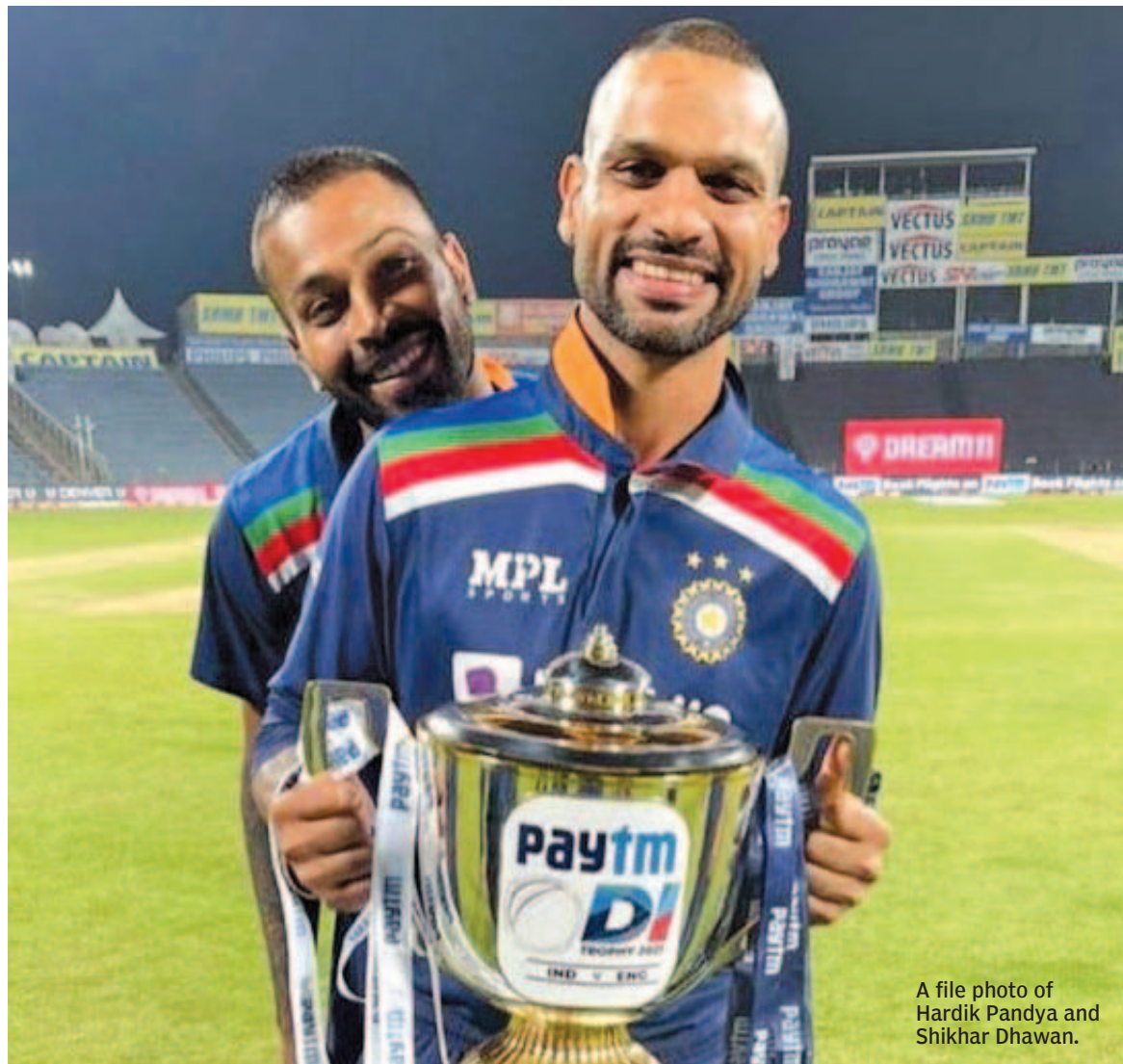
Failing to qualify would see Juventus lose out on roughly 80 million euros, jeopardising their ability to retain Ronaldo and afford his reported pre-tax annual salary of 54 million euros.

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

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

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

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



A file photo of Hardik Pandya and Shikhar Dhawan.

## A FEW INDIANS DIDN'T LIKE RESTRICTIONS: PAMMENT

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

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

suspended on May 4.

"Some of the senior Indian guys don't like being restricted and told what to do," he was quoted as saying by *stuff.co.nz*. "But we did feel safe, at no point did we feel the bubble would be compromised... We felt the travel was always going to be a challenge," he said.

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

was halted.

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

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

mindset had changed.

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

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

## No England stars for IPL phase 2

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

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

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

"We're planning on involvement of England players in England matches. We've got a full FTP schedule. So if those tours to Pakistan and Bangladesh are going ahead, I'd expect the players to be there," Giles said as quoted by *ESPNCricinfo*. There were 11



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

— Twitter

Englishman in various franchises in the suspended IPL.

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

is incredibly busy," Giles said.

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

— PTI

## MCC says bamboo bats will be illegal



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

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

the blade, except in junior bats."

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

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

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

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

## COVID | SCARE

## Doubts raised over Olympics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nishikori said there "def-



Naomi Osaka

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

— NAOMI OSAKA  
Japanese tennis star

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

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

**Nadal 'not sure'**

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

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

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

— AFP

## TORCH RELAY PULLED OFF STREETS IN JAPAN

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

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

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

— AP



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

— Twitter

## Indian shooters leave for Croatia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI