

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | FRIDAY 7 | MAY 2021

WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: 6%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 24
Tithi: Ekadhasi
Star: Poorattathy
Rahukalam: 10.30 am to 12 am
Yamagandam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.31 am
Luhar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.19 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 7.40 pm

MNM top leader quits, cites lack of democracy

Chennai: Makal Needhi Maiaim Vice President R Mahendran on Thursday resigned from the party, saying 'there seemed to be no democracy' in the Kamal Haasan-led organisation. The decision of the party's number two ranked leader came on a day when MNM announced that seven other senior functionaries have also tendered their 'resignation'.

COUNTER POINT



The highest bidder will get the bed!

STATE | 3

Alagiri expected at brother's swearing-in



SpaceX successfully lands Starship rocket

WORLD | 5

SPORT | 8

Covid-infected Hussey, Balaji fly to Chennai



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HC asks Centre to ensure O2 supply to TN by today

Reserves will last only till Friday, HC told

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 6

The Madras high court on Thursday appealed to the Union government and the empowered committee to take steps by Friday to ensure adequate supply of oxygen to Tamil Nadu.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy made this appeal while passing an interim order on suo motu proceedings initiated by it pursuant to reports about shortage of oxygen and drug Remdesivir and a batch of public interest litigations.

The bench said the Centre had agreed at a high level meeting held on May 2 to ensure the supply of 475 MT of oxygen to Tamil Nadu on a daily basis but the state has received no allocation till date.

According to officials, Tamil Nadu had agreed to release 25 MT of oxygen to Andhra Pradesh/Telangana in lieu of the supply of 40 MT of oxygen from Palakkad in Kerala per day. However, the empowered committee of the Central government issued an allocation order

LOCKDOWN IN KERALA FROM TOMORROW

Thiruvananthapuram, May 6: The Kerala government on Thursday decided to enforce total lockdown in the state from May 8 to 16 in view of the huge spike in Covid 19 cases.

Offices of Central and state governments and public corporations shall remain closed. Defence, Central Armed Police Forces, treasury, public utilities, disaster management, power, airport, railways, health, police, excise and forest are exempted. **(Bureau)**

noting the supply to Andhra Pradesh/Telangana but had no reference to the supply it was to receive from Kerala. The officials had said the state had reserves for only one day, the bench added.

"In the present state, no directions may be issued, but only an appeal may be made so that there is a broadly equitable distribution of the available resources. **■ P3**

Rly cancels Rajdhani, Shatabdi Exp trains

New Delhi, May 6: The Northern Railways on Thursday cancelled a slew of Rajdhani, Shatabdi and Durgam Express trains, stating low patronisation and rising coronavirus cases as the reason behind the decision.

The to-and-fro services of eight Shatabdi Express,

two Rajdhani Express, two Durgam Express and one Vande Bharat Express are among around 28 trains that have been cancelled 'till further advice'.

Rajdhani trains from Delhi to Chennai, Bilaspur, Durgam trains to Jammu Tawi and Pune also stand cancelled. —PTI

US to back waiver of vaccine patent

Washington, May 6: The Biden administration has announced to support India and South Africa's proposal before the World Trade Organisation to temporarily waive anti-Covid vaccine patents to boost its supply.

US trade representative Katherine Tai on Wednesday said this is a global health crisis and the extraordinary circumstances of the Covid-19

pandemic call for extraordinary measures.

"The (Biden) administration believes strongly in intellectual property protections, but in service of ending this pandemic, supports the waiver of those protections for Covid-19 vaccines," Ms Tai said.

The Biden administration's decision will make it easier for the WTO's General Council to approve the proposal. —PTI

Stalin keeps home, health goes to Ma Subramanian

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR,
D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 6

A 34-member cabinet that is set to be sworn in on Friday at the Raj Bhavan is a well balanced team comprising the party's long-time leaders and also newcomers, giving representation to women, Dalits and minorities.

While Chief Minister M.K. Stalin keeps home and general administration, some first time ministers have been handpicked based on their education and background.

Minister for Finance and human resources Palanivel Thiagarajan has a PhD from the State University and has worked as managing director of Standard Chartered Bank in Singapore. He has also worked for Lehman Brothers in the US.

Former mayor of Chennai Ma Subramanian has been given charge of health and family welfare, a ministry that is crucial at this time when the state is battling the second wave of Coronavirus. A health enthusiast himself, Subramanian proved his mettle as an administrator when he was mayor.

Similarly the party leadership has recognised the work of some functionaries, who did remarkably well in helping the party

TEAM STALIN

Stalin
Chief Minister Home, general administration



K.K.S.S.R. Ramchandran
Revenue



K.N. Nehru
Municipal administration



Thangam Thenarasu
Industries



Senthil Balaji
Electricity



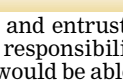
Geetha Jeevan
Social welfare and women empowerment



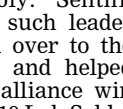
Palanivel Thiagarajan
Finance, HR



Ma Subramanian
Health



Durai murugan
Water resources



win elections, and entrusted them with responsibilities that they would be able to performably. Senthil Balaji is one such leader who switched over to the DMK in 2018 and helped the DMK-led alliance win seats in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and also the just concluded assembly polls. He has been made electricity minister also given the portfolios of prohibition and excise.

Another first time minister is S.S. Sivasankar, who hails from a traditional DMK family, and worked hard in Ariyalur district

during the 2019 and latest elections to ward off the influence of the PMK in the region. He gets backward classes welfare, which means he will be in charge of most backward classes welfare and denotified communities welfare too. S.M. Nasar, who defeated AIADMK minister K. Pandiarajan in Avadi, has been made the minister for milk and dairy development and K.S. Masthan the minister for minorities welfare and non-resident Tamils welfare. Both of them belong to the minority community. **■ P3**





தமிழ்நாடு அமைச்சரவை பதவியேற்பு விழா

நாள் : 7.5.2021 வெள்ளிக்கிழமை
நேரம் : காலை 9 மணி

இடம் : கிண்டி ஆளுநர் மாளிகை

மேதகு தமிழ்நாடு ஆளுநர்

திரு. **பன்வாரிலால் புரோகித்** அவர்கள்
முதலமைச்சர் மற்றும் அமைச்சர் பெருமக்களுக்கு
பதவிப் பிரமாணம் செய்து வைப்பார்கள்

திரு. **மு.க. ஸ்டாலின்** தலைமையிலான
அமைச்சரவை பதவியேற்பு விழா நடைபெறும்

முனைவர் ராஜீவ் ரஞ்சன் இ.ஆ.ப.,
தலைமைச் செயலாளர்
தமிழ்நாடு அரசு

வெளியீடு : செய்தி மக்கள் தொடர்புத் துறை



OTHER STORIES

Consignment of Covishield vaccine arrives in Chennai from Mumbai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 6

A consignment of Covishield vaccines arrived in Chennai from Mumbai on Thursday, as requested by the state government.

With shortage of Covid-19 vaccines in Tamil Nadu, The additional stock arrived here following a request by the state government to the Central government.

Sources at the airport said an Indigo airlines from Mumbai brought one lakh Covishield doses on Thursday evening. Sources said that the vaccines were taken to vaccine storage unit in D. M. S (Directorate of Medical and Rural health services in Teynampet.

Miscreants go on temple burglary spree

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 6

Burglars struck at three temples on East Coast Road in Chengalpatt district on Wednesday night.

In the first incident, burglars reportedly broke open the gate of Sri Ganapatheswarar temple in Mugaiyur along the ECR and looted gold ornaments and Rs 1.50 lakh from the temple hundi.

In the second incident, burglars gained entry into another temple of Pidari Vaanjamman temple and Periyandavar temple, located in the same village and made away with silver items worth at least Rs 3 lakhs and some cash.

Both the incidents came to light only when the priests and devotees turned up at the temple on Thursday morning. Police from Koovathur station visited the spot after temple priests lodged complaints. In all, valuables worth Rs 4.5 lakh were burgled from the temples.

These incidents have evoked concern among the locals. Residents allege the police should intensify patrol and arrest the miscreants immediately so that they can live peacefully.

Thief breaks into supermarket through roof

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 6

A burglar broke in, not through the door, but by cutting a hole through the roof of a supermarket in West Tambaram on the night intervening Wednesday and Thursday.

According to police, Tyagarajan of Virugambakkam has been running the store for the last four years in Krishna Nagar in West Tambaram.

On Wednesday night, he had locked Rs 2 lakh in a bureau inside the store before leaving home. On Thursday morning, when he had come to the store to collect the money, he found the store ransacked.

Immediately checking the surveillance video, Tyagarajan was able to see exactly what happened. The cameras captured ceiling tiles dropping to the floor. Moments later a masked burglar, using a rope, can be seen lowering himself between aisles. He then broke the bureau open and took the cash. The burglar had also made away with chocolates and nuts from the store.

Similarly, the burglar had broken into another textile shop in the area using the same technique. Around ₹2,500 and some clothes were stolen from the shop. Cases were registered by the Tambaram police.



A metropolitan bus running with 50 per cent passengers on Thursday.

— DC



Only frontline workers allowed to travel in Chennai suburban trains. A scene from Chromepet railway station. — DC

15 zonal enforcement teams launched by GCC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 6

With stricter restrictions in place to contain the second wave of Covid-19 in the city, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) on Thursday launched zonal enforcement teams (ZETs) across all 15 zones.

GCC commissioner G. Prakash said the teams were constituted for stricter enforcement of lockdown restrictions. "The joint team will have five members from GCC, police and tahsildars. They will patrol their zones to implement the restrictions. They will also check the commercial establishments and traders to ascertain whether they were following the new restrictions", said Prakash in a statement.

As per new restrictions, all offices including public and private sectors are allowed to function with 50 percent employees. Only 50 percent passengers will be allowed to travel in metro trains, suburban trains, private and MTC buses.

Vegetable and grocery shops will function till noon while big shopping complexes will be open from 6 am to 10 am and noon to 3 pm. The services of takeaway shops will be available from 6 am to 9 pm. Tea shops will function till noon. Weddings and funerals will be allowed with limited participants of 50 and 20. No services will be allowed from 10 pm to 4 am.

The new cases in Chennai continue to spike despite the stricter containment measures in

24,898 new Covid-19 cases, 195 deaths in TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 6

Tamil Nadu on Thursday reported 24,898 new Covid-19 cases and 195 deaths recording another day of spike. The figures on Wednesday were 23,310 new cases and 167 deaths. However, a total of 21,546 patients were discharged from hospitals after treatment across the state on Thursday, a rise from 20,062 on Wednesday.

According to the health department data, the total Covid-19 tally in the state has reached 12,97,500 and death toll is 14,974 including 5,021 in Chennai.

Chennai has registered another single day spike with 6,678, a surge from 6,291 on Wednesday. The district also reported 58 deaths. Total number of cases in the district touched 3,70,596.

Chengalpattu district recorded 2,039 cases. At least 16 people succumbed to Covid-19 in the district. Total cases in the district now stand at 90,264.

The number of daily cases in Coimbatore came down from 1,385 on Wednesday. Four deaths were reported in the district.

Thiruvallur district also reported 1,560 cases, an

place for the last one month. On Wednesday, the city reported 6,291 new cases and 58 deaths.

The GCC administration is also creating various forms of awareness cam-

Chennai has registered another single day spike with 6,678, a surge from 6,291 on Wednesday. The district also reported 58 deaths. Total number of cases in the district touched 3,70,596

increase from 1,152 on Wednesday. A total of 12 people lost their lives in the district on the same day.

Eight districts including Erode (590), Kancheepuram (836), Madurai (996), Selam (614), Thoothukudi (796), Tirunelveli (688), Trichy (746) and Vellore (614) crossed the 500 mark while Cuddalore (366), Kanyakumari (445), Krishnagiri (390), Nagapattinam (333), Namakkal (322), Theni (456), Thiruvannamalai (304), Tiruppur (443) and Villupuram (466) crossed the 300-mark. While six districts reported over 200 cases, 6 other districts recorded over 100 cases.

The contribution of Chennai and surrounding districts including Thiruvallur and Chengalpattu went up to 10,277 from 9,431 on Wednesday. Daily active cases have also gone up to 1,31,468 from 1,28,311 on

paings to break the chain. The administration also conducted an online Q and A programme with doctors the other day roping in celebrities. The officials asked the residents

to avoid crowds and closed spaces.

"Use double masking if you are sharing indoor spaces or happen to pass through a crowd," said a GCC official.

Public can't travel on suburban trains

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 6

In view of the new DMK government imposing fresh restrictions with effect from May 6 for 14 days to thwart the surge of Covid-19, the Southern Railway stopped the general public from travelling in the suburban trains from Thursday. However, frontline workers can travel with a seating capacity of 50 percent in the coaches.

The government allowed public transport including railways, metro, buses to operate at a maximum of 50 percent of the seating capacity from Thursday. The general public, including students and staff of educational institutions, will not be permitted to travel during

the period. The permission given for women passengers to travel throughout the day also stands cancelled except for those in select categories.

A Southern Railway release said that travel will be permitted only to railway staff, essential services staff authorised by the state government such as health, law and order, sanitation workers, municipal corporation workers, etc, staff of all central and state government departments and PSUs, staff of Madras high court, judicial bodies and quasi-judicial bodies including lawyers, travel and logistics organisation staff including Chennai Port Trust, Kamarajar Port Trust, staff of e-commerce companies on duty, staff of print and elec-

tronic media, staff of nationalised, private and co-operative banks, and staff of private security agencies.

The passengers coming under the abovesaid categories are requested to carry the photo identity card issued by their organisation. The railway reserved and unreserved counters will continue to function with 50 percent staff. However, general public are requested and encouraged to go for online booking of both reserved and unreserved tickets.

The railway administration will deploy appropriate restrictions at stations, counters and on trains to enforce the above guidelines and to prevent overcrowding of passengers.

Consider virtual mode to deal cases: HC to SIC, CIC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 6

The Madras high court has said it may do well for the State and the Centre to consider whether, particularly during the present Covid crisis, benches of the State Information Commission and the Chief Information Commission can take up matters on the virtual mode upon indicating an e-filing system to deal with Covid-related matters at least for three or four hours a day.

The bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy was disposing of the petitions filed by Saurav Das, which sought a direction to the authorities to issue guidelines and prescribe/fix a time limit to decide first and second



appeals and complaints under Section 19 (1) and 19 (30) and 18 of the Right to Information Act, 2005, with respect to applications seeking information pertaining to life and liberty.

The bench said though the petitions were filed complaining of the lack of appropriate provisions in the Right to Information Act, pertaining to appeals arising out of matters covered by the proviso to Section 7 (1) of the Act, the immediate prayer was for the constitution of

additional benches at the State level and the Central level Information Commissions to respond to Covid-related issues.

The bench said it was submitted on behalf of the State Information Commission that for nearly a year, a special sitting has been organised every Tuesday to deal exclusively with urgent matters and those covered by the proviso to Section 7 (1) of the Act. It may do well for the State and the Centre to consider whether, particularly during the present Covid crisis, benches of the State Information Commission and the Chief Information Commission can take up matters on the virtual mode upon indicating an e-filing system to deal with Covid related matters at least for three or four hours a day.

Isro supplies oxygen to Nellai GH

ARULOLI M | DC
TIRUNELVELI, MAY 6

The government medical college hospital here received oxygen supply from the Isro propulsion complex (IPRC) to manage its medical grade oxygen requirement for Covid-19 treatment.

Tirunelveli medical college hospital, crowded with Covid-19 patients, faced an oxygen shortage situation for the past two days. Despite the hospital having two oxygen storage tanks with a combined storage capacity of 32 KLD, authorities had to

As of now, the hospital has 600 oxygen beds with 100 percent occupancy rate. To provide oxygen to an additional number of beds, the hospital was in dire need of additional supplies

get oxygen from a private oxygen unit from a far off place, in Tiruchy.

As of now, the hospital has 600 oxygen beds with 100 percent occupancy rate. To provide oxygen to an additional number of beds, the hospital was in dire need of additional

supplies. Hence, the authorities is said to have requested the Isro administration to supply liquid oxygen from its oxygen production facility at its IPRC complex in Mahendragiri bordering Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts, following which they supplied 8,000 kilolitres of oxygen to the government hospital, on Thursday.

The oxygen supply was made in two cryogenic tanks of capacity 5,000 kilolitres and 3,000 kilolitres, said IPRC sources at Mahendragiri. Isro is also said to supply another

6,000 kilolitres from its IPRC complex at Mahendragiri to the Asaripallam government medical college hospital, Nagercoil, in Kanyakumari district.

It is to be noted that the Isro has also agreed to supply around 12 MT of oxygen to Kerala from its oxygen production units at Mahendragiri, on a weekly basis.

The IPRC complex of the Isro at Mahendragiri has facilities to manufacture 1.5MT per day and the oxygen produced at Mahendragiri is said to be 99 percent pure.

Break chain of infection

Lockdown may give TN govt breathing space



B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

The heavy rush on roads may have come down due to new enforcements in place, but oxygen shortage complaints are growing louder with daily Covid caseload touching

25,000 in the state. Thirteen patients died at Chengalpatt GH due to alleged disruption in oxygen supply and several people including doctors have been arrested for illegally selling

Remdesivir vials.

Meanwhile, Thoothukudi collector this week said Sterlite plant will produce oxygen within a week. The plant was inspected by the monitoring committee appointed by the Supreme Court. After a machinery and safety audit checks, the plant will begin oxygen production.

The health officials, while asserting that there is no oxygen shortage in government general hospitals, said private hospitals may face shortage. Private hospitals



People await their second vaccine shot in Vellore. — DC

are keeping tabs on oxygen supply and fear they may face shortage in two weeks if cases don't come down.

The Madras high court on Thursday appealed to the Centre and the empowered

committee to take steps to ensure adequate supply of oxygen to Tamil Nadu to meet its urgent demands. Kerala joined the list of states to enforce total lockdown from May 8 to 16 due to heavy spike in Covid-19 cases.

With Covid cases in Tamil Nadu galloping and the state facing shortage of medicines, oxygen and health infra, people have begun endorsing calls for total lockdown to break the chain of infection. Also, doctors and medical staff are hit by excessive workload and

stretched to a breaking point.

The government may be resisting the move for complete lockdown due to the economic impact. If planned properly to avoid misery to migrant workers and the poor, full lockdown will be helpful in containing the Covid cases spiralling out of control. It may give breathing time to our health staff and also hospitals to replenish oxygen, medicine and vaccination stocks while, hopefully, cases begin coming down.



Public waiting in front of KMC medical college to buy Remdesivir vials. — DC

SHORT TAKES

V.Gopal passes away

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, MAY 6

A man of letters, V. Gopalan (85), director of Bharathi Ilakkiya Payilagam of Thiruvaiyaru Bharathi Iyakkam, passed away here on Thursday.

Born in Thillaiyadi in Nagapattinam district in 1936, Gopalan lived at LIC Colony, Thanjavur, after his retirement from LIC.

An author of 15 books and a researcher on Bharathi's poems, Gopalan propagated Bharathi's poems and his life history through postal lessons on Bharathi, to the youth.

After his retirement, he spent his time writing books, conducting seminars on Bharathi and organising cultural events. His books include 'Thiruvaiyaru Varalaru', 'Marathiar Varalaru', 'Nayakkhar Varalaru', 'Thirukoilakalil Natyanjali' and 'Vedaranyam Uppu Satyagraham'. He was the brain behind Thiruvaiyaru Natyanjali.

As president of Thiruvaiyaru Natyanjali Trust, he conducted the festival every year during Mahasivarathiri at the temple. He was vice-president of Thanjavur Thyagabrahma sabha, trustee of Thanjavur Gandhi Iyakkam and Thiruvaiyaru Sai Trust. He leaves behind two sons, Sridhar and Suresh, and daughter Shanthi. His body was cremated in Thanjavur, on Thursday evening.

● An author of 15 books and a researcher on Bharathi's poems, Gopalan propagated Bharathi's poems and his life history through postal lessons on Bharathi, to the youth. He leaves behind two sons, Sridhar and Suresh, and daughter Shanthi.

Dad gets noose for raping daughter, killing wife

DC CORRESPONDENT
PUDUKOTTAI, MAY 6

The district fast track Mahila court on Thursday awarded death sentence to a man for raping his daughter and murdering the victim's mother, and also murdering his second wife.

According to the prosecution, the accused A. Murugesan, has three wives and 11 children. The accused had been sexually assaulting his teenage daughter from the year 2017, and subsequently murdered the victim's mother Banu alias Banumathi on December 1, 2019.

Judge Dr. Sathya awarded the death sentence to the accused and also slapped a fine of ₹1 lakh. The accused should undergo three more months of imprisonment if he failed to remit the fine, added the judge.

The judge also directed the government to pay ₹5 lakh to the rape victim, and also sanction a suitable compensation to Sellamuthu, brother of the victim.

Alagiri expected at brother's swearing-in

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 6:

In the select list of invitees for the swearing in of M. K. Stalin as Chief Minister is his Madurai-based elder brother M K Alagiri, who expected to attend the simple event at Raj Bhavan on Friday.

Alagiri, who was hitherto at loggerheads with his younger brother, surprised everyone by openly expressing happiness over Stalin becoming

the Chief Minister.

He told a news channel that he hoped that his younger brother would do good to the State as Chief Minister and congratulated him on his election.

A former Union minister, Alagiri had at one point, long ago, said that he would not accept the leadership of anybody else other than their father M Karunanidhi. Subsequently, he was removed from the party during the tenure of Karunanidhi as president.

Though he would occasionally make a noise against the DMK and Stalin, he remained quiet in Madurai when this electoral process unfolded before him, remaining without working against the party. Now he has supported his brother's elevation.

Meanwhile Stalin, in a statement, expressed regret over the inability to have his swearing in at a public place by inviting the party cadre from all over the state. He said the health and safe-

ty of party workers was more important and hence the event had been made a simple one in view of the second wave of Coronavirus.

Also Stalin called on three nonagenarian political leaders of the state at their homes and honoured them on the eve of his assuming office as Chief Minister. The leaders were veteran Communist stalwarts R. Nallakannu and Sankariah and Dravidian leader R M Veerappan.



SUMMER SPECIAL

Earthen pots in various sizes kept for sale to beat the summer heat at Kavundampalayam in Coimbatore.

—DC

Will back new CM for state's welfare: CII

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, MAY 6

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) congratulated the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) for the landmark victory in the Assembly elections.

C.K. Ranganathan, chairman, CII, southern region, in a statement on Thursday said that under the dynamic leadership of the new Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, Tamil Nadu would make rapid strides on socio-economic development, with focus on inclusive growth.

He further said that one of the key priorities of the new government should be to lay special focus on public health infrastructure, as we need to protect people from the pandemic. CII recommends the new government to adopt an economic agenda which would drive investment and create employment opportunities for the people.

Some of the priority sectors include agriculture, food processing, defence & aerospace infrastructure, MSMEs, ICT, automobile & auto components, leather, textiles, light engineering and financial services among others, he added.

Dr. S. Chandrakumar, chairman, CII, Tamil Nadu, mentioned that in the present scenario, the pandemic has hugely impacted the lives and livelihood of the people, and hence, the next focus should be on building large manufacturing hubs which would generate employment and also bring investment into the state. Tamil Nadu is already the leader in automobile industry and it's high time to start medical device and pharma manufacturing units.

The defence industrial corridor would also attract more investment in defence manufacturing, for which the CII is currently working

on coming out with a feasibility report on the opportunities available for defence industries including MSMEs.

Ease of doing business (EoDB) is another important area where the CII would be working closely with the new government. The CII would push for an investor-friendly policy regime to attract global players to start business in the state, he added.

Satyakam Arya, vice-chairman, CII, Tamil Nadu, said that CII would work with the new government to promote the southern districts towards ensuring balanced regional development. Further, CII urged the new government to focus on skill development to prepare the younger generation for the new age employment, imparting new and emerging technologies for various industry sectors.

Illegal resorts: Activist issues another notice to Collector

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, MAY 6

Chennai-based environmentalist 'Elephant G. Rajendran', has now sent a legal notice to the Nilgiris Collector seeking action on the alleged running of a private bar on a government land in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) buffer zone, and continuation of unauthorised resorts in the Nilgiris.

In his notice, Rajendran stated that a private bar in a private lodge is alleged to be functioning along the Ooty road in Masinagudi village in

MTR buffer zone. It is alleged to be located in government poramboke land and constructed without any proper permission.

It is also learnt that due to the influence that it's owners have with higher officials, they have prevented Tasmac outlets coming up in Masinagudi village, though the village had two Tasmac outlets till the recent past. Due to this, the poor villagers are forced to buy liquor at a higher price in this bar.

Even for allocation of bars in the lodge, the prescribed norms were not

followed by the concerned officials. This scam is only to help the owners of the private bar and prevent revenue flow to the government exchequer. Hence, action must be taken to set right the issue, demolish the private lodge and bar, and bring Tasmac outlets in Masinagudi as in the past, demanded Rajendran.

Three other big time unauthorised tourist resorts are said to be functioning on the Kalhatti road, Pororaihaty in Ketti town panchayat, and Burliar panchayat. These resorts or homestay facili-

ties were constructed in violation of hill area building rules.

"In the Maradu Apartment case in Cochin in Kerala, the Supreme Court has not only directed to demolish the buildings, but also directed to file criminal cases against the officials for not taking timely action against illegal constructions," he noted, and warned that if proper action was not taken on these issues in two weeks' time, he would be forced to move the court seeking action against the errant officials.

The state and the Union should facilitate setting up of oxygen production units

From P1

No court of a state or no state can demand all the facilities for itself to the exclusion of others; but there has to be an equitable distribution, reckoning the production capacity in a particular state and the position should not be altered to the detriment of a state, particularly, since Tamil Nadu has a production capacity of about 400 MT per day, which with some additional supply may suffice for its needs. The Union and the empowered committee should take immediate steps in such regard to ensure adequate supply of oxygen to the state of Tamil Nadu to meet the needs. This must be ensured by tomorrow, so that the emergency of the officials speak of of the reserve supply running out by Saturday does not happen. It is critical and it requires the attention of the highest offices so that lives are not lost for want of oxygen. The Sterlite unit at Thoothukudi is unlikely to produce oxygen till next week."

The bench said in addition, it has been noticed that the Defence Research and Development Organisation has installed oxygen generating machines in some hospitals else-

where at extremely short notice at affordable costs. The state and the Union should facilitate the setting up of such units, if feasible, in the state, particularly in the larger cities, including Chennai, Coimbatore and Madurai, the bench added.

The bench said the state was allocated 1.35 lakh units of the drug Remdesivir since April against an order of 2.5 lakh units. The officials say that about 24,000 units have been distributed from the Kilpauk centre upon appropriate documents being produced. Measures were being taken to set up centres in other major cities, including Madurai and Coimbatore for release of Remdesivir directly to private hospitals or patients.

The bench said in respect of vaccination, the state's allocation at present was 10.3 lakh units, out of which 7.65 lakh was to be supplied by one of the vendors and 2.65 lakh units by the other. The Centre and the vendors were requested to ensure prompt supply so that preventive measures may be taken at the earliest to stop the proliferation of cases and the possible third wave that was being talked of, the bench added.

Actor Pandu dies of Covid

Chennai, May 6: Tamil comedian Pandu, noted for his unique facial expressions and body language, died here on Thursday due to Covid-19, his family said.

"He tested positive for coronavirus and was admitted to hospital yesterday and his pulse dropped suddenly and he passed away early this morning," Pandu's son Pintu told P T I. Pandu is survived by his wife, who is also being treated for COVID-19 in a hospital and three sons.

In his career spanning about four decades, Pandu has performed comedy roles in 500-plus movies, mainly in Tamil and his late 1980s television serial in Doordarshan *Panju, Pattu, Peethambaram* was hugely popular. His debut movie was *'Karai Ellam Shenbagapoo'* in the early 1980s. The DMK and AIADMK condoled his death. DMK chief M. K. Stalin said



Pandu, besides being an excellent comedian, was also an artist who held a doctorate in the subject and he had developed a unique style of comedy. Pandu's death was a huge loss to the film industry and to the world of drawings, paintings, Stalin said in a statement.

AIADMK top leaders O. Panneerselvam and K. Palaniswami hailed Pandu for his acting skills and said he was well known to party founder and late Chief Minister M G Ramachandran. Expressing grief, they prayed for the comedian's soul to rest in peace. —PTI

Two women find place in TN cabinet

From P1

Two women find a place in the ministry. Geetha Jeevan is the minister for social welfare and women empowerment and N. Kayalvizhi Selvaraj, who defeated BJP state president L. Murugan in the election, is the minister for Adi Dravidar welfare.

Apart from Kayalvizhi

Selvaraj, two others Dalits in the ministry are C.V. Ganesan, entrusted with labour welfare, and M. Mathiven- than with tourism development. Other young leaders in the ministry are Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi, who has been given school education, and M.P. Saminathan holding the information and publicity portfolio.

Saminathan was the secretary of the DMK's youth wing after Stalin gave up the post to take bigger responsibilities in the party in 2017.

A key portfolio in the modern times, information technology, has also been given to a first time minister; Mano Thangaraj, who was elected from Padmanabhapuram in Kanyakumari district.

Otherwise, most of the senior leaders of the party find a place in the Cabinet. They are Duraimurugan (water resources), K.N. Nehru (municipal administration), I. Periyasamy (cooperation), K. Ponmudi (higher education), E.V. Velu, (public works) and M.R.K. Panneerselvam (agriculture and farmers welfare).

The other senior ministers are K.K.S.S.R. Ramchandran (revenue and disaster management), Thangam Thamarasu (industries), L. Raghupathy (law), S. Muthusamy (housing and urban development), K.R. Periyakaruppan (rural development) and T.R. Anbarasan.

The other ministers are Anitha R. Radhakrishnan

(fisheries), S.R. Rajakannappan (transport), K. Ramachandran (forests), R. Sakkarapani (food and civil supplies), R. Gandhi (handlooms and textiles), P. Moorthy (commercial taxes), P.K. Sekarbabu (Hindu religious and charitable endowments) and Siva V. Meyyanathan (environment, youth welfare and sports development).

PSPCL Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001 Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact 9846118773)	Punjab State Power Corporation Limited Tender Enquiry No.: Q-3998/20-21/PO-TCE-MM Chief Purchase Officer/MM, Central Purchase Organization, PSPCL, 2 nd Floor, Multi Storey Building, The Mall, PSPCL invites E-tender of 80 Nos. EEL-3 (Re-designated as EEL-2) ISI Marked Three Phase, 315 KVA, oil immersed, CRGO/Amorphous core, Aluminium wound, distribution transformers complete with fittings as per PSPCL specifications & conforming to IS 1180 Part-1 (2014) & IS 2026 (with latest amendments). For detailed NIT & tender specifications, please refer to https://leproc.punjab.gov.in from 07.05.2021 onwards. NOTE: Corrigendum and addendum, if any will be published online at https://leproc.punjab.gov.in C-172/21
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SHORT TAKES



FORMER IAF VICE-CHIEF RAMACHANDRAN NO MORE

Chennai, May 6: Former Vice-Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal P.M. Ramachandran passed away at his home in Chennai after a brief illness. He will be cremated with full military honours on Friday. He is survived by his son, daughter-in-law and two grandsons.

Air Marshal Ramachandran was commissioned as a fighter pilot into IAF in 1955. He participated in the liberation of Goa in 1961 where he destroyed the Portuguese patrol boat N.R.P. Vega and was awarded a gallantry award, Shaurya Chakra.

Air Marshal Ramachandran qualified as an experimental test pilot at the Empire Test Pilots' School in the UK, where he was awarded the Edward's Award for best all-around progress. He then did extensive test flying at various IAF and HAL establishments, including on the Jaguar, MiG-21, MiG-23 and MiG-25 aircraft. He was the first pilot from outside the Soviet Bloc to be permitted to fly the MiG-25 Foxbat in 1979.

As Vice-Chief, he was responsible for the operational deployment of India's short range ballistic missile, Prithvi. He was a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College and National Defence College, a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society and a Member of the Aeronautical Society of India. Air Marshal Ramachandran was awarded the PVSM, AVSM, SC and VM in his career with the Indian Air Force that lasted almost four decades.

BJP TAKES DOWN VIDEO CLAIMING DEATH OF 'JOURNO'

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

A video released by the BJP on its social media platform of its members who were "victims of the post-poll violence" in West Bengal had to be pulled back as photograph of one of the victims — Manik Moitra from Sitalkuchi — turned out to be that of a journalist.

The BJP had earlier shared the names of nine victims of post-poll violence in West Bengal including Monik Moitra. The party had to pull back the video after the journalist tweeted that he was "living and hale and hearty and around 1,300 km away from Sitalkuchi." "The image of Abhro Banerjee was erroneously included in the video while using an article by him as a source for the content."

WRESTLER'S DEATH: POLICE LOOK FOR SUSHIL KUMAR

New Delhi, May 6: The Delhi Police on Thursday said it is conducting raids in search of two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar and others in connection with a brawl that led to the death of a wrestler inside the Chhatrasal Stadium complex in north Delhi.

A senior police officer said Kumar, the only Indian to win two individual Olympic medals, is yet to join the investigation.

Teams have been formed and raids are being conducted in Delhi and the neighbouring states, the police said.

A 23-year-old wrestler died and two of his friends got injured after they were allegedly brutally assaulted by other wrestlers inside the Chhatrasal Stadium.

The incident occurred in the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday over a dispute related to a property located in the Model Town area.

Prince Dalal (24), a resident of Haryana's Jhajjar, has been apprehended in connection with the case and a double-barrel gun has been seized from his possession.

The police said they have seized two double-barrel guns, seven live cartridges, two wooden sticks and five cars in connection with the case.

BJP VETERAN LEADER TATHAGATA SUMMONED BY 'TOP LEADERSHIP'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC
KOLKATA, MAY 6

The BJP's top leadership has summoned outspoken party veteran from West Bengal Tathagata Roy to appear before them in New Delhi after he tore into a "foursome" of state and national leaders Thursday morning — this time over random ticket distribution to TMC turncoats, most of whom had lost in the Assembly elections.

Lashing out at national general secretary Kailash Vijayvargiya, state BJP chief Dilip Ghosh, national joint secretary (organisation) Shiv Prakash and national secretary Arvind Menon — who supervised the BJP's poll preparations in the state — the former Tripura and Meghalaya governor mocked their educational and professional qualifications upto Call 8 and carpenter level respectively in the social media.

In a wild attack on the quartet, Roy alleged on Facebook: "Kailash-Dilip-Shiv-Arvind (KDSA) foursome have dragged the names of our respected Prime Minister and home minister through mud and have sullied the name of the biggest political party in the world. Sitting atop Agarwal Bhavan of Hastings (West Bengal BJP's election headquarters) and 7-star hotels they have distributed tickets to incoming garbage from Trinamul. Now faced with abuse from party workers, they're staying put there, hoping the storm will blow over. These people have heaped the worst possible insults on ideologically driven BJP workers and devout swayamsevakas who had been relentlessly working for the party since 1980s. Now those very people are suffering the worst persecution from Trinamulis."

DELHI RECEIVES 700MT OF OXYGEN; KEJRIWAL THANKS PM

DC CORRESPONDENT
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

Nearly three weeks since Covid-19 patients started dying in Delhi hospitals due to shortage of oxygen, the national capital could finally begin to breathe easy as the Centre gave the city its full requirement on the orders of the

Supreme Court.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal thanked the Prime Minister saying Wednesday was the first time since the second wave of pandemic began that the city got its required supplies and asserted that no one will die due to lack of oxygen if the Centre maintains the same level of supply.

"Delhi requires 700 metric tonnes of oxygen every day. We have been requesting the Central government to help arrange the same. For the first time yesterday, Delhi received 730 MT of oxygen. On behalf of the people of Delhi, I thank you. I request you to see that Delhi gets this amount of oxygen on a daily basis and that there is no

cut," Kejriwal said in a letter to the Prime Minister.

Addressing an online media briefing on Thursday, the Chief Minister urged the city's hospitals to increase the number of Covid beds that they had to scale down due to shortage of oxygen. This way, 1,000-2,000 more beds will be added, he said.

Central team lands in West Bengal to probe poll violence

Nadda condemns attack on Muraleedharan's car

New Delhi, May 6: BJP president J.P. Nadda on Thursday condemned the attack on Union minister V. Muraleedharan's convoy in West Bengal and claimed that "TMC-sponsored" violence was in full swing in state after the assembly poll results were declared.

Union minister of state for external affairs V.

Post-poll clash: WB announces ₹2L compensation to kin of victims

Kolkata, May 6: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday said 16 people have lost their lives in post-poll violence in the state, and announced a compensation of ₹2 lakh

violence in the state.

The BJP has alleged that TMC-backed goons have killed a number of its workers, attacked women members, vandalised houses and looted shops.

Rejecting the charges, Ms Banerjee had Wednesday said violence and clashes were taking

Muraleedharan's car was vandalised at Panchkuri village in West Midnapore district on Thursday while he was visiting the area following alleged post-poll violence on saffron party workers.

Muraleedharan alleged in a tweet that "TMC goons" were behind the attack on his convoy.

Condemning the attack,

each for their families.

Banerjee, during a press meet here, also said that her government will provide jobs of home guard to one family member each of all five persons killed in CAPF firing in Cooch

place in those areas where BJP candidates emerged victorious in the assembly polls.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress MLA Firhad Hakim hit out at the Centre for sending teams instead of Covid-19 vaccines.

"They should send vaccines first, that's the

Nadda alleged that law and order has completely collapsed in West Bengal. "If an Union minister can be attacked then what would be the condition of common man?" he posed.

"TMC-sponsored violence is in full swing in West Bengal after assembly elections in the state," the BJP president alleged.

— PTI

Behar's Sitalkuchi area last month. She further said that a CID team has initiated a probe into the incident of firing in Cooch Behar that took place when the voting exercise was underway.

responsibility of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. We are grieved that some people have died, and action will be taken against the culprits.

"But, what will happen to the inoculation process which is stalled because of the vaccine crisis?" Mr Hakim said.

FALSE BELIEVES In Ganeshpur village, people take out torch rally to 'drive out' Coronavirus from their village

MP villages fight virus with superstitious practices, quacks

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPAL, MAY 6

A few remote pockets in rural Madhya Pradesh are currently battling the Coronavirus pandemic with superstitious practices and quacks, due to lack of access to medical facilities.

In the village of Johri under Bomari block in Guna district, people have started thronging the nearby river of Barni to fetch 'miracle water' to

cure Covid-19, official reports reaching here on Thursday said.

According to the reports, a rumour that a small patch of the dried up river bed has begun yielding water made rounds, the area immediately witnessed mad rush by locals who wanted to fetch a bottle of the 'miracle' liquid to treat people infected by Coronavirus.

The block administration has rushed the local 'patuvari' or revenue inspector to probe the inci-

dent and dissuade the villagers not to believe in such superstitions.

"Patuvari Mahendra Singh Dhakad visited the spot on Wednesday. He asked people gathered on the riverbed to disperse. He was, however, chased away by the mob", a senior district officer said unwilling to be quoted.

In another village of Umariya under Aron police station in the district, police last week arrested three healers who were taking gullible villagers

for a ride by promising them to ward off 'corona ghost' to make them immune to Covid-19.

The three accused, Kalyan Singh Ahirwar, Ram Singh Ahirwar and Maheswar Ahirwar, were arrested under section 269 (negligently spreading infection), 270 (willingly spreading infection) and 188 (disobedience to order promulgated by public servant) and Section 4 of the Epidemic Act, 1897, police said.

In the village of

Ganeshpur in Agar Malwa district, people took out a torch rally last fortnight to 'drive out' corona from their village.

The local youths ran around the village holding torches and chanting 'bhago corona bhago' (go corona go) slogans on the night of April 22 believing that the pandemic would be driven out by resorting to such superstitious practices.

Quacks in the villages were seen making hay out of the pandemic due to

lack of access to medical facilities by the people in remote villages as well as fear of visiting hospitals by the locals.

A quack was found running an 'open ground hospital' to treat suspected Covid-19 patients in his orange orchard on the outskirts of the village of Dhaniyakhedi in the district when a team of local block officers visited the spot following a tip off.

The team found people lying on the floor were being administered IV flu-

ids hanging from trees.

According to Agar Malwa district chief medical health officer Samandar Singh Malviya, the orange farm owner was allegedly running the 'open ground' hospital.

"Four cases have been registered in connection with the incident against the 'unlicensed practitioners' for duping people", he said.

Madhya Pradesh on Thursday reported 12,319 fresh cases taking the tally to 6,24,98.



Ajit Singh

RLD LEADER AJIT SINGH DIES OF COVID-19

New Delhi, May 6: Former Union minister and Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) leader Ajit Singh passed away at a Gurgaon hospital on Thursday morning battling Covid-19, his family said. He was 82.

Singh, the son of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, was diagnosed positive for Covid-19 on April 20, the family said in a statement.

"Chaudhary Ajit Singh ji was diagnosed as Covid+ on the 20th April. He battled his condition till the very end and breathed his last today morning, the 6th of May, 2021," his son Jayant Chowdhury tweeted.

"Throughout his life journey, Chaudhary Sahib was loved and respected by many. He, in turn cherished this bond with all of you and gave his best consideration and efforts for your welfare," he said.

"As our Nation confronts the horrific pandemic, it is our humble request to all those who wish to pay their respects, to please stay at home as far as possible. We must observe all safety protocols to keep ourselves and everyone around us healthy and safe. This would be the best way to honour Chaudhary Sahib as well as all those Covid warriors who are working night and day to protect us," he said. — PTI

Delhi, Maha see a fall in new cases; under testing suspected

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

Delhi and Maharashtra are finally witnessing some respite with fresh Covid-19 cases showing decline but it may be too early to rejoice as there are also complaints of under testing. In Delhi, the positivity rate is below 25 per cent and on Thursday it recorded about 1,900 cases less than Wednesday. India on Thursday had over 4 lakh fresh cases and close to 4,000 deaths in the last 24 hours, the highest so far ever since the pandemic began last year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reviewed the Covid-19 situation in the country during which the need to ensure quick and holistic containment measures were discussed.

"Prime Minister noted that an advisory was sent to the states to identify districts of concern where case positivity is 10 per cent or more and bed occupancy is more than 60 per cent on either oxygen supported or ICU beds," a statement from PMO said. Modi also spoke with the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand and Telangana about the Covid-19 situa-

● **PRIME MINISTER** reviews the availability of medicines and was briefed about the rapid augmenting of production of medicines, including Remdesivir.

tion in their respective states, as well as with lieutenant governors of Jammu & Kashmir and Puducherry, sources said. Several oxygen plants and machines donated by different countries have been made functional even though the Central government is yet to give a complete list of their deployment locations.

The Prime Minister also reviewed the availability of medicines and was briefed about the rapid augmenting of production of medicines, including Remdesivir, officials said. There was also a discussion on vaccination which is in short supply.

In Delhi, people complained of not finding any slots to get vaccinated, and in Mumbai people complained that they were turned away from vaccination centres despite having taken prior online appointments.

Meanwhile, the Union government on Thursday approached the Supreme Court against a Karnataka high court

SHORT TAKES

INDONESIAN
LANDSLIDE DEATH
TOLL RISES TO 10

Medan, Indonesia: The death toll from a landslide at a hydroelectric dam project on Indonesia's Sumatra island has risen to 10, an official said on Thursday, as authorities called off a week-long search for victims.

A landslide triggered by heavy rains struck the Chinese-backed Batang Toru hydropower plant on Thursday last week, burying an estimated 13 people.

Employees were checking on the area over concerns that heavy rains could trigger landslides when the disaster struck. At least two children are among the victims. The body of a Chinese employee of the plant was identified on Wednesday.

Another Chinese employee narrowly escaped as he fled the scene.

ISRAELI AIR
STRIKES HIT
SOUTHERN SYRIA

Damascus: Israel carried out air strikes overnight in the southern Syrian province of Quneitra, Syrian state media and a war monitor said on Thursday, though there were no reports of casualties.

The strikes came a day after one civilian was killed and six others injured in similar attacks in the northwestern region of Latakia, a bastion of President Bashar al-Assad's Alawite minority.

Official news agency SANA said there had been "an Israeli attack led by a helicopter in one of Quneitra's zones" not far from the border with Israel. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also reported there had been "Israeli strikes".

The Britain-based war monitor, which relies on an extensive network of sources on the ground, said the strikes targeted the Syrian Army's 90th Brigade and regime military positions in north Quneitra, near the Israel-occupied Golan Heights.

UN: 155 MILLION
FACED SEVERE
HUNGER IN 2020

United Nations: At least 155 million people faced acute hunger in 2020, including 133,000 who needed urgent food to prevent widespread death from starvation — and the outlook for 2021 is equally grim or worse, a report by 16 organisations said on Wednesday.

The report, which focuses on 55 countries that account for 97% of humanitarian assistance, said the magnitude and severity of food crises last year worsened as a result of protracted conflicts, the economic fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic, and weather extremes that exacerbated "pre-existing fragilities."

The 155 million people faced "crisis," "emergency" or "catastrophe/famine" levels of food needs, an increase of around 20 million people from 2019, it said.

According to the report, two-thirds of the people in those crisis levels were in 10 countries — Congo, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Sudan, northern Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Zimbabwe and Haiti.

GUNMEN KILL
FORMER TV
PRESENTER, FLEE

Kabul: Gunmen killed a former Afghan TV presenter on Thursday as he was travelling in the southern city of Kandahar, a provincial official said, adding to fears for press freedom in the war-wrecked country.

Nimat Rawan was shot at noon, provincial spokesman Baheer Ahmadi said, by two assailants who were able to escape with his mobile phone. Security officials have told several other journalists in the area that extremists are targeting them as well, he added.

The killing heightens worries over the fate of Afghan journalists as US troops pull out. Many fear violence will spike and reprisals will be taken out against those who worked with foreign forces. Rawan was a former presenter for the well-known local channel *Toloneus*.

He had been working in the Finance Ministry's media office, media watchdog Nia said in a statement. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but it comes a day after the Taliban issued a threat to Afghan journalists it considered too close to US-backed security agencies.

EU ready to discuss Covid-19
vaccine patent scheme today

Move comes after US backs patent waivers for Covid-19 vaccines

Brussels, May 6: European Union leaders said on Thursday that in the wake of the US backing patent waivers for Covid-19 vaccine technology, the 27-nation bloc immediately will start discussing whether they should join such a move.

The leaders' first opportunity to moulder a common view will come as soon as a two-day summit in Porto, Portugal, that starts Friday. While many insist that waiving patents would only go part way toward making vaccines available and likely in the midterm only, French President Emmanuel Macron said he "completely" supports opening up intellectual property protections for Covid-19 vaccines as "a global public good".

At the same time, Macron insisted that the immediate priority for wealthier countries should be first donating more vaccine doses to poorer countries.

EU nations have long insisted they were in the vanguard of helping the rest of the world obtain vaccines, and have looked with a weary eye at how the United States effectively banned such exports itself.

The move to support waiving intellectual property protections on vaccines under World Trade Organisation rules marked a dramatic shift for the United States, which had previously lined up with many other developed nations opposed to the idea floated by India and South Africa. While the EU did not echo the US position, it generally welcomed President Joe Biden's move.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that "we are ready to discuss how the US proposal for waiver on intellectual property protection for Covid vaccines could help" end the crisis. Von der Leyen said in a video address Thursday, though, that other issues should take center stage. "In the short run...we call upon all vaccine-producing countries to allow exports and to avoid measures that disrupt supply chains," she said. —PTI



Patients arrive to receive a dose of a Covid-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre in a shopping mall of Belgrade on Thursday. Serbia's president said that his country would pay each citizen who gets a Covid jab before the end of May, in what could be the world's first cash-for-jabs scheme. — AFP

Oz's Victoria state to send
\$41 million help to India

Melbourne, May 6: The Australian state of Victoria on Thursday announced 41 million dollar worth of aid and medical equipment, including 1,000 ventilators, for India to assist it to curb the devastating second wave of Covid-19.

The donation will be made to the Commonwealth medical stockpile. "We are working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to deliver this support to India as the country works to manage the second wave of coronavirus and treat those infected," according to an official statement.

"The 1,000 ICU Ventilators are currently owned by the Department of Health and will be donated to India for humanitarian purposes and the state was also preparing to send a range

of supporting equipment like connectors and humidifiers, with the total package valued at over 41 million Australian dollars. Announcing the support package, the state's acting Premier James Merlino said: "The situation in India right now is devastating and shows that the fight against this pandemic is not over — we have a responsibility to help where we can and that's exactly what we're doing." Minister for Multicultural Affairs Ros Spence said: "Our thoughts are with everyone impacted by this unfolding tragedy and we hope this package will go some way to addressing the challenges India is facing right now."

New Coronavirus cases and deaths in India hit a record daily high with 4,12,262 new infections and 3,980 fatalities being

reported, taking the total tally of Covid-19 cases to 2,10,77,410 and the death toll to 2,30,168, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

Expressing solidarity with India and the people, Kaushaliya Vaghela, the first Indian born MP elected to the Victorian Parliament, said "at this painful and difficult time, all Victorians stand side by side with our Indian community, both here and abroad." She said she had also expressed her concerns about India and requested the state government to support India and Australians in India during this crisis. "I stood up in Victorian Parliament to urge the federal government to explore all options possible to safely bring back Australians currently in India," she added. —AP

SRI LANKA BANS
TRAVELLERS
FROM INDIA

Colombo, May 6: Sri Lanka on Thursday announced that all arrivals from India will be banned with immediate effect due to the record rise in Covid-19 cases in the neighbouring country. Several countries like the UK, the UAE, Australia and Singapore have already banned travellers from India as well as other South Asian countries. The Civil Aviation Authority on Thursday said that travellers from India will not be allowed to disembark in Sri Lanka.

The decision has been taken as the coronavirus continues to spread rapidly in India. The Director General Civil aviation in a letter to the CEO of the national carrier Sri Lankan Airlines has said, "in accordance with instructions received from health authorities of Sri Lanka due to pandemic." —PTI

Macron endorses
share of vax tech

Paris, May 6: French President Emmanuel Macron is joining the Biden administration in saying that he backs the sharing of the valuable technology behind Covid-19 vaccines. But Macro is also insisting that the immediate priority for wealthier countries should be first donating more doses to poorer countries.

Speaking on a visit Thursday to a vaccine center, the French leader said he "completely" supports opening up intellectual property protections for Covid-19 vaccines. Macron said that "evidently, we must turn this vaccine in a global public good." But he also argued that even if patents are

waived, pharmaceutical companies in places like Africa aren't currently equipped to make Covid-19 vaccines and that donations of doses should be prioritized instead.

Macron claimed that the European Union is leading the way in vaccine donations and called for the United States and Britain to share more, too.

He said that "Europe is the most generous continent with the rest of the world," having exported 45 million doses, and expressed hope that "the British, the Americans and others will follow." He added that, "in the short term, this is what will allow us to vaccinate." —AP

Japan builds statue
with Covid-19 grant

Tokyo, May 6: A remote Japanese fishing town has sparked debate after spending coronavirus relief funds on a giant squid statue that cost nearly \$2,50,000 in a controversial bid to boost post-pandemic tourism.

The huge pink monument with its tentacles outstretched was unveiled in March by the coastal town of Noto in central Japan as a proud nod to its local delicacy.

It cost around 27 million yen (\$2,47,000) and was mostly paid for with a national tax grant to aid communities hit financially by Covid-19 restrictions.

Despite online debate over the merits of the public spending, local officials said they hoped the installation at a roadside rest stop would pique travellers' interest at home and abroad.

"Tourism in our town has been badly damaged by the coronavirus. We wanted to do something to support the local industries," including promoting squid fishing, an official at Noto town hall said on Thursday.

As well as the impact of Japan's border restrictions and calls to limit domestic travel in the past year, the town's economy has also been hurt by recent bad catches, he



A giant squid statue, built at a cost of nearly \$2,50,000. — AFP

added. Many people came to see the 13-metre (43-foot) monument this week during a series of public holidays, the official said, with children playing on it and adults taking quirky pictures for social media.

But some people online were less delighted by the 10-tentacled statue.

"This is too surreal. What is also unclear is why this qualified for the grant," one Twitter user wrote in Japanese.

"It is wrong to spend tax on a non-urgent, unnecessary item. The mayor and local politicians should pay for it," said another.

But others were supportive. "My daughter will go there for a picnic in autumn. I hope they will not take it away," one person tweeted. —AFP

CHINA HALTS
ECONOMIC DEAL
WITH AUSTRALIA

Beijing, May 6: China said on Thursday it had suspended an economic agreement with Australia, in an apparent tit-for-tat response to Canberra's scrapping a Belt and Road infrastructure pact and threat to undo a deal leasing Darwin Port to a Chinese company.

The China-Australia Strategic Economic Dialogue deal has been pulled "based on the current attitude" of the Australian government, China's National Development and Reform Commission said in a statement, blaming some officials of "ideological discrimination." Beijing will "indefinitely suspend all activities under the framework" of the agreement, the statement said. The Australian government has previously described the deal — designed to boost trade between both sides and introduce large Chinese investors — as one of the "premier bilateral economic meetings with China". —AFP

US downplays
post-Brexit deal

London, May 6: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has downplayed any prospect of an imminent trade deal with a post-Brexit Britain. In an interview with BBC radio broadcast Thursday, Blinken said any deal would take "some time" and that US President Joe Biden wants to ensure any trade agreement would benefit American workers and their families.

"Our trade negotiator just got on the job, so she's taking the time to go back and review everything that was discussed and that's going to take some time," said Blinken, who was in London in the early part of the week for the Group of Seven meeting of foreign ministers.

"We want to make sure that, whether it's with the United Kingdom or anyone else, any agreements reached are consistent with the principles that President Biden has established to focus on making sure that these

agreements really advance the wellbeing of our workers and their families. That's our focus." Blinken said the US's new trade negotiator, Katherine Tai, would be taking time to review the discussions that had taken place with the preceding administration of Donald Trump before progressing with the talks.

Trump had been a keen proponent of a trade deal with Britain, which formally left the economic orbit of the European Union at the start of this year. Now outside the EU, the UK can negotiate its own trade deals — previously, when within the bloc, the EU had negotiated trade deals on behalf of its members.

One of the main arguments of Brexit supporters in the runup to the referendum on Britain's membership of the EU in 2016 was the prospect of a swift trade deal with the US, the world's largest economy. —AP

French boats leave Jersey,
stand-off with Britain ends

Saint Helier, Jersey, May 6: French trawlers withdrew from waters around Jersey on Thursday after a protest over post-Brexit fishing rights that led to a brief standoff between British and French navy and coastal patrol boats.

The latest blow to cross-Channel relations was caused by angry French fishermen protesting over new fish licensing arrangements on the Channel island of Jersey following Britain's departure from the European Union.

At dawn, a flotilla of around 50 trawlers massed in front of the Saint Helier harbour on Jersey, a picturesque self-governing territory that is dependent on Britain for its defence.

Fears of a blockade prompted British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to send two royal navy gunboats to the area, with France following suit by sending two of its own



French fishing boats return home following their protest in front of the port of Saint Helier off the British island of Jersey to draw attention to what they see as unfair restrictions on their ability to fish in UK waters after Brexit, on Thursday. — AFP

coast patrol vessels.

"We won't be intimidated by these manoeuvres," French Europe Minister Clement Beaune told AFP of the navy deployment.

Jersey lies just off

France's northern coast and its rich fishing waters were previously open to French boats before Brexit tore up the previous arrangements.

In the middle of the

afternoon, after hours of bobbing around while letting off the occasional smoke flare, the French trawlers began withdrawing. —AFP

FIFTH TIME | LUCKY

Small fire erupts at base of 50 meter space vehicle, put out by sprinkle
SpaceX successfully lands Starship rocket

Washington, May 6: SpaceX successfully landed its prototype Starship rocket at its Texas base on its fifth attempt, a livestream showed.

The test flight represented a big win for Elon Musk's hard-charging space company after the last four tries ended in explosions.

"Starship landing nomi-

● The rocket dubbed SN15 took off from the Starbase in Boca Chica, southern Texas at around 5:25 pm.

nal!" tweeted Musk.

"Nominal" means normal in the context of spacecraft.

The execution wasn't quite perfect, with a small

fire engulfing the base of the 50 meter- (160 feet-) high space vessel shortly after landing.

SpaceX webcaster John Insprucker explained this was "not unusual with the methane fuel we're using," adding engineers were still working out design issues.

The flames were quickly put out with a water can-

non, footage showed.

Earlier, the rocket dubbed SN15 took off from the Starbase in Boca Chica, southern Texas at around 5:25 pm local time (2225 GMT), reached an altitude of around 10 kilometers (6 miles) and performed a series of flight maneuvers.

SpaceX was facing added pressure to succeed with

Wednesday's flight after NASA announced a version of Starship will be used as a lunar lander when the space agency returns humans to the Moon.

The \$2.9 billion contract is currently suspended after two rival companies, Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin and Dynetics, lodged a protest. —AFP

PSPCL Punjab State Power Corporation Limited			
Regd. Office: PSEB, Head Office, The Mall, Patiala-147001			
Corporate Identity Number: U40109PB2010SGC033813 Website: www.pspcl.in (Contact No. 96461-22185)			
Tender Enquiry No.:	231/2021	Dated:	06.05.2021
Dy. CE/Substation Design/ TS Organization, PSPCL, C-1, Shakti Vihar, PSPCL, Patiala invites E-tender For Manufacturing, Testing And Delivery of Various types of Marshalling Boxes. For detailed NIT & Tender specifications, please refer to https://eproc.punjab.gov.in from 10.05.2021 (11:00 AM onwards).			
Note: Corrigendum and amendments, if any will be published online at https://eproc.punjab.gov.in			
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DECCAN Chronicle

7 MAY 2021

As she fights Covid, Mamata must check Bengal violence

On taking the oath as West Bengal's chief minister for the third time on Wednesday, Mamata Banerjee went into top drive on the issue of battling the Covid-19 pandemic and the post-poll political violence in the state that had claimed 14 lives till then. Action on both began immediately, although she did say tackling Covid-19 was her "top priority".

If not Covid, what else can it be for any major leader of significance? Prime Minister Narendra Modi is a notable exception. The news of the second wave reached him late. Even today, the trench warfare against Covid-19 is being waged by state governments, with the Centre lording it over as the distributor of charity imports of oxygen.

It is just as well, therefore, that Ms Banerjee prioritised the fight against the virus. It is noteworthy, though, that the Centre has a different priority. The PM telephoned governor Jagdeep Dhankhar to say the post-poll violence must be tackled urgently. The PM's phone call is far from customary. It would have sufficed for the Union home secretary to call the state chief secretary.

The PM bringing himself into play is apt to be seen as a dog-whistle. BJP president J.P. Nadda rushed to Kolkata and staged a dharna. The notorious BJP IT cell went into over-drive with fake images that were called out by Alt News. An out-of-work ex-MP began lurid messaging on "Hindus" coming under even sexual attack.

In fact, a commission of inquiry will be needed to go into all aspects of the violence in the state in recent weeks, including the communal dimension. It will be found the dangerous process and the entire period of electioneering were co-terminous, and the post-poll violence was only the tail end of it. It is also incontrovertible, as Ms Banerjee noted, that for the past three months the state's law and order machinery was under the control of the Election Commission.

With a popular government back in the saddle, the chief minister now can't evade her responsibility. She must crack down on the troublemakers in all districts. It is not enough for her to say that the violence was mostly in constituencies where the BJP won. Attempts to communalise the situation with violence after a bitter defeat may be expected by bad losers, but triumphalist exuberance by the winners to showcase their prowess can't be ruled out.

In Tamil Nadu, Ms Banerjee's counterpart M.K. Stalin, the DMK chief, had his party supporters arrested for ransacking "Amma Canteens", a symbol that recalls late AIADMK supremo J. Jayalalithaa. This show of "raj dharma" and neutrality in administrative affairs is a fine example to emulate.

In recent days, repeated direct and indirect calls from elements at all levels within the BJP to impose President's Rule in West Bengal, using the post-poll violence as a pretext, it is self-evident that such posturing ridicules the saffron camp. In the real world, imposing Central rule is undoable after a stunning election. In fact, the BJP's moves are no more than a desperate attempt by the defeated side to shore up the battered morale of the faithful.

Besides tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, and the very culture of political violence — which Ms Banerjee is now uniquely placed to root out after her stupendous win — dealing with the unemployment monster must engage Ms Banerjee's attention without delay.

50% cap on quotas ideal

The Supreme Court has drawn a line in the sand in the matter of quotas. While striking down the reservation created for the Maratha community in Maharashtra, the court emphasised that the 50 per cent limit on total reservations cannot be crossed. This significant part of the ruling should help immensely in curbing the adventurism of political parties in creating openings for the wooing of community-based votes or pandering to dominant communities that have already achieved social salience. Also, in stretching quotas without end by quoting extraordinary circumstances, the states have been inclined to breach the 50 per cent, limit as Tamil Nadu (69 per cent) and Telangana (67 per cent) have done in extreme examples of reservation limits stretched unduly.

It is in perpetuating the principle of reservation, first thought of as a decade of social upliftment for disadvantaged people, that it has become an entitlement impelling movement beyond 50 per cent for those who, like dalits and SCs/STs, were historically denied by India's rigid and reprehensible caste system. True emancipation lies in the creation of opportunities in education and jobs so that no community feels left out. In the midst of the pandemic, this might seem a huge challenge, but progress can be achieved only if reservation is supported for those who really need it. Welfare measures for all economically backward people will be of greater help.

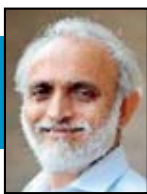
The court's stand on the inviolability of the 50 per cent limit set down in the Indra Sawhney verdict in 1992 might curb the rights of the states. The ruling that a single list of socially and educationally backward classes notified by the President of India alone will prevail, with states having only a recommendatory, role may prove contentious as it could lead to a further empowering of the federal at the cost of the regional. History does, however, suggest that neither the law nor the states have been able to do much about the creamy layer and their succeeding generations cornering opportunities stemming from reservations. In any event, breaching the 50 per cent ceiling will undermine the noble intentions of quotas for the most disadvantaged.

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Subhani



The case against quotas isn't about meritocracy



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

The five-member Supreme Court Constitution Bench's order quashing the Maharashtra law granting reservations in admissions to educational institutions and in government jobs for the Maratha community is quite a complicated ruling. It does not reject the idea of affirmative action, which is what many opposed to caste-based reservations of any kind want, nor does it approve the free run of reservations for different groups. The 50 per cent limitation on reservations pronounced in the 1992 Mandal ruling by a nine-member bench of the Supreme Court is indeed a compromise between the need for affirmative action and the need to set up a cutoff point. But it is not a rigid cut-off point, and there is room to accommodate groups which need affirmative action even if it means breaking the 50 per cent barrier.

In its May 5 verdict, the Supreme Court had spelled out various reasons for disallowing reservations for the Marathas. It said that the move breached the 50 per cent ceiling on reservations and that there were no compelling reasons to do so because the community was adequately represented in all government services. It made the additional observation that the states have no right to determine which group belongs to the backward class, and that this can only be decided by the Central government through the National Backward Class Commission. The state government can only make its recommendation to the Central government. All these issues pass muster legally, but

they do not close the possibility of discussion and the tenability of contrary and legitimate viewpoints.

It is but a truism that things are rarely if ever purely legal, and the politics of it all, and not always in the negative sense, cannot be brushed aside. It is on the political ground that the case of reservations for Marathas in educational institutions and government jobs will have to be assessed. And there would be sufficient arguments on the side of those favouring reservations for the Marathas, as well as of those who are opposed to it. And it is a moot point as where does the principle of equality figure in the middle of this political and social tussle.

A look at the three Articles of the Constitution related to equality show that the principle is not a simple one at all. Article 14 is about "equality before the law", which means "equal protection of the laws". And while Article 15 prohibits discrimination "on grounds of only religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them", it says in Article 15(4) that this shall not "prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes". And power of the State to make "special provision" is reiterated in Article 16, which is about "equality of opportunity in public employment".

The ideal solution would be when there would not arise the need to make any "special provision" for certain sections of society which has been historically

unequal, not just in unthinking ways but in a deliberate and vicious manner. In Indian society, the battle lines have been shifting from that between traditional upper castes to the middle class, middle castes, and again to a battle between the newly empowered middle caste middle classes to the middle classes of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There is the further complication of a battle between the middle classes of different middle castes seeking special provisions. It is not an easy thing for either the political leaders or for the judges to resolve the social disequilibrium.

The reservations issue poses a special dilemma for the Shiv Sena and the BJP, as both subscribe to conservative ideologies of different shades. The Shiv Sena's belief in the Maharashtrian identity is not sufficient to tackle the demands of different groups like that of the Marathas. Similarly, the BJP's Hindu identity, which seeks to overlook the clash of castes in the intra-Hindu framework, is of no help in facing up to the demand for reservations by the powerful middle class middle caste groups like the Patidars in Gujarat, the Marathas in Maharashtra and Jats in Rajasthan and Haryana.

It is quite easy to derive satisfaction from the discomfiture of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, but it does not help in resolving the basic challenge of delivering the terms of equality as enshrined in Articles 14, 15 and 16. What is needed is a debate across different

It is quite easy to derive satisfaction from the discomfiture of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, but it does not help in resolving the challenge of delivering the terms of equality as enshrined in Articles 14, 15 and 16.

sections of society about equality and how the fairness principle as spelled out by American political philosopher John Rawls can be applied. In a memorable passage from his classical treatise, *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls had stated: "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems. A theory, however elegant and economical, must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise, laws and institutions, no matter how efficient and well-arranged, must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust."

This statement can serve as an ideal touchstone for discussions in the legislatures and courts, in universities and homes for debating the question of equality and how every individual and every section can have access to it. It will always remain a work in progress. There can be no permanent solutions. If today the Maratha community feels the need for reservations in educational institutions and government jobs, there must come a time through remedial laws that it will not suffer from those handicaps. It is a judgment call that the Marathas must take. Also, the leaders of the Maratha community must be able to decide as to who among the community really needs reservations. If every citizen has an equal right to education, and there are enough schools and universities for all, would there be a need for reservations? If there are enough jobs, would there be a need for reservations for government jobs for any community?

The BJP-led Central government can bring in the necessary legislation to break the 50 per cent ceiling in reservations, and all other parties would support it. But it does not provide a solution to the basic issue — education for all, and full employment.

The writer is a commentator and analyst based in New Delhi

LETTERS

MEMORIAL FOR TR

It is very sad that a man named Ramasamy, best known by his popular moniker 'Traffic', is more.

A person with a steely heart in a weak and frail body and without any social or financial background proved himself to be an unrelenting crusader and indomitable terror to lawbreakers of every kind whether holding high political power or in top administrative positions. He had spent all his money, precious energy and time for the cause of discipline and adherence to the laws of the land by people. A straightforward person, he was loathed by many and loved by a few. For all socially conscious people and for those who value the rule of law, TR will ever remain a guiding and motivational force. This man really deserves a fitting memorial at a suitable public site and the government should itself spend for it.

Marudamalaiyan,
Chennai

DURGA WINS RAM

BJP's failure to seize West Bengal can be seen in part as a response to Modi's total mishandling of the Covid-19 pandemic. But voters also rejected the BJP's divisive anti-Muslim politics, which was the main thrust of its campaign. In several ways, the election result in West Bengal is Modi's personal failure after he launched the most virulent attack, addressing many rallies. In a mocking tone, Modi asked Mamata Banerjee to vacate the chief minister's office even before the elections were called. "Didi, O Didi, you have lost," said Modi repeatedly in countless rallies. He also accused Banerjee of not respecting Lord Ram, to which she tartly replied: "I am Brahmin, and I don't need lessons on Hinduism from you." Eventually, her landslide victory was spurred by the consolidation of votes by Muslims and Hindus. Perhaps, a typical Bengali would nicely sum up the election results: "Ram was squarely defeated by Durga!"

R. Sivakumar,
Chennai

Jawed Naqvi



Will Cong, Left help or hinder Mamata's effort to unite Opp?

It was a crucial make-or-break vote that P.V. Narasimha Rao faced when Mamata Banerjee was ushered into a packed and tense Lok Sabha in a wheelchair and helped to her seat. From the press gallery above, one could see her shaking with spasm under a woollen blanket that wrapped her. The fever from malaria ran high and she struggled to control waves of rigour that came with the affliction. Eventually, Rao won the trust vote with a narrow margin. She did her duty by the Congress and contributed in her way to the early economic reforms, which usually Rao and Dr Manmohan Singh are credited with.

Now, the tycoons her vote had helped become rich with India's top-down neo-liberal policies were switching sides. Their money power was transferred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP. All the loot one could imagine was thrown into the massive effort to dislodge Mamata Banerjee. She though was confidently plotting the fightback for a third term as West Bengal's chief minister. Her secular resolve and populist economic priorities can be gleaned from her modest home surrounded by lower-middle-class

dwellings and shanties in a non-descript Kolkata district. The Trinamul Congress she set up was itself a critique of the Congress, which nurtured her as a youth leader but was beginning to be associated with wealth and pelf.

Trinamul means "grassroots" in Bengali, and her party's name suggests her plain thoughts about her parent group. The results were out on May 2, the same day as Satyajit Ray's birth centenary. Bengal has been shaped by Ray, Nazrul Islam and Tagore, by Vivekananda and Kali worship. For her to open her account in West Bengal, her worldview had to challenge the invincible Communist hegemony, much of it secured under Jyoti Basu's watch. He had steered the state for most of the three decades of Left rule since 1977, a handy reward for steadfastly fighting Indira Gandhi's Emergency.

After Basu retired, citing age, the party's fortunes quickly melted with the economic chaos across India. The party evicted peasants from fields to make space for industry, a lesson they erroneously believed could be bodily lifted from China. If Nandigram and Singur were what the comrades saw as aspects of "socialism

with Bengali characteristics", the move boomeranged, and Ms Banerjee pounced on the opportunity.

During much of the post-Basu rule, Communist priorities in West Bengal dovetailed with the core quests of the Vajpayee-Advani duo in Delhi. West Bengal's Marxist CM and the BJP's Union home minister found common cause, really two causes, in fact. They both desired to deal decisively with the Maoist challenge, and both harboured strong reservations about a real or imagined influx of people from Bangladesh. This worked as a wedge that eventually drove many Muslims away from the party, while alienating many who opposed harsh solutions to tackle the Maoists.

Marxist CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharya went a step further in his induced aloofness from a people he had no use for. He turned down a request from a fellow partisan in Delhi to help the Progressive Writers Association host an Urdu conference in Kolkata. "Do you want me to patronise another Partition?" he had exploded.

Sunday's results saw the CPI(M) wiped out of West Bengal's Assembly. Self-criticism and intro-

spection don't seem to go well with the current crop of Leftists. They blamed their decline on state terror supposedly unleashed on the party by Ms Banerjee's TMC. If that were true, why did the cadre switch en masse to the BJP? Did the Communists really hope to challenge the BJP had they succeeded in defeating Ms Banerjee in the recent polls? The election results showed how Left votes helped in the narrow defeat of Ms Banerjee in Nandigram.

This mindless game of revenge and short-sighted gambits to somehow crawl back to power has harmed the Left enormously. It has also dented the cause of Opposition unity that is urgently needed to arrest the erosion of India's democracy under Narendra Modi. The party may learn from the DMK in Tamil Nadu, under whose umbrella it could win two seats in the southern state.

Ms Banerjee has periodically invited the Communists to join her struggle against the essentially anti-federal, anti-secular character of the BJP. This has also been the quest of Kerala's Marxist CM Pinarayi Vijayan, who landed a record second consecutive term by defeating the Congress. Ironically, it's these two

parties that are holding Opposition unity to ransom, has both display a marked inability to identify self-harm in their cherry-picking of friends and foes. The Marxists offer a terrible logic of being adversaries of the Congress in Kerala and its allies elsewhere. What kind of a national messaging does that invite? Was it a good idea for them to join hands against the TMC in West Bengal, granted that they at least benefited from being together in Tamil Nadu? Everyone has congratulated Mamata Banerjee on her fine victory against extremely heavy odds posed by the combined strength of India's right, left and centre parties. She has shown them their place. A Shiv Sena leader called her the "Tigress of Bengal". Arvind Kejriwal, M.K. Stalin, Akhilesh Yadav and Sharad Pawar, no small-time leaders, have greeted her with renewed hope to stall the march of fascism. The question is, will the Congress and the Left Front work with Ms Banerjee? Or will they persist with their misplaced zeal to inflict harm on themselves, and thereby on India's struggling democracy?

By arrangement with Dawn

quick
BITES

INDICATORS

		%
Sensex	48949.76	0.56
Nifty 50	14724.80	0.73
S&P 500*	4,178.58	0.26
Dollar (₹)	73.77	0.20
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.64	0.06
Euro (₹)	88.86	-0.15
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,680.439	0.94
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.36	-0.87
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.974	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.561	-0.023

* As of 8:30 PM IST

BoE expects UK
economy's best
year since 1941

The Bank of England has kept interest rates on hold as it forecast the fastest annual pace of growth for the British economy since early on in World War II, largely from the rapid rollout of vaccines. The Monetary Policy Committee said it will maintain the bank's main interest rate at 0.1 per cent, the lowest in the bank's 327-year history. The bank is now projecting economic growth of 7.25 per cent in 2021, instead of 5 per cent.

■ Malaysia's IHH runs 34 hospitals in India
Mitsui eyeing reins
of Fortis parent IHHSANGEETHA G
with agency inputs
CHENNAI, MAY 6

In a move that will help grab a large pie of India's private healthcare delivery infrastructure, Japan's Mitsui & Company is exploring a deal to take full control of Malaysian hospital group IHH Healthcare. IHH Healthcare runs 34 hospitals in India through Fortis Healthcare, Gleneagles Global Hospitals and Continental Hospitals.

The Malaysian group also has a presence in India's diagnostic market through Fortis subsidiary Religare Ltd.

According to a Bloomberg report, Mitsui & Company is exploring a deal to take a majority stake in Kuala Lumpur-headquartered hospital group IHH Healthcare and delist it from the stock exchanges of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Mitsui has reached out to Malaysian sovereign fund Khazanah Nasional, IHH's second largest shareholder, to pick up the latter's 26 per cent stake in the company. Mitsui has a 32.9 per cent stake in IHH Healthcare through a subsidiary. As of now IHH Healthcare is run as an independent company.

It may be recalled that IHH Healthcare acquired a 31 per cent stake in Fortis Healthcare in August 2018 in a \$1.1-billion deal, but could not make an open offer to acquire a 26 per cent more



stake in Fortis, owing to a Supreme Court stay order secured by Japan's Daiichi Sankyo over its disputes with the Singh brothers, the erstwhile promoters of Fortis.

As per the report, a few private equity firms have approached the Japanese trading house to team up on the potential transaction to buy out IHH's other shareholders. Mitsui had raised its stake in IHH in 2018 to 32.9 per cent, after buying additional 15 per cent shares in the hospital operator from Khazanah. The Japanese firm is now the single biggest shareholder in the company.

IHH, which is listed on the stock exchanges of Malaysia and Singapore, has a market value of \$11 billion. IHH runs a total of 80 hospitals in 10 countries.

In India, IHH runs 34

hospitals, with 4,770 operational beds across Fortis Healthcare, Gleneagles Global Hospitals and Continental Hospitals. IHH had a 50-50 joint venture with Apollo Hospitals to operate Apollo Gleneagles Hospitals in Kolkata, but last December IHH entered into a share purchase agreement to divest its 50 per cent stake in this.

IHH, which has majority stake in Fortis Healthcare, plans to rebrand the Fortis chain as Parkway, the Malaysian healthcare chain owned by it, but this will now require permission from the Supreme Court.

Recently, IHH had also entered into a partnership with Bharat Biotech to provide Covaxin at its Gleneagles Global Hospitals in three locations in India—Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad.

IBM UNVEILS
WORLD'S FIRST
2 NANOMETER
CHIP TECHNOLOGY

New Delhi, May 6: Tech giant IBM on Thursday said it has developed the world's first chip with two nanometer (nm) nanosheet technology that promises to speed up access to the internet, longer battery life and faster processing time in applications.

Semiconductors are needed to run everything from computers to appliances and transportation systems to critical infrastructure.

According to IBM, the potential benefits of advanced 2 nm chips could include quadrupling of cell phone battery life, reduction in the carbon footprint of data centres, and drastically speed up a laptop's functions (including quicker processing in applications to assisting in language translation more easily and faster internet access).

The use of the new technology could also contribute to faster object detection and reaction time in autonomous vehicles like self-driving cars, it said in a statement.

The demand for increased chip performance and energy efficiency continues to rise, especially in the era of hybrid cloud, AI and the Internet of Things.

"IBM's new 2 nm chip technology helps advance the state-of-the-art in the semiconductor industry, addressing this growing demand. It is projected to achieve 45 per cent higher performance," it said. —PTI

Prime residential prices
drop in top Indian citiesANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, MAY 6

The coronavirus pandemic seems to have hit the country's prime real estate market relatively more compared to the trend in the global market. Indian cities figuring in property consultant Knight Frank's Global Prime Residential Index saw a drop in prices while prime properties became dearer in many key cities abroad.

While the global index moved up 4.6 per cent in January-March (Q1) 2021, all the Indian cities in the index—Bengaluru, New Delhi and Mumbai—slipped down the index, with the property prices declining.

Prime residential property prices in Bengaluru declined 2.7 per cent, Mumbai 1.5 per cent and Delhi 0.2 per cent in Q1 against the same quarter last year. Sequentially also prices dropped. Against Q4 2020, Bengaluru prices fell 1.6 per cent, Mumbai 0.6 per cent and Delhi 0.1 per cent.

Due to price drop, Bengaluru came down

THE KNIGHT FRANK PRIME GLOBAL CITIES INDEX Q1 2021			%	%
Rank	City	World regions	12-MONTH (Q1 2020-Q1 2021)	3-MONTH (Q4 2020-Q1 2021)
1	Shenzhen	Asia	18.9	6.7
2	Shanghai	Asia	16.3	8.5
3	Guangzhou	Asia	15.2	12.6
4	Vancouver	North America	15.2	6.3
5	Seoul	Asia	14.8	1.3
6	St. Petersburg	Russia & CIS	13.4	2.5
7	Los Angeles 1,3	North America	12.6	2.2
8	Moscow	Russia & CIS	12.4	7.3
9	Taipei	Asia	12.2	6.5
10	Miami 1,3	North America	10.2	2.4
11	Toronto	North America	10.1	5.3
32	Delhi	Asia	-0.2	0.0
36	Mumbai	Asia	-1.5	-0.1
40	Bengaluru	Asia	-2.7	-0.6
46	New York	North America	-5.8	-1.6

(Ranked by annual % change)

Source: Knight Frank Global Research

four places in the index from 40 to 36 while Mumbai fell from 36 to 35 and Delhi from 32 to 31.

During the January-March 2021 quarter, prices of top three cities in the index—Shenzhen, Shanghai and Guang-

zhou—appreciated 18.9 per cent, 16.3 per cent and 15.2 per cent, respectively, against the year-ago quarter. Against Q4 2020, prices of these cities moved up 6.7 per cent, 8.5 per cent and 12.6 per cent, in the same order.

STATES GET ₹9,870 CRORE AS REVENUE DEFICIT GRANT

New Delhi, May 6: The finance ministry on Thursday released the second monthly instalment of revenue deficit grant of Rs 9,871 crore to 17 states.

With the release of the second instalment, a total amount of Rs 19,742 crore has been released in the first two months of the current financial year as

Post Devolution Revenue Deficit Grant to the states, the ministry said in a statement.

The Centre provides such grant to the states under Article 275 of the Constitution.

The grants are released as per the recommendations of the Finance Commission in monthly

instalments to meet the gap in revenue accounts of the states post-devolution.

The 15th Finance Commission has recommended Post Devolution Release Deficit Grants to 17 states based on the gap between the assessment of revenue and expenditure of the state.

—PTI

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: You tend to magnify and worry over small issues sometimes. You need to relax. You will receive good news today. You remain focused on money matters.



Taurus: Calm thoughts will help you make the right decisions. You will experience freedom from conflicting situations and worries. You will take refuge in creativity.



Gemini: You will achieve personal growth. Your inspired moves will aid you in reaping rich dividends. Start exploring old-age benefits and pension schemes.



Cancer: You will be preoccupied with the thought of wanting extra income. You will receive strength, support, and inspiration from your close friends, family, and spouse.



Leo: You realize that your future happiness depends on the choices you make now. People matter to you the most. You may like to bridge the gap within your family.



Virgo: You will achieve most of what you wanted to. You are almost where you wanted to be. Good communication and a clear realization will help you quite a lot in practical planning.

You share your b'day with

Vikas Gupta is an Indian television producer, creative director, screenwriter and is popularly known for participating in Bigg Boss 11 and Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi 9 and hosting MTV Ace Of Space.



Libra: Your creative energies will find a direction today. Future plans will be mapped out. Financial matters need to be well sorted out today.



Scorpio: You pay attention to one-to-one relationships, especially the parent-child one. You desire family union. Personal and family property issues may arise.



Sagittarius: Finances and the security of your near and dear ones will be there on your mind. Chalking out some solid plans for the future is on the cards.



Capricorn: Lot of opportunities seem to be at your doorstep. You will meet the right people, who help you in creating opportunities for learning. Inside knowledge on things will help you increase cash assets.

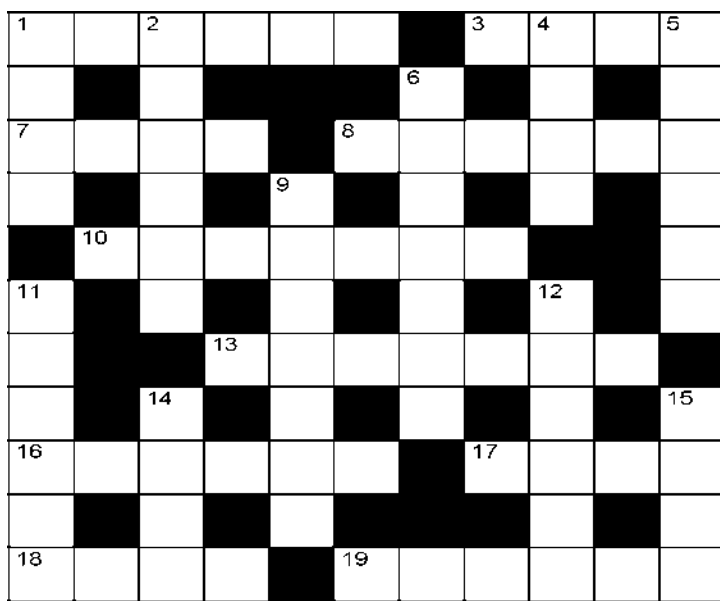


Aquarius: You have an intense desire to move on with your life. Be it emotionally, mentally or professionally. Increase in assets lightens your burden, in terms of responsibilities.



Pisces: Be tolerant towards your friends. You and your lover will succeed in overcoming all obstacles. You may be asked to make a commitment, do so only if you intend to keep your word.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Atoll lake (6)
- Support (4)
- Driven pin (4)
- Young swan (6)
- Practical joke (3-4) (7)
- Exhibit (7)
- On the decline (6)
- Engrave with acid (4)
- Affectively dainty (4)
- Undercover (6)

Down

- Road division (4)
- Unpowered aeroplane (6)
- Skin (4)
- Golf club (6)
- One-eyed monster (7)
- Alternatives (7)
- Get the better of by cleverness (6)
- Fried coating (6)
- Long ago (4)
- Informal conversation (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Brasserie, 6. Scour, 7. Final, 9. Rays, 10. Dry rot, 12. Filip, 14. Edge, 17. Dents, 18. Lobby, 19. Crows nest.

Down: 2. Roomy, 3. Sort, 4. Effort, 5. Inner, 6. Strafed, 8. Lottery, 11. Jigsaw, 13. Liner, 15. Debts, 16. Flan.

Word Mine

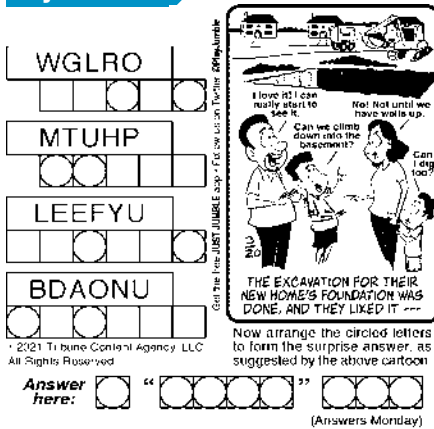
V
T
I
S
I
N
E
N
E

TODAY'S RATINGS: 10 AVERAGE; 12 GOOD; 14 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

South: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
West: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
East: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
North: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
Center: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
Diagonals: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
Opening lead: 4

jumble



Yesterday's Jumble: YOUTH DAISY DEPOT MODEST
Answer: Not everyone believes that marriage is for them but those who do — ESPIONAGE IT

points. Then, on the third round, with a maximum(1), three trumps and a ruffing value in hearts, North jumps to four spades. Finally, South bids what he hopes he can make. Unusually, the best line of play in six spades is the same as that in seven spades. Declarer, after winning with the diamond ace, draws exactly two rounds of trumps, cashes his top hearts and ruffs a heart in

CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs

bridge
PHILLIP
ALDERTHE SAME
PLAY,
BUT
DIFFERENT
SCORES

Die Propylaen" was a periodical begun in July 1798 by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Johann Heinrich Meyer. In its introduction, Goethe wrote, "The same man will ... often see and judge the same things differently on different occasions."

It is true at the bridge table. An expert will sometimes make a different bid or adopt an alternative line of play depending on the

standard of his opponents. This deal is different from that, though. How should South plan the play in either six spades or seven spades? After West leads the diamond queen?

South opens with a strong, artificial, forcing two clubs, North responds with a negative two diamonds, and South reveals his longest suit. Now North's three-club rebid is a double (or second negative, showing 0-3

South: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
West: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
East: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
North: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
Center: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
Diagonals: V, T, I, S, I, N, E, N, E
Opening lead: 4

SHORT TAKES

India's Oly-bound shooters get vax

New Delhi: Many shooters, coaches and officials from India's Olympic-bound contingent received their first dose of Covid-19 vaccine across cities on Thursday. The shooters were to get vaccinated before leaving for Zagreb, Croatia on May 11 to participate in the European Championship. "All the shooters have got vaccinated today. Some of them got their jab in Delhi while some in their respective home towns," a National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) source said.

Some of the members of the Indian team have already got their first dose of the vaccine last month, including pistol ace Manu Bhaker and rifle shooter Anjum Moudgil. As far as the national shooting team's coaches are concerned, quite a few of them, including Smaresh Jung, Suma Shirur and Deepali Deshpande, had got themselves vaccinated last month. — PTI

Kadiyan, Malik reach quarters

Sofia, Bulgaria: Satywart Kadiyan and Sumit Malik kept the Indian hopes alive by reaching the quarterfinals but it was all over for Amit Dhankar, who was ousted from the World Olympic Qualifiers after losing his opening bout, here on Thursday. Dhankar lost his 74kg Qualification bout 6-9 to Moldova's Mihail Sava. Dhankar's defeat means that India will go unrepresented in the 74kg at the Tokyo Games. This is the last Olympic qualifying event and Satywart Kadiyan (97kg) and Sumit Malik (125kg) are still in the hunt. Kadiyan won his pre-quarterfinal 5-2 against Evan Amador Ramos from Puerto Rico. He led 3-0 in the first period, but a take-down move by his rival threatened his chances before the Indian got another two-pointer to win easily. — PTI

Indian archers to miss Swiss WC

Kolkata: India's Olympic-bound archers will not get to compete in the Stage 2 World Cup in Lausanne as their short-term visa application has been rejected by the Switzerland Embassy. India has been battling a second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic that has forced many countries to ban travellers from India.

The Indian archers will now directly compete in the Stage 3 World Cup in Paris which will be the last Olympic qualification event for the Indian women's recurve team. The seven-day competition will begin on June 23. "Swiss Embassy did not allow any short term Visa and we had little time for the Stage 2 World Cup (May 17-23). Our focus is solely on the Paris World Cup now," Archery Association of secretary general Pramod Chandurkar said. The national federation may also seeking a relaxation in the 10-day quarantine rule for its archer when they reach Paris. — PTI

Bopanna in men's doubles last eight

Madrid: India's Rohan Bopanna combined with his Canadian partner Denis Shapovalov to stun top seeds Juan Sebastian Cabal and Robert Farah in straight sets and reach the men's doubles quarterfinals of Madrid Open Masters 1000 tournament here. This was the 41-year-old Bopanna's first win on the ATP tour in 2021. The Indo-Canadian duo won their round of 16 match 6-3, 6-4 on Wednesday. Bopanna and Shapovalov will take on German duo of Alexander Zverev and Tim Puetz in the quarter-finals. "A superb victory by #TOPSAthlete tennis player @rohanbopanna and his partner @denis_shapo who beat World #1 men's doubles pair of Robert Farah and Juan Sebastian Cabal 6-3, 6-4 to reach the quarterfinals of the @MutuaMadridOpen," Sports Authority of India (SAI) tweeted. — PTI

DEPARTURE GATES

Aussies fly out, New Zealand contingent to leave today

New Delhi, May 6: The Australians flew off to Maldives, the South Africans headed home and the ones from New Zealand waited to be sent back on Friday as the suspended IPL's foreign cricketers bid adieu to India, hoping that the country recovers from the mayhem unleashed by a second wave of Covid-19 cases.

The 40-strong Australian contingent, except for a Covid-positive Mike Hussey, left for Maldives on Thursday to serve out the waiting period before they can board a flight to Australia once the travel restrictions end on May 15.

"We can confirm that Australian players, coaches, match officials and commentators have been safely transported from India and are en route to the Maldives," Cricket Australia stated in a press release.

"The Australians will remain in Maldives until the conclusion of the travel pause pertaining to flights from India to Australia," it added.

The IPL was suspended on Tuesday after four players and two coaching staff members from three different teams tested positive for Covid-19 inside the bio-bubble.

Of the 40 Australians involved in the league after three early pullouts, 14 were players, including mega-stars such as David Warner, Pat Cummins, and Steve Smith among others.

The 11 South Africans in the league boarded flights for Johannesburg as their country has not imposed any restrictions on travel from India, which recorded more than 4 lakh Covid-19 cases on Thursday and close to 4,000 deaths.

"My constant prayers is with the people from India to get through this. Pls Take care of yourselves," Proteas star Faf du Plessis, who turned up Chennai Super Kings, posted on Instagram.

The Cricket Australia thanked the BCCI for its assistance in ensuring that players were able to leave India within two



Mumbai Indians' Trent Boult and Chris Lynn.

● The 40-strong Australian contingent, except for a Covid-positive Mike Hussey, left for Maldives on Thursday to serve out the waiting period before they can board a flight to Australia once the travel restrictions end on May 15.

● Of the 40 Australians involved in the league after three early pullouts, 14 were players, including mega-stars such as David Warner, Pat Cummins and Steve Smith among others.

days of the league's suspension owing to Covid-19 cases inside its bio-bubble.

"CA and the ACA extend their sincere thanks to the BCCI for their responsiveness in moving the Australians from India to the Maldives..." the statement read.

On the wait-list were the Black Caps. Four members of their Test contingent, including captain Kane Williamson, will head for the United Kingdom on May 11 while the rest will make their way back home on Friday, the country's cricket board announced.

New Zealand are scheduled to play hosts England in a two-match Test series, beginning on June 2, before facing India in the World Test Championships final at Southampton from June 18.

"We've worked closely

with the BCCI and the IPL franchises on the various departure strategies and we're very appreciative of their support during what is, clearly, a very challenging time," New Zealand Cricket (NZC) chief executive David White said in a statement on Thursday.

Williamson, pacer Kyle Jamieson and spinner Mitchell Santner, as well as physio Tommy Simsek, will remain in a mini-bubble in New Delhi before departing for the UK, ahead of preparations for the Test series against England, and the WTC final against India.

There were 17 New Zealanders involved in the League, including 10 players.

NZC said May 11 is the earliest date it could obtain for the team's arrival in the UK.

However, pace spearhead Trent Boult will return home briefly to see

his family before joining the Test squad in early June, for the second match against England and the WTC final.

"...Boult will leave MIQ (Managed Isolation and Quarantine) on May 22 and will spend a week at home with his family, training at Mt Maunganui before departing for the UK in early June," NZC stated.

White said IPL players, support staff and commentators returning to New Zealand would adhere to all regulatory protocols, including pre-departure Covid-19 tests.

Those returning to New Zealand on Friday from India also include Stephen Fleming, Brendon McCullum, Kyle Mills, Shane Bond, Mike Hesson, Tim Seifert, Adam Milne, Scott Kugeleijn and James Pamment.

— PTI

AFTER MOTHER, VEDA LOSES HER SISTER TO VIRUS

New Delhi, May 6: Indian women's cricketer Veda Krishnamurthy's sister Vatsala Shivakumar has died due to Covid-19, two weeks after her mother succumbed to the dreaded virus.

The 45-year-old died at a private hospital in Chikkamagaluru on Wednesday night.

The all-rounder, who has been helping others through her social media by amplifying their requests for aid, had lost her mother Cheluvamba Devi last month.

On April 24, the Bengaluru-based cricketer, who has represented India in 48 ODIs and 76 T20s, had tweeted about her mother's demise while also informing that her sister too was battling for her life. — PTI

EX-RAJASTHAN PLAYER YADAV DIES OF COVID

Jaipur, May 6: Vivek Yadav, a former Rajasthan leg-spinner and a member of their Ranji Trophy-winning squad, died of coronavirus-related complications.

He was 36-years-old and is survived by his wife and a daughter.

Yadav breathed his last at a city hospital on Wednesday.

"Rajasthan Ranji Player and a dear friend...Vivek Yadav is no more. May his soul R.I.P. Thoughts and prayers with the family," former India opener Aakash Chopra tweeted.

Yadav was undergoing treatment for cancer and had gone to the hospital for his chemotherapy, where he was tested and returned positive for Covid-19. His health deteriorated before he lost his battle against the dreaded virus. — PTI

Sri Lanka offers window for IPL

BY BIPIN DANI

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) is "keen" to help the Indian cricket board host the remainder of the Indian Premier League (IPL).

This offer has come at the time when former India captain Sourav Ganguly, who is now BCCI president, has said: "We have to speak to other boards and see if a window can be made available before the T20 World Cup".

"If we fail to complete the IPL, the loss will be close to ₹12,500 crore (\$340 million approximately) going by early estimates."

"Yes, we can certainly provide a window to host the IPL in the month of September," Prof. Arjuna de Silva, chief of the managing committee of Sri Lanka Cricket, speaking exclusively over the telephone from Colombo, said.

"We hear the UAE (United Arab Emirates) is one option for BCCI but Sri Lanka cannot be ignored for all reasons," he said. "We are planning to host the Lanka Premier League

We hear the UAE is also an option but Sri Lanka cannot be ignored for all reasons. We are planning to host the Lanka Premier League in July-August and the grounds and other infrastructure will be ready for the IPL in September.

— ARJUNA DE SILVA
SLC managing committee chief

(LPL) in July-August and the grounds and other infrastructure will be ready for the IPL in September," de Silva added.

Prof. de Silva's term is scheduled to be over this month after the SLC elections on May 20, but the offer will stand whoever comes into power.

The IPL teams have already hired the services of Sri Lanka's legendary cricketers — Kumar Sangakkara, Muthiah Muralitharan and Mahela Jayawardene in coaching roles.

COVID-INFECTED HUSSEY, BALAJI FLY TO CHENNAI

Chennai, May 6: Chennai Super Kings' batting coach Mike Hussey and bowling coach L Balaji have been flown into the city from Delhi in an air ambulance as they recover from Covid-19, a top franchise official said on Thursday.

Hussey and Balaji were among the prominent non-playing staff to test positive when the IPL was "indefinitely suspended" on Tuesday, following multiple Covid-19 cases inside the bio-bubble.

"We decided to bring Hussey and Balaji to Chennai by an air ambulance as we have better contacts here and wanted to ensure better medical facilities in case of any need," the CSK official said.

He further said the duo was "asymptomatic and doing fine."

The CSK official said Hussey would have to wait for a Covid-19 negative report to be able to leave the country.

"Hussey has to wait and get a Covid negative report before he can leave India. We will make arrangements for a charter when it is safe for him to fly," the official added.

While Hussey will have to wait, rest of the Australians participating in the IPL on Thursday left for Maldives to serve out the waiting period before they can board a flight to Australia.

The CSK official said the franchise made arrangements for the foreign players of the team to leave by charter planes.

The official also informed that CSK skipper Mahendra Singh Dhoni would leave for his hometown Ranchi in the afternoon once all his team members head for their respective bases.

Major blow for Saina, Srikanth

New Delhi, May 6: London Olympics bronze-medallist Saina Nehwal and men's star Kidambi Srikanth's last hopes of Olympic qualification hang in balance as the Indian government negotiates for their participation in the Malaysian Open amid a ban on flights from India in that country.

Following the postponement of the India Open (May 11-16), Saina and Srikanth's hopes of qualifying for the Tokyo Games hinge on the (May 25-30) Kuala Lumpur event followed by the Singapore Open (June 1-6).

In the wake of an unprecedented Covid-19 surge in India, Malaysia and Singapore have banned flights from the country effective April 28.

"The Sports Ministry, through the Ministry of External Affairs, has approached the Malaysian Government requesting to grant permission to the

Indian Badminton Team to travel to Malaysia to participate in the Malaysian Open scheduled from May 25 to May 30," the Sports Authority of India said.

"This is in light of a temporary travel ban that has been imposed by Malaysia on travellers from India, owing to the rising Covid-19 cases in India," it added.

After an initial request made earlier this week, the Indian High Commission in Malaysia "received information from the Malaysian Government that the travel of the team may not be possible immediately."

The tournament is one of the last events that contribute to Olympic qualification which ends on June 15. All top Indian singles and doubles players like P.V. Sindhu, Saina Nehwal, Kidambi Srikanth, Sai Praneeth, Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, Chirag Shetty, Ashwini Ponnappa and Sikki Reddy are due to participate in this. — PTI

Blues blank Madrid to set up all-English final

London, May 6: Chelsea set up an all-English Champions League final against Manchester City as goals from Timo Werner and Mason Mount beat Real Madrid 2-0 in a dominant display on Wednesday to seal a 3-1 aggregate victory at Stamford Bridge.

If anything, the scoreline flattered Madrid as the 13-time European champions had no response to Chelsea's greater strength and speed.

The Blues should have ran out far more convincing winners as they toyed with the tired visitors in the second half.

However, Werner's cushioned header into an empty net on 28 minutes after Kai Havertz's initial effort came back off the crossbar and Mount's tap-in five minutes from time were enough to seal their place in Istanbul on May

THE RESULT

Chelsea 2
(Werner 28, Mount 85)
Real Madrid 0
(Chelsea win 3-1 on aggregate)

29. "To never lose the concentration, focus and positive energy on the pitch — it was a huge performance and well deserved," said Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel, who has masterminded a huge turnaround in Chelsea's season since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard in January.

Backed by Russian billionaire owner Roman Abramovich, Chelsea's £220 million spending spree last summer has been rewarded with a first Champions League trophy since they lifted the trophy for the only time in 2012.

"We never lost the hunger, the desire to defend," added Tuchel. "In the second half we had even better structure to defend and it was a fantastic performance. "We could have scored so much earlier and more to be safe, but it's no time for criticism now. It's a fantastic achievement and big congratulations to the team."

Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane welcomed back captain Sergio Ramos for the first time in six weeks, while Eden Hazard was handed a rare start in an injury-hit season on his return to Stamford Bridge.

But the Belgian was again a peripheral figure as Madrid's over-reliance on Karim Benzema to provide a goal threat was exposed.

"We needed to be better going forward," said Zidane. — AFP



Chelsea's Timo Werner (right) scores against Real Madrid in their Champions League second leg semifinal match at Stamford Bridge in London on Wednesday. — AFP

Anti-Olympic petition gains tens of thousands of signatures

Tokyo, May 6: An online petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be canceled has gained tens of thousands of signatures since being launched in Japan only days ago.

The rollout of the petition comes with Tokyo, Osaka and several other areas under a state of emergency with coronavirus infections rising — particularly new variants. The state of emergency is to expire on May 11, but some reports in Japan say it is likely to be extended.

The postponed Olympics are to open in just under three months on July 23.

The petition is addressed to International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, who has tentative plans to visit Japan later this month. He is expected to meet the Olympic torch relay on May 17 in Hiroshima, and perhaps also travel to Tokyo where small anti-Olympic are protests being planned.

Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics cancelled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen. Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Tokyo

organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto, and Bach have repeatedly said the games will go on as scheduled.

Organizers and the IOC unveiled so-called Playbooks last week, explaining rules for athletes and others to show how the Olympics can be held in the middle of a pandemic. Several test events have been conducted in the last few days, and organizers have reported few problems.

The Olympic torch relay has been crisscrossing Japan for a month. Organizers say that eight

● Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics cancelled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen.

people working on the relay have tested positive for the virus.

The Tokyo Olympics have become a face-saving exercise for Japan, which has officially spent \$15.4 billion to prepare them. For the IOC, the Tokyo Olympics are critical since

73% of its income comes from selling television rights.

Organisers say the Olympics will be "safe and secure," though this has been challenged by local media specialists, and in an editorial last month in the British Medical Journal. It said mass events like the Olympics are "neither safe nor secure." Organisers say they will need 10,000 health workers to support the Olympics. They have also requested 500 additional nurses — a nurses' federation balked at the request — and 200 sports

medicine specialists.

The petition was organized by Kenji Utsunomiya, a lawyer who has run several times for Tokyo governor. It registered about 50,000 signatures in the first 24 hours after being launched. "Government policies are being set with the Olympics in mind, and measures to curb the coronavirus pandemic are being neglected," Utsunomiya told The Associated Press.

"Hospital are stretched thin, and some people are dying at home." The headline in English

over the petition reads: "Cancel the Tokyo Olympics to protect our lives."

The petition suggests the Olympics cannot be held safely and says the games have drained finances away for other needs such as the rollout of a Covid-19 vaccine. "In order to host the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in July, we must devote a large number of medical professionals, valuable resources such as medical facilities and medical equipment, and various other resources," the petition says. — AP