





## SHORT TAKES

## Man stabbed to death by couple after tiff over ₹100

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

A 40-year-old man was stabbed to death on Sunday allegedly by a couple over ₹100 in west Delhi's Rajpark area, police said. The deceased has been identified as Ajeet, a resident of P-block, Mangolpuri, they said.

On Sunday at 2:45 pm, police received information regarding the incident. Police reached Sanjay Gandhi Hospital where on enquiry, it was found that Ajeet was brought to the hospital by his father. He was declared brought dead, having one stab injury behind his right knee, a senior police officer said. During preliminary investigation, it was revealed that the deceased had to pay ₹100 to accused Jitender, a resident of P-block, Mangolpuri, the officer said. On Sunday, Jitender asked him to return his money. On this issue, a heated argument ensued between them which led to a quarrel. The deceased beat accused on the spot and refused to pay money, police said. Thereafter, Jitender went back home, brought a knife and his wife also accompanied him. In order to teach a lesson to Ajeet, Jitender and his wife Reshma again quarrelled with him and started beating Ajeet. Later, Jitender attacked Ajeet with the knife and both husband-wife ran away from the spot, police said. Deceased sustained stab injury at his right leg, behind his knee. Ajeet succumbed to his injury due to excessive bleeding. He was declared brought dead at the hospital, the officer said. Reshma has been arrested, while search for arrest of the absconding accused Jitender is underway, police added.

## Delhi govt, Ola to collaborate for O2 cylinders' delivery

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

The Delhi government will collaborate with the OLA Foundation and GivIndia to deliver oxygen concentrators to Covid-19 patients recovering under home isolation as well as for those who need it post-recovery under its Oxygen Concentrator Bank (OCB) scheme. On Saturday, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced that the state government is going to start yet another important service, the OCB scheme, in an effort to aid the national capital's residents amid the devastating second wave. "It has been often observed that whenever a person gets infected with the virus, their oxygen level drops. If they are given oxygen immediately, further deterioration of their health can be prevented. If they do not get timely oxygen, things may worsen. Therefore, it is imperative that Covid patients get timely oxygen," Mr Kejriwal said.

Under the scheme, nodal officers have been set up in 11 districts and each district will have around 200 oxygen concentrators. In a notification issued by the Delhi government on Saturday, it said hospital authorities will ensure that doctors are in touch with all those Covid patients who are being given oxygen concentrators. Also, if needed, the patients will be sent to healthcare centres. The maximum duration for which the oxygen concentrator will be provided to patients is two months. "Under the Covid management rules, if the oxygen therapy is needed again the patient will be evaluated by the physician and oxygen concentrator would be provided as per the demand," the notification stated.



People fill their cans from a tanker at a slum near Chanakypuri as water supply was affected in many areas in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

■ Don't want gains made in past few days to be lost all of a sudden: Kejri

## Lockdown extended by one more week in Delhi

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said that the ongoing lockdown in Delhi has been extended till the morning of May 24. It was earlier supposed to end at 5.00 am on May 17. For the past few days, Delhi has been witnessing a steady decline in Covid-19 infections. However, the positivity rate still remains well above 5 per cent — a level considered relatively safe by the WHO.

On April 19, a weekend curfew in Delhi was turned into a full lockdown from the next day in the light of an alarming rise in Covid-19 cases in the national capital which left the city's health infrastructure creaking. Since then, this is the fourth time the lockdown has been extended.

"The lockdown has been extended till 5.00 am next Monday," the chief minister said during his visit to a Covid-19 health facility set up outside the government's GTB hospital.

"We cannot let our guards down now. We do not want the gains made in the past few days to be lost all of a sudden," Mr Kejriwal said and added it was hoped that the situation would get better further in another week.

The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) issued the official order regarding the lockdown extension around 12.30 pm.

"The situation in Delhi has again been reviewed and it has been observed that Covid-19 positive cases and positivity rate is still high and the bed occupancy (oxygen beds/ICU beds) in the dedicated Covid-19 government and private hospitals and nursing homes is also on



**The lockdown has been extended till 5.00 am next Monday. We cannot let our guards down now. We do not want the gains made in the past few days to be lost all of a sudden.**

— Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi CM

the higher side," said the order explaining the rationale for extending the lockdown.

As on Sunday noon, 15,340 (66 per cent) of 23,213 total oxygen beds in the city's Covid-19 wards were occupied. Of the 6,415 total ICU beds, 5,728 (89 per cent) were occupied, the government's app on hospital beds showed.

While no new restriction has been imposed this week, no existing restriction has been lifted too. The general movement of the people and economic activities are prohibited in the lockdown with exemptions for those engaged in essential services and the supply chain of essential goods.

Metro services are suspended and public buses have been asked to cater only to essential service providers. When asked if Delhi Metro service would resume, the chief minister said: "Restrictions will remain as it is this week."

## Grievance cell set up in Delhi for senior citizens

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

The department of social welfare under the ambit of the Delhi government on Sunday set up a team of four officials to attend to distress calls and other queries from senior citizens impacted by the pandemic. The order, which was passed on Sunday, came in the wake of providing utmost care and help to the senior denizens of Delhi.

According to the order, the Delhi government has assigned a team of four officials who have been sent to the office of the divisional commissioner to support helpline number 1077 that is run under the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA). The deployed staff from its department of social welfare would attend to distress calls and other queries from senior citizens impacted by the

pandemic. The order further read that section officer G.C. Meena, senior assistant Kumar Gandharva, and welfare officers Kuldeep Saini and Vijay have been deployed for the task.

"These officials will also coordinate with HelpAge India, Qutab Institutional Area, to utilise the manpower engaged for the new elderly helpline for which the department of social welfare has entered into a MoU with HelpAge India as a project supported by the ministry of social justice and the National Institute of Social Defence," the order stated.

"The helpline staff shall, at all times, be cordial and polite and handle the queries with patience. They shall follow up with each caller to ensure complete resolution of his or her problem/issue," it said.

## Delhi records 6,456 Covid cases, 262 more deaths

**New Delhi, May 16:** The national capital recorded 6,456 fresh Covid-19 cases and 262 fatalities on Sunday while the positivity rate dropped to 10.40 per cent, the lowest in over a month, according to a Delhi government health bulletin.

With this, the total number of cases in the city has risen to 13,93,867 and the death toll to 21,506, it said. This is the third consecutive day when Delhi has recorded less than 10,000 cases. However, the small-

er number of new cases was due to relatively fewer tests, 62,059, conducted on Saturday.

Delhi had reported 6,430 cases on Saturday, the lowest since April 7, with medical experts attributing the lockdown as the main factor behind the dip. The positivity rate was 11.32 per cent on Saturday.

The national capital had recorded its highest positivity rate of 36.2 per cent on April 22.

— PTI

## 'Khan Chacha' owner Kalra arrested from Gurgaon

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

Businessman Navneet Kalra, who is accused of black marketing oxygen concentrators in the national Capital along with an international SIM company called Matrix Cellular Services Ltd, was arrested by Delhi Police from Gurgaon on Sunday evening. According to sources, Kalra has been arrested from his brother-in-law's farmhouse in Gurgaon.

On May 7, 105 oxygen concentrators were



Navneet Kalra

recovered from two upscale restaurants Khan Chacha and Townhall in south Delhi's Khan Market area. The restaurants are owned by Kalra. On Saturday, the police transferred the case to the Crime Branch.

After the arrest of four men — Gaurav, Satish Sethi, Vikrant and Hitesh from south Delhi's Lodhi Colony area on May 5, the next day 419 oxygen concen-

trators were recovered from another restaurant owned by Kalra and a farmhouse in south Delhi. The oxygen concentrators had been imported from China by a private company, Matrix owned by one Gaggan Duggal in partnership with Kalra.

The cost of one oxygen concentrator was between ₹16,000 to ₹22,000. Some of them had a capacity of five litres and some of nine litres. The accused were selling the machines between ₹50,000 to ₹70,000, police said.

## 'Govt will take all steps to check black fungus cases'

**New Delhi, May 16:** Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday said the Delhi government will take all necessary steps and precautions to check cases of black fungus or mucormycosis in the city. The fungal infection is caused by a group of moulds known as mucormycetes present naturally in the environment.

Recently, several states, including Delhi, have reported a rise in the number of black fungus cases among people recovering from Covid-19. "For the black fungus (cases), the Delhi government will take all the steps and precautions necessary," Kejriwal said in a statement.

Dr Ajay Swaroop, chairman of the ENT department at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital here, said the use of steroids in the treatment of Covid-19 coupled with the fact that many coronavirus patients have diabetes could be one of the reasons for the rise in the number of black fungus cases again.

— PTI

## Covaxin for above 45 yrs to last only 1 day: Delhi govt

**New Delhi, May 16:** Delhi has only one day of Covaxin stock left for those aged above 45, healthcare and frontline workers, while Covishield doses for this category can last up to five days, AAP MLA Atishi said on Sunday.

She said 1.18 lakh beneficiaries received the jabs on May 15. Around 10.50 lakh people have got both the doses since the inoculation drive began on January 16.

Delhi has so far received 44.94 lakh vaccine doses for this age group, of which 41.68 lakh have been administered, Atishi said.

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

The capital has received 8.17 lakh doses for the 18-44 age group so far, of which 5.25 lakh have been used till Sunday morning.

Since there are no

Covaxin doses left for this category, all such vaccination centres have been shut. We have six days of Covishield stock left, she said.

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

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

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

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

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

## Kejriwal not giving permission to set up Covid facility in N-E Delhi: Tiwari

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

While the national capital reels under Covid pandemic, political rivalry seems to be coming in the way of the suffering Delhiites. The Kejriwal government on Saturday stood accused of not giving permission to set up an 800-bed facility in Northeast Delhi by BJP MP Manoj Tiwari.

In a letter to the Editors Guild of India, member of Parliament from Northeast Delhi Manoj Tiwari, on Saturday, highlighted how some journalists, who had reported about the "misdeemeanours and negligence" of the Arvind Kejriwal led Delhi government regarding "political vendetta" against efforts by the local administration and social organisation in his constituency to arrange 808 beds for Covid-19 patients, were



Manoj Tiwari

"harassed for reporting the truth from the ground."

The MP has asked the media body to "take note of the situation and direct the Delhi government to not interfere with the functioning of the journalists or create hurdles for them."

Mr Tiwari, in his letter, mentioned how instead of making the facilities for Covid patients at four places in his constituency operational, the infrastructure was dismantled.

He noted how the media personnel, as frontline warriors, have been play-

ing a crucial role during the Covid-19 pandemic by highlighting and raising issues of the common man, which the Delhi government is "trying to suppress."

"It is an unfortunate and shameful act on the part of the government. Journalists are being harassed for reporting the truth from the ground," said Mr Tiwari.

He pointed out how some journalists were removed from the WhatsApp group of the AAP and the Delhi government while mentioning that at the time of the pandemic WhatsApp groups have become the source of information of the Delhi government's daily functioning for the beat reporters.

"By removing journalists from these groups, the Delhi government is putting undue pressure on them to toe their line," he added.

He claimed that the

Delhi government did not ramp up the health infrastructures in the city "despite when the Covid wave had started taking its toll on the city."

Mr Tiwari also mentioned that according to an RTI, the Delhi government "did not buy any ventilator between June 2020 and April 26, 2021, which is a serious offence."

"Instead, its focus is on blame game. They created panic regarding the oxygen supply requirements, changing the figures every day after the court intervened. A similar number of patients in other states need less than 300 MT per day but Delhi wanted 962 MT per day to do what?" said the BJP leader while adding that efforts by local administration and social organisations in his constituency to provide 808 beds had to face "political vendetta" by the Delhi government.

## 22-yr-old held for duping over O2 cylinders

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

A 22-year-old man was arrested for allegedly duping people on the pretext of providing oxygen cylinders, police said on Sunday. The accused has been identified as Jai Kishan, a resident of Jahangirpuri, they said.

During interrogation, accused disclosed that there was no source of income in his family due to lockdown and he knew that there is huge requirement of oxygen cylinders to Covid patients in the city.

Therefore, he planned to cheat people who were in urgent requirement of cylinders. He cheated more than 10 people with amount of around ₹3 lakh. One mobile phone and two SIM cards were recovered from his possession, police said.



Connaught Place wears a deserted look during the Covid-induced lockdown in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

## AAP leaders behind pasting anti-Modi posters, say cops

AAP owns up its role, challenges police to arrest senior party leaders, MLAs

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 16

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Arvind Gautam was behind the posters critical of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Covid-19 vaccination drive that surfaced in the Mangolpuri area, the Delhi Police claimed on Sunday, a day after it arrested 25 people for allegedly pasting them on walls across the city amid the coronavirus-induced lockdown. Gautam is absconding, the police tweeted.

"Police while patrolling to enforce lockdown announced by DDMA, created by GNCTD, noticed walls in several areas being defaced by pasting posters. Accused persons on questioning said an AAP member and president of Ward 47, Arvind Gautam was behind it in Mangolpuri. He is absconding," tweeted the Delhi Police, which comes under the Union home ministry. The police alleged that AAP leaders were involved in pasting the posters in other parts of the national capital as well. The police have regis-

tered 25 FIRs and arrested as many people for allegedly pasting the posters, reading "Modiji humare bachhon ki vaccine videsh kyun bhej diya (PM why did you send vaccines meant for our children to foreign countries)", in several parts of the city.

The AAP on Sunday owned up its role behind pasting the posters. "The AAP is behind the posters. Our party workers have been arrested and hundreds are being detained in different parts of the city. We challenge Delhi Police to arrest senior AAP leaders and party MLAs instead of harassing poor people who paste posters for a little money," said senior AAP leader Durgesh Pathak.

According to the police, an FIR was registered under relevant sections at Mangolpuri police station

earlier this week for defacement of wall adjacent to Kanjhawala Road. There was no details of printing press or publisher mentioned on these posters. From a video footage, those who were pasting these posters around 4 am were identified, the police said.

The accused persons disclosed during interrogation that Gautam, who is a worker of AAP at Sultanpur Majra, had sent instruction on WhatsApp to one Rahul regarding the subject matter of printing and ₹9,000 for printing and affixing these poster or hoarding, they said. Rahul (26), a resident of Mangolpuri, made a graphic image for printing and placed the order with Rajesh via email. Rahul runs a graphic designing shop, police said.

One Anil Kumar (25), a resident of Sultanpuri, is an e-rickshaw driver from whom the hoardings were recovered, police said. Rajesh Sharma (48), a resident of Mangolpuri, is the owner of Addline printing press. This order was given by Rahul via email to Rajesh.



## SHORT TAKES

## 'No new virus strain behind AMU deaths'

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

Professor Abu Qamar, 75, the former dean of the Faculty of Medicine in the Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College and Hospital died here on Sunday of Covid-19 after battling it for nearly three weeks, JNMC principal Shahid Ali Siddiqui said. Qamar died two days after AMU's former proctor, Nasim Beg, 76, died in a New Delhi hospital, where he was shifted to after his condition worsened, his family members said. At least 38 AMU teachers have died of Covid or Covid-like symptoms in the last one month, triggering doubts if any new deadly strain has been in circulation on the AMU campus. These doubts also prompted the varsity's JNMC authorities to send Covid-19 samples from the AMU campus and its neighbouring Civil Lines area for genome sequencing to New Delhi. — *PTI*

## Goa takes over pvt hospital admissions

**Panaji:** The Goa government on Sunday issued an order requisitioning the premises of the private hospitals in the state for providing treatment to Covid-19 patients under the Disaster Management Act. The order stated Covid-19 patients will be admitted in 50 per cent of the total beds in these hospitals as per the directions of designated officers of the government and the payment for the treatment of DDSSY (state-run insurance scheme) beneficiaries will be made by the government. This order, applicable for one month, was issued by State Executive Committee secretary Sanjay Kumar under section 65 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. Citing violation of norms, Goa CM Pramod Sawant on Saturday said the state government will take over the rights to admission in all the 21 private hospitals in the state treating Covid-19 patients from May 17. — *PTI*

## Noted scribe dies of Covid in Bengal

**Kolkata:** Editor of a popular Bengali news channel Anjan Bandyopadhyay died after suffering a heart attack due to Covid-19 complications in Kolkata on Sunday night. According to his family, he was infected by the deadly virus recently and was undergoing treatment at a private hospital. The 56-year-old journalist, who was also the brother of state chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, worked in many reputed media houses including ABP and ETV earlier. At Zee 24 Ghanta, he used to host prime time show *Aapnar Raay (Your Verdict)* which became a hit for his spectacular professionalism.

## HIV+ WOMAN WITH COVID-19 SAFELY DELIVERS BABY

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 16

An HIV positive woman diagnosed with Covid-19 safely given birth to a baby in Odisha's Ganjam district, reports said on Sunday. The newborn girl has tested negative for deadly coronavirus and is stated to be in good condition. According to reports, the HIV positive woman, a resident of Pattapur village in Ganjam district, was admitted to the City Hospital in Berhampur after she complained of labour pain a week ago. She underwent Covid test at the hospital before delivery and the result came out positive. On Saturday, the woman delivered a baby girl through C-section. Following delivery, the Covid test was conducted on the newborn and she was found negative for the deadly virus. Expressing pleasure over safe delivery of the baby, the doctors and nurses of the City Hospital celebrated the occasion by cutting a cake on the premises of the healthcare facility. Hospital authorities said both the mother and her baby were doing well. An HIV test of the newborn will be conducted after 6 weeks, the hospital authorities said.

## 3 BJP MLAs in WB sit on dharna over corona crisis

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI AND PRANMOY BRAHMACHARI**  
KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE, MAY 16

As a two-week-long total lockdown got underway in West Bengal from Sunday morning, three newly elected BJP MLAs — Shankar Ghosh of Siliguri, Sikha Chatterjee of Dabgram-Fulbari and Anandamoy Barman of Matigara-Naxalbari — took to the street unlike many others in their party.

Sitting on a dharna at Safdar Hashmi Chowk in Siliguri in a first-ever move since their party got the Opposition status in the state, the trio started protesting against the Mamata Banerjee government's apathy to the spike in Covid-19 deaths in North Bengal.

A police team came to the spot and asked them to lift their agitation as it was in violation of the curbs on political events. But the trio argued that they maintained social distancing norms. Following an altercation followed, the police detained the three MLAs and released them later.

The state health department informed that the daily spike in deaths and infection was recorded at 147 and 19,117.

Meanwhile, the Eastern Railway informed that local and suburban train services would remain suspended till the state government's next order.

It stated, "As advised, services of all local, suburban & EMU train services over West Bengal will continue to remain suspended till further advice. However, services of other special trains, mail/express special trains, parcel trains & freight trains will continue to run as per schedule, till further advice."

## Maha CM urges family docs to aid in Covid-19 fight

**BHAGWAN PARAB**  
MUMBAI, MAY 16

In a bid to make a fight against the coronavirus pandemic more comprehensive, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has appealed to the family physicians in the state to lend a hand in treating the Covid-19 patients, who are under home isolation. He has also requested the private doctors to extend their services in the Covid care centres in their vicinity.

"Nearly 70 to 75 per cent coronavirus patients are asymptomatic and undergo treatment by staying in home isolation. It makes the role of family physicians very important as they can help in managing the treatment protocols of these patients more effectively," said Mr Thackeray on Sunday.

He was addressing an online medical conference on Covid treatment, which was attended by nearly 17,500 private medical practitioners across the state. The conference was a part of Maharashtra Government's Majha Doctor (My Doctor) initiative launched with an aim of involving family doctors in the state's fight against



Social distancing norms go for a toss as people visit a crowded market during relaxation hours from Covid-induced lockdown in Hyderabad on Sunday. — *PTI*

## Govt: States to get nearly 51L vaccine doses in next 3 days

**New Delhi, May 16:** More than 1.84 crore Covid-19 vaccine doses are still available with states and UTs, while nearly 51 lakh doses are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days, the Union health ministry said on Sunday.

The Centre has so far provided more than 20 crore vaccine doses (20,28,09,250) to states and UTs free of cost, it said.

Of this, the total consumption, calculated based on average up to May 14, including wastages, is 18,43,67,772 doses, according to data available at 7 pm on Saturday.

"More than 1.84 crore Covid vaccine doses (1,84,41,478) are still available with the states and UTs to be administered. States with negative balance are showing more consumption (including

## 'Booked appointments for 2nd Covishield jab to remain valid'

**New Delhi, May 16:** The Union health ministry on Sunday clarified that already booked online appointments for second dose of Covishield vaccine will remain valid and the same will not be cancelled on Co-WIN platform.

It, however, said requisite changes have now been done in the Co-WIN digital portal, as a result of which further online

or on-site appointments will not be possible if the period after first dose date for a beneficiary is less than 84 days.

The Centre had on May 13 extended the gap between the first and second doses of Covishield vaccine to 12-16 weeks based on the recommendations by the Covid Working Group chaired by N.K. Arora. — *PTI*

(including test, track, treat and Covid appropriate behaviour).

The Centre has been supporting the nationwide vaccination drive by providing vaccines free of cost to states and UTs, in addition to several efforts to ramp up its production and supply, the ministry stated. Implementation of the liberalised and accelerated phase 3 strategy of Covid-19 Vaccination has started from May 1 as part of which the government has opened up inoculation for all aged above 18.

Under the strategy, every month 50 per cent of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be procured by the Centre. It would continue to make these doses available to state governments free of cost as was being done earlier. — *PTI*

states and UTs within the next three days.

Vaccination forms an integral component of the comprehensive strategy of the Government of India of containment and management of the pandemic

## Today's vaccine drive in Mumbai cancelled

*In view of cyclone, 580 patients from jumbo Covid facilities shifted to state, civic-run hospitals*

**SHAHAB ANSARI**  
MUMBAI, MAY 16

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has cancelled Covid vaccination scheduled on Monday in view of the IMD alert regarding cyclone Tauktae. The BMC on Saturday night shifted 580 patients from jumbo Covid facilities to state and civic-run hospitals in Mumbai. The IMD has said there is likelihood of heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places in Mumbai on Monday. An orange alert has been

issued for Mumbai and red alert for Raigad district in Maharashtra.

As per Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) warning the Cyclonic storm Tauktae is likely to pass close to Mumbai city. The Mumbai civic body has also informed that the revised schedule will be Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (May 18 to May 20).

According to the IMD, cyclone Tauktae has intensified into a "very severe cyclonic storm" and is expected to reach the Gujarat coast in the evening

► **THE IMD** has said there is likelihood of heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places in Mumbai on Monday. An orange alert has been issued for Mumbai.

hours of May 17 and cross it with wind gusts of up to 175 kmph (109 mph) between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district around the early Tuesday morning.

The BMC had already suspended the inoculation drive on May 15 and 16 to avoid troubles for people

due to the heavy rain and windstorm ahead of cyclone Tauktae.

The BMC has also shifted 580 patients from Covid care centres in the city as a precautionary measure. The BMC on Saturday night shifted 580 patients from BKC (243), Dahisar (183) and Mulund (154) jumbo Covid care facilities to state and civic-run hospitals in Mumbai, the official said.

According to a BMC official, the Central government has directed to keep the time gap of 12 to 16 weeks between two doses

of Covishield vaccine. Therefore, no one except health care workers/front-line workers will be eligible for the second dose of Covishield as vaccination for other categories commenced w.e.f. March 1, 2021.

BMC chief Iqbal Singh Chahal said that the vaccination drive will resume from Tuesday. The BMC will allow walk-in for people above 60 years who have taken their first dose. The other conditions mentioned in the order dated May 12 will remain unchanged.

## Cong leader Satav dies after Covid-19 recovery

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA**  
MUMBAI, MAY 16

Senior Congress leader Rajiv Satav breathed his last on Sunday in Pune's Jehangir hospital days after recovering from the coronavirus infection. The 46-year-old Congress leader was battling with the Covid related complications from the last 23 days. He was also suffering from Cytomegalovirus.

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari, NCP chief Sharad Pawar

and Leader of the Opposition in Maharashtra Assem bly De vendra Fadnavis among other leaders have expressed grief over the death of Satav and paid their rich tributes to him.

In a statement issued by Jehangir hospital said, "Rajeev Satav became RT-PCR swab negative on May 9, 2021. However, after a prolonged illness he succumbed to secondary pneumonia with multi-organ dysfunction on May 16."



A couple, along with their child, walks past a deserted street at Esplanade during the first day of the Covid lockdown in Kolkata on Sunday. — *Pritam Bandyopadhyay*

## Norms on Covid mgmt in rural areas issued

**New Delhi, May 16:** As rural areas see a rise in Covid-19 cases, the Centre on Sunday issued new guidelines for containment of the virus advising that peri-urban and rural areas plan a minimum 30-bedded Covid Care Centre for asymptomatic cases with comorbidities or mild cases where home isolation is not feasible.

Provision of Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) kits should be made at all public health facilities, including sub-centres or health

and wellness centres and primary health centres, the Union health ministry said.

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

► **PROVISION OF Rapid Antigen Test kits** should be made at all public health facilities, including sub-centres or health & wellness centres and primary health centres, the MHA said

structure at all levels to intensify Covid response.

It said Covid Care Centres (CCC) can admit a suspect or confirmed case but should have separate areas for suspected and

confirmed cases with preferably separate entry and exit for each.

"Suspect and confirmed cases should not be allowed to mix under any circumstances," the SOP said.

According to the SOP, in every village, active surveillance should be done for influenza-like illness/severe acute respiratory infections (ILI/SARI) periodically by ASHA with help of Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC).

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

Identified suspected Covid cases should link for testing to health facilities either through Covid-19 rapid antigen testing or by referral of samples to nearest Covid-19 testing laboratory, in accordance with ICMR guidelines. — *PTI*

## Triple lockdown in 4 Kerala dists kicks in from May 17

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 16:** Triple lockdown will come into effect in four Kerala districts reporting the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the state, from Sunday midnight and remain in force till May 23.

The boundaries of the Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Malappuram districts will be sealed as part of the administration's bid to arrest the massive spread of coronavirus,

while the current lockdown will continue in the other 10 districts of the state.

According to the guidelines issued by the Thiruvananthapuram district administration, shops dealing with food, groceries, fruits and vegetables, dairy products, meat and fish, animal fodder, poultry and cattle feed, bakeries will be open on alternate days starting from Monday onwards. — *PTI*



## SHORT TAKES

**1 dead, 5 missing in tug boat mishap**

**Mangaluru:** In less than 24 hours after a tug boat mishap off Mangaluru coast on Saturday leaving one dead, five missing and two surviving, another tug vessel with nine occupants hit the rocks off Kaup coast on Sunday, sources said. The Indian Coast Guard is making efforts amid raging waves to rescue the crew after they sent a video message seeking help, Coast Guard Karnataka commander DIG S.B. Venkatesh said. Coromandel, the tug vessel, owned by Kirosh company, is also contracted by New Mangalore Port Trust (NMPT). Coast Guard vessels and personnel were unable to go near Coromandel in the rough seas even though an ICG Ship escorted the tug from a distance, sources said. On Saturday, one person died and five others were missing after a tug boat contracted by NMPT capsized off Mangaluru coast. Two of the crew members were rescued, while search is on for five others. — PTI

**2 killed, 1 injured in Raj clash, 15 booked**

**Kota:** Two people were killed and one injured in a clash between two groups over alleged illegal mining of soil near an agricultural field along the Piplaj dam in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district, the police said on Sunday. Fifteen people have been booked and 10 of them detained in connection with the violence that took place near Gangpura village under Bhawani Mandi police station area on Saturday afternoon, they said. The deceased have been identified as Giriraj Gurjar and Basantlal Gurjar, the police said. — PTI

**MLA alleges racket over oxygen & beds**

■ **Continued from Page 1** been underway, the patient is on life support, ventilator, etc.” Referring to liquor sales at high prices in the black market due to the lockdown, Mr Mitra sarcastically added: “There is also a popular item which, I found while traveling, is also being sold in the black market. We had quit videshi (foreign) goods during British rule and went for desi (country-made) items. Someone now told me people are shifting to desi from videshi. But a Desi item of ₹100 is sold at anything between ₹1,000 and ₹1,500. I sometimes doubt myself about which group I belong to. I cannot accept it actually.” On Sunday, the TMC MLA clarified: “I do not hold the government responsible for the sale in the black market. I am a representative of the people. If I see someone profiteering while others show me documents, I will protest. Such practices have to be stopped. I am confused to see the police lathi-charging customers in queue at liquor shops when people are dying in absence of oxygen while others are desperately hunting for medicines.”

**Testing, fears a big problem**

■ **Continued from Page 1** several bloated and decomposed bodies were flushed out from the river in this particular region. Ashwini Varma, a social activist, lawyer and president of the Mahararishi Chausa Thermal Power Mazdoor Sangh, claimed that “log darke maare test nahi kara rahe hain” (People are not getting tested as they are scared). It's the fear of testing positive which is apparently preventing the villagers from getting tested. Varma further claimed that besides fear, the lack of infrastructure in Buxar was another major reason for the lack of testing. “Shortage of oxygen, hospital beds and vaccines” continue to hit Buxar, Varma said.

In fact last year, a paper published on “Coronavirus Testing Hesitancy among the Masses in India”, by Priya Thappa and Kirtan Rana, had said clearly that “in spite of the clear instructions from the government that no loss of wages should be suffered by people undergoing quarantine, many people, especially the ones belonging to the economically weaker sections of society, still face the fear of losing their livelihood”. One of the other major factors contributing to the hesitation could be the long waiting period between the sample collection and declaration of reports. The paper further claimed that “apart from these spheres, the lesser discussed issue is the social stigma associated with it”.

**Cyclone Tauktae wrecks havoc; 98 villages hit in K'taka, 4 dead**

**Bengaluru, May 16:** With Cyclone Tauktae wreaking havoc in the coastal and surrounding malnad districts of Karnataka, a total of four deaths have been reported in the state so far, officials said on Sunday.

According to a situation report by Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority officials, till this evening, 98 villages, 20 taluks in seven districts of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan have been affected by the cyclone so far.

Among the 98 villages affected, a maximum of 31 are from Uttara Kannada district.

▶ **A TOTAL** of 516 people have been evacuated so far, as per the situation report and 253 people are taking shelter in the 10 relief camps that have been opened

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

While one fisherman who went to tie his boat died in Uttara Kannada as he got hit by another boat, a person died in Udupi due to electric mishap, they said, adding that one death each were reported in Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga due house collapse and lightning

respectively. A total of 516 people have been evacuated so far, as per the situation report, and 253 people are currently taking shelter in the 10 relief camps that have been opened.

Damages to a total of 216 houses, 491 poles, 27 transformers, 3,000 meters of lines have been reported so far, it added.

Meanwhile CM B.S. Yediyurappa today asked in-charge ministers of coastal districts and deputy commissioners (DCs) there to visit affected areas and carry out rescue and relief works.

Mr Yediyurappa called ministers in-charge of coastal districts and DCs and took stock of the situation there, his office said

in a statement. He has directed the officials to call the ministers concerned or him directly if in need of any emergency assistance from the government.

According to a tweet on Sunday evening by the CMO, the CM once again spoke to three DCs and the chief secretary in the evening and directed the Dakshina Kannada DC to take necessary measures to rescue the crew of a tug boat that is caught in the sea.

He also directed the chief secretary to stay in touch with the Centre for the rescue of crew, and make all the necessary arrangements, including chopper if required. — PTI



NDRF team undertakes restoration work after a tree collapsed due to strong winds during the formation of Cyclone Tauktae in Panjim on Sunday. — PTI

**Cops use force, lob teargas at farmers in Hisar**

**Hisar, May 16:** The police on Sunday lobbied tear gas shells and used force to disperse a group of farmers who tried to march towards the venue where Haryana CM Manohar Lal Khattar was scheduled to inaugurate a Covid hospital. The police said the farmers jumped police barricades and they had to use force and resort to tear gas shelling to disperse them. Mr Khattar inaugurated the newly-built 500-bedded Chaudhary Devi Lal Sanjeevani Covid Hospital in Hisar and farmers were stopped before they could reach the venue, the police said.

The farmers claimed that a few of them were injured in police action.

The police said farmers pelted stones at the force and some personnel were injured and subsequently hospitalised. — PTI

**2 sons of separatist leader held for anti-India slogans**

**YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, MAY 16**

The Jammu and Kashmir police late Saturday night arrested both sons of separatist leader Muhammad Ashraf Sehrai, who died recently after contracting Covid-19 in jail.

The police sources said the brother-duo are among about 20 people who have been booked under relevant provisions of law by the police for chanting anti-India and pro-freedom slogans during the funeral of Sehrai in his native village in frontier Kupwara district earlier this month. Sehrai's third son Junaid Ashraf, a militant commander, was killed by security forces during a gunfight in capital Srinagar in May last year.

The police, however, strongly denied that Sehrai's sons Raashid Ashraf Khan and Mujahid Ashraf

▶ **THE POLICE,** however, strongly denied that the separatist leader's sons have been detained under stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) as was reported by a section of media

Khan have been detained under stringent Public Safety Act (PSA) as was reported by a section of media and also stated in some social media posts earlier Sunday. The J&K police in a tweet said, “Both sons of Late Sehrai & 4 others have been arrested for raising anti-national slogans during (his) funeral. But they haven't been booked under PSA. Please, don't spread rumour.”

The family sources said that a police party from Kupwara assisted by the Srinagar police raided the Sehrais' home in Srinagar's Bulbul Bagh,

Barzulla area late Saturday night and took Raashid and Mujahid along. Earlier, two other close relatives of the separatist leader too were arrested in connection with an open FIR lodged at the Tekipora-Sogam (Kupwara) police station on May 7.

77-year-old Sehrai, who was the chief of Tehrik-e-Hurriyat Party, died in a Jammu hospital on May 6, a day after he was shifted there from a jail of garrison town of Udhampur. He was early next morning laid to rest at “martyrs” cemetery in his native village Tekipora in Lolab Valley of Kupwara with only a limited number of mourners, including close family members, being allowed to offer funeral prayer “with adherence to all necessary protocols.” The entire area was placed under strict security restrictions.

**Slight fall in Covid cases give relief**

■ **Continued from Page 1**

deeper into rural areas, the Centre has issued guidelines on the containment and management of infections in semi-urban, rural and tribal areas that have much fewer means to detect, contain and treat the deadly virus. The districts have been asked to set up a dedicated testing centre in each village to increase surveillance and testing, have Covid Care Centres in blocks and districts must have dedicated Covid hospitals. All mild patients have to be kept in home isolation with proper monitoring.

Since tribal communities are geographically and socio-economically relatively segregated and have poor access to health care, the SOP suggests strengthening community-based management through Gram Sabha and having Mobile Medical Units (MMUs) that have medical officers, pharmacists, staff nurses

and lab technicians. This team will also carry out Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT), take samples for RT-PCR, provide treatment for mild illness, and help establish referral linkage with district health care centres. It has been advised to utilise tele-medicine and tele-consultation to bridge the geographical inaccessibility in tribal areas.

Patients, their contacts and suspected cases have to be closely monitored for oxygen levels and lung infection. The SOP prescribes home isolation for mild cases to be managed with paracetamol, and if needed other drugs like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as Naproxen or ibuprofen. In mild cases, if symptoms persist beyond seven days (persistent high-grade fever/ worsening cough) low dose oral steroids — 6 mg/Methylprednisolone 32mg —

the counselling, family members of the boys were advised to take proper care of their wards and keep a watch upon their activities, actions and behaviour.”

The witnesses had said that Gul drew the graffiti amid chanting of anti-Israel slogans by an imprudent crowd and subsequently some angry youth put several Palestine flags atop the platform crisscrossing a passageway. Local sources had said that it was a group of youth of Padshahi Bagh who “feeling disturbed and highly passionate over the mayhem caused by the Israeli forces in Gaza Strip” had persuaded Gul to draw the graffiti.

However, later in the evening, the police visited Gul's home and, his elder brother Badr-ul-Islami was quoted by kashmirwalla.com portal saying that they forced him to deface the graffiti and then took him along.

The police said, “During can be used. For moderate cases, Tab Ivermectin or HCQ, inhalational Budesonide can be given. Anticoagulation shall also be provided.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday held a meeting with the chief ministers of Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and Puducherry to review the Covid situation. The states have been asked to intensify the vaccination drive to cover the population as soon as possible. The priority has to be given to 45-plus people who are going for their second dose.

In several parts of the country nearly no vaccinations took place Sunday as vaccines stocks ran out. However, the vaccines are likely to be easily available in the coming week as the CoWIN app has been recalibrated to reflect the dose interval of Covishield vaccines from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks.

**Cyclone heads for Guj, Maha; storms likely in Mumbai**

■ **Continued from Page 1**

evening, the IMD said earlier. It is likely to cross the Gujarat coast with wind gusts of up to 175 kmph between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district in the early hours of Tuesday morning. In New Delhi, the home minister asked states to ensure uninterrupted power supply, particularly in

hospitals where patients are recovering in ICUs and wards. Mr Shah also said power supply to cold chains storing vaccines should not be hit. It was also decided that district magistrates should ensure oxygen supplies in their districts are not affected.

Sources said the home minister was particularly concerned that health

services during the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic should not be affected in any manner. Adequate arrangements are being made to ensure that the supply of oxygen, medicines and transportation for critical patients to hospital should not be hampered during Cyclone Tauktae. The states were advised to take help from the

National Disaster Response Force. NDRF teams have already been deployed in different states to ensure that makeshift facilities, specially where Covid patients are undergoing treatment, that may be hit by strong winds should be shifted to beds in properly built structures and hospitals. To closely monitor the

■ **Storm to reach Gujarat coast today, cross it Tue morning**

**Health staff on standby in Guj, 1.5L being shifted**

**Ahmedabad, May 16:** An estimated 1.5 lakh people are being shifted from low-lying coastal areas in Gujarat while 54 teams of the NDRF and SDRF remained deployed on Sunday in view of the IMD's warning that the very severe cyclonic storm Tauktae will reach the state coast on Monday evening and cross it on early Tuesday morning.

The government has asked hospitals treating Covid-19 patients to ensure a power backup and arrangements are also being made to ensure uninterrupted generation of medical oxygen in the eight manufacturing units and its supply.

Armed forces are also kept on standby to deal with any eventuality. “With the cyclone likely to affect power supply, hospitals treating Covid patients have been asked to ensure power back-up. Arrangements have also been made to ensure uninterrupted generation of medical oxygen in the eight manufacturing units and buffer stock is also created,” chief minister Vijay Rupani told reporters after attending a cyclone review meeting in Gandhinagar.

The government has also decided to halt the Covid vaccination drive on Monday and Tuesday as the health staff will be kept on standby for the next two days to meet any emergency arising out of the cyclonic storm, he said.

**Water level rises in many dams as rains lash Kerala**

**Kochi, May 16:** The water level in many dams across Kerala showed a rising trend on Sunday even as cyclone Tauktae moved away from the state's coast after wreaking havoc.

India Meteorological Department has issued orange alerts — a warning indicating heavy to very heavy rain — on Sunday in three districts.

The catchment areas of many dams in the central Kerala districts have reported heavy rains, prompting the authorities to sound alert warn-

ings before upping their shutters.

The Thrissur district administration said spillway shutters of the Peringalkuthu dam will be opened if the water level crosses the permitted limit of 419.41 metres.

In a statement, the administration has urged the people living on the banks of Chalakudy river to be cautious. Shutters of Malankara dam in Idukki district will be opened on Sunday, as the water level has increased, the authorities said. — PTI

teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), ten teams of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), as well as teams of the fire brigade, police, and coast guard have been deployed.

“If required, the Armed Forces will also assist in relief and rescue operations, and have been kept on standby”, Mr Rupani added.

He said that as the power supply is going to be disrupted, about 1,500 hospitals treating patients have been asked to make arrangements for power back-up through generators to ensure that treatment is not affected. — PTI

**42 die in Gaza, Israel warns war will go on**

■ **Continued from Page 1** residential buildings and storefronts over the course of five minutes after midnight, destroying two adjacent buildings and one about 50 yards (meters) down the road. At one point, a rescuer shouted, “Can you hear me?” into a hole in the rubble. “Are you OK?” Minutes later, first responders pulled a survivor out and carried him off on an orange stretcher. The Gaza health ministry said 16 women and 10 children were among those killed, with more than 50 people wounded, and rescue efforts are still underway.

Earlier, the Israeli military said it destroyed the home of Gaza's top Hamas leader, Yahiyeh Sinwar, in a separate strike in the southern town of Khan Younis. It was the third such attack in the last two days on the homes of senior Hamas leaders, who have gone underground.

Israel appears to have stepped up strikes in recent days to inflict as much damage as possible on Hamas as international mediators work to end the fighting and stave off an Israeli ground invasion in Gaza. But targeting the group's leaders could hinder those efforts. A US diplomat is in the region to try to de-escalate tensions.

In its airstrikes, Israel has levelled a number of Gaza City's tallest office and residential buildings, alleging they contain Hamas military infrastructure. Among them was the building housing the offices of the Associated Press, Al Jazeera and other media outlets.

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



# THE ASIAN AGE

17 MAY 2021

## Covid-19 in India is more than a crisis of numbers

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's exhortation to states to be transparent with the Covid-19 numbers — mainly about the number of people who test positive and those who fall victim to the virus — could not have come at a more opportune time than now as there have been reports of numbers being fudged by several states, including Gujarat and Delhi. Worse, the officials have still not yet completed counting the bodies of Covid victims floating in the river Ganga even as those bizarre images have created consternation among Indians living in India and abroad.

The world has lived with the virus for one-and-a-half years. Medical science and responsible administrations all over the world have come out of their initial confusion on the ways to deal with the micro-organism, and have developed fairly elaborate treatment protocols. There are also proper guidelines on ways to count a death as a Covid-related one. However, the reports coming from Gujarat inspire little confidence as the number of death certificates issued in the state far outnumber the recorded Covid deaths; it also bears little comparison with the number of total deaths in the previous years, giving room for suspicion that the government has discounted some. Such allegations are not limited to Gujarat; there are states which refuse to list a death under the Covid head once the patient tested negative and then succumbed to medical conditions triggered or exacerbated by the viral infection. Accurate data is critical to the proper analysis of the impact of the pandemic that would guide policymakers and scientists into taking proper decisions. Hence the Prime Minister is right in telling the states that they should be transparent with numbers "without pressure of high numbers showing

adversely on their efforts".

The bodies floating in the holy river points to a deeper malaise. Governmental apathy last year had lakhs of guest workers, women and children included, walking hundreds of kilometres to their homes after losing their livelihoods in the cities in the aftermath of the national lockdown. There was no government to help them out, and hundreds of Indians died on the road. The government, in fact, has no data on them. They presented this nation with images that generations will remember with a sense of shame and guilt.

A repeat of what Indian roads saw last year is happening on its rivers now. Villagers with infected lungs that disallowed them to breathe could not get oxygen, a hospital bed, a shot of life-saving drug and die helpless deaths. Their bodies are flung in the waters, as relatives have no wherewithal, financial and otherwise, to attend to the dead and accord them a decent farewell. The bodies of Indians float, or caught in the current, or stuck in the rocks or nibbled by crows and vultures. What we miss is the presence of a government, central and state, mandated to protect the right to life, guaranteed by the Constitution. All we need is a government that is willing to do a minimum job.

The Prime Minister is right: we should have accurate numbers. Yes, we miss the numbers. But we miss a government more. And it shows.

## Bengal gov must follow norms

West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar's public observations in the context of post-poll violence in the state appear to be a bundle of contradictions. Last Friday, visiting Dhubri district in Assam, where according to him 175 people from his state fled to be safe from post-poll violence, Mr Dhankhar expressed "concern" that chief minister Mamata Banerjee had maintained "silence" on this issue and on the subject of post-poll violence as such. He noted at the same time, "I should not say much as the cases are under investigation."

Well, if the cases are being investigated, then the CM has clearly not been silent. So, where is the misdemeanour on her part that the governor darkly hints at? Without a shred of evidence, and when investigation is on, the governor seems to have done his best to give a communal touch to the violence. This is a matter of record and deserves to be discussed in the state legislature.

If the governor's numerous observations were to be placed before a commission of inquiry, it might become amply clear that the burden of his song is that law and order does not exist in the state and that the constitutional machinery has broken down. If such is indeed his extraordinary reading, it is not clear what prevents him from reporting exactly this to the Centre, and recommending President's rule.

It is noteworthy that Mr Dhankhar, although a Constitutional head with severely circumscribed authority except the discretionary powers to appoint a CM, has been touring various parts of the state to study first-hand the post-poll violence situation. He has visited Cooch Behar and Nandigram. His most unusual Assam visit was also in the same context.

The state government frowned on these trips (when an inquiry is on). These did not deter him. For a governor, to make repeated forays into the countryside is unconventional, to say the least. It is akin to the role that Opposition parties, journalists, and NGOs play. In a formal communication, the chief secretary has now urged Mr Dhankhar to desist from further trips since the state has just been placed under a lockdown to deal with Covid. It is to be seen if the governor's wanderlust gets the better of constitutional propriety.

### THE ASIAN AGE

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Editor in Chief

Printer & Publisher: K. SUDHAKAR

The Asian Age office is located at: New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Phone: (011) 23211124.

Published and Printed on behalf of and for

Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited, Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002 at BFL Infotech Ltd., C-9, Sector-III, Noida -201301.

London: Quickmarsh Ltd, 8th Floor, Block 2, Elizabeth House, 39 York Road, London, SE1 7NQ.

RNI Registration number: 57290/94

Subhani



## Israel's brutality in Gaza has dented heroic image



Mohan Guruswamy

The ongoing Israeli military assault on the Gaza Strip is horrific in its ferocity and far exceeds any limits of justifiable and even acceptable retribution. There was once an image of the Israelis being a people of heroic dimensions and sterling character forged by the many tyrannies that the Jewish diaspora have suffered, including the industrial scale programme of extermination by Nazi Germany.

The founding of the State of Israel held out the promise of a new nation that, being tempered by their experiences and motivated by the high idealism of its founders, would give the world something to look up to. It was this idealism that inspired India to be among the first three nations to recognise Israel.

The first generations of Israeli leadership, drawn from the European Jewry known as the "Ashkenazim", were generally liberal and progressive. This was seen in early Israel when most agriculture was under cooperative farming organised around the kibbutz, which also entailed a communal (sharing) lifestyle.

The Histadrut, the labour union, which was the bedrock of the Labour Party and political movement led by Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, was also Israel's biggest employer and owned much of its transportation, dairy, construction and services sectors. Israel was intended as a progressive, socialist and democratic state. It has moved along quite a bit away from that now.

During the initial years of its existence, Israel heroically defied the odds and many writers like the late Leon Uris captured this new promised spirit of the Israeli people. His 600-page masterpiece *Exodus* created a sensation in 1957 and

propelled him to the highest literary fame. It was a detailed and heroic chronicle of European Jewry from the turn of the last century to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948.

*Exodus*, while being the epic story of a nation seeking a state, was also the touching love story of Ari Ben Canaan, an Israeli freedom fighter, and Kitty Fremont, an American nurse who joins Canaan's fight for a Jewish state.

In 1958, after it became one of the most popular novels of the century, *Exodus* was made into a film by Otto Preminger and featured Paul Newman as Canaan. It was probably the first time that Hollywood had portrayed a Jewish man in such heroic dimensions. The book and the movie contributed to the mythologising of the Israeli fighter as an indomitable and idealistic hero.

But it is not that Israel lacked such men those days. The founders of the Palmach, the elite strike force of the Haganah that was the forerunner of the Israeli Defence Forces, were men like Moshe Dayan, Haim Bar Lev, Ezer Weizmann, Yigael Yadin, Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Allon, who were all men of heroic proportions and each one could have been a prototype for Canaan.

But it was Yigal Allon who came closest of all to it. Allon, who died in 1980, began life as a Haganah field commander in 1936 when he was just 18 years old. In 1941 he was one of the founders of the Palmach, the Haganah's commando-style strike unit. In 1948 he was made a lieutenant-general and commanded Israeli forces in the south that "liberated" the Negev in what became to be known as the War of Independence. He retired from the IDF in 1950, at the ripe old age of 32.

In 1960, Allon went to Oxford's St. Anthony's

College to study international relations. He later entered public life and became deputy prime minister in 1967 and devoted himself to seeking a durable peace with the Palestinians.

The Haganah was founded in 1920 as the underground military organisation of the Jewish *Yishuv*, or community, and was then a loose organisation of various local defence groups. The Palmach was its first mobilised unit, gained battle experience in the Second World War as the Jewish Brigade under British command. The Palmach consisted of many first generation "Sabra", or Palestine-born Israelis, who were also fluent Arabic speakers, which gave it the ability remain concealed among the Arab population and to wage a lethal unconventional war on them.

The British learned as much from this experience. Captain Orde Wingate, who later led the famous Chindits Brigade in Burma, learned his art of fighting from the Palmach. Wingate was a charismatic dreamer who, though a Christian, had joined the Jewish movement and led the joint British-Haganah's Special Night Squad which fought in Ethiopia. Wingate's African experience found expression in Burma and its successes led all traditional armies to establish special warfare forces to give them similar deep strike capabilities.

The combination of unconventional warfare by the British SAS and US Special Forces and deep and precision air strikes by modern fighter and bomber aircraft in Afghanistan has now given

**The continued occupation of the West Bank since 1967 and the continued building of settlements in defiance of UN resolutions and in the face of world opinion are ugly and contemptuous manifestations of a narrow nationalism**

modern warfare a new dimension. Of the three battalions who formed the original Chindits Brigade, the 2/4 Gurkha Rifles is still with the Indian Army and carries the Chindits tag with great pride. Wingate was born in Nainital in 1901 and died in Manipur in 1944.

The Israeli Defence Forces' heroic sheen has now largely dissipated with its emergence as a mighty army with the latest weapons and America's unstinted support. It is now no longer David with a slingshot facing mighty Goliath. In the four major wars that it has fought, the IDF had worsted numerically superior Arab armies with ease. It is difficult to remain a heroic David against such adversaries for long.

The Palestinian intifada is now the heroic struggle of a people seeking to find their identity and their freedom. Just like Israel was before 1948.

The atrocities during the War of Independence can even be justified by the fact that there was a war declared on the Jewish State by all its Arab neighbours, Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and supported by the entire Arab world. The moth-eaten Israel mandated by the UN was not tenable in terms of security, and addition of territory to gain security could have even been justified.

But the continued occupation of the West Bank since 1967 and the continued building of settlements in defiance of UN resolutions and in the face of world opinion are ugly and contemptuous manifestations of a narrow nationalism.

Israel is no longer the valiant and beleaguered underdog, but increasingly seen as an increasingly arrogant oppressor seeking to crush another old nation under its jackboots. The sad truth about Israel is that Benjamin Netanyahu is fact and Ari Ben Canaan is fiction.

*The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.*

### LETTERS

#### SCAM IN MAKING

The black fungus disease has been notified by the Haryana government. Does merely notifying a disease serve any meaningful purpose? This is another attempt to suppress figures just like in the instance of Covid-19. Experts have pointed out that overdose of medicines, especially steroids, is the root cause of this lethal disease. Each hospital has developed its own customised treatment protocol for Covid-19, be it plasma therapy or remdesivir. Why has the government failed to notify the standard line of treatment across India?

**Deepak Singhal**  
Noida

#### BHUTAN A FRIEND

WHILE INDIA has historically come to Bhutan's aid — from helping in the 5-year plans since the 1960s, or during natural calamities — so, too, the small Himalayan nation has come to the rescue of its mighty neighbour as the second surge of Covid-19 pandemic overwhelms India's healthcare system and leads to a shortage of medical oxygen. It has assured to supply 40 metric tonnes of oxygen every day — an equivalent to 10,000 oxygen cylinders — starting next month. Thank you, Bhutan.

**Sankar Paul**  
Chakdaha, West Bengal

#### TIMELY WARNING

THE RSS CHIEF, Mohan Bhagwat, has pulled up the Narendra Modi government for complacency in dealing with the pandemic. Both the RSS and the two Indian Communist parties are known to put institutional discipline above individuals. In 1997, the Left did not allow its leading light, Jyoti Basu, to become Prime Minister. The BJP, on the other hand, in avid pursuit of power, is seen to be compromising the RSS ethos. Given the context, the warning is indeed timely. If neglected, the BJP, too, could face estrangement from people much like the fate of the Indian Left today.

**R. Narayanan**  
Navi Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to N.J. Ravi Chander (May 13). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

Sanjaya Baru  
Sanjayovacha



## The mango as a metaphor: The pluralism of our palate & politics

For the second year in a row Covid-19 has disrupted India's mango exports to the United States because the two governments have not been able to devise a solution to the problem of securing US government clearance of export consignments. India's mango exports to the US were the fruit of prolonged negotiations that finally came to fruition as part of the new strategic partnership inaugurated by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

In June 2007 I was presented with the opportunity of handing over the first basket of mangoes legally imported into the United States to then US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice at the annual meeting of the US-India Business Council (USIBC) in Washington D.C. I insisted that the USIBC include in the basket that I was to hand over to Ms Rice at least ten different varieties of mangoes, and not just the most popular export variety — Alphonso or Hapus.

While presenting the basket I said to Ms Rice that it represented India's national motto — unity in diversity. Every Indian regards the mango as the "king of fruits", I told her, but each In-

dian has his/her own favourite variety, and most of us can get very argumentative about which is the best variety.

The diversity in the subcontinent's preference for its favourite fruit is a metaphor for an India that is home to around 1,500 varieties of mangoes. While Maharashtra's Alphonso and Gujarat's Kesar dominate the export basket, other varieties like Andhra Pradesh's Banganapalli and Uttar Pradesh's Langra are also being increasingly marketed around the country and exported overseas.

But the immensely popular mango is not the only edible symbol of unity in diversity. Consider the case of the biryani. The social media has seen from time to time animated arguments about which is the best biryani among biryani aficionados and the authority of food columnists has often been summoned to pass judgement. Yet, between the biryani of Malabar, Bengal, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Chettinad and a dozen other places, it is difficult to select the best.

In the larger discussion on India's plurality and diversity, the culinary preferences of over a billion and a quarter people does not get the attention it deserves.

Just as most Indians who agree that democracy is the best form of governance would have sharp differences on which political party they would support in the interests of preserving that democracy, most of us would be united in our view that Indian food is the tastiest in the world, and yet argue about which part of India offers the most scrumptious cuisine. Unity in diversity is written into our social and cultural DNA.

Foreigners used to imagining that Indian food is tandoori chicken and mattar paneer or dosa and sambar are always surprised by the diversity of what Indian kitchens can conjure up. From imagining that there is something called Indian cuisine, they slowly get used to the idea that there may well be a north, east and south Indian cuisine. But when they discover that "Rayalaseema ruchulu" can be very different from "Telangana vantakalu", they give up looking for a common thread.

I have so far made a series of fairly obvious observations. Who would disagree with any of these statements? If we are a land of 1,500 mangoes, we are also the land of 15,000 gods and goddesses and 150,000 local deities. While

the Constitution recognises 22 official languages, close to 20,000 languages and dialects are spoken as the mother tongue across the subcontinent.

The miracle of Indian democracy and development is that despite this diversity the country has remained united and the roots of national unity now run deep into the soil of Mother India. Against this background, the desperate attempts by certain political elements to impose one religion, one language, one election on this diversity is an insult to the national imagination and an affront to our national personality.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the resistance to the "Hindu-Hindu-Hindustan" project has most recently been asserted by a clutch of regional political parties in the non-Hindi-speaking states. The electoral victory of the Trinamul Congress in West Bengal and the DMK in Tamil Nadu are only recent examples. They remind those who need reminding that diversity has never been India's weakness. Rather, it is its strength since it prevents the emergence of majoritarian authoritarianism.

If there is one lesson that the present political leadership in New Delhi should re-learn, it is that India cannot

be governed as if it was a land of homogeneity. Unity is rarely imposed on a nation from the outside. It is the product of shared values, interests, culture and experience.

No Indian has to be commanded to love the mango. That love is second nature to us. No Indian can be commanded to love just one variety of the mango. That assertion of independent thinking too is second nature to us.

There is much that political and religious leaders can learn from the preferences of the Indian palate. The national popularity of a dosa and a tandoori naan has not been imposed on us by any overbearing political philosophy of national unity. They have become popular across the length and breadth of the subcontinent because, like the majestic mango, we have all come to like their taste. We have our own favourite biryani and we love our own language, but we recognise that we belong to one nation.

*The writer is an economist, a best-selling author and former adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. His latest book is India's Power Elite: Class, Caste and a Cultural Revolution.*



## SHORT TAKES

## VENEZUELA FLAYS 'KIDNAPPING' OF EIGHT SOLDIERS

**Caracas, May 16:** Venezuela on Saturday condemned what it said was the “kidnapping” of eight soldiers by armed groups operating on the Colombian border, where clashes have been ongoing for nearly two months. “During the fighting, eight professional soldiers were captured and on May 9 we received proof of life,” Venezuelan Defence Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said in a televised statement.

“We denounce before the international community... the appalling kidnapping of these soldiers,” he said.

Venezuela’s armed forces have engaged in clashes with Colombian armed groups along the border since March 21, displacing thousands of civilians who fled to Colombia.

Venezuela does not name the armed groups it blames for the unrest, apart from calling them “terrorists” or linking them to drug trafficking.

## EXTENSION OF CJ TENURE WRONG: ZIMBABWE COURT

**Harare, May 16:** Zimbabwe’s High Court on Saturday ruled that President Emmerson Mnangagwa’s controversial extension of tenure of the country’s top judge is illegal.

Mnangagwa announced last week that he had extended Luke Malaba’s term of office by five years, just hours before the Chief Justice was to due to retire, a move seen as aimed at consolidating the president’s power. Three high court judges sat through Friday night as lawyers argued over the legality of the extension.

The court ruled on Saturday that “Malaba ceased being a judge and Chief Justice of Zimbabwe at 0000hrs on 15 May 2021.” Malaba has been accused of favouring Mnangagwa’s administration. He dismissed opposition leader Nelson Chamisa’s presidential election petition following the 2018 vote.

Decrying the ruling as “baseless and meaningless”, the government said the case was “a typical case of judicial overreach”.

## TWO KIDS FOUND DEAD IN ARIZONA, MOM DETAINED

**Tempe (Arizona), May 16:** Two children were found dead Saturday morning in a suburban Phoenix apartment after a woman flagged down a police officer and said she was hearing voices telling her to kill her children, police said.

Officers went to her apartment and found a nine-year-old girl and a seven-year-old boy dead with “obvious signs of physical trauma,” Tempe Police spokesman Sgt. Steven Carbajal said. The mother who flagged down a Tempe officer about 7 a.m. near a police station is Yui Inoue, 40, Carbajal said in a statement.

Inoue was arrested and charged with two counts of first-degree murder, he said. No other identities have been released. Police said they had been called to the same apartment earlier Saturday morning because of a domestic dispute involving a husband and wife. Carbajal said the couple was separated, and no one was arrested. The children were safe in bed at the time, and there was no apparent reason to call child welfare authorities.

## EASING AFRICA'S ECONOMIC WOES AT VIRTUAL MEET

**Paris, May 16:** French President Emmanuel Macron will on Tuesday host a virtual summit of European and African leaders to seek solutions to the financial crisis in Africa, where governments hope to boost development while managing massive debts.

The “summit on financing African economies” was planned last year after the International Monetary Fund calculated that African economies risk running into a total “financial gap” of \$290 billion by 2023.

Economic growth on the continent, which experienced its first recession last year, is expected to rebound to 3.4 percent this year and 4.0 percent in 2022. A moratorium on debt servicing, put in place in April 2020 by the G20 and Paris Club group of creditor nations, has given Africa a bit of breathing space, suspending the repayment of 5.7 billion euros (\$6.9 billion) by 50 countries.

The G20 also convinced China, by far the biggest bilateral lender on the continent, and private creditors to take part in future debt negotiations.

## Israel kills 42 as Bibi warns war will go on

Prime Minister says country wants to levy a heavy price on the militant Hamas rulers of Gaza City

## Qatar FM wants attacks to stop

**Doha, May 16:** Qatar’s foreign minister on Saturday met with the political chief of Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas and called for an end to Israel’s bombardment of Gaza, state media said.

“The international community must act urgently to put an end to Israel’s brutal and repeated attacks against civilians in Gaza and (Jerusalem’s) Al-Aqsa mosque,” Qatar’s Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said in a statement carried by the official QNA news agency.

He also assured Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh of Qatar’s support for its “Palestinian brothers”.

Their meeting came amid days of Israeli air strikes on Gaza, the group’s stronghold, in response to rocket fire by Palestinian militants in the coastal strip.

The violence was sparked by clashes between Palestinian

demonstrators and Israeli forces at the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound, one of the holiest sites in Islam.

Hamas issued an ultimatum for Israel to remove its forces, then started firing rockets into the Jewish state.

“We warned that the blessed Al-Aqsa mosque was a red line and we told Netanyahu: ‘Don’t play with fire,’” Haniyeh, who lives in exile, told hundreds of supporters at a pro-Palestinian demonstration in Doha.

He was speaking hours after an Israeli air strike flattened a building housing international media outlets, including *The Associated Press* and Qatar-based *Al Jazeera*.

Qatar, a key Hamas backer, has used its vast natural gas riches to provide aid and loans to Israeli-blockaded Gaza as well as mediating with Israel.

— AFP



People inspect the rubble of the Yazegi residential building that was destroyed by an Israeli airstrike, in Gaza City, on Sunday. — AP

## BIDEN TALKS TO ABBAS ON GAZA ESCALATION

**Ramallah, May 16:** Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has spoken on the phone with President Joe Biden and urged the US to intervene in the conflict and “put an end to Israeli attacks on Palestinians”.

The official Palestinian news agency *Wafa* says Abbas on Saturday updated Biden on the escalations across the Palestinian territories and said he was working to halt “the Israeli aggression against our people and to reach a ceasefire”. The report says Abbas also told Biden that “security and stability will be achieved when the Israeli occupation ends,” adding that Palestinians are ready and willing to work toward peace with international mediators.

Biden stressed the need to achieve calm and reduce violence in the Mideast, noting intensive American diplomatic efforts to that end. That’s according to the *Wafa* statement.

Biden told Abbas on Saturday that Hamas must stop rocket attacks on Israel, the White House said.

Biden “stressed the need for Hamas to cease firing rockets into Israel,” a statement said.

Biden also “underscored his strong commitment to a negotiated two-state solution as the best path to reach a just and lasting resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

— AFP

## Why were news offices destroyed, asks media

**Gaza City, May 16:** News organisations demanded an explanation Saturday for an Israeli airstrike that targeted and destroyed a Gaza City building housing the offices of *The Associated Press*, broadcaster *Al-Jazeera* and other media outlets.

AP journalists and other tenants were safely evacuated from the 12-storey al-Jalaa tower after the Israeli military warned of an imminent strike.

Three heavy missiles hit the building within the hour, disrupting coverage of the ongoing conflict between Gaza’s Hamas

rulers and Israel.

At least 145 people in Gaza and eight in Israel have been killed since the fighting erupted on Monday night.

“The world will know less about what is happening in Gaza because of what happened today,” AP President and CEO Gary Pruitt said.

He said the American news agency was seeking information from the Israeli government and engaging with the US State Department to learn more.

Mostefa Souag, acting director-general of *Al-Jaz-*

*eera Media Network*, called the strike a “war crime” and a “clear act” to stop journalists from reporting on the conflict. Kuwait state television also had office space in the now-collapsed Gaza City building.

“The targeting of news organisations is completely unacceptable, even during an armed conflict. It represents a gross violation of human rights and internationally agreed norms,” Barbara Trionfi, the executive director of the International Press Institute, said.

— AP



Antonio Guterres

## ISRAEL STRIKES ON GAZA 'DISTURB', 'DISMAY' UN CHIEF

**United Nations, May 16:** UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was “dismayed” by civilian casualties in Gaza and “deeply disturbed” by Israel’s strike on a building containing international media outlets, a spokesman said.

Guterres spoke as Israel pummeled the Gaza Strip with air strikes, killing 10 members of an extended family and demolishing the 13-floor Gaza building housing Qatar-based *Al Jazeera* and the *Associated Press* news agency, with Palestinian militants firing back barrages of rockets. “The Secretary-General is dismayed by the increasing number of civilian casualties, including the death of 10 members of the same family.”

— AFP

## ISLAMIC LEADERS HOLD EMERGENCY MEET ON GAZA

**Beirut, May 16:** The 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation held an emergency virtual meeting Sunday over the situation in Gaza calling for an end to Israel’s military attacks on the Gaza Strip.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan urged the international community to work on ending Israel’s military operations against Gaza and to allow aid to reach the coastal region. Speaking from Ramallah in the West Bank, Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki blasted Israel calling it an “apartheid state” that is practicing “crimes and brutality against our people in Gaza.”

He added that the latest round of violence that began on Monday has displaced 10,000 people.

— AP

## EGYPT SENDS AMBULANCES TO BRING WOUNDED

**Cairo, May 16:** Egypt opened its Rafah border crossing with Gaza Saturday to allow 10 ambulances to transport Palestinians seriously wounded in Israeli air strikes to Egyptian hospitals, medical officials said.

Egypt “exceptionally opened the Rafah crossing to allow 10 Egyptian ambulances into the Gaza Strip to transport wounded Palestinians... to be treated in Egypt,” a medical official said.

An official at the Gaza border said the opening was “exceptional” because it is usually closed during public holidays including Eid al-Fitr.

The Egyptian public health authority said that the holiday was being suspended for some Egyptian doctors and nurses.

— AFP

## Israel faces highest ever rate of rocket attacks

**Jerusalem, May 16:** Israel has faced the highest ever rate of rocket attacks on its territory during its latest confrontation with the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas that controls Gaza, the army said Sunday.

Since Monday, armed groups in Gaza have fired about 3,000 rockets towards Israel, surpassing the pace during an escalation in 2019 and during the 2006 war with Lebanon’s Hezbollah, said Major General Ori Gordin.

Gordin, commander of Israel’s home front, presented a graphic to reporters with data of

rockets fired toward Israel in past years and now.

During an escalation in November 2019 between the army and the Islamic Jihad group, 570 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel over three days. And in the 2006 war with the Iran-backed Hezbollah, a total of 4,500 rockets were fired at Israel over 19 days, according to the data Gordin shared with reporters.

Asked if the pace since Monday was the highest ever rate of rocket attacks on Israeli territory, Gordin said: “Not only do I agree, this is what I present.”

— AFP

**03 days: 570 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel during escalation between army and Islamic Jihad group in Nov. 2019.**

**19 days: A total of 4,500 rockets fired at Israel during 2006 war with the Iran-backed Hezbollah.**

## Protesters in US cities decry airstrikes

**Los Angeles, May 16:** Pro-Palestinian protesters took to the streets of Los Angeles, Boston, Philadelphia and other US cities to demand an end to Israeli airstrikes over the Gaza Strip.

Thousands of people shut down traffic on a major thoroughfare in west Los Angeles on Saturday as they marched two miles from outside the federal building to the Israeli consulate. The protesters

waved signs that said “free Palestine” and shouted “long live intifada,” or uprising. In San Francisco, a raucous crowd banged drums and yelled “Palestine will be free” as they marched across the Mission district to Dolores Park. A similar scene played out in Boston as protesters walked a short distance from Copley Square to the Israeli Consulate for New England, blocking traffic.

Footage on social media shows protesters unfurl a banner in the colours of the Palestinian flag with the words “Free Palestine” while standing on top of the awning of the building where the consulate is located. In Washington, thousands of protesters streamed from the Washington Monument and to the National Archives.

In Philadelphia, demonstrators filled Rittenhouse Square to decry US suppo-

rt for Israel. At a protest in Pittsburgh, one speaker called on lawmakers to put restrictions on how Israel can spend aid from the United States.

The protests were stoked by five days of mayhem that left at least 145 Palestinians dead in Gaza and eight dead on the Israeli side. The violence, set off by Hamas firing a rocket into Israel on Monday, came after weeks of mounting tensions and

heavy-handed Israeli measures in contested Jerusalem. Israel stepped up its assault and slammed the Gaza Strip with airstrikes Saturday, in a dramatic escalation that included bombing the home of a senior Hamas leader, killing a family of 10 in a refugee camp and destroying a building that house the offices of *The Associated Press* and other media.

— AP

## BIG CAT Animal owner maintains 2017 murder charge against him for fatal shooting was in self-defence

## Police: Missing Texas tiger has been found safe, healthy

**Houston, May 16:** A tiger that frightened residents after it was last seen briefly wandering around a Houston neighbourhood has been found after a nearly week-long search and appears to be unharmed, police announced Saturday evening.

In a short video tweeted by Houston police, Cmdr. Ron Borza can be seen sitting next to the tiger, petting the animal and saying it has been a long week searching for it. “But we got him, and he’s healthy,” Borza said as the wife of the man police allege is

the animal’s owner sat next to him and fed the tiger with a baby bottle.

The tiger was being held at BARC, the city of Houston’s animal shelter, but was expected to be taken Sunday morning to the Cleveland Amory Black Beauty Ranch, an animal sanctuary in Murchison, Texas, located south-east of Dallas. Authorities had been searching for the tiger, a nine-month-old male named India, since it was spotted May 9 in a west Houston neighbourhood. At the time, it was nearly shot by an off-duty

deputy before being whisked away in a car by Victor Hugo Cuevas, whose police allege is the owner.

At a news conference later Saturday evening, Borza said that Cuevas’ wife, Giordiana, turned over the tiger to police on Saturday after a friend of hers reached out to officials at BARC. “It is Victor’s tiger. That’s what I was told by (Giordiana Cuevas) ... She says they’ve had that animal for nine months,” Borza said. He alleged that the tiger was passed around to different people but that Cuevas’

wife knew where the tiger was at all times this week as authorities searched for it. Police are still trying to determine where exactly the tiger was held this week and if any charges related to having the tiger will be filed.

Tigers are not allowed within Houston city limits under a city ordinance unless the handler, such as a zoo, is licensed to have exotic animals. But Cuevas’ attorney, Michael W. Elliott, on Saturday night continued to insist his client doesn’t own the tiger, saying, “I am not sure it

makes any difference who technically owns India as he does not have a birth certificate or title.”

“Victor was not the primary owner of India nor did India stay with him the majority of the time,” Elliott told *The Associated Press*. “Victor was however involved in the caretaking of India often. Victor loves India as anyone else would love a favorite pet ... He treated India with love and fantastic treatment in all respects.” Cuevas was arrested Monday by Houston police and charged with evading arrest for

allegedly fleeing his home with the tiger after officers had responded to a call about a dangerous animal.

At the time of his arrest by Houston police, Cuevas was already out on bond for a murder charge in a 2017 fatal shooting in neighbouring Fort Bend County. Cuevas has maintained the shooting was self-defence, Elliott said. Cuevas was released on a separate bond for the evading arrest charge on Wednesday. But prosecutors in Fort Bend County then sought to have him held with no bond on the

murder charge.

After an all-day hearing on Friday, a judge revoked Cuevas’ current \$125,000 bond on the murder charge and issued a new bond for \$300,000.

He remains jailed. During Friday’s court hearing, Waller County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Wes Manion, who lives in the Houston neighbourhood where the tiger was seen, testified he interacted with the animal for about 10 minutes to make sure it didn’t go after someone else.

— AP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,732.55	0.09
Nifty 50	14,677.80	-0.13
S&P 500*	4,173.85	1.49
Dollar (₹)	73.28	0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.05	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,110.146	0.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.44	2.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.645	-0.023

\* As of Friday/Saturday

Cairn picks \$70b Indian assets in US for seizure

The United Kingdom-based oil major Cairn Energy has identified \$70 billion of Indian assets overseas for potential seizure to collect \$1.72 billion due from the government — a move if successful will put India in league with Pakistan and Venezuela which faced similar enforcement action over failure to pay arbitration awards. These assets are across several jurisdictions, sources said without giving further details.

Special drive to clear GST refunds by month end



The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has launched a special drive to clear all pending GST refunds by month-end. The 15-day GST refund drive is on the lines of an ongoing similar drive organised by the CBIC for refund of customs and duty drawback claims. The CBIC said there is a need to focus on timely disposal of all pending GST refund claims to provide immediate relief to business entities.

Airtel offers free pack to 5.5 cr low-income users

Bharti Airtel on Sunday announced offering a recharge pack of ₹49 for free to as many as 5.5 crore low income customers to help them stay connected during the pandemic. Additionally, customers buying the ₹79 recharge coupon will now get double the benefits, the company said. It said the scheme is worth ₹270 crore, covering credit of ₹49 mobile plan for 5.5 crore low income group customers.

Geojit Financial Q4 net profit nearly doubles

Reflecting the buoyancy in the markets, Geojit Financial Services has nearly doubled its net profit at ₹36.8 crore for the quarter to March, up 95 per cent from ₹18.8 crore a year ago, when the market was ravaged by the pandemic last year. The board of the company, which is leading distributor of mutual fund SIPs, has also decided to enter the International Finance Centre in Ahmedabad with an AIF.

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited. Printed at BFL Infotech Ltd, C-9 Sector 3, Noida-201301. Published at 219, N D Tiwari Bhawan, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi-110002. Editor: T.Venkatram Reddy, RNI Registration number 30074/09, Air surcharge Re 1. © All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission of The Editor, Financial Chronicle ® is prohibited.

Data shows recovery in manufacturing Power use up despite Covid

New Delhi, May 16: Power consumption in the country grew by around 19 per cent in the first fortnight of May to 51.67 billion units (BU) over the same period last year, showing recovery in industrial and commercial demand of electricity, according to the power ministry data.

Power consumption in the first fortnight of May 2020 was 43.55 BU. The power consumption in the entire month of May last year was 102.08 BU.

During the first fortnight of May this year (from May 1 to 14), peak power demand met or the highest supply in a day touched the highest level of 168.78 GW (on May 6, 2021) and recorded growth of over 15 per cent over 146.54 GW (peak met) recorded in the same period in 2020 (on May 13, 2020).

The power consumption in April grew nearly 40 per cent to 118.08 BU. Power consumption in April 2020 had dropped to 84.55 BU from 110.11 BU in the same month in 2019, mainly because of fewer economic activities following the imposition of lockdown by the government in the last week of March 2020 to contain the spread of deadly Covid-19.

The power consumption also fell in May 2020 to 102.08 BU from 120.02 BU in May 2019.

Similarly, peak power demand met or the highest power supply in a day also slumped to 132.73 GW in April last year from 176.81 GW in the same



month in 2019, showing the impact of lockdown on economic activities.

The fewer economic activities also resulted in a fall of peak power demand in May 2020 to 166.22 GW from 182.53 GW in May 2019. Davinder Sandhu, advisor, Primus Partners said, “Energy is derived demand, and with onset of summer and the productive pre-monsoon cycle of the Indian economy, an uptick is always expected.”

Sandhu who is also a former Advisor at World Bank said, “Both energy demand and supply have risen by 25-40 per cent over March-May 2021, with thermal PLFs (plant load factor or capacity utilisation) rising to 75 per cent and more, after many quarters. This is aided by the opening of the economy in Q1 (January-March 2021), with rising economic output as well as sharp uptick in exports.”

The second wave of lockdowns will certainly

impact economic activity, and in turn, energy demand. The larger than usual increase in part is attributed to lower base, and as well as to the pent up demand being executed now, he added.

After a gap of six months, power consumption had recorded a 4.6 per cent year-on-year growth in September 2020 and 11.6 per cent in October 2020.

In November 2020, the power consumption growth slowed to 3.12 per cent, mainly due to the early onset of winters. In December 2020, power consumption grew by 4.5 per cent while it was up 4.4 per cent in January 2021.

Power consumption in February this year recorded at 103.25 BU compared to 103.81 BU last year. But 2020 was a leap year. In March this year, the power consumption grew nearly 22 per cent to 120.63 BU compared to 98.95 BU in the same month of 2020.

— PTI

Markets to witness robust IPO line up in H2 of 2021

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 16

While the government's proposed privatisation drive has been hit by the Covid's second wave, a strong initial public offerings (IPOs) pipeline of privately owned companies is building up for the second half of calendar year 2021.

Several new names have filed draft red herring prospectus and some of them have already received market regulator Sebi's approval.

In the last few days some new names have filed DRHP like Go Airlines, Penna Cement Industries, Nuvoco Vistas Corp (Nirma Group's Cement Company), Supriya Lifescience, Krsnaa Diagnostics, Aptus Value Housing Finance,

In the last few days some new names have filed DRHP like Go Airlines, Penna Cement Industries, Nuvoco Vistas Corp, Supriya Lifescience, Krsnaa Diagnostics, Aptus Value Housing Finance, Devyani International and Windlas Biotech.

Devyani International and Windlas Biotech.

Zomato, Aditya Birla Sun Life AMC, Glenmark Life Sciences, Shriram Properties have also filed DRHP last month for their respective initial public offerings.

Sona BLW Precision Forgings' proposed Rs 6,000 crore IPO received Sebi nod last week. Another IPO by Shyam Metalics and Energy

worth ₹1,100 crore is awaited after getting Sebi approval.

In the first half of 2021 so far 19 IPOs have successfully listed on the bourses and only four of them are trading below their public issue price.

Among these, three government owned companies listed were Indian Railway Finance corporation, Powergrid Infrastructure Investment Trust and RailTel Corporation Of India.

Meanwhile, the much awaited IPO of Life Insurance Corporation of India is getting pushed back as the health crisis has also hit the bureaucracy badly with many key officials infected by the coronavirus, slowing decisions on privatisations, among other proposed reforms, said a report.

Hero MotoCorp to foray into electric two-wheeler market

New Delhi, May 16: The country's leading two-wheeler maker Hero MotoCorp is looking to launch an electric model next year and mark its entry into the segment, according to a senior company official.

Bullish on the electric vehicle (EV) vertical, the company is utilising its Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Stephanskirchen (Germany) based R&D set-ups to develop its own products.

Besides, it has tied up with Taiwan-based Gogoro Inc to bring the latter's battery swapping platform to India. The partners have also decided to collaborate on electric vehicle development to bring Hero-branded, powered by Gogoro network vehicles to market.

“We are trying to launch one of the EV products in fiscal year 2022, and you will see multiple actions, whether it is our own product or a swap product

or with Gogoro. All of those actions you will see in the next calendar year,” Hero MotoCorp CFO Niranjan Gupta said.

In order to tap the segment, the two-wheeler maker has already invested in Bengaluru-based EV startup Ather Energy, which already has introduced models in the market. He said the company's R&D centres have been working to develop products based on fixed charging system.

— PTI

COVID CLAIMS RISE MANIFOLD FOR HEALTH INSURANCE COS

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 16

Commensurate to the rise in Covid-19 cases, insurers are witnessing a surge in claims. Compared to the September-October period, Covid-related claims have gone up by more than three times.

“When the country is witnessing three to four lakh Covid cases every day and all hospitals are running beyond their bed capacity, a significant percentage of patients are also making insurance claims. The insurance industry is seeing a significant surge in claims,” said Dr S Prakash, managing director of Star Health and Allied Insurance.

According to Sanjay Datta, Chief Underwriting, Claims and Reinsurance, ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company, the industry has seen a three-fold rise in Covid claims in April compared to September-October 2020. Though the industry-wide loss ratios for FY21 are not yet out, insurers expect that it would be much more than 100 per cent.

However, during the first half of last fiscal, the claims of non-Covid cases were considerably down due to the lockdown. But now, he said, claims related to elective procedures have once again tapered down.

“We are only receiving claims of emergency non-Covid cases,” said Prakash.

Hester in talks with Bharat Biotech to make Covaxin

New Delhi, May 16: Hester Biosciences on Sunday said it has tied up with the Gujarat government to explore production of Covid-19 vaccine through technology transfer from Bharat Biotech.

The Ahmedabad-based firm said it has already initiated the discussions with Bharat Biotech in this regard. “A triparty consortium has been formed with the government of Gujarat as the lead partner, to explore the prospects of manufacturing the Covid vaccine through technology from Bharat Biotech,” Hester Biosciences CEO and MD Rajiv Gandhi said in a statement.

The discussions are currently ongoing with Bharat Biotech towards reviewing the infrastructure at Hester; the technology adaption process and the regulatory compliances, he added.

Based on the outcome of the review, the next course of action will be determined, he noted. Hester Biosciences is a



leading player in the animal healthcare segment. It is the second largest poultry vaccine manufacturer in the country.

Only three vaccines have so far been approved to be sold in India — Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik V.

Sputnik V has been approved to be imported from Russia by Dr Reddy's, but is yet to be widely available in the country.

Last week the Delhi government urged the Centre to use its special

power to allow more firms to manufacture vaccines.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying the Centre should share the vaccine formula of the two manufacturers with other capable pharmaceutical companies to scale up production in the country.

He said the Centre can also terminate the monopoly on vaccine production through the patent law.

— PTI

VACCINE, GLOBAL CUES MAY INFLUENCE INDIAN MARKETS

New Delhi, May 16: Equity markets this week are likely to follow the quarterly earnings outcome of listed companies, pace of vaccination drive in India and global market trends for further direction, according to analysts. “In absence of any major event, participants will be closely eyeing the performance of global indices, US bond yields, movement of rupee against the US dollar, and crude oil prices.

Religare Broking vice-president (research) Ajit Mishra said, “Needless to say, Covid-19-related updates and progress of the vaccine drive will also be in focus.”

On the earnings front, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, Indian Oil Corp, Havells, Hindalco and

Federal Bank are some of the prominent names who will be announcing their results during the week along with several others, Mishra added.

The quarterly earnings from Canara Bank, JK Tyre & Industries, Havells India, JK Lakshmi Cement, JSW Steel and State Bank of India will also be watched by investors this week.

“Going forward, market will track the pace of vaccination, trajectory of active cases curve and management commentary of companies,” Shibani Kurian, senior executive vice-president at Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Co, said.

Investors would also track the WPI-based inflation data to be announced on Monday.

— PTI

Centre plans to amend depositors insurance law

New Delhi, May 16: In a bid to ensure timely support to depositors of stressed banks, the government may bring amendment to DICGC Act in the monsoon session with the objective to provide account holders easy and time-bound access to funds to the extent of the deposit insurance cover.

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

The amendment to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act, 1961 is the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister and the Bill is almost ready, sources said.

It is expected that the Bill will be tabled in the upcoming monsoon session after being vetted by the Union Cabinet,

● The amendment to the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) Act, 1961 is the budget announcement made by the Finance Minister and the Bill is almost ready, sources said.

● Once the Bill becomes the law, it will provide immediate relief to thousands of depositors who had their money parked in stressed lenders such as PMC Bank and other small cooperative banks.

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

DICGC, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Reserve Bank of India, provides insurance cover on bank deposits.

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

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

It is to be noted that the enhanced deposit insurance cover of Rs 5 lakh is effective from February 4, 2020. The increase was done after a gap of 27 years as it was static since 1993. The cover is provided by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the RBI. With increased insurance cover, the banks are paying a higher premium of 12 paise against 10 paise per Rs 100 deposited without any additional burden on account holders.

— PTI

CHANGING TIMES

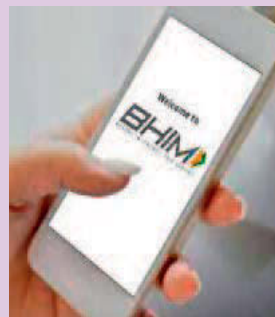
Ticket size of cash withdrawals at ATM rises

Covid wave spikes digital payments again

New Delhi, May 16: The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a behavioural change in usage of cash with people withdrawing larger amounts from ATMs but preferring to make digital modes to make payments, said experts.

The ferocity of the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic has scared people, forcing them to withdraw larger amounts from the ATMs with a view to avoid frequent visits. The money thus withdrawn is mostly held for emergency use and often payments are being made through UPI and other digital modes.

Talking about the behavioural change in currency usage, Sarvatra Techno-



logies founder and MD Mandar Agashe said that in view of the lockdown and social distancing norms, people are not venturing out to banks and ATMs as frequently.

“The average ticket size of withdrawals at any given time has gone up by almost 20 per cent, as peo-

ple withdraw in larger quantities and prefer to hoard, pre-empting medical or any other form of emergencies, which ultimately is not consumed as much.

“The average ticket size of withdrawals which earlier ranged between 2,000-3,000 now has invariably gone up by 20 per cent to ₹3,000-4,000 across both rural and urban India,” Adashe said.

He further said UPI was taking care of small-ticket transactions with the average ticket size constant at Rs 1,000.

Owing to this behavioural shift, daily average transactions on IMPS have now gone up to Rs 9,000 which was earlier in the range of around Rs

6,000-7,000, he said.

“The second wave of the pandemic has had a significant impact on the handling and management of cash.

“This has in turn brought about substantial shift in behavioral patterns among the masses which will play out in favour of digital transactions in the long run,” he added.

Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) is an instant interbank electronic fund transfer service through mobile phones.

According to the RBI's latest data, the outstanding currency in circulation on May 7 was ₹2,939,997 crore, up from ₹2,858,640 crore on March 26.

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Shankar bags high jump gold in US

**New Delhi:** Indian high jumper Tejaswin Shankar has claimed a gold medal at the Big 12 Outdoor Track and Field Championships in Manhattan, USA. Representing Kanساس State University, Tejaswin cleared 2.28 metres on Saturday, making a facility record. It was also the season's finest performance for the Indian but a centimetre short of his personal best and the current national record of 2.29m which he created in 2018. University of Oklahoma's Vernon Turner (2.25m) and Texas Tech University's Jequan Hogan (2.11m) claimed the silver and bronze respectively. This was Tejaswin's second successive gold at the event. — PTI

## Covid-free Hussey off to Australia

**Chennai:** Having recovered from Covid-19, Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey left for Australia on Sunday via Doha, a top official of the IPL franchise said. Following an RT-PCR test, the former Australia batsman had returned negative for Covid-19 on Friday, paving the way for his departure in the early hours of Sunday. "Yes, Hussey has left for Australia via Doha by a commercial flight. He left in the early hours of Sunday," CSK CEO K.S. Viswanathan said. Hussey, who had first tested positive for Covid-19 during the now-suspended Indian Premier League, is expected to reach home on Monday. — PTI

## Bryant inducted into Hall of Fame

**New York:** Los Angeles Lakers icon Kobe Bryant was inducted posthumously into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame on Saturday part of a star-studded group that also included Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett. Bryant was inducted as part of the Class of 2020, almost 16 months after he and his 13-year-old daughter Gianna were killed in a helicopter crash along with seven others in southern California. Bryant's wife, Vanessa Bryant, took the podium Saturday to speak movingly about his love for basketball, his family, his teammates and his fans. "You did it. You are in the Hall of Fame now. You are a true champion, not just an MVP. You are an all-time great," Vanessa said. — AFP

## Countdown begins for Paralympics

**Tokyo:** As Japan struggles to slow infections ahead of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, officials in Japan held an event marking 100 days to go to the start of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. The event was held at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government building with strict corona counter-measures in place. Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike in her opening remarks paid tribute to all the medical professionals fighting against Covid-19 and also thanked all the businesses in Tokyo that have been cooperating with the latest state of emergency requirements. Koike went on to point out that Tokyo will be the only city to have hosted the Paralympic Games twice and lauded the barrier free initiatives that have been implemented in the city thanks to the hosting of the Paralympics. — AP

## Indian women likely to tour Oz

**New Delhi:** The Indian women's cricket team is set to travel to Australia in September. India, who have played only one series amid the Covid-19 pandemic, tour England next month to play their first Test in seven years besides three ODIs and as many T20s. Australia pacer Megan Schutt dropped a hint that India will be visiting in September though Cricket Australia is yet to announce the schedule. The tour is expected to comprise ODIs and T20 Internationals. "We have got a tour against India in mid-September," Schutt said on a Cricket Podcast. — PTI

## TIM AND AGAIN

Paine says Kohli will always be remembered as world's best

**Melbourne, May 16:** Virat Kohli seems to have left an indelible mark on Australian Test captain Tim Paine, who says he will "always remember" the Indian skipper for being the world's best batsman, capable of also getting under the opposition's skin with his competitiveness.

Kohli and Paine have had a fiery rivalry which goes back to India's 2018-19 tour of Australia. Their on-field spats were an interesting sub-plot during the historic show-down in which India became the first Asian country to win a Test series Down Under.

"For Virat Kohli, I've said many times, he seems like the type of player you would love to have on your team. He is competitive. He is the best batsman in the world," Paine said on the 'Gilly and Goss' podcast.

"He (Kohli) is challenging to play against and he can get under your skin because he is so good and he is so competitive. But yeah, for me from where I came from, sharing a feud with him four years ago, He is certainly someone I will always remember," he added.

Interestingly, last year Paine had said that Kohli is "just another player" in the Indian team who "doesn't really bother me".

He had also stated that the Australian team "loves to hate" the superstar for his awe-inspiring abilities with the bat.

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

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



Virat Kohli and Tim Paine in this file photo.

## Sachin reveals he battled anxiety for 10 to 12 years

**New Delhi, May 16:** Cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar on Sunday said he battled anxiety for a major part of his 24-year-old career before realising that his pre-game quirks were an important part of his preparation.

Talking about mental health, which has gained significance in the Covid times with players spending lot of time in bio-bubbles, Tendulkar said acceptability is the key.

"Over period of time I realised that besides preparing physically for a game, you have to prepare

yourself mentally also. In my mind the match started long before I entered the ground. The anxiety levels were very high," Tendulkar said in an interaction organised by Unacademy.

"I felt the anxiety for 10-12 years, had many sleepless nights before a game. Later on I started accepting that it was part of my preparation. Then I made peace with times I was not able to sleep in the night. I would start doing something to keep my mind comfortable."

That "something" included shadow batting,

watching TV and playing video games in the wee hours of the day. Even making his morning cup of tea helped him prepare for the game.

"Making tea, ironing my clothes also helped me prepare for the game. I would pack my bag the day before the game, my brother taught me all of it and it became a habit. I followed the same drill even in the last match I played for India," he said.

Tendulkar said a player is bound to go through ups and downs but it is important to accept when one is feeling low. — PTI

## VIRAT VS KANE DEBATE TURNS UNSAVOURY

**London, May 16:** Former England skipper Michael Vaughan on Sunday launched a sarcasm-laden counter at Salman Butt, wishing that the ex-Pakistan skipper had shown such "clarity" of thought while "fixing matches", like the one that was on display while trashing his Kane Williamson greater than Virat Kohli viewpoint.

Vaughan told New Zealand's host broadcaster Spark Sport that had Black Caps captain Kane Williamson been an "Indian, he'd be the greatest player in the world".

"But he's not because you're not allowed to say that Virat Kohli is not the greatest, because you'd get an absolute pelting on social media. So, you all say Virat is the best purely to get a few more clicks and likes, few more numbers following here."

"Kane Williamson, across formats, is equally the best. I think the way he plays, the calm demeanour, his humbleness, the fact that he is silent about what he does," Vaughan said.

Speaking on his YouTube channel, Butt, who was banned from cricket for 10 years for the spot-fixing scandal in 2010, which was later reduced to five years, slammed Vaughan for stirring up an unnecessary controversy by drawing comparisons between Kohli and Williamson. "Kohli is from a country that has a huge population. So, he will have a bigger fanbase. Moreover, no other batsman in the world has 70 international centuries. He has dominated the batting rankings for a long period because his performances have been outstanding. So, what is the need of this comparison," Butt said. — PTI

## OLYMPIC | PREPARATION

## Sindhu sings Sang's praises

**New Delhi, May 16:** The lack of competitions before the Olympics is a major concern for Indian shuttlers but not so much for P.V. Sindhu, who trusts her Korean coach Park Tae Sang to create match situations for her in training itself.

Owing to the raging Covid-19 pandemic, the Badminton World Federation has been forced to cancel the remaining three Olympic qualifiers in India, Malaysia and Singapore. These were to be the last set of events before the Tokyo Games in July-August.

Asked if cancellations will affect her preparations, Sindhu said: "Well, we were thinking that Singapore will be the last event before Olympics but now we don't have another option, so I am playing matches against different players and my coach Park is trying to create match situations for me in training."

"Different players have different styles like Tai Tzu (Ying) or Ratchanok (Intanon) have different styles of play but Park is there to guide me, to prepare me for it."

"Obviously, we will be playing each other after a few months and there will be something new in our games, so I will have to pre-



P.V. Sindhu

pare for that," she added.

Sindhu doesn't train with the rest of the Indian Olympic-bound team. She has been training at the Gachibowli indoor stadium in Telangana and does her fitness training at Suchitra academy.

The 25-year-old endorsed BWF's decision to cancel the events, saying while it is sad that competitions could not take place but but life is more important than sports.

"It is sad that the whole world has come to a standstill but before sports-persons, we are human beings and life comes first."

"If tournaments happen, we don't know if we will be safe, we might think we will be but we can't be sure because we don't know from where this virus will come." — PTI

## BHAKER TO WRITE BA EXAMS WHILE SHOOTING IN CROATIA

**New Delhi, May 16:** Inside her hotel room in Croatian capital Zagreb, India's Olympic medal hope Manu Bhaker is juggling shooting-related activities and studies. However, a day before the Tokyo-bound Indian shooting contingent hits the range for its first training session in Croatia, Bhaker's pistol will give way to a pen and the shooting gear to her study materials, as she logs in for her BA fourth semester exam.

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

The continental tournament and Bhaker's exams will run almost concurrently but she is relieved that the dates of her events are not clashing with the papers.

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

## FABULOUS WIN

## ■ Schmeichel hails Leicester's historic win

**London, May 16:** Kasper Schmeichel described leading Leicester to the club's first ever FA Cup as a dream come true after he played a huge role in beating Chelsea 1-0 on Saturday.

Youri Tielemans's stunning strike just after the hour mark separated the sides in front of the largest sports attendance in England since the coronavirus pandemic hit, with 22,000 fans at Wembley.

But Schmeichel had to rescue his side late on with brilliant saves from Ben Chilwell and Mason Mount.

"I've dreamt about this since I was child," said Schmeichel, whose dad Peter Schmeichel won three FA Cups with Manchester United.

"We have talked about wanting to win trophies. The performance today, the grit and determination, I'm so proud of everybody, everybody contributed to get to the final. Everyone has played and been sensational."

Even when Schmeichel was eventually beaten, Chilwell's late equaliser against his former club was ruled out for offside



Leicester goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel (right) and Wes Morgan hold the trophy aloft after winning the FA Cup in London on Saturday. — AP

after a VAR review. "Thank you VAR! What an amazing technology," said Tielemans.

## SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS

Leicester players Hamza Choudhury and Wesley Fofana showed support for the Palestinians after winning the FA Cup final. English midfielder Choudhury and French defender Fofana were

seen holding a Palestinian flag.

Choudhury had the flagged draped over his shoulders as he collected his winner's medal after beating Chelsea 1-0.

A social media post from Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny also showing his support for the Palestinian people has been hit by a backlash from Jewish fans. — AFP

## Spurs continue last-four quest

## JUVENTUS PIP INTER TO KEEP ALIVE CL BID

**London, May 16:** Harry Kane scored his 22nd Premier League goal of the season as Tottenham Hotspur beat Wolves 2-0 on Sunday to maintain their hopes of a top-four finish.

England captain Kane fired Spurs ahead on the stroke of half-time before Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg doubled their lead in the 62nd minute.

Victory left Spurs in sixth place, five points behind fourth-placed Chelsea, with a maximum of six points available to them from their final two league games.

The top four in the Premier League are assured of a place in the 2021/22 Champions League.

Already crowned Premier League title-winners Manchester City and Chelsea will contest this season's Champions League final in Porto on May 29.

Earlier, Crystal Palace twice came from behind to beat Aston Villa 3-2, with Tyrick Mitchell's first goal for the club sealing victory six minutes from time.

Victory lifted south London club Palace to 13th. — AFP

**Milan, May 16:** Juan Cuadrado scored twice, including a late penalty, as Juventus beat Inter Milan 3-2 to keep their Champions League hopes alive on Saturday in a game where three spot kicks were awarded and both teams finished a man down.

Juve moved up to fourth equal on points with third-placed AC Milan and two points ahead of Napoli who both play on Sunday.

The win ended the 20-match unbeaten run for Antonio Conte's Inter who had denied Juventus a 10th consecutive league title this season. "It was important for us to win so we can keep hoping," said coach Andrea Pirlo.

Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty after 24 minutes but turned in the rebound to bring his tally to a Serie A leading tally 29 goals this campaign. — AFP

## Djokovic, Nadal set up final clash

**Rome, May 16:** World number one Novak Djokovic on Saturday battled past Italian Lorenzo Sonego to set up a clash with nine-time winner Rafael Nadal for the sixth time in the Italian Open final.

Defending champion Djokovic won through 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2 in 2hr 44min against the 33rd-ranked Italian after second seed Nadal earlier swept past American Reilly Opelka 6-4, 6-4.

Djokovic had earlier survived a three-set battle with Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas in their rain-delayed quarter-finals.

The five-time Rome winner had been trailing 6-4, 2-1 when the tie was halted overnight.

But he came back to win through 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 after 3hr 16min.

Djokovic and Nadal, who will be facing each other for the 57th time, last played in the 2020 French Open final which the Spaniard won.

The pair have won 14 of

the last 16 Rome titles between them while Nadal leads their head-to-head in finals in the Italian capital 3-2.

Djokovic had two match points in the 12th game of the second set of his semi-final before Sonego forced a third set to the delight of the home crowd in the Foro Italico.

The Serb saved three break points in the first game of the third set, coming back from 0-40 before powering towards his 11th Rome final.

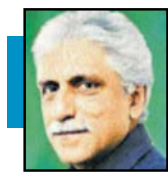
"I think I bounced back very well after the second set and 0-40, maybe if he started with a break up in the third it would be different," said Djokovic.

"I've only myself to blame for not closing the match in the second set, I could have and should have."

"First of all I need to recover. I don't have much time but hopefully I'll have fresh legs necessary to have against Rafa."

— AFP

## Dravid as NCA head has excelled in making Indian cricket stronger



Ayaz Memon Over The Top

Former Australia captain Greg Chappell has credited Rahul Dravid for India's pre-eminent position in cricket in the past few years. Chappell says Dravid understood the Aussies system of excellence, picked his brains (and of others from

his country) and replicated it successfully as coach of the under-19 and India A teams and now as director of the National Cricket Academy.

The ICC Test rankings put out last week seem to support his contention. India are top of the pops at no.1, New Zealand no. 2

and England no. 3. Australia, vying with India for the top place not too long back, have slipped to no. 4.

Barring a few weeks here and there, India have been no. 1 in the Test rankings for almost five years, which is a remarkable achievement. It shows consistency of performance, the only yardstick for excellence. This is true for India not just in Tests, but also in the other formats.

Fundamentally, India's current strength is based on a regular supply of high quality players. This

was the case with the Australians almost since the time cricket went Down Under. The West Indies too, till three decades back. And therein lies a message.

The West Indies faded away after a decade or so after the Packer Series, but the Australians continued to be strong, and in fact got better. What this showed was that it is not enough to just have a legacy of outstanding talent, also effective systems and structures for sustaining excellence.

Which brings me to why

Indian cricket is flourishing currently.

Primarily, credit must go to the BCCI for spreading the footprint of cricket all over the country. The more youngsters play, the larger the talent pool, the greater the number of elite cricketers. The BCCI has ensured this. It has also put in place institutions like the National Cricket Academy that can make a big difference.

The NCA has been around for just over two decades. For the most period, it functioned as rehab centre-cum-sanatorium for

injured cricketers. While putting cricketers back on their feet is obviously a big part of the academy, the NCA can't be limited to just that.

This is where Dravid has been of great value. As head of NCA he has gone beyond his job profile of being just administrator. He's proactively pursued the agenda of making Indian cricket stronger.

In this, he's drawn not just on his understanding of the Australian system, as Chappell highlights, but has brought his vast experience as player, and coach

of under-19 and India A teams to set up a more dynamic agenda to enrich Indian cricket.

This includes spotting and mentoring talent, mitigating fear of competition in young players and a desire for success.

Dravid's success is not an exhaustive formula or curriculum. It provides a kind of template of intent and practices. For India to keep excelling at the highest level depends on how this is assimilated, absorbed, improved upon at every nodal point in the cricket system.