



## FM tells Centre of strain due to influx

From Page 1

The finance minister brought to the notice of Dr Harsh Vardhan about the influx of thousands of Covid patients from the neighbouring states leading to shortage of oxygen and essential medicines in the state. The Centre should allocate oxygen and remdesivir and other essential drugs based on the influx of patients from outside instead of pro rata population basis, he said.

The minister sought enhanced allocation of oxygen from 450 MT to 600 MT and supply the same from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra instead of far-off Odisha to save turnaround time. The remdesivir allocation should be increased to 20,000 per day, he said.

Remdesivir allocation should be increased to 20,000 per day, he said, adding that two lakh testing kits also should be made available to the state every day. The state also needed 1.29 crore vaccines out of which 13 lakh should be arranged immediately, he said.

He was speaking after inspecting the Cantonment Hospital in Bolaram to examine whether it could be transformed into a vaccination and Covid-treatment facility.

The union minister said services of the retired defence and paramilitary medical personnel could be utilised for dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic. Young medics too could help in dealing with heavy rush of virus-affected patients after a 15-day training. Such medics will be given weightage when they apply for regular jobs.

Kishan Reddy advised opposition leaders to give constructive suggestions without criticising the government and creating obstacles in treatment of patients affected by the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Malkajgiri

**Young medicos to help in dealing with Covid-19 patients**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12



MoS G. Kishan Reddy visited the Cantonment Hospital in Bolaram, Secunderabad, on Wednesday and took stock of the facilities there. — DC

MP and TPCC working president A. Revanth Reddy requested the union minister to speed up conversion of Bolaram Hospital into a Covid-treatment centre.

The Congress MP said that in the past 15 days, his team has worked tirelessly

for setting up infrastructure in Bolaram Hospital. He himself has allocated ₹1 crore from his MP's fund for the hospital to treat Coronavirus patients belonging to his constituency.

Revanth Reddy appealed to Kishan Reddy to

speed up setting up of an oxygen unit at Bolaram Hospital. The MP said several people have come forward and donated money to develop Bolaram Hospital for treating people living within the Malkajgiri Lok Sabha constituency.

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# Army, Railway hosps to turn into Covid centres

**Young medicos to help in dealing with Covid-19 patients**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12



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## 28,898 Covid patients in hosp.

BALU PULIPAKA | DC

HYDERABAD, MAY 12

As many as 16 of Telangana's 33 districts on Wednesday reported an increase in Covid-19 cases while the other districts registered dips in the infection numbers. On the official daily chart, the state record 4,723 new cases and 31 more deaths while 5,695 Covid-19 patients have recovered from the disease.

According to the state health department, there were as many as 59,133 active Covid-19 cases in the state. Some 28,898 such patients were listed on the health department's bed availability status website, them being treated in government and private hospitals on Wednesday. This is close to 29,235, the number of Covid-infected people either in isolation centres or at homes this day.

The districts that reported a decrease in infections were Adilabad, Jagital, Kamareddy, KB-Asifabad, Mahabubnagar, Medak, Medchal-Malkajgiri, Nalgonda, Narayanpet, and Yadadri Bhongir.

The total Covid-19 deaths in the state stood at 2,834, and infection number at 511,711 on Wednesday while the number of people who have recovered was 4,49,744, the department said in its daily Covid bulletin.

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Coronavirus in the district.

About 14 cartons containing medical supplies like 500 PPE suits, 2,000 N95 masks and so on have already been sent to Narayanpet district headquarters. The second consignment consisting of biscuits, sanitiser dispensers and other food material are ready for dispatch.

FLO has also launched a dedicated portal in association with FICCI, Hyderabad chapter, FTCCI and Kalakruti India for reaching out to additional people affected by Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Hyderabad FLO chairperson Uma Chigurupati, the Covid Care Cell will initially help FICCI and FLO members and their families. Thereafter, it will start helping all others who approach it for help.

## System for soldiers at high altitude

From Page 1

According to an official press release issued here on Wednesday, this system was developed by Defence Bio-Engineering & Electrical Medical Institute (DEBEL), Bengaluru of DRDO for soldiers posted at extreme high-altitude areas.

The system is indigenous developed for operation in field conditions and is robust. It can be effectively used to treat Covid-19 patients.

With the sanction of PM CARES funds, 1,00,000 manual and 50,000 automatic Oxycare systems along with non-rebreather masks are being procured. Two variants of the system have been configured.

cally regulates the oxygen flow through a low-pressure regulator and a SpO2 probe.

The system optimises the consumption of oxygen based on the SpO2 reading of the patient and effectively increases the endurance of portable oxygen cylinders.

The threshold SpO2 value for initiating flow from the system can be adjusted by the health staff. A display is provided for continuously monitoring the SpO2 levels.

The oxygen flow is regulated manually based on the SpO2 readings. In the second configuration, the oxygen cylinder is equipped with electronic controls which automatically regulate the oxygen flow. The

automatic system also provides suitable audio warning for various failure scenarios including low SpO2 values and probe disconnections.

The non-rebreather masks are integrated with the Oxycare systems for efficient use of oxygen which results in saving of oxygen by 30-40%.

The non-rebreather masks need to be changed for every patient. These Oxycare systems can be used at homes, quarantine centres, covid care centres and hospitals.

The DRDO has transferred the technology to multiple industries in India which will be producing the Oxycare systems.

### STORIES OF HOPE



Members of Shyam Bharose Seva Samithi helping people by providing free food during Covid.

T.S. SIDDHARTH | DC

HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Coming to the aid of patients who are in need of oxygen concentrators, Hyderabad-based Shyam Bharose Seva Samithi has provided as many as 66 concentrators to the people who were in need of it.

"Oxygen has become an essential commodity during the pandemic. The shortage of oxygen in hospitals and other medical facilities is posing a big problem to those who are in the process of recovering from Covid-19. That is why we have begun giving out oxygen concentrators to the people in need of it," Sanjeev Agarwal, a member of the Samithi told this newspaper.

One of the beneficiaries of their oxygen drive, Naveen Kumar said, "I needed an oxygen concentrator for my mother who was affected with the disease. So, when I approached the Samithi, they readily gave me a concentrator to help my mother."

Apart from handing out

concentrators, the group also plays an active part in providing food to the needy and destitute.

"During the pandemic, we have seen people, especially those who are economically backward, struggling for one square meal a day. So, we began giving them meals at Koti and in other old age homes across the city. At Koti, we serve food to 200-odd people on a daily basis. We provide them basic vegetarian food," said Sanjeev Agarwal, a member of the Samithi.

The recipient had multiple comorbidities according to the team at the hospital, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension and recurrent encephalopathy.

He subsequently developed chronic non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, an advanced form of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), with typical symptoms of swelling of the abdomen and severe infection, leading to liver failure.

"Covid added to the complexity of the already highly demanding procedure of liver transplants," said Dr Perumalla. "As he had no compatible blood group donor from the family, he registered for a cadaver organ under the Jeevandan programme in February, and was waiting for a suitable organ", he added.

● THE RECIPIENT had multiple comorbidities according to the team at the hospital, including obesity, diabetes, hypertension and recurrent encephalopathy.

## Friends in need, with help in hand

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

As the Covid-19 pandemic is spreading its tentacles across the globe faster and more viciously during its second surge, a group of youngsters in this part of the globe is using social media for a good cause. They are using social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram to reach out to voluntary groups to help them with medicine, bed allotments, and even food.

One such group of volunteers is Fresh Serve, serving healthy, nutritious and free food to over a 100 people in just 10 days across the city. Five youngsters, between the age group of 19 and 25, have taken it upon themselves to provide food to Covid positive families since the beginning of May.

"We started helping our friends and families when the second wave of pan-

etary and pick up services online, also free of cost for those in need," Shah added.

Some of the beneficiaries this correspondent spoke to appreciated the initiative, saying that the service was hassle-free and put to rest their concerns over cleanliness, hygiene and safety. "Both my husband and I have been Covid positive. Due to this, other members of our family have been suffering too. Rahul and his team agreed to give us services free of cost and it has been a great help," said Vidya, a beneficiary at Kondapur.

Another beneficiary, Ranjith Dontamsetti at Manikonda added that he came to know about the service from social media and it helped his family too. "It is so encouraging to see how young adults are coming together to give back to society in such difficult times. Social media has

been of great help. I think a collaborative data bank of these home kitchens and services should be made to help people in need," he said.

'Fresh Serve' has been providing help in and around Komppally, Tarnaka, Gachibowli, Begumpet, Banjara Hills, Habsiguda among others.



Group of volunteers – Fresh Serve, serving healthy, nutritious and free food during Covid.

## IN BRIEF

**Police perform last rites of abandoned**

**Karimnagar:** The Telangana police on Wednesday performed the funeral of a poor person, who died of Covid-19, after the body was abandoned. Reeling under poverty, the family of 38-year-old Yamsani Sampath of Sirsai village in Karimnagar district was also affected by the virus but had no money to take treatment or pay even for his funeral, according to police commissioner V. B. Kamalasan Reddy.

**110-YEAR-OLD MAN COMBATS COVID-19 IN HYD**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Amidst the gloom and doom of Covid-19, Gandhi Hospital, the nodal Covid Care Centre in Telangana state, on Wednesday had some cheerful news. A 110-year-old man who was admitted to the hospital on April 24 with Covid-19, has beaten the disease, hospital superintendent Dr M. Raja Rao said.

He is probably the oldest person to have survived Covid in the country, Dr Raja Rao said. The man, identified as Ramananda Thirtha, does not have a family and was living in a home for destitutes in Keesara near Hyderabad. He was brought to the hospital on April 24 by the staff of the home. Ramananda who was on supplementary oxygen and under the care of the Gandhi Hospital doctors and staff, recovered.

In a short video clip shared by Gandhi Hospital staff, Ramananda can be heard saying he is 110-years-old. Asked by the doctors if he was aware of where he was, he says 'Corona hospital.' Though he was discharged as a patient on Tuesday, the 110-year-old Covid victor continues to be in Gandhi Hospital. Since he has no one to go back to, we have decided to take care of him and created a place for him in the hospital, a staffer said.

**POLICE DETAIN 5 NIGERIANS UNDER PD ACT**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD MAY 12

The Rachakonda police detained five Nigerian nationals who were involved in cyber crime cases under PD Act on Wednesday.

The Cyber Crimes Police of Rachakonda had earlier arrested five Nigerian nationals, identified as Akpalu Godstine, Nkekif Confidence David, Adjei Gift Osas, Kromah Oyibo and Ehigitor Daniel, from New Delhi on April 4 for luring innocent public in the guise of providing them foreign funds.

"The Cyber Crime Police of Rachakonda collected IP logs and other technical information and identified their location at New Delhi. The team visited New Delhi and arrested the gang and seized their passports and other materials used in the commission of the offence and brought them to Hyderabad on transit warrants and remanded them to judicial custody after invoking PD Act against them," police said.

**BREATHING EASY****5 tankers carrying 64.24 tonnes of liquid medical oxygen arrive****SCR delivers 3rd lot of oxygen tankers to TS**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

The South-Central Railway (SCR) on Wednesday delivered a third lot of liquid medical oxygen tankers to Telangana in a special train that reached the Sanathnagar Goods Complex in the city from Angul in Odisha.

This third consignment comprised five liquid oxygen tankers carrying 64.24 tonnes of liquid oxygen. So far, the SCR has transported 244.73 tonnes of liquid

medical oxygen from Odisha to Telangana state.

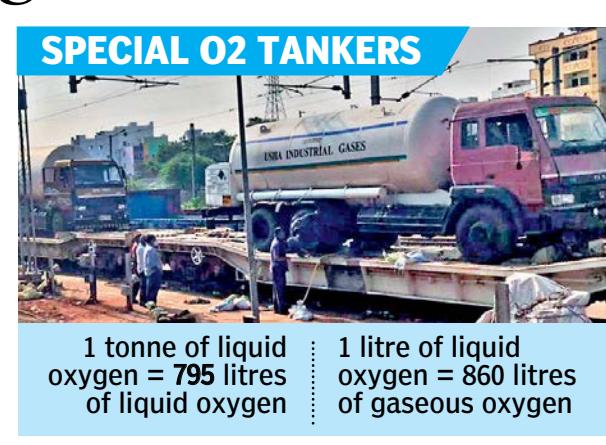
The special Oxygen Express had left for Angul on May 9 from the city and travelled a total distance of 2,426 km — to and from Angul — in about 60 hours.

As has been the case with the earlier two special trains, the SCR said it created a green corridor route for uninterrupted and fast movement of the train, which travelled at an average speed of 45 km an hour.

Since the liquid oxygen is carried in cryogenic

tankers, and falls into a special category cargo, the railways meticulously planned the transportation taking into consideration limitations with regard to maximum speed at which the cargo can be carried.

In addition, the route mapping was done to ensure the movement of tankers by railways is smooth with regard to curves, and adequate height clearance along the route, according to a press release issued by SCR here on Wednesday.

**SPECIAL O2 TANKERS**

1 tonne of liquid oxygen = 795 litres of liquid oxygen  
1 litre of liquid oxygen = 860 litres of gaseous oxygen

**Programme to upskill Indian nurses launched**

HARLEEN MINOCHA DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Apollo Hospitals Group, in partnership with Impact Guru Foundation on Wednesday launched a 'Covid Warrior Upskilling Program for nurses'. The advance nurses' growth excellence and learning (ANGEL) program aims to upskill one lakh nurses across India over the next few years with a commitment to invest up to ₹50,000 per nurse via scholarships for advanced skills training across the program period.

Other partners including Microsoft India, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (Ficci), Indian Nursing Council (INC), will play a role as impact and knowledge partners.

The initiative acknowl-

edges contribution of nurses, especially during critical Covid period, redefine and reinvent their career trajectories and empower them to succeed and grow in the clinical, management, research and other key aspects of the nursing.

It aims to provide free content and training for all nurses in India in partnership with various academic institutions, skilling, and nonprofit partners. Apollo Hospitals Group has committed to upskill a minimum of 1,000 nurses through this initiative.

Dr Sangita Reddy, Joint Managing Director, Apollo Hospitals Group, said, "Nurses make up the largest front-line healthcare workforce, and are key stakeholders in the fight against Covid-19. The upskilling program will

provide the nursing workforce with career-relevant skills and knowledge that will help in their professional development while improving patient outcomes. This provides nurses with a unique opportunity to continue their education while transforming their careers."

Dr Prathap C. Reddy, Chairman, Apollo Hospitals Group and Patron of the ANGEL #ThankANurse program said, "The pandemic has brought to fore the importance of nurses like never before. They have remained amidst all the sacrifices."

The program will prepare an increasing number of nurses for advancing their roles across the continuum of care in an evolving healthcare landscape."



People shop for Id-ul-Fitr before the lockdown kicks in at 10 am on Wednesday. It was unusual to see shoppers early in the morning in Charminar.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

**Shoppers flock early to Charminar area**

Police enforce strict rules, check every vehicle passing by

ATHER MOIN | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

In an unprecedented scene, there was a shopping frenzy around Charminar very early in the morning. Shops were shut down after 10 am and the city police erected barricades at several places and vehicles were checked. Only those exempted from lockdown restrictions were allowed to move around.

With Eid round the corner, and many of those who missed out on Ramzan shopping rushed to retailers dealing in garments, hosiery and shoes. It was a rather unusual sight as even during the Holy month, shops in and around Charminar open only after 11 am. On Wednesday, shopkeepers welcomed customers at 6 am on the first day of the lockdown.

Supermarkets, medical shops, kirana stores, vegetable markets and pan shops witnessed a huge rush of people during the four-hour relaxation period.

Within no time, the busy markets went under zero mobility as all shops and establishments downed their shutters and people were seen rushing back home.

The lockdown restrictions got harsher after 11 am as police sealed

From Page 1

Home minister Mahmood Ali and AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi appealed to the common Muslims not to come out of their houses to perform Id prayers at masjids as the government had not permitted congregational prayers. They appealed to the Muslims to perform Id prayers at their houses. Meanwhile, CEO of Wakf Board Shahnavaz Qasim issued a circular directing all Mutawallis and managing committees to strictly follow the instructions given in the

GO. Any deviation in the matter will be viewed seriously and action will be initiated against the concerned.

Moulana Anwaar Ahmed of Jamia Nizamia clarified that performing Id prayers at homes were not permissible in the Sharia, so people can perform the Chasht or Ishraq prayers (special morning prayers) at their residence instead of Id prayers.

There is infurition among common Muslims over not allowing them to perform Id prayers even in local masjids. Many people have

expressed their dissent over the decision of the government to ban Id prayers in masjids. Many religious scholars have also expressed their displeasure and said performing Id prayers at homes was not permissible by the Sharia.

Moulana Abdur Raheem Khurram said during the relaxation period, Id prayers can be performed complying with the SOPs of Covid-19. Ulemas had allowed performing Id prayers in more than one session in the Masjids to avoid the huge crowd. He asked the government to reconsider its decision.

City and reviewed arrangements with the senior officers. Speaking to the media near Charminar he said that as per government's circular only 40 persons will be allowed for weddings and only 20 to perform last rites.

He said that senior police officials, including ACPS and DCPs, will oversee implementation of lockdown enforcement orders at important check-posts right from 10 am.

He said that compared to other cities, the pandemic situation in Hyderabad was marginally better. However, to contain it, the state government has imposed a lockdown of 10 days in the larger interests of the general public and to reduce fatalities and spread of the virus.



People rush to buy groceries at a supermarket in the morning before the lockdown starts at 10 am on Wednesday in Hyderabad.

— R. PAVAN

**APOLLO OPENS 'COMMUNITY COVID CENTRE' IN ANDHRA**

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Two senior resident doctors working at the Telangana Institute of Medical Sciences (Tims) at Gachibowli in the city were, in a swift action, transferred to the Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences in Adilabad on Wednesday.

The two doctors, Dr Arundhati, a senior resident (community medicine), and Dr Wasey Wasim Kabir, a senior resident in general medicine, were shifted to RIMS "with immediate effect, on administrative grounds," according to the transfer orders issued by Dr Vimala Thomas, Director of Tims.

The transfer of the two doctors led to a flurry of activity in the doctors' fraternity here with some saying they were made to pay

**Two Tims doctors transferred to Rims**

BALU PULIPAKA DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

The transfer of the doctors, however, did not go well with the Telangana Senior Residents Doctors Association (TSRDA) which condemned the decision and demanded immediate revocation of the transfer orders and reposting of the doctors with immediate effect.

If the order is not revoked, we will boycott duties until justice is done to both senior residents," the association said.

Joining the TSRDA, the TS Junior Doctors Association said if the orders were not revoked, then it too would be announcing a plan of action. Both organisations said the two Tims' doctors were transferred because they questioned lapses in administration of the hospital, and patient care.

**TS EXTENDS VAX SECOND DOSE DATE**

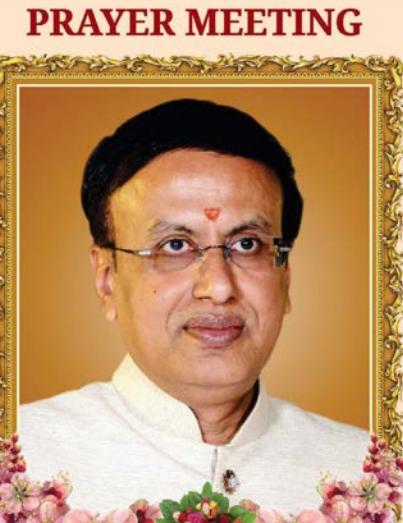
DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

The ongoing drive for second dose of Covid-19 vaccination in Telangana was extended "until further orders", according to officials.

The delivery of second dose for those eligible will continue at government vaccination centres from 9 am to 4 pm, and such persons must carry a proof of having got their first dose, along with their Aadhaar.

It may be recalled that when the special drive to cover those waiting their second dose began on May 8, the department had said that it expected to conclude on May 12.

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**PRAYER MEETING**

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(S/o. Late Shri Bajranglal Agarwal)

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## IN BRIEF

## HC FAULTS HOUSING BOARDS FOR DELAY IN REGISTRATIONS

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Telangana High Court has found fault with the State Housing Board and construction companies for inordinate delay in registering flats or houses in names of their respective buyers. The court ordered the housing board, Manjeera Trinity Homes at Kukatpally village in Balanagar mandal of Hyderabad, and Ramky Enclave near Railway Station in Warangal to register properties in the names of their buyers.

Manjeera Constructions and Ramky Developers have been ordered to initiate expeditious steps registering respective flats, preferably within one week from receipt of the court's order copy.

Telangana Housing Board is owner of the land measuring 32.69 acres at Warangal in Girmajipet and Laxmipura villages. The land was given to Ramky Developers for constructing dwelling units. Similarly, the housing board is also owner of the land at Kukatpally, which had been given for development to Manjeera Constructions.

Counsel for petitioners Arkut Chandrashekhar submitted before the court that petitioners had made an agreement with the Housing Board and construction companies and paid the total sale consideration for respective flats or villas in the said cities. Though the amount was paid three years ago, Housing Board has not yet executed sale deeds in favour of petitioners, which is illegal and arbitrary, the counsel maintained.

Taking all aspects into consideration, Justice T. Amarnath Goud directed Telangana Housing Board to register the said flats or villas in favour of respective petitioners. The judge also ordered that Housing Board pay ₹10,000 to each of the petitioners for the delay caused in registrations.

## KCR URGED TO RESCUE MAIZE AND SORGHUM FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Kisan Congress Chairman S. Anvesh Reddy on Wednesday demanded the Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao to clarify on the purchase of maize in the state. He expressed concern that farmers, who produced maize, would suffer huge losses if compelled to sell their produce to middlemen at low prices.

Reddy recalled that even in the previous season, although maize was cultivated in two lakh acres, the government asked them not to cultivate the crop. Despite massive protests by farmers, only half of the produce was purchased by the government. The harrowed farmers were forced to sell the other half to local brokers at less than ₹1,200 per quintal.

The Kisan Congress leader reminded that with the lifting of the restricted agriculture crops system, farmers cultivated their crop over 4.66 lakh acres in the state. Given that the government has not started procuring yet, around 1,500 agents are buying from farmers and that too at low prices, he said.

Reddy pointed out that sorghum was cultivated in 1.20 lakh acres and the government has remained silent, although the farmers were ready with the crop a month back. He demanded the government to fix MSP for sorghum, failing which middlemen and brokers would exploit the situation and add to the financial woes of farmers.

## Etala seeks support of 'like-minded' leaders

Discusses his removal from state cabinet for 2 hours

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Etala Rajendar

In a fresh political development, Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) MLA and ousted minister Etala Rajendar met some of the like-minded leaders on Wednesday and sought support for his next political move.

Rajendar called on TRS Rajya Sabha MP D. Srinivas at his residence in MLA Colony at Banjara Hills and discussed with him almost for two hours about the political development which resulted in his removal from the state Cabinet. He also is understood to have discussed taking on Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao

and other ministers who made him suffer for political gains.

Rajendar sought support from D. Srinivas as the latter knew well about Chandrashekhar Rao's strategy. Incidentally, Srinivas has been maintaining distance from the Chief Minister as well as the TRS for the last three years.

Sources said Etala was taking feedback

and asking advice from seniors like D. Srinivas on how to face Chandrashekhar Rao and defeat the TRS in the next Assembly elections. He also is understood to have discussed with D. Srinivas on launching a new party and sought suggestions on joining another party to fight against Chandrashekhar Rao.

After meeting Srinivas, Etala also met his son and BJP MP D. Arvind and discussed his political future. Etala is likely to meet the BJP MP again soon to discuss some important issues.

The disgruntled TRS MLA also met former TRS minister and present BJP leader A. Chandrasekhar at his residence located near

D. Srinivas' home. Chandrasekhar who worked in the TRS earlier came out of the party as he was unhappy with the Chief Minister's working style.

Rajendar later met former RTC chairman and ex-MLA from Ramagundam Somaram Satyanarayana and sought his support in his political voyage.

Sources said the BJP leader had an issue with former MP Vivek Venkataswamy in recent times and was not interested in continuing in the BJP. He is said to have expressed solidarity with Rajendar in his fight against Chandrashekhar Rao and the TRS.



Hyderabad police commissioner Anjani Kumar and other police officials inspect lockdown arrangements at Charminar area. — DC

## Top cops tighten lockdown security

DC CORRESPONDENT  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

said, adding that vehicles transporting emergency goods do not need a pass, but need to affix a paper on the windshield of their vehicle stating all needed precautions.

"We have a total of 168 police check posts in Hyderabad, which are open from 10 am to 6 am of the next day. In order to implement a full-scale lockdown in the city, one SI-level officer and staff will be on duty at each check post," he said.

Meanwhile, Rachakonda Police Commissioner Mahesh Bhagwat said that those prohibited as per the government order issued on Tuesday will not be permitted and in case of deviation, cases will be booked and stringent action will be taken against them. Cyberabad Comm-

issioner V.C. Sajjanar also warned lockdown violators and instructed officials to be on the field round-the-clock while taking all needed precautions.

"On the first day of the lockdown, I made surprise visits at Hitec City, JNTU, Kukatpally, Y Junction, Jeedimetla and Balanagar crossroads to supervise the arrangements," he said.

Any violations of the lockdown restrictions would result in prosecution under Sections 51 to 60 of Disaster Management Act, 2005 and Section 188 of IPC. A fine of ₹1,000 would be imposed for not wearing a face mask, he said and instructed people to follow safety measures such as physical distancing and use of sanitisers.

## ALL MINISTERS HOLD REVIEW MEETINGS

From Page 1

The minister said based on the instructions of the Chief Minister, all ministers held reviews in their respective districts and would be constantly monitoring the situation.

Referring to excess use of medicines, the minister said patients' anxiety and doctors' excess use of medicines or oxygen had been leading to artificial scarcity which the task force was keen to arrest. Apparently to lift

spirits of Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar, who received a flak from the High Court, the IT minister said the former had been making determined efforts to control the spread of the virus and provide best medicare to people.

Prime accused Ajeeet Kumar was involved in a series of burglaries, robberies and theft in and around Cyberabad. He and associate Mukesh Kumar, 21, had opened fire on the employees of Writer Safeguard, Ali Baig and Srinivas, on April 29," said police commissioner of Cyberabad, V.C. Sajjanar. Baig had succumbed to his injuries on the spot and Srinivas survived with injuries.

"Ajeeet Kumar came to Hyderabad in 2011 in search of work and was an alcoholic. He started committing robberies in 2018 and was arrested by the Dundigal Police. After returning to Bihar in 2018 on bail, he came back to Hyderabad in 2020 and worked for about eight months before he started committing offences. In March 2021, he transferred money to his friend in Bihar to buy a country-made pistol and come to the city along with five live rounds," said the commissioner.

The two did a series of robberies and bike thefts. On April 29, the two pursued an ATM cash van from Erragadda circle till KPHB, attacked the

SRI. SUNIL SONDAKAR  
D.O.B: 11-05-2021You will be missed deeply forever  
Inserted By:  
C. RAJEEV KUMAR & FAMILY

(S2122/D00184)

SHRADHANJALI

U. RAMCHANDER  
DOD: 11.05.2021

You're still here in our hearts and minds. Still making us laugh because your stories live on.

Miss You! Om Shanthi !!

Inserted by:  
Mody Motors & Mody Family

SHRADHANJALI

MOHAN GONDIKER (Mohan Maharaj)

S/o. Late Vishnu Gondiker

DOB: 25-08-1959 | DOD: 04-05-2021

Left for heavenly abode on May 04, 2021

Deeply Mourned by:

Smiti Gondiker (Wife), Aditya Gondiker (Son),

Ankita Gondiker (Daughter) &amp; Gondiker family

10th DAY CEREMONY

MANAV LINGA

who departed on 12th May 2021

In grief: Gunishetty &amp; Garudapalli family

11th DAY CEREMONY

GURRAM SURESH BAABU

Manager, SBI (Retd)

DOB : 08-03-1955 DOD : 03-05-2021

We cannot imagine a life without you, we will

treasure the countless memories of selfless

love and courage shown by you.

11th Day Ceremony will be held at his

residence, Flat No.121, CHIPPENDALE

Apartment, on 13-05-2021

A Tribute of love from all family members.

Promoted to Glory

The memory of righteous is a blessing

(Proverbs 10:7)

S.H.E. Stewart McLoughlin (Meckly)

Retd. Manager Designs, HMT

Ex. President - HMT All India

Officer's Association

DOB: 6 July 1945 - DOD: 11 May 2021

From Near and Dear

90009 83880 / 98854 46378

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC  
HYDERABAD MAY 12

The fingerprints on a helmet left behind at the crime scene helped the Cyberabad police arrest the two men involved in the Kukatpally ATM murder-robbery case that took place last month.

The special operations team along with the Kukatpally police arrested two boys — aged 21 and 23, and both natives of Bihar — on Tuesday and recovered ₹6.31 lakh from them as also a country made pistol, a magazine and live rounds.

Atm murder-robbery case cracked

2018 and was arrested by the Dundigal Police. After returning to Bihar in 2018 on bail, he came back to Hyderabad in 2020 and worked for about eight months before he started committing offences. In March 2021, he transferred money to his friend in Bihar to buy a country-made pistol and come to the city along with five live rounds," said the commissioner.

The two did a series of robberies and bike thefts. On April 29, the two pursued an ATM cash van from Erragadda circle till KPHB, attacked the

guards and fled with ₹5 lakh in cash.

In the commotion, Ajeeet dropped his helmet at the ATM and fled. After the attack, the two went to Medchal on a stolen bike via Miyapur-Bachupally-Kajipally ORR service road and left the vehicle at a temple in Medchal. They walked till their rented place and stayed there for a few days to avoid cAs. Ajeeet was previously arrested by the Dundigal police, his fingerprints lifted from the helmet at the crime scene provided sufficient hints to the cops."

## IN LOVING MEMORY OF



Shri. Anil Kumar Agarwal

24-11-1964 to 11-5-2021

(S/o. Late Shri Bajranglal Agarwal )

on Tuesday, 11th May 2021

"Our Friend, Our Brother  
Our Dearest Chachu"I am better for knowing you, better for loving you  
better for having met you.May you be as blessed in the next life, my friend,  
as I was in this one by knowing you.

IN PROFOUND GRIEF

MAHENDER - MADHAVI

PAREE NANDINI

PAARTH VEER

(AGARWAL)

## 11th DAY CEREMONY



N. VINAY KUMAR

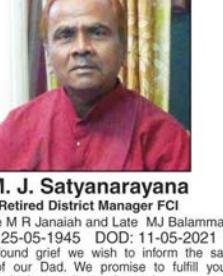
DOB: 22-04-1987 DOD: 03/05/2021

We deeply mourn the demise of Vinay Kumar  
11th day ceremony will be held at Plot # 22B,  
Akulanaraya Colony, Laxminagar, Picket,  
Secunderabad - 500026

May his soul rest in peace.

Inserted by - Family Members

## OBITUARY



M. J. SATYANARAYANA

Retired District Manager FCI

(S/o Late M R Janiah and Late MJ Balamma)

DOB: 25-05-1945 DOD: 11-05-2021

With profound grief we wish to inform the sad

demise of M J Satyanarayana

We promise to fulfill your

dreams and take your legacy forward

With heavy heart.

M S Ashalatha (Wife) Sons &amp; Daughters

Granddaughters and Grandsons.

Ph: +91 99630 08822

Contact Shiva Kumar

OBITUARY



You will always be a part of us in

our hearts and prayers.

We will miss you and fondly remember

you in every moment of our life.

## 10th DAY CEREMONY



LINGA MANAV

(Son of Linga Ashok and Linga Girija)

DOB: 14/10/1977 DOD: 12/05/2021

## SHORT TAKES

CURBS CONTINUE  
NEAR PULLUR  
TOLL PLAZADC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOOL, MAY 12

Restrictions on the movement of vehicles at Pullur toll plaza near the Telangana-Andhra Pradesh state border continue to be in force as the Telangana police are only allowing only those vehicles having e-passes. They are checking every vehicle coming from Andhra side and allowing those vehicles after producing e-passes issued by the government. A policeman said there was, however, no restriction on the movement of vehicles between 6 am and 10 am.

The Superintendent of Police, Dr Kagineelli Fakkeerappa, inspected the border post and told the TS police not to stop medical emergency cases.

KURNOOOL  
COLLECTOR TESTS  
COVID POSITIVEDC CORRESPONDENT  
KURNOOOL, MAY 12

Kurnool district collector G. Veera Pandian tested positive for Coronavirus on Wednesday, sending shock waves among the officials who had interacted with him during the past week. He had been moving from place to place, visiting Covid care centres, government hospitals at Nandyal, Adoni, and Kurnool. The top officials in the district from the police and the revenue department, who had come in touch with them, are at risk and have been asked to go for testing.

District Medical and Health Officer Dr Rama Giddaiah, who had been spending accompanying the collector on his visits, said his RT-PCR came negative and he heaved a sigh of relief. Other officials are undergoing Covid tests to confirm their status, it is learnt.

**● OTHER OFFICIALS** are undergoing Covid tests to confirm their status.

AP RESTRICTS  
MASS PRAYERS, NO  
ID NAMAZ AGAINDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 12

For the second year in a row, there will be no mass namaz for Id-ul-Fitr at idgahs and in open places in the state.

The AP government has issued orders, imposing a ban on mass prayers at Idgahs and in open places, restricting gatherings to 50 only to offer Ramzan prayers at mosques, duly following Covid protocols such as physical distance. Such prayers would be allowed twice at mosques.

Principal Secretary (Minorities Welfare) Dr Mohammed Ilyas Rizvi issued GORT: 51, placing restrictions on Eid prayers. Earlier the Chief Executive Officer of AP State Waqf Board asked the government for necessary instructions to district administrations to ensure precautionary measures, especially at Masjids in respect of Id-ul-Fitr prayers. The state government has made it clear that in view of the curfew restrictions in force 12 noon to 6 am till May 18, masjid committees should abide by the curfew regulations and follow all Covid-19 safety guidelines.

Muslims are urged to prefer Id-ul-Fitr prayers at home to those at Idgahs or in open spaces to ward off the raging pandemic.

## Socially distant



Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station wears a deserted look on Wednesday as the state went into 10 days lockdown, set to last until May 22.

— S. SURENDER REDDY

GHMC records  
high liquor sale

## Panic buying as lockdown announced

NAVEEN KUMAR | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

Liquor sales in the greater Hyderabad area were three to four times higher during the evening hours of lockdown announcement as opposed to regular days, sources from the wine dealers associations revealed, adding that in the GHMC alone, sales were upto ₹25 crore.

"GHMC has about 420-250 outlets and majority of the shops emptied 90 percent of their existing stock on Tuesday

and refilled from the buffer stock now. After the news was out saying shops will open from 6 am during lockdown, and extension of lockdowns last year, the rush decreased a bit. Usually, the wine shops in GHMC limits register a sale of ₹5 lakh on a daily average," said the source, requesting anonymity.

The member of the association also shared how during last year's lockdown, many of those who do not consume alcohol hoarded up on liquor to sell it later at a higher rate to make quick money.

"Panic buying was caused by the sudden announcement of lockdown and extension of lockdowns last year. People assumed that the 10 days lockdown might get extended like last year and came on to hoard up," he said.

Meanwhile, customers continued to line up before the shops after opening at 6 am on Wednesday. Shopkeepers opined that the panic buying would continue for the next two days and later the situation would normal.

The number of recoveries in the past 24 hours is 14,502.



Crowd drops at a wine shop in the early hours of first days of lockdown relaxation on Wednesday.

AP RECORDS 21,452  
FRESH CASES, 89  
MORE DEATHSDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 12

Andhra Pradesh is continuing to register more than 20,000 new Coronavirus cases per day by recording 21,452 new Covid-19 infections on Wednesday, apart from registering 89 new deaths during the past 24 hours.

State health authorities tested 90,750 samples of which 21,452 have been found positive, taking total number of Corona cases recorded so far to 13,44,386. 1,97,370 of these are active cases while 11,38,028 have been discharged after recovery.

The number of recoveries in the past 24 hours is 14,502.

AP plans to set up 10K  
more oxygen bedsDC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 12

Asserting that incidents such as those at RUIA Hospital will not be repeated, Minister for Health Alla Kali Krishna Srinivas alias Nani said that the government was taking all measures right from setting up oxygen monitoring cell in every hospital to appointing three

senior officials to oversee the supply of oxygen from neighbouring states. He stated that although the state is equipped with 27,500 oxygen beds, the government has decided to set up 10,000 more beds across the state on a war-footing to serve Covid-19 patients.

A Group of Ministers headed by Nani held a

press conference here on Wednesday after a review meeting and briefed on the Covid-19 preventive measures being implemented by the state government. Nani said the committee discussed key issues such as oxygen supply, testing, vaccination, beds as well as steps to be taken to bring down the number of infections.

## HIGHER STUDIES Officials directed to raise education standards

## Aim top rank for varsities: Jagan

DC CORRESPONDENT  
VIJAYAWADA, MAY 12

Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has instructed top officials to initiate an action plan to secure top ranking for state universities in National Institutional Ranking Frame Work (NIRF). Holding a review meeting on higher education at his camp office at Tadepalligudem on Wednesday, the Chief Minister asked them to make IITs on a par with IITs by introducing higher standards.

Reddy directed officials to raise education standards in all universities in the state, aiming at a slot in the top ten in the country. He wanted the state universities like JNTU (Kakinada, Anantapur), Andhra

University, SV University, Padmavathi Mahila University, and RGUKT (IITs) to reach higher levels.

Seeking budget estimates for bolstering the state universities, he drew the attention of officials to expedite setting up of Architecture University at Kadapa. The officials informed that Andhra University was currently ranked at 19 and SV University at 38 in the NIRF rankings. At this juncture, Reddy asked for a plan of action for the next two years to improve their rankings. He asked officials to study the best practices in the institutions which secured top ranks in NIRF list. The officials were directed to recruit talented, meritorious and exemplary people as teaching staff in the universi-

ties. The Chief Minister also asked higher officials to explore partnerships between state and reputed foreign universities. Reviewing the functioning of IITs, he directed the officials to introduce business courses and raise their standards to the level of IITs. He noted that IITs were badly neglected by the previous government, which diverted about ₹180 crore funds from these institutions. Learning that there were 22,946 students studying in IITs, he told the authorities to complete the construction of IIT buildings in Srikakulam and Ongole at the earliest.

With respect to medical education, the Chief Minister said that the government was setting up 16

new medical colleges as against the 11 colleges at present. The number of medical seats would rise significantly and 70 per cent of them would be filled up the convener quota, thus benefiting the poor students. He said the government was giving top priority to education and health sectors and spending huge amounts to improve the existing systems through Nadu-Nedu programme.

Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh, Special Chief Secretary (Higher Education) Satish Chandra, Principal Secretary (Finance) N. Gulzar, APSCHE Chairman K. Hemachandra Reddy, RGUKT Chancellor Prof K.C. Reddy and other officials were present at the meeting.

## Cantonment to get new fire station in two months

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH | DC  
HYDERABAD, MAY 12

The first fire station in the Secunderabad Cantonment Board (SCB) limits would start functioning within two months. The station will be located near Teacher's Colony in Tirumalgery. The nearest fire station is the one at Paradise junction.

SCB vice-president J. Maheshwar Reddy said: "The plans for a fire station here were first floated in 2017. The state fire services department wrote to the board seeking a fire station in the cantonment

board limits."

At that time, the land was allocated. Now, the works have begun and the first water motor is placed. In another few months, we will have the station inaugurated. This would be a normal station. The fire tenders would have all the capabilities, like a snorkel station or one with a telescopic ladder," said district fire officer

Madhusudhan Rao. This is also part of the state government's plan to provide each assembly constituency with at least one fire station. Former SCB CEO Sujatha Gutpa was approached by MLA G Savanna, urging the former to part with land for the fire station.

There are several vulnerable buildings in SCB limits that can turn into a fire hazard. Three children who are left with no one to look after them as their parents are hospitalised for Covid-19 treatment were shifted to a shelter home of RDT at BK Samudram on Wednesday.

A five-member family of agriculture labourers including three children — a 12-year-old son, five and three years old daughters lives at Therannapalli village in Tadipatri mandal. The parents tested positive for Coronavirus on Monday and had to be shifted to a Covid hospital. Collector Gandham Chandru swiftly directed ICDS to provide shelter to the children.

## Close Barytes quarry, says panel

DC CORRESPONDENT  
KADAPA, MAY 12

Midde Gowthami, chairperson of the government-appointed five-member committee and joint collector, said she would recommend the government to forthwith ban White Barytes Quarry, where a massive explosion had killed 10 people.

The committee members inspected the explosion spot near Kalasapadu mandal Mammillapalli village on Wednesday.

Later speaking to the media, Gowthami told reporters that they would insist that the quarry, which was operating in complete violation of regu-

lations, be done away with, once and for all.

She said that the committee would look into the functioning of all quarries in the district where mining is underway. She said they would recommend action against those carrying out excavations contrary to regulations.

She said police have already arrested three people in connection with the incident. They include operator Chikampally Nageswara Reddy and Y.S. Pratapa Reddy, who supplied explosives from Pulivendula. The committee includes revenue, mining, mining safety and explosives experts.

## Career Chronicle

GOVT OF TELANGANA  
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT MEDICAL & HEALTH OFFICER: R.R. DISTRICT  
NOTIFICATION FOR THE POST OF MEDICAL OFFICERS  
BASTHIDAWAKHANA IN RANGA REDDY DISTRICT  
**NOTIFICATION**  
Rc.No. 433/E1/DMHO/R/2020-21 Dated: 07.05.2021

Applications are invited to fill up the (20) post of Medical Officer in Basthidawakhana to attend for walk in interviews on 13.05.2021 at 10.30 AM at O/o District Medical & Health Officer, Ranga Reddy District under NHM in Ranga Reddy District on contract basis with consolidated pay of Rs 42,000/- per month for a period of (1) year with qualification MBBS registered to attend for walk-in interview along with the original certificate and submit their applications along with O/o DMO and self attested of all certificates Xerox copies with Barfalests from 1st to 7th at O/o DMO, Ranga Reddy District near pillar No. 1 of PVNR opposite Meenakshi Colony, Shivarampally, Rajendranagar, Ranga Reddy District.  
Sd/- DM&HO, R.R.Dist. Sd/- District Collector & Magistrate, Ranga Reddy District  
Rc.No.: 136-DPC/AGENCY/ADVT/1/2021-22

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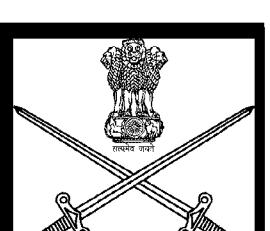
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- DAV Management, IITH Campus, Kandi



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अधिकारी प्रविष्टि

अल्पसेवा कमीशन (गैर तकनीकी) जे.ए.जी. भर्ती योजना 27वाँ पाठ्यक्रम पुरुष और महिला विधि स्नातकों के लिए (अक्टूबर 2021 में निर्धारित) आवेदन आमंत्रित किए जाते हैं।

ऑनलाइन आवेदन 06 मई 2021 से 04 जून 2021 तक खुले हैं।

## OFFICER ENTRY

Applications are invited for Short Service Commission (NT) JAG Entry Scheme 27<sup>th</sup> Course for Men & Women Law Graduates (scheduled in October 2021).

Online applications are open from 06 May 2021 to 04 Jun 2021.

**नोट :**

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# DECCAN Chronicle

13 MAY 2021

## Be grateful for ideas, don't cast them in partisan light

The abject failure of the Union government in anticipating, and preparing the nation for, the second wave of the pandemic Covid-19 seems to have unsettled the ruling dispensation with its leading lights jeering at every criticism, instead of offering an answer. The practical suggestions former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had listed in his letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi were met with an uncharacteristically scornful reply by health minister Harsh Vardhan. And now the letter BJP president J.P. Nadda has written to Congress president Sonia Gandhi in reply to the Congress Working Committee's criticism that the Centre has abdicated its role in fighting the pandemic is another example.

As the principal Opposition party, the Congress would be failing in its job if it does not call out the lapses of the government and force it to correct its course. The government needs to answer it but the BJP has chosen to do the job, seeing it as a political issue. It hardly is.

The BJP president's letter essentially questions the credentials of the questioner, instead of rebutting the points in a way that behoves the ruling party. To the criticism about the shortage of vaccines, Mr Nadda says state governments had demanded decentralisation of the vaccination programme. This is specious because it is not the entry of the states in the market that has created the shortage; it's the complete lack of planning by the Centre, which went to the town about launching the "world's largest inoculation drive", that has created the present situation where the states are forced to wind up their vaccination camps for shortage of doses. The shortage was felt even before the third phase of vaccination, to be taken up by the states, started. The states never wanted to pay twice or four times the price the Centre pays the vaccine manufacturers for each dose; nor did they ask for organising a competition with one another and the private sector for vaccines. Now several states, including those ruled by the BJP, are forced to float global tenders for sourcing the vaccine.

The BJP president says the Opposition parties were less appreciative of the achievements of Indian scientists in developing the vaccine. Everyone will join Mr Nadda when he says the vaccine that is made in India should be a matter of national pride but his overplaying the nationalistic cap will be unacceptable. True, there were sceptics even in the scientific community when the authorities concerned cleared the India-made vaccine for emergency use without waiting for the scientific process to get completed. Mr Nadda gives a partisan tilt to the call for adherence to the scientific process. This is unfair.

The Congress' criticism that India is witnessing a "grave calamity" was in fact shared by Mr Nadda's former colleague in the Union council of ministers, Santosh Gangwar, who put it on record in his letter to Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath. Mr Gangwar was only reflecting what millions of Covid-19 patients and their dear ones have been feeling. The BJP must realise that shooting the messenger hardly helps solve issues.

## Is it time to free Rajiv killers?

The clamour for the release of seven Rajiv Gandhi assassination case convicts is bound to grow. The change in government in Tamil Nadu has given fresh impetus to what is already a state-wide push to see those involved in the periphery of the LTTE plot to kill a Prime Minister of India be freed as they have been incarcerated for close to 30 years now — May 21 will mark the 30th anniversary of the sombre event that shook the nation. The killing itself had come straight out of a Frederick Forsyth novel with belt bomber Dhanu activating the device while pretending to greet Rajiv Gandhi in Sripurumbudur when he was on a campaign visit.

The Centre has been steadfast in its refusal to countenance the release of the prisoners for life, some of whose death sentences were commuted to life. The rationale for the refusal to consider several pleas, an Assembly resolution and a Cabinet decision to recommend that they be freed on compassionate grounds has been that those associated with the killing of a Prime Minister of the land cannot be sown any mercy. The breach of security taking a PM's life — Rajiv was a former PM at the time as he had refused to try to retain his post though Congress was returned as the single largest party after the 1989 polls — was considered a national affront that hurt even more as the conspiracy was confined outside India.

The Tamil Nadu governor, acting obviously on orders from the Centre, sat on the matter of freeing many who had spent their entire youth in jail, including for the possibly innocent act of procuring a nine-volt battery for the detonator. The LTTE was subsequently decimated after a civil war that lasted over 25 years and Rajiv Gandhi's wife and children had also forgiven the killers. The sentiment in Tamil Nadu is overwhelmingly in favour of the prisoners' release but it is complicated as it involves foreigners. Whether cold-blooded conspirators in assassinating an Indian PM deserve any mercy when they should be in prison for life is another matter.

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**Kaushik Mitter**  
Editor  
  
**Vijayawada:** No.C-3 & P Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.), Ph: 0866-255284/2555287; Telefax: 0866-2555283  
**Visakhapatnam:** Survey No.1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017 (A.P.), Ph: 0891-255233/255234; Fax: 0891-2755285  
**Rajahmundry:** Venagiri, Dhawaleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry, Ph: 0883-2417618/2417208; Telefax: 0883-2417208  
**Anantapur:** Thapovan colony, Bangalore By-Pass Road, Anantapur - 515004, Ph: 08554-276903; Fax: 08554-276904  
**Karimnagar:** Survey No.1341, Vavilalapally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar - 505 001, Ph: 0878-2228908; Telefax: 0878-2220433  
**Nellore:** Survey No.52/2, Burrapur Village, Venkatachalam (M), Chemmudugunta Panchayat, Nellore, Ph: 0861-2348581/82; Telefax: 0861-2348580  
**Chennai:** SP-3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032, Ph: 044-22254747/48/50/51; Advt. Fax: 22254765/22254766/42305325  
**Cochin:** 77, Vivekananda Road, Rammagari, Cochin - 641 009, Ph: 0422 2231255  
**Gram:** CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-08

Ashwani Kumar

## Amid grief as Covid surges, India needs divine mercy!

Driven by a compelling need to unburden an unbearable sense of grief, this article is also a supplication for divine mercy in these calamitous times. It is about the moral impoverishment of an ancient society and wanton abandonment of empathy, that is an essential condition of our coexistence.

Proud citizens of a resurgent nation that seeks a place on the high table of global politics have been reduced to beggary — begging for a gasp of breath, a ventilator, a hospital bed and medicines, a chance to be vaccinated on a non-discriminatory basis, transportation of the sick and the deceased, sources of information for medical relief and, above all, a cylinder of oxygen to buy time in a hope to live, have robbed us of our innate dignity which defines our humanity. The trauma of seeing a loved one slip away gasping for breath while struggling to hold on to life, wanting to live, is a burden too heavy to carry, and I should know, having lost my wife to lung failure. That she did not go due to lack of oxygen seems like a divine benediction today.

How else can we respond to Sahir Ludhianvi's damning interrogatory: "Kahan hain, kahan hain muhafiz khudi ke" (Whither the sentinels of honour), except by way of humble repentance for our moral, political and societal excesses? Living with the thought of dying alone with no one to

hold our hand in the last moments, not able to feel the warmth of those who are integral to our lives... remains a mourning in perpetuity.

Loneliness, as Mother Teresa had reminded us, is about the feeling of being unloved. Thoughts about the futility of human relationships and about the dispensability of those who define us have added to an unprecedented sense of aloneness. Gulzar's poignant verse depicting a decline in human togetherness even in normal times has an added resonance today: "Zindagi yun hui basar tanha, kafila saath aur safar tanha" (Life lived alone, surrounded by a crowd). And now we are compelled to be alone even in death. Hopefully, this will not be the life we want for the generations to come. Wailing mothers, grieving children and the helplessness of marginalised people mock our politics and proclaim a failure of the dignitarian promise of our national charter. Our "raucous" democracy remains enthralled with electoral triumphs and the vanquishing of political opponents even as the nation's soul is scarred

beyond all recognition. The political parties are complicit in their failure to prevent large gatherings, protest movements or religious congregations — all of which are responsible for the pandemic's massive surge across the country. Our exalted institutions of democracy, including Parliament, the Election Commission and even the Supreme Court, have failed the nation. Despite its celebrated jurisprudence on human rights issues, our highest court's inability to issue binding judicial diktats against the holding of massive electoral rallies during the time of a pandemic is wholly inexplicable considering the indisputable evidence that huge physical gatherings compromise the social distancing norms and the legally enforceable Covid-related protocols. An eloquent newspaper headline about a high court sums up in varying degrees the unintended but failure nevertheless, of our constitutional institutions. It reads: "High court hearing, plea to get ICU bed, man dies in wait". (Indian Express, May 1)

Clearly, in matters of life and death, judicial inaction cannot be passed off as

Subhani



## Will Beijing return the remains of 1962 hero?

Claude Arpi

In recent months China has given a lot of publicity to several new war memorials which have come up in Tibet; this mushrooming is probably due the Galwan incidents in which the People's Liberation Army lost some 45 men and officers in July 2020, although this information is still a state secret within China (it took months for Beijing to finally admit four Chinese had died in the brawl with Indian troops).

On May 6, *China Tibet Net* published pictures of the Lhoka (Shannan) Martyrs' Cemetery. This sub-district of the Tibet Military Region (TMD) faces the northern borders of Bhutan and the western part of the McMahon Line, north of the Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh.

What happened to Joginder Singh?

In the morning of October 20, 1962, a JCO of the Assam Rifles posted at Bumla, north of Tawang, noticed some 1,000 labourers, with digging implements, they came protected by Chinese soldiers. The JCO rushed to inform the nearby platoon of a possible danger.

Nothing happened till 4.30 am on October 23, when suddenly the Chinese started firing with mortars and anti-tank guns to destroy Indian bunkers built south of the international border, and soon 600 Chinese attacked the Assam Rifles post, which was quickly overrun, though after inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

More than 700 soldiers are said to be buried there.

Tibet's so-called "peaceful liberation" should be read as the invasion of the Roof of the World; the Tibetan "rebellion" is the Tibetan masses' uprising against the occupiers in March 1959 while "the self-defence counterattack" is the treacherous attack against India in October 1962.

Along with the memorials, "sculptures, manuscripts, pictures, certificates of merit, military medals... all cultural relics, silent and sacred, telling the infinite loyalty and love of revolutionary martyrs to the motherland and people."

The Sikhs were able to inflict heavy casualties to the Chinese, compelling them to retire.

Joginder Singh immediately asked for more ammunition, but by that time the enemy had cut the communications with the company headquarters. Joginder Singh fought like lion, he was badly wounded in the process and then taken prisoner.

The citation for the PVC gave more details: "In this fierce action, the platoon lost half of its men but not the will to fight. Subedar Joginder Singh, despite a wound in the thigh, refused evacuation. His platoon also refused to yield any ground to the enemy. The last wave of the Chinese attack, which was more determined and more forceful, followed next.

Ironically, it is at Bumla, the place where Joginder fought so well, that the first wounded jawans were repatriated by the Indian Red Cross on December 15.

In his memoirs, one of the COs remembered that on March 23, 1963, the PoWs were informed that Maj. Gurdial Singh of the Rajputs, who was in the camp, was awarded the Mahavir Chakra. At the same time, they probably heard of the PVC for Joginder Singh.

The officer noted: "On 26 March 1963, the commandant of the camp called us to tell us we were going to be returned to India via the mainland."

He further recalled: "Before leaving the PoW camp, we asked the Chinese to take us to the graves of our soldiers who had died in our camp. There were seven of them, including Subedar Joginder Singh, who had been awarded the highest gallantry award, the PVC. We were told by the Chinese that he had refused to have his toes, which were affected by frostbite [and bullet wounds], amputated... He [had] died of gangrene."

Incidentally, a war memorial has recently been constructed to honour the PVC awardee at Bum La; it was inaugurated by Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Pema Khandu, with Joginder's family and Army representatives present. It is a first step in the right direction, but it is time for New Delhi to ask the Chinese government to repatriate to India the mortal remains of the brave Sikh soldier as well as his six other companions still buried in Tibet.

It would only be late justice.

The report concluded: "While in the enemy's custody he died because of his wound. He was awarded the PVC (posthumously) for his bravery."

Joginder was very badly wounded. When a few days later he arrived at the PoWs' camp near Chongye in central Tibet, Chinese doctors immediately suggested an amputation (he was also suffering from frostbites), which the brave subedar refused; his chances of being promoted to Subedar-Major, the senior-most rank for a JCO (junior commissioned officer) would be jeopardised.

Subedar Joginder Singh of 1 Sikh Regiment was posted a few hundred metres away. According to the official report of the 1962 War: "The enemy attacked the forward platoon position of 'D' Coy [Company] of the Sikhs at the IB [Inspection Bungalow] Ridge, at about 5:00 hrs with the objective of capturing 'Twin Peaks'. As the climb from the bed of the nullah to the platoon position was steep,

**The report concluded: 'While in the enemy's custody he died because of his wound. He was awarded the PVC (posthumously) for his bravery.'**

The Chinese doctors asked the Indian commanding officers in the camp to try to convince Joginder it was necessary if he wanted to survive. But the Indian officers failed to do so and soon after Joginder passed away. This was sometime in November 1962.

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The writer is based in South India for the past 42 years. He writes on India, China, Tibet and Indo-French relations.

## LETTERS

### LOCKDOWN

Lockdown is not the solution to Covid-19. We must step up production of vaccines and oxygen for patients. Scientist and scholars or doctors must come forward to save the lives of peoples. It is the responsibility of citizens to save themselves and one another.

M.A. Khan  
Hyderabad

### VACCINATION CHAOS

The vaccination programme in India is completely flawed and biased. Many people above the age of 45 who got their first dose are left in the lurch without accountability. The CoWIN portal allows booking vaccination appointment but the government is not in a position to supply vaccine as per demand. The irony is it is not ready to admit or clarify when we will get our second dose. Adding to the confusion, they are suggesting walk-ins for the second dose. Every vaccination centre looks like a mela. Making senior citizens wait in the scorching heat without any social distancing and without any information is ridiculous. Why not give dates and time slots for the second dose?

A. Joseph  
Hyderabad

### BLACK MARKETING

Why are state governments and Centre not able to stop black marketing of health facilities and medications like remdesivir and oxygen supplies? The Supreme Court must step in and order punishment of culprits and send them to jail under non-bailable conditions.

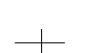
Venkat Kumar  
Hyderabad

**50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle**  
**Increased share for Telangana**

NEW DELHI, MAY 12. Telangana might get a greater share of the States development funds.

This was understood here today after the high level talks the State leaders, Mr. K. Brahmananda Reddi, Chief Minister and Mr. J. Chokka Rao, Regional Committee Chairman had with the Prime Minister and the Planning Minister.

The Chief Minister, it is understood, has agreed to the Regional Committee Chairman's plea for the 40 per cent share if it could be provided without sacrificing the needs of the other backward region, Rayalaseema.



## SHORT TAKES

## J&amp;K OFFICIAL BEATS UP PEOPLE, INVITES PUBLICIRE

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR MAY 12

A video of a senior government official thrashing citizens in an attempt to enforce the lockdown necessitated by the current wave of the Covid-19 in north-western Baramulla district has shocked people of Jammu and Kashmir and beyond and sparked anger among netizens, many of whom demanded his sacking or, at least, stripping him of the present assignment.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Baramulla, Muhammad Ahsan Mir, can be seen in the video which went viral beating up an elderly woman and man with a stick and even kicking the latter and also threatening another woman resident in the main town of Baramulla for defying the 'Corona curfew'.

Many people soon took to social media platforms to condemn the ADC's behaviour and demand action against him. Senior journalist Mufti Islah tweeted "He should get a sack immediately. This is an unruly behaviour. His way of dealing with people will rub on to his subordinates and they are likely to unleash terror on people. He is a very bad example to be a J&K government interface. Isolate him. A bad apple can spoil a basket."

## ODISHA TO GIVE JAB TO NON-ID PROOF HOLDERS

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, MAY 12

The Odisha government on Wednesday decided to administer Covid-19 vaccine to vulnerable people who don't possess any identity proofs.

In a letter to all the collectors and Municipal Corporation Commissioners, additional chief secretary to the government, P. K. Mohapatra, asked to immediately identify such persons and bring them under the inoculation process.

"In all the phases of Covid-19 vaccination drive, it has been prescribed that the beneficiary must register in the COWIN portal. The beneficiary has to register in the portal with one of the seven prescribed ID proofs. However, some vulnerable groups of citizens may not possess any of the seven prescribed identity cards. Such vulnerable persons may not be denied for Covid-19 vaccination for absence of identity proof. Hence, there is a need to provide special consideration for Covid-19 vaccination of the vulnerable population, as these beneficiaries are also at risk of exposure to Covid-19 infection," Mr. Mohapatra wrote in the letter.

"Such groups of people include nomads (including sadhus/saints from various religions), prison inmates, inmates in mental health institutions, citizens in old age homes, roadside beggars, people residing in rehabilitation centers/camps and any other identified eligible persons, aged 18 years or more, and not having any of above prescribed individual photo ID cards". the official said.

## 103-YEAR-OLD GANDHIAN FIGHTS COVID BATTLE

Bengaluru, May 12: Eminent Gandhian and freedom fighter H. S. Doreswamy has won the Covid-19 battle at the ripe old age of 103 and is returning home.

"I developed symptoms five days ago but there were no complications as such. Yet, I decided to get admitted because I have respiratory problems. Now, I am getting discharged," the centenarian told PTI on Wednesday.

According to him, he got admitted to Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research (SJICSR), a government-owned autonomous hospital.

Sources close to him said the director of the Jayadeva Institute Dr C. N. Manjunath, an eminent cardiologist and the son-in-law of former Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda, personally monitored the treatment for Doreswamy.

Born on April 10, 1918, Harohalli Srinivasaiah Doreswamy took a plunge into the freedom struggle by taking part in the Quit India movement and was jailed for 14 months from 1943 to 1944. The Gandhian had also participated in the Mysuru Chalo movement to compel the Mysuru Maharaja to accede to the Indian State post-independence.

## Delhi blames Bharat Bio for vax shortage

Sisodia says pharma firm refused to supply required doses after reserve stock of vaccines exhausted

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 12

Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia on Wednesday alleged that Bharat Biotech has refused to supply the required doses of its Covid-19 vaccine Covaxin to Delhi.

Addressing a press conference, Sisodia said that Delhi had asked for total 1.34 crore doses of two Covid vaccines - 67 lakhs each of Covaxin and Covishield. However, Bharat Biotech informed the Delhi government of its inability to supply the said doses as it is "making dispatches as per directives of concerned government officials".

Sisodia claimed that it was obvious that Bharat Biotech was talking about central government officials.

"They further wrote, 'We sincerely regret that we cannot make any additional supplies as required by you'. I do not know how much is being supplied to other states but they have written to us that they cannot provide to Delhi because they have to supply as per the central government order," the deputy CM said.

Manish Sisodia said that Delhi has run out of its reserve stock of vaccines.

Our reserve stock has been exhausted. The centres administering Covishield vaccines are functioning but we have had to close the centres administering Covaxin. So, we have had to close down more than 100 centres across 17 schools," Sisodia said.

The deputy chief minister and AAP leader urged the Centre to stop all vaccine-related exports and allow more companies to produce the doses.

"The Centre should act as the government of a country. They should carry out their responsibility and stop all exports," he said. Sisodia also said that the Centre must import vaccine doses from across the globe and make them available to state governments.

## ASSAM SHUTS ALL OFFICES IN URBAN AREAS

MANOJ ANAND | DC GUWAHATI, MAY 12

A day after the approval of the state cabinet, the Assam government on Wednesday announced strict containment measures by shutting down of all offices, religious places and weekly markets for 15 days in urban and semi-urban areas of the state, besides imposing curfew from 2 pm to 5 am as Covid-19 cases in the state continue to surge ahead dangerously.

On Tuesday, 6,258 new cases and 85 fatalities were reported, both of which are biggest single-day spikes so far since the first wave of the pandemic struck. The test positivity percentage on Tuesday shot above 9 percent. On the other hand, 4,409 patients were discharged from hospitals on Tuesday. The total number of cases reported in the current month till Tuesday stood at 51,306 while 531 patients have lost their lives in these first 11 days of the month.

Issuing a new set of guidelines for the urban and semi-urban places in the periphery of 5 km of municipal areas, Assam chief secretary Jishnu Barua told reporters, "Complete lockdown is an option, but we are going gradually in a phased manner. We hope these measures will work in the next two-three days." As per the restrictions notified by the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA), weekly haats, bazaars, educational institutions and all government and private offices have been ordered to shut for the next 15 days.



Nurses pose for a picture on the occasion of International Nurses Day, at NMMC Covid-19 care centre, Navi Mumbai, on Wednesday. — PTI



New Delhi workers install an oxygen plant for a temporary Covid Care Centre at Ramlila Ground, near LNJP Hospital in Delhi on Wednesday.



Family members mourn the death of a Covid-19 victim, at Patna Medical College and Hospital in Patna, on Wednesday. — PTI

## Cong. slams Centre over lack of vaccines

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

The Congress on Wednesday hit out at the Center over the lack of vaccines. Taking to Twitter, Party General Secretary Ms. Priyanka Gandhi said, "India is the largest vaccine-producing country.

The BJP government marked 'Tika Utsav' on April 12, but did not make arrangements for providing vaccines and in 30 days there was an 82 per-

cent decline in our vaccinations." The central government had marked 'Tika Utsav', a vaccination drive between April 11 and 14, with an aim to vaccinate the maximum number of eligible people against coronavirus amid a surge in cases. She also shared a graph showing that India was behind countries like the US, the UK, Turkey and France in terms of vaccinating citizens. She further said, "Modi ji went to vaccine factories, also got photo-

graphs clicked, but why did his government place its first order for vaccine doses only in January 2021? The United States and other countries placed orders with Indian vaccine companies long ago. Who will take responsibility for this?"

Several state governments have had to reschedule their vaccination plans due to slow availability of vaccines. In states like Maharashtra the emphasis has been to

provide the second dose to

people who have already taken the first dose. While several other states delayed the vaccination for the population in the age bracket of 18 to 44 years so that the second doses of 45 years and above could be completed. Meanwhile some states like Uttar Pradesh have already rolled out a global tender for vaccines while others are contemplating doing so.

The Congress has also attacked the Centre for levying high GST on products crucial in the fight

against Covid-19 and sought an exemption for vaccines, Remdesivir and oxygen concentrators. The party also demanded that the government should provide exemption not only on the final product but also on the raw material being used. The Congress along with several other opposition parties have demanded an immediate convening of the GST Council meeting to rationalize taxation on the products essential to combating Covid-19.

## V-P NAIDU LAUDS CONTRIBUTION OF NURSES

New Delhi, May 12: Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday lauded nurses for rendering untiring, selfless service during the Coronavirus pandemic, and described them as a critical link in India's health infrastructure.

"On International Nurses Day, I compliment our nurses for rendering untiring, selfless service to the people. They have been at the forefront during this pandemic, being a critical link in our health infrastructure," the Vice President Secretariat tweeted quoting Naidu.

International Nurse Day is celebrated on May 12 to mark the birth anniversary of social reformer and founder of modern nursing, Florence Nightingale.

The day is also observed to appreciate the contributions of nurses to the society around the globe.

"Let us all express our gratitude to them for their invaluable contribution in advancing the health and well-being of the people," Naidu said.

— PTI

## DOOR-TO-DOOR JAB WOULD HAVE SAVED MANY: HC

SHAHAB ANSARI | DC MUMBAI, MAY 12

The Bombay High Court on Wednesday asked the Central government to reconsider its current protocol that doesn't allow door-to-door vaccination. The court also said that had the government incorporated such a policy earlier, it could have saved lives of senior citizens and specially-abled persons who were unable to visit vaccination centres.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice Girish S. Kulkarni was hearing a PIL filed by city-based lawyers Dhruvi Kapadia and Kunal Tiwari, seeking directions to the Centre, the Maharashtra government and the BMC to provide door-to-door vaccination facility for people over 75 years of age, the specially-abled and the bed-ridden.

## Inoculation drive in hosp's on hold

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

Paucity of vaccines in the national capital has forced several government and private hospitals to stall the inoculation drive. While some hospitals as a last resort had to discontinue the vaccination drive last week, with the shortage of vaccines availability, it has become a herculean task for several hospitals management to deal with the crisis.

According to officials, though there has been a shortage of vaccine in the city, the city hospitals

have the capacity to vaccinate more people. On Wednesday, the Delhi Government received 2,67,790 doses of Covishield vaccine for people in the 18 to 44 years age group. It has become a concern for hospitals like Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, Fortis Health Care and others to continue the inoculation drive.

As per an official from Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital, the Covid vaccination drive can't be expanded as it is getting only 200 doses of Covishield every day.

According to officials, though there has been a shortage of vaccine in the city, the city hospitals

## Didi: Import more foreign vaccine

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MAY 12

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging him to "speedily import vaccines" to match the massive demand in the country. She also urged the Prime Minister to allow reputed global Covid-19 vaccine producers to open their franchise operations in the country to tackle the scarcity of antitoxins.

The Trinamul Congress supremo also informed Mr. Modi that her government would provide the international giants land and support for their franchise operations, even by the national players in the case, for bulk production of the vaccines.

Ms. Banerjee told the PM, "It seems, however, that the production (and hence, the supply and distribution) of vaccines in the country is extremely inadequate and insignificant in the context of the

massive needs of the people at large. About 10 crore people in West Bengal and 140 crore people in the country need vaccination, here and now, but only a microscopic percentage has been covered."

Ms. Banerjee added, "Also, it may kindly be considered if we could encourage the world players to open up franchise operations in our country. Even the national players could be inspired to go for the franchise mode for bulk production of vaccines. We, in West Bengal, are ready to provide land and support for any manufacturing/ franchise operation for authentic vaccine manufacturing. I would request you to kindly consider the proposition."

With the aid of scientists and experts it is possible to identify the reputed and authentic manufacturers...

...and it is possible for us in this country to speedily import vaccines from those ends across the different parts of the world. I urge you to embark upon this endeavour.

our without any further delay." Ms. Banerjee wrote.

Liberals, proactive and discerning import of vaccines is the paramount need today, she stressed.

Ms. Banerjee added, "Also, it may kindly be considered if we could encourage the world players to open up franchise operations in our country. Even the national players could be inspired to go for the franchise mode for bulk production of vaccines. We, in West Bengal, are ready to provide land and support for any manufacturing/ franchise operation for authentic vaccine manufacturing. I would request you to kindly consider the proposition."

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organ that forms during pregnancy. It performs duties for most of the foetus' organs while they are still forming, such as providing oxygen while the lungs develop and nutrition while the gut is forming. According to the researchers, the placenta manages hormones and the immune system, and tells the mother's body to welcome and nurture the foetus rather than reject it as a foreign intruder.

— PTI

## Pregnant women make antibodies after vaccination and transfer them to babies

## Vaccines don't damage placenta: Study

New Delhi, May 12: Covid-19 vaccines may be safe during pregnancy, suggests a study that found no evidence of injury to the placenta in pregnant women who received the preventive.

The first-of-its-kind study, published on Tuesday in the journal Obstetrics & Gynecology, adds to the growing literature that Covid-19 vaccines are safe in pregnancy.

"From what we can tell, the Covid vaccine does not damage the placenta," Goldstein said.

The researchers noted that there is a lot of vaccine hesitancy, especially among pregnant people. The team hopes these data, albeit preliminary, can reduce concerns about the risk of the vaccine to the pregnancy," said study co-author Emily Miller, assistant professor at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in the US.

The study authors examined the placentas from 84 vaccinated patients and 116 unvaccinated patients who delivered at a hospital in Chicago, US.

Most patients received the vaccine — either Moderna or Pfizer — during their third trimester. Last year, the same team published a study that found placentas of women who tested positive for the Covid-19 virus while pregnant showed abnormal blood flow between mother and baby in utero.

Pregnant patients who want to get vaccinated to avoid contracting the disease should feel safe doing so, Miller said.

"We are beginning to

move to a framework of protecting foetuses through vaccination, rather than from vaccination," Miller said.

In April, the scientists published a study showing pregnant women make Covid antibodies after vaccination and successfully transfer them to their foetuses. "Until infants can get vaccinated, the only way for them to get Covid antibodies is from their mother," Goldstein said.

The placenta is the first

— PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## TWO ARRESTED FOR SELLING BLOOD PLASMA

Noida (UP), May 12: Two men were arrested in Greater Noida on Wednesday for allegedly selling blood plasma to Covid-19 patients for up to Rs 60,000 each unit, police said.

The duo had floated their phone number on Facebook through which they were contacted by people who were in need of blood plasma but were charged up to Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000 for a single unit, the police said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Greater Noida) Vishal Pandey said the accused were held by officials of the Beta 2 police station and the Crime Branch.

"Accused Anil Sharma had some time back contacted Rohit Rathi, who worked as a ward boy in a hospital, for blood plasma for treatment of his mother. Later, the two got together with an idea to find plasma donors and then selling it to the needy at high rates due to increased demand amid the pandemic," Pandey said.

"The duo would hire plasma donors and pay them some money for it after which they sold the same plasma to people at exorbitant rates of Rs 50,000 to Rs 60,000," he added.

The police said so far they have been able to track six such cases involving the duo, while further investigation is underway.

They have also seized one unit of plasma (A+ blood group), Rs 35,000 cash from the car and impounded their car.

An FIR has been lodged against them under the Indian Penal Code section 420 (cheating) and provisions of the National Disaster Management Act (NDMA), the police added.

## TARUN TEJPAL CASE VERDICT ON MAY 14

Panaji, May 12: A sessions court in Goa on Wednesday said it will pronounce the verdict in the Tarun Tejpal case on May 19.

The former Tehelka editor-in-chief, who was present in the court on Wednesday, is accused of sexually assaulting a female colleague inside the elevator of a luxury hotel in Goa in 2013.

The additional district court was to pronounce the verdict on April 27, but judge Kshama Joshi had then adjourned the verdict to May 12.

The court on Wednesday said the latest adjournment was due to lack of staff due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"The judge said they are operating with only 15 per cent staff and there was lot of material to go through before pronouncing the verdict," public prosecutor Francisco Tavora said.

Tejpal was present in the court along with some of his family members. While moving out of the court room after the judge adjourned the verdict to next week, Tejpal refused to talk to reporters, saying the matter is sub-judice. A number of media persons and lawyers were present in the court. The Goa police registered an FIR against Tejpal in November 2013 following which he was arrested.

He has been out on bail since May 2014. The Goa crime branch had filed a charge sheet against Tejpal.

## RAPE VICTIM'S FATHER BEATEN; VIDEO GOES VIRAL

Agra, May 12: A case was registered on Wednesday against eight people, who could be seen thrashing a rape victim's father and brother with sticks in a viral video, police said here, adding one of the accused was arrested.

The video shows the two being attacked on the banks of Yamuna river. The incident occurred on Tuesday evening at Balkeshwar Ghat under Kamla Nagar Police Station, police said.

The victims, aged 45 and 20, were being treated at Sarojini Naidu Medical College and Hospital. Two of the accused in the viral video were identified as Rahul and Jogendra, who are named in the rape case of the 45-year-old's daughter.

They are out on bail, police said, adding the rape survivor was a minor when she was assaulted. The accused attacked her father and brother after they refused to accept a compromise, they added.

Superintendent of Police, Agra, Botre Rohan Pramod told reporters that the arrested accused was identified as Vikas Gautam and efforts were on to nab the other seven.

## SC refuses to give bail for Navlakha

## Court suggests he be put on house arrest

PARMOD KUMAR | DC NEW DELHI, MAY 12

The Supreme Court Wednesday rejected a plea for default bail by human rights activist Gautam Navlakha, one of the accused in the January 2018 Bhima Koregaon violence case, over his alleged links with Maoists.

Rejecting Mr Navlakha's bail plea, a bench of Justices Uday Umesh Lalit, Indira Banerjee and K.M. Joseph suggested that the lower courts could put him under house arrest, given the need to stop overcrowding of jails in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic's second wave.

Having shown the new course for the subordinate judiciary to follow by sending an accused to house arrest, in the case of Mr Navlakha, the court rejected his contention that he was entitled to default bail as the National

Investigating Agency did not file the chargesheet within the statutory 90 days from the date of his arrest.

Speaking for the bench, Justice Joseph said: "The concept of house arrest as part of custody under Section 167 has not engaged the courts, including this court. However, when the issue has come into focus, and noticing its (Section 167) ingredients we have formed the view that it involves custody which falls under Section 167."

Justice Joseph said: "We observe that under Section 167 in appropriate cases it will be open to the

courts to order house arrest."

Indicating the criteria, which it said was not exhaustive, Justice Joseph said an accused could be sent to house arrest given factors like "age, health condition and the antecedents of the accused, the nature of the crime, the need for other forms of custody and the ability to enforce the terms of the house arrest."

The high court hadn't accepted Mr Navlakha's plea to include the 34 days of his house arrest in Delhi from August 28, 2018 to October 1, 2018 to show his incarceration for 93 days in the calculations and dismissed his appeal on February 3, 2021.

The NIA had filed the chargesheet on October 9, 2020.

Seeking default bail, Mr Navlakha had shown 34 days of house arrest, plus 11 days of NIA custody and 48 days in Tihar Jail, Delhi, and Taloja Jail, Mumbai.

Mr Navlakha and the other activists are accused of allegedly making inflammatory speeches and issuing provocative statements at the Elgar Parishad meeting in Pune on December 31, 2017 that led to violence at Bhima Koregaon the next day.

Mr Navlakha had approached the Supreme Court against the Bombay high court order denying him bail. He is among the eight alleged Maoist activists against whom the NIA filed a chargesheet on October 9, 2020.

## Good wishes



Members of Dawoodi Bohra Community exchange greetings amongst family members after offering prayers at home on Id-ul-Fitr, in Bhopal, on Wednesday. — PTI

## Task force by SC is to certify Modi govt's failure: Congress

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, MAY 12

The Maharashtra Congress on Wednesday said that the Supreme Court's decision to appoint the national task force for oxygen supply and distribution has underlined the failure of the Centre to handle the Covid situation. Saying that the Narendra Modi-led BJP government has failed miserably to tackle the coronavirus pandemic, Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole also demanded a national poli-

cy for Covid vaccination drive in the country.

"The vaccination drive has also failed due to the callousness of the Centre. The Modi government is claiming to have vaccinated 17 crore people in the country, but lakhs of people are still not given second dose despite their time limit being expired.

Mr Patole said that the country would have not witnessed such a calamity, had the Modi government acted on the warning given by Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi about the Coronavirus crisis.

Thousands of people are

dying due to the absence of oxygen, medical equipment and adequate vaccines in the country. The world media has exposed the hollowness of disaster management of the Modi government, due to which the country's image has been maligned across the world, he added.

Mr Patole said that the nation's power corridor, envisages a new Parliament building, a common central secretariat, revamping of the 3-km Rajpath from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.

— PTI

## Gen Naravane talks to US Army chief

New Delhi, May 12: Chief of Army Staff Gen MM Naravane held a telephonic conversation with his American counterpart Gen James C. McConville on Tuesday, focusing on bilateral military cooperation as well as effectively dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic.

Officials said Gen Naravane and Gen McConville discussed ways to expand cooperation between the two armies in specific areas in view of the evolving regional security

scenario. They also deliberated on effectively dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic.

"General MM Naravane #COAS had telephonic interaction with General James C. McConville, Chief of Staff of the Army #USArmy on Tuesday and discussed issues of bilateral defence cooperation," the Indian Army said in a tweet.

The Indo-US defence ties have been on an upswing in the last few years.

— PTI

#Pithavum Puthranum Parisudhathmavinum' which is set to air on an OTT platform on May 14, on grounds that it was "blasphemous" in nature and would hurt the religious sentiments of Christians at large.

The petitioner, Jessy Mani, who is a nun and a psychologist by profession has opposed release of the film on the grounds that it allegedly depicts the sexual rela-

tionship of nuns with two priests."

The film stars Sunny Wayne, Honey Rose and Rajshri Ponnapa in lead roles. According to the petitioner, the movie was completed in 2012-13 and was originally named 'Pithavum Puthranum Parisudhathmavinum' which would mean 'Father Son and the Holy Spirit'.

Later the word

'Parisudhathmavinum' was deleted by the producers and when they applied for certificate from the censor board, the same was denied as

— PTI

## Petitioner says film depicts sexual relations of nuns with 2 priests

## Nun moves HC to stop film release

## Remembering Guru Angad Dev Ji



Fireworks at Golden Temple on the occasion of birth anniversary of Guru Angad Dev Ji, the second guru of Sikhs, in Amritsar, on Wednesday. — PTI

## Didi, Dhankhar fight over 'riot' visit

RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC KOLKATA, MAY 12

A day before West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was scheduled to begin his tour of areas affected by post-poll violence, chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday advised him to "desist" from undertaking "field trips" and follow the established government protocol.

In a strongly worded letter to the governor, who is planning to undertake the trip in a BSF helicopter, Ms Banerjee drew his attention to the state home (political) department's 'Manual of Protocol & Ceremonials' which mentions: "The programme for the governor's visits to places in the districts is finalised by the secretary to the governor after obtaining the orders of the government. However, before recommending a request to the governor for acceptance, whether it is from a private party or a government institution,

the secretary to the governor consults the governor and the commissioner of the division and the district officer in charge of the proper execution of the overall programme."

She told the Governor, "I find from social media that you are unilaterally proceeding to the district of Coochbehar on 13-5-2021 and, sadly, I find that to be violative of the long-standing norms as evolved over several decades. I, therefore, would expect that you will kindly follow the well-established norms of protocol, as stated above, and desist from abrupt decisions with regard to field visits."

Reminding Mr Dhankhar of one of her previous letters, Ms Banerjee added, "I had requested and specifically advised you to refrain from surpassing the chief minister and her Council of Ministers and communicating with and dictating to the state officials, in excess of your power under the Constitution, and directing them to attend before you". I find that you are steadily ignoring this advice, solemnly rendered by me to you, and have been communicating with and dictating the state officials. You have also been seeking reports from them directly. I urge you and again request and advise you to refrain from this. I am asking my chief secretary to go by this norm."

Hitting back at the Trinamul Congress supremo immediately, Mr Dhankhar, who plans to visit Assam first on Thursday morning to meet BJP workers in a shelter there, rejected her advice and reminded her of his "constitutional duties".

In his reply to her, Mr Dhankhar wrote, "In time of such unprecedented crisis there was need to act in togetherness with all concerned, including the governor. It was no time for optics or playing to the gallery when we are in the midst of unprecedented

post-poll retributive violence. I can't persuade myself to subscribe to the stance reflected in your communication. It betrays elementary ignorance of constitutional provisions. We both, being constitutional functionaries, are subject to the Constitution. I am sure you will at least concede supremacy of the Constitution, that by oath you are ordained to follow. It is a textbook preposition that provisions of the Constitution can neither be diluted nor ignored."

He added, "I am appalled that a leader of your stature should be even contemplating that in making visits the governor has to obtain orders of the government. Surprising that you became aware of this constitutionally untenable provision at a time when my visits are to share the pain and agony of suffering people. I am just not persuaded by your stance. There would be no sane takers of this."

## Visva-Bharati 'BJP defeat' seminar topic stirs row

DC CORRESPONDENT KOLKATA, MAY 12

The Visva-Bharati authorities courted a major controversy after they uploaded a notice on the central university's website on Wednesday morning about a virtual seminar, to be addressed by a senior Union government official on May 18, to detect the causes behind the whitewash of the BJP in the just concluded Assembly Election in West Bengal.

The proposed online event was the 35th Lecture of the V-B in a series. The notice stated, "Visva-Bharati cordially invites you to the lecture by Prof. Sanjay Kumar, in the Visva-Bharati Lecture Series. The title of his talk is 'Why BJP failed to win West Bengal Assembly Election?' Prof. Kumar is Joint Advisor, Niti Aayog, Govt. of India and formerly Director of Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi."

It added, "The lecture will be organized through online mode by using ZOOM on 18 May 2021 (Tuesday) at 4.00pm IST. Professor Bidyut Chakrabarty, Vice Chancellor, Visva-Bharati shall preside over the lecture. Zoom Meeting Joining Link: https://zoom.us/j/91371997686?pwd=ZWPkTTN3URcGdANNGX.Meeting ID: 913-7199-7686 and Passcode: 180521. All are welcome to join."

The political topic instantly infuriated people cutting across barriers at Shantiniketan and beyond. Supriyo Tagore, a family member of poet Rabindranath Tagore, whose brainchild V-B is,

said, "Politics never existed in Visva Bharati. Rabindranath Tagore also did not like it. But politics has taken control of Visva Bharati now. It is unfortunate and an injustice." Saoni Chakraborty, a student, alleged, "We condemn such events on the interests of a particular political party."

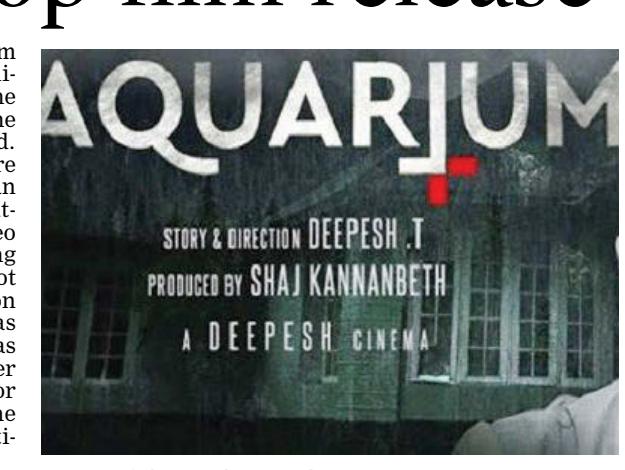
Dulal Chandra Ghosh, a V-B executive council member who is also a nominee of Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the central university: Narendra Modi, claimed, "The V-C is behind all such events to save his job. He initiates these exercises but blames the BJP."

Hit by the massive uproar, the V-B authorities later replaced the notice with another stating, "Due to some unavoidable circumstances, this lecture is treated to be as cancelled for the time being."

It added, "The lecture will be organized through online mode by using ZOOM on 18 May 2021 (Tuesday) at 4.00pm IST. Professor Bidyut Chakrabarty, Vice Chancellor, Visva-Bharati shall preside over the lecture. Zoom Meeting Joining Link: https://zoom.us/j/91371997686?pwd=ZWPkTTN3URcGdANNGX.Meeting ID: 913-7199-7686 and Passcode: 180521. All are welcome to join."

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— PTI



Poster of the movie Aquarium.

**SHORT TAKES**  
**S'PORE: 2 CHARGED UNDER OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT**

**Singapore:** A 22-year-old Indian national and a Singaporean of Indian descent were charged by a court here on Wednesday under the Official Secrets Act for unauthorised communication about an apartment inspection.

Damandeep Singh allegedly received the information while having reasonable grounds to believe that it was communicated to him in contravention of the Official Secrets Act, said the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB).

He received the information from Kalayarasen Karuppaya, an Indian-origin higher estate executive with the Housing and Development Board (HDB), the public housing authority.

The 44-year-old Singaporean allegedly leaked information on HDB's impending inspections of a flat at Kim Tian Road, off the central business district, to Singh, a registered tenant of the unit.

**GREEK COMEDIAN CHARGED WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT**

**Athens:** One of Greece's top comedians was on Wednesday charged with sexual assault, a court source said, the latest case in a belated #MeToo awakening sparked by an Olympic medalist last year.

Petros Filippidis, whose successful theatre and TV career spanned over three decades, has been accused by female colleagues of demanding sexual favours in return for help in landing roles.

He was dropped in February from a comedy series aired by state broadcaster ERT after the allegations emerged.

The 57-year-old denies the claims.

Greece has in recent months been rocked by a wave of allegations of sexual abuse in the fields of arts, sport and education.

In February the former artistic director of Greece's national theatre, Dimitris Lignadis, was charged with raping minors and jailed pending trial.

**UK GOVT TO GET STRICTER WITH VOTER ID RULES**

**London:** The British government has announced contentious plans to toughen election voting rules by requiring photo identification at polling stations, a move it says will protect the democratic system against electoral fraud.

But opponents and civil liberties groups say the law proposed by Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government could disenfranchise millions of voters, particularly the poor and members of ethnic minorities.

The government's legislative agenda for the next year, announced Tuesday, includes a plan to tighten election rules for postal and proxy voting, and to require electors in UK general elections to show photo ID at polling stations. At present, Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK that requires voters to prove their identities at polling stations.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said on Wednesday that the changes would "protect the integrity of our electoral system" against fraud and had "nothing to do with party interests."

But opposition Labour Party justice spokesman David Lammy said it was a cynical and ugly attempt to rig the system to disempower the poorest and most marginalised groups."

**WOMEN SEXUALLY ABUSED BY AID STAFF DURING EBOLA IN CONGO**

**Kinshasa, May 12:** Nearly two dozen women in DR Congo have come forward with allegations of sexual abuse by aid workers during an Ebola outbreak, adding to a scandal that broke last year; a report said on Wednesday.

Twenty-two women have said they were sexually exploited or abused, in acts that included alleged rape or led to unwanted pregnancies, by male aid workers responding to an Ebola crisis in eastern DR Congo, The New Humanitarian (TNH) and the Thomson Reuters Foundation said.

The men offered them jobs in exchange for sex, identifying themselves as working for major aid organisations.

Three of the seven organisations named are UN agencies, led by the World Health Organisation (WHO), which features in 14 of the claims.

The allegations centre on Butembo, a major trading city and an epicentre of the 2018-2020 outbreak of Ebola that claimed 2,200 lives.

"One woman said she was raped by a man who said he was with the WHO, and reporters learned of three others who said they had become pregnant," the investigators said.

"One of those women died after a botched abortion as she tried to conceal the pregnancy from her husband and children, her sister said."

The gruelling fight to roll back the Ebola epidemic, the Democratic Republic of Congo's worst ever has been tarred by allegations of sexual abuse by well-paid aid workers who flooded into the poor region. — AFP

# Fauci: India opened up too soon

Infectious disease expert points to country's 'incorrect assumption' that it finished Covid



In honour of International Nurses Day and Nurses Week, unionists from the National Nurses United place 400 pairs of shoes on Black Lives Matter Plaza to recognise the registered nurses who have died from the Covid-19 in Washington on Wednesday.

**RICH INDIANS HIT AS MALDIVES BANS TRAVEL**

**Mal, Maldives, May 12:** Rich Indians can no longer escape their country's raging pandemic by holidaying in the Maldives, after the island paradise said on Wednesday it would ban travel from South Asia as it battles a surge in Covid-19 infections.

The exact origins of the cases have not yet been discovered.

The challenge at this moment is still severe. Please be alert and follow the guidelines," President Tsai Yin-wen said in televised remarks. She called on people not to panic.

Taipei, May 12: Taiwan's president on Wednesday sought to reassure the public that the government is capable of withstanding a further outbreak of Covid-19 after 16 local cases were detected.

**TAIWAN PANICS AS 16 NEW COVID CASES SURFACE**

**Taipei, May 12:** Taiwan's president on Wednesday sought to reassure the public that the government is capable of withstanding a further outbreak of Covid-19 after 16 local cases were detected.

The challenge at this moment is still severe. Please be alert and follow the guidelines," President Tsai Yin-wen said in televised remarks. She called on people not to panic.

Taipei said medical supplies were sufficient and vaccines would continue to be distributed. Taiwan had virtually eradicated domestic transmission of the Covid through strict protocols. — AP

## French MPs back Macron's Covid 'pass' after changes

**Paris, May 12:** France's parliament on Wednesday backed President Emmanuel Macron's plan to introduce a Covid "health pass", after deputies pushed back against the move arguing it was discriminatory for those not yet vaccinated.

Macron wants the pass to help speed up the lifting of Coronavirus restrictions as his Covid-19 vaccination programme gathers pace.

It will be used to travel outside France for people showing proof of Coronavirus vaccination, a recent negative test or recovery from a Covid-19 infection.

Opposition parties have criticised the bill for posing a discrimination risk, not least because millions of people have yet to be inoculated.

Even some deputies usually loyal to Macron balked at what they said was a lack of details on how the pass would be used, saying the government was basically asking

for a blank cheque. They pressed for a firm number on how many passholders would be allowed at large gatherings, but the government insisted on a need to remain flexible.

The disagreement led to an initial defeat of the bill by 108 votes to 103 in the lower-house National Assembly, with a high number of abstentions.

But in the early hours of Wednesday it passed 208 to 85. — AFP

respond appropriately to this pandemic and future outbreaks, as well, Senator Murray said as she asked Fauci what can the US learn from India's outbreak.

"One of the important things is don't ever underestimate the situation,"

Fauci said as he referred to India's incorrect assumption and premature opening up.

"The second thing is preparedness with regard to public health, preparedness, which we, as a lesson learned for future pandemics, have to realise that we need to continue to build up our local public health infrastructure, which over the last decades we have let actually in many respects go into disarray, likely because of our successes in controlling so many diseases, Fauci said. — PTI

## WHO should have more power: Experts

**Geneva, May 12:** A panel of independent experts who reviewed the World Health Organisation's response to the Coronavirus pandemic says the UN health agency should be granted guaranteed rights of access in countries to investigate emerging outbreaks, a contentious idea that would give it more powers and require member states to give up some of theirs.

In a report released on Wednesday, the panel faulted countries worldwide for their sluggish response to Covid-19, saying most waited to see how the virus was spreading until it was too late to contain it, leading to catastrophic results. The group also slammed the lack of global leadership and restrictive international health laws that hindered WHO's response to the pandemic.

Some experts criticised the panel for failing to hold WHO and others accountable for their actions during Covid-19, describing that as an abdication of responsibility.

Lawrence Gostin of Georgetown University said the panel failed to call out bad actors like China, perpetuating the dysfunctional WHO tradition of diplomacy over frankness, transparency and accountability. — AP

## Nepali Congress gears up to stake claim to PM post

**Kathmandu, May 12:** Main Opposition party, the Nepali Congress, has decided to stake a claim for the prime minister's post and is engaged in hectic parleys with other parties to conclude a deal ahead of Thursday's deadline issued by the President to political parties to form a new government as the one headed by K.P. Sharma Oli lost a crucial trust vote.

The decision to form a new government was taken after the office bearers of the Nepali Congress met on Tuesday.

Prachanda indicated that his party would support Deuba to become Prime Ministerial candidate. However, JSP-N with its 32 seats in the 271-member House of Representatives is divided on the issue of supporting Deuba as the new prime minister.

Nepali Congress with 61 seats in the House of Representatives and Maoist Centre with 49 seats cannot form a majority government without the support of JSP-N. — PTI

## TRUMP ADMIN STAFF TO DEFEND JAN. 6 VIOLENCE

**Washington, May 12:** Two senior Trump administration officials plan to defend their actions during the Jan 6 riots at the US Capitol when they appear before Congress, with former acting Defence Secretary Christopher Miller standing behind every decision he made that day.

Miller will tell the House Oversight Committee on Wednesday that he was concerned before the insurrection that sending troops to the building could fan fears of a military coup and cause a repeat of the deadly Kent State shootings, according to a copy of prepared remarks obtained.

His testimony is aimed at rebutting broad criticism that military forces were too slow to arrive even as pro-Trump rioters violently breached the building and stormed inside.

Miller will be joined by former acting Attorney General Jeffrey Rosen, who is also testifying for the first time. — AP

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## Nasa's Webb telescope clears test



This handout image released by NASA shows Nasa's James Webb Space Telescope undergoing tests at Northrop Grumman in California. — Nasa

**Washington, May 12:** The world's largest and most powerful space telescope unfolded its giant golden mirror for the last time on Earth on Tuesday, a key milestone before the \$10 billion observatory is launched later this year.

The James Webb Space Telescope's 21 feet 4 inch (6.5 meter) mirror was commanded to fully expand and lock itself into place, Nasa said — a final test to ensure it will survive its million-mile (1.6 million kilometer) journey and is ready to discover the origins of the Universe.

"It's like building a Swiss watch at 40-feet-tall... and getting it ready for this journey that we take into the vacuum at minus 400

degrees Fahrenheit (-240 Celsius), four times further than the Moon," said Scott Willoughby of lead contractor Northrop Grumman. He was speaking at the company's spaceport in Redondo Beach, California, from where the telescope will be shipped to French Guiana to be launched on an Ariane 5 rocket, with Nasa targeting October 31 for liftoff.

Webb's primary mirror is made of 18 hexagonal segments coated with an ultra-thin layer of gold to improve its reflection of infrared light. It will fly to space folded like a piece of origami artwork, which allows it to fit inside a 16-foot (5-meter) rocket fairing, and will then use 132 individual actuators and motors to bend each mirror into a specific position.

Together, the mirrors will function as one massive reflector, to enable the telescope to peer deeper into the cosmos than ever before.

Scientists want to use the telescope to look back in time over 13.5 billion years ago and see for the first time the first stars and galaxies that formed, a few hundred million years after the Big Bang.

To do this, they need to detect infrared. The current premier space telescope, Hubble, only has limited infrared capacity.

This is key because by the time the light from the first objects reaches our telescopes, it has been shifted towards the red end of the electromagnetic spectrum as a result of the Universe extending the space between objects as it expands. — AFP

**SHORT TAKES****IRAN CLASH KILLS 2 GUARD TROOPS, 7 MILITANTS**

Tehran: Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard forces on Tuesday killed seven militants and dismantled their cell in the country's northwest near the border with Turkey. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported. Two Guard members were also killed in the shootout.

IRNA said the "group of terrorists" had snuck into Iran illegally from Turkey. The clash took place around noon in the city of Salmas in Iran's West Azerbaijan province, according to the report.

The city is located about 650 kilometers (400 miles) northwest of the capital, Tehran. The area has seen occasional fighting between Iranian forces and Kurdish separatists as well as militants linked to the extremist Islamic State group.

In November, unknown gunmen killed three and wounded two Iranian border guards in the province.

**SUDAN FORCES DISPERSE PROTEST; TWO KILLED**

Cairo: Two protesters were killed when Sudanese security forces dispersed a demonstration late Tuesday in the capital of Khartoum, a local medical group said.

The violence broke out when dozens of protesters made their way late in the day to the sealed-off area outside the military's headquarters to commemorate a deadly break-up of a protest camp two years ago. The protesters have demanded justice for those killed in the 2019 violence. Security forces closed off major roads and streets leading to the government and military headquarters in Khartoum ahead of the protests.

The Sudanese doctors' committee said security forces fired live bullets and tear gas to disperse the protesters, killing at least two people and wounding more than 15 others, some of them in critical condition. The committee is the medical arm of the Sudanese Professionals' Association, which spearheaded the popular uprising that led to the military's ouster of Omar al-Bashir in April 2019.

**CHANCELLOR PROBED OVER LYING TO MPs IN AUSTRIA**

Vienna: Austria's Sebastian Kurz said on Wednesday that he was being investigated over possible false statements to a parliamentary committee probing corruption, in the latest headache for the conservative chancellor.

"I wish to inform you that... prosecutors have opened an investigation against the head of my office," Bernhard Bonelli, "and against me," Kurz told reporters before a cabinet meeting.

Kurz denied any wrongdoing, saying: "I always answered all (the committee's) questions truthfully." Prosecutors confirmed in an email that the investigation had been opened after several complaints were made to them.

The offence of lying under oath carries a prison term of up to three years.

The investigation comes after the opposition Social Democrats (SPÖ) and NEOS parties accused Kurz of not telling the truth in front of the committee of MPs, who are investigating the fallout from the so-called "Ibizagate" scandal that brought down Kurz's previous government in 2019.

**KREMLIN IMPOSES CUTS AT U.S. EMBASSY**

Moscow: Under Kremlin orders, the U.S. Embassy has stopped employing Russians, forcing the embassy to cut its consular staff by 75 per cent and limit many of its services.

The order went into effect on Wednesday, bringing the sharply deteriorating U.S.-Russia relationship to an intensely personal level. Because of the cuts, the embassy can offer only very limited services, such as considering "life-and-death" visa applications. That leaves Russian businessmen, exchange students and romantic partners adrift because they won't be able to obtain visas. Even Americans will be unable to register their newborns or renew their passports.

For Anastasia Kuznetsova, a 20-year-old engaged to marry a Californian, it's a crushing blow. She had already spent about two years seeking a fiancée's visa. The notoriously laborious process for Russians to get US visas had already been slowed by Covid. "I felt destroyed, much more depressed than I was before," said Kuznetsova.

# Israel PM declares emergency in Lod

Netanyahu visits Tel Aviv suburbs as cops accuse Arab residents of causing riots

**Jerusalem, May 12:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday declared a state of emergency in the central city of Lod as police accused Arab residents of waging "wide-scale riots".

Netanyahu's statement came after an Israeli Arab was killed in Lod the previous night as violence soars between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

According to a photographer, Netanyahu himself went to the city, which is in the suburbs of economic hub Tel Aviv near the Ben Gurion airport, to call for calm.

The city of 77,000 people, including 47,000 Jewish Israelis and 23,000 Arab Israelis, had been the scene of violent clashes on Monday, the local police confirmed.

But on Tuesday evening, as protests multiplied across East Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and also Israeli Arab cities, the situation degenerated in Lod, police said.

"Wide-scale riots erupted by some of the Arab residents and endangering communities," the police said in a statement.

"Vehicle were burnt and damage caused to property." The government said reinforcements had been deployed after Israeli media reported that three synagogues and several businesses were set on fire in Lod.

"Sixteen border police platoons (have been) mobilised in areas that deadly violence between Israel and Palestinians could spiral into 'full-scale war'."

There were also violent scenes in Israeli Arab areas as including Acre, Wadi Ara and Jisr A-Zarqa, where eight people were arrested, police said.

Weeks of tensions boiled over when Israeli riot police clashed with crowds of Palestinians at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque, on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Nightly clashes since then at the compound, which is holy to both Muslims and Jews, and elsewhere in east Jerusalem have left at least 700 Palestinians injured.

On Tuesday Palestinian militants Hamas and the Israeli army traded their heaviest fire for several years, with rockets fired at Tel Aviv after an Israeli strike destroyed a tower block in Gaza.

**● Weeks of tensions boiled over when Israeli riot police clashed with crowds of Palestinians at Al Aqsa mosque.**



Palestinians wave the Hamas flag during the funeral of Rashid Abu Ara, 16, who was killed during clashes with Israeli troops in village of Aqaba near Nablus, in the north of the occupied West Bank, on Wednesday. — AFP

**PALESTINIANS OPPOSE SOCIAL MEDIA CENSORSHIP**

**Dubai, May 12:** With accounts deleted on Twitter and content blocked on Instagram, Palestinian social media users say they have been censored from showing the reality of the unrest in Jerusalem.

The eastern part of the holy city has been hit with the worst violence since 2017, with clashes centred around the Al Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, since Friday.

The tensions have since spiralled into full-scale military confrontation, in which Islamist groups have fired rockets and Israel has launched air raids on targets in the coastal enclave of Gaza.

The tensions, which the United Nations has warned is heading towards "a full-scale war", were triggered by the looming evictions of Palestinian families to make way for Israeli settlers in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah.

On social media, Palestinians have widely shared photos and videos of Israeli forces facing off with residents, in what Amnesty International has denounced as an "illegal and abusive use of force" against "largely peaceful" protesters.

Social media remains an important tool for Palestinians, many of whom believe traditional media coverage does not sufficiently capture the reality of the crisis.

— AFP

## Fear of 'war' looms over Israel

**Tel Aviv, May 12:** Relentless rocket fire and rioting in mixed Jewish-Arab towns fuelled growing fears on Wednesday that deadly violence between Israel and Palestinians could spiral into "full-scale war".

Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz vowed more attacks on Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups in Gaza to bring

"total, long-term quiet" before considering a ceasefire.

Gaza militants have launched more than 1,000 rockets since Monday, said Israel's army, which has carried out hundreds of air strikes on Islamist groups in the crowded coastal enclave of Gaza.

The most intense hostilities in seven years have killed at least 53 people in Gaza, including 14 children, and six in Israel, including an Israeli soldier and one Indian national, since Monday.

Three Palestinians were killed in West Bank clashes. And at least 230 Palestinians and 100 Israelis have been wounded.

The bloodshed was triggered by weekend unrest

at Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque compound, which is sacred to both Muslims and Jews.

As world powers voiced growing alarm and the UN Security Council readied for another emergency meeting on the bloody crisis, the UN Middle East envoy Tor Wennesdal warned that "we're escalating towards a full-scale war".

— AFP

## Hamas: Gaza City commander killed

**Gaza City (Gaza Strip), May 12:** Militant group Hamas confirms that its Gaza City commander was killed in an Israeli airstrike, the highest-ranking militant killed since the 2014 war in the Palestinian territory.

Earlier, Israel's internal security agency said that a series of airstrikes had killed Bassam Issa and several other senior Hamas militants.

The army released a statement on Wednesday, saying that it carried out a complex and first-of-its-kind operation. Those targeted, it said, were a key part of the Hamas General Staff and considered close

to the head of the group's military wing.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel will use an iron fist if needed to stop widespread protests by Arab citizens that have resulted in injuries, arrests, and property damage.

Netanyahu said on Wednesday that Israel will stop the anarchy after deploying Border Police forces to calm unrest in recent days in the cities of Lod and Acre.

The mounting unrest comes after weeks of violence in Jerusalem and heavy fighting between Israel and Hamas militants in the Gaza Strip.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti tweeted that in the UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday on the escalation in East Jerusalem, he said that

India is deeply concerned at clashes & violence in Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount and equally concerned about evictions in Sheikh Jarrah & Silwan neighbourhoods." He said India calls on both sides to avoid changing the status quo on the ground. He added that the old city also houses Al Zawiya Al Hindiyah — The Indian Hospice.

India also condemned rocket fire from Gaza.

India also urged restraint of all parties to adhere to Security Council resolution 2334, which reaffirms that the

establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

The resolution also reiterates its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory and that it fully respects all of its legal obligations in this regard.

— PTI

## India expresses concern over Palestine violence

**United Nations, May 12:** Amid escalating tensions between Israel and Palestinian militants, India has expressed deep concern at clashes and violence in Jerusalem's Temple Mount as well as over evictions in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan neighbourhoods and called on both sides to avoid changing the status quo on the ground.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador T.S. Tirumurti tweeted that in the UN Security Council meeting on Tuesday on the escalation in East Jerusalem, he said that

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— PTI

## Taliban seizes Afghan district before ceasefire

**Kabul, May 12:** The Taliban have seized a district from Afghan government forces on the outskirts of Kabul, ahead of a three-day ceasefire agreed between the warring sides, officials said.

Nerkh district is around 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the Afghan capital in neighbouring Wardak province, which has long been used by militants as a gateway to reach Kabul and launch deadly attacks.

Violence has soared since May 1 when the US military began formally withdrawing its last remaining troops, as peace efforts between the Taliban and the Afghan government have stalled.

people. "Commando reinforcements are on their way," said Fawad Aman, a spokesman for the defence ministry.

Large swathes of Wardak and neighbouring Logar province have been controlled or contested for years by Taliban fighters and have served as a strategic staging ground for militants hoping to enter Kabul.

The main highway that connects Kabul to southern Kandahar province — the former Taliban stronghold and the scene of intense fighting in recent weeks — goes through the district.

Taliban fighters have been encircling major Afghan urban centres, spurring speculation the militants are waiting for the Americans to withdraw before launching all-out assaults on Afghan cities.

**● VIOLENCE HAS SOARED SINCE MAY 1 WHEN THE US MILITARY BEGAN FORMALLY WITHDRAWING ITS LAST REMAINING TROOPS, AS PEACE EFFORTS BETWEEN THE TALIBAN AND THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT HAVE STALLED.**

Taliban fighters have been encircling major Afghan urban centres, spurring speculation the militants are waiting for the Americans to withdraw before launching all-out assaults on Afghan cities.

Fast-expanding urban areas are home to more than half the population of the planet and are increasingly exposed to climate-fuelled disasters, economic shocks and health crises as the world warms, with fears that vulnerable communities

will be hardest hit.

CDP, a global non-profit that collects data disclosed by companies, cities, states and regions on environmental impact, analysed over 800 global cities and found that 43 percent do not yet have a plan to adapt to the challenges of climate change.

With more and more people drawn to live in urban areas, CDP estimated that by 2030 around 400 million people will be living in poorly prepared cities.

"The urgent need to act and have adaptation measures in place to keep the

citizens safe, is increasing together with (the growing urban population)," said Mirjam Wolfram, CDP's Policy Director for Europe.

She said that 93 percent of the cities included in

the report were facing "significant threats", while 60 percent highlighted "substantive" water security issues.

The top five hazards are flash and surface flooding — including from rising sea levels — heat waves, rainstorms, extreme hot days and droughts, she said, adding that air pollution is also a major health concern.

Ongoing adaptation strategies in the municipalities that reported to CDP include tree planting (20 percent), flood mapping (18 percent) and

## Egypt plans to widen, deepen Suez Canal

**Cairo, May 12:** Egypt on Tuesday announced plans to widen and deepen the southern part of the Suez Canal where a hulking vessel ran aground and closed off the crucial waterway in March.

The head of the Suez Canal Authority, Lt Gen Osama Rabie, announced details of the plan in a televised ceremony in the canal's city of Ismailia. Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi and top government officials attended the ceremony.

The eastern part of the holy city has been hit with the worst violence since 2017, with clashes centred around the Al Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, since Friday.

The plan includes widening the canal's southernmost stretch by about 40 meters (yards) to the east, on the side of the Sinai Peninsula, Rabie said. That segment would also be deepened to 72 feet, from the current 66 feet in depth.

The tensions have since spiralled into full-scale military confrontation, in which Islamist groups have fired rockets and Israel has launched air raids on targets in the coastal enclave of Gaza.

The plan also includes a 10-kilometer-long extension of a second lane of the waterway that opened in 2015. That would bring the double-lane stretch of the canal to 82 kilometers, or 60 miles, allowing more vessels to pass through the canal.

The Ever Given, a P&amampa m a f l a g g e d Japanese-owned ship, had run aground in the single-lane stretch of the canal on March 23 before it was extricated six days later after a massive salvage effort by a flotilla of tugboats. The vessel is still held in the canal's Great Bitter Lake amid a financial dispute between its owners and the Suez Canal Authority. The six-day blockage disrupted global shipping. Some ships were forced to take the long alternate route around the Cape of Good Hope.

## DespitE COURT ORDER, UK PM IGNORES DEBTS

**London, May 12:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whose personal finances are under scrutiny after several scandals, has failed to pay a small debt nearly seven months after a court order documents showed Wednesday.

An online database of civil county court judgments in England and Wales showed Johnson has yet to settle the debt of \$35 (\$757, 624 euros) following a ruling on October 26 last year.

The judgment, confirmed and first reported by the fortnightly satirical and news magazine Private Eye, does not reveal details about the nature of the debt or the creditor. Johnson is named as the debtor and lists his address as 10 Downing Street — the home of prime ministers since 1735 and one of the country's best-known residences.

## quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	48,690.80 -0.96
Nifty 50	14,696.50 -1.04
S&P 500*	4,103.24 -1.18
Dollar (₹)	73.42 -0.09
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.78 -0.12
Euro (₹)	89.10 0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,074 ▼229 0.48
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.54 1.44
IN 10-yr bond yield	6.010 0.00
US 10-yr T-bill yield*	1.668 0.044

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Nod for ₹18,100 cr PLI scheme for battery storage

**New Delhi:** The government approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for promoting battery storage at an estimated outlay of Rs 18,100 crore. With the objective to promote the 'Make in India' initiative, the National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage is expected to attract investment of Rs 45,000 crore, information and broadcasting minister Prakash Javadekar said.

## EU economy to expand, bouncing back from slump



**Brussels:** The European Union economy is set to bounce back this year after the deep Coronavirus recession and member states are forecast to have recouped the ground that they had lost by the end of next year. In its latest forecast, the EU's executive commission said that growth in the 27-nation bloc is predicted to expand by 4.2% this year, a significant uptick from a February prediction of 3.7%.

## \$376 mn outflow in India-focussed offshore, ETFs

**New Delhi:** India-focused offshore funds and exchange-traded funds (ETFs) witnessed a net outflow of \$376 million in three months ended March 2021, making it the twelfth consecutive quarter of withdrawal, according to a Morningstar report released on Wednesday. This was markedly lower than the net outflows of USD 986 million registered during the quarter ended December 2020.

## SoftBank sets record with \$17.7bn profit

**Tokyo:** SoftBank Group Corp. reported a \$17.7 billion fourth-quarter profit, setting a new record for Japan thanks to an unprecedented windfall from its investment business. The net income was 1.93 trillion yen in the three months ended March 31, according to a filing by SoftBank on Wednesday. That's the highest ever for a listed Japanese company in any quarter dating back to 1990.

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## Food basket inflation at 2%; manufacturing surges Inflation eases, IIP up

**FC BUREAU**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 12

With the easing of food prices, India's retail inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index or CPI, slowed to 4.29 per cent in April 2021, while industrial output, measured by the Index of Industrial Production or IIP, grew 22.4 per cent in March 2021 as compared to 16.7 per cent in the same period a year ago, government data showed on Wednesday.

The CPI data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, however, showed that inflation in the food basket was 2.02 per cent in April, down from 4.87 per cent in the preceding month. The consumer retail inflation was predicted to cool to 4.2 per cent in April, just above



the RBI's 4 per cent target and down from March's four-month high of 5.52 per cent, according to a Reuters poll which was taken over the past week.

Meanwhile, the industrial output, or IIP, on the whole grew 22.4 per cent in March 2021 as compared to 16.7 per cent in the same period a year ago. Despite the massive spread of Covid-19 across

the country in its second wave, industrial activities were not hampered to a great extent.

A separate data, released by the National Statistics Office, also showed that the manufacturing sector output surged 25.8 per cent in March 2021. "Besides, mining output too climbed 6.1 per cent and power generation increased by 22.5 per cent in March. The IIP had shrunk by 18.7 per cent in March 2020," it showed.

As per the data, during 2020-21, the IIP contracted 8.6 per cent compared to 0.8 per cent contraction in 2019-20. Industrial production has been hit due to the Covid-19 pandemic since March last year when it contracted by 18.7 per cent.

The IIP had registered a growth of 5.2 per cent in February last year.

**IEA SAYS OIL GLUT GONE EVEN AS DEMAND FORECAST CUT ON INDIA**

**GRANT SMITH**  
MAY 12

The International Energy Agency said the supply glut created by the global pandemic has cleared, even as demand suffers a blow from a resurgence of the virus in India.

Surplus oil inventories in developed nations are now just a small fraction of the levels seen when demand collapsed last year, with output cuts by OPEC and its allies draining the excess, the IEA said on Wednesday. Still, the agency sees a temporary setback for global consumption as infections rock India, before the recovery resumes later in the year.

"Bloated world oil inventories that built up during last year's COVID-19 demand shock have returned to more normal levels," the IEA said in its monthly report. "But India's COVID crisis is a reminder that the outlook for oil demand is mired in uncertainty. Until the pandemic is brought under control, market volatility is likely to persist."

Oil markets have extended their recovery as fuel consumption roars back in China and the US, buoying crude prices to about US\$69 a barrel in London. — Bloomberg

## U.S. REVERSES TRUMP JAB, REMOVES XIAOMI FROM BLACKLIST

**May 12:** The US Defence Department will remove China's Xiaomi Corp from a government blacklist, a court filing showed, marking a reversal by the Biden administration of one of Donald Trump's last jabs at Beijing before exiting office.

The court filing said the company and the US government would agree to resolve their ongoing litigation, bringing to an end a brief and controversial spat between the hardware company and Washington that had further soured Sino-US ties.

A Xiaomi spokeswoman said the company is watching the latest developments closely, without elaborating.

Shares in the company jumped over 6 per cent in Hong Kong as news of the decision spread. The company's share price has tumbled roughly 20 per cent since it was placed on the blacklist in January in the waning days of the Trump administration.

The defense department did not immediately comment. A justice department spokeswoman declined to comment.

The department had designated the firm as having ties to China's military and placed it on a list that would restrict US investment in the company.

Xiaomi went on the offensive by filing a lawsuit against the US government, calling its placement "unlawful and unconstitutional" and denying any ties to China's military.

— Reuters

## Job postings decline yearly, sequential fall

**SANGEETHA G**  
CHENNAI, MAY 12

Amid the second wave of the pandemic, online job postings saw a decline in April, both against March 2021 as well as lockdown-hit April 2020.

The employment index saw a decline in job posting activity in April 2021 compared to the previous month by 3 per cent. Overall job postings have declined by 4 per cent year-on-year in April 2021 compared to April 2020, Monster.com said.

The job postings for entry-level roles have declined by 5 per cent month-on-month in April 2021 against March 2021. The decline in postings is due to the onset of the second wave of the pandemic leading to lockdowns, Monster.com reported.

Industries that exhibited the highest decline in job postings compared to the previous month include engineering, cement, construction, iron and steel, which declined 15 per cent, retail 14 per cent, FMCG, food and packaged food 12 per cent and logistics, courier/ freight/ transportation 12 per cent.

The second wave of the pandemic and various intensities of lockdowns across the country have impacted hiring activity. However, hiring activity in cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai reported significant increase in the number of job postings year-on-year and marginal growth month-on-month. Agro-based industries, chemicals/ plastic/ rubber/ paints, fertilizer/ pesticides and printing/ packaging recorded good growth over April 2020. Software and hardware, telecom and shipping and marine too saw growth in April.

Meanwhile, industries such as travel and tourism declined 52 per cent, education 34 per cent, engineering, cement, construction, iron/ steel 26 per cent as of April 2021 compared to April 2020.

Online job postings in Delhi were down 1 per cent and Mumbai 2 per cent in April compared to March. Cities like Baroda



with a 10 per cent decline and Jaipur with 5 per cent have been the most impacted sequentially.

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## FMCG industry grows record 9.4%

**New Delhi, May 12:** The Indian FMCG industry has recorded a 9.4 per cent growth in the January-March quarter of 2021, helped by a consumption-led growth and value growth by increased prices of products, especially of staples, said data analytics firm Nielsen.

The rural market continued to perform with strong growth of 14.6 per cent during the period and the metro markets have registered a positive growth after two quarters.

Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry sales growth from the tra-

ditional trade channels jumped to double digits, while growth in e-commerce normalised down to single digits in the January-March quarter.

"FMCG industry in India has built growth momentum by growing at 9.4 per cent in the quarter ending March 2021 after growing at 7.3 per cent in the previous quarter (October-December 2020), over the same quarter of the previous year," said FMCG Snapshot for Q1 2021 released by NielsenIQ's Retail Intelligence team.

NielsenIQ South Asia

Lead Diptanshu Ray said: "This is backed up by staples, essential non-foods and indulgence categories." He cautioned that the beginning of the second quarter may bring some new dimensions, as the situation is dynamic.

"Now that lockdowns have resurfaced, and with last-mile delivery boost up, the e-commerce channel will continue to be dynamic," it said.

According to the report, metros have registered a growth of 2.2 per cent in the January-March quarter after two-quarters of decline. — PTI

## New Covid-19 lockdowns hit vehicle sales: Siam

**MICHAEL GONZALVES**  
PUNE, MAY 12

The Covid-19 pandemic induced partial lockdown in several states hit sales of cars, SUVs, vans, bikes and scooters during April as showrooms remained shut while those open were a deserted look.

On Wednesday the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers or Siam said passenger vehicles sales in April fell 10 per cent at 2,61,633 units compared with 2,90,939 units sold in March 2021. No year-on-year compari-

son data is available due to total national lockdown in April 2020 which led to zero sales in that month.

Sales of two-wheelers also fell 33 per cent last month at 9,95,097 compared with 14,96,806 units sold in March.

While sales of three-wheelers dropped 57 per cent at 13,728 units, the all categories of vehicles plunged 30 per cent at 12,70,458 units.

While showrooms remain shut in most parts of the country, automakers are trying to avoid a pile of inventory by cutting back on production.

Since retail off-take has been impacted, automakers are trying to avoid a pile of inventory by cutting back on production.

On a quarterly basis, the same FPIs saw a 20 bps decline from the December 2020 quarter, and DIIIs witnessed decline by 10 bps, show data from domestic brokerage Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

In the March quarter, while foreign portfolio investors pumped \$7.3 billion into domestic equities, domestic institutional funds saw a net outflow of \$3.2 billion. It indicates that vastly divergent

sequential trends are seen between FPI and DII purchases of equities, it said.

While FPIs increased weights in two-thirds of the sectors (telecom, metals, consumer durables, realty, and cement), DIIIs trimmed weights on these sectors in particular and the overall market in general between the December and March quarters.

The overall FPI ownership in Nifty-500 grew 160 bps year-on-year to 22.3

per cent while DII holdings were down 50 bps

down year-on-year to 14.3 per cent.

The lockdown has hit the supply chain involving component supplies.

"Supply chain related production challenges continue with the lockdown restrictions in many parts of the country. The demand has been clearly impacted by the second wave of Covid-19, both in terms of low consumer sentiments and closure of dealerships due to lockdown restrictions," Rajesh Menon, Director General at Siam, said.

On May 10, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Association or

FADA also reported lower sales during April based on the vehicle registration data sourced from the regional transport offices.

When compared to the previous month of March, FADA said in April 2021 total vehicle registrations were down 28.15 per cent at 11,85,374 units versus 16,49,678 units.

Passenger vehicle registrations were down 25.33 per cent at 2,08,883 units in April, as against 2,79,745 units in March this year, while those of 2W declined by 27.63 per cent at 8,65,134 units, as against

11,95,445 in the previous month, it pointed out.

Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, UP, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Goa are some of the states that have announced full lockdowns, putting automotive sales in the non-essential category.

"The first nine days of May have seen extremely lean sales due to lockdown announced by a majority of states. Even where dealerships are open, the walk-ins have dropped to 30 per cent and customers are delaying their decision," FADA said.

"18 states have been covered though in smaller shipments. Quite disheartening to the teams to hear some states complaining about our intentions. 50 of our employees are off work due to covid, yet we continue to work under pandemic lockdowns 24x7 for U," she said in a tweet.

The Hyderabadi-based firm is supplying Covaxin to 18 states, including Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Jharkhand and Delhi. Other states are Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Telangana, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and West Bengal.

— PTI

## DILs stake in Nifty 500 at 14.3%

**Mumbai, May 12:** As foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have increased their holding in the domestic stocks, domestic institutional investors (DIIs) have been net sellers, and their stake in Nifty-500 stocks declined to a seven-quarter low of 14.3 per cent in the March 2021 quarter, shows a brokerage Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

**SHORT TAKES**  
**NZ 'keeper Watling to retire after WTC**

**Wellington:** New Zealand wicket-keeper batsman BJ Watling on Wednesday announced that he will end his over-decade-long career in all forms of cricket after the World Test Championship final against India next month. New Zealand will also play two Tests against hosts England before the WTC final against India in Southampton from June 18. The 35-year-old has been a stalwart of the Test side since debuting in 2009 as an opener, going on to establish himself as a world-class keeper-batsman and claiming numerous records in his 73 Tests to date. The Northern Districts gloveman had been pondering his options for a while. "It's the right time," said Watling. The announcement of Watling's retirement was also expedited by his expected omission from the player contracts list. — PTI

**Perera appointed Sri Lanka skipper**

**Colombo:** Wicketkeeper-batsman Kusal Perera was on Wednesday named Sri Lanka's ODI captain with Kusal Mendis as his deputy for the away series against Bangladesh this month. Perera, who has represented Sri Lanka in 101 ODIs, 22 Tests and 47 T20Is, takes over the reins from Dimuth Karunaratne who has been dropped along with Angelo Mathews and Lahiru Thirimanne. — PTI  
**Squad:** Kusal Perera (capt), Kusal Mendis (vice-capt), Danushka Gunathilaka, Dhananjaya Silva, Pathum Nissanka, Dasun Shanaka, Ashen Bandara, Wanindu Hasaranga, Isuru Udana, Akila Dananjaya, Niroshan Dickwella, Dushmantha Chameera, Ramesh Mendis, Asitha Fernando, Lakshan Sandakan, Chamika Karunaratne, Binura Fernando, Shiran Fernando.

**Need competitions before Oly: Neeraj**

**Mumbai:** The training has gone along just fine but Olympic-bound star javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Wednesday said he is desperate for some competition ahead of the Tokyo Games given that two years have simply been "wasted" because of injury and the Covid-19 pandemic. The 23-year-old, who is being seen as a strong medal hope in Tokyo, said he has been coordinating with the Sports Authority of India to get some competition exposure. "I am trying to give my 100 per cent in training and have been training as I used to do before. The focus on training is good and it is happening well. But I am in need of competitions and we are trying for it," he said. "It has been over two years that I haven't played international competitions," added Neeraj. — PTI

**RP Singh loses his father to Covid-19**

**New Delhi:** Former India cricketer Rudra Pratap Singh lost his father to Covid-19 on Wednesday. The 35-year-old left-arm pacer from Uttar Pradesh informed about the death of his father Shiv Prasad Singh on Twitter. "It is with deepest grief and sadness we inform the passing away of my father, Mr Shiv Prasad Singh. He left for his heavenly abode on 12th May after suffering from Covid. We request you to keep my beloved father in your thoughts and prayers. RIP Papa," he tweeted. RP Singh represented India in 14 Tests, 58 ODIs and 10 T20 Internationals before hanging his boots in September 2018. — PTI

**Semenya held for reckless driving**

**Cape Town:** Olympic champion Caster Semenya was sentenced to 50 hours of community service for speeding while driving in South Africa, prosecutors said on Wednesday. The runner was arrested last Thursday and released on \$35 bail, the National Prosecuting Authority said in a statement. Semenya appeared in court in the capital, Pretoria, on Friday and pleaded guilty to the offense, the NPA said. She faces a second court hearing in August when authorities will report back on whether she completed her community service. The 30-year-old Semenya is a two-time Olympic and three-time world champion over 800 meters whose career has been halted by contentious rules regulating the natural level of testosterone in female runners. — AP

# ALL-ROUND VALUE

Bowling coach says Shardul has proven himself with the bat too

**New Delhi, May 12:** India bowling coach Bharat Arun on Wednesday said Shardul Thakur has what it takes to be the fast-bowling all-rounder that the team has needed ever since Hardik Pandya's back injury restricted his role with the ball. Pandya was not included in the Test team for the tour of England as he "was not in a position to bowl", according to the BCCI.

Arun said that while the selectors will have the last word on finding the next set of options, Thakur has certainly made a case for himself.

"It is more of a selectors' job to find them and then we can develop those all-rounders. Shardul has proved he can be an all-rounder. What he did in Australia was fabulous," Arun said.

Pandya last played Test cricket for India in 2018, during the tour of England. He has been battling a back injury since 2019 and recently, during the IPL, also picked up a shoulder niggle.

Arun agreed that finding someone as good as Pandya would be a very tough job.

"I wish you could just wish and develop bowlers like that. Hardik is an outstanding talent, but unfortunately, he had to undergo a back operation and then it's not very easy to come back after that," he said.

"He bowled against England, I thought he did a really good job. But, to sustain that we need to manage him well and build on his strength," he added.

The two-Test old Thakur was mighty impressive in the only longest format game he played in the away series against Australia.

— PTI



A file photo of India bowling coach Bharat Arun (left) with Shardul Thakur.

## Dravid picked Aussie brains: Greg

**Sydney, May 12:** Rahul Dravid picked Australian brains to create a talent identification system better than Australia in India, the legendary Greg Chappell has said, lamenting the current lack of a similar structure in his own country that was "one of the best at developing young players."

Chappell said that both India and England have

overtaken Australia as the best in recognising young talent and providing them a platform to succeed.

"India have got their act together and that's largely because Rahul Dravid has picked our brains, seen what we're doing and replicated it in India and with their much larger population base," Chappell told cricket.com.au.

Dravid is the Director of Cricket Operations at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru. He was the head coach of India A and India under-19 cricket teams between 2016 and 2019.

Chappell, one of the finest batsmen to have played the game, cautioned that talented Australian cricketers might find their careers at

crossroads because of the domestic structure.

"Historically, we've been one of the best at developing young players and keeping them in the system, but I think that's changed in the last couple of years. I'm seeing a bunch of young players with great potential who are in limbo. That's unacceptable. We cannot afford to lose one player." — PTI



A Manchester City fan celebrates his club's EPL triumph. — AFP

# PROLIFICITY!

**Manchester City are English champs for 3rd time in 4 seasons**



This has been a season and a Premier League title like no other. This was the hardest one. To come through this season, with all the restrictions and difficulties we've faced, and show the consistency we have is remarkable. It is relentless.

— PEP GUARDIOLA  
 Manchester City manager

Stadium, while United kept them waiting with a victory at Aston Villa on Sunday.

But the delay was only temporary and City, who also won the League Cup in April, can finally savour a title triumph that is all the sweeter given the obstacles they have overcome this term.

"This has been a season and a Premier League title like no other. This was the hardest one," Guardiola said.

"We will always remember this season for the way we won. I am so proud to be the manager here and of this group of players.

"They are so special. To come through this season, with all the restrictions and difficulties we've faced, and show the consistency we have is

remarkable. It is relentless," the jubilant City boss added.

Treble-chasing City's seventh top-flight title could be the prelude to an even greater triumph on May 29 when they face English rivals Chelsea in their first ever European Champions League final match.

Drained by the late finish to last season and ill-prepared due to the subsequent lack of a proper pre-season, City were slow out of the blocks.

After a dismal 1-1 draw against lowly West Bromwich Albion in December, City had won just five of their opening 12 Premier League games.

Following the West Brom game, City powered to 21 successive victories in all competitions, a record for an English top-flight club, including a 4-1 rout of Liverpool at Anfield. — AFP

### MOST TITLES (EPL ERA)

Manchester United	13
Chelsea	5
Manchester City	5
Arsenal	3
Blackburn Rovers	1
Leicester City	1
Liverpool	1

admission that he didn't like his team. A coronavirus outbreak in the squad added to Guardiola's problems in December.

Having surrendered the title weekly to Liverpool the previous season, it seemed City were heading for a period of regression. But Guardiola masterminded such a superb recovery that City turned the title race into a procession, giving him three Premier League crowns to go with three La Liga trophies with Barcelona and three at Bayern Munich.

Following the West Brom game, City powered to 21 successive victories in all competitions, a record for an English top-flight club, including a 4-1 rout of Liverpool at Anfield. — AFP

## UEFA BEGINS LEGAL BATTLE WITH REBELS

**Lausanne, May 12:** UEFA on Wednesday initiated disciplinary proceedings against Real Madrid, Barcelona and Juventus, the three clubs yet to renounce the aborted European Super League project.

European football's governing body has appointed disciplinary inspectors to conduct an investigation regarding a potential violation of UEFA rules by the clubs "in connection with the so-called 'Super League' project", it announced.

"Further information regarding this matter will be made available in due course."

UEFA last week said it would take "appropriate action" against the three clubs who still support the proposed Super League, a competition that would guarantee its founding members involvement every season, instead of having to qualify. — AFP



A file photo Saina Nehwal.

## Saina, Srikanth to miss Games

**New Delhi, May 12:** Star Indian shuttlers Saina Nehwal and Kidambi Srikanth's chances of booking berths for Tokyo Olympics are all but over after the world body on Wednesday cancelled the last qualifying event in Singapore due to the coronavirus-related travel restrictions.

The BWF said it will issue a further statement. The chances of London Olympics bronze-medallist Saina and Srikanth qualifying for the Olympics had hinged on the Singapore Open after the Malaysian Open (May 25 to 30) was postponed on May 7.

After the postponement of the Malaysian Open, Badminton Association of India (BAI) had reached out to the world body, seeking clarity on the qualification scenario for its shuttlers. With Singapore suspending all flights from Covid-ravaged India, it was always going to be a difficult task for the Indian players to travel to the country for the last qualifier.

Indian shuttlers who have already made the cut for the Olympics include P. V. Sindhu, B. Sai Praneeth and the men's doubles pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. — PTI

## OLYMPICS CANCELLATION DEMANDS GROW LOUDER

**Tokyo, May 12:** A full-page newspaper ad says Japanese will be "killed by politics" because the government is forcing them to endure the pandemic without vaccines. More than 300,000 people have signed a petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be canceled. And a swimming star has faced pressure to drop out of the games. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, meanwhile, has caused anger and confusion by repeatedly vowing to skeptical lawmakers that the Olympics will be safe, even as some hospitals struggle to find beds for the sick and dying and a state of emergency was extended on Wednesday to more places in Japan.

Public frustration has even targeted Japanese swimming star Rikako Ikee who tweeted recently that she has received messages that "pained her heart" by urging her to oppose the Olympics and not attend.

Meanwhile, Japan plans to vaccinate its Olympic athletes before the Games, a move that would place them ahead of the general population as the government faces pressure over a slow rollout. — AP

## TT loses a legend and brave fighter

NEHA SURANA | DC  
 CHENNAI, MAY 12

The Indian table tennis fraternity on Wednesday expressed shock and sorrow at the demise of Arjuna awardee V. Chandrasekhar. Chandra, as he was fondly called, passed away due to Covid-19 related complications here on Wednesday. He was 63 and is survived by his wife and son.

A three-time national champion, Chandra was a stylish player with a huge fan following during his playing days. As a coach, Chandra played a key role in grooming champions such as S. Raman and G. Sathiyan. His academy in Chennai has produced many a quality player.

Sathiyan, who trained under Chandra for 14 years, said his demise felt like a personal loss. "My family was pretty close to him. I have a lot of memories which I will cherish forever. When I found out he was hospitalised, I kept calling to check on his health. He was fine for a few days but I think things went out of control in the past two days," said Sathiyan.

Raman hailed Chandra as a "fighter". "A multi-talented person before medical negligence reduced him to fight for survival. As a player he fought against the system. Remained a fighter till the very end, battling tooth and nail with Covid," said Raman, who coaches Sathiyan now.



V. Chandrasekhar

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