

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI MONDAY 31 MAY 2021



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**JAPAN'S Naomi Osaka celebrates after defeating Romania's Patricia Maria Tig during their first round match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros stadium, Paris, on Sunday.**  
— AP ■ **Report on Page 8**

## India sends pvt jet to Dominica with Choksi documents

**New Delhi:** India sent a private jet to Dominica carrying documents related to the deportation of fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi, wanted in a ₹13,500 crore bank loan fraud case, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda Gaston Browne told a radio show in his country. There was, however, no immediate official confirmation from India.  
■ **'Fugitive may have taken his girlfriend to Dominica for dinner':** Page 4

## Monsoon likely in Kerala 2 days late

**New Delhi:** The arrival of Southwest Monsoon over Kerala is likely to be delayed by two days and it is now expected to make an onset over the state by June 3, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.  
■ **More on Page 4**

## Israel Opp. near deal to topple Netanyahu

**Jerusalem:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's opponents on Sunday appeared to be moving closer toward a coalition deal that could end the 12-year rule of the longtime Israeli leader. Naftali Bennett, leader of the small Yamina party and a kingmaker, scheduled an 8 pm news conference about decision to join the alliance.  
■ **More on Page 6**



**Stay home, stay safe from price rise!**

WEATHER

Max: 39°C  
Min: 28°C  
RH: 39%  
Rain: 20%

Forecast: Mostly sunny

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana

Tithi: Vaishakha Bahula  
Shashti till 1.09 am  
(Tuesday)  
Star: Sravanam till 4.06 pm  
Varjyam: 8.07 pm to 9.44 pm  
Durmuhurtam: 12.39 pm to 1.31 pm; 3.15 pm to 4.06 pm  
Rahukalam: 7.30 pm to 9 pm  
SUNSET TODAY 5.23 PM  
SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.13 AM  
MOONRISE TOMORROW 12.11 PM  
MOONSET TODAY 10.08 AM

■ **BJP leaders laud PM; Opp. says his govt is 'weakest in 73 years'**

# Modi 2.0 is 2: India fighting Covid with all its might: PM

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

As the BJP-led NDA government completed seven years in office amid India grappling with the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the nation followed the mantra of “sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas” and that “India now moves ahead not under the pressure of other countries but with its own convictions”.

On a day the ruling BJP held welfare programmes across the country to mark the second anniversary of the NDA government's second term as “Sewa Divas”, with party president J.P. Nadda flagging off Covid relief material for Delhi, the Opposition parties claimed the Narendra Modi government had proved to be the “weakest government in the country in the last 73 years”, saying that the government had given the country “unmeasurable pain” as it listed unemployment, petrol prices, inflation, the farmers issue and “mismanage-



**Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma during a visit to Guwahati's famed Kamakhya Temple on Sunday to mark the second anniversary of the Narendra Modi government's second term. The BJP had asked all its leaders, including CMs, not to hold any celebrations in view of the grim Covid-19 situation.**  
— PTI

ment of the Covid crisis”, among other issues, to attack the government.

Prime Minister Modi, asserting that India was “fighting Covid-19 with all its might”, on Sunday spoke to a number of people ranging from those engaged in transporting medical oxygen to lab technicians, and said the nation's resolve to prevail

over the virus was equal to the magnitude of the challenge it faces.

In his monthly “Mann ki Baat” radio address, Mr Modi noted that the nation also faced several natural disasters, including cyclones, landslides and earthquakes during the pandemic, and said more lives were saved than in the past with the Centre,

states and local administrations coming together to carry out relief and rescue operations.

With the demand for medical oxygen rising hugely during the recent surge in Covid-19 cases and many states and hospitals complaining of its shortage, the PM said the production of the liquid medical oxygen had risen by over 10 times to nearly 9,500 MT daily from 900 MT earlier.

“The demand for oxygen surged all of a sudden. This was a very big challenge and delivering medical oxygen to remote parts of the country was indeed a huge task”, he said, noting that many plants manufacturing industrial oxygen were located in the eastern parts of the country and lauded those, including cryogenic tanker drivers, the oxygen express (train) crew and Air Force pilots, involved in its transportation.

In New Delhi, many BJP leaders, including Union ministers, lauded the Modi government on its seventh anniversary, with home minister Amit Shah claiming the country had made  
■ **Turn to Page 4**

■ **1.6L cases, 3,460 deaths in 24 hrs** ■ **Cases dip in many cities**

# 12cr vaccine doses for states, UTs in June, a jump of 50%

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

India on Sunday registered 1.65 lakh new cases — its lowest count in 46 days. The active caseload has further dipped to 21.14 lakhs and the daily recoveries continue to outnumber the new cases for the 17th consecutive day. The country's recovery rate has increased to 91.25 per cent and the daily positivity rate at 8.02 per cent continues the streak of less than 10 per cent positivity for six days running. Deaths, however, continue to be high — with 3,460 fatalities recorded in the last 24 hours.

The Centre on Sunday said that nearly 12 crore anti Covid-19 vaccine doses will be made available to the states and Union territories in June, which is 50 per cent more than what they got in May, to boost the nearly halted vaccination drive.

However, out of these 12 crores, nearly half will be provided by the Centre directly while the rest will be available for direct procurement by the states/UTs and private hospitals.

The health ministry said states have been

## Delhi sees 946 new cases, death toll falls below 100

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

With 78 new fatalities in the last 24 hours, Delhi's single-day Covid-19 death toll dropped below 100 for the first time since April 13, with 946 fresh infections recorded, the Delhi government health bulletin said on Sunday.

The national capital is seeing a steady decline in daily positive cases for the last few weeks. The bulletin said 1,803 people recovered from the dis-

ease in the last 24 hours, while the positivity rate, at 1.25 per cent, remained below two per cent.

The government data showed 75,440 tests done in the last 24 hours, and a total of 53,918 beneficiaries vaccinated in the same period.

On April 20, Delhi registered the biggest spike of 28,395 new cases since the pandemic began last year. On April 26, the city saw its highest ever positivity rate, of 36.24 per cent.  
■ **More on Page 2**

informed about the availability of vaccines for June and a delivery schedule will also be shared with them soon for better planning.

Several major cities like Delhi and Mumbai have started witnessing a significant dip in daily cases. Delhi on Sunday had 946 new cases and 78 deaths. The deaths in the national capital have dropped below 100 for the first time in 47 days. In Uttar Pradesh, meanwhile, curfew has been eased in 55

districts from 7 am to 7 pm which have fewer than 600 cases, while the curfew will continue in districts with more than 600 active cases for one more week.

The health ministry has said that the allocation of Central supplies to the states and UTs was decided on the consumption pattern, population and vaccine wastage. “Visibility for availability of vaccines for the entire month of June 2021  
■ **Turn to Page 4**



**Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and his longtime girlfriend Carrie Symonds pose for a photo in the garden of 10 Downing Street after their wedding in a small private ceremony in London on Saturday.**  
— AP



**A car is damaged under a tree that fell during a storm at Gurgaon's Sector 4 on Sunday evening. A dust storm hits Delhi and parts of NCR late Sunday, with strong winds cooling down the temperature. The India Meteorological Department has predicted that Delhi and its surrounding areas may see rains and thunderstorms in the next two days.**  
— PTI

■ **Tug of war turns into political slugfest**

# Bengal may defy Centre, not relieve its chief secy

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, MAY 30

Speculation is rife that West Bengal chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay may not visit New Delhi on Monday, which is also the date of his retirement, to report to the Centre despite its direction for his deputation as the Mamata Banerjee government has not relieved him yet from his present post in the state.

The state's top bureaucrat, who got a three-month extension last week from the Narendra Modi government after a request from the Trinamul Congress government for his efficiency in handling the Covid-19 pandemic, has been asked to report at 10 am on Monday at North Block, at the department of personnel and training under the ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions which is headed by the Prime Minister himself.

The order was sent under the provisions of Rule 6(1) of the Indian

## Experts, ex-babus feel Centre's case is shaky

**Kolkata, May 30:** Former top bureaucrats and legal experts believe that the Central government's order recalling West Bengal chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay to Delhi, on the day he was slated to retire, may be one which the Centre finds hard to enforce as the state government is within its rights to refuse his release.  
The order came within hours after a political row erupted on Friday over West Bengal chief minister Mamata

Banerjee curtailing her meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the post-cyclone situation in her state to just 15 minutes, and within days of another central order extending Bandyopadhyay's tenure by three months to help combat the Covid pandemic in the state.

“The state may well send a politely drafted reply to the order pointing out the All-India Service rules which govern such transfers,” said  
■ **Turn to Page 4**

Administrative Service (Cadre) Rules 1954 on May 28 evening, hours after the 1987 batch IAS officer accompanied the chief minister in skipping the PM's review meeting on Cyclone Yaas at Kalaikunda Air Force Station in West Midnapore. While the

Trinamul Congress supremo on Saturday appealed to the PM and Union home minister Amit Shah to withdraw the Centre's controversial order after attacking them, the state government has received no further communication from the  
■ **Turn to Page 4**

# Sasikala hints at a comeback, tries to get control of AIADMK

**Chennai, May 30:** V.K. Sasikala, eased out from the AIADMK years ago, has hinted at resumption of efforts to regain control of the party, a political comeback, by telling her supporters that there would soon be a “good decision.”

After announcing ahead of the April 6 Assembly polls, that she would stay away from politics, Sasikala said she could not see the party getting ruined due to “infighting.”

Her reference to the

feud, though has no direct mention of the AIADMK or its leadership, but is seen as a pointer to alleged differences between top two leaders, K Palaniswami and O Panneerselvam.

A confidante of late chief minister J. Jayalalithaa, Sasikala's brief conversation with two of her loyalists over phone has surfaced and

this has dropped hints about her rethink.

In the first audio clip she could be heard saying, “we will for sure streamline the party...certainly, I will come.”

In the second, she could be heard telling the supporter that the party, apparently a reference to AIADMK, was built through hard work of leaders including her and it was anguishing to see “them fighting,” and she could not be a mute spectator to the party getting ruined due to it.  
— PTI

## Israel, Egypt are in talks on truce, Gaza rebuilding

**Cairo:** Egypt and Israel held high-level talks in both countries Sunday to shore up a fragile truce between Israel and Hamas and rebuild the Gaza Strip after a punishing 11-day war that left parts of the sea-side enclave in ruins. Egyptian foreign minister Sameh Shukry received his Israeli counterpart, Gabi Ashkenazi, in Cairo on Sunday as part of efforts to revive the Mideast peace process and to “build on the cease-fire in Gaza,” the Egyptian foreign ministry said.  
— AP ■ **More on Page 6**

# Boris weds Carrie, in a first for sitting British PM in 199 years

**London, May 30:** British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has married his fiancée, Carrie Symonds, in a small private ceremony that came at the end of a tumultuous week during which a former top aide said he was unfit for office. The couple wed on Saturday at the Roman Catholic Westminster Cathedral in front of a small group of friends and family, Mr Johnson's office said on Sunday, confirming newspaper reports that were published overnight. Photos taken after the ceremony in the garden of the prime minister's residence showed

friends next summer.”

The couple have reportedly sent save-the-date cards to family and friends for a celebration on July 30, 2022. Under current coronavirus restrictions in England, no more than 30 people can attend a wedding. The last British Prime Minister to marry in office was Lord Liverpool in 1822.

Mr Johnson, 56, and Symonds, a 33-year-old Conservative Party insider and environmental advocate, announced their engagement in February 2020. Their son, Wilfred, was born in April last year.  
— AP

■ **JOHNSON, 56, and Symonds, a 33-year-old Conservative Party insider and environmental advocate, announced their engagement in February 2020. Their son, Wilfred, was born in April last year.**

Symonds in a long white dress and floral headband. Johnson wore a dark suit. “The Prime Minister and Ms Symonds were married yesterday afternoon in a small ceremony at Westminster Cathedral,” Downing Street said. “The couple will celebrate their wedding with family and



## SHORT TAKES

## 30-year-old man held for supplying heroin in Delhi

**New Delhi:** Delhi Police have arrested a 30-year-old man indulged in supplying heroin in the national capital. Police said that they have also recovered one kilogram of heroin worth ₹1.5 crores from the possession of the accused. The accused has been identified as Sumit alias Sunny, a resident of Delhi's Aman Vihar. According to Chinmoy Biswal, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Crime Branch, Narcotics, on May 27, specific inputs were received that one Sunny would be supplying heroin to someone in the area of Aman Vihar in the morning hours. "A trap was laid and Sunny was apprehended with one kg of heroin. A case was registered under section 21 NDPS Act and Sunny was placed under arrested," said the DCP. "During interrogation, the accused Sunny disclosed that finding less profit in illicit liquor trade he started selling Ganja in Aman Vihar and nearby areas. Gradually he realized that some of his acquaintances who were earlier bootleggers were making quick money by selling heroin in following which he also started selling heroin also called as 'pudiya' at ₹300-per 'pudiya' to addicts of the area," said the DCP.

## JNU student on bail returns to jail after father's last rites

**New Delhi:** Jawaharlal Nehru University student Natasha Narwal, who was granted bail to perform the last rites of her father who succumbed to Covid-19, on Sunday came back to jail, officials said. A senior jail official said that Narwal has come back in jail on Sunday. The Delhi High Court had granted bail to Narwal, a Pinjra Tod activist who was arrested last year in May in connection with the communal riots in north-east Delhi. Pinjra Tod (Break the Cage) was founded in 2015 to make hostels and paying guest accommodations less restrictive for women students. The Delhi Police's Special Cell in May last year arrested Narwal and booked her under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act for alleged conspiracy in the northeast Delhi riots in February.

## AAP MLA organises inoculation drive, 485 vaccinated

**New Delhi:** AAP MLA Somnath Bharti on Sunday organised an immunisation drive for the locals at Greenfield School in Safdarjung Enclave, where 485 people received vaccine doses. According to a statement from Bharti's office, the drive was held with the help of Delhi-based NGO "Bridging the Gap Foundation" and Fortis Escorts Hospital. The Malviya Nagar MLA had organised a similar drive in the Safdarjung Development Area on Sunday where 457 people were vaccinated. "We are very excited about starting the vaccination drive in assembly constituency AC43. Our target is to get more and more people vaccinated to be able to provide a Covid protective cover to one and all at the earliest," Bharti said.

## 72-yr-old man strangled during burglary attempt by neighbour

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

A 72-year-old building contractor was allegedly strangled to death at his home in Southwest Delhi's Sagarpur area during a burglary attempt by his neighbour, who was released from Tihar jail two months ago, the police said on Sunday. The police said it has arrested the accused along with his associate who received the stolen articles to further sell them. The incident took place on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday when the deceased had woken up to go to the washroom, the police said. The accused have been

◆ **THE ACCUSED** along with his associate who received the stolen articles to further sell them were arrested. The incident took place on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, police said.

identified as Sunny, a resident of Main Sagarpur and Bhanu, a resident of West Sagarpur.

On Friday, the police received information and reached at the spot where one Sunil Saigal was found in an unconscious condition. He was declared dead and his body was preserved in Safdarjung Hospital, the police said.

On Saturday, the deceased's daughter, Mukta

Saigal, went to the police station and alleged that some articles, including two cheque books, one ATM card, one gold chain, and one gold ring, were missing from their house, a senior police officer said.

She suspected that someone had killed her father and stolen the things, the police said.

During investigation, the police analysed the CCTV footage and arrested Sunny.

On his instance, receiver Bhanu was also arrested, the officer said. Bhanu was not involved in the killing. He received the stolen articles from Sunny to sell them, he said.

The stolen items were recovered from their possession, the police added.

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

A Delhi Police constable got injured while he was apprehending two Nigerian nationals drug peddlers in west Delhi, officials said on Sunday. Police said that one of them was arrested, however, his associate managed to escape from the spot. The accused has been identified as Joseph, a native of Nigeria, they said.

On Saturday, police received information that one African National would come to deliver heroin at Major Deepak Tyagi Marg, Janakpuri around 3 am to 4 am, police said. A police team reached the spot. Around 3:45 am, two African National came on a scooter

and were waiting for someone. When they tried to leave, constable Rakesh pounced on the drug peddlers and caught one of them Joseph, a senior police officer said.

Meanwhile, the accomplice of Joseph stabbed Rakesh in attempt of get him out of clutches of the constable, but Rakesh did not allow Joseph to escape, the officer said. However, the accused who stabbed Rakesh managed to escape from the spot. A total of 280 grams heroin was recovered from the possession of Joseph. Search of absconded accused is underway, they said.

Rakesh is under treatment at Safdarjung Hospital. Further investigation is in progress, police added.

■ **Delhi records 946 Covid cases, 78 deaths; vaccination of 18-44 age group suspended for 7th day**

## 14-day stock of Covishield left for 45+ age group: Delhi govt

**New Delhi, May 30:** About 3.5 lakh Covid vaccines are available in Delhi for the 45-plus age group, including over 3 lakh doses of Covishield, which may last for 14 days, AAP MLA Atishi said on Sunday.

Even though the national capital received a fresh stock of 48,000 doses of Covaxin on Saturday, it is being kept for those requiring the second dose, she said. "For the 45-plus age group there are about 3.5 lakh doses available, including about 40,000 doses of Covaxin and 3.25 lakh doses of Covishield."

"The Covaxin doses are only being given to those who need the second dose because there are many people who have taken their first dose and were waiting for the second one. We have Covishield stock for another 14 days," Ms Atishi said during the daily vaccination bulletin.

While the vaccination of the 18-44 age group



A health worker administers a dose of Covid-19 vaccine to a beneficiary at a drive-through vaccination camp at Saket in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

remained suspended for the seventh day, she alleged that the Delhi government was not receiving the vaccines while the private hospitals were inoculating those in this age group by charging exorbitant rates.

She alleged that both the companies, Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute, told the Delhi

government that they can only send vaccines based on what the Centre tells them.

"When we approached both the companies to buy 1.5 crore vaccines, both the companies told us that they will only send vaccines based on what the Central government tells them," she said.

She added that vaccina-

## Drive-through vaccination centre opened in Saket mall

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

In an effort to boost the vaccination drive, another drive-through Covid-19 vaccination centre was opened in Saket's DLF Avenue mall in the national capital on Sunday. The vaccination site for 45 years and above was inaugurated by Delhi health minister Satyendar Jain on Sunday. "Dedicated a drive-thru vaccination centre at Saket Mall to Delhiites. Drive-thru vaccination facilities will

enhance Delhi's vaccination process. These facilities can be extended further if we get the required number of vaccine doses," Jain tweeted.

An officer on special duty (OSD) to Jain succumbed to Covid-19 on Sunday, a day before his retirement, according to his family. A. K. Rakshit was battling Covid-19 for over a month. He is survived by wife, son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter. He was admitted to Aakash hospital in Dwarka on April 23.

tion for 18-44 age group was only "available at private hospitals, which are charging anywhere between ₹900 and ₹1,400 per dose."

"How is it possible that the Delhi government,

which is vaccinating people for free, doesn't have a single vaccine dose but the private hospitals, which are charging exorbitant prices for vaccination, are doing so without any trouble," she said. — PTI

## Death tally below 100 in city for 1st time since April 13

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

With 78 new deaths in the last 24 hours, Delhi's single-day Covid-19 death toll dropped below 100 for the first time since April 13, while recording 946 fresh infections, according to the Delhi government's health bulletin on Sunday. With 946 fresh positive Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, Delhi's Covid-19 death count went below 100 for the first time since April 13, recording 78 new deaths on Sunday.

The national capital is witnessing a steady decline in daily coronavirus cases since the last few weeks. According to the Delhi government's health bulletin on Sunday, as many as 1,803 people recovered from the disease in the 24-hour period, while the positivity rate remained below 2 per cent and stood at 1.25 per cent. As many as 53,918 beneficiaries were vaccinated in the last 24 hours while 53,43,766 people have been

vaccinated so far.

On April 20, Delhi had registered the biggest spike of new 28,395 coronavirus cases since the pandemic began last year. On April 26, the city registered the highest ever positivity rate of 36.24 per cent.

The Centre on Sunday asked private TV news channels to display four new national helpline numbers for the benefit of citizens as a part of the Covid-19 awareness initiative. In a letter to all private TV news channels, the ministry of information and broadcasting said the national helpline numbers should be run as a ticker or any other appropriate way at periodic intervals. It lauded the news channels for playing an important role in supplementing the efforts of the government in fighting the coronavirus pandemic by creating awareness and informing people about Covid treatment protocol, Covid-appropriate behaviour and vaccination.

## DCPCR survey identifies 32 Covid-19 orphans in Delhi

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

The Delhi Commission For Protection of Child Rights (DCPCR) has identified 32 children who were orphaned during the Covid-19 pandemic in the national capital.

Ten more children have been identified who have lost their single parent to the viral disease, DCPCR chairman Anurag Kundu said.

He said a survey was started earlier this month to trace children in similar distress. "Sixteen children have been identified who lost their parents during the second wave. We have

been enquiring about them whether they require medical attention, rations, counselling, immunisation etc," said DCPCR member Ranjana Prasad.

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal had on May 14 said the Delhi government will bear the cost of education and upbringing of children who were orphaned during the pandemic.

The government has also planned to give ₹2,500 per month to such children, and a proposal is likely to be tabled before the Cabinet soon for approval, a senior official said.

Kundu said the findings of the survey will be shared with the government. "We

will ensure they are enrolled within a week of the notification," he said.

The panel has started a helpline to address the needs of children orphaned during the pandemic.

The helpline (+91 9311551393) also addresses the concerns of kids whose parents are hospitalised or who are facing any other distress. The helpline has received over 2,200 calls till now.

Kundu had also written to the Delhi Police chief earlier this month, drawing his attention to children orphaned by Covid-19 being put up for adoption on social media platforms in violation of the law.

## ■ AAP campaigning for costly foreign-made vaccine manufacturers, alleges BJP Covid vaccines being channelled to pvt hospitals through BJP leaders: AAP

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

Covid vaccines that were supposed to be supplied to state governments are being diverted to private hospitals so that BJP MLAs can "fill their pockets with huge commission", the Aam Aadmi Party alleged on Sunday.

However, the BJP's Delhi unit said AAP leaders, it seems, "are campaigning for highly priced foreign-made vaccines manufacturers" and every time say recorded statements on vaccine shortage when Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India have assured normal supply in the next 10-15 days.

Addressing a press conference, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) spokesperson and MLA Atishi said that the BJP is earning "heavy commission" through private hospitals and a proof of this has emerged from Karnataka. It involves BJP MP Tejasvi Surya and Ravi

Subramanya, she said.

The Congress on Saturday had accused Surya and his uncle Ravi Subramanya, an MLA in Karnataka, of making money through vaccines and demanded that an FIR be registered against them and they be removed as MP and MLA respectively. The BJP leaders have, however, denied the charge.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara alleged that according to an audio tape leaked through social media, Subramanya purportedly took a bribe of Rs 700 per vaccine at a private hospital in Karnataka. Surya has been seen promoting the hospital in advertisements, he alleged.

AAP's Atishi alleged that according to call records, the private hospital clearly stated that they are administering vaccines at expensive rates because they have to "feed" the MLAs' office with huge commission. "The call records also reveal that in order to get vaccine, people are being forced to

get themselves registered at the MLA office just so that BJP politicians can earn their commission and fill their pockets," she said.

Atishi claimed that the BJP is indulging in a "vaccine scam" in these testing times at the cost of the lives of people. "Vaccines which were supposed to be supplied to state governments are being diverted to private hospitals just so that BJP MLAs can fill their pockets with huge commissions," she claimed.

"The state government which is immunising people for free is not getting any vaccines but private hospitals and private hotels are getting huge supply. What kind of a connivance is this of the Centre," Atishi asked.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said no doubt that there is a slight slow inflow of Covid vaccines but both Bharat Biotech and Serum Institute of India have assured that supply will be normal in the

next 10 to 15 days.

"Despite this reassurance by manufacturers one fails to understand that why every day AAP leaders like Atishi play their recorded statement on vaccine shortage and need for allowing import of foreign-made vaccines. It seems they are campaigning for highly priced foreign-made 'vaccines' manufacturers," he said.

"AAP leaders say that they want free vaccines but they campaign for import of highly-priced foreign vaccines which no government can provide for free," Kapoor said.

The Delhi BJP spokesperson said at press conferences, AAP leaders pretend to be against costly vaccines at highly-priced vaccination centres like malls, hotels and private hospitals but every other day "we find chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and his other ministers inaugurating such highly-priced vaccination Centres," Kapoor said.



Resident welfare association member performing havan in memory of Covid victims at Vaishali sector 6 in Ghaziabad on Sunday. — G.N. JHA



## SHORT TAKES

## Odisha lockdown extended till June 17

**Bhubaneswar:** The Odisha government on Sunday extended the lockdown period by 16 days — till June 17. The current second phase of 14-day lockdown ends at 5 AM on June 1. According to state chief secretary Suresh Kumar Mohapatra, the earlier two phases of lockdowns spanning 28 days had contributed to a drastic fall in the Covid-19 test positivity rate (TPR) and the fresh spell is most likely to led further reduction in the pace of infection. “The rate of positivity which stood at 25 per cent three weeks ago had come down to 15 per cent. We need to reduce it further and hence the government has decided to extend the lockdown till June 11 morning,” Mr Mohapatra said. The chief secretary, however, added that the efforts were on to bring the TPR to less than 10 per cent. He informed that agriculture, industrial and banking activities will be allowed to continue. Besides, emergency services will be allowed to continue.

## Lockdown relaxed in UP from June 1

**Lucknow:** The Uttar Pradesh government on Sunday relaxed the Covid lockdown from June 1 allowing shops and markets outside containment zones to open for five days a week, but it would not be implemented for now in 20 districts where active cases are over 600. Once the tally of active COVID-19 cases in these districts falls below 600, relaxation will be implemented there, said UP chief secretary R.K. Tiwari. The 20 districts where there would be no relaxation yet are Meerut, Lucknow, Saharanpur, Varanasi, Ghaziabad, Gorakhpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bareilly, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahr, Jhansi, Prayagraj, Lakhimpur-Khri, Sonbadra, Jaunpur, Bagpat, Moradabad, Ghazipur, Binjor and Deoria. For the rest of the 55 districts, shops and markets outside containment zones will be allowed to remain open 7 am to 7 pm from Mondays to Fridays from June 1, Tiwari said in a government statement. — PTI

## Soren: No time for politicking by Centre

**Ranchi, May 30:** Accusing the Centre of politicking at a juncture when the country is fighting against a raging second wave of Covid, Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren urged PM Modi to “weather the storm” together with states and focus on surviving the “hurricane”. “This is not the time to meddle in politics when we are caught in a storm. This is not the time for leg-pulling. (Let us) weather the storm together. Survive the hurricane and take the boat to shore together ... But if you (Centre) continue fighting in mid-sea, you will sink and we (states) will sink (too),” Mr Soren told PTI in an interview. Urging PM Modi to “work together” with states during these difficult times, Soren accused him of instead causing damage to India’s federal structure. — PTI

## MUMBAI MAYOR FINDS COVID JABS IN HOTEL’S FRIDGE

**Mumbai:** Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar on Sunday conducted an inspection at a hotel in suburban Andheri and found several Covid-19 vaccines stored there in a normal fridge, in violation of the laid down norms. The Covaxin doses found stored there have been sealed and an inquiry has been ordered, she said. The mayor conducted the inspection at The Lalit Hotel in Andheri East, during which some Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) officials accompanied her. Talking to reporters later, Pednekar said there is a tie-up between the hotel and Criticare Hospital, a local private hospital. The hospital had procured the Covid-19 vaccine doses from the central government, which the civic and the state authorities were not aware of, she said. “The Lalit Hotel had received a proposal from the hospital that people can be vaccinated there (at the hotel). As per the proposal, those people, who do not have a family to look after following the vaccination, can stay in the hotel after inoculation... Here 500 people have been vaccinated,” the mayor said. — PTI

## Sena slams Modi govt, calls for introspection

Maha Congress held protests at district and tehsil levels

SONU SHRIVASTAVA  
MUMBAI, MAY 30

Shiv Sena, NCP, and Congress, on Sunday, slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the completion of seven years of the NDA government at the Centre. The Congress, on Sunday, observed black day across Maharashtra. Shiv Sena said that the Modi government has nothing new to offer to the people of the country. Shiv Sena spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Raut said that the country is surviving as a nation due to the good deeds of the Congress governments under the leaderships of late former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajiv Gandhi, P.V. Narasimha Rao, and former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

“Under the regime of Congress prime ministers, many new projects were undertaken and new schemes were rolled out. The Modi government did not offer anything new,” he said.

Mr Raut also advised the Central government to introspect the chaos, inflation, and unemployment which has been caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

“The people have limited. Everyone does not

## Modi govt harmful for country: Congress on its 7th anniversary

**New Delhi, May 30:** The Narendra Modi dispensation is harmful for the country as it has failed on every front and betrayed people’s trust, the Congress charged on Sunday on the seventh anniversary of the government.

“The truth is Modi government’s seven years are a story of immeasurable pain, insurmountable devastation and unfathomable agony and anguish for a nation of 140 crore people,” the party said.

The opposition party released a seven-point charge-sheet of “blun-

ders” it accused the government of committing, and alleged that the Modi dispensation abdicated its responsibilities towards people.

The Congress listed out what it called the major failures of the government, including a declining economy, rising unemployment and inflation, and Covid mismanagement.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said the government needs to have the right intention, policy and determination to fight the coronavirus and not just a monthly talk.

— PTI

want to become industrialists like Ambani, Tata, Birla, and Adani. If the people are provided basic things—food and job—they would be happy,” the Shiv Sena leader said.

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole demanded the resignation of PM Modi as the NDA government completed its seven years. Mr Patole said that the coronavirus pandemic is man-made and biological.

“The Central government has committed the sin of killing people by bringing this pandemic into the country. Mr Modi should accept the responsibility and apologise to the people of the country. He should step down from the post of Prime Minister,” the Congress leader said.

The Maharashtra Congress held protests at the district and tehsil levels.

## J.P. Nadda: Some parties lowering country’s morale

**New Delhi, May 30:** BJP chief J.P. Nadda on Sunday said while crores of party workers serve people by helping them with Covid relief material, the opposition has “quarantined” itself and works to lower the morale of the country during the pandemic.

BJP leaders and workers are marking the seventh anniversary of the Modi government on Sunday by carrying out Covid prevention and relief work in one lakh villages.

J.P. Nadda, while addressing BJP workers virtually, told them to continue working like “doers”, help people during the pandemic and not get bothered by “obstructors” who absolve themselves from their responsibility. The BJP is observing the anniversary of its government at the Centre as “Seva Diwas” and in view of the Covid pandemic, the party has decided not to celebrate the day, but instead organ-

**Party workers serve people by helping them with Covid relief material, the opposition has ‘quarantined’ itself and works to lower the morale of the country during the pandemic**



— J.P. Nadda, BJP chief

ise relief works under the campaign ‘Sewa Hi Sangathan Hai’.

Crores of BJP workers are carrying out Covid prevention and relief works by distributing masks, sanitisers, food packets and spreading awareness about vaccines in more than one lakh villages and hamlets, Nadda said, adding that all this is being done while following Covid-related protocols. — PTI

## Two caught on tape throwing Covid patient’s body into river

**Balrampur (UP), May 30:** Two men, one of them wearing a PPE kit, were caught on tape rolling down a coronavirus patient’s body from over a bridge into Rapti river in Uttar Pradesh’s Balrampur district.

Hours later, the two were arrested, a senior police officer said.

The video was shot by some people who were driving by the spot.

After the visuals surfaced, police registered a case.

Additional superintendent of Police Arvind Mishra on Sunday told PTI, “The body of the deceased was sent home as per Covid protocol. In this context, two persons have been arrested for violation of Covid protocol after a case was registered following a complaint lodged by the CMO. The person in the PPE kit has been identified as Manoj, while the other person was the nephew of the deceased (who received the body).”

He added that the hunt is on for the third person, and investigations are going on. — PTI

## Stan Swamy tested positive for Covid, claims his friend

SHAHAB ANSARI  
MUMBAI, MAY 30

Stan Swamy has reportedly tested positive for the Covid after he was moved to a hospital. Swamy, who is in custody in connection with the 2018 Bhima Koregaon case, was moved to the private hospital following the directives given by the Bombay high court on Friday.

Swamy is amongst the 16 persons arrested in connection with the Elgar Parishad case. Soon after he was remanded to jail custody, he had to be shift-



ed to the jail hospital and he has personally complained to the Bombay High Court that his health is continuously deteriorating since he has been shifted to jail. He had stated before the court that he was able to walk, write, eat and do all of his work by himself, but with every passing day in the hospital, he has become so weak that he needs help to do his day-to-day work.

According to one of Swamy’s friends, his co-

## 21 UP inmates don’t want parole amid Covid

**Lucknow, May 30:** Most people would do anything to get out of jail. But that’s not the case with 21 inmates in nine prisons of Uttar Pradesh who have written to authorities saying they don’t want parole as staying incarcerated is “safer and healthier” for them during the Covid pandemic.

Parole is a temporary suspension of prison sentence.

The inmates who have made such a request are

lodged in nine jails of the state, including in Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Meerut, Gorakhpur and Lucknow, director general of jail administration Anand Kumar told PTI on Sunday.

The reason is that if they get a 90-day parole, then this will get added to the punishment term, he said.

“The other overriding reason which they give is that if they go out, they



A crowded vegetable market during coronavirus induced restrictions at Nagri area of Ranchi on Sunday.

— PTI

Borders of districts having 20 per cent positivity rate will be sealed  
Lockdown extended in Maha till June 15BHAGWAN PARAB  
MUMBAI, MAY 30

With the coronavirus cases on rise in rural areas of the state, chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has announced a new drive ‘Corona-Mukta Gaon’ (Covid-free village) in Maharashtra.

Villages in the state become corona-free, the entire state will inevitably get rid of the virus, he said on Sunday.

The coronavirus cases in Maharashtra state are on decline in recent days.



However, while the Covid-19 pandemic in urban areas has seen a gradual drop, the rural Thackeray areas have witnessed a gradual rise. The new drive is aimed at bringing the coronavirus cases in rural areas under control.

While announcing the corona-free village drive in a virtual address to the state, Mr Thackeray specially mentioned the villages in Ahmednagar and

Solapur districts, which have managed to become free of pandemic. “People like Popatrao, Ruturaj Deshmukh, Komal Tai have made commendable efforts in eradicating coronavirus from their villages. If we fight the pandemic in a disciplined manner like them, we can also make villages in the state corona-free,” he said.

The CM also extended the lockdown-like restrictions in the state till June 15. However, the restrictions will not be uniform throughout the

state, but they will vary in cities and districts according to the positivity rate and the availability of oxygen beds, he added.

At the places, where the positivity rate is 10 per cent, the State government has increased the timings of shops of essential commodities from 7 am to 2 pm. The deadline earlier was only up to 11 am. The borders of districts having 20 per cent positivity rate will be sealed and the entry-exit from these districts will not be allowed.

## NDRF to have mini oxygen plants soon: MHA

AGE CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 30

Taking serious note of the acute shortage of oxygen faced across the country during the lethal second wave of the corona pandemic, the Union home ministry, in a major initiative, will soon allow the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to have their own “cryogenic oxygen containers and mini oxygen plants” that

can be set up at any required location within a few hours.

The NDRF is a highly specialised nodal agency of the government to deal with any natural or man-made disaster. The home ministry sources said the government had taken the oxygen shortage in the country extremely seriously and was putting in place a robust mechanism to avoid a repeat of such a situation in future.

**OFFICIALS CLAIMED a detailed analysis of the oxygen shortage revealed that apart from the sudden increase in the demand the other main reason was transportation of oxygen**

Officials claimed a detailed analysis of the oxygen shortage revealed that apart from the sudden increase in the demand the other main

reason was transportation of oxygen. Officials added that there is no dearth of oxygen production in the country and the main problem is transportation.

“Adequate oxygen was available across various industrial plants in the country. But the main problem was that of transportation since highly specialised tankers are required for its transportation and not enough

of them were available in the country. Now, this problem would be resolved before the anticipated third wave which is likely to strike sometime in September or October,” an official explained.

The NDRF is already equipped with a lot of state-of-the-art equipment which is required in relief and rescue operations. These oxygen containers and mini plants will only add to their inventory.

## U’khand: Tribals in Pithoragarh flee into forest to escape Covid-19 test

**Pithoragarh (U’khand), May 30:** Residents of a tribal village here ran to a nearby forest when a team of district health workers came to their doorsteps recently for Covid test.

Kuta Chaurani village is inhabited by Banrawats — an endangered tribe.

The shy tribals fled to the forest on getting information about the arrival of a testing team. Didihat SDM K.N. Goswami said on Sunday, “While we could test residents of Aultari & Jamtari villages, those living in Kuta Chaurani fled to the forest,” the SDM

said. The Banrawat community was declared a primitive tribe on the verge of extinction by India government in 1967.

“Over 500 members of this endangered tribe are living in 8 localities of Didihat sub division. We had sent our testing team to Aultari, Jamtari and Kuta Chaurani villages to test them. A total of 191 members of the community from Aultari and Jamtari came forward FOR the test but residents of Kuta Chaurani fled to the forests to avoid tests,” Goswami said. — PTI

## Cargo aircraft from China with over 1350 O2 cylinders lands in Odisha

AKSHAYA KUMAR  
SAHOO  
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 30

In a first in the country, a cargo aircraft from China carrying over 1350 oxygen cylinders landed at the Biju Patnaik International Airport (BPIA) in Odisha capital here on Sunday.

Informing about it, Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik’s chief advisor Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) chairman Asit Tripathy said the incident was first-of-its-kind for the country.

ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel India (AM/NS

India), one of the largest steel makers of the world, delivered the cylinders to the Odisha government. The delivery of 1350 oxygen cylinders to the Odisha government was the first tranche of a consignment of 5150 cylinders pledged by AM/NS India to be given as a part of its contribution to bring relief to victims of Covid-19 across the state.

Describing it as a step ahead in oxygen security, Mr Tripathy said the chief minister had directed that no patient shall suffer due to lack of oxygen.

## TMC MLA falls ill after getting discharged from hospital

RAJIB CHOWDHURI  
KOLKATA, MAY 30

Madan Mitra, one of the four heavyweight Narada sting b r i e r y accused granted an interim bail by the Calcutta High Court recently, fell ill on Sunday soon after his release from SSKM Hospital.

He was the last among the three accused who were admitted at the Woodburn Block of the state government-run hospital due to ill-health.

Coming out of the hospital, a cheerful Trinamul Congress MLA of Kamarhati, in a red dress, expressed his gratitude to his followers and doctors also sang two Bengali songs in front of the media. “I am very happy that I am returning home,” he said.

The former state transport minister then visited a Mazar and then a Gurdwara in Bhowanipore to pay his obeisance. His aides, excited about his return to home, had arranged a small event roadside nearby to greet him.



## SHORT TAKES

## Man lynched over 'abduction', 5 held

**Thane:** Five persons were arrested from Thane in Maharashtra on Sunday for allegedly lynching a 34-year-old man the previous night on suspicion that he was trying to abduct a minor daughter of one of them, the police said. The incident occurred on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday in the Wagle Estate area of the city. The police said one of the accused suspected that the victim, Ramawtar Dhobi, was abducting a minor girl, following which he raised an alarm and attacked Dhobi. Dhobi was thrashed by at least 10 people, which resulted in his death, an official said. A hunt is on to trace other accused involved in the crime. A case has been registered under various sections of the IPC and the Maharashtra Police Act. — *PTI*

## 4 Maoists arrested from C'garh district

**Narayanpur, Chhattisgarh:** Four Naxals, allegedly involved in triggering IED blasts and torching vehicles, were arrested from Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district, a police official said on Sunday. The cadres, identified as Sonaru Anchla (22), Fagu Ram Anchla (35), Sonu Ram Anchla (45) and Mangtu Ram Potai (35), were apprehended from a forest near Irakbhathi village under Kohkameta police station limits on Friday when a joint team of security forces was out on a search operation, he said. Personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard (DRG), the Indo-Tibetan Border Police and the district force were involved in the operation that was launched on May 28, the official said. — *PTI*

## 13 injured after bus falls into ditch in UP

**Agra:** Thirteen passengers were injured after a bus fell into a 15-feet-deep ditch along the Agra-Lucknow Expressway in Uttar Pradesh, the police said on Sunday. The accident occurred on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday, and its suspected that the driver lost control of the vehicle after its axle broke, it said. The injured passengers were admitted to the Sarojani Naidu Medical College and Hospital here, the police said. The bus, which was going from Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh to Jaipur in Rajasthan, had 70-80 passengers. It fell into a 15-feet-deep ditch along the expressway near milestone nine, they said, adding that the area falls under the Dauki police station. — *PTI*

## India sends pvt jet to Dominica with Choksi deportation docus

*Fugitive may have taken his girlfriend to Dominica for dinner: Antigua & Barbuda PM*

**New Delhi, May 30:** India sent a private jet to Dominica carrying documents related to the deportation of fugitive businessman Mehul Choksi, wanted in a ₹13,500 crore bank loan fraud case, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda Gaston Browne told a radio show in his country.

There was, however, no immediate official confirmation from Indian authorities about it.

A Qatar Airways private jet landed at the Douglas-Charles airport in Dominica, Antigua News Room reported, leading to speculations about deportation of Choksi who was detained in the Caribbean island nation after his



**Choksi has alleged that he was abducted from Jolly Harbour in Antigua and Barbuda by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and taken to Dominica.**

mysterious disappearance from neighbouring Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr Browne told the radio show that the jet came from India carrying necessary documentation needed for deportation of the businessman, the media outlet reported.

Publicly available data of Qatar Executive flight A7CEE shows that it left the Delhi airport at 3.44 pm on May 28 and reached Dominica at 13.16 local time on the same day, via

Madrid. The Dominica high court has stayed the removal of Choksi from its soil and put a gag order on the developments till the matter is heard in an open court on June 2.

Choksi has alleged that he was abducted from Jolly Harbour in Antigua and Barbuda by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and taken to Dominica.

Purported pictures of 62-year-old Choksi that have surfaced in Dominica

shows him with red swollen eye and bruises on his hands.

The fugitive diamantaire may have left his sanctuary in Antigua and taken a boat ride to neighbouring Dominica to have dinner or a "good time" with his girlfriend, Mr Browne said.

"The information that we are getting is that Mehul Choksi may have taken his girlfriend to Dominica probably to have dinner or have a good time and so on and got caught. That would have been a monumental error because in Antigua he is a citizen, we could not deport him," the PM of Antigua and Barbuda said. — *PTI*

## 'Centre-state relations more strained under Modi's govt'

**New Delhi, May 30:** Former Union minister M Veerappa Moily on Sunday said that relations between the Centre and states have become "more strained" under the Narendra Modi government and urged the Prime Minister to revive the Planning Commission to strengthen cooperative federalism.

He also called for a meeting of the National Integration Council, which finds ways and means to combat the evils of communalism, casteism, regionalism and linguism.

The senior Congress leader hit out at Mr Modi, saying in a democracy, one man's thinking cannot replace national thinking.

The Union government needs to collaborate with state governments rather than behaving like a big brother, he said.

Describing the Centre's decision to recall West Bengal chief secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay as an assault on federalism, he said such actions would only create friction.

The Centre should not act as a big brother. This is not pleasant, the former Karnataka chief minister said. — *PTI*



Members of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ugrahan) take part in a protest march in Patiala on Sunday against the Centre's three farm bills. — *PTI*

## 'Monsoon onset in Kerala to be delayed; likely by June 3'

**New Delhi, May 30:** The arrival of the southwest monsoon over Kerala is likely to be delayed by two days and it is now expected to make an onset over the state by June 3, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.

However, Skymet Weather, a private forecasting agency, said monsoon has already made an onset over Kerala.

G.P. Sharma, President (Meteorology) of Skymet Weather, said it is a "very weak onset" this year.

Skymet Weather had earlier predicted that monsoon will make an onset over Kerala on May 30. IMD director general M.

Mohapatra said there is cyclonic circulation along the Karnataka coast which is hindering the progress of the southwest monsoon.

"The southwesterly winds could strengthen further gradually from June 1, resulting in likely enhancement in rainfall activity over Kerala. Hence, the monsoon onset over Kerala is likely to take place around June 3," the IMD said.

Due to strengthening of lower level southwesterly winds, fairly widespread rainfall activity with isolated heavy falls are very likely over northeastern states during the next five days. The normal onset

date for the monsoon over Kerala is June 1. This marks the start of the four-month rainfall season for the country.

Earlier this month, the IMD had predicted the arrival of monsoon over Kerala by May 31 with an error margin of plus or minus four days.

On Sunday morning, the IMD, in its daily bulletin, said the onset of the monsoon over Kerala was expected to be around May 31. However, by afternoon it said the onset is expected to be by June 3.

According to the IMD, the onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala depends on three parameters. — *PTI*

## Naravane: Modernisation of Army is well on course

**New Delhi, May 30:** The modernisation of the Indian Army is well on course, Army Chief Gen. M.M. Naravane has said, dismissing apprehensions that the need for devoting more resources to guard the Line of Actual Control in the face of the prolonged standoff with China in eastern Ladakh may starve the force of funds for buying new weapons and platforms.

Emphasising his point, Gen. Naravane said that 59 contracts worth ₹21,000 crore have been concluded since last fiscal while a number of other capital acquisition proposals are in the pipeline.

In an exclusive interview to PTI, he said the modernisation drive in the Army



has been going on without facing any difficulty and that required resources are being provided by the government. "The modernisation drive of Indian Army is well on course. Recently 15 contracts worth more than ₹16,000 crore have been concluded under normal schemes of procurement and 44 contracts worth ₹5,000 crore have been concluded in 2020-21 under emergency procurements," he said.

"A number of capital acquisition proposals too are underway concurrently," the Chief of Army Staff said.

He was replying to a

question on whether the much-needed modernisation of the Army has been impacted due to the need for allocation of greater resources to keep a large number of troops for guarding the LAC in eastern Ladakh and elsewhere in the wake of the standoff since last one year.

"We are not facing any difficulty," he said, referring to the modernisation drive.

In February, the government allocated ₹4.78 lakh crore for the defence budget for 2021-22. Out of the total allocation, ₹1,35,060 crore was set aside for capital expenditure that includes purchasing new weapons, aircraft, warships and other military hardware. — *PTI*

## Death toll rises to 25 in UP hooch tragedy

**Aligarh, May 30:** The death toll in the Aligarh hooch tragedy climbed to 25 on Sunday, officials here said.

BJP Lok Sabha MP from Aligarh Satish Gautam, however, said according to information gathered by him, the death toll has crossed 35.

In a series of raids on Sunday, six police teams managed to nab four more people wanted in connection with Friday's hooch tragedy.

The police said with Sunday's arrests, 11 of the 12 people booked in connection with the hooch tragedy have been arrested during the past 48 hours.

Search is on for Rishi Sharma, reportedly close to kingpin Anil Chaudhary who was arrested on Saturday. Sharma has strong political links and was recently elected as a member of

his village panchayat. A large stock of illicit liquor has also been seized in these raids.

Senior superintendent of police Kalanidhi Naithani on Saturday said that a reward of ₹50,000 each has been announced one the arrest of Rishi Sharma and Vipin Yadav.

Raids have also been conducted in the city and the police of the Kuwarsi police station nabbed five people on Sunday who were allegedly involved in illicit liquor trade. A large stock of spurious foreign liquor was also seized.

The SSP said the raids will continue throughout the night.

The excise department and police conducted a joint raid in the district's Tappal block and arrested a person with a large stock of illicit liquor. — *PTI*

## Farmer held for hoax bomb scare in Maha's secretariat

**SONU SHRIVASTAVA**  
MUMBAI, MAY 30

The Mumbai police were sent into a tizzy after a call claiming a bomb threat in Mantralaya on Sunday. The Disaster Management Control Room of Mantralaya received the call from an unknown caller in the afternoon. However, no explosives were found after a thorough search operation, the police said. Immediately after

receiving the threat call a team of Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) was sent to Mantralaya, but no suspicious material was found.

During the course of investigation, the phone call was traced to Nagpur. Further probe revealed that a farmer, identified as Sagar Mandhare (40), from district Nagpur had made this phone call.

The farmer was detained within hours of making the hoax call.

## MP honeytrap case: Notice to Kamal Nath over pen drive

**Indore, May 30:** A special investigation team probing a "honeytrap" case in Indore in Madhya Pradesh that made national headlines in 2019 on Sunday asked former state chief minister and Congress leader Kamal Nath to submit a pen drive in his possession as "extremely important evidence".

Five women and a man were arrested in Bhopal and Indore in September, 2019 for allegedly trapping well-placed people and blackmailing them with objectionable videos.

The SIT notice sent to Mr Nath under relevant CrPC provisions said he had claimed in an online press conference on May 21 that he was in possession of a pen drive/CD of the honeytrap case.

The notice went on to state that this 'pen drive/CD was extremely important evidence' in the FIR lodged in Palasia police station, and it would make the probe more effective and stronger.

Speaking on the issue in Morena, the former chief minister said he would respond to the notice but added the pen drive was not with him and several journalists were in possession of it and it was being circulated widely in Madhya Pradesh. — *PTI*

## Modi 2.0 is 2: India fighting Covid with all its might: PM

■ **Continued from Page 1** "unprecedented achievements" in the fields of security, public welfare and reforms under NDA rule. He insisted that the people have "consistently expressed their unwavering faith" in the PM's "service and dedication".

The BJP had already told its leaders and chief ministers not to hold any celebratory event in the wake of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, and instead hold welfare events, including in one lakh jhuggi clusters across the country. "The achievements of the past seven years have been those of the nation and its people... together we experienced so many moments of national pride... India now moves ahead not under the pressure of other countries but with its own convictions... it makes everyone proud," said the PM in his

"Mann ki Baat" address.

Highlighting the government's initiatives on national security, the PM, without naming China, said a befitting reply had been given to those who had conspired against the country. "When we witness that now India gives a befitting reply to those who conspire against us, then our confidence soars. When India does not compromise on the issues of national security, when the strength of our armed forces increases, we feel that yes, we are on the right path," Mr Modi said. He further said that many old disputes had also been resolved with complete peace and harmony, and a new confidence underpinned by peace and development has arisen from the Northeast to Kashmir.

BJP president J.P. Nadda said the nation has been moving towards the path of

becoming "atma nirbhar" under the Modi government.

In a series of tweets in Hindi, home minister Amit Shah credited Mr Modi for improving the living standards of the poor, farmers and deprived sections by bringing them into the mainstream with his determined, holistic and welfare policies and making India a powerful nation with his strong leadership.

"The Modi government has presented a unique example of unparalleled coordination of development, security, public welfare and landmark reforms," he said. Defence minister Rajnath Singh said India "wrote a new chapter in the field of social welfare, development, good governance" under the Modi government and the PM and the government was guided by the mantra of "sabka aath, sabka vikas, sabka vishvas".

## 12cr vaccine doses for states, UTs in June

■ **Continued from Page 1** has been provided well in advance to states/UTs by the Union government as communicated to States and UTs vide letters of the Union health ministry," officials said.

For June, 6.09 crore doses of Covid-19 vaccines will be supplied to states and UTs for vaccination of priority group of Health Care Workers (HCWs), Front-Line Workers (FLWs) and persons aged 45 years and above as free supply from Centre. In addition, over 5.86 crore doses will be available for direct procurement by the

states/UTs and private hospitals, officials said.

They added that the delivery schedule for this allocation will be shared in advance and the states had been requested to direct officials to ensure "rational and judicious utilisation of allocated doses and minimise the vaccine wastage". In May, the health ministry said over 4.03 crore vaccine doses were made available by the Centre to states free of cost, while an additional 3.90 crore doses were available for direct procurement by the states and

private hospitals, which totals to 7.94 crore doses.

The health ministry has asked states not to allow "vaccination packages at hotels" since under the guidelines, vaccinations can be carried out at government and private vaccination centres, workplaces, near to home, Covid vaccination centres for the elderly and differently abled persons to be organised at group housing societies, RWA offices, community centres, panchayat offices, schools and colleges, old age homes, etc on a temporary basis.

## Bengal govt may defy Centre

■ **Continued from Page 1** Centre till the reports last came in on Sunday evening.

On the other hand, the state government has also taken a firm stand by not issuing

Mr Bandyopadhyay any order for his release, which is essential for all bureaucrats in the all-India service cadres to go for a Central deputation from their places of posting in the state.

It maintains that since Mr Bandyopadhyay has not applied for a Central deputation and the Centre had sought neither any concurrence nor any

empanelment for his Central deputation, the question of relieving him does not arise, although the Centre's stand gets the priority in such a situation, according to sources.

On Sunday afternoon, Mr Bandyopadhyay along with his wife, Calcutta University vice-chancellor Sonali Chakravarti Banerjee, visited his office at Nabanna, the state secretariat. He is expected to attend a meeting to be chaired by the CM on Monday to discuss the damage caused in the state due to Cyclone Yaas.

The tug of war over the state's top bureaucrat has

meanwhile turned into a political slugfest between the BJP and the Trinamul Congress.

Attacking the chief minister, state BJP chief and Midnapore MP Dilip Ghosh said: "Everyone saw what she did on that day. Accompanied by the state chief secretary, she met the PM and left. Where is the decency in it? What kind of honour is this? She earlier spoke indecently about the Prime Minister too. It does not suit her to talk about honour and the Constitution in any way. She wants to play politics only."

## Experts, ex-babus feel Centre's case shaky

■ **Continued from Page 1** Jawhar Sircar, a former secretary to the Government of India.

He said it is difficult for the Centre to unilaterally transfer an IAS or IPS officer, who is not under its control but that of another government within the federation.

According to rule 6(1) of the AIS on deputation of all India service officers, an officer on the rolls of a certain state may be deputed to the Centre or another state or a PSU with the concurrence of the concerned state.

"In case of any disagreement, the matter shall be decided by the central government and the state government or state governments concerned shall give effect to the decision of the

Central government," the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954, mention.

However, the problem for the central government is that it neither asked for West Bengal's consent nor of Bandyopadhyay, considered essential for such a transfer.

The transfer directive was seen by many quarters as an indication of vindictiveness by the Centre, after the chief minister on Saturday appealed to "PM Modi to end political vendetta, withdraw order recalling Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay, and allow him to work for the Covid-infected".

BJP MLA and Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suvedu Adhikari, however, alleged at a virtual press confer-

ence that the chief secretary had broken protocol at the review meeting, and as per the Constitution, the transfer was fair.

Mr Sircar said the West Bengal government could also seek legal remedies through the Central Administrative Tribunal or the High Court and though the Centre was believed to have filed caveats in both the platforms, "this is the remedy which common sense would dictate".

"Aside from politics, the order issued by the Centre does not stand the test of law as the central government did not obtain the state's approval or the officer's willingness for central deputation," said a former secretary ranking officer from the Indian Audit and Accounts

Service. He pointed out that instead the Centre came up with a unilateral order that neither mentions the post to which Bandyopadhyay is being appointed to nor the tenure.

Earlier, similar unilateral orders transferring three IPS officers from West Bengal were not accepted by the state government. A few years ago, Tamil Nadu had also similarly refused to relieve its Director General of Police when ordered to report to Delhi.

Another former chief secretary of West Bengal said "the operation of any proviso to a rule (which allows Central directives to prevail) happens only after the substantive part of the rule is given effect

to, which is prior concurrence before issuance of an order", and added "these procedures have been clearly laid down. Any departure from this practice needs to be explained".

Questioning the propriety of the decision to transfer Bandyopadhyay, senior advocate Arunabha Ghosh said that if the chief minister decides not to give the release order immediately, it would create a legal complication.

Ms Ghosh said the chief secretary is under the direct control of the CM.

"The Centre can do it (transfer Bandyopadhyay) under the rule, but there is timing... Will an Army general be removed in the middle of a war?" he said. — *PTI*



# THE ASIAN AGE

31 MAY 2021

## Centre petty in a needless confrontation with Bengal

The manner in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "review meeting" — or, really speaking, so-called review meeting, in light of everything that's transpired since — concerning the devastation caused by the cyclone Yaas with West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee was conducted, it would seem the idea was not so much to discuss cyclone-related damage in the middle of the second wave of Covid but to provoke a fresh round of confrontation between the Centre and the state.

In the three weeks since the state Assembly election result became known, and Ms Banerjee led her party to a record victory, in the process trouncing the BJP which had hoped to form government, not a day has passed without the exchange of bitterness and acrimony between the Centre and the state and the BJP and the Trinamul Congress.

Regrettably, governor Jagdeep Dhankhar has taken it upon himself to be at the centre of these activities in ways that suggest he values his party association more than the neutrality his constitutional duties cast on him. He had been invited to the "review" meeting at the Kalaikunda air base, along with a clutch of BJP leaders, including the leader of the Opposition in the Assembly.

This is far from usual. In the event, the CM did well not to have any part in any of this. That would have set a dreadful precedent. A meeting between the PM and a CM ought to be just that, the presence of senior aides apart; else it would always be a crowd commandeered by the Union government. The governor decidedly has no role to play in such a meeting. Nor do Opposition party leaders since this was not billed as an all-party meeting.

The CM, therefore, met the PM at the airbase, handed him an estimate of financial requirements to repair the damage caused by the cyclone, and with the PM's "permission" proceeded to her next meeting along the damaged coastal belt. Nevertheless, through the BJP's propaganda network, which alas includes sections of the impressionable media, it has been given out that the CM "skipped" the meeting called by the PM to review the damage.

Ms Banerjee is a very combative street politician and is known to give as good as she gets. This does not always make a pretty picture. However, events initiated by the Centre after her party's recent electoral triumph suggest that her actions have been reactive, not pro-active. It is ironical that a PM who skipped talking about "federalism" after taking office and insisted on calling it "cooperative federalism" should be the presiding deity when ugly fracas plays out on daily basis in relation to a state in which his party has been firmly placed on the electoral mat.

Perhaps nothing shows this more graphically than the way the Centre chose to deal with the chief secretary, Alapan Bandyopadhyay. He was asked to report for duty at the Centre on the last day of his service as an IAS officer. Ironically, only four days before he was to superannuate, at the state's request, the Centre had granted him an extension of three months in service (as against the six sought). This has been widely viewed as an act of infinitesimal smallness — a part of the act of continuing jousting against a state with whose CM the Centre is at odds.

## 2 yrs of Modi 2.0: Little to celebrate

The conspicuous absence of celebrations around the completion of two years of the NDA-2 regime betrays how tumultuous they have proved to be. There are many reasons why this period was far from memorable from among the seven years of Narendra Modi rule since 2014. Waves of a rampant pandemic, which have tested the capacity to govern in over 200 nations, have had less to do with why the last two years have been particularly filled with turmoil in India.

The biggest mandate in democratic India's history in 35 years since 1984 was squandered by the regime giving primacy to a Hindutva agenda, beginning with the abrogation of Article 370 in the "taming" of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. The pursuit of an amended citizenship bill promising to give citizenship to all refugees except Muslims tore the fabric of a pluralistic democracy asunder leading to communal riots in New Delhi. The seeming foreign policy gains from the showmanship of the "Howdy Trump" and "Howdy Modi", besides the positive vibes generated by the banning of the triple talaq had all but evaporated.

While the verdict in the sticky dispute over the Ayodhya shrines, courtesy of an obliquis judiciary, was welcomed with the enthusiasm reserved for the resolution of any historical disagreement, there was a ruthless persistence in a divisive agenda, which seemed to be driven by the itch to settle scores more than repaying the people who voted again for the BJP over the combined opposition. In prioritising a blatantly political agenda, from Kashmir to Lakshwadeep and Puducherry, even the new farm laws became suspect, triggering a long running agitation.

In promoting electoral aims above governance, which was largely left to bureaucrats even during the pandemic, the ruling party lost the perception battle, too. Image management and a retributory stance against the public media run by Big Tech are seen now like a pushback by a federal regime fast losing its popularity, also reflected by poll verdicts in many prominent states. The second Covid-19 wave has simply added to the image of a faltering Centre and the ruling party, which now has less than three years to undo the post-2019 damage.

### THE ASIAN AGE

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Mohan Guruswamy



## Tobacco India's top health crisis: Act now, or just go up in smoke!

The consumption of tobacco in all its forms — cigarettes, cheeroots, bidis, gutka and other forms of chewing tobacco — is our number one health challenge now. According to the World Health Organisation, there are approximately 120 million smokers in India, and India is the home of 12 per cent of the world's smokers. More than 10 million die each year due to tobacco in India. According to the same study, 70 per cent of adult males in India smoke. Among adult females, the figure is much lower, at between 13-15 per cent. The total tax revenue derived from cigarettes and tobacco products is about ₹30,000 crores.

According to a study commissioned by the Government of India, the total economic costs attributable to all diseases related to tobacco consumption is over ₹104,000 crores.

In recent years, the cigarette business has been reporting a drop in consumption. But we do not know if there was a corresponding decrease in the incidence of cancer and other smoking induced ailments. The government, presumably under pressure from the rich and powerful cigarette industry, has not yet conducted a detailed study

of this and the consequential cost to the economy in spite of a specific request from the revenue department to enable it to evolve a scientific basis for cigarette taxation.

Whatever be the drop in stick sales, it is very evident that rupee sales and profits have not shown any decline. Industry bosses can, like the cigarette-smoking Dev Anand in the film Hum Dono did, continue to sing "barbadhion ka jashn manata chala gaya, har fikr ko dhuey mey udhatha chala gaya!"

Objectively speaking, this is not a bad situation at all, and is proof that the government policy, whether deliberate or accidental, is still halfway good. For, as far as this industry goes, a good policy will ensure that the state gets more revenue, while the consumption keeps dropping each year. But this does not necessarily mean any good news on the health front, as dropouts may have switched to bidis? Nevertheless, the decline in consumption, attributed by the industry to higher excise duties in each of the previous few budgets, means the policy is in the right direction and that there is a case for further increasing the tariffs on cigarettes and bidis once again this year.

The cigarette industry will, no

doubt, argue now that it is not wise to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. In this case it is not a golden egg but a time bomb, as each cigarette smoked now implies a future medical cost. Very recently the US government negotiated a \$368 billion damages package from the US cigarette industry to pay for future health costs. As the finance minister's adviser, I had once recommended that the health ministry be asked to similarly estimate future health costs in India. It followed that excise duties should be determined with the idea of recovering these costs now. I also advised that raising excise duties each year is a win-win situation. If consumption drops, it means future savings.

It is not that the incidence of smoking is low in India if we take into consideration the widespread bidi habit. NCAER has estimated that 348 million people belong to households with an annual income of over ₹12,500. Logic suggests that the vast majority of cigarette and bidi smokers must come from this segment. This is, by any standards, a very high and dangerous figure. Another point of concern is that the US congressional investigations have revealed that cigarette companies rou-

tinely spiked tobacco with extra nicotine to intensify addiction. It is rumoured that similar practices are still widespread in India. There is, therefore, a case for pegging excise duties with nicotine content as well.

One reason suggested for the drop in stick sales in the first half is that smuggled cigarettes ate into the share of locally produced brands. Industry analysts estimate that a third of MNC production are for illegal exports. The port of Antwerp is the hub of the international cigarette smuggling business. Antwerp is to cigarettes what Dubai is to gold! The Indian cigarette industry estimates that smuggled international brand penetration now accounts for two per cent of the market and to some 30-40 per cent of the segment for king-size cigarettes.

Cigarettes are an easy target because they are in the organised sector. But the consumption of bidis and chewing tobacco is just as dangerous and these sectors are growing. Therefore, the danger to public health only keeps increasing. The unfortunate part of this is that the government actively supports and subsidises the increased production of tobacco. Tobacco farming makes a huge

footprint on our agriculture and now accounts for 4,95,000 hectares of the most fertile land. Apart from using up valuable agricultural land, tobacco farmers derive all the largesses the state and Central governments confer on them. Free water and free power are the more obvious ones. Then there is subsidised fertiliser and tax-free status for all farming. The government must review these policies. I would like to see tobacco farming taxed on an acreage basis to make it less profitable and for the government to recover all the unmerited subsidies that tobacco farmers encash.

This is easier said than done. The tobacco sector is a powerful vested interest. ITC and the other cigarette manufacturers are the top half of that pyramid. It is easy to take it on, but it's now time to take on the base.

Today, May 31, is World No Tobacco Day

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

Subhani



## Flux in Centre-state ties with breakdown of trust



Sanjaya Baru

An outstanding address to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council by Tamil Nadu's finance minister P.T. Rajan, a contentious interaction between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and the questionable remarks by V.K. Paul, a member of the Niti Aayog, blaming state governments for the mess over the Covid vaccination strategy once again draw attention to the sorry state of Centre-state relations today. Mr Modi came to power in New Delhi in 2014 promising to adopt "cooperative federalism" as his watchword. Seven years into office he is reminding many people across India of the Indira Gandhi era when the Centre rode roughshod over the states.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent direct interaction with district magistrates, ignoring their chief ministers, was also a reminder of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's attempt to empower the district level bodies, funding them directly from New Delhi, by-passing state governments.

The Indira-Rajiv era of unhappy Centre-state relations was challenged by several powerful chief ministers, including Jyoti Basu, N.T. Rama Rao and M. Karunanidhi. The Centre is a conceptual myth, declared NTR, who in the early 1980s emerged as a stout defender of the rights of state legislatures and state governments.

Seeking to retrieve the trust of provincial political leaders, Indira Gandhi appointed the Justice Sarkaria Commission on Centre-state relations in 1983. Every time that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had problems in dealing with state governments he would, in jest, recall NTR's assertion and remind himself of Justice Sarkaria's views.

In the quarter century from 1989 to 2014, successive PMs had managed Centre-state relations within a framework of consensual politics. Prime Ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao, Atal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh maintained excellent personal, political and administrative relations with all the chief ministers, irrespective of their party political affiliation.

Against this background, it is disconcerting to hear the Tamil Nadu finance minister speak of "a deterioration of the relationship of trust" between the governments of the Union and the states". It was even more worrisome to see a photograph of a scheduled meeting between the PM and the West Bengal CM in which the PM was seated at the head of the table and the CM and other officials, including the Leader of the Opposition BJP in the state Assembly, were required to be seated along both sides of the table. In the event, Ms Banerjee chose not to attend the meeting.

During his first term in office, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh travelled to many state capitals to chair meetings with state CMs and their ministerial colleagues and officials, often accompanied by the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and senior Central government officials. The seating arrangement always had the PM and his team seated across the table facing the CM and his/her colleagues. It was a gesture of respect that built trust. These meetings were meant to discuss the implementation of various Centrally funded projects at the state level. The Centre has the money, but it is the states that implement all the projects and programmes. A cooperative relationship between the two is essential for good governance in a quasi-federal administrative system like that of

India.

The "deterioration in the relationship of trust" that the Tamil Nadu finance minister spoke of contrasts with the environment of trust and mutual accommodation that former finance minister Arun Jaitley referred to when he addressed a special midnight session of Parliament launching the new GST system. The late Arun Jaitley paid handsome tribute to three state finance ministers affiliated to political parties that opposed the BJP — Thomas Isaac of Kerala, Haseeb Drabu of Jammu and Kashmir and Amit Mitra of West Bengal — for their cooperation and contribution to making the introduction of the GST possible. Jaitley's consensual style, which he learnt at the feet of Prime Minister Vajpayee, served the nation well.

Narendra Modi's imperious manner as Prime Minister contrasts with his attitude towards the Central government as the chief minister of Gujarat and his promise of pursuing "cooperative federalism". When Ms Banerjee objected over not being allowed to speak during the PM's interaction with district magistrates, BJP spokespersons chided her for speaking out of turn. This incident reminded me of what used to happen at New Delhi's Vigyan Bhavan during chief ministers' conferences during the first term of Dr Manmohan Singh. Mr Modi would step out of these meetings to address a group of select media people, summoned by the CM's staff, in the lobby of Vigyan Bhavan. Ms Banerjee may well have learnt from that example of how a CM could upstage a PM at a national conference.

Whatever the banter and the normal party political

**Narendra Modi's imperious manner as PM contrasts with his attitude towards the Central government as the chief minister of Gujarat and his promise of pursuing 'cooperative federalism'**

differences, the fact is that such interactions between the PM and CMs were usually cordial and businesslike during the tenures of consensual PMs like Narasimha Rao, Vajpayee and Dr Manmohan Singh. The current phase of discord and distrust must be brought to an end if India's political leadership as a whole has to deal with the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and restore momentum to the economy.

Neither the management of the pandemic and the vaccination drive nor the challenge of fiscal stabilisation and restoration of growth momentum can be handled by the Central government alone. The citizen demands a rational and efficient vaccination programme, a humane and competent healthcare administration and revival of economic growth, employment opportunities and confidence in the medium-term prospects of the economy. The bizarre games of political one-upmanship, the consequent weakening of federal institutions and systems and the mutual blame game between politicians at the Centre and in the states does not serve the interests of the citizen and the nation.

India has lived through many crises and it has recovered speedily when the Centre and the states have shared a spirit of cooperative federalism. Any excessive politicisation of federal governance does no good to either pandemic management or economic revival, nor indeed to an overall improvement in the welfare of the citizen. A prolonged period of political grandstanding and continued tensions between the Centre and the states has already adversely impacted governance and economic development. In the event, the nation needs a renewed commitment to cooperative federalism as defined by the principles of the Constitution.

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

### LETTERS

#### DRAMA QUEEN

Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's ploy of playing to the gallery was once again to the fore on Saturday. Hours after skipping the review meeting on Cyclone Yaas chaired by the Prime Minister and a day after the Modi government recalled IAS officer Alapan Bandopadhyay, Didi sought to turn the tables on the Centre by spinning one false narrative after the other. She accused the PM of playing dirty games and resorting to vendetta politics. The CM's remark that she would not hesitate to fall at the PM's feet if he helps Bengal shows her in poor light.

N.J. Ravi Chander  
Bengaluru

#### PK'S TWEET

**ELECTION STRATEGIST** Prashant Kishor whose indubitable expertise did bring the BJP to power the first time around at the Centre has come out in criticism of the PM-Cares aid announced by Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's Office (PMO) for children who have lost both their parents to the Covid-19 pandemic. The minors need immediate help but the aid will be dispersed once they reach the age of 18. As it is, there is no data on deaths and no process has been put in place to identify them. So this is propaganda at their expense. The question is, though, is this the precursor of Mr Kishor forming his own party?

Priyanka Mathur  
Noida

#### THE 'THIRD' WAVE

**IF THE TWO WAVES** of the pandemic have wrought havoc on human health and economy, the third seems to be targeting the political arena. With the Centre forced on the backfoot over vaccines and much else, the regional satraps are no longer overawed or tongue-tied. The local satraps of the BJP are, meanwhile, finding the nerve to undermine the defectors. They are yet to be rewarded for switching loyalties.

R. Narayanan  
Navi Mumbai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Anthony Henriques (May 29). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



## SHORT TAKES

## 14 ABDUCTED FROM NIGERIAN VARSITY SET FREE

**Lagos, May 30:** Fourteen university students and staff abducted from their school in northwestern Nigeria were released Saturday after spending more than a month in captivity.

Gunmen abducted the students and staff from Greenfield University in Kaduna state on April 20. Authorities have said that one person was killed during the kidnappings.

Kaduna State commissioner for Internal Security and Home Affairs Samuel Aruwan said in a statement that the hostages were found released along the Kaduna-Abuja road.

The gunmen had demanded hundreds of thousands of dollars in ransom and had killed five other students to pressure the remaining students' parents to raise the money. Aruwan did not say whether any ransom was paid, but reports had quoted some parents as saying that a ransom was being negotiated with the gunmen.

## UKRAINIAN AMBASSADOR IN THAILAND DIES

**Bangkok, May 30:** The Ukrainian ambassador to Thailand collapsed and died on Sunday while on a resort island with his family, authorities said.

Andrii Beshta, 44, was declared dead on Lipe Island in southern Satun province, Gov. Ek-karat Leesen said.

Police quoted his teenage son, who was staying in the same hotel room, as saying his father vomited and fainted early Sunday. He said he was feeling fine before. Police said they suspect he may have suffered a heart failure.

Leesen said the body was sent to the police hospital for an autopsy.

Beshta had assumed the post of ambassador in January 2016. He is survived by his wife, daughter and two sons, according to a bio on the embassy's website.

## CYPRUS POLLS: SMALL PARTIES LOOK TO GAIN

**Nicosia, May 30:** Cypriots voted Sunday to elect a new parliament, with opinion polls suggesting that the country's two main parties will hemorrhage support as disenchanted voters seek out alternatives among smaller parties.

The election won't affect the running of the government on the divided Mediterranean island and nation, as executive power rests in the hands of the president, who is elected separately.

The island's 558,000 eligible voters were choosing among 21 political parties for the 56 Greek Cypriot seats in parliament. Casting his ballot, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades urged citizens to abandon the couch and vote so they won't give others the right to decide for them.

Among the parties projected to make gains is the far-right ELAM party, whose strong showing in the previous election five years ago surprised many. Among the key campaign issues were the country's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and the hoped-for economic reboot as the country ramps up vaccinations. Migration has also been an issue as the Cypriot government insists it has exceeded its limits and can no longer receive more migrants.

## NZ FLOODS THREATEN 3,000 HOMES

**Christchurch, May 30:** New Zealand authorities declared a state of emergency in the province of Canterbury Sunday, as the region was pounded by heavy rain that could force thousands of people to abandon their homes.

Acting Emergency Management Minister Kris Faafoi, who visited the hardest-hit southern parts of the area, said about 3,000 homes were at risk and the army had been mobilised to assist with evacuations if necessary.

"The rain is going to stick around until at least tomorrow. It will be heavy and the authorities will be watching those river levels tonight," Faafoi said. The New Zealand Meteorological Service has issued a rare "red" warning for the area, with up to 300 millimetres of rain expected to fall in inland areas.

In coastal Christchurch, the main city in Canterbury, forecasters expected about 100 mm to fall. Canterbury Civil Defence emergency management group controller Neville Reilly said that the state of emergency was declared because authorities could not afford to take chances.

## 'Change' bloc to oust Netanyahu

## Ex-TV anchor Lapid trying to build coalition

**Jerusalem, May 30:** Israeli politicians Sunday inched closer to forming a coalition that would end the era of right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the country's longest serving leader.

Politicians opposed to Netanyahu were in intense talks ahead of a Wednesday night deadline, as a ceasefire held following the latest deadly military conflict with Islamist group Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Netanyahu, 71, who faces trial on fraud, bribery and breach of trust charges which he denies, has held onto power through a period of political turmoil that saw four elections in under two years.

After an inconclusive March vote in which Netanyahu's Likud party gained the most seats but again failed to form a government, former TV anchor Yair Lapid is now trying to build a rival coalition. Lapid, a centrist, is seeking to forge a diverse alliance the Israeli media has dubbed a bloc for "change", which would

## Israel, Egypt talk truce with Hamas

**Cairo, May 30:** Egypt and Israel are holding high-level talks in both countries Sunday to shore up a fragile truce between Israel and the Hamas militant group, and rebuild the Gaza Strip after a punishing 11-day war that left much of the seaside enclave in ruins.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shukry was meeting with his Israeli counterpart, Gabi Ashkenazi, who landed in Cairo on Sunday. It was

the first public visit by an Israeli foreign minister in over a decade, according to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

The Israeli Embassy in Cairo said on Twitter that Ashkenazi's visit is the first for a top Israeli diplomat since 2008.

It wrote that the two ministers would discuss topics including the ceasefire and the release of Israeli soldiers and citizens being held by Hamas.

include the nationalist hardliner Naftali Bennett as well as Arab-Israeli lawmakers.

In his determination to bring down the hawkish prime minister, Lapid has offered to share power and let Bennett serve the first term in a rotating pre-

miership. Netanyahu, in office for 12 consecutive years after an earlier three-year term, tried to cling to power Sunday by offering his own, last-ditch power-sharing agreement to several former allies including Bennett.

## Nepal Opp: Shun Oli govt activities

**Kathmandu, May 30:** Nepal's Opposition alliance on Sunday urged all state institutions not to support Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli government's "unconstitutional" and "anti-democratic" activities and expressed hope that the Supreme Court's verdict on the petitions against the dissolution of the lower house of Parliament will come in its favour, according to a media report.

A Constitutional Bench of Nepal's Supreme Court on Friday heard 30 writ petitions against the dissolution of the lower house of Parliament and fixed Sunday as the next date of hearing.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari dissolved the 275-member House of

Representatives on May 22 for the second time in five months and announced snap elections on November 12 and November 19 on the advice of Prime Minister Oli.

She rejected the bids of both Prime Minister Oli and the Opposition alliance's claims to form a government. Oli and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba had staked separate claims to the premiership, saying the "claims were insufficient." The alliance of Nepali Congress, CPN (Maoist Centre), the Madhav Kumar Nepal led-faction of the UML, the Upendra Yadav-led faction of Janata Samajbadi Party and the Rastriya Janamorchha Party held a joint meeting on Sunday.

— PTT

5 dead in suspected jihadist attack in Mali  
Florida shooting: 2 killed

**Bamako, May 30:** Four civilians and a police officer were killed Sunday by suspected jihadists in southern Mali, a region that has previously been mostly spared from the country's Islamist unrest, a security official said.

The unidentified men attacked a checkpoint near the town of Bougouni, around 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Mali's borders with Ivory Coast and Guinea between 3:30 am (0330 GMT) and 4:00 am, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

A local lawmaker, also requesting anonymity, confirmed the attack, saying it had targeted an outpost that is used by both police and forest rangers. The checkpoint sits on a key route between Mali and Ivory Coast.

The attack came as West African leaders from the ECOWAS regional bloc were preparing to meet in Ghana on Sunday to discuss a response to the political turmoil in Mali, which this week witnessed its second military coup in nine months.

New president Colonel Assimi Goita, who led the coup last August and was installed after transitional president Bah Ndaw and prime minister Mocrar Ouane were stripped of the powers this week, is attending the ECOWAS talks in Accra.

Mali's elected president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, was forced out by young army officers led by Goita last August over perceived corruption and his failure to quell a bloody jihadist insurgency.

The jihadist conflict first emerged in northern Mali in 2012.

— AFP

**Miami, May 30:** Two people were killed and at least 20 injured Sunday when a gang of three shot indiscriminately into a crowd outside a concert in Miami, Florida, local police said.

The mass shooting happened during the early hours at a billiards hall on a commercial estate near Miami Gardens, to the

northwest of the coastal city's downtown. The venue was "hosting a scheduled event and several patrons were standing outside," Miami-Dade Police Department said in a statement. When a Nissan Pathfinder SUV approached the scene, it added, "three subjects exited the vehicle and began shoot-

ing indiscriminately into the crowd." The trio then got back in the car and fled the scene. When first responders arrived, they found two people dead, according to the statement.

At least 20 injured people ended up in hospital, with at least one in a critical condition.

— AFP



This handout photograph taken and released by the Sri Lanka Air Force on Sunday shows smoke billowing from the Singapore-registered container ship MV X-Press Pearl, which has been burning for the eleventh consecutive day as vessels try to douse the fire, off Sri Lanka's Colombo Harbour, in Colombo.

— SRI LANKA AIR FORCE / AFP

## Marine pollution: Sri Lanka to sue Singapore ship owners

**Negombo, Sri Lanka, May 30:** Sri Lankan authorities Sunday said they will sue the owners of a Singapore-registered cargo carrier which has burned for 11 straight days off the island's west coast and caused some of its worst-ever marine pollution.

Police said a criminal investigation was also launched into the blaze aboard the MV X-Press Pearl, which was carrying 25 tonnes of nitric acid and a huge amount of plastic raw materials.

The intense fire, still burning at the rear of the 186 metre (610 feet) vessel, has destroyed much of the cargo, some of which also fell into the Indian Ocean. Tonnes of microplastic granules have inundated the South Asian nation's famed beaches, forcing a fishing ban and sparking fears of ecological devastation.

Sri Lanka's Marine Environment Protection Authority said it met with attorney general Sanjaya Rajaratnam on Sunday to plan legal action against

the owners of the vessel, its crew, as well as insurers.

"We have gone through the details and will be taking action against those responsible," MEPA Chairman Dharshani Lahandapura told reporters in Colombo.

She said they were, however, yet to make an assessment of the environmental damage, but she believed it was the "worst marine pollution" Sri Lanka has ever suffered.

Sri Lanka's navy chief, Vice Admiral Nishantha Ulugetenne, who was also at Sunday's talks with the island's chief prosecutor, said the X-Press Pearl was still on fire, but the blaze was now under control.

"It will take a few more days to completely extinguish the fire," Ulugetenne said, adding that his assessment was that there was no danger of the vessel breaking up.

But he ruled out towing it away from Sri Lankan waters until the fire was completely put out and

experts examined the vessel for any structural weaknesses.

International salvage firm SMIT is leading efforts to douse the flames and is being assisted by Sri Lanka's navy and the Indian coastguard.

The three-month-old ship was heading to Colombo from Gujarat, India. It had previously visited Qatar and Dubai and was due to go to Malaysia and Singapore after calling at Colombo.

The 25-member crew, who have already been evacuated from the ship, will be questioned on Monday, police said.

Authorities said last week they believed the fire was caused by a nitric acid leak that the crew had been aware of since May 11.

"The captain and the crew were in quarantine, but health authorities have told us that we can question them from tomorrow," Ajith Rohana, a police spokesperson, said.

"We have already sent

samples of polluted seawater and burnt debris from the vessel for a forensic report." The ship's owners, X-Press Feeders, said the vessel's hull remained intact and there was no damage to its fuel tanks.

Fishermen have been banned from the 80-kilometre (50-mile) stretch of coast, where tonnes of plastic pellets have washed up, sparking a massive clean-up effort.

Fisheries minister Kanchana Wijesekera said the government would compensate them for their expected losses.

At least 4,500 fishermen were affected at the fishing and tourist resort of Negombo, officials from the Roman Catholic church in the area said Saturday as they pleaded for financial aid.

Priest Sujeewa Athukorale said on Saturday that there were also fears of reduced demand for seafood from the area over contamination fears.

— AFP

## 210 FRENCH COPS HUNT FOR FORMER SOLDIER

**Le Lardin-Saint-Lazare, France, May 30:** French police backed by helicopters hunted Sunday for a heavily armed former soldier who had allegedly opened fire on officers responding to a domestic violence dispute in southwestern France.

Some 210 police officers and four helicopters were searching for the man, who has an electronic tag due to a prior domestic violence conviction, but who was still at large in the woods of the Dordogne region. "The man is heavily armed and around 30 years old. He is athletic and moving quickly. We have been able to locate him in an area of around four to five kilometres but it's a wooded area, difficult to access," said Francine Bourra, the mayor of Lardin-Saint-Lazare village, said.

— AFP

## SHELL KILLS 7: GOVT, TALIBAN IN BLAME GAME

**Kabul, May 30:** A mortar shell hit a wedding ceremony in northern Afghanistan, killing at least seven people, mostly children, and wounding at least four others, a police spokesman said.

Taliban insurgents attacked a government security checkpoint in the district of Tagab and one of their mortar shells hit a civilian house, Kapisa provincial police spokesman Shaveq Shoresah said Sunday. He said the attack happened the night before.

But Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid in a tweet accused police of firing several mortar shells toward the civilian house, causing the casualties.

Both the Taliban and government forces routinely blame each other for attacks.

— AP

## NEW RECORDS

## Climbing teams have been struggling with bad weather and a Coronavirus outbreak

## Oldest American, fastest woman on Everest return safely

**Kathmandu, May 30:** A retired attorney from Chicago who became the oldest American to scale Mount Everest, and a Hong Kong teacher who is now the fastest female climber of the world's highest peak, on Sunday returned safely from the mountain where climbing teams have been struggling with bad weather and a Coronavirus outbreak.

Arthur Muir, 75, scaled the peak earlier this month, beating the record

by another American, Bill Burke, at age 67.

Tsang Yin-hung, 45, of Hong Kong scaled the summit from the base camp in 25 hours and 50 minutes, and became the fastest female climber. The record 10 hours and 56 minutes is held by a Sherpa guide, Lakpa Gelu.

A climbing accident in 2019, when he hurt his ankle falling off a ladder, did not deter Muir from attempting to scale the peak again. The retired lawyer, who began moun-



Tsang Yin-hung

taineering late in life, said he was scared and anxious during his latest adventure.

"You realise how big a mountain it is, how dan-



Arthur Muir

gerous it is, how many things that could go wrong. Yeah, it makes you nervous, it makes you know some anxiety there and maybe little bit of

scared," Muir told reporters in Kathmandu.

"I was just surprised when I actually got to there (summit) but I was too tired to stand up, and in my summit pictures I am sitting down," he said.

Muir began mountaineering at age 68 with trips to South America and Alaska before attempting Everest in 2019, when he fell off the aluminum ladder. Climbing was closed last year due to the pandemic.

Married and a father of

three, Muir has six grandchildren.

The last one — a boy — was born while he was still on the mountains during his current expedition. Tsang made only two stops between the base camp, located at 5,300 metres (17,390 feet), to the 8,849-metre (29,032-foot) summit to change, and covered the near vertical distance in 25 hours and 50 minutes.

She was lucky because there were barely any climbers on the way to the highest camp at South Col.

After that, on her way to the summit, she met only climbers making their descent, which did not slow her speed climb.

There are only a few days of good weather left on the mountain this year, when hundreds of climbers line up to the summit, many having to wait for a long time in the traffic jam on the highest trail.

"I just feel kind of relief and happy because I am not looking for breaking a record," she said.

— AP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,422.88	0.60
Nifty 50	15,435.70	0.64
S&P 500*	4,204.11	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.43	0.22
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.74	-0.24
Euro (₹)	88.28	0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,910*205	0.42
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.78	0.46
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.003	0.27
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.599	-0.011

\* As of Friday/Saturday

FDI in software, hardware jumps 3-fold to \$26 bn

FDI in computer software and hardware jumped over threefold to \$26.14 billion during 2020-21, according to DPIIT data. The sector received \$7.67 bn FDI in 2019-20 and \$6.41 bn in 2018-19. The sector accounted for about 43 per cent in the total \$59.63 bn foreign inflows that India attracted in 2020-21. The technology space in India is growing significantly on the back of the rapid digitisation of businesses, Deloitte India's Rajat Wahi said.

Nepal's CG Corp in talks to buy listed India hotel



Nepal-based CG Corp Global is in advance talks to acquire a publicly listed hotel brand in India. The firm also plans to add 26 new managed hotel properties, expected to be operational in 2022. "We are in the process of acquiring a very well known brand of a listed hotel company," CG Corp global chairman Binod Chaudhary said. The firm operates 112 hotel properties with 6,013 rooms in 10 countries.

Burlington English readies IELTS coaching in India

With Covid-19 shifting the dynamics from traditional to online training methods, Burlington Group is focusing on its IELTS programme besides a range of other web-based English language learning solutions in India. Ratnesha Jha, CEO, Burlington Group South East Asia & India, an education conglomerate present in nearly 40 countries, says India is currently home to the largest number of IELTS test takers in the world.

470 infra projects show ₹4.38-L cr cost overrun

As many as 470 infrastructure projects, each worth Rs 150 crore or more, have been hit by cost overrun totalling more than Rs 4.38 lakh crore. Of the 1,737 such projects, 470 reported cost overrun and 525 were delayed. Total original cost of implementation of the 1,737 projects was Rs 22,33,409.53 crore and their completion cost is likely to be 26,71,440.77 crore, an overall cost overrun of 4,38,031.24 crore.

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■ Five-year personal loans at easy rates Banks to offer ₹5L Covid loan

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 30

Public sector banks on Sunday announced that they would be offering unsecured personal loans of upto Rs 5 lakh to salaried, non-salaried as well as pensioners to meet the treatment cost for Covid-19 at a concessional rate.

The banks also announced new loan schemes for hospitals/dispensaries, vaccine manufacturers, oxygen and ventilator manufacturers and suppliers, importers of vaccines and Covid-related drugs logistics firms.

Loans extended under the above schemes would form part of the Covid loan book under the guidelines issued by the central bank this month and are under priority sector lending.

Addressing a joint press conference, State Bank of India (SBI) chairman Dinesh Khara, Indian Banks Association (IBA) chairman Rajkiran Rai and IBA chief executive Sunil Mehta announced various support measures and launch of three new loan products by all nationalised banks to mitigate the impact from the pandemic resurgence.

Khara said, "Individuals, including salaried, non-salaried and pensioners, can avail of unsecured personal loans from Rs 25,000 to Rs 5 lakh to meet Covid-19 treatment. The repayment tenure would be five years. SBI would charge interest of 8.5 per cent per annum while other banks



are free to decide their interest rate."

The PSBs have also offered to provide upto Rs 2 crore as healthcare business loan for setting up oxygen plant along with power backup system to existing hospitals, nursing homes under the government's Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS.) The loan tenure is of five years. Capped at an interest rate of 7.5 per cent these loans are backed by 100 per cent guarantee cover of the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC) under ECLGS 4.0, which was announced by the government on Sunday. The third product is a business loan for healthcare facilities up to Rs 100 crore to setup/expand healthcare infrastructure and to manufacturers of healthcare products at a concessional rate.

The government has announced modifications to the ECLGS by enlarging the scheme's scope. The validity of ECLGS has

been extended to September 30, 2021 and disbursement is permitted up to December 31, 2021.

Similarly, to address the disruptions caused by the resurgence of Covid pandemic, the Reserve Bank of India on May 5 announced several measures, including a term liquidity facility of Rs 50,000 crore to Ease Access to Emergency Health Services (Covid Loan Book) such as resolution framework 2.0 for Covid related stressed assets of individuals, small businesses and MSMEs, re-assessment of working capital limits, etc.

While the economy had revived well from the beginning of fourth quarter of FY21, the pandemic's resurgence from April 21 has impacted the lives of individuals, and cash flows of businesses and MSMEs.

"In regard to Resolution framework 2.0, PSBs have formulated a templated approach for restructuring of loans," a release from SBI and IBA said.

PAYTM BOARD OKAYS ₹22K CR IPO IN Q3

PRASOON SRIVASTAVA NEW DELHI, MAY 27

Digital payments and financial services firm Paytm has received in-principle approval from the company's board to raise around Rs 22,000 crore through an initial public offering in the October-December quarter this year, according to an industry source.

The company is looking at an enterprise value of over Rs 2 lakh crore for the IPO, which is likely to be discussed at its board meeting scheduled for Friday.

"The board of directors of Paytm has given in-principle approval for the mega IPO planned to be launched in October-December quarter. The company expects to raise around Rs 21,000-22,000 crore from the IPO. This will also give some of the existing investors to offload some of their stake," the source told PTI.

The board meeting of the company was held on Friday.

When contacted, Paytm spokesperson declined to comment.

It is likely to be one of the largest IPOs in India.

Paytm shareholders include Alibaba's Ant Group (29.71 per cent), Softbank Vision Fund (19.63 per cent), Saif Partners (18.56 per cent) and Vijay Shekhar Sharma (14.67 per cent).

AGH Holding, T Rowe Price and Discovery Capital, Berkshire Hathaway hold less than 10 per cent stake.

Paytm claims to be 30-50 per cent larger than mobile apps in the segment. —PTI

ECLGS extended to aviation, scope widened

FALAKNAAZ SYED MUMBAI, MAY 30



The government on Sunday announced extending the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) to the civil aviation sector that has been facing headwinds since the onset of the pandemic, besides expanding the scope of the scheme. It also extended the validity of the scheme till September 30, 2021 or till guarantees for an amount of Rs 3 lakh crore are issued.

Disbursement under the scheme will be permitted up to December 31, 2021. In a statement, the finance ministry said that on account of the disruptions caused by the second Covid-19 wave to businesses across various sectors of the economy, it has been decided to enlarge the scope of ECLGS.

In March, ECLGS 3.0 was introduced to cover business enterprises in hospitality, travel and tourism, leisure and sporting sectors.

The ministry has also removed the current ceiling of Rs 500 crore of loan outstanding for eligibility under ECLGS 3.0, subject to maximum additional ECLGS assistance to each borrower being limited to 40 per cent or Rs 200 crore, whichever is lower.

As per an official statement by the finance ministry, under ECLGS 4.0, 100 percent guarantee cover will be extended to loans of up to Rs 2 crore given to hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, medical colleges for setting up on-site oxygen generation plants. The interest rate has been capped at 7.5 per cent for

the same, which means the banks can offer loans at lower rates than this ceiling.

"Borrowers who are eligible for restructuring as per the RBI guidelines of May 5, 2021, and have availed loans under ECLGS 1.0 of overall tenure of four years comprising of repayment of interest only during the first 12 months with repayment of principal and interest in 36 months thereafter will now be able to avail a tenure of five years for their ECLGS loan i.e. repayment of interest only for the first 24 months with repayment of principal and interest in 36 months thereafter," the ministry said.

Also, the new scheme has made a provision of additional ECLGS assistance of up to 10 per cent of the outstanding as of February 29, 2020, to borrowers covered under ECLGS 1.0, in tandem with restructuring as per the RBI guidelines of May 5, 2021.

The revised operational guidelines are being issued by the National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Ltd (NCGTC).

Addressing a joint press conference, State Bank of India chairman Dinesh Khara, Indian Banks Association chairman Rajkiran Rai and IBA CEO

Sunil Mehta said the new measures and loan products announced by the banks were aimed at mitigating the impact from the resurgence of the Covid pandemic.

To implement the expanded ECLGS measures, the public sector banks have put in place systems and processes for seamless implementation of RBI's Resolution Framework 2.0, they said.

Declining to comment on the likely number of resolution applications by the MSMEs this time, Rai said last time out of the 8.5 lakh eligible firms only 60,000 had availed of the facility.

Recently the government had announced collateral-free automatic loans worth Rs 3 lakh crore for micro, small and medium enterprises, out of which Rs 2.54 lakh have been sanctioned, IBA and SBI officials said, adding there was still headroom to lend another Rs 46,000 crore under this scheme.

To a question, Rai said the Covid second wave has impacted the collections of public sector banks in the month of May. "It is difficult to give numbers but can say that we faced difficulty in collections in the month of May and we are offering the available reconstructing scheme to customers," Rai said.

With 1,400 semiconductors in a car, chip-makers get upper hand

IAN KING & KEITH NAUGHTON MAY 30

A century after automakers showed the world the value of assembly-line manufacturing, a shortage of semiconductors is teaching the industry a painful new lesson in what it takes to build a car.

For most of its history, the industry has relied on a distinct approach to buying car parts, procuring components from suppliers right at the moment they're needed. It's referred to as just-in-time manufacturing and is designed to streamline production and eliminate the costs of keeping warehouses stocked with parts waiting to be used.

But the shortcomings of that system were made starkly clear this year as the automakers confronted a dearth of the chips they need to build advanced functions into their vehicles, and found themselves near the bottom of chipmakers' customer lists because of their just-in-time

approach. That shortage is threatening to cut \$110 billion in sales from the industry, and forcing auto manufacturers to overhaul the way they get the electronic components that have become critical to car design.

"Customers need to change," said Hassane El-Khoury, chief executive officer of ON Semiconductor Corp, which gets more than a third of its revenue from the automotive market. "That just-in-time mindset doesn't work."

Semiconductor makers are demanding guaranteed, long-term orders rather than the short-term flexibility the carmakers are used to. The chipmakers' assertiveness, even under pressure from lawmakers, underscores the rebalancing of power from the companies whose logos are on the cars to those that provide the advanced technology that runs them.

As these components play a bigger role in everything from in-car entertainment to self-



driving functions, chip manufacturers say they're willing to invest in expanding production to head off a repeat of shortages that have forced the industry to mothball factories and furlough workers—if the carmakers give them orders that can't be cancelled and commit to long-term agreements.

"Why would I have invested a single dollar when my customer can cancel within 30 days and it takes me two years to build capacity?" El-Khoury asked.

There are signs the industry is listening. A week before, Ford Motor Company CEO Jim Farley indicated a new willingness to reverse decades of outsourcing for parts.

"As the industry changes, we have to in-

source now, just like we in-sourced powertrains in the '20s and '30s," said Farley, who has shut down half his factories.

Automakers can no longer "assume the dominance of an 800-pound gorilla" in negotiations with chip companies and battery makers, said Mark Wakefield, head of the auto practice at consultancy AlixParters.

Pioneered by Toyota Motor Corp. in the 1960s, just-in-time strategy helped the industry organise a system for sourcing the 40,000 or so components that go into a modern vehicle, many of which can be made in a matter of days. But semiconductors—the heart of sensors, engine management and battery controllers, infotainment and eventually systems that will pilot vehicles—are created in a process that takes months.

Today's cars contain an average of 1,400 semiconductors—and that puts the chipmakers at an advantage.

—Bloomberg

Intrastate e-way bills see rise, interstate bills dip

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 30

While intrastate e-way bills continued to grow even in the pandemic year of FY21, interstate bills registered a decline. Textiles was the top sector generating e-way bills last fiscal.

At 37.55 crore, intrastate e-way bills registered a marginal growth of 1.65 per cent from 36.94 crore in FY20. However, the restrictions across state borders during the nation-wide lock-down and even during unlock phases interstate e-way bills saw a decline by 7 per cent from 25.94 crore in FY20 to 24.13 crore in FY21. Gujarat was the top state to produce the highest number of interstate e-way bills, while Maharashtra generated the highest intrastate bills, as per government data.

However, Karnataka was the top state to verify e-way bills followed by Gujarat and Kerala.

Textiles continued to be the top sector generating e-way bills even in FY21, but there was a decline of 21 per cent in the number of bills from 8.20 crore in

FY20 to 6.47 crore in FY21. In FY20, the sector had seen a growth of 15 per cent in e-way bill generation. Electrical machinery and equipment, machinery and mechanical appliances, iron and steel articles and automobiles were the other top e-way bill generating sectors. Among them, electrical machinery and equipment as well as machinery and mechanical appliances continued to register growth.

E-way bills meant for both exports and imports were down in line with the decline in overseas trade in FY21.

Bills for imports fell 15 per cent, while exports were down 4.7 per cent. About 98 per cent of the 61.68 crore e-way bills generated in FY21 were meant for road transport, while one per cent each used them for rail and air transport.

A large chunk of bills were meant for shorter distances. Around 44 per cent of the bills were generated for transporting goods for less than 100 km. Another 14 per cent for distance between 100 and 200 km.

SANITISERS WITH LEUKEMIA-CAUSING BENZENE IS LATEST WORRY



ANNA EDNEY MAY 30

Four decades ago, the US government used rarely deployed emergency powers to reduce workers' exposure to benzene, a chemical linked to a five-fold increased risk of leukemia. After a landmark study in 1977 highlighted its health risks, employers and manufacturers were forced to limit the industrial compound in their workplaces. Yet just within the past few months, elevated levels of benzene have appeared in some hand sanitisers, and last week, an analysis by an independent testing lab revealed its presence in some sunscreens and after-sun skin soothers.

While the amounts found in skin products have been relatively small—far less toxic than the doses that resulted in blood cancers and regulatory action—they're still spurring alarm from public health experts. Questions are being raised about how benzene was allowed into the common lotions, and how to keep it out.

"There's no such thing as a safe level of exposure, and that's especially true for children," said Philip Landrigan, director of the Global Public Health Program and Global Pollution Observatory at Boston College who has studied toxic chemicals and human health for 40 years. "Benzene actually causes DNA mutations, it's a potent carcinogen. Even a small dose can set in motion the chain of events that can lead to a cancer a few years later."

—Bloomberg

KEEPING OFF CROWD

"We saw a lot of first-time customers coming into the stores"

Virus fear speeds gold buyers' shift to retail chains

SWANSY AFONSO MAY 30

The world's worst coronavirus outbreak is changing the way Indians buy gold, hastening a shift to modern, retail stores.

While buyers have been slowly shifting away from the thousands of family-run jewellery shops that control the bulk of the world's second-biggest gold market, the pandemic has sped up the process, according to Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director at Kalyan Jewellers India Ltd.

"We have seen in the last quarter that the shift has become very, very steep," he said in an interview. "We saw a lot of first-time

customers coming into the stores, about 50 per cent more than a year before. In this Covid scenario, people don't want to go to crowded streets and small shops and instead they prefer stand-alone stores like Kalyan."

Demand for gold slumped to a more than two-decade low last year although it bounced back in the first three months of 2021 on softening gold prices and a sharp pickup in economic activity. The change in buying behaviour and resilient wedding-related purchases boosted Kalyan's profits by 54 per cent in the January-March quarter.

The company, which counts Warburg Pincus



LLC and the Singapore government as investors, raised \$158 million in an initial public offering in March, one of the biggest share sales among Indian jewellery.

"The shift to national and regional brands is clearly on the rise as consumers get more comfortable and feel secure in

terms of quality, which is still a problem with the unorganised sector," said Gnanasekar Thiagarajan, director at Commtrendz Risk Management Services. Concerns by consumers are also prompting smaller jewellers to accept new government rules on quality standards to try to retain

their customer base, he said.

The government's efforts to bring the country's informal economy to book through measures such as increased digitization, a goods and services tax and stricter quality standards have improved the market share of established chains like Tata Group's Titan Co, Kalyan and Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

About 60 per cent of Kalyan's domestic stores are located in south India. The Kerala-based jeweller plans to add a dozen more stores in the country this year as it remains optimistic on a demand recovery despite the second wave of the pandemic. It

also expects the shift to chain stores to lead to higher revenue along with its plan to open more stores outside of southern India.

Though this year India has only localised lockdowns unlike last year, "the fear factor is much higher because we see a lot of people dying," Kalyanaraman said. "But we have an advantage of experience as we faced this kind of crisis last year; we have a strengthened our balance sheet post our IPO, and the way revenue came back last year, we know that demand cannot go away, it can only move to different quarters."

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## Teen rider dies in Moto3 crash

**Florence:** Swiss motorcycle rider Jason Dupasquier has died following a crash during Moto3 qualifying for the Italian Grand Prix, the Careggi Hospital in Florence announced Sunday. He was 19. "Despite the best efforts of circuit medical staff and all those subsequently attending to the Swiss rider, the hospital has announced that Dupasquier has sadly succumbed to his injuries," MotoGP said in a statement. Dupasquier was involved in an accident with Ayumu Sasaki and Jeremy Alcoba toward the end of Saturday's session, which was immediately red-flagged. Meanwhile, Repsol Honda's Pol Espargaro took a 12th place finish in Mugello MotoGP. Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo won the race. After a promising start, star Honda rider Marc Marquez's race lasted just over a lap as he fell at turn three on lap two. — Agencies

## Diya-Swastika assured of medal

**New Delhi:** Young Indian paddlers Diya Chitale and Swastika Ghosh put up solid performances at the 2021 WTT Youth Star Contender in Tunisia as they confirmed a medal in the U-19 girls doubles besides advancing to the knockout stage of the singles category. The Maharashtra duo of Diya and Swastika, who received a bye in the opening round, registered convincing 11-5, 6-11, 11-9, 11-8 victory against the local favourite Fadwa Garci and Maram Zoghliani in the last-8 match in Tunis, and secured at least a bronze medal with an entry into the semi-finals. The Indian pair will take on Czech Republic's Linda Zaderova and Croatia's Hana Arapovic in the last-four match. — PTI

## Milkha is back home, wife in ICU

**Chandigarh:** Legendary Indian sprinter Milkha Singh was on Sunday discharged from a private hospital where he was getting treatment for Covid-19 infection even as he continues to be on oxygen support. While the 91-year-old Milkha was discharged in stable condition on the request of his family, his 82-year-old wife Nirmal Kaur had to be shifted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) on Saturday night due to increasing oxygen requirement. "On the request of the family, Mr Milkha Singh was discharged from the hospital today in a stable condition. He is on oxygen and nutritional support," the Fortis hospital, Mohali, said in its update. "Mrs Milkha Singh had to be shifted to the ICU last night due to increasing oxygen requirements. She continues to be stable." The hospital had earlier said that they were being treated for pneumonia. — PTI

## Iniyan wins chess World Cup qualifier

**Chennai:** Indian Grandmaster P. Iniyan on Sunday qualified for the FIDE World Cup, scheduled to be held in July, by winning the AICF World Cup qualifier online chess tournament. Iniyan and fellow GM from Tamil Nadu, D. Gukesh had finished on 12.5 points each after 17 rounds but the former took the top prize since he had emerged winner in the match between the two in round 14. Iniyan entered the final day with 10.5 points in his pocket and ahead of Gukesh by half a point. He defeated Rithwik Raja in the 15th round and Saravana Krishnan in the 16th before losing to Deep Sengupta. — PTI

## Giannis delivers for Milwaukee

**Washington:** Giannis Antetokounmpo managed his first NBA playoff triple double on Saturday and the Milwaukee Bucks defeated Miami 120-103 to sweep the Heat out of the post-season in the opening round. Greek star Antetokounmpo had 20 points, 12 rebounds and 15 assists to spark the Bucks, who were led by 25 points from center Brook Lopez and 22 more off the bench from Bryn Forbes. — AFP

## KINGS OF EUROPE

## Havertz strikes as Chelsea edge City to win Champions League

**Portugal, May 30:** Chelsea won the Champions League for the second time as a Kai Havertz goal secured a tense 1-0 victory over Manchester City in Saturday's final in Porto, shattering Pep Guardiola's dream of lifting the trophy for the third time.

Havertz rounded Ederson to score three minutes before half-time at the Estadio do Dragao and the Chelsea players ran to celebrate with the German.

Coach Thomas Tuchel, full of energy on the touchline just like his opposite number, punched the air in celebration, and later jumped with joy on the pitch after Chelsea held on for victory in the second half after City lost distraught skipper Kevin De Bruyne to injury.

The London club finished fourth in the Premier League, a huge 19 points behind champions City, but this, remarkably, was their third win over Guardiola's side in six weeks.

They ended City's hopes of a domestic treble when they triumphed in the FA Cup semi-finals in April and delayed their title celebrations with victory in Manchester.

Now, in a final watched by a limited crowd of just over 14,000 fans who created a raucous atmosphere,



Chelsea players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Champions League on Saturday. They beat Manchester City 1-0 in the final. — AP

they have denied City the first Champions League crown they and Guardiola so crave.

City had to wait 13 years after being taken over by Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Mansour just to get to the Champions League final.

They are now the eighth consecutive team to lose in their first appearance at this stage. The same misfortune befell Qatar-owned Paris Saint-Germain last year as well as Tottenham Hotspur when they were beaten by

Liverpool in the last all-English final in 2019.

"It is the first time we're here, we'll learn, we'll come back," Guardiola said.

"The players did everything, they wanted to do well, to win this competition, sometimes you perform well, sometimes not."

Chelsea also lost when they first got to the final, on penalties against Manchester United in Moscow in 2008.

They overcame the final

hurdle by beating Bayern Munich in a shoot-out in 2012 and now they have their second European Cup to move level with Juventus, Benfica and Porto as well as another English side, Nottingham Forest.

Their transformation into one of Europe's super clubs has been down to the riches of Roman Abramovich, their Russian oligarch owner who was in attendance in Portugal.

"It's such a special occa-

## CL WINNERS (SINCE 2010)

2010-11	Barcelona
2011-12	Chelsea
2012-13	Bayern Munich
2013-14	Real Madrid
2014-15	Barcelona
2015-16	Real Madrid
2016-17	Real Madrid
2017-18	Real Madrid
2018-19	Liverpool
2019-20	Bayern Munich
2020-21	Chelsea

**It was an incredibly tough fight. They were determined to win this. We wanted to be the stone in their shoe. The effort was huge. We overcame some difficult moments and had a fantastic attitude to defending**

— THOMAS TUCHEL, CHELSEA COACH

sion. At this moment in time, we're the best team in the world. You can't take that away from us," said Mason Mount, who has been outstanding for the Stamford Bridge side this season.

Chelsea have been transformed since the appointment as coach in January of Tuchel. — AFP

## IPL PHASE 2 | IN UAE

## Pat to skip, other Aussies doubtful

**Sydney, May 30:** Kolkata Knight Riders pacer Pat Cummins is set to miss the UAE-leg of the IPL and Cricket Australia needs to make a call if it is prudent to let other Australian players compete in the League and spend more time in mentally tough bubble.

The BCCI on Saturday approved IPL's resumption in September in the UAE. The organisers were forced to suspend the league earlier this month after multiple cases of Covid-19 were reported inside the bubble.

"Cummins, despite a multi-million dollar IPL contract, has already said he will not return to the T20 tournament this season," a report in the Sydney Morning Herald said.

Cricket Australia will have to factor in the workload and bio-bubble fatigue ahead of the T20 World Cup, scheduled to take place in India in October-November.

The Australian players had to serve a quarantine period upon their arrival back home via Maldives from India due to travel restrictions in the country in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic.

"CA will need to decide whether it's in the best mental health interests of

its players to spend even more time in a bio-secure bubble," the report said.

"CA could decide the IPL will ensure players are fine-tuned for the World Cup, which could also be held in the UAE," the report added.

ECB's Director of Cricket Ashley Giles has already said due to a busy international schedule from June onwards, the English players are unlikely to be available for the remainder of the tournament.

Australia have a tour of West Indies scheduled from late June ahead of the T20 World Cup, followed by a Test against Afghanistan and the Ashes series.

## BCCI WANTS CPL TO BE ADVANCED

The BCCI is trying to convince Cricket West Indies to advance the start of the Caribbean Premier League by a week or 10 days to ensure a seamless bubble-to-bubble transfer of players for the IPL's resumption.

The CPL is scheduled to get underway from August 28 with the final to be played on September 19, while the remaining part of IPL is likely to be held from September 18 to October 10, not leaving the players with any time to settle down.

— PTI

## Mary goes down in summit clash

**Dubai, May 30:** Six-time world champion M C Mary Kom (51kg) signed off with a silver medal in the Asian Boxing Championships after going down in an intense final against Nazym Kyzaibay of Kazakhstan here on Sunday. Mary Kom lost in a split 2-3 verdict. It was her seventh medal in the tournament, the first being a gold that came way back in the 2003 edition.

Up against an opponent 11 years younger to her, the 38-year-old made an impressive start and clinched the opening round comfortably by relying on her sharp counter-attacks.

The intensity picked up in the second round and both the boxers showed aggressive intent. The Kazakh drew level at this point with her jabs landing perfectly.

Mary Kom fought back in the final three minutes but that was not enough to get the judges' nod.

The Manipuri legend also won a prize money of \$5,000 for her campaign, while Kyzaibay was richer by \$10,000.

## OSAKA LETS RACQUET TALK, ANDUJAR SHOCKS THIEM

**Paris, May 30:** World number two Naomi Osaka let her racquet do the talking at the French Open on Sunday, maintaining her media boycott but briefly telling a TV interviewer that her clay court game is "a work in progress".

Osaka opened the first day of action at Roland Garros with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) victory over Romanian world number 63 Patricia Maria Tig.

However, Osaka was threatened with disqualification from the French Open if she persists with her controversial media boycott, officials said.

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

"As might be expected, repeat violations attract tougher sanctions

including default from the tournament."


Meanwhile, fourth seed Dominic Thiem blew a two-set lead to be dumped out in the first round by Spanish veteran Pablo Andujar on Sunday.

The 35-year-old Andujar staged a remarkable comeback to defeat the two-time Roland Garros runner-up 4-6, 5-7, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 after almost four-and-a-half hours on Court Philippe Chatrier.

It is the first time in his 17-year career that Andujar has come from two sets behind to win.

"It's a very special moment because I'm 35 and I don't know how long I'm going to play," said Andujar. "I had to believe to be able to get this result."

"It was very difficult, in the third set he wasn't quite as strong." It is Thiem's first opening-round exit at Roland Garros and the first time he has failed to reach at least the quarter-finals of the tournament since 2015. — AFP



Govt. of Haryana

## Haryana Government's Mukhyamantri Bal Sewa Yojana for the Children Orphaned Due to Corona

**School Education for Children Below 10 Years of Age**

- Admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar.
- For admission in private school, facility of fee, uniform, textbooks and notebooks from PM CARES under RTE.

**School Education to Children Between 11-18 Years of Age**

- Admission in any residential school such as Sainik School, Navodaya Vidyalaya etc.
- For admission in private school, facility of fee, uniform, textbooks and notebooks from PM CARES under RTE.
- Admission in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar, in case the child is to be continued under the care of Grandparents/ extended family.

**Assistance for Higher Education**

- Assistance in obtaining education loan for Professional courses / Higher Education in India and the interest on this loan will be paid by the PM CARES as well.
- Scholarship equivalent to the tuition fee / course fee for undergraduate/ vocational courses to such children under various Schemes.
- For children who are not eligible under the existing scholarship schemes, PM CARES will provide an equivalent scholarship facility.

**Health Insurance**

- Health Insurance cover of Rs. 5 lakh to all such children under Ayushman Bharat Scheme.
- The premium amount for these children of up to 18 years of age will be borne by PM CARES.

**Fixed Deposit in the Name of the Child**

- Fund of Rs. 10 lakh by PM CARES on completion of the age of 18 years.
- Monthly Financial Assistance / Scholarship for the next 5 years after 18 years of age during the period of Higher Education.
- For the personal or business purposes, Lump sum amount to the children on completion of 23 years of age.

**Announcements by Haryana Government**

- Rs. 2500 per child per month** up to 18 years of age by the Haryana Government.
- Rs. 1500 per child per month up to 18 years of age** to 'Child Care Institution' for upbringing of children without families.
- All other **expenses will be borne by the Child Care Institutions.**
- Rs. 12,000 annually for other expenses** while pursuing education up to 18 years of age as well.
- Tablets to children** studying in **Class 8th to 12th** or pursuing vocational course.

**Free Residential Education to Girl Students in 25 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas of the State.**

**Under the Mukhya Mantri Vivah Shagun Yojana, Rs. 51,000 will also be deposited in the bank accounts of such girls and this amount along with the interest would be given to them at the time of their marriage.**

**For More Information Please Contact State Helpline numbers**

# 8558893911

(For Entire State)

# & 1075

(Except Gurugram & Faridabad)

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana

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