

# THE ASIAN AGE

NEW DELHI TUESDAY 1 JUNE 2021



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**Delhi HC condemns drug controller's clean chit to Gambhir in Fabiflu case**



## SPORT | 8

**Pooja Rani emerges as lone Indian woman boxer to get gold at Asian Championship**

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**Actress Juhi Chawla files plea in Delhi HC against 5G technology, hearing June 2**



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**SOCIAL WORKER** Rajendra Kumar Tiwari holds up a placard adorned with cigarette boxes, as he campaigns during World No Tobacco Day on his scooter in Prayagraj on Monday. — PTI

### 'Central Vista a vital project': HC dismisses plea

**New Delhi:** Holding Central Vista Project to be of national importance, the Delhi high court on Monday dismissed a petition that had sought a stay on the construction-taking place at Central Vista Avenue during the peak phase of Covid-19 pandemic and imposed a cost of ₹1 lakh on the petitioner. A bench of Chief Justice D.N. Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said the work at Central Vista Avenue is part and parcel of the work at Central Vista Project and of vital public importance. ■ **More on Page 2**

### Naomi Osaka pulls out of French Open

**Paris:** The four-time Grand Slam singles champion Naomi Osaka pulled out of the French Open following statement issued by organisers that she would face disqualification if she continued to refuse to speak to media. She was fined \$15,000 after she did not conduct a post-match press conference. ■ **More on Page 8**

### Tarzan actor among 7 killed in plane crash

**Washington:** All seven passengers aboard a plane, including *Tarzan* actor Joe Lara and his diet guru wife, are presumed dead after it crashed in a lake near the US city of Nashville, authorities said. The plane went down into Percy Priest Lake, about 12 miles south of Nashville.

## COUNTERPOINT



**Yes! I found it. That relief package is from this tiny island in Antarctic Ocean**

## WEATHER

**Max:** 36°C  
**Min:** 26°C  
**RH:** 47%  
**Rain:** 20%

**Forecast:** Partly cloudy

## ASTROGUIDE

**Plava:** Dakshinayana  
**Tithi:** Vaishakha Bahula Saptami till 12.49 am (Thursday)  
**Star:** Dhanishta till 4.12 pm  
**Variyam:** 11.39 pm to 1.19 am (Thursday)  
**Durmuhurtam:** 8.20 am to 9.12 am; 11.07 pm to 11.51 pm  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**SUNSET TODAY 5.23 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.14 AM**  
**MOONRISE TOMORROW 12.49 PM**  
**MOONSET TODAY 11.11 AM**

## ■ The fiscal deficit marginally better at 9.3% of GDP GDP grew by 1.6% in Q4 of fiscal yr 2020-21: NSO

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
HYDERABAD, MAY 31

India's economy grew 1.6 per cent in the January-March quarter, continuing its recovery phase after the first wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. The economy had grown 0.5 per cent in the October-December quarter.

According to data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Monday, "GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in Q4 of 2020-21 is estimated at ₹38.96 lakh crore, as against ₹38.33 lakh crore in Q4 of 2019-20, showing a growth of 1.6 per cent."

In the fourth quarter, the government data further suggests that there was a 43 per cent growth in the sale of commercial vehicles, 27 per cent growth in private vehicles, cargo handled at major seaports had risen by 6.8 per cent and net tonne-kilometres (freight) handled by railways increased by 16.9 per cent.

It also claimed that consumption of steel grew 25.2 per cent in the fourth quarter, while cement

**■ IN THE FOURTH** quarter, the government data further suggests that there was a 43 per cent growth in the sale of commercial vehicles, 27 per cent growth in private vehicles, cargo handled at major seaports had risen by 6.8 per cent and net tonne-kilometres (freight) handled by railways increased by 16.9 per cent

**The demand in rural India has been resilient. Earlier last year, rural India continued to aid the economy while urban India fought the initial wave of Covid-19. The agriculture sector has been a silver lining, clocking consecutive growth.**

**— Krishnamurthy Subramanian, Chief Economic Advisor**

production was up by 5.2 per cent. The manufacturing sector grew 5.8 per cent in the January-March quarter.

Reacting to the Q4 GDP numbers, Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) Krishnamurthy Subramanian said there had been a marginal improvement in the FY21 GDP. "The demand in rural India has been resilient. Earlier last year, rural India continued to aid the economy while urban India fought the initial wave of Covid-19. The agriculture sector has been a silver lining, clocking consecutive growth," Mr Subramanian said. "After the quarter one

numbers were released, we had said things will get better from here and had predicted growth. It is heartening to know those projections have held. Annual numbers signify a revival in demand. The second wave is likely to have hit some of the recoveries, and it will have some impact on the economy," the CEA added.

Separately, higher tax collections helped arrest the fiscal deficit (excess of government expenditure over revenue) at 9.3 per cent of the GDP in FY21 as against 9.5 per cent projected previously and 3.5 per cent estimated when the Budget was presented in February 2020.

## ■ Why states are being asked to source vaccines themselves & race with each other: SC SC pulls up Centre over vaccine policy

**PARMOD KUMAR**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The Supreme Court Monday posed searching questions to the Centre on its Covid-19 vaccine pricing, procurement policy and need for mandatory registration on the CoWIN app for people to get vaccinated without keeping in mind the real "digital India" situation.

Observing that policy makers must have an ear to the ground, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, heading a special bench also comprising Justice L. Nageswara Rao and Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, said that the current vaccination policy is urban-centric that does not address the needs of the rural population and flagged various other "flaws" in the inoculation drive, including differential pricing and shortage of doses.

Solicitor general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, replied that registration is mandatory as a person needs to be traced for a second dose and as far as rural areas are concerned, there are community centres where a person can get registered for vaccination.

### Singh lists 108 items that can't be imported

**PAWAN BALI**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Defence ministry under Rajnath Singh on Monday notified second negative list (now called as Second Positive Indigenisation List) of 108 weapons and equipments which will not be imported by defence forces as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat endeavour of the Modi government. This second list is planned to be implemented progressively with effect from December 2021 to December 2025.

The first negative list notified in August last year had barred import of 101 defence items from specified dates, starting December 2020. ■ **More on Page 4**

### Mumbai mosque turns into vaccination centre



**NCP leader Supriya Sule (left) and others at the inauguration of a Covid-19 vaccination centre in Mohammadi Masjid complex in Mumbai on Monday. The centre will be open to people belonging all communities.**

**— RAJESH JADHAV**

At the outset of the hearing that lasted two hours, the court asked the Centre about its vaccine procurement policy by referring to the fact that states like Punjab and Delhi are in the process of issuing global tenders to procure foreign vaccines. The bench said that even Municipal

Corporation like Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has received bids.

The court said that municipal corporations and states are issuing global tenders and asked if it is the government's policy that each municipal corporation and state will be left

to their own devices and procure vaccines by floating global tenders.

"Is this the policy of the Central government that the state or municipal corporation can procure the vaccine or the Union government is going to procure for them like a nodal

■ **Turn to Page 4**

### ■ Move comes after census data showed a steep decline in birth rates

## In a major policy shift, China allows 3 kids

**JOE McDONALD**  
BEIJING, MAY 31

China's ruling Communist Party said on Monday that it will ease birth limits to allow all couples to have three children instead of two in hopes of slowing the rapid aging of its population, which is adding to strains on the economy and society. The ruling party has enforced birth limits since 1980 to restrain population growth but worries the number of working-age people is falling too fast while the share over age 65 is rising. That threatens to disrupt its ambitions to transform China into a prosperous consumer society and global technology leader.

A ruling party meeting led by President Xi Jinping decided to introduce "mea-



**■ The ruling party has enforced birth limits since 1980 to restrain population growth but worries the number of working-age people is falling too fast while the share over age 65 is rising. That threatens to disrupt its ambitions to transform China into a prosperous consumer society and global technology leader**

sures to actively deal with the aging population," the official Xinhua News Agency said. It said leaders agreed "implementing the policy of one couple can have three children and supporting measures are conducive to improving China's population structure."

Leaders also agreed China needs to raise its retirement age to keep more people in the workforce and improve pension and health services for the

elderly, Xinhua said. Restrictions that limited most couples to one child were eased in 2015 to allow two, but the total number of births fell further, suggesting rule changes on their own have little impact on the trend. Couples say they are put off by high costs of raising a child, disruption to their jobs and the need to look after elderly parents.

Comments on social media Monday complained the change does nothing to

help young parents with medical bills, low incomes and grueling work schedules known popularly as "996," or 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. six days a week. "Every stage of the problem hasn't been solved," said a post on the popular Sina Weibo blog service signed Tchaikovsky. "Who will raise the baby? Do you have time? I go out early and get back late. Kids don't know what their parents look like."

Another, signed Hyeonmok, joked bitterly: "Don't worry about aging. Our generation won't live long."

China, along with Thailand and some other Asian economies, faces what economists call the challenge of whether they can get rich before they get old. — AP

### Delhi lifts curbs as Covid cases continue to dip

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Delhi on Monday saw restricted reopening of limited establishments after six weeks of strict lockdown to check the second wave of the menacing Covid-19 pandemic. However, in the absence of labourers, majority of whom have fled the city and gone to their native places, and raw material, most of the factories and construction sites remained shut or functioned below their full capacity. The markets and offices in Delhi will remain closed for some more time till the city is comfortably placed to open up.

Delhi in the last 24 hours reported 648 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours bringing down the positivity rate to 0.99%, and deaths to 86. India saw the lowest daily rise in Covid cases in 50 days with 1.52 lakh fresh infections. ■ **More on Page 4**

## Checkmate: WB chief secy quits, appointed chief adviser by Didi

*Home secretary H.K. Dwivedi has been made new state chief secretary*

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI**  
KOLKATA, MAY 31

In a dramatic twist to the tug-of-war between the Centre and the state over the state Chief Secretary, the 1987-batch IAS officer Alapan Bandyopadhyay on Monday took retirement and was immediately appointed chief adviser to chief minister Mamata Banerjee for three years. H.K. Dwivedi, who was the state home secretary, has become the new state Chief Secretary while B.P. Gopalika has been appointed as the state home secretary.

Caught in a tug-of-war between two governments — at the Centre and the state — Mr Bandyopadhyay, who had got a three-month extension last week but was summoned for deputation by the Centre four days later, was due to retire on Monday.

The top state bureaucrat's decision came to light after he attended a meeting chaired by Ms Banerjee on the devastation by Cyclone Yaas and Covid-19 pandemic at the state secretariat Nabanna following her refusal to



**Mamata Banerjee**

**■ Caught in a tug-of-war between the Centre and the state, had Alapan Bandyopadhyay availed of his extension to continue as WB state Chief Secretary instead of opting for retirement or for the Central deputation, he might have faced an inquiry which would have affected his retirement benefits**



**Alapan Bandyopadhyay**

release him in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Trinamul Congress supremo's tough stand prompted the Centre to explore its options to initiate departmental proceedings against Mr Bandyopadhyay for defying its order to report at North Block in New Delhi. He was to report in the morning to the department of personnel and training under the ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions headed by the PM himself.

Had Mr Bandyopadhyay availed of his extension to continued his stint as the state Chief Secretary from Tuesday instead of opting for retirement or for the

Central deputation, he might have had to face an inquiry which would have affected his retirement benefits since the Union government's decision is final in such cases, according to government sources.

In the afternoon Ms Banerjee said that her government received a reply from the Centre following her letter to the PM. She then announced Mr Bandyopadhyay's retirement as the state Chief Secretary in her second round of briefing to the media.

"It was his desire to retire. He made a request to me for relief. I accepted it respecting his dedicated service. It was his date of superannuation anyway. If

I would not have approved his wish, he would have still been the state chief secretary and the Centre would not be able to do anything to him. But I am not allowing him to go. He has been appointed as my chief advisor from Tuesday for three years," the CM said.

Lashing out at the BJP at the Centre, the TMC chief claimed that Mr Bandyopadhyay is an example of "how a bureaucrat has been victimised which never happened in the last 74 years in the country."

Alleging political vendetta by the PM and Union home minister Amit Shah for their party's poll debacle in the state, Ms Banerjee claimed, "This is a battle of not Alapan Bandyopadhyay but a battle for all bureaucracy. This is disrespect and humiliation to the entire bureaucracy. I appeal to all the state governments, all the CMs, senior leaders of the country, and all intellectuals to fight against the Centre."

Earlier Ms Banerjee wrote to Mr Modi, "I therefore humbly request you to

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## It's time we define limits of sedition: Supreme Court

*Court gives relief to Telugu channels, takes jibe at repeated invoking of sedition to silence critics*

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The Supreme Court on Monday put on hold Andhra Pradesh government's action against two TV channels and issued a notice to the state government asserting, "It's time we define limits of sedition."

"The Andhra Pradesh government should not take any coercive steps against Telugu news channels TV5 and ABN Andhra Jyoti," the Supreme Court said.

"The Andhra Pradesh government's act of filing sedition cases against the channels is muffling channels. It is time the court defined sedition," said Justice D.Y. Chandrachud.

The court also said, "We are of the view that provisions of 124A and 153 of the IPC (Indian Penal Code) require interpreta-

**Yes. There was a picture of a body being thrown into a river. I do not know whether a complaint of sedition (has been) filed against the news channel for showing it.**

**— D.Y. Chandrachud, SC judge**

tion, particularly on the issue of rights of press and free speech."

Section 124 A deals with sedition and 153 with provocation for riots.

At a separate hearing on Covid and vaccination before a two-judge bench, when senior advocate and amicus curiae Meenakshi Arora raised the issue of dignified handling of bodies of victims of the deadly virus, "sedition" came up

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## Marathas to get 10% edu quota under EWS

**BHAGWAN BABAR**  
MUMBAI, MAY 31

In a major decision, the Maharashtra government has announced a 10 per cent reservation for the Maratha community in educational institutions and government jobs under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category. The move is seen as an attempt to placate the dominant Maratha community which has been fuming over being denied reservation by the Supreme Court.

According to the government resolution issued by the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government on Monday, Maratha students and candidates in the state

will now be able to avail 10 per cent reservation in educational institutions as well as in direct service recruitment.

The Supreme Court had on May 5 had struck down the 13 per cent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the Maratha community brought in by the Maharashtra government in 2018, saying it exceeded the 50 per cent cap imposed earlier.

Maharashtra government's fresh move to provide EWS reservation to the Maratha community is based on the Centre's decision in 2019 to give 10 per cent reservation in education and jobs to the EWS people in the general category.

■ **More on Page 4**



## IN BRIEF

## 'Delhi may witness rain, thunderstorm'

**New Delhi:** Delhi is expected to witness thunderstorm with rain for the next three days, the IMD said on Monday. Delhi recorded a minimum temperature of 25 degrees Celsius, three notches below normal, on Monday after a sudden change in the weather on Sunday evening as a dust storm hit parts of the city. The maximum temperature was recorded at 40 degrees Celsius. The relative humidity was 32 per cent at 5.30 pm. Despite the forecast for rain, the maximum temperature is likely to hover around 38 degrees Celsius over the next three days. The air quality index (AQI) was recorded at 127 at 4.30 pm, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe". Delhi also recorded a mean maximum temperature of 37.5 degrees Celsius in May, the lowest for the month in 13 years, the India meteorological department said on Monday. — PTI

## Police arrests 2 in murder case

**New Delhi:** With the arrest of two persons, the Delhi police, on Monday, claimed to have solved a murder case from last year at Subhash Place in Northwest district. Based on a tip off, the police set up a picket at Britannia Chowk near Punjabi Bagh flyover and arrested the accused, Vijay (32). It recovered a semi-automatic pistol with two magazines having seven live cartridges and a bike from him. Accordingly, a case was registered against the accused under Section 25 of the Arms Act at the Subhash Place police station.

## City BJP distributes ration in Chak Chilla

**New Delhi:** The BJP Delhi unit, on Monday, arranged a month's dry ration for the villagers of Chak Chilla village, an island in the middle of Yamuna River in Delhi. The BJP provided the dry ration kit for a month to around 60 families living in the island under its 'Sewa Hi Sangathan 2.0' scheme launched to mark the seventh anniversary of the Narendra Modi government. Rajya Sabha member Dr Vinay Sahasrabudde and Delhi BJP president Adesh Gupta took a boat ride to reach out to the residents of the island, which falls under the Assembly constituency of deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, and distributed dry ration kits.

## HC says Central Vista essential, imposes ₹1L fine on petitioners

**SANJAY KAW**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Holding Central Vista Project to be of national importance, the Delhi High Court on Monday dismissed a petition which had sought a stay on the construction taking place at Central Vista Avenue during the peak phase of Covid and imposed a cost of ₹1 lakh on the petitioner.

A division bench of chief justice D.N. Patel and justice Jyoti Singh said the work at Central Vista Avenue is part and parcel of the work at Central Vista Project and of vital public importance. The bench said the construction of Central Vista Avenue Redevelopment cannot be seen in isolation.

"Since the workers who are working at the project are staying on-site, there is no question of issuing directions to suspend the work of Central Vista Avenue Redevelopment Project," said the court, adding the DMA in the April 19 order has not prohibited construction activity where labourers are residing on-site.

The Central Vista Project entails construction activities on majestic Rajpath and the surrounding lawns from the India Gate to the Rashtrapati Bhawan, according to the petition, filed through lawyers Gautam Khazanchi and Pradyuman Kaistha. The project envisages building a new Parliament House, a new residential complex to house offices and the Prime Minister and the Vice-President. It will also have new office buildings

Report is not worth the paper it is printed on, submit again: Court

## HC pulls up drug controller over Gambhir's clean chit

**SANJAY KAW**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The Delhi high court, on Monday, rapped Delhi's drug control department for giving a clean chit to former cricketer and BJP MP Gautam Gambhir in connection with his "illegal distribution" of Covid-19 drugs and asked the drug regulator to file a better status report before it by Thursday.

The court said its confidence was completely shaken and observed that the report is not worth the paper it is written on. "If your Drug Controller is not interested in doing the job, then we will ask that he be removed and let somebody else take over. What investigation? This is trash. There is no legal basis to it," a division bench of Justices Vipin Sanghi and Jasmeet Singh said while hearing a case alleging illegal distribution of medicine by political leaders during the pandemic.

The Drug Controller, in the report, told the court that the distribution of Fabiflu strips by the Gautam Gambhir Foundation appears to be covered by an exception mentioned in the Drugs and Cosmetics Act since the drugs were given away during an event which is being treated as a medical camp organised under the supervision of a doctor of Garg Hospital. Section 5 of the Schedule K of the act, which was cited by the



Gautam Gambhir

Questioning how the event during which the distribution was done is being treated as a medical camp, the court said the purchase should have been made by the hospital.

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Drug Controller, allows a medical practitioner to stock and dispense medicines to his patients from his premises without obtaining a drug license.

The court asked additional standing counsel Nandita Rao whether he had taken the trouble to go through the rules or had simply accepted this status report prepared by the Drug Controller and placed it before the bench.

Questioning how the event during which the distribution was done is being treated as a medical camp, the court said the

purchase should have been made by the hospital.

The court said everyone knows that the drug was in short supply and while Mr Gambhir bought thousands of strips of the medicine, other people who needed it could not get it on that day.

The court also pulled up Mr Gambhir for again making a statement that he will continue to do such work.

It said, "We have already said it is a malpractice. This tendency, of people trying to take advantage and then trying to appear as saviours when they themselves created the problem, has to be denounced. Then the person goes on to state that he would do it again! If it continues, we know how to deal with it."

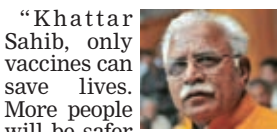
The court observed that thousands of needy people could have otherwise gone to the pharmacy and bought the medicine.

## Kejri giving out vaccines 'too fast', says Khattar

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
CHANDIGARH, MAY 31

Haryana chief minister M.L. Khattar on Monday accused his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal of playing politics over anti-Covid vaccines, saying Delhi is exhausting its supply too soon while his own state is stretching it over a longer period.

Hitting back, Mr Kejriwal said his focus is on saving lives not vaccines.



"Khattar Sahib, only vaccines can save lives. More people will be safer the sooner they get vaccinated. My aim is not to save the vaccines, but to save people's lives," Mr Kejriwal tweeted in Hindi, tagging Khattar's video.

Mr khattar's comment on vaccine rationing invited a sharp reaction from the Congress as well, which said Haryana has

doses but is administering them to people in small numbers over several days. "Deliberate delay in administering vaccines is also being termed as a strategy. He says the government has vaccines, but these will be administered to people in small numbers over several days. This is the reason why the people of Haryana are not able to get the vaccines..."

Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala said in a tweet. Claiming that Kejriwal always has a critical tone, Khattar said Delhi is getting more vaccine doses considering the size of its population.

Giving his own state as an example, Khattar said, "Even we can administer two lakh doses in one day and exhaust our stock. But we know how much stock we are getting and if we keep administering 50,000 to 60,000 doses to people daily, this (stock) will keep going on."

## City likely to get Sputnik V in June, says Kejriwal

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Delhi is likely to receive the first consignment of Sputnik V, the Russian Covid vaccine, in June, Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday, while stressing that vaccination is key to the fight against coronavirus.

The chief minister also said the city currently has around 944 cases of mucormycosis or black fungus, including 300 at the central government-run hospitals.

The chief minister said there are around 650 cases of the black fungus in

Delhi government hospitals but there is a shortage of drugs used to treat the disease.

"There are 300 cases of black fungus in central government hospitals and around 650 in Delhi government hospitals. However, the supply of injections is low. We had received 1,000 injections the day before yesterday, but did not receive any injections yesterday. It takes 3-4 injections per person per day," he said.

Mr Kejriwal said Delhi is likely to get a consignment of the Sputnik V vaccine

that will be imported by the firm concerned after June 20.

"Sputnik will probably offer vaccines after June 20. They will start the vaccine production from the month of August. They are importing the vaccines right now, and they will allot a section of their imported vaccines to the Delhi government," he said.

The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has granted permission for restricted emergency use of Sputnik V with certain conditions. Dr Reddy's Laboratories will import the vaccine in the country.



### IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that the timings of the following Special Train will be revised as under:-

Train No. & Name	Station	Existing Time		Revised Time		Date (w.e.f. Originating Station)
		Arr.	Dep.	Arr.	Dep.	
<b>08477</b> Puri - Yoga Nagari Rishikesh Special (Daily)	Jhansi Jn.	05:00	05:10	<b>05:45</b>	<b>05:53</b>	Ex. Puri from 01.06.2021
	Datia	05:38	05:40	<b>06:17</b>	<b>06:19</b>	
	Dabra	06:34	06:36	<b>06:42</b>	<b>06:44</b>	
	Gwalior	07:18	07:20	<b>07:24</b>	<b>07:26</b>	
	Morena	07:48	07:50	<b>07:55</b>	<b>07:57</b>	

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

For any kind of Information such as detailed Time-Table and Stations enroute etc., passengers are requested to contact RailMadad Helpline No. 139 or may visit Indian Railways website <http://www.enquiry.indianrail.gov.in> or NTES App.

Visit RailMadad website:- [www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.railmadad.indianrailways.gov.in) Download RailMadad app.

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

This is notified for the information of rail passengers that Railways have decided to run train no 02919/02920 Dr. Ambedkar Nagar-Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra-Dr. Ambedkar Nagar Malwa Superfast Special Express (Original Train No 12919/12920) and train no 02903/02904 Mumbai Central-Amritsar Jn.-Mumbai Central Daily Superfast Golden Temple Special Express (Original Train No 12903/12904) with revised timings as under:-

REVISED TIMINGS OF TRAIN NO. 02919/02920 DR. AMBEDKAR NAGAR-SHRI MATA VAISHNO DEVI KATRA-DR. AMBEDKAR NAGAR SUPERFAST SPL. EXP. (TRI-WEEKLY) (ORIGINAL TRAIN NO. 12919/12920)									
Train No. 02919				↓ STATIONS ↑	Train No. 02920				
Existing Timings		Revised Timings			Existing Timings		Revised Timings		
ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.		ARR.	DEP.	ARR.	DEP.	
---	11:50	---	11:50	Dr. Ambedkar Nagar	13:15	---	14:30	---	
12:15	12:25	12:05	12:15	Indore Jn.	12:40	12:50	13:40	13:50	
13:04	13:06	12:51	12:53	Dewas	11:56	11:58	12:30	12:32	
13:45	14:05	13:45	14:00	Ujjain Jn.	11:00	11:20	11:20	11:35	
14:40	14:41	14:35	14:36	Maksi	10:09	10:10	10:29	10:30	
14:55	14:57	14:51	14:53	Berchha	09:50	09:52	10:00	10:02	
15:21	15:22	15:19	15:20	Akodia	09:23	09:24	09:33	09:34	
15:34	15:36	15:32	15:34	Shujalpur	09:08	09:10	09:18	09:20	
15:49	15:50	15:47	15:48	Kalapipal	08:55	08:56	09:05	09:06	
16:14	16:15	16:10	16:11	Sehore	08:28	08:29	08:38	08:39	
16:56	16:58	16:53	16:55	Sant Hirdaram Nagar	08:03	08:05	08:21	08:23	
17:20	17:30	17:20	17:30	Bhopal Jn.	07:20	07:30	07:30	07:50	
18:08	18:10	18:05	18:07	Vidisha	06:16	06:18	06:35	06:37	
18:40	18:42	18:35	18:37	Ganj Basoda	05:49	05:50	06:10	06:12	
19:35	19:40	19:30	19:35	Bina Jn.	05:10	05:15	05:30	05:35	
20:25	20:27	20:14	20:16	Lalitpur	04:00	04:02	04:21	04:23	
21:10	21:12	20:54	20:56	Babina	03:10	03:12	03:37	03:39	
21:45	21:55	21:30	21:38	Jhansi Jn.	02:35	02:45	03:05	03:15	
22:17	22:19	22:00	22:02	Datia	01:50	01:52	02:28	02:30	
22:41	22:43	22:23	22:25	Dabra	01:23	01:25	02:02	02:04	
23:18	23:23	22:55	22:57	Gwalior Jn.	00:30	00:35	01:25	01:27	
23:50	23:52	23:26	23:28	Morena	23:55	23:57	00:56	00:58	
00:32	00:34	00:08	00:10	Dhaulpur	23:28	23:30	00:13	00:15	
01:15	01:20	00:43	00:48	Agra Cantt.	22:20	22:25	23:10	23:15	
02:05	02:07	01:23	01:25	Mathura Jn.	21:33	21:35	22:33	22:35	
02:38	02:40	01:53	01:55	Kosi Kalan	21:04	21:06	22:08	22:10	
03:38	03:40	02:58	03:00	Palwal	20:30	20:32	21:40	21:42	
03:56	03:58	03:16	03:18	Ballabgarh	19:54	19:56	21:11	21:13	
04:09	04:11	03:31	03:33	Faridabad	19:43	19:45	21:01	21:03	
04:36	04:38	03:54	03:56	Hazrat Nizamuddin	---	---	---	---	
05:05	05:20	04:20	04:35	New Delhi	18:55	19:15	20:15	20:30	
---	---	---	---	Subzi Mandi	18:25	18:27	19:40	19:42	
06:13	06:15	05:15	05:17	Sonipat	17:40	17:42	19:04	19:06	
06:49	06:51	05:45	05:47	Panipat Jn.	17:08	17:10	18:24	18:26	
07:30	07:32	06:09	06:11	Karnal	16:39	16:41	18:00	18:02	
08:03	08:05	06:34	06:36	Kurukshetra Jn.	16:15	16:17	17:35	17:37	
09:05	09:15	07:33	07:40	Ambala Cantt. Jn.	15:35	15:40	17:00	17:05	
09:54	09:56	08:14	08:16	Sirhind Jn.	14:43	14:45	16:17	16:19	
10:12	10:14	08:27	08:29	Khanna	14:25	14:27	16:01	16:03	
11:00	11:10	09:30	09:40	Ludhiana Jn.	13:35	13:45	15:10	15:20	
11:57	12:02	10:30	10:33	Jalandhar Cantt.	12:38	12:43	14:15	14:18	
12:50	12:52	11:20	11:22	Dasua	11:35	11:37	13:18	13:20	
13:08	13:10	11:38	11:40	Mukerian	11:18	11:20	12:58	13:00	
13:55	14:00	12:23	12:26	Pathankot Cantt.	10:40	10:45	12:25	12:30	
14:33	14:35	13:05	13:07	Kathua	10:00	10:02	11:35	11:37	
16:05	16:16	14:30	14:38	Jammu Tawi	08:50	09:00	10:25	10:35	
17:35	17:37	15:55	15:57	Ramnagar J & K	07:40	07:42	09:29	09:31	
17:51	17:53	16:21	16:23	Udhampur	07:26	07:28	09:04	09:06	
18:09	18:11	16:36	16:38	Chak Rakhwal	07:11	07:13	08:49	08:51	
18:30	---	17:10	---	Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra	---	06:55	---	08:35	



## SHORT TAKES

## 3 men bury father using excavator

**Gorakhpur:** A video clip in which three men can be seen burying a body wrapped in a plastic sheet with the help of an excavator, went viral on social media. It was later found that the clip was captured in Parsa Shukl village in Sant Kabir Nagar district and three men were burying the body of their deceased father along with some packets and sheets, the police said. Village head Triyoganand Gautam said: "We offered help to perform last rites of the man but his sons didn't accept it." The 60-year-old died of Covid about a week ago, said Gautam. His sons said they were not sure of the Covid protocol so they buried the body with a JCB machine to prevent others from getting affected. On Sunday, two men were arrested after they were caught on tape rolling down a coronavirus patient's body from over a bridge into the Rapiti river in Balrampur district in the state. Earlier in the month, several bodies were seen floating in the Ganga and Yamuna rivers in the state. — PTI

## 6 more bodies found in Ganga in UP dist

**Fatehpur, UP:** Six more bodies of suspected Covid-19 victims were found floating in the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh, an official said on Monday. Fatehpur sadam tehsil sub-collector (SDM) Pramod Jha said he was informed about the bodies floating in the river on Sunday morning, following which a search operation was launched. Six decomposed bodies were recovered from the river, he said. Later in the day, a team of doctors performed the last rites at Bhitara Ganga Ghat as per the Covid guidelines, the SDM said. The bodies could not be identified as they were highly decomposed, the SDM said, adding that they appear to have come floating from far-off places. Earlier this month, at least 52 bodies were seen floating at the Ujiyar, Kulhadia and Bharauli ghats in Ballia's Narahi area. However, the district authorities did not tell the exact number of bodies found there. — PTI

## Japan to extend \$14.8m aid to India

**New Delhi:** Japan has decided to extend Emergency Grant Aid of approximately \$14.8 million (over ₹100 crore) to India in response to the current surge of Covid-19 infections in India. The decision was taken last week, the Japanese embassy in New Delhi said on Monday. Also, a total of 1,800 ventilators and 2,800 oxygen concentrators in total are being provided to India by Japan to help deal with the second Covid wave that has battered India for the past more than two months.

## ODISHA GEARS UP FOR POSSIBLE 3rd WAVE OF CORONA

**AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO**  
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 31

The Odisha government has started its preparation to avoid any kind of eventualities during the much apprehended third wave of Covid-19. According to state additional chief secretary (ACS) Pradipta Kumar Mohapatra, the state government was emphasising on strengthening medical facilities and ramping up tests to deal with the pandemic. "Some experts have opined about the possible third wave of the pandemic. The state government is fully prepared for the situation. On an urgent basis, Oxygen PSA and liquid oxygen plants will be set up in all the district headquarters hospitals and medical colleges in the next two and half months. We will also set up more paediatric beds in the hospitals as children may be more vulnerable to the disease," Mr Mohapatra informed on Monday. The state government has also set a target to set up RTPCR laboratories in each district headquarters hospitals to ramp up testing in next two months. "The Odisha government has placed an order for 5,000 sachets of 2-DG (2-deoxy-D-glucose) anti-Covid drugs for the treatment of hospitalised Covid-19 patients.

■ Kerala CM to 11 non BJP states: Let's unitedly demand Centre to procure vaccines

## Lowest single-day cases in 50 days

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Delhi on Monday saw restricted reopening of limited establishments after six weeks of strict lockdown to check the second wave of the menacing Covid-19 pandemic. However, in the absence of labourers, majority of whom have fled the city and gone to their native places, and raw material, most of the factories and construction sites remained shut or functioned below their full capacity. The markets and offices in Delhi will remain closed for some more time till the city is comfortably placed to open up.

Delhi in the last 24 hours reported 648 new Covid-19 cases, bringing down the positivity rate to 0.99 per cent, and deaths to 86. The city has 11,040 active cases at present.

The signals of a retreating second wave were visible across the country as India on Monday recorded its lowest daily rise in Covid-19 cases in 50 days with 1.52 lakh fresh detections.

The country has recorded less than 2 lakh daily new cases for four continuous days now. The deaths, however, still are high as 3,128 fatalities were registered.

The Union health ministry held a meeting to review the vaccine situation in various states. The Centre has said from June 1 more vaccines will be available to States and UTs to carry out their vaccination programmes.

However, States feel more is to be done.

Kerala chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to chief ministers of 11 non BJP ruled states

## COVID WATCH

1.52L

ACTIVE CASES IN INDIA IN 24 HOURS

3,128

DEATHS IN A DAY

— Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra — urging them to unitedly demand the Centre to procure vaccines needed by States and distribute free of cost.

Meanwhile, Banaras Hindu University researchers have claimed that a single dose of vaccine is enough for Covid recovered patients.

"We studied the effect of vaccines on Covid recovered and non-infected people. Antibodies in recovered people developed in the 1st week after 1st dose. While only 90 per cent of non-infected people developed antibodies after 3-4 weeks. So, by giving single-dose to recovered people we can overcome vaccine shortage. We have also written a letter to the Prime Minister in this regard," Prof Gyaneshwer Chaubey, zoology department, Banaras Hindu University told news agency ANI.

It is learnt that the Centre is going to conduct studies on mixing of two vaccines and the effectiveness of a single dose of Covishield.

"The mixing of two different vaccines is expected to start in a month and is likely to be completed in roughly three months.

## Bihar extends curbs till June 8, minor relaxations in place

**NAYYAR AZAD**  
PATNA, MAY 31

The Bihar government has extended the lockdown till June 8 to stop the surge in Covid-19 cases in the state. However, the state government has also announced some relaxation to boost business activities.

The decision was taken during a review meeting chaired by chief minister Nitish Kumar on Monday. "In view of Covid infection, it has been decided to extend the lockdown for one week — till June 8. But some relaxation is also being given to boost business activities in the state. People are requested to wear masks and maintain social distancing," Mr Kumar said in a tweet after he met with the crisis management group on Monday.

Officials said that the revised home department guidelines would come into effect from June 2 onwards. According to the administration, essential services like general provision stores and shops dealing with dairy products will be allowed to open from 6 am to 2 pm.

Earlier this month when the lockdown was imposed the cases had exceeded one lakh. However, the latest data shows that the cases have dropped below

**Children who have lost their parents due to Covid infection will be given a monthly stipend of ₹1,500 till they turn 18 years...**

— Nitish Kumar, Bihar CM

20,000 and the recovery rate has increased.

"Teams have been formed to keep a tab on those who violate Covid protocols during the relaxation of lockdown. Cases have gone down but to wipe out the Covid infection we should strictly follow the guidelines" Patna DM Chandra Shekhar Singh said.

Earlier the state government had announced financial aid of ₹1,500 for children who lost their parents due to Covid-19. The rehabilitation was announced by Mr Kumar on Sunday.

Taking to his social media account Mr Kumar had said that, "Children who have lost their parents due to Covid infection will be given a monthly stipend of ₹1,500 till they turn 18 years. Children who have no guardian will be sent to shelter homes."

## Bank frauds on rise under Modi govt: Congress

**New Delhi, May 31:** The Congress on Monday alleged that banking frauds have risen under the Modi government and accused it of allowing the fraudsters to either continue functioning in the country or leave.

Citing an RBI report, Congress spokesperson Gourav Vallabh alleged that there have been bank frauds to the tune of 5 trillion rupees.

"The Modi government has weakened the banking system by allowing the fraudsters to either continue functioning in the country or leave the country," he told reporters. — PTI

## 'Navy ops during 1971 Indo-Pak war still carries valuable lessons'

**New Delhi, May 31:** The core tenets of planning, decisive action, operational synchronisation and out-of-the-box thinking by the Indian Navy during the 1971 war still carry valuable lessons for the future, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Karambir Singh said on Monday.

The Navy Chief said the tactical ingenuity, the deployment of available combat power and detailed planning of naval aspects of the war proved crucial in shaping the land battle.

Adm. Singh was speaking at a webinar organ-



A shopkeeper cleans his shop that was opened after partial relaxation in the ongoing Covid lockdown by the Jammu and Kashmir government in Jammu on Monday. — PTI

## Stricter lockdown in Mumbai if vehicular traffic high: Maha CM

**BHAGWAN PARAB**  
MUMBAI, MAY 31

Noting that several areas in Mumbai have been reporting heavy traffic congestion during the peak hours, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray on Monday warned that the state will impose even stricter lockdown-like restrictions in the city if the vehicular traffic is not controlled.

"I have not said that Covid-19 restrictions have been lifted. If traffic jams continued, Mumbai will have to be put under stricter curbs," the chief minister said during the inauguration of the trial run of two Metro lines and bhoomipujan of the



elevated road and vehicular underpass to connect the airport.

Chief minister Thackeray on Sunday had announced that the lockdown-like restrictions in the state have been extended till June 15 and relaxations will be granted depending on the Covid-19 positivity rate and availability of oxygen beds.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) began testing on the yellow line 2A and red line 7 from Monday wherein oscillation trials of a prototype 6-car train

will be run at various speeds. The commissioning of both the lines is planned in two phases, the first phase of 20 km from Charkop depot/ Dahanukarwadi to Aarey by September 2021, and the remaining line by January 2022.

The Mumbai Metro lines 2A and 7 were sanctioned by the government on October 6, 2015 and the bhoomipujan was performed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 11, 2015.

The project will help ease the traffic congestion on one of the busiest routes passing through the Western Express Highway from Andheri to Dahisar.

■ Nations set up O2 bridge across Indian Ocean to bring several rotations of liquid oxygen

## France to double aid after Modi-Macron talks

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

France and India have "set up an oxygen bridge across the Indian Ocean to bring several rotations of liquid oxygen donated by French multinational Air Liquide", the French embassy announced on Monday, adding that France is doubling the Covid-related support to India following a phone call between French

President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week on May 26.

France said it was carrying out the largest solidarity operation undertaken by it so far since the beginning of the pandemic which "reflects the long-standing, two-way solidarity" between France & India

twice as many oxygen generators plants as the eight already delivered earlier this month and that a special cargo flight with 10

such units would reach India mid-June and that another flight would follow after that. The French Embassy pointed out that each of these French-made, high capacity plants produces 24,000 litres of oxygen per hour non-stop and can make a 250-bed Indian hospital oxygen self-reliant for a dozen years.

In a statement, the French embassy in New Delhi said that on the directions of President Macron,

France is bringing in additional support to India to continue fighting the second wave together.

"France and India have set up an oxygen bridge across the Indian Ocean to bring several rotations of liquid oxygen donated by French multinational Air Liquide. The containers are filled in Qatar, shipped to India by the Indian Navy, and then brought back empty by the Indian Air Force for refilling," it said.

## Brics ministers' virtual meet today

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Foreign ministers of the five Brics nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) will meet in virtual format on Tuesday in a meeting convened by India to discuss a range of multilateral issues of common interest touching upon issues of political, economic and cultural cooperation.

This comes ahead of a

Brics Summit to be convened by India later this year. India is the current Brics Chair this year and China will take over the role next year. Foreign ministers, including external affairs minister S. Jaishankar, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi and Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, are among those expected to participate in the meeting on Tuesday.

<b>NORTHERN RAILWAY</b>				
<b>INVITATION OF TENDERS THROUGH</b>				
<b><u>E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM</u></b>				
<b>Tender Notice No. 83215119</b>			<b>Date : 31.05.2021</b>	
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items :-				
<b>S.N.</b>	<b>Tender No.</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Qty.</b>	<b>Closing Date</b>
01	83215119	C-Arm imaging system	01 No.	22.06.2021
<b>NOTE -1.</b> Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> for details.				
<b>2.</b> No Manual offer will be entertained.				
<b>SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE</b>				
				<b>1166/21</b>

## CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS

It is notified for the information of all concerned that due to operational reasons, following special trains will remain cancelled as per details given below :-

CANCELLATION OF SPECIAL TRAINS	
Train No. & Name	Date of cancellation (from the Originating Station)
05483/05484 Alipur Duar Jn. - Delhi Jn. - Alipur Duar Jn. Special Express	01.06.2021 to till further advice
05733/05734 Katihar Jn. - Amritsar Jn. - Katihar Jn. Special Express	01.06.2021 to till further advice

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

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

RailMadad Helpline No. 139

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## SHORT TAKES

## Woman gangraped by 3 in Rajasthan

**Jaipur:** A woman was allegedly raped by three men when she stepped out of her house to attend nature's call in Rajasthan's Nagaur district, police said on Monday. The incident took place on May 24, they said. The victim, who is married, had gone out with her sister to attend nature's call.

Main accused Devakaran Gurjar and two others threatened to kill her, forcibly took her to a secluded place on a tractor and raped her there, SHO, Makrana, Roshan Lal Samaria said. A case was registered in the matter on the basis of the complaint lodged by the woman on Sunday. The three accused, who are from the victim's village, have been booked under Sections 376D (gangrape) and 365 (kidnapping) of the IPC and the SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, he said. — *PTI*

## Aligarh hooch death toll rises to 36

**Aligarh:** The toll in the Aligarh hooch tragedy climbed to 36 on Monday with 11 more deaths being confirmed by the district authorities amid apprehension that it may rise further. Viscera samples of 35 other people, who are suspected to have died after consuming spurious liquor, have been sent for examination to confirm the cause of death, chief medical officer Dr Bhanu Pratap Kalyani said. Former SP MLA from Aligarh Zameerullah Khan produced before the media the families of 12 people who he claimed died over the past three days after consuming the spurious liquor and whose post-mortem was not conducted. He demanded that the state government provide compensation to all such families. — *PTI*

## SDM eacapes attack by UP mining mafia

**Bareilly, UP:** Members of a local mafia on Monday attacked Bareilly sub-divisional magistrate Vishnu Raja when he went to check illegal mining in Izzatnagar area here, injuring four members of his team, police said. The attackers also opened fire but nobody suffered any gunshot injury, they said. The SDM received information about illegal mining in Mundia Ahmad Rajpura Mafi area and rushed to the spot with his team, superintendent of police (city) Ravindra Kumar said. Seeing his vehicle, the miners started fleeing in their JCB and tractor trolleys and as an attempt was being made to stop them, an SUV came in front of the government vehicle, he said. — *PTI*

## GUJ DOCS SEEK POLICE ACTION AGAINST RAMDEV

**Ahmedabad:** Prominent associations representing doctors in Gujarat Monday approached the Ahmedabad city police and sought registration of an FIR against yoga guru Ramdev for his alleged disparaging remarks against modern medicine and its practitioners. Senior doctors and office-bearers of the Gujarat unit of the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Ahmedabad Medical Association (AMA) submitted separate applications to the Navrangpura police, seeking action against Ramdev, who is in the eye of a storm over his remarks on allopathy and vaccines. They urged the police to lodge an FIR against Ramdev under relevant sections of the Epidemic Diseases Act and the Disaster Management Act (invoked in view of the Covid-19 pandemic). The police said they have accepted the "memorandums" from the doctors.

"We have accepted the memorandums given by the IMA and the AMA. However, the issue they have raised is beyond our jurisdiction," said DCP, Zone-1, Ravindra Patel. The IMA alleged that Ramdev was trying to incite people against doctors by claiming that allopathy is a "stupid science" and "lakh of people died after consuming allopathy medicines". "Ramdev talked rubbish about modern medicine. He even said people need not take vaccine against coronavirus. If people do not take vaccine, it will be difficult to stop the third (coronavirus) wave," said Dr Devendra Patel, president, IMA-Gujarat. — *PTI*

## Maha govt extends EWS quota to Marathas after SC setback

*Reservation aims to placate dominant Maratha community*

**BHAGWAN PARAB**  
MUMBAI, MAY 31

In a major decision, the Maharashtra government has announced a 10 per cent reservation to the Maratha community in educational institutions and government jobs under the economically weaker section (EWS) category. The move is seen as an attempt to placate the dominant Maratha community, which has been fuming over being denied reservation by the Supreme Court.

According to the government resolution (GR) issued by the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government on Monday, the

Maratha students and candidates in the state will now be able to avail 10 per cent reservation in educational institutions as well as in direct service recruitment.

The Supreme Court on May 5 had struck down the 13 per cent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions for the Maratha community brought in by the Maharashtra government in 2018, saying it exceeded the 50 per cent cap imposed earlier.

The Maharashtra government's fresh move to provide EWS reservation to the Maratha community is based on the Centre's decision in 2019 to give 10

per cent reservation in education and jobs to the EWS people in the general category. The norms for seeking the EWS reservation are that the candidate's annual family income should not be less than ₹8 lakh and his/her family must not own more than five acres of agricultural land.

After the SC verdict, there has been pressure on the MVA government to provide relief to the Maratha community with the BJP MP Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje giving a warning that if the State Government does not approve the demands of the Maratha community by June 6, he would

launch an agitation from Raigad Fort and demanded that a two-day Assembly session should be called over this matter.

However, Maharashtra's ruling party Shiv Sena has said that the battle for the Maratha reservation will be fought in Delhi. "The Supreme Court has scrapped the reservation given by the Maharashtra government saying only the Central government has the powers to make such an act. Hence, a decision on this should be taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ram Nath Kovind," said the Sena in its party mouthpiece Saamana.



Union minister of petroleum and natural gas and steel Dharmendra Pradhan and Union minister of state for MSME Pratap Chandra Sarangi inspect the Cyclone Yaas affected areas of Balasore district. — *PTI*

## ■ 'Attempts being made to impose saffron agendas'

## Kerala passes resolution to call back Lakshadweep administrator

**Thiruvananthapuram, May 31:** The Kerala Assembly on Monday unanimously adopted a resolution seeking L a k s h a d w e e p Administrator Praful Khoda Patel's recall, becoming the first state in the country to express solidarity with the islands, where regulations over beef and liquor, among others, have sparked a row.

Voicing concern, the House adopted the first Assembly resolution moved by the ruling CPI(M) in its successive term on the issue, with the Opposition Congress bloc backing the government. The members sought the recall of Patel and requested the immediate

intervention of the Centre to protect the lives and livelihood of the citizens.

The hard-hitting resolution alleged attempts were being made to impose "saffron agendas" and "corporate interests" by destroying the unique way of life of Lakshadweep people.

The BJP slammed the resolution adopted by the Assembly against the Central government appointed administrator and said the House had no authority to do so.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and NCP supremo Sharad Pawar had earlier written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, requesting his intervention in the matter, while criticising Mr Patel's administrative

measures. An archipelago located in the Arabian Sea, Lakshadweep is witnessing protests by local people for some days over the recent actions and the administrative reforms.

Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan moved the government resolution, the first in the 15th state Assembly, reminiscing the historic and cultural bond between Kerala and Lakshadweep and criticised the Centre for allegedly trying to destroy the natural democracy there.

Stating that the future of Lakshadweep is a matter of concern, he said any attempt to undermine its unique culture and indigenous lifestyle is unacceptable. — *PTI*

## Aatmanirbhar: Govt lists 108 items that can't be imported

**PAWAN BALI**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The defence ministry on Monday notified the second negative list (now called as second positive list) of 108 weapons and equipments which will not be imported by the defence forces as part of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat endeavour of the Modi government.

This second list is planned to be implemented progressively with effect from December 2021 to December 2025.

The first negative list notified in August last year had barred the import of 101 defence items from specified dates, starting December 2020. "Great news for Indian defence industry. With 101 items notified in August 2020 and 108 items notified now, 209 items not to be imported by Armed Forces from specified dates," tweeted defence secretary Ajay Kumar.

The second list has 108 items, including single-engine helicopters, next-generation corvettes, air borne early warning and control systems, tank engines, medium power radar for mountains, and medium-range surface to air missile weapon systems among others.

The ministry said that the notification of the second list will give a further boost to indigenisation with the active participation of the public and private sector for fulfilling the twin objectives of achieving self-reliance and promoting defence exports. All the 108 items will now be procured from

## New chiefs for Eastern Army, Andaman-Nicobar Commands

**AGE CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

India's only tri-service military theatre command Andaman and Nicobar Command has got a new commander Lt. Gen. Ajai Singh who will take over the charge on Tuesday.

Incumbent Lt. Gen. Manoj Pande will take over the Eastern Command of the Indian Army, which is a crucial command due to ongoing

tensions with China.

Lt. Gen. Anil Chauhan, the current GOC-in-C, Eastern Command Monday relinquished the command on superannuation after 40 years of service. Lt. Gen. Pande will be the senior-most officer in the Army when Gen. M.M. Naravane retires next year.

Lt. Gen. Singh is a fifth-generation Army officer, with family service of over 162 years since 13 September 1858.

indigenous sources as per provisions given in Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020.

India is one of the world's largest arms importer. To give a push to Make-in-India in the defence sector, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman last year had announced hiking FDI in defence manufacturing to 74 per cent from 49 per cent under automatic route to encourage major foreign defence companies to set up factories in the country.

## 'Sasikala won't be taken back, bid to create confusion'

**G BABU JAYAKUMAR and D SEKAR**  
CHENNAI, MAY 31

Can V.K. Sasikala, the erstwhile confidante of former Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalithaa, recapture the AIADMK as it is widely speculated after the audio of a telephonic conversation she had with a follower was leaked on social media?

While this question looms large over the state's political landscape, the AIADMK's deputy coordinator K.P. Munusamy clarified that the reported conversation was between Sasikala and a cadre of the AMMK, the breakaway faction headed by her nephew T.T.V. Dhinakaran.

Munusamy told the media in his native Krishnagiri district on Monday that no AIADMK cadre had sought out

Sasikala and it was she who had called the particular 'cadre' and spoken to him.

However, it is learnt that Sasikala is getting letters at her home in Chennai from "Jayalalithaa loyalists" who invite her to lead the party. Sasikala, too, is said to have called up about 500 persons both in the AMMK and AIADMK and assured them that she would come to "save" Jayalalithaa's party.

Also, there is reported to be a feeling among a section of AIADMK members that Sasikala could possibly bring in the much-needed cohesion in the AIADMK, whose vote bank had split in the just concluded election with the AMMK taking away a good slice of it.

Some low-level leaders even suggest that the AIADMK lost in 31 seats only because the AMMK had taken away their votes, suggesting they should have won those constituencies by being together.



Sasikala

## Bengal: 52 cops shifted

**Kolkata, May 31:** The West Bengal government on Monday evening transferred as many as 52 police officers, an official said.

DIG, Midnapore Range, Kunal Aggarwal was sent on compulsory waiting, while V. Solomon Nesakumar was made the joint CP of the STF of Kolkata police and Prasun Bandyopadhyay the DIG, Barasat Range, an order said. Praveen Kumar Tripathi will be the new DIG Malda Range while DN Goswami, joint CP special branch of Kolkata police was appointed the DIG of the state STF. Sudheer Kumar Neelakantam replaced Goswami.

— *PTI*

## Supreme Court: It's time we define limits of sedition

■ **Continued from Page 1** again, with Justice Chandrachud making a caustic remark on the repeated invoking of the sedition law by the Centre and state governments to curb news and views that are critical of them.

"Yesterday we saw pictures of a dead body being thrown into a river," Justice L. Nageswara Rao observed.

"Yes. There was a picture of a body being thrown into a river. I do not know whether a complaint of sedition (has been) filed against the news channel for showing it," Justice Chandrachud replied.

The exchange came

hours before a three-judge bench, including the same two judges and Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, put on hold the Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy-led Andhra Pradesh government's action against the two TV channels. The issue in court pertains to an FIR on their reportage of the Covid-19 pandemic in the state.

The news channels challenged the FIR before the Supreme Court, arguing that the Andhra government had violated a recent court order that restrained governments from punishing citizens for flagging Covid-related grievances.

TV5, represented by sen-

ior advocate Shyam Divan and advocate Vipin Nair said, "The attempt of the FIR is to create a chilling effect for news channels in the State, so that every news channel is wary of hosting any content which is critical of the government. By filing a vague FIR and abusing the process of law, the State intends to silence its critics and the media."

The apex court had earlier taken strong note of registration of criminal cases against those who sought help for Covid-19 related problems on social media and were critical of the government's handling of the pandemic.

thing to do with our meeting at Kalaiakunda on 28th May, 2021? I really and sincerely hope that this latest order is not related to my meeting with you at Kalaiakunda. If that be the reason, it would be sad, unfortunate and would amount to sacrificing public interest at the altar of misplaced priorities," she noted.

Referring to Leader of the the Opposition Shuvendu Adhikari's inclusion in the review meeting by the PM, the CM observed that he had no locus standi and was "unacceptable" to her.

## SC pulls up Centre over vaccine policy

■ **Continued from Page 1** agency? We want clarity on this and rationale behind this policy," the bench said.

The court also referred to the financial status of different civic bodies across the country saying that there was no comparison between the budget of BMC with the civic bodies in Uttar Pradesh or Bihar or any other state. The BMC's budget is more than that of some of the states, the court said and questioned Mr Mehta whether the government thinks that this process is viable and asked him to place a policy document on record.

The hearing saw the top court asking a number of pointed questions to Mr Mehta on vaccine availability and as to why for people above the age of 45 years the Centre was procuring vaccines but for the larger chunk of population between the age group of 18 to 45 years, the burden has been put on the states.

The court asked the Centre to relook at its Covid policy on vaccine pricing and the vaccination drive, adding that the policy should be flexible to factor in the scenarios likely to emerge in due course instead of being ad-hoc to deal with the situations popping up on a day-to-day basis.

Making it clear that admitting to flaws or gaps in a policy is not a sign of



A couple wearing PPE Kit during their wedding ceremony amid the Covid-19 pandemic at Manarsa village in Nainital district on Monday. — *PTI*

"weakness" but that of strength, Justice Chandrachud said, "Let me tell you from my experience as a judge — the ability to say that you're wrong is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength."

"You must smell the coffee and see what is happening across the country. You must know the ground situation and change the policy accordingly. If we had to do it, we would have done it 15-20 days back," the court said.

Giving two weeks' time to the Centre to file an affidavit addressing the concerns voiced by the court and amicus curiae

Jaideep Gupta and Meenakshi Arora, Justice Bhat said, "Whatever affidavit you are filing, it should be accompanied with the policy document and also the thinking that went behind the formulation of policy."

Amicus curiae Gupta flagged a number of issues which he said must be addressed by the policy. He said that to vaccinate people in the age group of 18 to 44 years, the country needs 100 crore vaccines and it will go right up to the end of January 2022 to complete the task. He said that the vaccines that are being counted to achieve the target are those which are yet to be approved.

Other amicus curiae Arora said that 50 per cent of the total vaccines are being picked up by the Centre at the price of ₹150 and from the remaining 50 per cent states are getting 25 per cent vaccines at the price of ₹300 each and remaining 25 per cent is going to private hospitals who are charging ₹900 to ₹1,250 per shot.

She said that it is for the first time in a pandemic of such magnitude the Centre is leaving states to fend for themselves, adding that the entire drive is urban oriented as most of the private hospitals are located in urban areas. She said that never in the past, be it cholera, chicken pox or any other vaccination drive, were citizens ever made to pay.



# THE ASIAN AGE

1 JUNE 2021

## Propaganda fails in face of Covid crisis

In the aftermath of the suffering caused by the second wave of Covid, Prime Minister Narendra Modi might have been expected to apply balm in his monthly ‘Mann ki baat’ radio programme last Sunday even as he exhorted the nation to put fight together against the deadly virus. Instead, he chose to be propagandistic, as usual bombastic, diversionary, and for the most part irrelevant to the context of the present day. He was anything but contrite. In this respect, the PM’s approach was fundamentally at odds with the propaganda ploy that RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat laid out for him in order to win the trust of the country in these most trying of circumstances.

The RSS leader had commenced his address, winding up the four-day long “Positivity Unbounded” sessions promoted by his outfit, with words that expressed sorrow at the nation-wide tragedy that unfolded before us. He then held the “people” responsible (presumably for being careless about Covid protocols), and also the administration and “the government”. Only after pointing fingers did Mr Bhagwat speak of the need for “collective effort” to overcome the crisis. After this pep talk, it was evident that the RSS-BJP cadres across the country would fan out to apply the healing touch and engage in “sewa” or service. BJP president J. P. Nadda directed his party “not to celebrate” two years of the second Modi government but to throw themselves into the field to help those in need. Such exhortation is important when the “sewa” is meant to yield future electoral and political benefits. But the leader of the government did little more than self-promotion in his nationwide address last Sunday.

Showing scant sense of occasion, Mr Modi spoke of rural electricity connections, infrastructure, financial inclusion, availability of domestic water connections, “new confidence of peace and development” from the northeast to J&K, better farm yields in the year. He spoke of giving a “befitting reply(sic) to those who conspire against us” and not compromising on national security. This in fact appears out of line as even now Chinese soldiers remain parked deep inside our side of our perceived boundary. As distinct from Mr. Bhagwat and Mr Nadda, he was clearly grandstanding on the second anniversary of his second term. Few governments in a democracy might venture to do that.

In the backdrop of the severe shortage of medical oxygen which brought forth unprecedented scenes of suffering on a magnified national scale, eliciting the pity of the world, the PM boasted that India was now producing ten times the oxygen than it does in normal times. He did not pause to reflect that the grave crisis was self-inflicted as official recommendations regarding enhancing oxygen supply were consistently disregarded for more than a year. The PM cited offering free food grains to 800 million poor people as a signal achievement. For May and June this year, the additional amount of five kilograms per month — made necessary by utter economic dislocation and job losses — amounts to roughly ₹32/ per head- and there are no pulses in this pack, only rice or wheat. This alas is the real measure of Modi’s India. Is there much to write home about?

## Tejpal case: Don’t judge victims

The Goa government’s decision to appeal against a palpably poor judgment acquitting Tarun Tejpal of rape and pressing for an early hearing in the Bombay high court is to be welcomed. The verdict, delivered by a woman judge, was shockingly stereotypical of warped thinking that it went beyond being just bad in law. This was a clear instance of victim shaming as the complainant was described in the judgment as “smiling and looked happy, normal, in good mood,” in photographs taken shortly after the alleged assault. The tone was accusatory as the judge recorded

**The tone was accusatory as the judge recorded - “She did not look disturbed, reserved, terrified or traumatised in any way even though this was immediately after she claims to have been sexually assaulted.”**

In a male-dominated society misogynistic rulings are not rare. But this verdict went well beyond misogyny, straying often as it did into slander. There have been any number of rulings by the top court stating clearly that assumptions or facts about a woman’s sexual history or character are not relevant. The standard of proof needed in a rape case, with the burden of proof devolving mostly upon the victim, is extremely high, which is why many may be getting away. The day a sexual harasser is punished for his intention as revealed in circumstantial evidence will represent true emancipation of women who are invariably at the receiving end. And that is when more victims will come forward to complain against sexual assaults.

### THE ASIAN AGE

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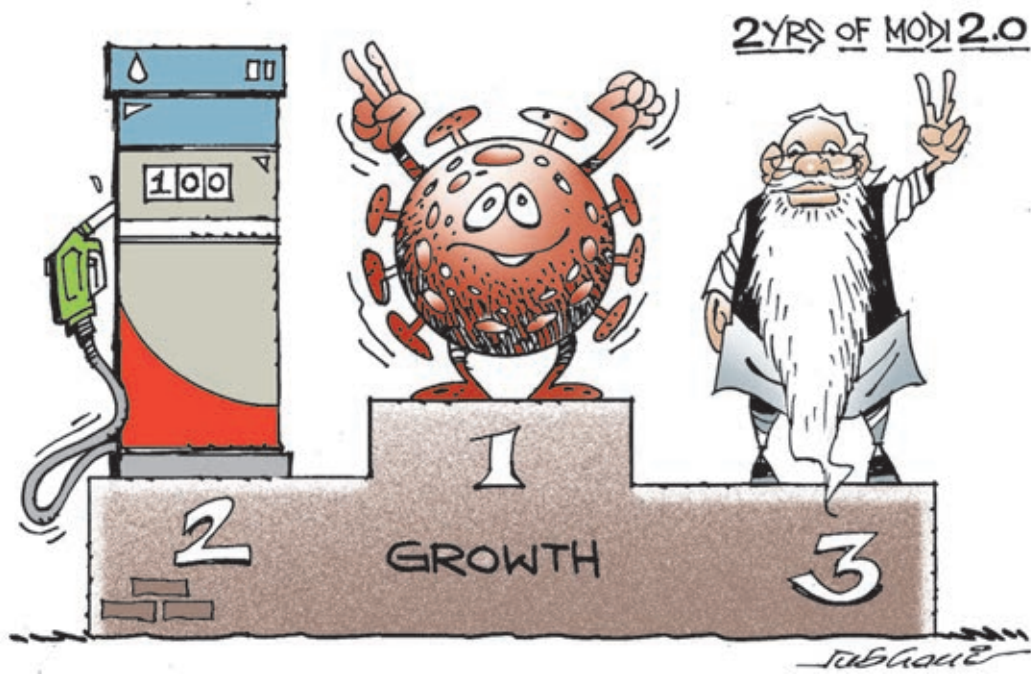
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Subhani



## To improve India’s image, govt needs a reality check



K.C. Singh

External affairs minister Subrahmanya Jaisankar’s five-day visit to the United States needs closer examination, not for what was publicly articulated but their real intentions. In the middle of the raging second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in India, the considerations must have been really weighty.

US secretary of state Antony J. Blinken tweeted that the two leaders had a productive discussion on “regional security and economic priorities to include Covid-19 relief efforts, the India-China border situation and our support for Afghanistan”. The tweet ended by saying that as friends the two nations will address these “areas of shared concern”. US national security adviser Jake Sullivan, who also met Mr Jaishankar, emphasised people-to-people contacts and shared values as the foundation of the US-India partnership, and finally listed three issues: “pandemic elimination, leading on climate change and support for an open and free Indo-Pacific”. The emphasis on Covid-19 by both close advisers to President Joe Biden assumes significance. The rest are only a reiteration of the usual subjects on the US agenda, including China.

President Biden’s foreign policy priorities, as adumbrated from the start of his presidency, are: China, climate change, US withdrawal from Afghanistan despite a paltry face-saver and reaffirmation of the trans-Atlantic alliance. Now, the Israel-Palestine standoff has got added due to the sudden outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East. Mr Blinken not even being in Washington for much of Mr Jaishankar’s stay in the US capital underscores the sudden importance of the Mideast crisis. They met literally on the last day of Mr Jaishankar’s visit.

Mr Jaishankar in turn

described his meeting with Mr Blinken as having “further solidified our strategic partnership and enlarged our agenda of cooperation”. Ignoring the usual hyperbole, it’s unclear how the agenda has “enlarged” when all the issues are old. India has been cautious to prioritise, keeping in mind the need not to provoke China, while working with the US and its partners in the four-nation Quad and carefully balancing India’s traditional ties with Russia with closer US engagement. Mr Jaishankar also met the defence secretary, US trade representative and congressional leaders, but there was no contact with either President Biden, who has been known to “drop by” when key ministers are at the White House to meet the NSA, or Indian-origin vice-president Kamala Devi Harris, with whom Mr Jaishankar has had differences during the Trump presidency over India’s handling of Kashmir.

What then was the real purpose behind the visit, as indeed its timing? Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his government have been on the backfoot since the BJP’s embarrassing defeat in West Bengal and the Covid-19 second wave, which the government clearly did not foresee or simply ignored despite warnings. To Mr Modi’s consternation, he has also lost face internationally, damaging his carefully nursed post-Godhra image as a statesman. The government seriously erred in resting its Covid handling strategy on the premise that neither the Kumbh Mela nor the endless election rallies would exacerbate the lingering pandemic. The vaccination strategy was tailored to this assumption, with increased vaccine supply, treble the current production capacity of the two indigenous manufacturers, becoming available only after August. The aim was to

ratchet up the daily vaccination rate in the period September-December to 10 million jabs a day, to in theory vaccinate the entire 45-plus and bulk of the over-18 population before the Uttar Pradesh election in February next year.

This tendency to have even our health policy bend to electoral priorities rather than medical science has proven disastrous. A C-Voter survey indicates that for the first time since the PM assumed office seven years ago those dissatisfied with his performance exceed those who are satisfied. With pictures of overflowing cremation grounds and even bodies dumped in the Ganga or buried along its banks, and the international media carrying those pictures on their front pages, the government’s immediate need was twofold — get an emergency supply of vaccines to bridge the gap till September and mend the Prime Minister’s shattered image.

Mr Jaishankar began his visit to address these two issues in particular. But instead of facing the editorial boards of major newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, he chose the easier option of a calibrated chat at a think tank to answer the critics of his government. Unlike someone like late PM Atal Behari Vajpayee who would have allowed an urbane Jaswant Singh leeway to meet the media halfway to allay their concerns, Mr Jaishankar simply dug in stubbornly.

He went on the offensive on the Modi government being portrayed in a “certain way”. In a tweet I asked if the minister understood whether this “way” was actually the media simply speaking truth to power? Which is their right, if not their

**In the coming days, America’s willingness to bail out India will be known. *Global Times*, is taunting that Mr Jaishankar’s US visit was just “fanfare” and “blank checks”.**

duty, in a democracy. The US state department released its 2020 Report on Religious Freedom on May 12, as the BJP-appointed administrator of Lakshadweep was busy imposing the Hindutva agenda on the Muslim-majority islands.

The minister may pummel the Indian media all he wants, but such actions bring international focus back on whether India under today’s BJP any longer shares “values” with the US?

Mr Jaishankar’s other agenda item was the emergency procurement of vaccines, out of the 80 million doses the US promised to release for international use. Two hurdles are in the way.

One, some AstraZeneca stock is feared contaminated during production and thus needs an audit. Two, the US may not divert the bulk to one nation, to maintain equity and its image. Interestingly, not a word was heard about the US pressing for a waiver at the World Trade Organisation on intellectual property.

In the coming days, America’s willingness to bail out India will be known. *Global Times*, the Chinese government’s English mouthpiece, is taunting that Mr Jaishankar’s US visit was just “fanfare” and “blank checks”.

The US will help but may extract greater alignment with its interests in the Indo-Pacific against China, on climate change and trade.

It may also force India to curtail its Russian arms purchases, especially the S-400 missile system. The US would also want India to not rock the boat in Afghanistan and meet Pakistan halfway on Kashmir. Meanwhile, the US is silent on restoring the Generalised System of Preferences, revoked by President Trump. Thus, the vaccines may come at a strategic cost, as global hegemony don’t run charities. Mr Modi’s image is another matter, to recover which he needs more than aggressive wolf ministers. He needs a reality check.

*The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.*

### LETTERS

#### ANTI-PEOPLE MOVE

Alapan Bandyopadhyay was granted an extension of service for three months in order to ensure continuity in the battle against Covid-19 in West Bengal. Now, by ordering his transfer to the Centre, hasn’t the very purpose of such an extension been nullified? Is this an example of Prime Minister Narendra Modi “standing strong with the citizens of West Bengal in the wake of Cyclone Yaas”, as claimed by BJP president J.P. Nadda? The BJP, it now emerges, is not only a sore loser but is also anti-federalism, anti-West Bengal and, finally, anti-people as well.

Kajal Chatterjee  
Kolkata

### BLUES CHAMPIONS

KUDOS TO Chelsea for defeating Manchester City and covering themselves with glory by winning the Champions League on Saturday. The Blues won the league for the second time with a first-half strike by Havertz, who ran onto Mason Mount’s perfectly weighted through-ball and skipped by Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson Moraes before slotting the ball into an empty net. It has been a dream run for Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel, who took over charge just four months ago but steered Chelsea into the top four of the Premier League, reached the FA Cup final and now won the Champions League title. Way to go!

N.J. Ravi Chandar  
Bengaluru

### ROLE MODEL

THIS REFERS to the news, “2 yrs after he died, Pulwama martyr’s wife joins military” (May 30, 2021). Nitika Kaul, the wife of Maj. Vibhuti Shankar Dhoumdiyal and now a lieutenant in the Indian Army herself, may be considered a role model for Indian women. In India, where most women are still identified as “housewives”, her’s is an example to follow. After the death of their husbands, many women have to lead a miserable existence. Many are driven out of their matrimonial homes, and for a lot of them the scope of returning to their paternal home is almost closed. Nitika has thrown away all these worries. We salute her.

Sugata Tripathi  
Kolkata

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

Pervez Hoodbhoy



## Why are Arabs powerless? It’s not guns; ideas rule the world

FOR a terrible 11 days in May, the world watched hellfire rain upon the world’s largest open-air prison camp, otherwise known as Gaza. The dazed, bleeding survivors crawling out of the rubble of collapsed buildings have experienced this before. Everyone knows this tragedy will repeat. In faraway Arab cities, people glumly watched the unhindered, televised bombing by Israeli jets. But the most they could manage was a few toothless resolutions and a few impotent slogan-chanting demonstrations trampling upon the Israeli flag.

What makes Israel with nine million people a Goliath of biblical proportions? Equally, notwithstanding their fabulous oil wealth, why are 427 million Arabs the pygmies of international politics? Before Israel — which has almost zero natural resources — the Arab Kings and sheikhs can only bow their heads.

Blame the West if you want and, in particular, America. Indeed, from 2000-2019 armaments supplied to Israel by the Western powers (US, UK, France, Spain, Germany) are documented at a

hefty \$9.6 billion. But within that 20-year period the same document shows this amount is dwarfed by arms sold by the same suppliers to Saudi Arabia (\$29.3bn), UAE (\$20.1bn), Egypt (\$17.5bn), Iraq (\$9.1bn), and Qatar (\$6bn). And yet these expensive weapons will provide little protection if Israel ever chooses to attack the Arab lands again. While the nine-country Saudi-led coalition has created a humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, it is failing dismally against the ragtag Iran-supported Houthis forces.

Okay, so then let’s blame Palestine’s ill-fortune upon Arab disunity. There’s truth in this: Arabs are indeed bitterly divided. But when were they not? From about AD-634 to AD-750 is the only period in history when they stood together. Then, after Nasser won the Suez War against Britain, Arabs united again for a brief, euphoric moment. But this unity did nothing to avert their crushing defeat in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, that which forever changed borders. And while friends and activists for Palestine would love to see Patah and Hamas patch up their differences, doing so will not change things funda-

mentally. The secret of Israel’s strength is not hidden in its weaponry. Instead, this still-expanding and still-colonising apartheid settler state uses the same magic that enabled just a handful of 18th-century Englishmen to colonise the entire Indian subcontinent.

That weapon was a system of organised thought based upon a rational and secular approach to life, a modern system of justice, and a new set of social relations. This was sustained and enhanced by Enlightenment-era education that de-emphasised rote learning of the scriptures, was this-worldly and future-oriented, and which focused upon problem-solving skills using systematic, scientific thinking.

In a nutshell, imperialist conquests showed that brains would rule over brawn: a stark truth that got still starker with time. But where are brains produced? Obviously in the womb but it’s in schools, colleges and universities where minds are shaped and sharpened. Hence, these days everyone and their uncle rush to one single conclusion: fix education and this will level the playing field, greatly diminishing or perhaps ending the inequalities of

power. That’s so much easier said than done. To have buildings and classrooms with teachers is one thing but to coax the potential out of a student is altogether different. With their vast wealth, Arab countries have built impressive university campuses with well-equipped laboratories and well-stocked libraries. They have even imported professors from America and Europe. Yet, the needle has barely flickered so far. That’s because attitudes towards learning take forever to change; and only if they are somehow forced to change. Pakistan follows the Arab model as best as it can, and no university has a bookshop, a centre for students that hums with open debate and discussion, or a theatre where classic movies are screened. Looking for a philosopher or a high-grade pure mathematician will be in vain. For 20 years, papers and PhDs have been churned out at a frantic rate. But I suspect many of the country’s “distinguished national professors” with hundreds of research publications would be judged unfit to teach in a high-end Israeli high school for lack of scholarship.

The problem is not genetics – Arabs

have a brilliant past and may be just as smart as Ashkenazi Israelis. But the two groups have different attitudes towards success and different role models. The Ashkenazi child wants to be Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, John von Neumann, George Wald, Paul Samuelson, Gertrude Elion, Ralph Lauren, George Soros, or a thousand other such names that fill textbooks on physics, philosophy, technology, medicine, and business. Compare this with the Arab boy who wants to be Salallahuddin Ayubi. We live in a cruel world which, of course, we must try our best to make less cruel and more humane. But making a socially just world requires much more than condemning oppressors and crying with the oppressed. Instead, the weak must be made stronger. That strength does not derive from oil or nuclear bombs. Instead, it springs from the human brain, but only when that superb gift of nature is appropriately tutored and trained within a system of secular values that cherishes and rewards logical thinking, questioning and creativity.

By arrangement with Dawn



## SHORT TAKES

FRENCH POLICE  
DETAIN FUGITIVE  
EX-SOLDIER

**Paris, May 31:** French police on Monday detained in southwest France a former soldier who fled into a forest after firing on the security forces in an incident that sparked a massive manhunt, officials said.

The government's top official in the Dordogne region, Frederic Perissat, told a press conference in Le Lardin-Saint-Lazare that the suspect was shot and wounded by police, and had been taken into custody. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Twitter that the man had been "neutralised" and praised the security forces for their actions.

48-KG ATLANTIC  
CROAKER SOLD FOR  
Rs 72 LAKH IN PAK

**Islamabad, May 31:** A Pakistani fisherman has sold a rare 48-kg Atlantic croaker fish for a whopping Rs 72-lakh (\$46,706), in one of the costliest seafood transactions in the country, according to a media report on Monday. Boatman Sajid Haji Ababakar caught fish off the coast of Gwadar in Balochistan province on Sunday, the *Dawn* newspaper reported. An auction was held and the highest bid was settled at Rs 86.4 lakh. "However, we settled for Rs 72 lakh following our tradition of discounts," Ababakar said. Deputy Director for Fisheries, Gwadar, Ahmed Nadeem said he had never seen a fish fetch a such a high price. The fish is in great demand in Europe and China for its meat and use of skin and bones in medical sciences.

"Some fish are expensive because of their meat. But this species (large croaker fish) has a high demand because parts of it are known for their use in medicine and surgery," said Abdul Rahim Baloch, marine biologist and Assistant Director, Environment Development Authority, Gwadar.

INVESTIGATORS  
PROBE GHOSN IN  
LEBANON

**Beirut, May 31:** French investigators started interrogating former Renault-Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn Monday in Lebanon, where he has sought refuge since a dramatic escape from Japan, a court source said. The source said that Ghosn, his defence team, a Lebanese prosecutor sitting in on the hearing and the visiting French judges entered the hall at the Court of Cassation where the interrogation over alleged fraudulent activities got under way.

A separate Lebanese judicial source said Ghosn would be interrogated for five days, every day from 10:00am (0700 GMT) until 6:00pm (1500 GMT) with a lunch break.

The 67-year-old faces scrutiny from French investigators centring on alleged improper financial interactions with Renault-Nissan's distributor in Oman, payments by a Dutch subsidiary to consultants and parties organised at the Versailles Palace.

Ghosn — who holds French, Lebanese and Brazilian passports — was arrested in Japan in 2018 on suspicion of financial misconduct.

GUNMEN ABDUCT  
STUDENTS IN  
NIGERIA

**Lagos, May 31:** A large number of students were abducted Sunday and one person was killed at a school in Nigeria's north central Niger State, a police spokesman said.

Nigerian media, including the independent Channels TV, said about 200 students were abducted at the Salihu Tanko Islamic School in Tegina in the local government area of Rafi.

Wasiu Abiodun, the Niger state police spokesman, confirmed the incident, though without giving a number for those abducted. He said the abduction was carried out by armed bandits on board motorcycles in their numbers. The gunmen fired indiscriminately and abducted a yet to be ascertained number of children, he said, adding that the gunmen shot one person dead in the process.

All tactical teams have been mobilised to rescue the victims and the police will ensure that the children are rescued unhurt, he said. The incident is the latest in a series of mass abductions in Nigerian schools by gangs who collect money for ransom. The worst incident this year occurred at the Government Girls Secondary School Jangebe in February, when 279 girls were abducted and later released.

Many schools have been forced to close due to the frequent incidents.

Regional bloc  
suspends Mali

**Accra, May 31:** West African leaders suspended Mali from their regional bloc Sunday over what they said amounted to a coup last week, Ghana's foreign minister said after an emergency meeting to address the political crisis in Mali.

The bloc, the Economic Community of West African States, "is worried about the security implications for West Africa because of the continued insecurity brought about by the political upheavals in that country," Foreign Minister Shirley Attorkor Botchwey said.

At the end of their summit, the heads of state of the ECOWAS member nations demanded that Malian authorities immediately release former transitional President Bah N'Daw and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane, who are being kept under house arrest. In their statement, the leaders condemned the arrests by Mali's military, which they said violated mediation steps agreed to last September, a month after a coup d'etat led by the same man who has now again taken power in Mali, Col. Assimi Goita. ECOWAS also

called for a new civilian prime minister to be nominated immediately, a new inclusive government to be formed and the 18-month transition of power leading to February 2022 elections to be carried out, saying a monitoring mechanism will be put in place to assure this.

In addition, the statement said, the head of the transition government, the vice president and the prime minister should not under any circumstances be candidates in the planned February 27 presidential election.

ECOWAS urged all international partners, including the African Union, the United Nations, and the European Union, to continue to support the successful implementation of the transition in Mali. The heads of state expressed "strong and deep concerns over the present crisis in Mali, which is coming halfway to the end of the agreed transition period, in the context of the security challenges related to incessant terrorist attacks and the Covid-19 pandemic with its dire socio-economic impacts," the statement said. — AP

Cyprus: Far-right  
party gains big

**Nicosia, May 31:** The far-right ELAM party and a centrist splinter group made big gains in Cyprus' parliamentary election on Sunday as a sizeable chunk of supporters appeared to have turned their back on the top three parties amid voter disenchantment with traditional power centres.

With 100 per cent of votes counted, ELAM garnered 6.78 per cent of the vote — a 3 per cent increase from the previous election in 2016 — to edge out the socialist EDEK party by the razor-thin margin of around 200 votes. The centrist DIPA — made up of key figures from the centre-right DIKO party which has traditionally been the third biggest party — gained 6.1 per cent of the vote.

The centre-right DISY emerged in first place with 27.77 per cent of the

vote, 5.4 per cent more than second-place, communist-rooted AKEL.

But the parties respectively lost 2.9 per cent and 3.3 per cent of their support from the previous election.

"The result isn't what we expected," AKEL General-Secretary Andros Kyprianou told a party rally. "We respect it and we'll examine it carefully to draw conclusions, but we can now say that we failed to convince (our supporters)."

Analyst Christoforos Christoforou said the results indicate a "very big failure" on the part of both DISY and AKEL to rally more supporters by convincing them of the benefits of their policies.

A last-ditch appeal by the DISY leadership limited a projected 5 per cent voter loss to 3 per cent. — AP

Envoy to return  
after wife hits 2

**Seoul, May 31:** Belgium will bring home its ambassador to South Korea amid public anger over his wife's alleged assault of two employees at a shop in Seoul.

The Belgium Embassy said the country's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sophie Wilmes, decided it was in the best interest of bilateral relations to end Ambassador Peter Lescouhier's tenure this summer. He has been the envoy in Seoul for three years.

The embassy didn't provide a specific date on when Lescouhier's term will end or name a replacement. While Lescouhier served his country with dedication, "the current situation doesn't allow him to further carry out his role in a serene way," the embassy said.

The Belgian government also waived the diplo-

matic immunity of Lescouhier's wife, Xiang Xueqiu, so that she could be investigated by South Korean police, the embassy said in a Facebook post.

However, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said her immunity was only partially waived and she still had protection from criminal trials or punishment. Lescouhier earlier this month issued an apology on behalf of his wife, saying in an Instagram video that she "might have had her reasons to be angry at the way she was treated in that shop but committing physical violence is totally unacceptable."

The embassy said Xiang has privately apologised to the employees. Xiang reacted angrily when an employee asked about the jacket she was wearing, suspecting that it could have been stolen. — AP

UK in early stages of third  
wave, warns PLO scientist

Prof. Gupta urges PM Boris to delay the June 21 reopening of the country

**London, May 31:** An eminent Indian-origin scientist advising the British government has warned that there are signs that the UK is in the early stages of a third wave of Coronavirus infections and urged Prime Minister Boris Johnson to delay the planned June 21 reopening of the country by a few weeks, according to a media report on Monday.

Professor Ravi Gupta of the University of Cambridge, who is a member of the government's New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag), said although new cases were "relatively low" the B.1.617 variant of the Covid-19 had fuelled "exponential growth", the BBC reported.

On Sunday, the UK reported more than 3,000 new Covid infections for a fifth day in a row. Prior to this, the UK had not surpassed that number since April 12. Gupta also called on Prime Minister Johnson to delay the planned June 21 reopening of the country by "a few weeks".

The UK's overall Covid-19 caseload and death toll currently stood at 4,499,939 and 128,043, respectively. Prof Gupta said the UK was already in a third wave of infections and at least three-quarters of cases were the new variant first discovered in India. "Of course the numbers of cases are relatively low at the moment — all waves start with low numbers of cases that grumble in the background and then become explosive, so the key here is that what we are seeing here is the signs of an early wave," he said. — PTI

TRAVEL CURBS  
ARE BACK IN  
CHINA PROVINCE

**Beijing, May 31:** China on Monday re-imposed anti-Coronavirus travel controls on its southern province of Guangdong, announcing anyone leaving the populous region must be tested for the virus following a spike in infections that has alarmed authorities.

Guangdong, which borders Hong Kong, recorded 20 new confirmed cases, all contracted locally, in the 24 hours through midnight Sunday. Guangdong's numbers are low compared with many places in the world, but the rise has rattled Chinese leaders.

People leaving Guangdong by plane, train, bus or private car after 10 p.m. on Monday must present results of a nucleic acid test. — AP



People queue for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine during the first mega Covid-19 vaccination at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday.

— AFP

S'pore PM: Virus to keep  
infecting people for years

**Singapore, May 31:** Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Monday the deadly Coronavirus will not disappear completely and will keep infecting people for years to come, urging citizens to carry on with their lives in this "new normal" while promising to reopen the country's borders.

Addressing the nation on the government's Covid-19 plan, Lee said the pandemic will remain with the humankind and become endemic.

"One day this global pandemic will subside. But I do not expect Covid-19 to disappear. It will remain with humankind, and become endemic. The virus will continue to circulate in pockets of the global population for years to come. This also means we will see small outbreaks of

the disease from time to time in Singapore as well," he said.

"In this new normal, we will have to learn to carry on with our lives even with the virus in our midst. Our aim must be to keep the community as a whole safe, while accepting that some people may get infected every now and then. Just as we do with the common flu or dengue fever, which we now manage through public health measures and personal precautions. And in the case of the flu, with regular vaccinations too," he said.

Lee said many countries were still struggling to fully bring the pandemic under control or, much less, eliminate it. "Even as we tackle our Covid-19 situation, the pandemic rages on around us," said Lee.

India has suffered a huge surge of new cases, although their numbers are now coming down while in Southeast Asia, many countries have not started vaccinations in a big way, and may see more spikes in the next few months, he said.

Malaysian cases have been rising, and they are just entering a nationwide full lockdown. Even places that have kept Covid-19 well under control, like Taiwan, Australia and Vietnam, have recently experienced outbreaks, Lee said. "Covid-19 vaccinations will not entirely prevent you from getting Covid-19. But the vaccination makes this much less likely. And, if you do get sick despite being vaccinated, you are less likely to become very ill," he said. — PTI

Virus spreads to nursing  
homes in Melbourne

**Melbourne, May 31:** Authorities say a Covid-19 cluster in Australia's second-largest city has spread to nursing homes.

Victoria state began a seven-day lockdown on Friday due to a cluster in its capital Melbourne.

State health authorities on Monday announced 11 new cases. A second staff member and a 90-year-old

resident of the Arcare Maidstone Aged Care facility in Melbourne were among the new infections. The first infected staff member was reported on Sunday.

The second staff member had also worked at the BlueCross Western Gardens nursing home in Melbourne last week and had not been vaccinated. The

BlueCross facility has gone into lockdown after the news.

Health Minister Martin Foley described the cluster spreading into aged care homes as a "very great concern to the Victorian government." The vast majority of Victoria's 820 Coronavirus deaths have been in nursing homes. — AP

## Record virus cases in Thailand

**Bangkok, May 31:** Thailand reported a record number of new Coronavirus cases on Monday as the governor of Bangkok announced an easing of some restrictions in effect for more than a month including people visiting parks for exercise.

Thailand has been fighting to deal with a virus

surge that began in early April in a group of nightclubs in Bangkok and has since spread around the country. The Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration reported a record 5,485 new cases, of which 1,953 were in prisons.

Confirmed deaths increased by 19 to bring the total to 1,031 since the pan-

demie began last year.

The total number of confirmed cases has now risen to 159,792, of which 82% occurred during the latest surge. Many of the cases are concentrated in prisons, housing for construction workers, factories, slums and low-income housing areas.

Officials have in some

cases been criticised for allowing companies to isolate and quarantine workers inside factories.

Bangkok, which has been a hot spot, reported 1,356 of the cases on Monday. CCSA deputy spokeswoman Apisamai Srirangsan said the capital currently has 45 clusters to deal with. — AP

STAY | AWAY The EU poured 3 billion euros into security tech research following refugee crisis in 2015-16

## Post pandemic, Europe migrants to face digital fortress

**Peplo (Greece) May 31:** As the world begins to travel again, Europe is sending migrants a loud message: Stay away!

Greek border police are firing bursts of deafening noise from an armoured truck over the frontier into Turkey. Mounted on the vehicle, the long-range acoustic device, or "sound cannon," is the size of a small TV set but can match the volume of a jet engine. It's part of a vast array of physical and experimental new digital barriers being installed

and tested during the quiet months of the coronavirus pandemic at the 200-kilometre (125-mile) Greek border with Turkey to stop people entering the European Union illegally.

A new steel wall, similar to recent construction on the US-Mexico border, blocks commonly-used crossing points along the Evros River that separates the two countries. Nearby observation towers are being fitted with long-range cameras, night vision, and multiple sensors.

The data will be sent to

control centres to flag suspicious movement using artificial intelligence analysis. "We will have a clear pre-border picture of what's happening," Police Maj. Dimonsthenis Kamargios, head of the region's border guard authority, told the *Associated Press*.

The EU has poured 3 billion euros (\$3.7 billion) into security tech research following the refugee crisis in 2015-16, when more than 1 million people — many escaping wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan — fled to Greece and on to

other EU countries.

The automated surveillance network being built on the Greek-Turkish border is aimed at detecting migrants early and deterring them from crossing, with river and land patrols using searchlights and long-range acoustic devices. Key elements of the network will be launched by the end of the year, Kamargios said.

"Our task is to prevent migrants from entering the country illegally. We need modern equipment and tools to do that." Res-

earchers at universities around Europe, working with private firms, have developed futuristic surveillance and verification technology, and tested more than a dozen projects at Greek borders.

AI-powered lie detectors and virtual border-guard interview bots have been piloted, as well as efforts to integrate satellite data with footage from drones on land, air, sea and underwater.

Palm scanners record the unique vein pattern in a person's hand to use as a

biometric identifier, and the makers of live camera reconstruction technology promise to erase foliage virtually, exposing people hiding near border areas. Testing has also been conducted in Hungary, Latvia and elsewhere along the eastern EU perimeter.

The more aggressive migration strategy has been advanced by European policymakers over the past five years, funding deals with Mediterranean countries outside the bloc to hold migrants back and transforming the EU border

protection agency, Frontex, from a coordination mechanism to a full-fledged multinational security force. But regional migration deals have left the EU exposed to political pressure from neighbours.

Earlier this month, several thousand migrants crossed from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta in a single day, prompting Spain to deploy the army. A similar crisis unfolded on the Greek-Turkish border and lasted three weeks last year. — AP



quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	51,937.44	1.00
Nifty 50	15,582.80	0.95
S&P 500*	4,204.11	0.08
Dollar (₹)	72.62	0.24
Pound Sterling (₹)	102.93	0.18
Euro (₹)	88.49	0.23
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	48,860▲318	0.66
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	69.22	0.73
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.022	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.581	0.00

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

Global tax deal unlikely till Oct, says OECD official

A full global deal to overhaul taxation rules and make multinationals pay more in countries where they operate may not be achieved until October, the chief of the OECD said on Monday. Speaking in Paris, Angel Gurria said a “180-degree change in the position of the United States” has accelerated the talks, making an outline of a deal possible at a meeting of G20 finance officials in July.

BMW drives in X7 M50d Dark Shadow edition



BMW Group India on Monday said it has launched X7 M50d 'Dark Shadow' Edition in the country priced at ₹2.02 crore (ex-showroom). The model comes to India as a completely built-up unit and only be available for booking at the company's website. “The BMW X7 is a statement of the luxury class. It opens up a brand-new dimension in luxurious driving pleasure,” said BMW Group India President Vikram Pawah.

Monetisation to gather pace in road sector: Crisil

Asset monetisation in the roads sector will see an acceleration as EPC companies in this space pursue growth and is also aided by various government initiatives, domestic rating agency Crisil said on Monday. It said that the healthy order book position of the road EPC companies, which stands at over three times revenue at present, is expected to improve further supported by new project awarding momentum.

Cognizant set to expand vaccine centres for staff

Cognizant on Monday said that it will spend \$8.5 million for Covid relief funding to vaccinate more than 6.5 lakh associates, their families, support teams. The company said its vaccination drive for associates and families, which was launched in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Gurgaon, has been expanded to 100 vaccination centres across 40 cities. The company said it will cover the costs of vaccines.

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Control on expenses beat Covid blues Listed firms post superlative profits

SANGEETHA G. CHENNAI, MAY 31

Listed companies, which have already published their results, have registered more than a 200 per cent growth in profits in the March 2021 quarter following a tighter control on expenditure. This would be the third consecutive quarter of superlative profits, according to CMIE.

The companies grew their top-line by 14.7 per cent in the March 2021 quarter against the same quarter last year. But net profits expanded by 212.4 per cent. In the March 2021 quarter, 935 companies have booked a profit of ₹1.58 lakh crore.

The companies managed to book superlative profits because of higher growth in profit margin. Compared to a 0.2 per cent profit margin in the March 2020 quarter, the companies managed to clock a 10.8 per cent margin in the March 2021 quarter, the highest rise in recent years.

In the March 2021 quarter, financial services companies saw a 2.1 per cent increase in the topline and a 2.1 per cent fall in total expenses as a result, net profits expanded by 65 per cent.

In the same quarter, non-finance companies saw topline expand by 18.6 per cent and total expenses grow by a much lower 8.9 per cent. As a result, net profits grew by 295 per cent. The share of non-



finance companies in total profits of the corporate sector increased from 73 per cent in the quarter ended September 2020 to 78 per cent in the quarter ended March 2021.

Further, the companies controlled expenses in spite of a significant increase in raw material costs. In the March 2021 quarter, non-finance companies saw their topline grow well. But, this growth was accompanied by an increase in raw material costs. However, a tighter control on other costs delivered high profits during the quarter.

Manufacturing companies recorded a 22.9 per cent increase in net sales during the quarter ended March 2021. Growth in raw material expenses was close at 18.6 per cent. But the companies kept other expenses in much greater control. Wages grew by 10.3 per cent and

other expenses shrunk by 1.8 per cent. Overall operating costs of manufacturing companies grew by 11.9 per cent although raw material expenses grew by 18.6 per cent. Further, interest costs declined by 20.2 per cent. The much lower growth in or shrinking of costs of manufacturing companies helped them see a 610 per cent increase in profits.

“Nearly three-fourths of the listed companies are yet to declare their financial performance during the March 2021 quarter. These companies collectively made profits of about ₹25,000 crore in the September and the December 2020 quarter each. Assuming similar orders of magnitude to continue, total profits by listed companies could touch ₹1.8 trillion in the March 2021 quarter,” said Mahesh Vyas, the chief executive officer of CMIE.

EPFO allows 2nd PF advance now

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO NEW DELHI, MAY 31

Keeping in view the raging second wave of the pandemic, the labour ministry on Monday said that the members of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) can now avail a second non-refundable advance from their EPF accounts. Earlier, there was only a one-time advance available for the EPF members.

The decision comes at a time when the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has made the financial position of many employees precarious and more difficult than the first wave.

“In such trying times, EPFO endeavours to lend a helping hand to its members by meeting their financial needs. The members, who have already availed of the first Covid-19 advance, can now opt for a second advance also. The provision and process for the withdrawal of the second Covid-19 advance are the same as in the case of the first advance,” the ministry said in a statement.

“Under this provision, non-refundable withdrawal to the extent of the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to member's credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, is provided,” EPFO said.

“Under this provision, non-refundable withdrawal to the extent of the basic wages and dearness allowances for three months or up to 75 per cent of the amount standing to member's credit in the EPF account, whichever is less, is provided. The members can apply for a lesser amount also,” it added.

“The Covid-19 advance has been a great help to the EPF members during the pandemic, especially for those having monthly wages of less than Rs 15,000. As on date, EPFO has settled more than 76.31 lakh Covid-19 advance claims thereby disbursing a total of ₹18,698.15 crore,” it added.

Bulls take Nifty to all-time high

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, MAY 31

Upward market momentum continued for the seventh consecutive session taking the Nifty-50 index to a new all-time high, even as post-market hour economic data showed that the economy has contracted by 7.3 per cent in FY 2020-21.

The Nifty-50 index gained 147.15 points or 0.95 per cent to close at a new all-time high of 15,582.80, while the Sensex gained 514.56 points or one per cent to close at 51,937.44.

The forward-looking equity market is more focused on brightening prospects of economic recovery as fresh Covid cases have fallen consistently after crossing over four lakh cases in early

Since we are in an uncharted territory, there is no historic level to consider as a next resistance, but taking a few ratios into consideration, there is no major level visible before the magical figure of 16,000 for the Nifty-50

— SAMEET CHAVAN Analyst, Angel Broking

May to over 1.52 lakh cases last Sunday, according to equity market analysts.

“The Nifty rose for the seventh consecutive session reaching and closing at fresh record highs. It has closed the month of May with a 6.5 per cent gain almost matching the February gains. The con-

tribution to this rise was broad-based on May 31,” said Deepak Jasani, head-Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

The top five gainers on the Nifty-50 were JSW Steel (3.25 per cent), ICICI Bank (3.00 per cent), Reliance Industries (2.80 per cent), Bharti Airtel (2.36 per cent), and Tata Steel (2.13 per cent).

On Monday, the last day of the month of May, foreign portfolio investors turned net buyers by ₹2,412 crore, while the domestic institutions also purchased shares worth Rs 179.78 crore.

Overall FPIs were net sellers in May but the latter half of the month saw an aggressive buying as the dramatic rise in Covid during the first half was followed by a

steep decline. “Bulls discarded the myth ‘Sell in May and go away,’” said Angel Broking.

“Since we are in an uncharted territory, there is no historic level to consider as a next resistance, but taking a few ratios into consideration, there is no major level visible before the magical figure of 16,000 for the Nifty-50,” said Sameet Chavan, analyst, technical and derivatives at Angel Broking.

PNB Housing Finance board approved a capital raise proposal of ₹4,000 crore led by the international private equity firm Carlyle and as the exchanges were informed, the PNB Housing Finance stock hit the 20 per cent upper circuit and closed up 19.99 per cent.

Real estate sector to cross \$1 trillion by 2030: Official

New Delhi, May 31: The size of real estate sector is projected to cross \$1 trillion by 2030, housing and urban affairs secretary Durga Shanker Mishra said on Monday.

“In 2019-20, real estate sector contributed nearly seven per cent to our GDP. Its total contribution was to the tune of \$200 billion to our GDP... And projections are that by 2030 this number is going to cross \$1 trillion,” Mishra said.

He also noted that real estate is an important sector for the economy with around 11 per share in the total employment numbers.

The secretary was speaking at a virtual event to launch Housing Price Index, created by realty portal Housing.com and Indian School of Business (ISB) in association with industry body NAREDCO.

“By 2030, when we are projecting our economy to go up to \$10 trillion, nearly 10 per cent of that will come from the real estate sector itself,” he added.

Mishra said the sector is also very important from the point of view of employment and high-



lighted that out of 50 crore jobs, real estate provides 5.5 crore employment opportunities.

The secretary said the real estate sector has transformed in the last seven years and implementation of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, popularly known as RERA, has played an important part in making a paradigm change.

He said the central law has already been implemented across all states/UTs, except West Bengal and Nagaland.

Mishra said a large number of real estate projects and property brokers are registered under RERA.

The government has taken various measures in the Budget of last seven years to spur growth in the real estate sector, he added.

“Every Budget has some announcement for real estate sector.”

The secretary emphasised on having robust digital platforms for smooth and transparent real estate buying-selling process.

Mishra said he had asked CREDAI and NAREDCO, the two major associations for real estate, to create a digital platform for real estate, similar to Amazon, and some progress has been made in this regard. — PTI

Core sectors grow 56% in April over low base effect

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, MAY 31

On the back of a low-base effect, eight core sector industries in the country registered a 56 per cent growth in April 2021, according to the government official data released on Monday.

The eight infrastructure sectors — coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity had contracted by 37.9 per cent because of the national lockdown imposed by the government in April 2020.



The data, however, showed that the sequential decline in core sector output stood at 15 per cent in April on account of the second wave of the virus.

“This high growth rate in April 2021 is largely due to low index base in April 2020 consequent to the low industrial production across all sectors caused

by the nationwide lockdown imposed to contain the spread of Covid-19 last year. The month-over-month production of eight core industries, as captured by ICI, declined by 15.1 per cent (P) in April 2021 compared to March 2021(P) due to the emergence of the second wave of infectious Covid-19,” the official data said.

The RBI in its annual report also acknowledged the impact of the second wave on the economic recovery process. However, it said that the impact may not be as harsh as in the first wave.

NEW | WORLD

Work-from-home and study-from-home spiked gadget demand

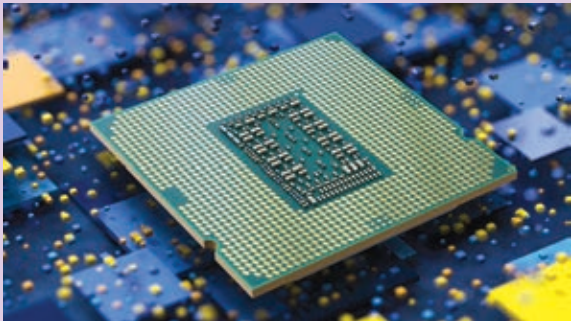
Chip shortage to ease in two years, says Intel CEO

New Delhi, May 31:

Global chip maker Intel on Monday said it could take a couple of years to address the supply shortage in the semiconductor ecosystem that is witnessing huge demand for tech products, accelerated by the Covid pandemic.

Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger noted that the work and study-from-home trends during the Covid-19 pandemic have led to a “cycle of explosive growth in semiconductors” that has placed huge strain on global supply chains around the world.

“We have been working diligently with our partners... to address constraints and increase output to meet demand, and we are acting to help



ensure capacity to meet the world's needs for this new era... But, while the industry has taken steps to address near-term constraints, it could still take a couple of years for the ecosystem to address shortages of foundry capacity, substrates and components,” he said at a

virtual session at the Computex event.

He stated that the company has doubled its internal wafer capacity in the past four years, and that it is driving a collaborative approach to help the supply chain.

Semiconductors play a crucial role in every-

thing, right from computers to appliances, communication devices, transportation systems to critical infrastructure.

“We've already announced more than \$20 billion of new investment in our foundry capability. This includes large scale capacity expansion in Arizona, in support for advanced semiconductor manufacturing technologies in New Mexico. We plan to expand to other locations in the US and Europe, ensuring a sustainable and secure semiconductor supply chain for the world,” Gelsinger said.

Intel Corporate Vice President and General Manager CCG Sales Steve Long announced the

launch of two new 11th generation Intel core SKUs that will help the company deliver performance and extend its leadership in the thin and light notebook category.

The company is also launching the Intel 5G solution 5000, its first 5G product for the next-generation of PC experiences.

“This is Intel's first 5G product coming out from our previously announced collaboration with MediaTek with global certification. Acer, Asus and HP are expected to bring these 5G-enabled PCs to market this year and the momentum continues in 2022, with over 29 designs expected,” Long said. — PTI

CAPGEMINI TO USE ERICSSON'S SOLUTIONS FOR 5G LAB IN INDIA

DC CORRESPONDENT HYDERABAD, MAY 31

Capgemini on Monday said that it has tied up with Ericsson to accelerate the deployment of 5G solutions.

As part of this collaboration, the company has deployed Ericsson's 5G Industry Connect solution at its 5G Lab in Mumbai which will enable industry innovation, experimentation and deployment of 5G and Edge technologies for clients across industries.

According to Ashwin Yardi, CEO, India, at Capgemini: “The Capgemini 5G Lab offers a “ready to use” platform for our customers to ideate, innovate and deploy use cases as they adopt new technologies which will enable them to accelerate their digital transformation journey towards Intelligent Industry.”



## SHORT TAKES

Zidane criticises  
Real in open letter

**Madrid:** Zinedine Zidane resigned as Real Madrid coach because he felt the Spanish club no longer had any confidence in him, he wrote in an open letter on Monday. "I'm leaving because I feel the club no longer has the faith in me I need, and doesn't offer me the support to build something in the medium or long term," the Frenchman wrote in the letter published in the daily AS. "I am a born winner and I was here to win trophies, but beyond this there are human beings, emotions, life and I have the feeling that these things have not been valued, that it has not been understood that this is also how the dynamic of a great club is maintained. But everything I built on a daily basis, what I brought to the relationship with the players... Has been forgotten," he said. — *AFP*

Draw vs Qatar not  
my best: Sandhu

**Doha:** India goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu says the memorable goalless draw against Asian champions Qatar, in the FIFA World Cup qualifier in September 2019, is not his greatest performance till date. According to him, he has performed his best, surprisingly, in a 0-4 loss to Iran in a 2018 World Cup qualifier at a packed Azadi Stadium in Tehran, and during a match against China in China. "Almost everyone I speak to always makes me remember about the Qatar match. But if you ask me, that isn't my best performance so far. I understand that in the Qatar match, we got a result — and hence, it will always stay a highlight," Gurpreet told the All India Football Federation. — *PTI*

Barca sign up  
Agüero from City

**Barcelona:** Barcelona announced on Monday that they had agreed to sign Sergio Agüero on a deal until 2023, after the Argentina forward quit Manchester City following a decade at the Premier League club. In a statement, Barca said that Agüero will become their player once his contract with Manchester City expires at the end of next month, adding that there is a buy-out clause "set at 100 million euros (\$122 million)". The 32-year-old's signing for Barca comes two days after he missed out on winning the Champions League with City, Pep Guardiola's side losing this season's final to Chelsea. His final appearance for City was as a substitute for Raheem Sterling late in the final in Porto as the newly-crowned Premier League champions tried in vain to win Europe's top prize for the first time. — *AFP*

Sharma finishes  
among top 10

**Forso, Denmark:** Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma registered his first top-10 finish on the European Tour in 18 months with his Tied eighth-place result at the Made in Himmerland event here. His last top-10 on the European Tour was in November 2019, when he was T-7 place at the Turkish Airlines Open. He had a similar result at the Italian Open a month before that. Sharma's 68 in Denmark came with four birdies after settling for pars in his first 10 holes on the final day. With 10 places up for grabs for the US Open in June, Sharma needs to finish in Top-10 of a mini-series list to get one of the slots. — *PTI*

Suns bounce back  
to even series

**Los Angeles:** Chris Paul overcame an injured shoulder and Jae Crowder busted out of a playoff slump on Sunday as the Phoenix Suns took a 100-92 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers, who lost Anthony Davis to another injury. Paul had 18 points and nine assists, while Crowder delivered 17 points as half a dozen players finished in double figures for the Suns, who clawed their way level at 2-2 in the Western Conference playoff series against the reigning NBA champions. — *AFP*

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## PLAN FOR FUTURE

## T20 World Cup, FTP cycle to come up for discussion at ICC board meet

**New Delhi, May 31:** The BCCI will ask for one month's extension to decide on hosting the T20 World Cup in India amid the looming Covid-19 threat when the all-powerful ICC Board holds a virtual meeting on Tuesday to discuss a host of other issues as well.

While earlier, it was decided that BCCI president Sourav Ganguly will attend the meet in person, it is learnt that now he will be present virtually and will only leave for the UAE on Wednesday to have discussions on the organisation of IPL with Emirates Cricket Board.

There are no concrete outcomes expected at the meeting and after July 1, the BCCI will hold another SGM. The ICC is likely to make a formal announcement of its final decision during its annual conference that starts on July 18.

While the remainder of the IPL has been shifted to the United Arab Emirates between September 15 to October 15, the Indian cricket board doesn't want to let go the opportunity of hosting the global T20 event, which also has Emirates as back-up hosts.

"The Covid-19 cases are reducing but obviously it is still not a situation where we can firmly commit to hosting the World T20. Ganguly and secretary Jay Shah are right in asking for one month's time to decide," a senior BCCI source privy to developments said on conditions of anonymity.

## FTP CYCLE 2023-31

The Futures Tours & Programme Cycle for the next eight years between 2023 to 2031 will also be discussed with provision for the flagship ICC events apart from the bilateral series.

"Obviously due to the pandemic, every cricket board has lost money and the bilateral events are the way forward to recover the costs. In any case, currently rested ICC CEO Manu Sawhney's proposal of a marquee ICC event every year was red flagged by the 'Big Three' much earlier.

"They need to look after the financial health of their boards," the official further added.

Also the future of the World Test Championship will also be discussed. — *PTI*



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly (left) and secretary Jay Shah in this file photo. — *BCCI*

## IPL-retained Aussies are home

**Sydney, May 31:** Amid hugs, tears of joy and relief, Australia's jumbo IPL contingent comprising players, support staff and commentators on Monday reunited with their family members after serving a 14-day hotel quarantine here.

The 38-member Australians landed in the country two weeks ago after a stopover in Maldives due to travel ban from Covid-ravaged India.

The highlight of the day was premier fast bowler Pat Cummins exiting the hotel and reuniting with his pregnant partner Becky Boston, a video of which was uploaded on Twitter by well-known Australian sports journalist Chloe-Amanda Bailey.

"Video of the day! After eight weeks away for the IPL, Pat Cummins finally leaves hotel quarantine and reunites with his pregnant partner Becky. All the feels!" Bailey tweeted alongside the video.

OZ PLAYERS AVAILABILITY IN  
IPL YET TO BE DISCUSSED: CA

**Melbourne, May 31:** Cricket Australia on Monday said it's yet to start discussions on whether Australian cricketers would compete in the IPL when the T20 league re-commences in the UAE in September.

Nick Hockley, who was confirmed as CA chief executive on Monday after performing the duties in an interim role, said a decision on IPL can wait as Australian players were just reunited with their families after completing a two-week hotel quarantine.

"Once we get back together as a group that (IPL) is something we'll obviously need to discuss," Hockley was quoted as saying by *ESPNCricinfo*.

"Our players returning from the IPL have only today come out of quarantine, so our first priority is to make sure they are reunited with their families. We have a tour to prepare for in the West Indies," he added.

Hockley said the players will regroup at the National Cricket Centre (in Brisbane) in a couple of weeks before the West Indies tour and that would be the time to refocus. — *PTI*

Besides Cummins, batting maestro Steve Smith, big-hitting all-rounder Glenn Maxwell and the swashbuckling opener Dave Warner were among those who finally embraced their loved ones after nearly eight weeks away from home. Most of them had not seen their families since

heading into the Indian Premier League in early April. They were flown home via a charter flight after the IPL was postponed owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cricket Australia's newly-appointed chief executive officer Nick Hockley said the feeling among the players about going home to be with their families could not be understated.

"We've been texting, and I've spoken to a couple of the broader group, not just the players but there's commentators, match officials and physios," Hockley said.

"They are clearly quite shaken from the experience, very appreciative to be home back here in Australia."

The BCCI paid for the charter flights and accommodation of the Australians in the Maldives and Sydney, and Hockley thanked the Indian board for the manner in which it helped them after the abrupt suspension of the IPL. — *PTI*

OSAKA COULD  
BE BANNED FOR  
MEDIA BOYCOTT

**Paris, May 31:** Japanese superstar Naomi Osaka was on Sunday 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 the world number two was fined \$15,000.

"Repeat violations attract tougher sanctions including default from the tournament and the trigger of a major offence investigation that could lead to more substantial fines and future Grand Slam suspensions."

Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam title winner and sport's highest-earning female athlete, was sanctioned for refusing to hold a press conference after her opening 6-4, 7-6 (7/4) win over Romanian Patricia Maria Tig.

The 23-year-old had said on the eve of the tournament that she would not carry out any media obligations, claiming news conferences are detrimental to her mental health.

She likened traditional post-match inquests to "kicking people when they're down".

Tennis Federation president Gilles Moretton had described Osaka's vow of silence as "a phenomenal error". — *AFP*

## ASIAN | BOXING

Pooja strikes gold,  
silver for Panghal

**Dubai, May 31:** Defending champion Pooja Rani (75kg) was the lone Indian woman boxer to strike gold at the Asian Championships while defending champion Amit Panghal (52kg) and Shiva Thapa (64kg) lost gruelling and close final bouts to fetch silver medals here on Monday with the country seeking a review of the former's defeat.

The Olympic-bound Pooja (75 kg), who was competing in her first bout of the tournament after getting a bye and a walkover earlier, dismantled Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan with a clinical performance.

She also earned \$10,000 for her marvellous one-bout show in which Movlonova was simply out of sorts, unable to keep pace with the Indian's intensity.

Panghal lost 2-3 to known nemesis Shakhobidin Zoirov of Uzbekistan in what was a repeat of the 2019 world championship final, which had also ended in Zoirov's favour.

India sought a review of the second round of the bout which Panghal won on a split count but looked to have dominated completely. The result of the review will be known later.

"I dedicate this silver medal to my coach Anil Dhanker. I wish he was here with in Dubai," Panghal tweeted referring to his personal coach.

Thapa (64kg) also lost by the same margin to Mongolia's Baatarsukh Chinzorig, the reigning Asian Games silver-medalist. This was Thapa's fifth successive podium finish at the showpiece and second silver.

Both the contests had the Indian boxers doing most things right but not getting the judges' nod.



Pooja Rani (75 kg) celebrates her 5-0 win against Mavluda Movlonova of Uzbekistan at the Asian Championships in Dubai.

The Panghal-Zoirov clash lived up to the hype with both the Olympic-bound boxers engaged in a fast exchange of punches from the very first round.

Zoirov claimed the opening round. But in the second round, Panghal raised his game by a notch, evading Zoirov's range with his pace and landing his left straights precisely. Zoirov, on the other hand, struggled to connect.

The two went all out in the third round but it was Panghal who was more impressive with his body shots despite an injured eye.

He even had the judges' verdict in his favour for the round but it was not enough to alter the final scoreline. — *PTI*

PADDLERS DIYA, SWASTIKA  
END RUNNERS-UP IN TUNIS

**New Delhi, May 31:** Young Indian paddlers Diya Chitale and Swastika Ghosh's splendid run at the WTT Youth Star Contender ended with a runners-up finish following their 3-11, 6-11, 7-11 defeat against Russia's Natalia Malinina and Elizabet Abraamian in the U-19 girls doubles final in Tunis, Tunisia.

Earlier, the Indian pair made its way into the final, defeating Czech Republic's Linda Zaderova and Croatia's Hana Arapovic in the semifinals.

Diya and Swastika were also impressive in the U-19 singles as both finished their campaigns in the semifinals after suffering identical 2-3 defeats in hard-fought encounters.

Diya made life tougher for Russian paddler Vlada Voronina before losing the thrilling contest 8-11, 11-7, 11-6, 8-11, 7-11. The current junior national champion Swastika too lost to Turkey's Ece Harac 8-11, 4-11, 11-9, 3-11, 6-11 in an intense decider.

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, it was the first international youth event where Indian players were seen in action. — *PTI*

## VIRUS | EFFECT

Copa America  
moved to Brazil

**Asuncion, May 31:** South America's largest football tournament, the Copa America, was moved Monday to Brazil after a Covid-19 surge in Argentina and social unrest in Colombia saw the co-hosts stripped of the right to host the event.

With two weeks to kick-off, South America's CONMEBOL football federation tweeted that "The CONMEBOL Copa America 2021 will be played in Brazil!" and the June 13-July 10 dates were maintained.

CONMEBOL is expected to announce the venues and dates of matches in the coming hours.

Brazil hosted the last Copa America, in 2019. Originally scheduled for last year, the Copa was postponed by 12 months due to the coronavirus epidemic.

New host Brazil is one of the countries in the world worst affected by the outbreak, with the second-highest death toll of over 460,000 so far and more than 16.5 million cases.

It was to have been the first time in its history that the tournament would be co-hosted by two countries, Argentina and Colombia. — *AFP*

WC QUALIFIERS  
SHIFTED FROM  
CHINA TO DUBAI

**Shanghai, May 31:** Several World Cup football qualifiers scheduled to be played in China were moved to Dubai on Monday over coronavirus infections in the Syria and Maldives teams, the Chinese Football Association said.

Seven Group A fixtures involving China, Syria, Maldives, the Philippines and Guam are affected.

"In view of the recent epidemic infections in the Maldives and Syrian national football teams... They must be strictly quarantined upon entry and cannot participate in the games as scheduled," a CFA statement said.

"According to recommendations from the AFC (Asian Football Confederation), the Chinese FA agreed that the remaining qualifying matches... Will not be held in Suzhou and will be transferred to Dubai and held there," it added. — *AFP*



Poland's Iga Swiatek returns to Kaja Juvan in their French Open first round match in Paris on Monday. — *AFP*

## Swiatek starts title defence with win

**Paris, May 31:** Reigning women's champion Iga Swiatek made a winning start to her French Open title defence with a straight-sets victory over Kaja Juvan on Monday, while men's second seed Daniil Medvedev finally reached round two for the first time at Roland Garros.

Poland's Swiatek, celebrating her 20th birthday, saw off her good friend Juvan 6-0, 7-5 on Court Philippe Chatrier.

Medvedev, who had lost in the first round in all of his four previous appearances in the tournament, put his poor clay-court form behind him by beating the dangerous Alexander Bublik 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.

The 23-time Grand Slam

## THE RESULTS

**Men's first round:** Cameron Norrie (GBR) bt Bjorn Fratangelo (USA) 7-5, 7-6 (7/5), 6-2; Jannik Sinner (ITA x18) bt Pierre-Hugues Herbert (FRA) 6-1, 4-6, 6-7 (4/7), 7-5, 6-4; Gianluca Mager (ITA) bt Peter Gojowczyk (GER) 6-2, 3-6, 6-4, 7-5; Federico Delbonis (ARG) bt Radu Albot (MDA) 6-1, 2-6, 6-0, 6-1; Filip Krajinovic (SRB) bt Maximilian Marterer (GER) 6-4, 6-1, 7-6 (7/3); John Isner (USA x31) bt Sam Querrey (USA) 7-6 (7/2), 6-3, 6-4; Thiago Monteiro (BRA) bt Francisco Cerundolo (ARG) 6-3, 6-4, 6-3; Steve Johnson (USA) bt Frances Tiafoe (USA) 6-7 (5/7), 3-6, 6-4, 6-2, 6-1; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x2) bt Alexander Bublik (KAZ) 6-3, 6-3, 7-5.

**Women's first round:** Hailey Baptiste (USA) bt Anna Blinkova (RUS) 6-1, 6-4; Zarina Diyas (KAZ) bt Heather Watson (GBR) 6-4, 7-5; Elise Mertens (BEL x14) bt Storm Sanders (AUS) 6-4, 6-1; Rebecca Peterson (SWE) bt Shelby Rogers (USA) 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (10/8), 6-2; Iga Swiatek (POL x8) bt Kaja Juvan (SLO) 6-0, 7-5; Madison Brengle (USA) bt Maria Camila Osorio (COL) 7-5, 6-4; Polona Herczeg (SLO) bt Kiki Bertens (NED x16) 6-1, 3-6, 6-4; Harmony Tan (FRA) bt Alize Cornet (FRA) 6-4, 6-4; Marketa Vondrousova (CZE x20) bt Kaia Kanepi (EST) 4-6, 6-3, 6-0.

champion's match against Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania will be played behind closed doors, though, due to a 9pm Covid-19 curfew imposed by the French

government. Swiatek, who became the first major singles champion from Poland last October, hit 22 winners in an impressive opening to her bid for a

second straight Roland Garros triumph.

MEDVEDEV ENDS  
MISERABLE RUN

It is not just in Paris that Medvedev has struggled on clay.

The Russian had lost eight of his previous nine matches on the surface dating back to 2019.

But the two-time Grand Slam runner-up was too strong for Kazakh Bublik, setting up a second-round tie against either Australian wildcard Christopher O'Connell or US player Tommy Paul.

"It was a good match and I've been training really well," said the 25-year-old Medvedev, who lost the Australian Open final to Novak Djokovic in February. — *AFP*