

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 11 | MAY 2021

## WEATHER



**Max:** 36°C  
**Min:** 23°C  
**Rainfall:** 6%

## ASTROGUIDE

**Pilava:** Chithirai 28  
**Tithi:** Amavasyai  
**Star:** Bharani  
**Rahukalam:** 3 pm to 4.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:** 9 am to 10.30 am

### PRAYERS

**Fajar:** 4.31 am  
**Luhar:** 12.11 pm  
**Asar:** 3.19 pm  
**Maghrib:** 6.25 pm  
**Isha:** 7.40 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.36 PM**  
**SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.00 AM**  
**MOONRISE TODAY 5.38 AM**  
**MOONSET TOMORROW 7.09 PM**

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+3,05,284)	(+3,493)
2,29,67,832	2,49,641

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+28,978)  
**TN:** 14,09,237 15,880

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

15,94,02,368

### DEATHS

33,12,993

COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES 219

worldometers.info

## Pondy CM Rangasamy in Chennai hospital

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

Puducherry Chief Minister N R Rangasamy was admitted to the MGM Healthcare Hospital in Chennai on Monday after he tested positive for Coronavirus. Wishing him a speedy recovery, Chief Minister M K Stalin tweeted that he heard that Rangasamy was doing well. He wished him to return to work at the earliest.

## WHO classifies Indian Covid strain as ‘variant of concern’

**United Nations:** The B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus, first identified in India, has been classified as a “variant of concern” at the global level by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, COVID-19 Technical Lead at the WHO, said Monday that the B.1.617 virus variant that was first identified in India had been

### COUNTER

### POINT



**They are here for the second dose of the vaccine, sir!**

# Must set our house in order, says Sonia

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
with agency inputs  
NEW DELHI, MAY 10

Interim Congress chief Sonia Gandhi demanded that the party “take note of our serious setbacks (and) put our house in order”, after disappointing performances in elections. She said senior leaders from the states that went to the polls - Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Bengal would be required to “brief us, very frankly, on our perfor-

mance. We want them to tell us why we performed well below expectation. These results tell us clearly that we need to put our house in order,” Mrs Gandhi said at the meeting of the Congress Working Committee (CWC). “We have to take note of our serious setbacks. To say we are deeply disappointed is to make an understatement. I intend to set up a small group to look at every aspect that caused such reverses and report back very quickly,” she added. The Congress has decided



to postpone the proposed election of a party chief in June. The pandemic has been given as the reason for the reluctance to take on the

sensitive issue that has been bugging the national party since a Group of 23 have been asking for an “effective, full-time leadership.” The group had also written a letter dated August 23 that divided the party in its opinion on the need for an active leader. The CWC also hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his handling of the coronavirus crisis, saying he must “atone for his mistakes” and serve the people instead of carrying on with his “personal agen-

da” oblivious to the sufferings all around. In a resolution, CWC also questioned the government data on coronavirus cases and fatalities, and alleged non-reporting of deaths. “The solution lies in facing challenge, not in concealing the truth,” it said. The CWC also expressed deep concern over the government’s coronavirus vaccination strategy, alleging the supply was grossly insufficient and the pricing policy opaque and discriminatory.



**CITY | 2**  
**Oxygen plants at 142 places soon: TN Health minister**



**WORLD | 5**  
**China against Taiwan joining WHO meeting**

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# Lockdown begins on soft note with cops warning offenders

**Govt operates 200 buses to help people reach workplaces**

**G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR /DC**  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

Kind, though firm, handling of violators by the police marked the start of the 14-day lockdown on Monday when the government operated 200 city buses to help those in essential services reach their workplaces and also rushed to help stranded passengers at the Central railway station. Since shops selling essential goods like groceries, condiments, vegetables, meat, chicken and fish were allowed to be open, besides eateries and tea shops providing take-away service alone, from 6 am to 12 noon, people were seen on the road at that time, but mostly on foot.

The ban on vehicles on the road during the lockdown, however, saw a few violators. But the police warned them sternly and sent them back home unlike last year’s lockdown that saw police turning violent and aggressively seizing vehicles.

With the police being strict about the shops shutting at 12 noon, roads were deserted after that and not many people ventured out, needlessly. Some persons on motorbikes were questioned and warned when found to be out on the street for no valid reason.

Besides erecting blockades, police allowed motorists to pass through a single lane in many main roads, which enabled the monitoring of vehicle movement closely and also slowing down the flow of traffic. ■ P4



With a total lockdown declared from Monday in TN, Chennai sported a deserted look, as seen in this aerial view of the Outer Ring Road, which connects Vandalur and Minjur. — E.K. Sanjay

# Stalin speaks to Union minister for Remdesivir

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

Chief Minister M K Stalin urged the Railway Minister Piyush Goyal to take steps to increase the supply of Remdesivir drug, which is used to treat Coronavirus patients with increased lung involvement, to 20,000 vials per day.

Stalin who spoke to Goyal over the phone on Monday stressed on the need for more vials of the drug to meet the growing demand for both govern-

ment and private hospitals across the State. An official press release said that 1,45,000 persons were undergoing treatment for Covid-19 in the State and the present allotment of 7,000 vials per day by the Centre was not adequate.

As of now the State has received 2,05,000 vials of Remdesivir and has made efforts to procure the drug and provide it to hospitals. All important government hospitals and many private hospitals in six big towns are now sell-

ing the drug. CPM Member of Parliament, Su Venkatesan, representing Madurai constituency, also wrote to Goyal, following up on the Chief Minister’s appeal for increased supply of Remdesivir.

He said that he had been personally witnessing the ordeal of patients and their relatives in Madurai, which gets a daily supply of only 500 vials, which would be sufficient for only 60 patients. ■ P2

## INDIAN DIPLOMAT DIES OF COVID IN AFGHANISTAN

**SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC**  
NEW DELHI, MAY 10

India’s Consul General in northern Afghanistan Vinesh Kumar Kalra has died of cardiac arrest there after contracting Covid. Mr. Kalra, who was posted at the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, is the first Indian diplomat posted abroad to die after being infected with the deadly virus, sources confirmed.

Expressing his condolences, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar tweeted, “Deeply grieved at the passing away of Shri Vinesh Kalra, Consul General, Mazar-e-Sharif. A conscientious and dedicated colleague, he will be missed by us all. Sincerest condolences to his family.”

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokes person Arindam Bagchi tweeted, “@MEAIndia sincerely condoles the passing away of Shri Vinesh Kalra, Consul General, Mazar-e-Sharif.”

**BIDEN'S CMA ADVICE**

**GETTING PEOPLE VACCINATED ONLY SOLUTION FOR INDIA: FAUCI**

Getting people vaccinated is the only long-term solution to the current Covid-19 crisis in India, America's top public health expert Dr Anthony Fauci said on Sunday as he called for scaling up manufacturing of Coronavirus vaccines both domestically and globally to fight the pandemic.

**■ REPORT ON PAGE 5**

# Nepal PM Oli loses trust vote

**Kathmandu, May 10:** Nepal Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli lost a trust vote in the House of Representatives on Monday, in a fresh setback to the embattled premier seeking to tighten his grip on power after the CPN (Maoist Centre) led by Pushpakamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ withdrew support to his government. Prime Minister Oli secured 93 votes in the lower house of parliament during a special session convened on the directives of President Bidya Devi Bhandari. Oli, 69, required at least 136 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives to win the confidence motion as four members are currently under suspension. A total of 124 members voted against the confidence motion while 15 members stayed neutral, Speaker Agni Sapkota announced. The session was attended by 232 lawmakers.

Some 28 Lawmakers belonging to Oli’s rival faction led by Madhav Nepal Jhala Nath Khanal abstained during the voting. The main Opposition Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), which control 61 and 49 votes, respective-



ly, voted against Oli’s trust motion. The Janata Samajbadi Party, which has 32 votes, however, was divided. The Mahantha Thakur-led faction stayed neutral while the Upendra Yadav-led group voted against Oli. After its alliance Nepal Communist Party Maoist Centre led by Prachanda withdrew its support to the government last week, Oli’s government was reduced to a minority one. After losing the Vote of Confidence, the Prime Minister is automatically removed from his post and now the new coalition government will be formed as per the constitutional process, said senior Nepali Congress leader Prakash Man Singh. Senior leader of CPN-Maoist Ganesh Shah said that Oli should immediately resign from the post and pave way for the formation of an alternative government.

Vol. 11 No.134 Established 1938 | 8 PAGES| 4.00

## STAVES OFF OPS

# EPS voted Oppn leader by party

**G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC**  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

After three hours of stormy deliberations, the newly elected AIADMK MLAs chose former Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami as their Legislative Party Leader, which will make him the Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly.

The MLAs met for the second time to elect their leader in the House on Monday. The first meeting on May 7 saw a pitched battle between Palaniswami and the AIADMK coordinator O Panneerselvam, leading to an impasse.

When the meeting began at around 9.30 am Monday, the mood among the supporters of both the leaders was to put up a strong fight. It was evident from the boisterous welcome both leaders received as they entered the AIADMK headquarters on Avvai Shanmugham Salai.

The huge congregation at the premises portended a battle of wits inside the hall, too. Even as supporters of both Palaniswami and Panneerselvam were speaking out as to why their leader should be the right choice, Panneerselvam quered the pitch with his proposal.

Panneerselvam, who had staked his claim for the post saying that in the earlier showdown when he wanted to become the Chief Minister he was promised a chance “the next time,” suddenly proposed the name of former Speaker Dhanapal, which was vehemently shot down by the MLAs.

Most of the MLAs spoke in



favour of Palaniswami, saying that he was behind the victory of so many MLAs of the party as he had spent money during the elections. But still Panneerselvam was digging in his heels. Finally OPS gave up when it was suggested that they go for a secret ballot. By then he had realised that the majority of the MLAs were in favour of his rival.

Since some top leaders of the party like S P Velumani and Thangamani were trying to pacify him and not back him, Panneerselvam realised that his game was up. He stormed out of the meeting before it concluded but signed in the joint statement issued by him and Palaniswami on the party letterhead announcing the result of the election.

Many party leaders were upset over Panneerselvam trying to throw a spanner into the party wheels by making such demands. Some even suggested that he was behaving in that fashion at the behest of VK Sasikala.

However, many other parties are yet to announce the leaders of their legislative parties. The Congress MLAs who met earlier on May 7 could not arrive at a decision with two MLAs from Kanyakumari district, Prince and Vijayadharani, staking claim over the post, citing seniority

## Bengal Guv vows to go ahead with tour of violence-hit areas

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC**  
KOLKATA, MAY 10

In what appears to be his first confrontation with the third Trinamul Congress ministry in West Bengal, state governor Jagdeep Dhankhar on Monday accused the Mamata Banerjee government of not arranging his visits to the post-poll violence-hit parts of the state. Mr Dhankhar vowed to go ahead with his planned visits on his own as Nandigram BJP MLA Suvendu Adhikari took a swipe at the chief over the post-poll violence after he became the new Leader of the Opposition.

At Raj Bhavan, the governor alleged: “We are in a very deep crisis in the state. Post-poll retributive violence, acts of arson and loot have graded to intimidation and extortion. This is very worrisome. I therefore decided to visit the affected parts of the state as part of my constitutional duty. I asked the state government to make a r r a n g e m e n t s . Unfortunately, the response has not been very responsive. I will go ahead with my schedule. This is the time for me to perform my constitutional duty to share the pain, agony and anguish of the suffering people, and will therefore make arrangements for such visits in the coming days.”

He claimed: “The most alarming situation, the most concerning facet of this violence, is that in democracy the people are made to pay the price with their lives, rights and human rights because they chose to vote.”



## SHORT TAKES

## Two mobile snatchers nabbed

Chennai, May 10 : Two alleged mobile - snatchers were nabbed by the victim with the help of the police after a relentless search in Alandur.

The incident took place on Monday when Swetha ( 22) of Besant Nagar was riding pillion with his friend to the Chennai airport.

According to police sources, when the duo was crossing Alandur, suddenly two men on a two - wheeler snatched her Rs 1.2 lakh worth iPhone in a flash. They fled even as the woman and her friend chased the miscreants. A Sub Inspector of police attached to the St. Thomas Mount station noticed the chasing and joined the chase.

They continued to chase the bikers and reached near Thillaianga nagar subway, where they were caught. The two accused Parthiban (19) of Velachery and Samuel (21) of Adambakkam. Police recovered the mobile phone from them. They were arrested and further investigation is under progress.

—DC

## 2.5 kg gold granules seized

Chennai, May 10 : Chennai cir customs has busted a new modus operandi by seizing gold granules concealed in the instant drink mix which arrived in a postal parcel for the first time. The gold granules worth ₹1.20 crore, were seized at the Foreign post office.

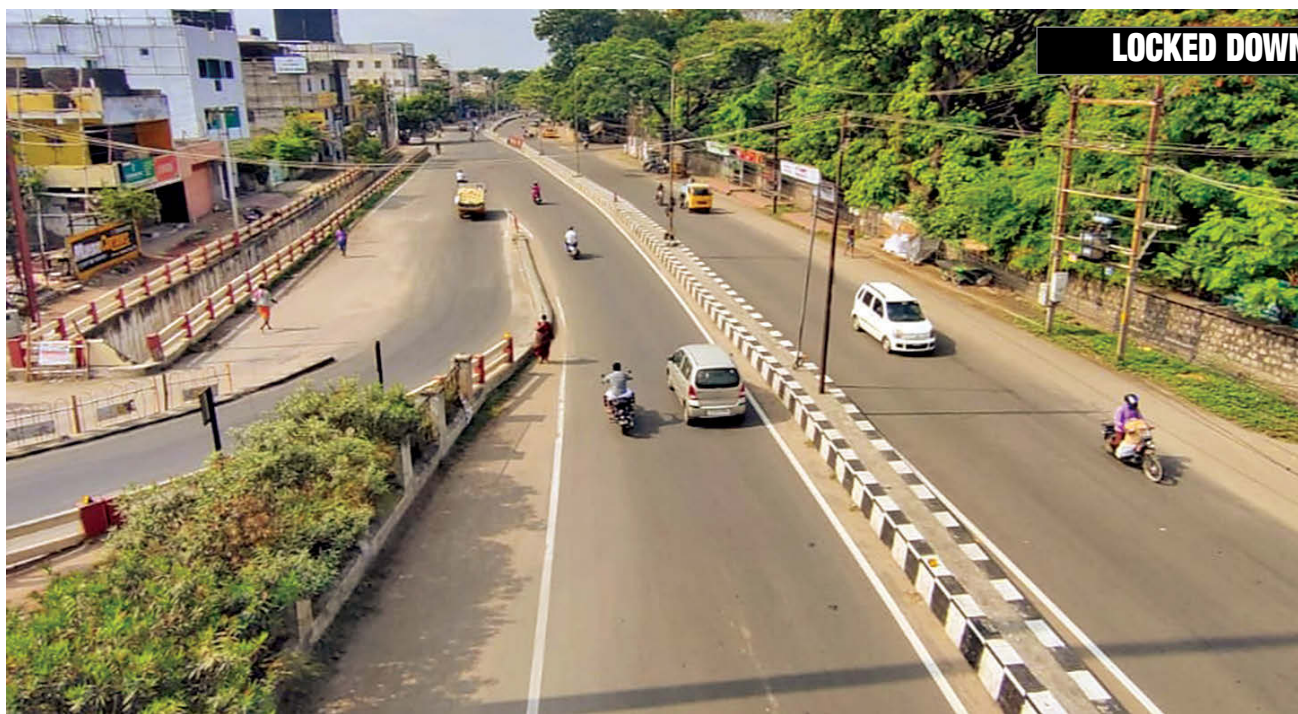
Based on intelligence that smugglers may resort to smuggling of gold in postal mode, a high alert was maintained at Foreign Post Office. One postal parcel which arrived from Dubai a few days ago was intercepted at FPO on suspicion of containing gold.

The parcel was declared to contain "seeds" and addressed to a Chennai based person. On cut opening, the parcel four big containers 2.5 kg each of Tang Orange instant drink mix were found inside along with packets of white oats and chocolates.

On examination, the containers were found to be unusually heavy. On opening the containers found to be having original aluminium foil lids. On cut opening lids gold granules mixed with orange powder were found inside containers. The gold granules were then segregated from the orange powder mix by using a sieve. Total 2.5 kg of gold granules valued at ₹1.20 crore were recovered and seized under Customs Act.

Searches were carried out and it was found that the address of the receiver has been misused. The role of the postal staff is being investigated. Further investigation is under progress.

—DC



Several arterial roads in Coimbatore and Madurai wear a deserted look after the two-week lockdown came into force on Monday. TNSTC buses, which will not be running owing to lockdown, are parked in bus depot.

—DC



## Give vax preference to petrol bunk dealers, staff, says assn

A. ARUL PALANI | DC  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

The Tamil Nadu Petroleum Dealers Association (TNPDA) has requested the Central and state governments to give preference in the administration of inoculation to all frontline retail outlets staff members and dealers across the state.

In a representation sent to the union ministry of petroleum and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Monday, TNPDA president K.P. Murali said that even dealers in the prime of their lives have succumbed to this deadly disease, leaving their families in the lurch.

He said the dealers and staff in the petrol refilling

stations are operating under heavy risk and their family members also face the risk. Since their duty is an essential service, they continue to work even during the pandemic lockdown.

Murali requested Stalin to initiate action at the earliest to administer Covid-19 vaccine to dealers and staff and

shore up their morale in this calamitous time.

He said during the last 13 months many frontline staff members and dealers have fallen prey to the deadly virus in the line of duty. The dealers and staff are being put to great risk by the nature of the business, which involves dealings with large numbers of customers for long hours.

J.STALIN | DC  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

The Madras high court has asked the Union government to take immediate urgent measures both to augment the supply of oxygen in Tamil Nadu and of vaccines and drugs to Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

Passing further interim orders on a suo motu proceedings initiated pursuant to newspapers reports about the alleged shortage of oxygen and drug Remdesivir, and another batch of PILs, the first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthikumar Ramamoorthy said additional solicitor-general Shankaranarayanan has assured to take up the case of both the state and the Union Territory with the Centre, at least till such time that the National Task Force set up by the Supreme Court order gets down to the nitty-gritty of allocation and the like. It is necessary that immediate urgent measures be taken, both to augment the supply of oxygen in the State and of vaccines and drugs to both the State and the Union Territory, the bench added.

The bench said Advocate General R.Shanmugasundaram has referred to an order of the Supreme Court passed on May 6, 2021, by which a National

Task Force has been constituted, inter lia, to assess and make recommendations for distribution of medical oxygen for the entire country, review and suggest measures necessary for ensuring the availability of essential drugs and medicines, plan and adopt remedial measures to meet future emergencies arising during the pandemic, suggest measures to augment the availability of personnel and facilitate the sharing of best practices and make recommendations in regard to other issues to find an effective response to the pandemic, the bench added.

The bench said as far as the supply of oxygen to the State was concerned, the State's demand about a week back was for 475 MT of oxygen on a daily basis. Against this, the allocation of May 8, 2021 provides for 419 MT, including a daily 40 MT supply from Palakkad in Kerala till May 12, 2021. The State now perceives that, with the rising numbers, the demand for oxygen will hit 800 MT within the next few days and seeks augmented supply of oxygen. It has been submitted on behalf of the State that the Sterlite factory in Thoothukudi may begin production this week with an anticipated 40 MT per day initial supply, the bench added.

The bench said both

Tamil Nadu and Puducherry seem to be crying out for the requisite supply of drugs and vaccines. In Tamil Nadu, the vaccination for persons below the age of 45 has not been possible because of the lack of the number of doses. In Puducherry, the position appears to be somewhat better with about 2 lakh doses in hand out of slightly over 4 lakh doses that had been allocated and supplied to the Union Territory. Similarly, Remdesivir appears to be in short supply in both the State and the Union Territory.

Puucherry has a little over 7,00 vials left for distribution. In Tamil Nadu additional centres have been opened up in cities other than Chennai for supply of Remdesivir to private persons. "This is one area that should be looked into by the State with immediate effect as all patients may not have available representative to stand in queue at government outlets to obtain the drug and, in any event, verification of the requirement together with proper certification may be better done at a government to private hospital basis with a degree of accountability if it was ultimately found that the private hospital may have tinkered with the details or eligibility criteria", the bench added.

## Match box units in state to shut during lockdown 104 flights cancelled

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUNELVELI, MAY 10

The match box manufacturers in the state have decided to suspend production despite the state government permitting the industry to go ahead with its work during lockdown.

The reason, according to the match box manufacturers in Kovilpatti, the hub of match sticks production in Tamil Nadu, was the problem in supply of raw materials and getting new orders.

Having 90 percent of its match manufacturing units concentrated in the southern districts of Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli, Tenkasi and

Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu, however, is dependent on states like Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra for major raw materials including logs to produce the match sticks. The much-needed chemical, potassium chloride, has to come from Pondicherry.

"Due to the Covid-19 lockdown in these states, the raw material supply chain is cut off," said Paramasivam of National Small Manufacturers Association in Kovilpatti.

The industry also feels the stress on the market side, as the northern states, the major market for the match boxes produced by around 300 small and medium units at Kovilpatti, Sattur,

Sivakasi, Sankarankoil in the southern districts, too are under prolonged lockdown.

"Hence we have decided to close down the industry during the lockdown period so that our workers can stay safe at home till May 24," he said.

He also wanted the state government to give a special assistance for the sustenance of around three lakh workers during the lockdown days.

Another three lakh workers in and around Sivakasi and Sattur went jobless as the cracker units too were not permitted to function during the lockdown days till May 24.

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

At least 104 domestic flights were cancelled at the Chennai airport on the first day of state-wide lockdown on Monday, despite the state barring the air services.

According to officials of the Chennai airport, on Monday, 104 flights — 54 arrivals and 50 departures— were cancelled to and from Chennai. Airlines said that the cancellations were due to poor patronage. Most of the flights had very few passengers and the airlines had to cancel it because it may not be profitable.

Sources said even three months back the air passenger traffic was particularly high and 270 domestic flights operated from and to Chennai in a day. On Monday only 99 flights provided service. The airport saw 2,000 passengers arriving in the city and 4,500 departing from here.

## Chennai police start 24X7 helpdesk; AC to supervise team

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

The Greater Chennai Police have started a round-the-clock lockdown help desk as the statewide lockdown for 14 days began on Monday. The public is requested to contact the help desk emergency numbers 9498181236 and 9498181239.

The help desk will assist the public who require any clarification regarding the Covid lockdown mechanism including procedure for movement of persons in general and other specifics such as e-registration, assistance for senior citizens and single woman staying alone without care, help for movement of oxygen tankers/cylinders by the manufacturers to various hospitals / Covid centres without any hindrance, movement of essential commodities and guidance for purchase of Remdesivir medicine.

The help desk will function 24x7 under the supervision of an assistant commissioner of police/modern control room with a team of police personnel.



Police checking motorists at Perungalathur on Monday.

—DC

## Remdesivir shortage: CM urges Union min to intervene immediately

From P1

He said the queues outside the counters to buy Remdesivir was long and a shortage of the drug could have disastrous consequences and urged the union minister to intervene immediately.

Meanwhile Stalin flagged off 500 oxygen concentrators, donated by the Srinivasan Services Trust, to the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and the Stanley Medical College Hospital at the Secretariat, besides receiving 300 oxygen concentrators donated by OLAM International and TEMASEC.

Singapore Consul General in Chennai, Pong Kok Tian, First Secretary John Cheo, Deputy Consul General Abraham Dan and the OLAM honcho Thiagarajan Manikantan handed over the concentrators with the capacity of five litres each to the Chief Minister.

Srinivasan Services Trust has pledged to donate 1600 concentrators worth Rs 18 crore to the State on behalf of TVS Motor Company and Sundaram Clayton. Monday's dispatch was the first instalment and it was handed over by Swaran Singh, chairman of the Trust, and Sethuraman of TVS Motor Co.

## Oxygen plants at 142 places soon: Health min

Chennai, May 10: The number of people who tested positive for COVID-19 on Monday increased to 28,978 in Tamil Nadu, including 7,149 fresh infections in the State capital, Chennai.

With the death of 232 people (98 in private and 134 in government hospitals), the total fatalities rose to 15,880 in the State.

Minister for Medical and Family Welfare Ma Subramanian said efforts were on to establish oxygen plants at 142 places across

Tamil Nadu to meet the additional requirement for the medical oxygen to treat the infected.

The projects have been sanctioned by Chief Minister M. K. Stalin and one each will come up at Perambalur, Virudhunagar and Nilgiris districts at a cost of ₹60 lakh each, the minister told reporters after inspecting the government hospital at Avadi, near here, on Monday.

The total number testing positive till date increased

to 14,09,237 and the number of active cases as on today remains at 1,52,389.

The number of positive patients discharged after treatment stands at 20,904 and the total is 12,40,968. Next to Chennai, Coimbatore registered 2,781 cases followed by Chengalpattu with 2,181 cases, Madurai: 1,024, Thiruvallur: 1,008, Krishnagiri: 895, Tiruchirappalli: 869, Tirunelveli: 862 and Thanjavur: 831.

—PTI



Greater Chennai Corporation Commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi inspects food given to Covid patients at a care centre in Jawahar Engineering College, Chennai, on Monday.

—DC

## Off-centre

## May Day Covid care

Amid the Covid-19 second wave threatening the state, Thanjavur district collector M. Govinda Rao decided to celebrate May 1, the global workers' day, with the patients at the Corona care centre at Vallam near Thanjavur. Some voluntary organisations like Jemma Muthamizh Sangam, Thanjavur palace city Lions Club and AMC alumni virtual Lions Club were roped in and dry fruits hampers were distributed to 375 Covid patients, spending time in isolation at the care centre. To entertain them, a music programme by Lion Franklin was arranged in the evening. "Our thanks to the district collector who remembered us on May Day and gave us dry fruits and music", said the patients. Doctors, nurses, sanitary workers and security personnel at the care centre also participated.

— G. Srinivasan

## Diff-abled churn out dishes for patients

In a novel venture, two differently-abled persons have opened a cloud kitchen in the city to serve home-cooked meals for Covid-19 patients under home quarantine. The two women, Rathinam and Pramila, who are hearing impaired, started the kitchen in Velachery with the help of a sign language translator. The duo cook healthy traditional dishes with ragi, millets and kambu. They curate meals according to the needs of corona patients. Three hearing-impaired people help them in the kitchen. People leave messages booking their orders and the food is delivered at their doorstep observing Covid protocols.

— Sindhiya Samuel

## Special Task Force's Covid task in MTR

In order to ward off the Covid-19 virus from the remote tribal villages in Siriyoor jungle in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve buffer zone limits, the Special Task Force (STF) is doing a yeoman service by educating the tribal residents on the need to wear masks and following other Covid-19 protocols including social distancing. The STF men, who had been camping in different locations inside the jungles to combat the Maoist threat, visited the tribal villages in Siriyoor belt to create an awareness among the tribals on the dreaded Corona, distributed face masks and appealed to them to stay indoors and follow the prevention norms to keep the tribal villages in good health.

— B. Ravichandran







## SHORT TAKES

GOLD GRANULES  
RECOVERED FROM  
INSTANT DRINK

**Chennai, May 10:** The Air Customs here on Monday claimed to have busted a new modus operandi vis-a-vis gold-smuggling, with officials recovering the yellow metal concealed as granules in instant drink mix.

The seizure was made from the Foreign Post Office (FPO) here based on intelligence that smugglers may resort to smuggling of gold in postal mode.

Accordingly, a postal parcel, which arrived from Dubai a few days ago, was intercepted at FPO on suspicion of containing gold, an official release here said.

The parcel was declared to contain seeds and addressed to a city-based person, but when it was cut open, officials discovered four big containers of an instant drink mix that they found unusually heavy.

“On opening, the containers were found to be having original aluminium foil lids. On cut opening the lids, gold granules mixed with orange powder were found in the containers. The gold granules were then segregated from the orange powder mix by using a sieve,” the release said.

A total of 2.5 kg of gold granules valued at Rs 1.20 crore were recovered. Searches were carried out and it was found that the address of the receiver has been misused, it said.

“The role of the postal staff is being investigated,” it added.

RAPE ACCUSED  
TIES NUPTIAL  
KNOT WITH VICTIM

**Kota (Rajasthan), May 10:** A rape accused tied the wedding knot with the complainant at a police station in Rajasthan's Kota district on Monday, police said.

They decided to marry after a compromise was reached between them with the help of police intervention.

The girl's brother, the man's father and the police were present at the temple in Ramganj Mandi police station premises where the couple exchanged wedding vows and garlands, Superintendent of Police, Kota (Rural), Sharad Choudhary said.

Earlier this month, the survivor had lodged a case of rape under IPC Section 376 against Motilal who is her neighbour, police said.

They were reportedly having an affair and after Motilal refused to marry the girl, she filed a complaint against him.

Investigation into the matter was underway, Choudhary said, adding that the wedding was performed as per Covid-19 guidelines.

The matter is sub judice in court, Station House Officer at Ramganj Mandi police station, Harish Bharti said.

Meanwhile, Sub-Divisional Magistrate at Ramganj Mandi, Balkishan Tiwari denied permission to the couple to organise a wedding ceremony in view of the Covid-19 crisis in the country.

ROW OVER BJP  
MLA'S 25-YR-OLD  
SON GETTING JAB

**Dehradun, May 10:** A controversy has erupted in Uttarakhand over a BJP MLA's 25-year-old son getting the anti-Coronavirus vaccine jab despite the fact that inoculation of people in his age group is yet to begin in the state.

The vaccination process for people aged 18-44 years begins officially in Uttarakhand on Monday. However, BJP MLA from Khanpur Kunwar Pranav Singh Champion's son Divya Pratap Singh Champion got the jab on May 5.

The controversy broke out when pictures of Divya Pratap Singh getting the vaccine shot went viral on social media on Saturday.

Doon hospital staff requesting anonymity said the MLA, along with his wife and son, arrived at the medical superintendent's residence on May 5 and allegedly pressured the doctors to administer the vaccine dose to his son.

The Aam Aadmi Party questioned how the vaccination was administered to the MLA's son when the drive for those aged 18 or above was yet to start.

AAP's state spokesperson Raju Maurya said the incident had come to light last week and his party has sent a complaint to Uttarakhand Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat through the Haridwar district magistrate and demanded an inquiry into it.

Party doesn't  
pay attention to  
Raut: Congress

**BHAGWAN PARAB | DC  
MUMBAI, MAY 10**

Irked by the constant deriding by Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut over the leadership issue of anti-BJP front, the Congress on Monday said it does not give any importance to Mr Raut.

Expressing his displeasure on Mr Raut's comments on Congress's downfall, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole said, “We don't pay attention to everything that Mr Raut says. We also do not read Shiv Sena mouthpiece Saamana. Mr Raut keeps pointing fingers at others. But he doesn't realise that his party will not grow by merely criticizing others.”

The Congress made the country self-reliant through various schemes like green revolution and white revolution. However, the BJP government has made the country so weak that it is seeking help from poor countries, he added.

“Only Congress has the ability to pull the country out of the coronavirus crisis. Even Sanjay Raut has said that Congress is the soul of the country and we agree to him on that,” said Mr Patole.

The Congress has played a big role in making India a prosperous country and the development works did by various Congress governments have made India stand firmly across the world, the Congress leader added.

After the assembly polls results in five states, Mr Raut had raised question marks over the Congress

● **THE CONGRESS** made the country self-reliant through various schemes like green revolution and white revolution. However, the BJP government has made the country so weak that it is seeking help from poor countries, he added.

leadership saying the downfall of the party is painful and it needs to improve its strength in the country. “The Congress performed well in Assam assembly polls, but it could not come to power. They also received some success in Kerala and Tamil Nadu,” he said.

“The pain over the downfall of the Congress is equally intense. If the situation is like this today, where will the Congress be in the 2024 electoral scenario? If the Opposition tries to form an alliance together, who will represent it? It should be unanimously decided and the Congress should also agree to it,” the Sena Rajya Sabha MP added.

Mr Raut has been insisting that Mr Pawar should lead the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Mr Raut had earlier said that the UPA is ‘paralysed’ now and hence a non-Congress leader like Mr Pawar should lead it at the national level. His statement has invoked an angry reaction from the Congress leaders, which asked whether the Sena leader was a spokesperson of Mr Pawar.

LOCKDOWN BEGINS ON SOFT NOTE  
WITH COPS WARNING OFFENDERS

**FROM PG 1**

All other business establishments, big and small, remained shut and no public transport like city buses, suburban trains, Metro Rail services, auto rickshaws, taxis was allowed to operate, as it was announced earlier.

However, in a sudden decision, the government operated 200 city buses to ferry those exempted from lockdown to reach their destinations. For, the government itself has exempted many essential services like health, revenue and

so on from the lockdown.

Since many employees did not have the means to reach their work spots, the buses came to their rescue and the gesture was widely appreciated by those commuters.

Similarly, when Chief Minister M K Stalin learnt that several railway wait list passengers, who had booked tickets for long distance travels, were stranded at the Central Station, he dispatched two senior IAS officers to sort out the issue and earned encomiums.

Home ministry rules  
out national lockdown

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, MAY 10**

Home Ministry has ruled out any possibility of a nationwide lockdown saying only “local lockdown and containment” zones will be identified and imposed by respective State Governments. Sources said the issue of nationwide lockdown was discussed at the highest level but Govt decided against it as it would have dealt a severe blow to the economy. Instead, it was decided to let State Governments decide on the issue.

Sources said apart from the economic considerations it was also felt that Corona situation in every region or State was differ-

ent from the others. Thus, in areas where positivity rate was less there was no pointing in disrupting the economic activity. In fact, officials added, even with one particular States there was lot of variation in Corona rate from one region to another.

Hence, officials added, after lot of deliberations at the “highest levels in the Government” it was decided that this time during the second wave it would be best to leave the decision on lockdown or local containment zones to the States.

Each State can decide on what kind of lockdown or restrictions they need to impose keeping in view their local ground situation.

**JAL JEEVAN | MISSION**

## UT of Puducherry is now planning for effective treatment of greywater

## Puducherry achieves 100% tap water connection

**New Delhi, May 10:** Puducherry has achieved the target of 100 per cent piped water connection in rural areas under the Jal Jeevan Mission, the Jal Shakti ministry said on Monday.

Punjab, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and Daman and Diu too have crossed the milestone of covering 75 per cent of rural homes with assured tap water supply, the ministry added.

“Puducherry has become

‘Har Ghar Jal’ UT by ensuring that every rural home in the Union Territory gets a household tap connection, the ministry said in a statement.

All 1.16 lakh rural households in Puducherry have tap water supply now, it said.

With this, the Union Territory became the fourth State/UT after Goa, Telangana and Andaman and Nicobar Islands to provide assured tap water supply to every rural

Appeal to ULFA(I) chief to  
abjure violence: Himanta

## Calls for Cabinet to meet to discuss on Covid-19 situation in Assam today

**MANOJ ANAND | DC  
GUWAHATI, MAY 10**

Assam's new chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who took the oath and assumed office on Monday morning, straightaway called upon the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) commander-in-chief, Paresh Baruah, to abjure the path of violence and come to the table for talks. Saying the agenda of his government will be to maintain the state's prevailing peace and harmony and take it on the path of prosperity, Mr Sarma told reporters the people would get a proactive government which will work round the clock for them.

“You will see a proactive government which will be there for you at 12 midnight, at 5 am and also at 2 pm. We will try and resolve all pending issues and seek the blessings of the people of Assam,” he said.

He said his government's prime focus will be to fulfil electoral promises of one lakh jobs, waive off all microfinance loans taken by women in the state and further strengthen the Arunodoi scheme, that provides Rs 830 to eligible households every month. Mr Sarma said the first Cabinet meeting of his government will take place on Tuesday, and the prevailing Covid-19 situation will be on top of the agenda. “We will announce a planned roadmap to handle this Covid crisis. Daily cases in Assam have crossed 5,000. The situation in Assam may affect the other northeastern states as well,” he said.



Assam Governor Jagdish Mukhi greets the new Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma during his swearing-in ceremony at Srimanta Sankaradev Kalakshetra in Guwahati, on Monday.

— PTI

The chief minister pledged that all the promises made by the BJP and its allies in their election manifesto will be fulfilled. “We saw peace and development in the past five years. I appeal to the remaining outlawed armed outfits in Assam to join the peace talks. I would make a special request to the leader of the United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (Ulfa-I) Paresh Baruah to shun violence and join talks for permanent peace in the state.”

In response to a question on the NRC, Mr Sarma said that as promised by the BJP in its manifesto, his government would seek re-verification of the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The document that lists Indian citizens in Assam was released in 2019 with exclusion of the names of 1.9 million applicants. The BJP has termed it as faulty, saying while many genuine citizens got left out, those with dubious credentials managed to get enlisted. “Our view on the NRC is

very clear. We want 20 per cent re-verification of the list in districts bordering Bangladesh and 10 per cent in other districts. If after that, the NRC is found to be correct, the government will accept it and take the process forward. But if the NRC is found faulty after re-verification, we would plead before the Supreme Court to view this issue critically,” said the chief minister.

On the granting of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Ahoms, Koch-Rajbongshi, Moran, Motok, Sootias

and tea-tribe, Mr Sarma said the state government would try and resolve the issue through talks and without affecting the rights of tribes already under the ST ambit.

On concerns about Assam's financial situation, Mr Sarma, who held the finance portfolio in the previous government, said the state has nearly RS 7,000 crores in its treasury and stressed there was no cause of concern as the state's fiscal health was among the best in the country.

## 43 TMC leaders sworn-in as ministers

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI | DC  
KOLKATA, MAY 10**

Forty-three Trinamul Congress leaders took their oath as ministers -- 24 with Cabinet rank, 10 ministers of state (independent charge) and nine others as ministers of state in the third Mamata Banerjee government in West Bengal on Monday morning. The CM was present at the swearing-in ceremony.

Among them, three were sworn in at their residences in virtual mode by governor Jagdeep Dhankhar from the Raj Bhavan's Throne Room, marking a first due to Covid-19

pandemic. They are Amit Mitra, who becomes the state's finance minister for the third time though he did not contest the Assembly election, Dum Dum MLA Bratya Basu and Madhyamgram MLA Rathin Ghosh. While Dr Mitra has not been keeping well, Mr Basu and Mr Ghosh had been infected by Covid-19 recently.

The ministerial portfolio allocations of the third TMC government also bears a massive change with Ms Banerjee, as CM, heading the maximum number of departments (six), including home and hill affairs and health.

In a significant move to

boost women's empowerment, she also raised the number of women ministers to nine, including herself. Four of them are new faces, while the total number of new faces among the 43 is 16.

Ms Banerjee's Cabinet colleague Partha Chatterjee, who held education in the last term, has got three departments — industry, commerce and enterprises; information technology and electronics and parliamentary affairs.

The education portfolio went to Mr Basu while Mr Ghosh has been given food and supplies, of which Jyotipriyo Mullick was the minister earlier. Mr

Mullick is now minister of forest, non-conventional and renewable energy sources. Former minister Chandrima Bhattacharya also got three portfolios.

But the most surprising allocation was of outgoing Kolkata mayor and former municipal affairs and urban development development minister Firhad Hakim, known for his proximity to the TMC chief. He has got transport and housing this time.

In the afternoon Ms Banerjee chaired a Cabinet meeting with the new ministers at Nabanna, the state secretariat, and discussed her priorities regarding Covid-19.



Natasha Narwal

HC GRANTS BAIL  
TO NATASHA  
NARWAL AFTER  
FATHER DIES

**New Delhi, May 10:** The Delhi High Court Monday granted bail to JNU student Natasha Narwal, arrested last year in May in connection with the communal riots in north-east Delhi to perform the last rites of her father who succumbed to Covid-19.

The court granted the relief as her brother is also infected with Covid-19 and the state did not oppose the plea. “In view of the foregoing and in the interests of justice, we are of the view that the release of the applicant/appellant (Natasha Narwal) is imperative in this hour of grief and personal loss and in the facts and circumstances of the case.”

“We accordingly direct that the appellant/applicant Natasha Narwal be released forthwith on interim bail for a period of 3 weeks,” a bench of Justices Siddharth Mridul and A. J. Bhambhani said. It said that interim bail granted to Narwal, a Pinjra Tod activist, would be subject to her furnishing of a personal bond of Rs 50,000. Pinjra Tod (Break the Cage) was founded in 2015 to make hostels and paying guest accommodations less restrictive for women students.

The bench also directed that Narwal, represented by advocate Adit S Pujari, will provide a cell phone number to the SHO, PS Crime Branch (Special Cell) on which she may be contacted at any time and which she has to keep operational during the entire period of her release. — PTI

**DC CORRESPONDENT  
MUMBAI, MAY 10**

After NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant lauded the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for its management of the second Covid wave, the NCP has hit back against BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis, who has accused the BMC of creating perception contrary to ground situation. “The Supreme Court, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and now Niti Aayog have lauded the efforts of the BMC in tackling the coro-

navirus pandemic. Their appreciation has exposed the BJP leader,” said the NCP leader Nawab Malik. Mr Fadnavis has claimed that the BMC lowered the number of tests in order to show fewer cases.

Mr Kant took to Twitter to applaud BMC and wrote, “Centralized bed allotment, anticipating oxygen storage facilities, common allotment of beds even in pvt hospitals, dashboards for monitoring, war rooms for patient follow up. Inspirational Mumbai model of Covid Mngmnt. Congrats my-

bmc Commissioner Chahal & his Gr8 team (sic).” Meanwhile, state NCP chief Jayant Patil has reiterated the Maharashtra Government's demand that there should be a separate app for each state for the vaccination drive.

“The technical issues with the Cowin app are putting lakhs of people at disadvantage. Therefore the Centre should decentralise the vaccination app completely,” demanded Mr Patil.

“There are a lot of technical errors in the Cowin app as several people have

complained about delays for login and OTP. It is very challenging for about 1.3 billion Indians to register on time for a single central app. In such a scenario, the implementation system of such an important vaccination programme is limited and the errors in it are very serious,” said Mr Patil.

Chief minister Uddhav Thackeray has requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to create a separate app for each state or allow the Maharashtra Government to create its own app.

● **PUDUCHERRY HAS 84** irrigation tanks and more than 500 ponds which are the lifeline for groundwater recharging systems, drinking water and agri-culture.

home under the Centre's flagship programme by 2024.

“Puducherry's achievement is another timely indicator of JJM's success as people living in rural areas can practice regular

handwashing at home and maintain physical distancing by avoiding crowds at public stand posts, it said.

In Punjab, 26.31 lakh households (76 per cent) out of 34.73 lakh have tap water supply and it plans for 100 per cent coverage of all rural households by 2022.

The UT of Puducherry is now planning for effective treatment and reuse of greywater coming out of homes.

The UT is actively work-

ing towards water source sustainability. The four regions, namely the Pondicherry region, Karaikal, Yanam and Mahe region are at different locations, geographically separated from each other.

Puducherry has various rivers and tributaries. There are five rivers in Puducherry district, seven in Karaikal district, two in Mah district and one in Yanam district drain into the sea, but none origi-

nates within the territory, the ministry said.

Puducherry has 84 irrigation tanks and more than 500 ponds which are the lifeline for groundwater recharging systems, drinking water and agriculture.

Puducherry has been consistently working towards de-silting of ponds and rejuvenation of its local water bodies, which is crucial for drinking water supply schemes, it added. — PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## MAN KILLS 6, THEN SELF, AT BIRTHDAY PARTY

**Colorado Springs (US):** A gunman opened fire at a birthday party in Colorado, slaying six adults before killing himself Sunday, police said.

The shooting happened just after midnight in a mobile home park on the east side of Colorado Springs, police said. Officers arrived at a trailer to find six dead adults and a man with serious injuries who died later at a hospital, the Colorado Springs Gazette reported.

The suspected shooter was the boyfriend of a female victim at the party attended by friends, family and children. He walked inside and opened fire before shooting himself, police said. The birthday party was for one of the people killed, police said.

Neighbor Yenifer Reyes told The Denver Post she woke to the sound of many gunshots. "I thought it was a thunderstorm," Reyes said.

## MAN HURLS SLUR, KICKS INDIAN WOMAN IN S'PORE

**Singapore:** In an apparent incident of hate crime, a man hurled racial slurs and kicked a 55-year-old Indian-origin woman in Singapore for not wearing a mask while she was brisk walking.

Hindocha Nita Vishnubhai, a private tutor, was brisk walking on Friday morning when a man approached her and asked her to pull her mask up from her chin, her daughter Parveen Kaur was quoted as saying by the Channel News Asia on Monday. Nita was walking along Choa Chu Kang Drive when the man came up to her near a bus stop outside Northvale condominium, according to the Channel report.

"She explained that she was brisk walking but he didn't care. He hurled vulgarities and racial slurs at her," Kaur said in a widely circulated Instagram post. "My mum responded with a 'God bless you' and the guy kicked her in the chest. My mum landed on her back and hurt herself," she said. The man, whose identity is not yet known, ran away while the woman was left bleeding.

## 5 MIGRANTS DROWNED OFF LIBYA, SAYS UN

**Cairo:** At least five people, including a woman and a child, drowned when a boat carrying at least 45 Europe-bound migrants capsized off Libya, a UN migration official said on Monday.

The wreck was the latest disaster in the Mediterranean Sea involving migrants seeking a better life in Europe.

Safa Msehli, a spokeswoman for the International Organisation for Migration, said the wreck took place on Sunday. She said fishermen rescued 40 migrants and returned them to the shore. Msehli said the boat was among nine others carrying more than 700 migrants intercepted Sunday by the Libyan coast guard off the coast of the North African country.

The migrants were taken to overcrowded detention centers, where the UN migration agency fears more threats to their lives and violations of their rights, she said.

Libya has in recent years emerged as the dominant transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East.

## S.KOREAN POLICE SUMMON ACTIVIST OVER LEAFLETS

**Seoul:** South Korean police on Monday summoned an activist who said he flew hundreds of thousands of anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets toward North Korea in defiance of a new law that criminalises such activities.

The questioning of Park Sang-hak came hours after President Moon Jae-in in a nationally televised speech issued apparent criticism toward Park without naming him, saying it's "never desirable" to dampen relations with the North by violating inter-Korean agreements and South Korean laws. While South Korea has faced criticism over the anti-leafleting law, which some human rights advocates see as an attack on democratic freedoms and efforts to break the North's information blockade, Moon stressed that his government has "no choice but to strictly enforce laws."

Police had searched Park's office last week after he announced that his group launched balloons carrying 500,000 leaflets, 5,000 one-dollar bills and 500 booklets about South Korea's economic riches across the border during April 25-29.

## China opposes Taiwan joining WHO meeting

**Beijing, May 10:** China's government criticised U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday for urging the World Health Organisation to invite Taiwan, the island democracy claimed by Beijing as part of its territory, to participate in a meeting this month.

Blinken's statement on Friday adds to a similar joint appeal by foreign ministers of the Group of Seven major economies this month in London. That irked the Communist Beijing government, which insists Taiwan has no right to conduct foreign relations or join global bodies.

Blinken's appeal "seriously violates the one-China principle" and joint US-Chinese declarations, said a Foreign

Ministry spokesperson, Hua Chunying. "China firmly deplores and rejects it."

Taiwan split with the Chinese mainland in 1949 after a civil war. The two sides have extensive trade ties but no official relations. The US and other major governments have no official ties with Taiwan, but Washington and some others have expressed growing support for Taiwan during the Coronavirus pandemic and in response to Beijing's increasing assertiveness abroad. Blinken called Taiwan a "force for good in the world" and said it should be invited as an observer at the meeting of the World Health Assembly, the WHO decision-making body. — AP



Palestinian man runs away from tear gas during clashes with Israeli security forces in front of the Dome of the Rock Mosque at the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City on Monday.

## 305 Palestinians injured in clash with Israeli police

**Jerusalem, May 10:** Israeli police firing tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets clashed with stone-throwing Palestinians at a flash-point Jerusalem holy site on Monday, the latest in a series of confrontations that threatened to push the contested city toward wider conflict.

More than a dozen tear gas canisters and stun grenades landed in the Al-Aqsa Mosque, one of Islam's holiest sites, as police and protesters faced off inside the walled compound that surrounds it, said a photographer at the scene. Smoke rose in front of the mosque and the iconic golden-domed shrine on the site, and rocks littered the nearby plaza. Inside one area of the compound, shoes and debris lay scattered over ornate carpets.

More than 305 Palestinians were hurt, including 228 who went to hospitals and clinics for

treatment, according to the Palestinian Red Crescent. Seven of the injured were in serious condition. Police said 21 officers were hurt, including three who were hospitalized. Israeli paramedics said seven Israeli civilians were also hurt.

The confrontation was the latest after weeks of mounting tensions between Palestinians and Israeli troops in the Old City of Jerusalem, the emotional center of their conflict. There have been almost nightly clashes during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, already a time of heightened religious sensitivities.

Most recently, the tensions have been fueled by the planned eviction of dozens of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of east Jerusalem where Israeli settlers have waged a lengthy legal battle to take over properties. — AP

## New military letter warns Prez over France's survival

**Paris, May 10:** A group of serving French soldiers has published a new open letter in a conservative magazine warning President Emmanuel Macron that the "survival" of France is at stake after he made "concessions" to Islamism.

The letter published in the conservative Valeurs Actuelles magazine published late on Sunday

echoes the tone of a similar letter printed in the same magazine last month which also warned a civil conflict was brewing.

The previous letter, signed by a handful of officers and some 20 semi-retired generals, sparked a furore in France with the prime minister calling it an unacceptable interference and France's top general vowing those behind

## Getting people vaccinated only solution for India: Fauci

Biden's Chief Medical Adviser suggests additional resources from outside India too

**Washington, May 9:** Getting people vaccinated is the only long-term solution to the current Covid-19 crisis in India, America's top public health expert Dr Anthony Fauci said on Sunday as he called for scaling up manufacturing of Coronavirus vaccines both domestically and globally to fight the deadly pandemic.

The endgame of this all...is going to be to get people vaccinated... India is the largest vaccine-producing country in the world. They've got to get their resources, not only from within, but also from without, Fauci, who is the Chief Medical Adviser to U.S. President Joe Biden, told the ABC News in an interview.

That's the reason why other countries need to chip in to be able to get either supplies to the Indians to make their own vaccines or to get vaccines donated. One of the ways to do that is to have the big companies that have the capability of making vaccines to really scale up in a great way to get literally hundreds of millions of doses to be able to get to them, he said.

Responding to a question, Dr Fauci said that India needs to immediately build makeshift field hospitals like what China did a year ago.

You've got to get that. You can't have people out in the street not having a hospital bed. The oxygen situation is something that was really critical. I mean, to have people not have oxygen is really tragic, what's going on over there, he said.

The 80-year-old physician and immunologist, who serves as the director of the U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases said there is an immediate problem of hospital beds, oxygen, PPE and other supplies.

Then there's the problem of looking forward to how are you going to shut this down, how are you going to turn it around, how are you going to break the chain of transmission? he said, underlining the need for a countrywide lockdown to arrest the spread of the virus.

Vaccines is one of them but there are other ways too, like shutting down the government. I have advised them in the past that you really need to do that. You've got to shut down, I believe several of the Indian states have already done that, but you need to break the chain of transmission. And one of the ways to do that is to shut down, the top American doctor said. Fauci, in an interview last week, had termed the situ-



Staff member cleans the terrace outside a cafe in Paris on Monday as France is set to reopen its trademark sidewalk cafes and restaurants on May 19.

— AFP

## Oz dismisses plea against ban on India returnees

**Melbourne, May 10:** An Australian court in Sydney on Monday dismissed the legal challenge filed by a 73-year-old citizen stranded in Bengaluru against the federal government's controversial decision to temporarily ban the return of its citizens from Covid-19 stricken India.

In its first hearing, Justice Thomas Thawley, who presided over the case, said the law was drafted with an appreciation that biosecurity emergencies might take a wide variety of forms and the

precise nature of future threats could not be known. "It is tolerably clear that the chief medical officer thought further relief would come to Australia's quarantine endeavour by preventing further entry, even for those travelling indirectly through transit hubs," the judge said.

The application was filed by lawyers acting for Gary Newman last week, seeking to overturn an emergency declaration made by Health Minister Greg Hunt last month under the Biosecurity Act. Newman,

who is stranded in Bengaluru since March last year, has said that the ban was "unconstitutional". The declaration had taken into effect last Monday making it punishable with a maximum USD 66,000 fine, five years' jail term, or both, for those who tried to return back to Australia and have been in India in the past 14 days.

The temporary suspension was aimed to reduce the public health risk posed due to massive Covid-19 cases in India, the government said.

— PTI

## NORWAY PANEL: DROP ASTRA, J&amp;J VACCINATION

**Oslo, May 10:** An expert committee set up by Norway's government to evaluate AstraZeneca's and Johnson & Johnson's Covid vaccines said on Monday that both should be abandoned over risks of rare but serious side effects.

In order to avoid a slow-down of the vaccine rollout the committee recommended that the two jabs should be made available for people on a voluntary basis.

— AF

## FRANCE ACCEPTS EU CURB ON ASTRA VACCINE

**Paris, May 9:** French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the decision from the European Union not to renew its order for the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine.

Macron said the EU policy is aiming at responding in particular to the variants... We see that some other vaccines are more efficient.

The bloc's Internal Market Commissioner, Thierry Breton, said on Sunday the EU Commission has not ordered AstraZeneca shots for after June. Two weeks ago, the EU launched legal proceedings against the pharmaceutical group for allegedly failing to respect the terms of its contract.

— AP

## London launches tourism campaign

**London, May 10:** London Mayor Sadiq Khan launched a campaign on Monday to bring tourists back to the British capital, ahead of a planned easing of government Covid-19 restrictions across England.

The 6 million (\$8.4 million, 7 million euro) campaign by Khan's office with the capital's tourism and transport bodies will look to drive domestic tourism to hospitality, culture, nightlife and retail venues in the city.

The plans are designed to boost the sectors, which

have been badly hit by months of closures and lockdown curbs during the pandemic.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected on Monday to confirm the next stage of his government's roadmap out of lockdown from next week, including a return to indoors mixing, and the reopening of cinemas and theatres.

Khan, who on Saturday was re-elected for a second term as mayor, called the initiative "the biggest domestic tourism campaign London has ever seen".

— AFP

## Labour min. swaps team post UK polls

**London, May 10:** The leader of Britain's main opposition Labour Party shook up his top team after disappointing election results, moving his economy spokeswoman and chief whip in an attempt to exert control over a fractious membership. But the moves by Labour leader Keir Starmer spurred new recriminations in a party that has not been able to

make a breakthrough against Prime Minister Boris Johnson's governing Conservatives.

Starmer late on Sunday fired deputy party leader Angela Rayner from the post of party chairwoman and named Rachel Reeves his new Treasury spokeswoman, replacing Anneliese Dodds. Long-serving chief whip Nick Brown was replaced by Alan Campbell.

— AP

## Boris probed over Caribbean holiday

**United Kingdom, May 10:** Boris Johnson is under investigation over who paid for his Caribbean holiday with Carrie Symonds during Christmas 2019.

The parliamentary standards commissioner, Kathryn Stone, confirmed on Monday morning that she was investigating a possible breach of the MPs' code of conduct.

It is the latest allegation of impropriety faced by the prime minister, as the Electoral Commission continues its inquiry into the Conservative party over claims that a loan to cover works to Johnson and Symonds' Downing Street flat were not properly declared.

The "sleaze" attacks deployed against the prime minister in the run-up to last week's local elections seem not to have substantially damaged his reputation among voters, given the gains made by the Tories in the Hartlepool by-election and councils across England.

But some Conservatives are privately dismayed the party is being more opaque than they think it should be on issues of



Boris Johnson

funding and declarations.

The investigation into Johnson's holiday comes after he took a trip to Mustique to celebrate new year at the start of 2020. The Daily Mail reported Johnson spent 10 days on a luxury villa break worth £15,000 – provided courtesy of the Carphone Warehouse founder and Conservative donor David Ross.

Johnson did record a "benefit in kind" from Ross worth £15,000 for "accommodation for a private holiday for my partner and me" in St Vincent and the Grenadines from 26 December 2019 to 5 January 2020. It was submitted to the register of members' interests on 27

## TURNING POINT 46-member scientific integrity task force to meet for first time

## White House panel to split science, politics

**Washington, May 10:** Eager to the turn the page on the Trump years, the Biden White House is launching an effort to unearth past problems with the politicisation of science within government and to tighten scientific integrity rules for the future.

A new 46-person federal scientific integrity task force with members from more than two dozen government agencies will meet for the first time on Friday. Its mission is to

look back through 2009 for areas where partisanship interfered with what were supposed to be decisions based on evidence and research and to come up with ways to keep politics out of government science in the future.

The effort was spurred by concerns that the Trump administration had politicised science in ways that put lives at risk, eroded public trust and worsened climate change.

We want people to be able to trust what the fed-

eral government is telling you, whether it's a weather forecast or information about vaccine safety or whatever, said Jane Lubchenco, the deputy director for climate and environment at the White House Office of Science

and Technology Policy.

People need to know "it's not by fiat, somebody's sort of knee-jerk opinion about something, added Alondra Nelson, the science office's deputy director for science and society. Nelson and Lubchenco said ahead of a Monday announcement about the task force's first meeting and part of its composition. It stems from a January 27 presidential memo requiring evidence-based policy-making.

Scientists and others

have accused the Trump administration of setting aside scientific evidence and injecting politics into issues including the Coronavirus, climate change and even whether Hurricane Dorian threatened Alabama in 2019.

Naomi Oreskes, a Harvard University historian said politicisation of science undermines the nation's ability to address serious problems that affect Americans' health, their well-being and the economy.

— AP



DECCAN  
Chronicle

11 MAY 2021

Himanta faces a new test,  
but choice is no surprise

Few are likely to be surprised at Himanta Biswa Sarma being officially chosen by the BJP as Assam's new chief minister and his taking the oath of office on Monday. The BJP is where it is today in Assam, and in the Northeast as a whole, due to Mr Sarma's tactical and organisational skills in political affairs, and indeed his ability to play the communal card with a rare deftness in the Assamese context, surpassing by far master tacticians like Narendra Modi and Amit Shah.

Back in 2014 when Mr Modi was on the stump, hoping to be Prime Minister, he would speak of letting in Hindu Bengali migrants from Bangladesh while leaving the Muslim migrants out. Herein lay the seed of the Citizenship Amendment Act. This particular aspect of Mr Modi's campaign was with an eye on capturing West Bengal in future, but he felt it had its uses in Assam too and used it in his Assam speeches as well.

When the CAA did eventually come and led to an anti-BJP backlash among caste Hindu society in Assam, on which the BJP based its political ambitions, it literally ran up against a wall. Assamese Hindu society did not want even Bengali Hindu migrants, unlike the BJP. But the skills of Mr Sarma, who left Congress in 2015 to join the BJP, managed to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the saffron party.

Mr Sarma worked on two tracks. He harped on Assam's neo-Vaishnavism linked to the great personality of Srimanta Sakardev as being the essential Assamese identity, and pitched this against the "miyan", the derogatory name for Muslim migrants from erstwhile East Bengal (later East Pakistan and subsequently Bangladesh). This became an instant hit in an already somewhat polarised world.

It was communal to the core, of course, and yet its emphasis was on the so-called Assamese identity and not on the Hindu-Muslim binary that the BJP usually pitches. In defining this identity, those not from Assam's Hindu society are wholly overlooked — such as the various tribal people, and Bengalis. But this worked as an election strategy to blunt Assam's intense anti-CAA movement.

Mr Sarma took no chances. The second prong of his strategy was to split the anti-CAA vote by being somewhere instrumental in encouraging the Rajior Dal and the Assam Jatiya Party.

Mr Sarma has so far displayed political energy, political savvy and ambition of a very high order — qualities that will be an asset to any party he may be in. He has by now also gained considerable administrative experience, having been the most important minister in his predecessor Sarbananda Sonowal's Cabinet and earlier in the Cabinet of stalwart Congress chief minister Tarun Gogoi.

However, in Assam this has not exactly been in play in the past five years which were consumed by the politics of the NRC/CAA and the agitations around these themes. As chief minister, Mr Sarma will have to wrap his mind around development, and the first charge on him cannot but be the pandemic that is ravaging every part of India. Even so, the NRC remains a live issue. Its consequences have brought this country the condemnation of the world and impacted ties with neighbouring Bangladesh in some measure. Mr Sarma will be on a different kind of test than previously.

## Afghan terror: Little hope ahead

The last vestiges of civilisation are fast disappearing from Afghanistan. The Taliban and other insurgents attack maternity hospitals, ambulances and kill innocent schoolchildren as they leave the citadels of learning. Inured to a life of fear, they may live on not knowing where the crazed militants will strike next. There is no rationale for the Afghan terror, invariably stemming from Afghans taking aim at Afghans, especially at the ethnic Hazaras, who are Shias and thus invariably the target of avowed Islamic State affiliates. Barbarous attacks on girls who attend school in the afternoons after the boys are done with their classes lays bare the barren conscience of the attackers.

Truth to tell, the attack on the Darst-e-Barchi neighbourhood of Afghan capital Kabul is only a precursor of the "bad possible outcomes" of the planned withdrawal of 2,500 to 3,500 American and Nato troops. The foreign soldiers will be leaving the "forgotten war" that has raged over decades without clarity on what the Taliban or other Afghan rebels expect to gain from the savagery of their brand of terror in attacks not only on Afghan troops and policemen but also on the civilian population. If the foreign troops aiding the Afghan forces in ensuring security pull out by September 11, the target date set by President Joe Biden and the US government, they will be leaving behind a land that will be open for exploitation by militants.

The families of the 70 schoolgirls who were killed on Saturday by blasts from three bombs are turning against the Afghan government as well as its international backers for their failure to put an end to the violence. The fear is over security levels that the government can guarantee when Afghanistan is left to the mercy of the Taliban, waiting to try and take the reins of power after 20 years. With the United States not inclined to even leave a small counter-terrorism force in Afghanistan, it would be solely up to the Ashraf Ghani government to end the violence, though multilateral talks may go on in search of a peaceful solution. The history of Afghanistan holds out little room for optimism.

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Subhani

CHINA  
WEAPONISING  
CORONAVIRUS  
—REPORTCheck India's corruption,  
or insurgencies will go up

Mohan Guruswamy

Corruption is India's favourite conversation topic. We love discussing it and bemoan it's all-pervasiveness. Whenever two or more Indians meet, the conversation inevitably moves to corruption. Sometimes I wonder what we would say to each other if there were no corruption to talk about. We are all near experts at it and have all experienced it in one way or another and at all levels. Yet, with so much collective experience, it is an elusive topic to write about. Like our gods, it takes so many myriad forms. It defies a simple definition. But we all know what it is.

Economists prefer to bandy about a different term when referring to corruption. They call it "economic rent". According to the International Monetary Fund, "it is the extra amount paid (over what would have been paid for the best alternative use) to somebody or for something useful whose supply is limited either by nature or through human ingenuity". Quite clearly, this definition excludes the moral dimension. But then our problems get even more compounded when we realise that morality itself is very elastic and varies depending on time, place and context.

Economic rent takes other forms, which tax the common good much more. High import duties, for instance, meant to restrain imports, actually serve to increase prices and profits for domestic manufacturers.

Did you notice how all car tyres or batteries cost about the same? Or how all similar sized air-conditioners and refrigerators cost about the same? Or, till recently, how all air tickets cost

the same and an arm and a leg at the same time? Adam Smith explained it best by noting that: "People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public."

Opinion polls show that there are some professions that are believed to be entirely corrupted. Politicians and policemen top this list. Much of the corruption we see in everyday life is a result of their unnecessary exertions. Some years back I had the opportunity every morning to contemplate a vacant plot of land in the Gurgaon neighbourhood I lived in. Roads bound the plot on all four sides and naturally people walking take a short cut across it. Some soul with a penchant for orderliness has taken upon him to put an end to this practice. First a sign came up demanding that people not do the most rational thing, which is taking a short cut. The sign was ignored, and my dog Charlie has been using the signpost to leave his signature. Then a small length of barbed wire pegged between two poles appeared astride the path at both ends. The people who use the path still find it convenient to go around the poles and take the not-so-short shortcut. Good old Charlie just slips under the wire and seems quite happy that he has two more poles to leave his daily markers on.

The nature of most of our lawmaking is just like this. They are irrational and people will respond rationally to them, by circumventing them if not completely ignoring them. Now the only way that plot can be prevented from being used as a short cut is to build on it. If the empty

plot is just walled up, the walls will encourage another use, which will be odious to boot. Laws that conflict with common sense just do not work. Which brings me to another aspect. We have laws that prohibit urinating in public and on walls, private and public. Urinating is meant to be a private business. But where are people to urinate when you just don't have enough urinals? Therefore, a law against urinating in public makes sense only when you have enough public urinals.

Thoughtless laws corrode a state thoroughly. This is why states built around tight regulation and appeals to a higher human ideal always fail. Corruption is all-pervasive and a worldwide phenomenon. It comes built in with nature. Animals steal food from each other just as humans extort from others. But human beings live in organised societies and societies are simply systems based on laws. For laws to work, it must be clear that if caught, the trial will be swift, and if found guilty the retribution will be commensurate.

That's where we have serious problems. Who makes the law? Politicians. Who enforces the laws? The police. Both are believed to be overwhelmingly corrupt. And can we expect anything better from the courts? Corruption in the judiciary and the need to uproot it were intermittently discussed in the past few years. Judges themselves have provoked these discussions. Former Calcutta high court judge Soumitra Sen became the first judge in the

**A relatively honest society requires a system that inflicts swift and commensurate retribution on transgressors. It is apparent that we quite clearly do not have that and will not have in the foreseeable future.**

country to be impeached by the Rajya Sabha for misappropriation of funds in 2011. P.D. Dinakaran, the former chief justice of the Sikkim high court, had to resign in July 2011 in the wake of graft allegations. The next year, former Chief Justice of India and National Human Rights Commission chief K.G. Balakrishnan faced allegations that his family members had amassed wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income.

In 2003, the CBI arrested Shanti Mukherjee, a former Delhi high court judge, for his alleged involvement in a land scam. In 2008 the Punjab and Haryana high court was rocked by a different type of controversy after a bag containing ₹15 lakhs was delivered at the residence of Justice Nirmaljit Kaur on August 13, 2008. The money was allegedly meant for another judge, Nirmal Yadav. Justice Yadav, who had to quit later, is still facing trial. The judicial process seems to be working for her, as it works for most of the well connected by lingering endlessly.

A just and relatively honest society requires a system that inflicts swift and commensurate retribution on transgressors. It is apparent that we quite clearly do not have that and will not have in the foreseeable future. The only way we can get that for ourselves is a vigilant media that relentlessly probes, investigates and informs the public. The fellows who still call the shots in our media businesses are the ones who have turned a calling into a business, like the fellows who got themselves farmhouses in Mehrauli. That then leaves the people to fend for themselves. Which is what they are doing in many parts of the country that are increasingly being gripped by insurgencies.

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

## LETTERS

## SHOCKING REVELATION

Apropos your report Washington varsity study forecasts 15 lakh India deaths by September. A shocking revelation has been made by The University of Washington's Institute for health metrics and evaluation on the pandemic crisis and its outcome which will be severe and causing around 15 lakh deaths in India by September 2021. While other countries have curtailed their increase in cases by abiding by Covid-appropriate norms, Indian behaviour is irresponsible. The sad fact is that in our country many find ways to make fast money by short cuts even in this quandary instead of providing proper health facilities. While a series of deaths have been reported due to lack of oxygen supply in hospitals, it's difficult to blame anyone in particular as everyone is hand-in-glove with each other right from the hospital staff, medical and health workers and last but not the least our politicians.

Jacqueline Netto, Chennai

## TIPLERS' WORLD

It was really shocking to see a lot of people queuing up in front of Tasmac shops in Tamil Nadu on Saturday and Sunday after the announcement of lockdown from May 10 to May 24. This may fill up the coffers of the government, but surely at the expense of the health of the people. What sort of addiction is this? That some were seen purchasing liquor bottles in gunny bags in some places (as reported by your paper) really suggests that prohibition is never possible in the state. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the Nation, would really hang his head in shame, if he were to live today.

S. Ramakrishnasayee, Chennai

## RESIDENCE FOR PM

The statement of Rahul Gandhi that the vista project envisaged by the Central government is, engaged in construction of housing quarters for the PM has reached all-time idiocy and the GK level of the crown prince of the Congress. The project envisages construction of a new Parliament House besides other Government offices. Even if a new residence is constructed it will be 100% government property and will be for the use of all PMs in the future and it is not going to be a private property of Modi to be inherited by his relatives or kin. It is one thing to oppose the whole project and a different one to utter a blatant canard against a PM for cheap publicity. Rahul by doing so is again proving that the critics are correct in calling him "Pappu".

Kongunaattan, Coimbatore

Aakar Patel

Don't fudge  
Covid data,  
that'll make  
crisis worse

The world is worried about its "Vishwa Guru" as our mismanagement of the Covid-19 pandemic has turned into a global story. The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, an independent research centre in the United States, has estimated that by September 2021, which means in just four months, another million Indians will die. And this is based on the official numbers, which are anyway difficult to accept given what has been revealed by the scenes in the crematoria across states and in our major cities, and also by the numbers that the newspapers have put out. A newspaper in Gujarat reported on May 6 that 17,822 bodies had been cremated or buried with Covid-19 protocols in one month in the state's seven major cities — Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Baroda, Surat, Rajkot, Jamnagar and Bhavnagar. But the government had acknowledged only 1,745 deaths officially from Covid-19, or 10 per cent. And remember that these cities are only about a third or less of the state's total population. In the

villages, the chances of those being tested and treated are even fewer.

This is, of course, not only about Gujarat. On May 3, a newspaper had reported that Bhopal had acknowledged only 104 deaths from Covid-19 while reports from the crematoriums and cemeteries spoke of 2,557 Covid patients among the total of 3,811 who were cremated or interred.

That is a ratio of 1:25. A report on May 4 from Haryana said that the difference between the official death toll and the number from crematoria was 1:2. This is similar to the number reported for Bengaluru for the last one month (1,422 official toll; versus 3,104 cremated with Covid-19 protocols). In Uttar Pradesh, a report from Meerut said the difference was 1:7.

If we remove the outliers and look at the data, it seems like a figure of twice and perhaps three times the official one is not unreasonable. If we take that into account, our official death toll of 2.3 lakhs, the third highest in the world, actually looks like 5.6 lakh or more than seven

lakh and easily the highest in the world. This will not surprise anyone and has been borne out by the sadening and shameful and horrific visuals that the entire world has now seen from India.

I should clarify that the fudging of the numbers is not entirely because of governmental fraud. It has happened in part because most people are dying at home, unable to access medical facilities or unable to afford them and they have not been tested. Second, how a death is classified depends a lot on the state government and the people making out the certificate. A person who has Covid-19 but also has another disease can be classified either as a Covid death or as something else. It serves the immediate purpose of the government to pretend that the official number is low because it makes it appear less incompetent and helpless than it really is. But hiding the number and not actively promoting the fact that things are much worse is dangerous for us all.

The first reason why the government should come clean and say

that its numbers are an undercount is public safety. If people are fed nonsense like "recovery rate" (a meaningless number for a disease that has no cure), then they will be less alert and more prone to carelessness about masking and social distancing. If they knew that many more people are dying after being infected, especially because the government cannot manage hospitals at this point in time, they would not think they were personally safe.

The second reason is our shortage of oxygen. After Delhi, now two BJP-run states, Gujarat and Karnataka, have said that they are not getting enough oxygen from the Narendra Modi government. Gujarat has said it needs 1,400 tons a day and will need 1,600 tons a day by May 15 but is currently getting only 795 tons. Karnataka had asked for 1,200 tons instead of the 962 tons allocated by the Centre. The Central government says that it has enough oxygen but this is untrue. We do not. And we will make our jobs more difficult if we continue to be in denial.

The third reason is credibility.

The world is reporting the Indian numbers and saying that these cannot be believed. And the world cannot be blamed for feeling this, because it is true — based on what our own media is reporting. The damage to India has already been considerable in terms of reputation, but that is not important. What will happen is that more countries will ban the entry of Indian travellers. Already that list is quite large. In time the wave will recede, but another one is likely to come. At that point, the world will look at our official numbers and try and add a factor of their own to arrive at the real number if they think that we are still fudging. This will harm Indians on work visas, families who are separated and Indian business in general.

That is why in our self-interest we should actively make attempts to find out the real fatality rate as the first step towards trying to curb this deadly Covid-19 pandemic.

*The writer is a columnist and a senior journalist*



## quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	49,502.41	0.60
Nifty 50	14,942.40	0.80
S&P 500*	4,229.49	-0.07
Dollar (₹)	73.35	0.23
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.35	-1.01
Euro (₹)	89.22	0.49
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,452.179	0.37
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.35	0.10
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.014	-0.02
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.568	-0.011

\* As of 8:30 PM IST

## Ahluwalia settles dispute with A2 Interiors

Ahluwalia Contracts Ltd has entered into a settlement agreement and resolved the payment issues with its operational creditor, A2 Interiors Products Pvt Ltd, and is filing an application to withdraw the insolvency proceedings. On May 5, the Delhi bench of the NCLT had allowed the insolvency plea filed by A2 Interiors against Ahluwalia Contracts claiming default of Rs 14.10 crore and had appointed an interim resolution professional.

## Eli Lilly in ties with Sun, Cipla & Lupin for baricitinib



US drug firm Eli Lilly and Company said it has inked voluntary licensing agreements with Indian drug firms Sun Pharma, Cipla and Lupin to expedite availability of its arthritis drug baricitinib for treatment of Covid-19 patients in India. The company "has issued royalty-free, non-exclusive voluntary licences to established Indian pharmaceutical manufacturers of generic medicines," Eli Lilly said.

## RBI appoints Kattoor as exec director

The Reserve Bank of India has appointed Jose J. Kattoor as executive director (ED). Prior to this, Kattoor was heading the Bengaluru Regional Office as RBI's regional director for Karnataka. He will look after human resource management, corporate strategy, budget department and Rajbhasha departments.



## IOC converts LNG tankers to carry oxygen

Indian Oil Corporation is converting 14 liquefied natural gas (LNG) tankers into medical grade oxygen carriers. It had diverted high-purity oxygen used in its monoethylene glycol (MEG) unit to produce medical-grade liquid oxygen at its Panipat refinery complex. It is supplying 270 tonnes of LMO per day to the hospitals in Delhi, Haryana and Punjab. IOC is also converting 14 LNG tankers of 17 tonnes each.



## Govt expects prices to soften soon Cooking oil prices rise 50% in a year

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

Edible oil prices have shot up more than 50 per cent in a year's time on supply constraints. Production shortages, delay at the ports and lower imports have led to cooking oil burning a hole in consumers' pockets. However, the government is hopeful that the prices would soften in the days ahead.

According to government data, retail prices of edible oils have shot up by 55.55 per cent in over a year.

The retail price of vanaspati has increased by 55.55 per cent to Rs 140 a kg on May 8 this year from Rs 90 per kg a year ago. The retail price of palm oil has risen by 51.54 per cent to Rs 132.6 per kg from Rs 87.5 per kg, soya oil by over 50 per cent to Rs 158 per kg from Rs 105 per kg, while that of mustard oil by 49 per cent to Rs 163.5 per kg. The retail price of groundnut oil has gone up by over 38 per cent to Rs 180 per kg from 130 per kg during the one-year period.

"The global demand-supply situation has been leading to price rise. Production has been down last year due to the pandemic. However, the demand started improving with the progress of vaccination," said Ajay Kedia, managing director, Kedia Commodities.

Further, the labour issues in Malaysia and Indonesia have been



Flaring oil

Items	Price last year	Current price	% increase
Vanaspati	90.00	140.00	55.55
Palm oil	87.50	132.60	51.54
Soya oil	105.00	158.00	50.00
Mustard oil	110.00	163.50	49.00
Groundnut oil	130	180.00	38.00

Price per kg

affecting production of palm oil and sunflower oil. Last week Malaysian palm oil futures touched their highest level since 2008. Soybean futures in Chicago too are trading close to multi-year highs.

"In India, we had good production of edible oil seeds. But this did not help prices much," said Kedia.

Indian edible oil refiners also had curtailed palm oil imports for May and June as most states have imposed curbs on hotels and restaurants.

However, the government expects that release of imported stock, stuck at key ports, will help cool

prices in the coming days.

According to food secretary Sudhanshu Pandey, there was holding of some stock at Kandla and Mundra ports due to delay in clearances. Before clearing, tests were done by various agencies as part of the general risk analysis in view of the Covid situation.

"That problem has been addressed along with customs and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India. With that stock getting released in the market, we hope to see the softening impact on the oil prices," he said in a virtual press conference on Monday.

## BLACKSTONE ACQUIRES EMBASSY INDUSTRIAL PARKS IN ₹5,250-CR DEAL

New Delhi, May 10: Global investment firm Blackstone on Monday announced the acquisition of Embassy Industrial Parks from Warburg Pincus and realty firm Embassy group in a big ticket deal estimated to be worth Rs 5,250 crore.

Blackstone and Embassy group did not disclose the value of the deal, which is one of the largest in the Indian logistics and warehousing segment.

In 2015, the Bengaluru-based Embassy Group had formed a joint venture with private equity firm Warburg Pincus to build industrial parks.

Warburg Pincus had a 70 per cent stake while Embassy has a 30 per cent shareholding in the joint venture, Embassy Industrial Parks.

NYSE-listed Blackstone said funds managed by Blackstone Real Estate have acquired Embassy Industrial Parks from Warburg Pincus and Embassy Group. Sources said the deal will be concluded in two stages.

In the first stage, Blackstone is buying Embassy Industrial Parks, having a portfolio of nearly 11 million sq. ft., at an enterprise value of around Rs 1,750 crore.

In the second stage, Blackstone, through its newly acquired firm Embassy Industrial Parks, would buy few land parcels directly from the Embassy group comprising another 11 million sq. ft. area, the sources said. —PTI

## ISUZU DRIVES IN D-MAX V-CROSS

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, MAY 10

The Japanese carmaker Isuzu Motors on Monday launched its BS VI compliant D-Max V-Cross, the lifestyle pick-up. Prices of the passenger versions of Isuzu D-Max start from Rs 16.98 lakh for the Isuzu Hi-Lander and go up to Rs 24.49 lakh at Tamil Nadu showroom for the V-Cross 4x4 automatic in top-spec Z Prestige guise. The base 4x2 automatic V-Cross starts from Rs 19.98 lakh.

## JAPAN AND UNDP TO SUPPLY O2 TO N-E

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MAY 10

The Government of Japan and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India have partnered to provide oxygen generation plants to the North Eastern Region. "The support from the people of Japan has enabled UNDP in procuring and installing eight Pressure Swing Absorption oxygen generation plants in the States of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura," said a joint release.

## MFs change NFO tack after Sebi changes rules

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD  
MUMBAI, MAY 10

After the Sebi overhaul of mutual fund scheme categories in October 2017, fund houses have changed their strategies and are now busy launching new fund offers in the "other schemes-index funds, ETFs and fund of funds" category.

"The fourth quarter of fiscal-year 2020-21 saw the new fund offering (NFO) of a total of 27 open-end funds (including ETFs) and two closed-end funds. Cumulatively, these funds were able to garner Rs 11,826 crore at their inception stage," said Morningstar's domestic fund flows report for the fourth quarter.

"The 'other schemes' category, which typically has sub-categories of ETFs (other and gold), index funds, and funds of funds overseas, has been gaining a lot of traction recently. The 'other schemes' category saw net inflows worth Rs 20,063 crore in the fourth quarter of fiscal year

2020-21," Morningstar said.

The other schemes category is likely to get more traction, as from July 1, 2021, a minimum of 20 per cent of the take home salary of the key employees of the asset management companies will be paid in the form of units of mutual fund schemes in which they have a role/ oversight, according to a new Sebi rule, except for ETFs, index funds, overnight funds and existing closed-ended schemes.

"The provisions of this circular shall not be applicable to key employees having role/ oversight only over ETFs, index funds, overnight funds and existing close ended schemes," a Sebi circular issued last month said.

At present, four NFOs, by Axis Mutual Fund (Axis Healthcare Fund and Axis Global Innovation Fund of Fund), ICICI Mutual Fund (ICICI Prudential Healthcare ETF) and SBI Mutual Fund (SBI Nifty Next 50 Index Fund) fall in 'other schemes' category.

## Iron ore turns 'very, very hot' as prices jump 10% in minutes

May 10: Iron ore futures leaped higher as trading opened on Monday, extending a record run amid rampant Chinese demand and a wider surge in commodity prices as the global economy recovers.

Futures in Singapore jumped more than 10 per cent to hit a fresh record high of \$226 a tonne. The steel-making raw material is surging as strong demand from top buyer China leaves supplies stretched. Prices breached \$200 for the first time only last week.

"This sector is very, very hot, and just when China's steel demand impulse will

ease is perhaps the biggest question of 2021," Vivek Dhar, commodities analyst at Commonwealth Bank of Australia, said in Bloomberg Television interview. "Supply is still not able to meet that strong demand."

Iron ore is just one of a sweep of materials from copper to crops that have marched higher in recent months. Bloomberg's gauge of spot commodity prices finished last week at its highest in nearly a decade. Copper also extended its record rally Monday, soaring to \$10,500 a tonne in early trade.

Steel prices have jumped

in China as heavy users like the construction and manufacturing sectors enjoy a busy period, as well as enjoying tailwinds from stimulus measures. Steel-makers in the rest of the world such as ArcelorMittal SA are also enjoying a boom as markets bounce back from the pandemic.

"There is a chance that ex-China demand can come back to such an extent that we still see steel demand pick up globally and that will see iron ore demand remain at these elevated levels," CBA's Dhar said.

—Bloomberg

## Mall footfalls vanish, recovery seen in Q3

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

After recovering to 75 per cent, footfalls in malls are once again down to nil. The mall revenues had declined around 40 per cent last year. This time the industry expects a full recovery by the third quarter.

"After the lockdown, different states started opening up in different months—some in July, some in August and some others later. Overall, in FY21, the mall business would have been 60 to 65 per cent of FY20," said Mukesh Kumar, chairman, Shopping Centres Association of India and CEO of Infiniti Malls. By Diwali time, there was a quick recovery in mall businesses.

For mall owners the impact of the pandemic in FY21 was around 50 per cent, mainly due to loss of rent, and operational costs, says Shubhranshu Pani, MD (retail services), JLL India. Revenues from multiplexes, which contribute 15 per cent to the overall rental income of mall owners, were almost wiped out.

From nil levels during the lock-down, footfalls had recovered to 75 per cent by March 2021. However, after March 15 once again footfalls started dwindling.

On an average during pre-Covid days, the industry was clocking a revenue of Rs 15,000 crore per month and had reached the same during mid-March 2021, but, with the local restric-



## DECLINE IN MOBILITY HITS RETAIL

SANGEETHA G  
CHENNAI, MAY 10

India had high levels of mobility decline in the first week of May in places such as retail and recreation, groceries and pharmacies, parks, transit stations, workplaces, says a Google survey.

According to the Google Community Mobility Report, when compared to a pre-Covid baseline, the movement of people on May 5, 2021 was far less. The mobility in retail and recreation was down 59 per cent, groceries 20 per cent, parks 44 per cent, transit stations 44 per cent and workplaces 48 per cent. At the same time in residential places it was 24 per cent up.

Mobility of people has been affected the most in India among the top 10 countries with Covid caseloads, the report said.

"Mobility has fallen by high rates in five of the six parameters for India and was the highest on the one relating to being at home. Mobility has been impacted across the world, but India has probably witnessed the sharpest decline due to the recent restrictions imposed by various states," says Care Ratings.

For grocery, India is the only country which had a decline in mobility, indicating that the restrictions put by the government on shopping for just four hours a day had hit visits to the stores.

tions, almost 50 per cent revenue got reduced.

"April has been a wash-out. We don't expect much from the first quarter. By the second quarter, things will start improving and we expect footfalls to return to FY20 levels in the third quarter," said Kumar.

By then, vaccination would cover a large section of the society and provide people the confidence to venture out.

Moreover, some of the states have started using malls as vaccination centres.

While last fiscal revenues were severely affected, this year the impact is expected to be lower. "Last year, there were massive job losses and salary cuts. This time the incomes have not been affected much and the GST collections also are at record high," he added.

## Passenger vehicle sales dip 14% in FY21: Dealers body

MICHAEL GONSALVES  
PUNE, MAY 10

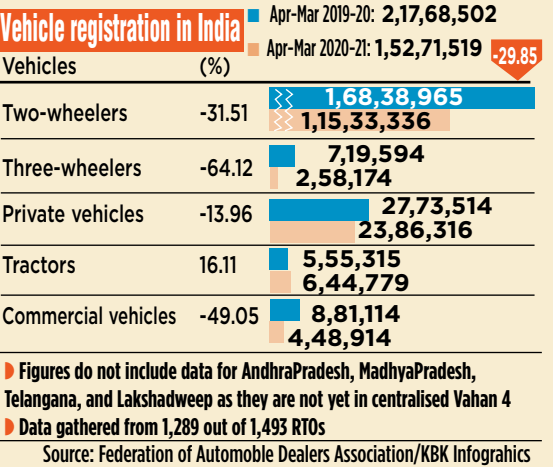
Passenger vehicles (PV) sales declined 13.96 per cent at 23,86,316 units last fiscal, compared with 27,73,514 units sold in FY20 while total vehicle registrations in the country fell by 29.85 per cent to 1,52,71,519 units in FY21, the lowest in the last eight years, impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations, or Fada, said on Monday.

Total vehicle registrations were at 2,17,68,502 units in fiscal year 2019-20.

All categories of vehicles, except tractors were in the red in FY21 with two-wheeler (2W), three-wheeler (3W), commercial vehicles (CV) and passenger vehicles (PV) falling by 31.51 per cent, 64.12 per cent, 49.05 per cent and 13.96 per cent respectively, the lowest in last eight years and way below the FY13 levels, Fada said in a statement.

Sales of two-wheeler also dipped 31.51 per cent to 1,15,33,336 units as compared to 1,68,38,965 units in the previous fiscal.

Three-wheeler registrations in FY21 were down 64.12 per cent at 2,58,174



units, as compared to 7,19,594 per cent in FY20, while CV registrations were at 4,48,914 units as against 8,81,114 units, a decline of 49.05 per cent.

Tractor registrations, however, grew by 16.11 per cent last fiscal at 6,44,779 units as compared to 5,55,315 units in 2019-20, it added.

As for April 2021, FADA said since India was under complete lockdown in April 2020 and not a single vehicle could be sold, a year-on-year comparison is not possible.

When compared to the previous month of March, Fada said in April 2021

total vehicle registrations were down 28.15 per cent at 11,85,374 units versus 16,49,678 units.

PV registrations were down 25.33 per cent at 2,08,883 units in April, as against 2,79,745 units in March this year, while those of 2W declined by 27.63 per cent at 8,65,134 units, as against 11,95,445 in the previous month.

Registrations of CV were at 51,436 units in April as compared to 67,372 units in March, down 23.65 per cent. Tractor registrations also witnessed a dip of 44.58 per cent last month at 38,285 units.

## HUL'S SITAPATI MAKES WAY FOR SUNDARAM

New Delhi, May 10: F M C G major HUL on Monday said its executive director (foods and refreshment) Srinandan Sundaram S u d h i r



Sitapati is leaving the organisation and will be replaced by Srinandan Sundaram as part of top level management changes.

"Srinandan Sundaram replaces Sudhir Sitapati, who is leaving the organisation to pursue an external opportunity," HUL said in a statement.

Sundaram is currently executive director (customer development) at HUL.

The changes in the Management Committee would be effective from July 1, 2021, it added.

"I would like to thank Sudhir for his immense contributions to the company over the last two decades.

"We cherish iconic ad campaigns like Daag Acche Hain and Swad Apnepan Ka that were created under his leadership," HUL CMD Sanjiv Mehta said.

—PTI

## HALTING | DEFECTIONS Bank to pay sign-on bonus to associates

## UBS promotees get \$40,000 bonus

CATHY CHAN  
MAY 10

UBS Group AG will pay a \$40,000 one-time bonus to its global banking analysts when they are promoted, doubling what some competitors are offering, as lenders seek to reward and retain younger employees weighed down by a surge in business and a prolonged work-from-home grind.

Starting as soon as this month the Swiss bank will pay the sign-on bonus to analysts promoted to associates on top of any regular salary increases, said people



familiar with the move who asked not to be identified because the information is private. The amount represents about 30 per cent of the annual base pay of a newly promoted associate, one of the people said.

Banks are raising pay for junior employees to prevent defections and ease discontent amid a jump in deals and an intensifying focus on work-life issues sparked by the pandemic. Wall Street was set abuzz earlier this year by a leaked presentation from junior analysts at Goldman Sachs Group Inc that detailed their gruelling workload and punishing hours.

A Hong Kong-based spokesman at UBS declined to comment.

UBS is upping the stakes, offering one-time bonuses that are double the amount that Credit

Suisse Group AG and Wells Fargo & Co have agreed to give their junior bankers. Other lenders such as HSBC Holdings Plc are also moving to raise pay and shortening the path to promotion, while Houlihan Lokey Inc has even offered some workers all-expenses-paid vacations.

Banks are also beefing up staff to avoid burnout. JPMorgan Chase & Co said last month it plans to add almost 200 staff, joining Goldman Sachs and Jefferies Financial Group Inc in boosting headcount.

—Bloomberg



## SHORT TAKES

## Pakistan sweep Zimbabwe series

**Harare:** Pakistan quickly took the one wicket it needed Monday for another innings victory over struggling Zimbabwe in the second Test and a 2-0 series sweep. It took only five overs on Day 4 for Shaheen Shah Afridi to end it by having Luke Jongwe caught behind by wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan for 37. Pakistan won by an innings and 147 runs at Harare Sports Club to go with the innings and 116-run win in the first test at the same venue. Pakistan also claimed a slice of history with Afridi's 5-52 making him the third Pakistan bowler in the Test to take a five-wicket haul. He and Nauman Ali took five each in the second innings after Hasan Ali's five in the first. It's the first time Pakistan has had three bowlers with five wickets in a match, and the first time it has happened in tests since 1993. — *PTI*

## Chawla's father dies of Covid-19

**Mumbai:** Experienced India leg-spinner Piyush Chawla's father Pramod Kumar Chawla on Monday died after battling COVID-19. He was around 60 years old. "With deepest grief, we announce that my beloved father, Mr Pramod Kumar Chawla, left for the heavenly abode on 10th May 2021. He was suffering from covid and post covid complications," Chawla wrote on his Instagram account. "We invite your kind thoughts and prayers in this difficult times. May his noble soul rest in peace." Chawla's latest IPL team Mumbai Indians too offered their condolences. — *PTI*

## Zverev clinches 2nd Madrid title

**Madrid:** Alexander Zverev continued his impressive form going into the French Open by winning his second Madrid Open title. After beating top-seeded Rafael Nadal in the quarterfinals and fourth-ranked Dominic Thiem in the semifinals, Zverev rallied to defeat Matteo Berrettini 6-7 (8), 6-4, 6-3 for his second title this season. The sixth-ranked German also won the Mexican Open in Acapulco in March. Zverev won his first Madrid title in 2018 in a final against Thiem. The win on Sunday gave him his fourth Masters 1000 title, and first in three years. Zverev will be trying to improve from his fourth-round exit last year at the French Open. "To do well at the French Open, you need to be playing well during the clay court season," Zverev said. — *PTI*

## Former footballer Franco no more

**New Delhi:** Fortunato Franco, one of the pillars of India's last Asian Games gold-winning football team in 1962, died in Goa on Monday. He was 84. The AIFF confirmed the news of his death but did not specify the cause of his demise. Franco is survived by his wife, son and daughter. One of India's finest mid-fielders, Franco was a part of Indian football's golden era between 1960-64. He was a part of the 1960 Rome Olympics squad but didn't get a game. However, he was an integral part of the 1962 Asiad gold winning team in Jakarta. — *PTI*

## Shafali set to play for Birmingham

**New Delhi:** India's teen batting sensation Shafali Verma is set to play for Birmingham Phoenix in the inaugural edition of The Hundred and might also turn up for a Sydney franchise in the Women's Big Bash League later in the year. The 17-year-old, who is the world number one in ICC women's T20I rankings, thus will join her skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues and Deepti Sharma in the 100-ball tournament involving eight men's and women's teams. "Shafali was approached by Birmingham franchise and the deal is about to be closed," a BCCI source said. — *PTI*

Regd. No. TNENG/2010/35692

Printed & Published by K. Sudhakar on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited and Printed at: Deccan Chronicle Press situated at No 2/22, Sengallapalayam Road, N.G.O Colony Post, Kurudampalayam Village, Coimbatore - 641 022, RNJ Registration No: TNENG/2010/35692 Ph No : 2231252,253,255,257 & 358 Editor: KAUSHIK MITTER

## PINNED TO MAT

## WFI says murder case against Sushil tarnished wrestling's image

**New Delhi, May 10:** At the peak of his prowess, Sushil Kumar single-handedly lifted Indian wrestling to unprecedented heights but as police looks for him in relation to a murder case, the sport's image has taken as much a beating as that of the trailblazing grappler. Sushil's international success triggered a revolution and created an inspirational legacy. The reserved grappler from Najagarh's Baprola village is till date India's only world champion (2010) in the sport. He is also the only one to claim two individual Olympic medals, an exceptional feat for a country which has seen very limited success at the Games.

The Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is concerned that the good reputation built over the years with stupendous international performances, many of them given by Sushil himself, has been ruined.

"Yes, I must say that the image of Indian wrestling has got hurt badly by this. But we have nothing to do with what wrestlers do away from the mat. We are concerned with their on-mat performance," WFI Assistant Secretary Vinod Tomar said.

Sushil's bronze medal at the 2008 Beijing Olympics ended India's 56-year-long wait for an Olympic medal in wrestling.

The achievement had a tremendous impact as Indian wrestling witnessed the rise of Yogeshwar Dutt, Geeta and Babita Phogat, their cousin Vinesh, Rio bronze medalist Sakshi Malik and World medallists Bajrang Punia, Ravi Dahiya and Deepak Punia after that. However, the fraternity is now shell-shocked as the police on Monday issued a 'Look-out Circular' (LoC) against the champion wrestler, who is untraceable since the brawl that led to the death of a young wrestler.

## REBEL JUVENTUS RISK REMOVAL FROM SERIE A

**Rome, May 10:** Juventus will be kicked out of Serie A if it doesn't withdraw from the European Super League, Italian soccer federation president Gabriele Gravina said Monday. While AC Milan and Inter Milan backed out of the ill-fated bid to form a breakaway competition, Juventus remains the lone holdout in Italy.

"The rules are clear: If Juventus is still part of the Super League when it enters next season, it can't participate in Serie A," Gravina told Naples radio station *Kiss Kiss*.

"I would be sorry for the fans but rules are rules and they apply to everyone."

Real Madrid and Barcelona are also still grasping onto the project, despite the risk of being banned from the Champions League. "I hope this holdout ends soon," Gravina added.

The Super League project imploded three weeks ago after the six English clubs involved, Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester United, Manchester City and Tottenham, backed out inside 48 hours of the project's announcement.

— *AP*

The 39-year-old, still ranked eighth in the world, has been absent from the courts since her semi-final defeat by eventual champion Naomi Osaka at the Australian Open in Melbourne in February. Williams remains uncommitted about



The Delhi Police has issued a lookout notice against two-time Olympic medallist Sushil Kumar in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl.

The incident has come at a time when Indian wrestling is celebrating its highest number of quotas — eight — for the Olympics. The anticipation of a best ever performance at the Tokyo Games is hard to miss.

The police is ascertaining the role of Sushil in a May 4 brawl that led to the death of 23-year-old Sagar Rana outside the Chhatrasal stadium.

"Not only this, but the incident that happened in February had also tarnished the image of Indian wrestling. The sport has struggled hard in earning a reputation because for long wrestlers were known only as a bunch of goons," Tomar lamented.

The WFI official was referring to coach

Sukhwinder Mor's involvement in the murder of five people, including a fellow coach Manoj Malik, in Jaat College in the Rohak district of Haryana.

Sukhwinder had allegedly gunned down five people due to his personal enmity with Malik and was arrested from New Delhi in a joint operation by Delhi and Haryana police.

Asked if WFI will remove Sushil from the annual contracts list, Tomar said they "were not mulling any such move as of now."

Sushil was handed an A grade contract in December 2018 along with four others for an annual financial support of ₹30 lakh.

However, he has not par-

ticipated in any international event since his first round defeat in the 2019 World Championship in Nur Sultan.

The image of Chhatrasal stadium, which has given India its finest wrestlers like Sushil, Yogeshwar, Bajrang and now Tokyo-bound Ravi Dahiya and Deepak Punia, has also taken a beating.

A source at the stadium said prominent wrestlers like Yogeshwar and Bajrang left the facility because "they were targeted by Sushil's camp for not toeing their line."

The 1982 Asian Games champion Satpal Singh, Sushil's coach and father-in-law, was in charge of the stadium till 2016 before he retired as additional director.

After that Sushil was

appointed an OSD and it is believed that the move was aimed at keeping the stadium in the tight grip of the family.

"Sushil, who is employed there on Railways' deputation, calls the shots. If you won't listen to him or do as he suggests, he would quietly start harassing you," the source said.

"People are scared to say anything. They come to make a career, not to indulge in politics. So they found it convenient to leave than tolerate the stadium politics," the source said.

The gravity of the current situation is enormous but Sushil is no stranger to controversy either.

In 2016, when WFI had chosen Narsingh Pancham Yadav to represent India at the Rio Games. He later failed a dope test and accused Sushil of having a role in spiking his food, a charge which was found to be false.

During the 2018 Commonwealth Games trials when Sushil beat Praveen Rana in the final, the supporters of the two camps traded blows outside the stadium.

Rana had later alleged that the bout was interrupted many times at the behest of Sushil and the officials were also threatened and finally it was awarded to the 2010 World Champion.

Sushil is also the President of the School Games Federation of India (SGFI), which was in news for all the wrong reasons.

He had alleged that SGFI secretary had forged his signature to change the by-laws of the organisation and also committed irregularities.

He filed an FIR against the secretary in December last year and was re-elected President of the body in March after fresh polls were held on the direction of the Sports Ministry.

— *PTI*

## KOHLI | GETS A JAB



India skipper Virat Kohli gets vaccinated in New Delhi on Monday. — *Twitter*

## Recovered KKR duo back home

**New Delhi, May 10:** Kolkata Knight Riders' leg-spinner Varun Chakravathy and pacer Sandeep Warrier, who were the first to test positive for COVID-19 in the currently-suspended IPL's bio-bubble, have returned to their respective home cities after completing 10 days of mandatory isolation. Tamil Nadu's Chakravathy was officially the first player in this edition of the IPL, who contracted the infection after going for some medical scans.

Subsequently, two of his teammates, Warrier and Prasidh Krishna, were also infected by the virus.

The Chennai-based Warrier's interaction with Delhi Capitals veteran Amit Mishra led to the veteran being found positive as well, causing ultimately

the league's suspension. "Yes, Chakravathy and Sandeep have gone home. They have completed 10 days of mandatory isolation. However, KKR as a franchise will keep monitoring their health," a BCCI official said.

**Windies return** All the Caribbean players have reached home following concerted efforts by the BCCI and their respective franchises. Cricket West Indies CEO Johnny Grave has said. Top West Indies players like their white-ball captain Kieron Pollard, Jason Holder, Sunil Narine, Andre Russell, Dwayne Bravo, Nicholas Poonan, Shimron Hetmyer, and Fabien Allen were a part of the league. In all, nine West Indies cricketers competed in the event.

— *PTI*

## TRIBUNAL GIVES CLEAN CHIT TO GUNAWARDENE

**Dubai, May 10:** An independent anti-corruption tribunal of the ICC on Monday cleared former Sri Lanka player Avishka Gunawardene of corruption charges, allowing him to resume participation in cricket-related activities with immediate effect. Gunawardene was facing two charges under the Emirates Cricket Board's Anti-Corruption Code.

The tribunal upheld one charge (2.4.6) against Sri Lanka's Nuwan Zoysa but dismissed the other three charges. "The detailed decision will be announced to the parties in due course and remains subject to appeal," an ICC released said.

Gunawardene was charged with Article 2.1.4 that relates to — Directly or indirectly soliciting, inducing, enticing, instructing, persuading, encouraging or intentionally facilitating any Participant to breach Code Article 2.1.

He was also charged with Article 2.4.5 that relates to, "Failing to disclose to the ACU (without unnecessary delay) full details of any incident, fact, or matter that comes to the attention of a Participant that may evidence Corrupt Conduct under the Anti-Corruption Code by another Participant."

— *PTI*

## SURGE IN | COVID CASES

## IOC chief puts off trip to Japan

**Tokyo, May 10:** IOC President Thomas Bach has cancelled a trip to Japan because of surging cases of COVID-19 in the country, the Tokyo Olympic organising committee said on Monday in a statement.

Bach was to visit Hiroshima next Monday and meet the torch relay and then probably travel to Tokyo.

Organising committee president Seiko Hashimoto said last week that the trip would be "tough" for Bach to make, which was interpreted in Japan as meaning it was cancelled.

The trip was made impossible because of a state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of the country that has been extended until May 31. The state of emergency was to have ended on Tuesday.

The statement said Bach's visit would be made "as soon as possible."

The postponement is an embarrassment to the IOC and local organisers with the Olympics opening in just over 10 weeks. Organisers and the IOC have repeatedly said the Olympics will not be cancelled, and will be "safe and secure."

Japan has attributed 11,000 deaths to COVID-19, better than many coun-

**The trip was made impossible because of a state of emergency in Tokyo and other parts of the country that has been extended until May 31.**

tries, but poor for Asia. Variants of the virus are spreading with reports of public health systems coming under pressure.

Public sentiment in Japan continues to run against holding the Olympics in the middle of a pandemic. Between 60-80% of Japanese people in polls have said the Olympics should be cancelled or postponed.

An online petition calling for the games to be canceled gained 300,000 signatures in three days, although a small protest against the Olympics on Sunday in Tokyo drew only 100 people.

Naomi Osaka, who will represent Japan at the Olympics, said she has mixed feelings.

"Of course I would say I want the Olympics to happen, because I'm an athlete and that's sort of what I've been waiting for my entire life," she said Sunday at the Italian Open.

— *AP*

## Neesham doubts IPL re-start

**Christchurch, May 10:** New Zealand all-rounder Jimmy Neesham doesn't think that there is any chance of the remaining 31 matches of Indian Premier League happening in India this year, after the tournament got postponed due to COVID-19 cases inside the bio-bubble.

He also has serious doubts whether India would be able to host the 16-team T20 World Cup later this year.

India is in the midst of its worst ever health crisis in last 70 years with the country recording 400,000 cases on a daily basis with at least 4000 deaths on an average.

Both IPL and T20 World Cup are set to be re-scheduled to the United Arab Emirates.

"If it did start up again, I doubt the IPL would be in India again," said Neesham told Newshub.

"I think we've already seen plans for the T20 World Cup to move out of India later in the year and they're going to be ultra-cautious about that sort of thing," said Neesham, who was playing for Mumbai Indians in the now suspended league.

Neesham feels the bio-security lapses could be due to the fact that the



New Zealand's Jimmy Neesham represents Mumbai Indians in IPL.

teams were travelling across the country.

"Even though we were flying on chartered planes, we have to go through customs, hand your details over to people, walk through terminals, so there were always going to be pinch-points there," he said.

Neesham said that it is difficult to comprehend how the bubble was breached.

"We obviously don't know yet exactly how teams were infiltrated, but... it's such a difficult

prospect to keep everything perfect and when you've got so many guys that are close to each other, there are going to be social interactions after games.

"Once one team has it, you start looking back through your last week at who you talked to and who you shook hands with. It certainly gets your mind racing."

However Neesham isn't averse to the idea of going back to India again and playing the IPL if it resumes.

— *PTI*

## Returning Serena could miss Olympics

**Rome, May 10:** Serena Williams raised doubts over her participation at the Tokyo Olympics on Monday, ahead of her return to the limelight this week at the Italian Open.

The 39-year-old, still ranked eighth in the world, has been absent from the courts since her semi-final defeat by eventual champion Naomi Osaka at the Australian Open in Melbourne in February.

Williams remains uncommitted about

whether she will join up with Team USA in Japan this summer, especially if it means time away from her three-year-old daughter Olympia.

"I haven't spent 24 hours without her (Olympia) so that kind of answers the question itself," said the American, who has won four Olympic gold medals, a record she shares with her sister Venus.

"I haven't really thought much about Tokyo, because it was supposed to be last year and now it's this year, and then there is



Serena Williams

this pandemic and there is so much to think about.

"Then there are the

Grand Slams. It's just a lot. So I have really been taking it one day at a time to a fault, and I definitely need to figure out my next moves."

Williams says she is "ready" to get started again in Rome as preparation for the French Open which starts in Paris on May 24.

"It's good to start fresh but it's also hard to start fresh," she told a press conference on Monday.

"I feel like I'm good. I'm in Rome. I'm going to have some good matches here

hopefully and then I will be at another Grand Slam which always makes me excited. So I think either way I'll be ready."

Williams has been stuck on 23 major trophies, one behind Australia's Margaret Court, since winning the 2017 Australian Open while pregnant.

Since then she has given birth, returned to the tour, and finished runner-up at four major tournaments — after losing just six out of 28 finals before 2017.

— *AFP*