

OTHER STORIES

Lalithaa donates ₹1 cr for Covid relief

Chennai: Dr M.Kiran Kumar, chairman, Lalithaa Jewellery Mart Pvt Ltd, handed over ₹1 crore favouring 'Tamilnadu State Disaster Management Authority' to the Chief Minister on Friday. Kiran Kumar had donated ₹1 crore during the first wave last year and also ₹1 crore each to the Governments of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Vellore Naruvi Hospitals donate ₹25 lakh

Vellore: Vellore Naruvi Hospitals chairman G. V. Sampath donated ₹25 lakh to CM Stalin towards CM Covid Relief Fund. Anita Sampath, Vice-Chairman, and Nitin Sampath, General Manager, accompanied him.

Sastra donates ₹1 crore to CMPRF

Thanjavur: Sastra Deemed University's management handed over its Covid relief support of ₹1 Crore towards the CMPRF. The Chancellor R.Sethuraman handed over the DD to the Chief Minister on Friday.

He was accompanied by Dr.S.Vaidhyasubramaniam, VC of Sastra. Sastra has also handed over 6 ventilators to Thanjavur Medical College Hospital & ESIC Hospital, Chennai, along with oxygen concentrators & flowmeters worth ₹55 lakh. Sastra is also sourcing 25 more oxygen concentrators to be handed over to TN government soon.

Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research bags top honour

Chennai, May 14: The Chennai-based Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research (BIHER), one of India's leading private and deemed universities, is ranked as the number one private university in the country by the SCImago Institutions Rankings - 2021.

Published by Scimago Institute in partnership with Elsevier, the SCImago Institutions Rankings are considered as one of the most objective rankings in the world, as the universities and scientific organizations are ranked not on the basis of their applications, but on information from international databases over the past five years. In his comments, Dr. J. Sundeeep Anand, president, BIHER, said that securing several top positions among Indian and global universities in the SCImago Rankings 2021 and being recognized as a leader in research among all universities in India is an outstanding achievement. It is a moment of pride for all faculty members, staff, scholars, and students of the university.

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Chennai corporation to tighten lockdown norms

T. SUDHEESH | DC CHENNAI, MAY 14

As Covid-19 cases continue to spike despite the lockdown, the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) has decided to tighten lockdown norms across the zones.

The zonal enforcement teams (ZETs), which were launched on May 6 with five members including officials from the GCC, police and tahsildars, intensified patrolling in their zones to implement the restrictions. They will also check commercial establishments and traders.

GCC commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi said the teams will take strict action against individuals and commercial establishments found violating Covid-19 protocols. Shops which continuously violate lockdown norms will be sealed and individ-

GCC commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi said the teams will take strict action against individuals and commercial establishments found violating Covid-19 protocols

uals not wearing masks and following social distancing at public places will be fined. The civic body announced that it had collected Rs 1.34 crore as fine since April 9. A total of Rs 21 lakh were collected by the ZETs since May 6, he said.

Bedi on Friday inspected various parts of the city distributing masks to the public. He also visited the residents along with health volunteers to check the health conditions and make them aware of the procedures to be followed

if any family member tested positive.

The commissioner also sought the services of medical students asking them to get prepared to treat Covid-19 patients at the screening centres and other places due to the shortage of hands at hospitals.

At present at least three zones - Anna Nagar, Kodambakkam and Adyar - are reporting 4,000-plus active cases. Before the lockdown was implemented, the number of active cases in these zones was little more than 3,000. As per the data, on Thursday all 15 zones in GCC together added 42,579 active cases. On May 4, the number of active cases across the city was 33,222.

Anna Nagar, which reported 3,800 active cases on May 4, added 4,514 cases on Thursday. Likewise, cases in Kodambakkam were 3,056

two weeks ago, but increased to 4,140. Adyar, which reported 3,098, now recorded 4,166 cases.

However, other critical zones such as Teynampet (3,755), Thiru.Vi.Ka. Nagar (3,513), Ambattur (3,722), Teynampet (3,755) and Valasaravakkam (3,044) continue to report 3,000-plus active cases.

Teynampet continues to retain the top slot in death toll among zones with 659 cases. Anna Nagar (649) and Kodambakkam (643) have also crossed the 500-mark.

The zone-wise death toll is as follows: Tondiarpet (414), Royapuram (452), Thiru. Vi. Ka. Nagar (593), Ambattur (400), Adyar (438), Madhavram (146), Valasaravakkam (280), Alandur (224) and Perungudi (211). The death toll in the city touched 5,546 on Thursday.

450 vehicles seized for violation

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 14

Police in Chennai suburbs on Friday seized 450 vehicles from motorists roaming on roads in violation of the complete lockdown imposed by the state.

To prevent the spread of Covid-19, the government announced a "complete lockdown" from May 10 - May 24 in the state. Public were requested to avoid venturing out unnecessarily and not gather on the streets without maintaining personal distancing. No vehicle was allowed to ply on the road, except vehicles meant for milk distribution, medical purposes, emergencies and funerals and other essential services. Police checkpoints were established all over the city and suburbs and both law and order and traffic police personnel tightened the security arrangements. The police said at least 450 vehicles were seized for violating norms.

Id at home

Muslims offer prayer on the terrace of a house at Tambaram on the occasion of Ramzan on Friday.

— DC

Breath of life

A Covid care oxygen centre, a temporary medical facility, set up by Credai Chennai.

— DC

Produce Covid vaccines at 3 TN centres: Wilson

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 14

The DMK's Rajya Sabha member and senior advocate, P. Wilson, has urged the Central government to commence production of vaccines for Covid-19 at King's Institute at Chennai, Integrated Vaccine Complex (IVC) by HLL Biotech at Chengalpattu, and Pasteur Institute at Coonoor, Nilgiris.

In a letter sent to Union minister for health and family welfare Harsh Vardhan, Wilson urged the government to utilise the abovesaid three vaccine manufacturing centres in Tamil Nadu to produce Covishield and Covaxin vaccines in a

large scale.

He noted that IVC at Chengalpattu has been lying idle for almost a decade, after being established in 2012 at an estimated cost of ₹594 crore and a sanctioned staff strength of 408, of which nearly 251 posts remained vacant. The Pasteur Institute of Coonoor, one of the oldest and pioneer institutes in the country, manufactures antirabies vaccine and DPT group of vaccines.

He suggested that the government should permit Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech to utilise these facilities on a payment basis to ramp up production immediately. Since these two companies already have the licence /patent,

they can begin production forthwith.

He said that Section 92 of the Patents Act, 1970 permits the Central government to compulsorily license a drug during a "national emergency". The pandemic has posed the worst health crisis that independent India had witnessed and certainly falls under the category of a "national pandemic". The Supreme Court had also stressed the need for lifesaving drugs to be made available to the people at affordable rates. Hence, the Central government can to utilise the power under Section 92, compulsorily license the drug and permit these three vaccination centres to be used.

Nilgiris daily tally crosses 200 mark

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC OOTY, MAY 14

The daily Covid-19 positive tally has crossed the 200-mark for the first time in Nilgiris. On Thursday, Nilgiris recorded 224 positive cases. In 2020 summer, while the country was battling the Covid-19 spread, Nilgiris recorded only a dozen positive cases.

The data shows that the virus spread is high in Ooty and Gudalur taluks

and relatively less in Kotagiri taluk.

Forest minister K. Ramachandran, who hails from Nilgiris, held a review meeting with the district officials on Friday. He told the media that the total number of positive cases in Nilgiris stood at 11,699 while 10,521 have been discharged.

The number of active cases in the Nilgiris is 1,119. Out of this, 477 persons are undergoing treat-

ment in hospitals across the Nilgiris, while other patients are on home quarantine.

He added that 1.59 lakh hill residents have been administered Covid-19 vaccine so far.

Two medical oxygen plants are being set up in the government medical college hospital in Ooty, he added and appealed to the hill residents to adhere to the Covid-19 prevention norms.

Woman burns husband alive in Madipakkam over disputes

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 14

Upset over the unending disputes in the family, a 33-year-old woman allegedly burned her husband in a family dispute in Madipakkam on Thursday evening. The police arrested the woman on murder charges on Friday.

As per the police reports, the victim, S. Pandi (43) succumbed to his injuries during treatment on Friday. The incident took place in Thanthai Periyar Nagar, Kaiveli in Madipakkam on Thursday

During the argument, police alleged that Pandi attacked Parvathi Devi. In a fit of rage, she reportedly poured kerosene on the drunk man and lit him up

afternoon.

According to the police, the accused Parvathi Devi (33), lived with an alcoholic husband, Pandi and two school-going daughters.

Pandi's drinking problem has led to the dispute between the couple and above that, he could not

make both ends meet as he was economically weak. On Thursday afternoon, there was a heated argument taken between the couple. During the argument, police alleged that Pandi attacked Parvathi Devi. In a fit of rage, she reportedly poured kerosene on the drunk man and lit him on fire.

She then locked the house from outside. The neighbours who heard his cries alerted the ambulance and rushed him to the Kilpauk Government medical college and hospital for treatment.

During a police inquiry, Parvathi Devi staged a suicide drama. She said her husband immolated himself during an argument. However, Pandi in his declaration said that his wife set him on fire.

The Madipakkam police on Thursday evening booked an attempt to murder a case against Parvathi and arrested her. Meanwhile, Pandi died at the hospital on Friday morning, after which she was booked for murder. Police sources said investigations are underway in the case.

Court directs Ponneri tahsildar to act, remove encroachments

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 14

The Madras high court has directed the tahsildar, Ponneri taluk to consider and dispose of a representation, which sought to remove the encroachments allegedly made by Velammal Educational Trust at Ponneri taluk in Tiruvallur district.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy disposed of the petition filed by Makkal Vazhurimai Sangam.

The bench said the petition complains of the alleged encroachments by Velammal Educational Trust in S.Nos.176/2 and 176/3 at Panchat, Thacheri-II village, Ponneri taluk, Tiruvallur district. It was stated that Ponneri Taluk has several waterbodies and



that the Velammal Educational Trust, which was running various educational institutions under different names, has encroached on the lands specified in the abovementioned survey numbers to an extent of 20 acres 40 cents. In spite of submitting representations in this connection, no action has been taken by the authorities.

HC upholds 10-yr RI awarded to two accused in acid attack case

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 14

The Madras high court has upheld the conviction and sentence of 10 years Rigorous Imprisonment awarded to two accused by a Sessions Court (Fast Track Mahila) in Namakkal district, in an acid attack case, in which a nurse attached to a Primary Health Centre sustained grievous injuries.

Justice P.Velmurugan dismissed the appeal filed by Boopathy alias Manikandan and Vijay

alias Vijayakumar, challenging the order of Sessions Court, Namakkal dated September 11, 2020.

The case of the prosecution was that in the year 2014, Manikandan admitted his wife to a Primary Health Centre at Elachipalayam in Namakkal district for delivery and she gave birth to a child. After the nurse Vijayakumari noticed that the condition of the baby was not good, referred the mother and the child to a government hospital, where

the child died. On October 31, 2014, Manikandan along with his relatives came to PHC and picked up quarrel with the doctor, nurse Vijayakumari and other staff for not giving proper treatment to his wife and child and demanded money from them. While so, on December 31, 2014 when Vijayakumari was returning home along with her colleague Kesavan as a pillion rider after attending a review meeting, Manikandan along with his friend Vijayakumar came

in a two wheeler and threw acid on them, in which Vijayakumari sustained grievous injuries. A case was registered for offence under section 326 (A) of IPC and after a full fledged trial, the Sessions court convicted and sentenced the accused to 10 years RI. Aggrieved, the accused filed the present appeal.

Dismissing the appeal, the judge said this court independently finds that the prosecution has proved its case with cogent and reliable evidence. This court

also finds that the appellants have committed the offence punishable under section 326 (A) of IPC. Though the accused (A-1) has got the motive and A-2 had accompanied him, both came in a two wheeler and threw the acid on Kesavan and Vijayakumari."

Further, this court considering the fact that the injuries sustained by the victims were serious in nature and the appellants knowing fully well if acid was thrown on a person, he or she would sustain injuries and

such injuries would lead to death of that person sometimes.

Therefore, in these circumstances, this court finds that the prosecution has proved the case beyond reasonable doubt". The trial court also rightly appreciated the entire materials and elaborately discussed both the prosecution case as well as the defence raised and given cogent reason for conviction. Therefore, this co-urt does not find any merit in the appeal and the appeal was liable to be dismissed, the judge added.

The aforesaid contentions were refuted by the counsel appearing for Velammal Educational Trust, the bench added.

The bench said, "In the aforesaid facts and circumstances wherein the contentions of the petitioner

are strongly refuted by the contesting Velammal Educational Trust., we do not propose to examine the merits of the matter.

Instead, the Tahsildar is directed to consider the representation dated May 18, 2018 of the petitioner and dispose of the same by a

reasoned order after providing a reasonable opportunity to all parties affected by such order, including the petitioner and the fourth

respondent (Velammal Educational Trust). Such reasoned order shall be passed within a period of eight weeks".

No tea shops; groceries to shut at 10 am

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC CHENNAI, MAY 14

Chief Minister M K Stalin announced a set of stringent lockdown norms from Saturday under which no tea shops would be allowed to function and standalone groceries, vegetable, fish and meat shops would have to shut at 10 am as against the earlier timing of 12 noon.

The decisions taken after a meeting with high level officials and medical experts on Friday include strict implementation of the norms like shops operating without air conditioning, allowing only 50 per cent clientele inside at a time and delivering goods through e-commerce services like Dunzo only between 6 am to 10 am.

Earlier, roadside shops selling vegetable, flowers and fruits besides tea shops were permitted to do business between 6 and 12 noon but from Friday they would not be allowed to operate at all. However other e-commerce would be allowed between 2 pm and 6 pm.

Otherwise the other restrictions like total lockdown on Sundays and night curfew on all days till May 24 between 10 pm and 4 am would be in force, an official press release said.

Those travelling between districts or within districts for inevitable reasons like attending a wedding or a funeral or medical treatment or to take care of elders would have to go through an e-registration process that begins on May 17. The registration should be done at

https://eregister.tnega.org, the release said.

Though the lockdown came into force on May 10 itself, the government was concerned over many people venturing out of their homes needlessly. So, a crackdown on violators of the lockdown norms began on Friday morning across the state with police and Corporation teams monitoring the movement of vehicles and also the functioning of commercial establishments.

So, officials in vehicles drove through even small alleys to ensure that social distancing was maintained in the shops that were permitted to be open till noon and levied fines on the shopkeepers who flouted the norms.

By around 9 am, police started checking vehicles that had come out to the roads. Those with no valid reason to venture out of home were warned and sent back if they were aged or if a woman was in the vehicle.

Many youth who had just come out for a spin found themselves at the receiving end as their vehicles were seized. Some were asked to return home and warned not to repeat the offence again.

After noon, none of the shops were allowed to be open and vehicles were stopped at intersections to know the reason for their coming out at that time. The crackdown thus ensured that the roads were almost empty with just pedestrians passing by.

The officials were also

keeping a watch over hospitals, where ambulances were waiting outside with patients for long hours as there were reports of some patients passing away before getting a bed in the hospital or after returning home due to lack of beds.

So on Friday, officials took steps to shift the patients inside the hospital premises on a stretcher and start preliminary treatment, rather than making them wait outside.

A watch was also kept over crematoriums that were overflowing, leading to inordinate delay in doing the final honours for the dead. Discussions were on to increase the facilities in the crematoriums by constructing additional platforms for burning the pyres.



Chennai police checking vehicles on Friday.

—DC

Pondy logs 1,974 fresh cases, overall tally rises to 80,947

Puducherry, May 14: Puducherry logged 1,974 new coronavirus cases during the last 24 hours pushing the overall tally to 80,947, a senior official of the Health Department

said on Friday. Thirty more patients (16 men and 14 women) succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours ending 10 am Friday as the toll rose to 1,099. Director of Health and

Family Welfare services S Mohan Kumar said.

The Puducherry region accounted for 1,580 of the 1,974 fresh cases followed by Karaikal (224), Yanam (152) and Mahe (18). —PTI

Sterlite oxygen plant develops technical snag, production halted

DC CORRESPONDENT THOOTHUKUDI, MAY 14

Oxygen production at Sterlite was hit due to a technical snag at the oxygen unit. It is expected that production will resume in a couple of days.

The first batch of 4.82 metric tonnes of oxygen produced by Sterlite was dispatched to the Tirunelveli medical college hospital (TVMCH) on Thursday evening. The plant expected to scale up its production in the coming days, how-

ever on Thursday night abruptly suspended its production activity due to a technical snag.

According to sources the oxygen production was paused following the finding of a crack at the cold box where the oxygen in gaseous state is converted to liquid form.

According to Sterlite administration, the possibility of technical fluctuations of this kind was anticipated, as the plant has been unattended for three years. The crack found in

the cold box was said to be set right by welding and the repairing work is expected to go on for another three days as the cold box could be opened only after its cryogenic temperature (below -183 degree Celsius) was warmed up to bring it to normal temperature.

The technical expert team attending the issue at the oxygen production unit is hoped to provide a real time solution for resuming oxygen production at the earliest.

COOKER STEAM THERAPY



DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, MAY 14:

The Tamil Nadu government on Friday transferred 15 IPS officers including officers on a compulsory wait.

The press statement read DGP Pratheep V Philip is transferred and posted as the director of Tamil Nadu police academy while ADGP, Jayanth Murali is posted as head of the armed police unit in Chennai.

Former Chennai City police commissioner Mahesh Kumar

Aggarwal has been posted as the Additional Director General of Police Crime in Chennai.

ADGP Abash Kumar will head the economics offences wing of the CID, while Inspector General of Police, R. Dhinakaran has been posted as the IGP of the Economic offences wing of the CID unit.

IGP HM Jayaram, has been posted as the IGP of the Tamil Nadu Uniformed Services Recruitment Board in Chennai while IGP J. Loganathan is posted as

A herbal steam bath unit for the benefit of Covid-19 patients was established for the first time in Tamil Nadu at the corona ward of the government hospital at Mannargudi on Friday. The herbals including nochi, thulasi, karpooravalli, thumbai, vembu and R S Pathi leaves are used every day for the treatment, according to Dr N. Vijayakumar, superintendent, government hospital, Mannargudi. (Left) Madurai DIG Sudhakar inhales steam through vents in a pressure cooker filled with herbal water, while inaugurating the system to increase the immunity of police officers at Tirumangalam in Madurai district.

—DC correspondents

Suspend biometric system at PDS shops: Litigants assn

DC CORRESPONDENT TIRUCHY, MAY 14

The Litigants Welfare Association has appealed to the Tamil Nadu government to suspend the biometric system at fair price shops until the Corona-19 pandemic is over.

In a letter to the state chief secretary, the association president M. Sekaran has requested to direct the civil supplies department to suspend the biometric system at ration shops considering the spread of the virus, as directed by the NHRC, New Delhi, on the association's complaint.

He added that the civil supplies department had assured us to follow the guidelines to protect ourselves from Coronavirus, such as masks, sanitiser, and maintaining physical distance at ration shops. But the public have to press their thumb on the machine without any preventive measures. Due to some reasons, they suspended it for some time and restored it, he added.

Congress hoping to get one of three RS seats

FROM P1

Mr Munusamy who won from Veppanahalli was elected to the Rajya Sabha only in 2020 and hence could have been an MP till 2026. The other MLA who has given up the Rajya Sabha membership is R. Vaithilingam, who was elected in 2016. He could have been a member till 2022.

Since all those who would be filling the three vacancies through byelections would

have different terms in office, the elections would be held separately and the DMK and allies would be able to win all three of them.

Among the leaders whose names are being sounded for the MP seats are Subulakshmi Jagadeesan and Thanga Tamiliselvan.

Both of them lost the Assembly polls: Jagadeesan to BJP candidate C. Saraswathi and Tamiliselvan to AIADMK head honcho O. Panneerselvam.

The Congress leaders are also hoping to get one of the three seats and some of them had even called on DMK president and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin, it is said. TNCC president K.S. Alagiri and former MP Peter Alphonse are two of the aspirants for the seat, it is learnt.

While the AIADMK has five members in the Upper House, MDMK's Vaiko, PMK's Anbumani Ramadoss and TMC's G.K. Vasan are the other members.

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Those involved in property matters may face anxious moments. Share important information with others. Real estate brokers may find the day very dull.



Taurus: Home front will be peaceful and pleasant. Money gains are certain. Do not indulge in gambling. Stabilize your relationship with family members.



Gemini: You need to check your financial position and control excessive spending. You can put your creative ideas to use at your coworkers may not extend much support.



Cancer: Contribute generously to social organizations. Concealment of facts will complicate matters. Students and professionals will have a steady progress in their field.



Leo: Past investments need a re-examination. Your ability to charm others will put you in the limelight. Property or vehicle transactions seem quite likely.



Virgo: You will have lot of energy today and your intuition will be helpful in making crucial decisions. Love and romance will dominate your day as you go out of the way to please your beloved.

You share your b'day with

Madhuri Dixit Nene is an Indian actress, producer, television personality and a music artist. The Padma Shri awardee actress has appeared in over 70 Bollywood films.



Libra: Health will be normal. This is a wonderful day to attend seminars and exhibition of your interest. Your optimism will push your career to new heights.



Scorpio: You will feel somewhat let down by the people you trust. Financial gains will be slow but certain. You need to do more things that you enjoy in order to relax.



Sagittarius: Your artistic abilities and hard work will bring you recognition and fame. Don't compromise on your principles for glamour and finances.



Capricorn: Opportunities coming your way will lead to good outcomes. A spiritual person's blessings will give you comfort and relief. You will benefit from your leadership strength today.

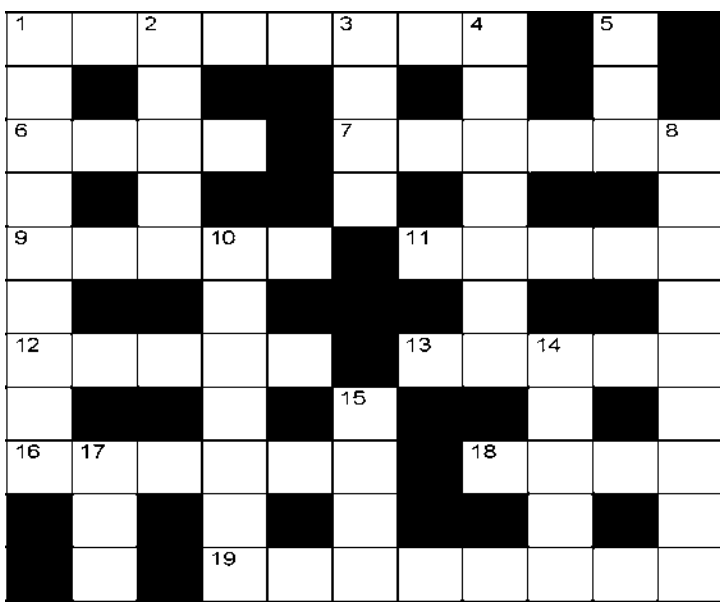


Aquarius: You will take charge of important work and gain additional respect from people in your group. Elders will provide you with necessary love and care. Express your true feelings to your lover.



Pisces: Happiness and love will dominate your day. Disturbing financial matters should settle down. You've worked hard to get to the position you are at today and it will be highly appreciated by others.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across
1. Cooked too long (8)
6. Successor (4)
7. Singular (6)
9. Oven-cook (5)
11. Fashion (5)
12. Populous country (5)
13. Mohammed's birthplace (5)
16. Locomotive (6)
18. Foolhardy (4)
19. Outline (8)

Down
1. White rose (anag) (9)
2. Health plant (5)
3. Responsibility (4)
4. Instalment (7)
5. Wildebeest (3)
8. Facial hair (9)
10. Distilled liquor (7)
14. Paint layers (5)
15. Sea swallow (4)
17. Sister (3)

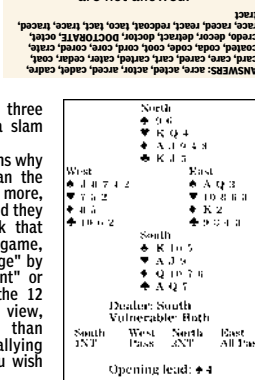
YESTERDAY'S ANSWER
Across: 6. Undervalue, 8. Upend, 10. Dogma, 13. Congregate, 14. Elate, 17. Balm, 19. Entrenched.
Down: 1. Once, 2. Mend, 3. Avid, 4. Flag, 5. Rewarding, 7. Quickened, 9. Night, 11. Osaka, 12. Vex, 15. Anti, 16. Ewer, 17. Back, 18. Item.

Word Mine

C
TDA
E O O R T

TODAY'S RATINGS: 30 AVERAGE: 33 GOOD: 36 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.



jumble

ZLAAP
XCTIO
GFIREU
FUNIFM

Print the answer here: _____

Saturday's Jumble: HITCH ONION SUPPLY RATHER Answer: After getting both major syntactical points replaced, he should — HIP HIP HURRAY



THE ARTIST WAS PAINTING THE HOB AND MADE SURE TO MATCH THE HOB'S...

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon

to be an expert, you must count both.) Here, East has 9 points, dummy contains 14, and declarer holds 15-17. This means that West owns a miserable 0-2 points. So, he cannot have the spade king. If East wins trick one with the spade ace and continues with the spade queen, declarer will calmly duck. South will win the third spade, take the diamond finesse and collect an over-trick. Instead, East must play the

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CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



THE WIZARD OF ID | Parker and Hartsd



ARCHIE | Bill Henry Scarpelli & craig boldman



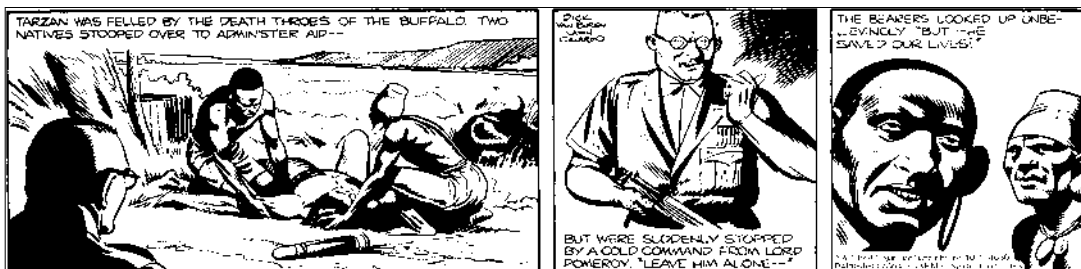
BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



TARZAN | Edgar Rice Burroughs



bridge

PHILLIP ALDER

THIRD HAND GETS A SIXTH CHANCE

In the deck, a king outranks a queen, but in this deal, a queen defeats a king — sort of. For our last look at third-hand play this week, East is defending against three no-trump. How should he plan the defense after West leads a fourth-highest spade four? Although five diamonds would make here, if North always heads for a minor-suit game with that type of hand, he will be a big loser in the long run. When you have minor-suit length with no sin-

gletons or voids, think three no-trump unless it is a slam deal. There are three reasons why experts play better than the rest of us. They count more, and they count more, and they count more. (The book that most improved my game, "Killing Defense at Bridge" by Hugh Kelsey, has "count" or "counting" in five of the 12 chapter titles.) In my view, even more important than tracking trumps is tallying high-card points. (If you wish

to be an expert, you must count both.) Here, East has 9 points, dummy contains 14, and declarer holds 15-17. This means that West owns a miserable 0-2 points. So, he cannot have the spade king. If East wins trick one with the spade ace and continues with the spade queen, declarer will calmly duck. South will win the third spade, take the diamond finesse and collect an over-trick. Instead, East must play the

spade queen at trick one, preferably in tempo. Declarer can hardly duck; he may instantly lose five spade tricks, or four fast spades and a later diamond. But if South wins trick one, he can no longer succeed. When East gets in with the diamond king, he continues with the ace and another spade to defeat the contract.

SHORT TAKES

PARENTS GRIEVE
AS COVID-19
SNATCHES KIDS

New Delhi, May 13: Nine-month-old Krishu, the only child to his blind parents, succumbed to Covid-19 at a Delhi government-run hospital on Thursday, while his father, battled the deadly virus at another hospital.

On Thursday evening, Jitender Singh 'Shunty', a former BJP MLA, buried Krishu in a corner of the Old Seemapuri cremation ground.

This was the second time in two days that Singh was burying a child so young.

The 59-year-old humanitarian, who has given dignified cremations to over 2,000 strangers during the second wave of Covid-19, buried five-month-old Pari on Wednesday evening, near the spot where Krishu now rests.

A relative of Krishu said the boy was the only child to his parents who live in Dilshad Garden in East Delhi.

"Both the parents are blind," he said, choking on his tears.

Krishu's mother contracted the infection around 18 days ago and since she breastfed the child, he also became ill, the relative said.

A few days ago, Krishu was admitted to the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, where he died in the early hours of Thursday.

His father, Shashank Shekar, 26, is battling for his life in the Rajiv Gandhi Super Speciality Hospital in Tahirpur.

"He doesn't know he lost his beloved Krishu today. Now, I don't want to lose his father too," the mother, Jyoti, said, as she broke down over the phone.

BJP LEADER'S
KIN BOOKED FOR
OPENING SHOP

Budaun (UP), May 14: The brother of a BJP leader here was booked for allegedly opening his garment shop in the local market amid the Covid-19 lockdown, an official said on Friday.

The police identified the accused as Jyoti Prakash, the brother of Badaun district's BJP president Ashok Bharti.

An FIR was lodged against Prakash under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code for disobeying duly promulgated public servant's order after he was found having opened his garment shop, City ASP Praveen Singh Chauhan said.

Prakash was found having opened his shop by city magistrate Amit Kumar and Circle officer Chandrapal as they were patrolling the city to enforce the lockdown, the ASP said.

As the two officials entered the shop, they even found customers sitting inside it purchasing different articles, Chauhan said.

As the two officials questioned the BJP leader's brother, he entered into an argument with them with his son and employees too joining them in a bid to browbeat them, following which an FIR was lodged against all the accused.

Chauhan said a probe is on in the matter.

COVID CONTINUES
TO WREAK HAVOC
LIVES IN J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, MAY 14

Id-ul-Fitr was celebrated in a subdued manner in Jammu and Kashmir as Covid-19 continues to wreak havoc upon lives. As many as 115 more people fell prey to the deadly virus whereas about 7,500 new positive cases surfaced in the twin Union territories of J&K and Ladakh during the past two days.

The local religious groups and the mosque committees in J&K had around midnight on Wednesday endorsed Pakistan Central

Ruet-e-Hilal Committee's testimony of the sighting of the Shawwal (Eid) moon. However, no big Eid congregations could be held anywhere in the UT due to the restrictions imposed to contain Covid-19 pandemic. Only small groups of Muslims offered Id prayers in locality mosques or in the lawns of residential houses with complete adherence to the Covid Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines. Eid was celebrated in similar fashion in Kargil and most other parts of Ladakh with rest of the country on Friday.

The local police and Central armed police forces have continued to enforce the 'corona curfew' in twin capitals of Srinagar and Jammu and all other major cities and towns.

Action against second
wave on war-footing: PM

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 14

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday warned that the Covid-19 pandemic was rapidly spreading in rural areas, as he urged all citizens to take precautions, wear masks and keep social distancing in order to check the spread of the disease that has claimed over 2.6 lakh lives.

The Centre, he said, was working on a "war footing" to check the second wave of infections and was setting up new hospitals and oxygen generating plants while augmenting supplies of medicines and vaccines.

"I want to warn you about corona. This pandemic is spreading fast in rural villages. Every government is making efforts to stop this. But awareness of this among rural people and the cooperation of panchayats is equally important," the Prime Minister said, saying the country was facing an "invisible enemy".

Speaking at the release of the eighth installment of financial benefits under the PM-Kisan scheme via video conferencing, Mr Modi added: "You have never disappointed the nation. We hope this time too, to protect yourself and your family from Covid, all necessary precautions are taken. Wearing masks properly and regularly is important."

Facing the world's worst health crisis, India has reported over three lakh daily infections for 22 consecutive days. The health ministry said India logged 3,43,144 new infections in the last 24 hours, taking the case tally to 2,40,46,809. The tally of total cases crossed 2.4 crores on Friday. With 4,000 more deaths, the toll stands at 2,62,317 since the pandemic first struck India over a year ago. While 2,00,79,599 people have recovered from the virus across India, the number of active cases is 37,04,893. The bulk of new infections is said to be coming from rural areas.

On Friday, Mumbai reported 1,657 new cases, and over 2,572 recoveries



Jama Masjid wears a deserted look on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, marking the end of the fasting month of Ramadan, during the ongoing Covid-induced lockdown, in New Delhi, Friday.

—PTI



96-year-old Pushpa Sharma poses for a photo with her family, after she recovered from Covid-19, at her residence in Shahdara area of New Delhi.

—PTI

and 62 deaths in the last 24 hours. Seeing a dip in the number of positive cases, Delhi on Friday reported 8,506 new cases, the lowest since April 10, with the positivity rate falling to 12.40 per cent; and 289 more deaths. The Kerala government on Friday extended the strict statewide lockdown to fight the pandemic till May 23.

Andhra Pradesh reported 22,018 new Covid-19 cases, taking the cumulative caseload to 13,88,803. Eith 15,747 new Covid cases, Uttar Pradesh recorded 312 deaths in the last 24 hours. Kerala reported over 34,000 new cases on Friday, and

Odisha 12,390 new cases and 22 more deaths Friday. Karnataka reported 41,779 new cases, 35,879 recoveries and 373 deaths in the last 24 hours. Rajasthan had 14,289 fresh Covid cases and 155 deaths on Friday, taking the infection tally to 8,35,814, with the death toll in the state at 6,472, officials said.

The health ministry said Friday it would supply a total of 191.99 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines -- Covishield and Covaxin -- to the states and Union territories free of cost from May 16 to May 31. These include 162.5 lakh Covidshield doses and 29.49 lakh Covaxin doses.



A paramilitary personnel punishes women for breaking Covid-induced curfew rules in Guwahati, Friday.

—PTI

2,000 bodies retrieved from Ganga

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 14

The Union home ministry has revealed that nearly 2,000 bodies have been retrieved from the Ganga by various district administrations in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the last one week or so. Officials say that these bodies are most likely of Corona patients who died in remote villages along the Ganga. Since most of the villagers are extremely poor and not able to finance the last rites of their family members, they have been

dumping the bodies in the river. Both UP and Bihar share a long river bank of the Ganga of more than 1,400 km.

The Union home ministry is in close touch with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar governments to ensure that dumping of bodies in the Ganga is checked immediately as this could lead to further spread of the Corona pandemic in the two states.

Ministry sources said the trend of dumping bodies was being noticed largely in four districts of Kanpur, Ghazipur, Unnao and Balia from where bodies were

also going further downstream to Bihar. Both states have been asked to take immediate corrective steps.

After the discovery of the dead bodies floating in the Ganga, almost all bodies were disposed of with proper religious rituals. Local police have been directed to start intensified patrolling along the river and spread awareness among the villagers not to dispose of bodies in the river as this could lead to fresh health issues.

Earlier, Bihar had also raised this issue saying that most dead bodies floating in

the Ganga were coming downstream from UP and were getting piled up near Balia.

Both states have mobilised massive resources as the home ministry has cautioned them that dumping of Corona victims in the Ganga can lead to massive contamination of river water which in turn will lead to greater health issues in the coming days.

There is considerable concern among Central agencies over the spread of the Corona virus in rural areas, particularly in the populous states of UP and Bihar.

Dhankhar slams Mamata's
silence on poll violence

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MAY 14

West Bengal governor Jagdeep Dhankhar who on Friday visited western Assam's Dhubri district and interacted with people who escaped from Bengal during post-poll violence regretted that West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee was maintaining silence over the violence

unleashed in the state after declaration of Assembly poll results on May 2.

Mr Dhankhar, who visited a camp in Dhubri where several families from Bengal's Cooch Behar claiming to be BJP supporters are taking shelter, said, "Nothing can be more shameful for us than people of West Bengal taking shelter in neighbouring state of Assam."

3 prisoners killed in clash

Chitrakoot (UP), May 14 (PTI) Three prisoners were shot dead in a clash at Ragauli district jail here on Friday, police said. One of them died in an exchange of fire with jail officials after he shot dead the other two prisoners, jailor S P Tripathi said.

The deceased inmates have been identified as Anshu Dixit, Merazuddin alias Meraj Ali and Mukeem Kala, officials said in Lucknow. "Dixit shot dead Ali and Kala, and held some of the other prisoners at gunpoint and threatened to kill them. He was later killed in the exchange of fire with police," IG, Chitrakoot Range, K Satyanarain said. Taking note of the incident, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said a joint team of Divisional Commissioner D K Singh and IG, Chitrakoot and DIG (prison) Sanjeev Tripathi will submit a report in this regard. Asked how weapons reached inside the jail, the IG said, "The matter is being investigated." He

said all the three inmates were hardcore criminals and had a number of criminal cases pending against them. However, Ragauli district jailor S P Tripathi earlier in the day said Dixit had snatched the service revolver of a jail staff when the official intervened in the argument between the inmates.

According to sources, Kala, a resident of Shamli, was involved in a number of cases of murder, dacoity and extortion cases, whereas Ali was an active member of gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari's gang. Dixit, a resident of Sitapur, was a contract killer who had worked for gangster Munna Bajrangi in the past, they said. Ali was shifted to Chitrakoot on March 20 from Varanasi jail, while Kala came to the jail on May 7 from Saharanpur. Dixit had been lodged in the jail since December 8, 2019, officials said. Thesituation inside the jail is now under control, they added.

—PTI

MUCORMYCOSIS

State health department compiles list of deaths by black fungus

Black fungus claims 52 lives in Maharashtra

Mumbai, May 14: As many as 52 people have died due to Mucormycosis, a rare but dangerous fungal infection, in Maharashtra since the COVID-19 outbreak last year, a senior health department official said on Friday. Mucormycosis, also known as black fungus, became a much talked about subject after some recovering and recovered coronavirus patients were found infected with the disease, whose symptoms include headache, fever,

pain under the eyes, nasal or sinus congestion and partial loss of vision. As many as 52 people in Maharashtra have died due to the Mucormycosis disease since the COVID-19 outbreak last year. All of them were COVID-19 survivors, but succumbed to the black fungus infection, the official told PTI.

For the first time, the state health department has compiled a list of deaths caused by black fungus," said the official who spoke on condition of

anonymity. On Wednesday, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope had said there were 1,500 cases of black fungus in the state, which is in the throes of a severe second wave of COVID-19.

Rising Mucormycosis cases, whose treatment requires a multidisciplinary approach, is expected to put a further burden on the state's healthcare infrastructure which is already under a strain. The state will float a tender to procure one lakh

Amphotericin-B anti-fungal injections to treat Mucormycosis patients, Tope had said a couple of days back. Mucormycosis has a very high fatality rate and this has increased the woes of the health department which has deployed all its resources to combat COVID-19. Mucormycosis was not a notified disease like malaria and hence its cases were not mapped and a database was not prepared, the official said. With the rise in COVID-19 cases and pre-

liminary reports of growing infection of black fungus, the state started creating a database. This exercise revealed that so far 52 people have died due to the black fungus infection, the official said. All the 52 patients died after the coronavirus infection spread in the country. However, very few deaths took place in 2020 in Maharashtra. A sizeable number of deaths have taken place in the current calendar year, he said.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

TURKISH TOURISM VIDEO TAKEN DOWN AFTER BACKLASH

Istanbul: A video promoting tourism in Turkey amid the pandemic has caused an uproar on social media for showing tourism employees wearing masks that read “Enjoy, I’m vaccinated.”

The video was published on the social media accounts of official travel guide Go Turkiye on Thursday and was taken down later that day. It aimed to promote travel to Turkey as a “safe haven” for foreigners and showed unmasked tourists being served in hotels on the Turkish coast.

Opposition parties and critics on social media said the promotional video was an insult to Turks. A hashtag calling for the tourism minister to resign was trending on Twitter on Friday. Tourism workers have been prioritised to receive their vaccinations and the country’s foreign minister promised “we will vaccinate all people tourists may see by the end of May.”

AS A GESTURE, MYANMAR FREES JAPANESE SCRIBE

Bangkok: An arrested Japanese freelance reporter left for home on Friday after being released by Myanmar’s ruling junta in what it called a gesture of friendship to Japan, Japanese officials and Myanmar state media said.

Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said Yuki Kigazumi was released after efforts by Japanese diplomats and others. The reporter boarded a plane at Yangon’s airport and was expected to arrive in Japan on Friday night.

Myanmar’s army-run *Myawaddy TV* said Kigazumi was arrested on April 18 for “inciting” anti-military civil disobedience and riots. “Although the journalist is a lawbreaker, the case will be closed and he will be released at the request of the Special Envoy of the Japanese Government for National Reconciliation in Myanmar, in view of the close ties and future relations between Myanmar and Japan,” the junta said in a statement read on TV.

UN ENVOY ASKS THAI AID IN ENDING MYANMAR CRISIS

Bangkok: The United Nations’ special envoy on Myanmar met with Thailand’s prime minister on Friday as she continues efforts to end violence in Myanmar sparked by a military takeover in February.

The envoy, Christine Schraner Burgener, told Prayuth Chan-ocha in Bangkok that she hopes Thailand will find ways to work with Myanmar’s military to ease the unrest, the prime minister’s office said in a statement. The army’s seizure of power has been opposed by a broad cross-section of Myanmar’s population, and the junta has responded with a violent crackdown that has cost hundreds of lives.

The escalation of violence and the junta’s failure to restore order has led to fears the country could become a failed state, impacting neighboring Thailand and the whole region. Prayuth told Schraner Burgener his government is ready to listen and exchange information that could be beneficial, according to the statement, which said the two also discussed humanitarian assistance for affected people.

PUTIN ALLY, OPPN MIN. UNDER HOUSE ARREST IN UKRAINE

Kyiv (Ukraine): A top Ukrainian opposition politician with close links to Russian President Vladimir Putin was placed under house arrest on Thursday, days after being charged with treason.

Viktor Medvedchuk, who heads the Opposition Platform for Life party, the largest opposition force in parliament, denies the charges brought against him last week and says they’re politically motivated.

Medvedchuk, who has close personal ties with Putin, the godfather of Medvedchuk’s daughter, could face 15 years in prison if tried and convicted. Prosecutors had asked a court in Kyiv to put Medvedchuk in jail, but a judge ordered house arrest instead.

Medvedchuk, 66 is accused of transferring oil and gas production licenses from one of the fields in Crimea to Russian authorities. Russia annexed the Black Sea peninsula in 2014, weeks after Ukraine’s former Moscow-friendly president was ousted by protesters.

Medvedchuk is also charged with allegedly disclosing secret data on the deployment of Ukrainian military units last year.

U.S. VOWS TO STAND BY ALLY AUSTRALIA AGAINST CHINA

Washington, May 14: The Biden administration has vowed to stand by Australia in its worsening trade and other disputes with China.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Australian counterpart on Thursday that the US will not leave Australia alone on the field or maybe I should say alone on the pitch in the face of economic coercion by China.

That’s what allies do,” he said. “We have each other’s backs so we can face threats and challenges from the position of collective strength.

Like the United States and China, Australia and China are in the midst of several major disputes as Beijing seeks to apply pressure over commerce and influence. Blinken said the the United States and Australia are bound together by deeply held shared values that no other nation, including China, can uproot.

Blinken and Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne both said that presenting a united front to China is key. — AP

HONG KONG FREEZES JIMMY LAI’S ASSETS

Hong Kong, May 14: Hong Kong authorities on Friday announced that they had frozen the assets of billionaire pro-democracy tycoon Jimmy Lai, including shares in his media publications, for breaching the city’s national security law.

The security bureau said it had issued an order to freeze Lai’s shares in Next Digital media group and “the property in the local bank accounts of three companies owned by him”.

A rags to riches billionaire, media tycoon Lai has long been a thorn in Beijing’s side thanks to his caustic tabloids and unapologetic support for democracy.

His *Apple Daily* newspaper has staunchly backed Hong Kong’s pro-democracy cause, including the huge and often violent protests that swept the international financial hub in 2019. — AFP

No mask for fully vaccinated in US

Covid test, quarantine waived for travel; Biden says Americans can now greet with a smile

Washington, May 14: In the biggest indication that the United States is fast returning to pre-pandemic life, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has said that fully vaccinated people are no longer required to wear masks. The recommendation holds true for both indoors and outdoors, the CDC said.

Following the announcement on Thursday, President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris appeared before reporters at the Rose Garden of the White House without wearing masks.

“I think it’s a great milestone. A great day. It’s been made possible by the extraordinary success we’ve had in vaccinating so many Americans so quickly,” Biden said.

He said 250 million vaccine shots have been given in 114 days. “We are seeing the results. Cases are down in 49 of 50 states. *New York Times* has reported that hospitalisations are the lowest they’ve been since April of 2020, over a year ago, right after the start of the pandemic. Deaths are down 80 per cent and also at their lowest level since April of 2020,” Biden said.

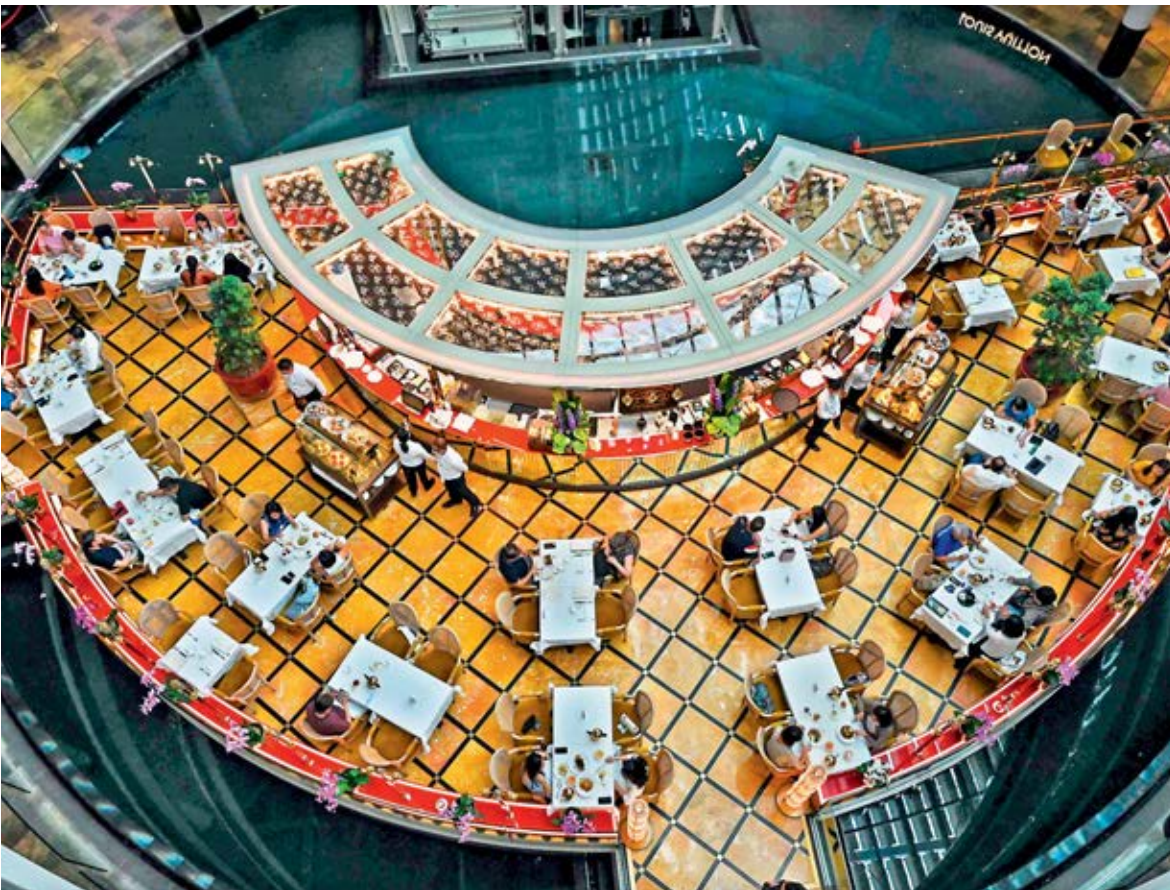
He said that the virus tragically rages in other countries. “In less than four months, we’ve gone from 5.5 per cent to nearly 60 per cent of the adults in America with at least one shot in their arm. We’ve gone from stagnation to an economy that is growing faster than it has in nearly 40 years. We’ve gone from an anemic job creation, to a record for job creation for a new administration,” Biden added.

The CDC said fully vaccinated people can resume activities without wearing a mask or distancing, except where required by federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial laws, rules, and regulations, including local business and workplace guidance.

Those travelling within the United States need not get tested before or after travel or self-quarantine after travel. The CDC said the vaccines are effective at preventing the Covid-19 disease, especially severe illness and death.

Biden spoke about the thousands of deaths and the lives upended for millions more as they missed family gatherings and important rituals.

He heaped praise on ordinary Americans who, he said, had met the challenge head on — and better than in some other countries. — Agencies



Ahead of the tightening of restrictions due to the surge in Covid-19 cases in the country, people dine at a restaurant in a shopping mall in Singapore on Friday. — AFP

Indian strain doubles in 1 week in UK

London, May 14: The case numbers related to the B.1.617.2 variant of Covid-19, first identified in India, have more than doubled within a week in the UK, resulting in further surge testing and enhanced vaccine measures to be deployed in parts of the country where the strain is beginning to spread “increasingly rapidly”.

Public Health England (PHE) said on Thursday

● **UK HEALTH** Secretary Matt Hancock said that the health authorities are monitoring the situation “very carefully” and will not hesitate to take further action if necessary.

that its latest analysis shows the number of cases of the highly transmissible variant first

detected in Maharashtra has risen from 520 last week to 1,313 cases this week. Most cases are in the northwest of England, with some in London, and additional measures are being put in place to “rapidly break chains of transmission”.

UK Health Secretary Matt Hancock said that the health authorities are monitoring the situation “very carefully” and will not hesitate to take fur-

ther action if necessary, indicating that the roadmap to lifting all lockdown measures from June 21 may have to be reassessed. “This data demonstrates why our swift and decisive measures are in place. Everyone has a part to play in controlling this variant, from participating in surge testing, to following the rules, to getting the jab,” said Hancock. — PTI

Washington state schools to resume full-time classes

Olympia (Washington), May 14: Washington authorities said on Thursday all schools in the state must provide full-time, in-person education for students for the 2021-22 school year and that students and staff will still be required to wear masks.

The Washington state Department of Health released guidelines that included mitigation efforts they said were

designed to stop the spread of the Coronavirus. The mask directive could prove controversial, as the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday moved to ease indoor mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated people.

Currently people over the age of 12 are eligible for Covid-19 vaccines in Washington state. About 1.1 million students attend

public schools in Washington state. The Washington state schools directive for fall calls for all people in K-12 schools to wear masks indoors – as well as outdoors if six feet of distancing can’t be maintained.

State authorities are recommending Covid vaccinations and testing programs but are not requiring them for in-person instruction in the fall. — AP

12 killed in Kabul bomb blast

Kabul, May 14: A bomb ripped through a mosque in northern Kabul during Friday prayers and killed 12 worshippers, Afghan police said.

Spokesman Ferdaws Faramarz said the mosque’s imam, Mofiti Naiman, was among the dead. Another 15 people were wounded. The bomb exploded as prayers had begun. No one claimed responsibility for the bombing, but initial police investigations suggest the Imam may have been the target, Faramarz said.

A worshipper at the mosque, Muhibullah Sahebzada, said he had just stepped into the mosque when the explosion went off. Stunned, he

● **THE EXPLOSION** comes on the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the warring Taliban and Afghan government.

heard the sound of screams, including children, as smoke filled the mosque. Sahebzada said he saw several bodies on the mosque floor and at least one child was among the wounded.

It appeared the explosive device had been hidden inside then pulpit at the front of the mosque. “I was afraid of a second explosion so I came immediately to my home” he

said. An image circulating on social media showed three bodies lying on the floor of the mosque, which showed minor damage.

The explosion comes on the second day of a three-day ceasefire announced by the warring Taliban and Afghan government. The pause was for the Islamic festival Id-ul-Fitr, which follows the fasting month of Ramadan. Until now many of the attacks in the capital have been claimed by the local Islamic State affiliate, but both the Taliban and government blame each other.

The most recent attack last week killed over 90 people, many of them pupils leaving a girls’

school when a powerful car bomb exploded. The Taliban denied involvement and condemned the attack.

The relentless violence comes as the US and allied NATO forces continue with their final withdrawal from Afghanistan after nearly 20 years of war. Just this week the last of the US troops left southern Kandahar Air Base, while some NATO troops still remained. At the war’s peak more than 30,000 US troops were stationed in Kandahar, the Taliban heartland. Kandahar was the second largest US base in Afghanistan after Bagram north of the Afghan capital. — AP

2 detained Indians freed after outrage in Scotland

London, May 14: Two Indians detained by British Border Force officials on suspicion of immigration offences in the Scottish city of Glasgow have been released after residents swarmed the street for eight hours to block their van from leaving, according to media reports.

The two were released on bail pending further investigation. Hundreds of residents had surrounded the Border Agency van in the Pollokshields area of Glasgow to try to prevent immigration officers from

● **HUNDREDS OF** residents had surrounded the Border Agency van in Glasgow to try to prevent immigration officers from removing the men.

removing the men. One person lay underneath the van, according to the reports.

The protesters chanted “Leave our neighbours, let them go” and “Cops go home” being heard as a ring of police stood around the van, local Scottish newspapers said. Officers said they were

freeing the men for the safety of everyone involved following a stand-off in Glasgow. The protest prompted Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon to accuse the Home Office of creating “a dangerous and unacceptable situation”. “Doing this on Id, in the heart of our Muslim community, and in the midst of a serious Covid outbreak was staggeringly irresponsible – but the even deeper problem is an appalling asylum and immigration policy,” she said. — PTI

FINANCIAL | TROUBLE

With over half of Lebanese population in economic crisis, people depend on NGOs for pet food

Poverty takes toll on the lives of pets in Lebanon



Founder of Woof N wags shelter Joe Okdjian plays with rescued dogs in the shelter on the outskirts of the village of Kfar Chellal in south of Beirut. As people struggle economically, activists say more pet owners are asking for help to feed or re-home their animals, selling them, or in the worst cases abandoning them. — AFP

Beirut, May 14: Ibrahim al-Dika had raised his Belgian shepherd Lexi since she was a tiny pup, but then Lebanon’s economic crisis made him jobless and he had to sell her to repay a bank loan.

“It got to the point where I was no longer able to feed her, the bank was pressuring me, and I hit a wall,” said the 26-year-old, devastated beside her empty kennel outside his Beirut home.

“I didn’t sell a car or a telephone. I sold a soul. I sold a part of me.” Can you afford to keep your pet? Animal activists say this is a dilemma a growing num-

ber of Lebanese owners are facing as their purchasing power nosedives.

Tens of thousands of Lebanese have lost their jobs or seen their income reduced to a pittance due to Lebanon’s worst economic crisis in decades.

As many families struggle to stay afloat, activists say increasingly more pet owners are asking for help to feed or re-home their animals, selling them, or in the worst cases abandoning them.

Dika, after losing his father to illness, was laid off last year when his employer, a fashion

retailer, closed shop, affecting his ability to support his mother and brother.

He had spent around a year caring for Lexi, and training her to sit, heel, give him the paw, and play dead. But when the bank started calling, he saw no

option other than to sell her. He drove over a few days later to check in on her, and Lexi thought he had come to take her home. “She leapt straight into my car,” he said. “She broke my heart the way she looked at me.” — AFP

	KONKAN RAILWAY CORPORATION LTD. (A Government of India Undertaking)
Tender No.: KR/KW/OL/W/2021/05-CB	
The Konkan Railway Corporation Limited has invited following open tender on ireps.gov.in system. Name of the Work: Protective works inside Pernem tunnel between KM 384/6-7 for 63 mtrs. length under SEN/MAO section. Priority-I Work (Excluding ongoing work portion). Cost of the Work: ₹ 249.07 Lakhs Excluding GST. Closing Date & Time: 04/06/2021 at 15:00 Hrs. For further details, contact Office of Sr. Regional Engineer, Konkan Railway Corporation Ltd., Karwar. For more details visit (https://www.ireps.gov.in)	

DECCAN Chronicle

15 MAY 2021

Opp. letter key first step govt must take on board

Leaders of 12 Opposition parties have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding that his government rework its vaccination policy and announce a universal free vaccination programme against Covid-19 and provide immediate financial relief to the people who have been hit by the second wave of the pandemic. The Union government must procure vaccines centrally from all available sources for the purpose and fully spend the budgetary allocation of ₹35,000 crores for vaccination and the money in the PM-Cares Fund in the fight against the pandemic, they said.

India is now witnessing the more fatal second wave of the pandemic and is left with no option but to declare an all-out war against the coronavirus. The steps the Opposition has listed invariably could be part of the strategy even an expert would lay out. On the other hand, the vaccine policy the government now follows is deeply flawed: It has left the job to the state governments and the private sector to source doses from Indian or foreign

The government must see the Opposition leaders' letter to the Prime Minister as an invitation to open a joint front in the war against the virus

The government must see the Opposition leaders' letter to the Prime Minister as an invitation to open a joint front in the war against the virus. The government now says the country will get 216 crore doses by December-end. This is a welcome announcement as the quantity is enough to inoculate all the eligible persons in this country. With an assured supply of the doses, the government must now set a practical deadline for vaccinating at least 70 per cent of the population which, experts say, is a necessary condition to attain herd immunity, and roll out a programme with definite milestones. The state governments and the private sector can be drafted for the success of the mission. The programme should work in a reverse engineering mode and ensure that every bottleneck is cleared.

The Opposition has called for the postponement of the Grand Vista project as well as scrapping of the three laws that would govern the agriculture sector in this country. We find these demands are a digression. This nation has far too many issues left unaddressed for centuries, but the challenge the virus poses eclipses them all.

The nation is going through one of the most difficult phases in its history, and it's time all the people joined together and fought off the enemy, a microorganism, as one man. Shorn of the political points in it and the rhetoric, the Opposition leaders' letter can be seen as a first step. The government should drop the recalcitrant attitude it has shown towards the earlier Opposition positions and instead take this as an opportunity to work together to save the nation from further devastation.

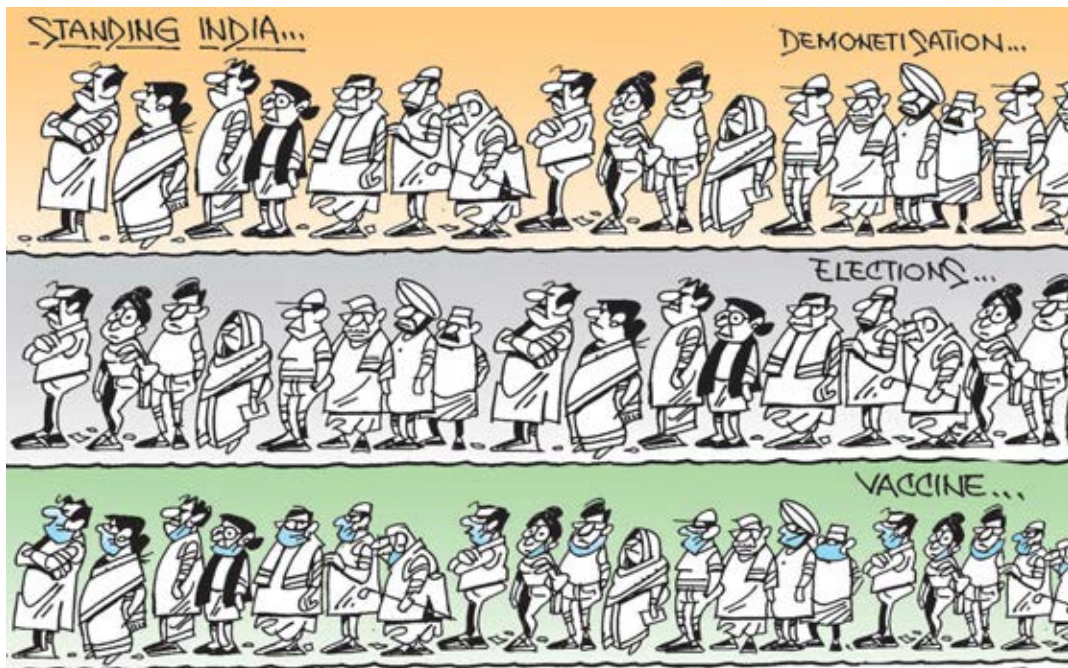
Courting transparency

The Chief Justice's idea of live-streaming and telecasting live proceedings of the Supreme Court is to be welcomed. The CJI is seeking a consensus within the court to try and take forward a path breaking concept, which can bring transparency and openness that can reinforce the faith of the public in the judicial system. The idea was mooted in a 2018 case in the top court and experiments were conducted in the Gujarat high court, which telecast proceedings on the YouTube channel. The pandemic may have enforced virtual hearings on the judiciary but it does appear the experience can prove beneficial if it leads to telecasts and live-streaming from the Supreme Court of India.

Progress in the form of open media access was seen recently in online media portals being able to hear court proceedings. In fact, it was the reporting in online portals of the observations of Madras high court judges on the Election Commission of India that brought out the severity of issues surrounding polls in the time of the pandemic. Contentious though the comments were and also frowned upon by the top court, such access to reporting of court proceedings by the media allowed the matter to come out in the public domain.

There may be much that is opaque in the manner in which the wheels of justice move, especially in areas like the process of nomination of judges to the higher judiciary. While such matters should be confidential and handled between the collegium and the executive branch of government in power, there is no reason why the proceedings in celebrated cases cannot be telecast live so that the wider legal fraternity as well as members of the public can witness them. Of course, the matter of what is live-streamed or telecast should lie strictly in the control of the highest judiciary so that issues like those that popped up in the famous O.J. Simpson case in the US do not crop up.

Subhani



What'll it take for Modi to stop playing ostrich?



Shobhaa's Take

The Hindi word for the two-toed, flightless, largest living bird known as the ostrich is “*shuturmurg*”. I bet you didn't know that! Well, India is full of *shuturmurgs* right now, most of them working for the government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi can't seem to make up his mind — to be a peacock or an ostrich. Which is maybe why he plays both, depending on the occasion. Of course, the ostrich in him makes sure he sees nothing and says nothing, while he watches India being turned into the world's biggest funeral pyre. Ostriches are known to run really fast when they are being chased by enemies (real or imaginary). Since our PM is staying put and not running, it's safe to assume he has zero enemies chasing him. The peacock in him makes sure his rare public appearances are perfectly colour coordinated and his flowing snowy beard well-groomed. He is now beginning to resemble the biblical Moses rather than Tagore or an Indian sage. But, unfortunately for citizens, he doesn't bear tablets in his hands nor an iPad with 10 or 20 or even 100 commandments. He says nothing at all. For a man known to like the sound of his own voice (six years of Modinama), one wonders about the stony radio silence.

Meanwhile, home minister Amit Shah stays in purdah as meme-makers go into overdrive (“Students' union files a missing person's report for Amit Bhai”). With two of the most important men in India not around during the country's biggest crisis, we are stuck with a headless chicken (the absentee government) in charge. In

charge of WHAT, you ask. Hello! In charge of us: the hapless citizens of this great nation. Guys — get this clearly — we are adrift, minus life jackets. There is no sighting of the captain who seems to have abandoned the ship. So please don't stress over minor issues and keep asking: “Where's the roadmap for the future? How do we tackle the acute vaccine shortage? What happens when the third wave hits India?” *Bhagwan ka naam lo* — and hope for the best. The roadmap doesn't exist.

A distraught friend from Jaipur was close to tears when he said: “People are dying on the streets. But the government reports only six deaths, while the funeral homes report 57 — that's how wide the gap is.” From all corners of India, citizens are sending out pathetic appeals for oxygen cylinders, beds, oximeters, vaccines — anything to save their loved ones. There is only a stone wall in front of them. Isn't it unbelievable and horrifying that our PM keeps mum through such an unprecedented tragedy? Why? It's an absolute mystery! Why has the “Great Communicator” not expressed sympathy, reassured citizens and calmed an agitated nation? Forget an apology. Forget owning up to his responsibility. Forget taking charge. Such a cavalier and heartless attitude speaks of bad politics and terrible image management. Here's a man who rose to the pinnacle of power through image manipulation. He understands the impact of optics, he's the master of the social media game — and yet he refuses to pacify his countrymen and countrywomen. Unless we are overlooking the arrogance of megalomani-

acs through history — those who cruelly control their own people through fear, terror tactics, severe punishment and the threat of death.

At this point, death is at our door regardless — what's left to “fear”? Experts are warning us the times ahead will be a lot worse. In a masterly, timely and balanced essay Dr Devi Shetty gives readers a no-frills, straight-up perspective on what awaits us. The picture is far from pretty. That we are woefully short of ICUs is known. But so far, these were meant for adults. The third wave is likely to affect our infants and children — hospitals are simply not geared to meet this challenge. As always, Dr Shetty doesn't merely paint a grim picture and leave it there, he also offers strategic solutions. Why doesn't our PM induct him to lead a crack Covid team and stall the inevitable disaster?

All along, India wasted precious time and resources not enforcing Covid-19 protocols strictly. An old clip of Assam's then BJP health minister (who is now chief minister) Himanta Biswa Sarma is doing the rounds. In that he tells a persistent reporter that masks are “not necessary” as there's not even a single Covid-19 case in his state. That's the level of brazenness, plus a lack of education of our elected representatives. This week former Uttarakhand CM Trivendra Rawat said: “Corona is also a creature and has the right to live.” Insane!! D.V. Sadananda Gowda, another brilliant minister

(chemicals and fertilisers) asks unnecessarily: “If vaccines are not produced yet, should we hang ourselves?” To which net-zines retorted: “What an idea, *Sirji!*” Chief ministers are callously playing with the lives of citizens, sitting back and averting their eyes from the pileup of corpses. Unless, of course, those corpses are found floating in the holy Ganga! That's when a few politicians sit up and ask for an inquiry. *Kyon?* Because the holy Ganga has been polluted — not because those who threw the half-burnt, plastic-wrapped bodies into the river may have been left with no other choice! We are running out of firewood for pyres. We will soon run out of space for graves.

These are humanitarian issues. Our leaders lack humanity. They don't have to be scientists or Covid experts. They just need to be human. And tell people that no matter what, help will reach them. Instead, all energies are focused on completing the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista construction in New Delhi: Prime Minister Modi's pet project. Imagine the irony: a man the world admired for rising to the highest position in the country after starting his life as a humble *chaiwalla* and sleeping on a hard floor now wants to reside in an opulent multi-crore palace, financed by us!

Today, there are any number of Indians who are demanding the Prime Minister's resignation (as would happen in any other civilised country) and holding him directly responsible for this unspeakable tragedy. Others are seriously nominating an actor (Sonu Sood) for PM, in recognition of his sustained work during the pandemic. Rather an actor who delivers and feels the pain of his fellow citizens than a wannabe superstar who has forgotten his dialogues.

Kuch na Kaho... Kuch bhi na kaho...

Instagram handle: @ShobhaaDe; Twitter: @DeShobhaa

Our leaders lack humanity. They just need to be human. And tell people that no matter what, help will reach them. Instead, all energies are focused on completing the ₹20,000-crore Central Vista construction...

LETTERS

IS MODI MISSING?

Whatever PM Modi knows or not, the PM should know that this is not the time to play hide-and-seek in these coronavirus days. The patients are everywhere, dying in heaps every now and then. There is no space in the crematoria and dead bodies are kept waiting to be burnt. What an apathy! Where is the PM, Rahul Gandhi asks. What I have explained are only a few instances of corona stories, a pandemic which the Centre has thoroughly mismanaged from the beginning. As Karan Thapar asks, ‘Why did Centre fail to act despite surge warning from INSACOG that came in early March?’ Does it become of a PM to play hide-and-seek with the lives of lakhs of citizens?

Manoharan Muthuswamy, Chennai

HUMANITY SURVIVES

It is really heartening to note that corporates, charity institutions, celebrities and people from all walks of life have started donating funds generously to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund, following an appeal made by Mr Stalin in an endeavour to combat the Covid-19 pandemic collectively. What is even more touching is that children also have been contributing their piggy-bank collections, as in a gesture by a schoolboy from Madurai who donated his savings to CM's relief fund, which prompted Mr Stalin to gift him a bicycle. Such efforts strongly underline the fact that adversity not only unites people irrespective of age, gender, caste and religion, but also shows that humanity and compassion haven't diminished a bit in our society.

R. Sivakumar, Chennai

BIDEN'S TALL CLAIM

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has eased mask-wearing guidance for fully vaccinated people in the United States and President Joe Biden claims it is an achievement. India should not be in a hurry to follow his footsteps since under the prevailing situation we may end up as in a former TN Minister's thermocool experiment which cost Rs10 lakhs to try and prevent the Vaigai dam water from evaporating and which became a nationwide joke.

A.P. Thiruvadi, Chennai

Farrukh Dhondy
Cabbages & Kings



“It's called hiding and running Or Silence, Exile and Cunning All with Capital letters To unchain Envy's fetters

Always beat about the Bush Suspense keeps hearers Khash Language and idiom mix The ideal poetic fix?”

— From Chowpatty Repartee by Bachchoo

Apologies! Heres' a political quiz: Question 1: In which democracy is the party, which has very often been in power since the late 1940s, now on the brink of collapse?

Question 2: In which democratic country has the governing party come to power through an appeal to irrational or non-rational factors?

Question 3: Which government was slow to react to the Covid pandemic and caused as a consequence an avoidable number of deaths?

Congratulations, gentle reader — perhaps the questions were too easy and the answers obvious: But you got it — the answer to all three questions is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland!

The Opposition Labour Party has lost its appeal and is falling apart; the Tories appealed not to rational material advance of classes but to emotional xenophobia and BoJo's government will be castigated in the forthcoming inquiry into the handling of the Covid-19 emergency, for not implementing lockdown measures in the face of rampant public contagion.

So, why is the Labour Party, a force in British politics since its formation in 1906, on its uppers if not on the rocks? Last week, on May 6, the UK held elections for several local council seats — control of the municipalities. Labour lost 267 of them while the Tories gained 294. The biggest disaster for Labour on May 6 was the single byelection for the Westminster Parliament held in the northeastern port of Hartlepool. For seventy years this town has voted Labour. This time it changed to Conservative. What the media in Britain characterise as another brick in the “red wall” turning blue!

In 2019, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour Party lost disastrously to Boris Johnson's Brexiteer buccaneering Tories. BoJo's 80-seat majority in the House of Commons was made up substantially of MPs from constituencies in this red

wall — the towns and cities of the Midlands and the North who were traditionally Labour, as they had vast populations of the working class. Did these “natural” Labour voters have a change of heart or even of DNA?

No, gentle reader, they voted with a change of allegiance towards the party that promised to “Get Brexit Done” and so ban European citizens from coming into the country, whether they came into their own red wall constituency or not.

Why? Go back a few governments and we have the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher who closed down the mines and mills, destroyed swathes of traditional manufacture and opened up Britain's markets, for example, to Polish coal and Asian textiles.

It left millions of people in the red wall territories unemployed. Subsequent Labour governments did very little to make the economic revival of these towns and cities their priority. Albeit there was a lot else to do and the 2008 world financial crisis didn't assist those Labour governments either.

Membership of the European Union gave European citizens — Poles, Hungarians, Spaniards and others

from the 27 countries — the right to come to Britain and work. These workers brought skills which had become scarce or prohibitively expensive in UK cities. For instance, in London, if you needed a plumber or a builder, the most convenient, cheapest and reliable one to do the work would be Eastern European.

Apart from an innate xenophobia, which no columnist can honestly quantify, there was the definite canard in the British working classes that these “foreign” workers were undercutting British wages. There were other more nebulous reasons — a faux-nostalgia for a supposedly vanishing British culture, eroded by the presence of other languages, religions, cuisine etc. “Keep Johnny Foreigner out” was the unspoken credo of the Brexiteers.

And the Labour Party was split on the issue. Jeremy Corbyn and several leftish infiltrators and open “Trotskyists” (Yes, gentle reader, in 2019!) were wholehearted Brexiteers. They made no assessments of the damage to Britain and to its working classes or to its security. They were following the 1960s and 1970s' contention of their hero Tony Benn who called the EU a “capitalist club”. They would leave it and join Russia, China, the United

States, India and other great “socialist” nations and with them defeat pernicious capitalist clubs. No, gentle reader, this is not an extract from Monty Python or any other satirical show. These advocates, some of them my friends, really believed and preached this.

What had started out in 1906 as a party of workers, mostly unionised, has, a hundred years on, become the political vehicle of an urban elite who would support Jeremy Corbyn's plans to nationalise the railways and take its ownership away from French and Dutch capitalist companies. They would support taxing the very rich, plugging the tax-dodge holes that the Tories and Rishi Sunak have left gaping. What they would also support is what has come to be known as the “woke” agenda. And most important, they (including yours truly) are decidedly anti-Brexit.

Labour has become two factions — the red wall xenophobes and the liberal, partially if dedicatedly, “woke” (not quite yours truly) urban membership. These are political enemies and can't present the country with a unified Opposition. Kali's heads can look both ways and manifest her powers — the Labour Party's can't.

Why is Labour, once a force in British politics, on the rocks?

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	48,732.55	0.09
Nifty 50	14,677.80	-0.13
S&P 500*	4,168.54	1.36
Dollar (₹)	73.28	0.19
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.05	-0.06
Euro (₹)	88.74	0.01
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	47,110▲146	0.30
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	68.44	2.07
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.986	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.645	-0.023

* As of 8:30 PM IST

ADB sanctioned \$3.92 billion loan to India in 2020

The Asian Development Bank on Friday said it has committed a record \$3.92 billion in sovereign loans for 13 projects to India in 2020, including \$1.8 billion in Covid-19 related projects to support the government's pandemic response. The agency said it has provided emergency assistance to contain the disease and establish social protection measures for relief to the poor and other vulnerable groups.

Forex reserves swell by \$1.4b to cross \$589b



The country's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$1.444 billion to \$589.465 billion in the week ended May 7, 2021, RBI data showed. In the previous week ended April 30, 2021, the reserves had risen by \$3.913 billion to \$588.02 billion. The reserves had touched a lifetime high of \$590.185 billion in the week ended January 29, 2021. The increase in reserves was on account of a rise in foreign currency assets.

Vandita Kaul is appointed Bol's nominee director

State-owned Bank of India (BOI) on Friday said the government has appointed Vandita Kaul, additional secretary in the finance ministry, to its board as a nominee director. The bank said it has received the communication from the finance ministry about Kaul's nomination on May 13, 2021. Bank of India has a total of eight members on its board, including the MD and CEO Atanu Kumar Das.

Mphasis Q4 net profit declines 10.2% to ₹316 cr

Mphasis has reported a 10.2 per cent decline in its consolidated net profit to ₹316.9 crore in the March 2021 quarter. Its net profit stood at ₹353.2 crore in the year-ago period, the company said. Its revenue from operations grew 7.5 per cent to ₹2,524.2 crore in the quarter from ₹2,346.1 crore in the year-ago period, it added. For the full fiscal 2019-20, Mphasis' net profit was up 2.7 per cent to ₹1,216.8 crore from ₹1,184 crore.



Akshaya Tritiya didn't end up as dud Gold sales muted but not a washout

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, MAY 14

Despite the lockdowns in key gold-buying states, Akshaya Tritiya was not a complete wash-out this year as it was the last year. The jewellery industry expects close to one-third of the usual sales to have happened this time.

Consumer sentiment remained muted and offline sales were severely affected due to lockdown in major cities and gold-consuming states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal. Further, the sentiments were affected by an uneasy air of fear.

According to P.R. Somasundaram, managing director, India, World Gold Council, there were certain markets that were still open and hence it was not a complete washout as last year.

"Many organised jewellers have adopted digital and omnichannel strategies to reach out to their consumers, learning from the lockdown experience of 2020. Coupled with decent pre-bookings before lockdown, these steps could redeem the festival from being a complete washout and present a slightly improved picture than last year," he said.

He expects almost one-third of the usual Akshaya Tritiya sales to have happened this time. Usually, 20 to 30 tonnes of gold is sold during Akshaya Tritiya. Some of the organised players and

Gold bond's price fixed at ₹4,777 gm

Mumbai, May 14: The issue price for Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22, which will open for subscription for five days from May 17, has been fixed at ₹4,777 per gram, the Reserve Bank of India said on Friday.

The government has decided to issue the bonds in six tranches from May 2021 to September 2021. The RBI will issue the bonds on behalf of the Government of India.

"The nominal value of the bond based on the simple average closing price for gold of 999 purity of the last three business days of the week preceding the subscription peri-

online companies saw a good jump in digital buying. "In 2020 Augmont sold around 15 kg of Digi Gold on Akshaya Tritiya and in 2021 it has increased by almost 100 per cent to around 30 kg of gold. Gold coins and gold bars in the range of ₹3,000-4,000 was preferred by buyers this year," said Ketan Kothari, director, Augmont.

Some of the jewellers saw good demand for gold coins that were booked on calls to be delivered post-lockdown. However, the lockdown in almost all of the south Indian states

od...works out to ₹4,777 per gram of gold," it said.

The government, in consultation with the RBI, has decided to offer a discount of ₹50 per gram less than the nominal value to those investors applying online and the payment against the application is made through digital mode.

"For such investors, the issue price of the gold bond will be ₹4,727 per gram of gold," the RBI said. The Sovereign Gold Bond Scheme 2021-22 Series-I or first tranche will be open for subscription from May 17, 2021, to May 21, 2021, and bonds will be issued on May 25.

affected the sales of some retail chains.

"Most markets in India remained closed and the overall sentiment was muted. Only 20 per cent of our showrooms were operational and they functioned under strict guidelines with reduced working hours. As expected, traction in these showrooms was minimal. It is not appropriate to compare this year's Akshaya Tritiya with any of the pre-Covid years," said Ramesh Kalyanaraman, executive director, Kalyan Jewellers.

CHIP SHORTAGE TO COST \$110B

As the semiconductor shortage hobbling the global automotive industry has worsened, its cost as a hit to sales has almost doubled to \$110 billion, up from an earlier estimate of \$61 billion, according to AlixPartners, a global consulting firm.

It also now says the world's carmakers will lose 3.9 million vehicles of production to the chip shortage this year, more than its prediction four months ago of 2.2 million or 4.6 per cent of the total production. — Bloomberg

SENSEX NOT PRICING IN COVID LOCKDOWN

India's Covid-19 crisis has so far failed to spark a deep stock selloff like that seen last year, and some asset managers point to less stringent curbs on the activity as one factor at least for now. Even as the nation reports more than 300,000 confirmed infections and over 4,000 deaths a day, India's benchmark equity index has been moving in line with regional peers. The Sensex has declined 6.6 per cent from a mid-February peak, compared to a 23 per cent fall last March. — Bloomberg

BIG TECH FIRMS ENTER FRAY TO SAVE JOBS OF STAFF'S SPOUSES

New York, May 14: Big Tech is wading into a legal fight over visas in an attempt to preserve the jobs of spouses of its foreign employees who are working in the US.

Amazon.com Inc., Apple Inc., Google, Microsoft Corp. and more than 20 other companies and organisations, including the US Chamber of Commerce, on Friday, urged a federal court in Washington to reject a lawsuit seeking to eliminate work authorisation for more than 90,000 H-4 visa holders.

Eliminating H-4 visas "would not only siphon off US gross domestic product but gift that productivity — and the innovation that comes with it — to other nations, harming America's global economic competitiveness into the future," the companies and organisations said in a so-called friend-of-court brief.

Under the Obama-era "H-4 Rule," the US department of homeland security in 2015 issued visas to spouses, more than 90 per cent of whom are women, of more than 580,000 highly skilled workers who live in the US on H-1B visas, according to the companies' filing. H-4 visas are critical to couples' decisions to come to the US, buy homes and raise children, they argue. The Trump administration attempted to dismantle the rule, but never executed its decision. —Bloomberg

Farmers got ₹1.35L cr under PM-Kisan: Modi

New Delhi, May 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the Centre has transferred around ₹1,35,000 crore so far under the PM-KISAN scheme with the payment of the eighth instalment on Friday and is also procuring a higher quantity of paddy and wheat at MSP to boost farmers' income.

Out of the total amount disbursed since the launch of the scheme in February 2019, Modi said around ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is helping farmers in these difficult times.

The Prime Minister on Friday released the eighth instalment of ₹20,667 crore to more than 9.5 crore farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme via video conference.

Under the scheme, which became effective from December 2018, the Centre provides ₹6,000

Out of the total ₹1.35 lakh crore disbursed since the launch of the scheme in February 2019, the Prime Minister said around ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is helping farmers in these difficult times.

per year to eligible farmers in three equal instalments of ₹2,000.

Addressing the event, Modi said farmers have performed their duties even during this Covid-19 pandemic and helped the country achieve record production of foodgrains and horticulture crops.

He said the PM-KISAN scheme was launched to help farmers, especially small and marginal ones, in meeting their input costs.

He said around 10 crore farmers have received the 8th instalment.

"To West Bengal farm-

ers, the benefit has begun to reach for the first time. Today, lakhs of farmers in West Bengal have got their first instalment. Gradually when the names of farmers are sent to the Centre, the number of beneficiaries will increase," he added.

Overall, around 11 crore farmers have received around Rs 1,35,000 crore under the PM-KISAN scheme so far, Modi said, adding that about ₹60,000 crore has been transferred during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"PM-KISAN is benefiting small and marginal farmers. In these difficult times, this money is helping these farmers a lot. So far under the scheme, about 11 crore farmers have got ₹1.35 lakh crore in their bank accounts. There are no middlemen," Modi said.

The government is continuously making efforts to ensure benefits to farmers reach directly at a faster pace, the Prime Minister added. — PTI

India's exports up 3-fold in April

New Delhi, May 14: India's exports in April jumped nearly three-fold to \$30.63 billion from \$10.36 billion in the same month last year, according to government data released on Friday.

Imports too rose to \$45.72 billion last month as against \$17.12 billion in April 2020, the data showed. The trade deficit widened to \$15.10 billion

as against \$6.76 billion in April 2020.

Exports in April last year had plunged by a record 60.28 per cent due to the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdown.

In March this year, exports grew by 60.29 per cent to \$34.45 billion.

Due to the low base effect, exports in April 2021 recorded a growth rate of 195.72 per cent.

Oil imports stood at \$10.8 billion as compared to \$4.66 billion in the corresponding month last year.

Major export commodities which have recorded positive growth in April include gems and jewellery, jute, carpet, handicrafts, leather, electronic goods, oil meals, cashew, engineering, petroleum products, marine products and chemicals. — PTI

Dr Reddy's set to focus on Sputnik shots, Covid drugs

Bharat Biotech to set up vaccine unit in K'taka, says deputy CM

New Delhi, May 14: Dr Reddy's Laboratories on Friday reported a 29 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at ₹557 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 31, 2021.

The Hyderabad-based drug major had posted a net profit of ₹781 crore in the January-March period of 2019-20.

Net sales, however, rose to ₹4,608 crore in the quarter under review as compared with ₹4,336.1 crore in the fourth quarter of 2019-20, Dr Reddy's Laboratories said in a regulatory filing.

For 2020-21 fiscal year, the company posted a consolidated net profit of ₹1,952 crore as against ₹2,026 crore in 2019-20.

Net sales increased to ₹18,420 crore during the last fiscal year as compared with ₹16,357 crore in 2019-20.

"In FY 21, we continued to grow across all our businesses, enhance productivity and strengthen our development pipeline," Dr Reddy's Laboratories co-chairman and MD G.V. Prasad said.

The company is prioritising its efforts to launch Sputnik V vaccine across India while working on the development and com-

Bengaluru, May 14: Karnataka will soon have a Covaxin-manufacturing plant of Bharat Biotech in Kolar district near here, Deputy Chief Minister of the state Dr C.N. Ashwath Narayan said on Friday.

The construction work has already begun and the government has invited investors to make the vaccine in the State, he said.

"Covaxin vaccine-manufacturing plant of Bharat Biotech will be established at the earliest in Malur Industrial Area of neighbouring Kolar district," he said. — PTI

mercialisation of several drugs for the treatment of mild to severe Covid-19 infections, he added.

The drug maker said it has commenced a detailed investigation into an anonymous complaint which alleges that health-care professionals in Ukraine and potentially in other countries were provided with improper payments by or on behalf of the company in violation of US anti-corruption laws.

A legal firm is conducting the investigation at the instruction of a committee of the company's board, it added.

Dr Reddy's noted that it has disclosed the matter

to the US Department of Justice, Securities and Exchange Commission and Securities Exchange Board of India (Sebi).

"While the matter may result in government enforcement actions against the company in the United States and/or foreign jurisdictions, which could lead to civil and criminal sanctions under relevant laws, the probability of such action and the outcome are not reasonably ascertainable at this time," it added.

The company said its board has recommended a final dividend of ₹25 per share of ₹5 face value (500 per cent) for financial year 2020-21. — Reuters

GO AIRLINES FILES DRHP FOR ₹3,600-CR IPO

New Delhi, May 14: Go Airlines, which has rebranded itself as 'Go First', has filed preliminary papers for an initial share sale worth ₹3,600 crore and the proceeds will be mainly used to repay dues amid the aviation industry facing strong headwinds due to the coronavirus pandemic.

After taking to the skies 15 years ago, the Wadia group-promoted budget carrier — which has ambitious expansion plans — is looking to mop up the amount through the issuance of fresh equity shares. It also has plans to raise up to ₹1,500 crore by way of a pre-IPO placement.

Once the shares get listed, Go Airlines (India) Ltd will be the third operational scheduled carrier after SpiceJet and IndiGo to trade on Indian bourses. "We expect competitive conditions in our industry to intensify further as new entrants emerge and as existing competitors seek to extend their operations and flight frequencies over routes that we operate," as per the DRHP. It also noted that the aviation industry faces significant business challenges due to Covid. — PTI

COVID | WARRIORS

Centre for special drive for fin services staff

Vaccinate bank staff, says finmin

New Delhi, May 14: The finance ministry on Friday asked state governments to accord priority to employees of banks and insurance companies for Covid-19 vaccination, saying they are exposed to high risks during these difficult times.

Department of financial services secretary Debasish Panda, in a letter, addressed to chief secretaries of states and union territories, said states should consider a special dispensation for vaccination of staff of banks, insurance companies, business correspondents, payment systems



and other financial services providers on priority.

Tagging the letter, he said in a tweet, "Kudos to our Bankers, Insurers, Payment Service Providers, Bank Mitras for

ensuring uninterrupted delivery of banking and financial services to people in need during these challenging times."

He also mentioned that many of these employees have succumbed to

Covid-19. "All state/UT governments are requested to instruct local authorities to provide them necessary help and support in ensuring delivery of banking and financial services. Vaccinating them on priority will mitigate their high exposure to risk in the delivery of public service," he said.

Raising the issues of some instances of manhandling by state law enforcement authorities during local lockdowns, the letter also asked state administration to ensure easy movement of officials for discharge of duty. — PTI

UK's anti-fraud agency probes GFG Alliance

London, May 14: The United Kingdom's Serious Fraud Office (SFO) said on Friday that it is investigating suspected fraudulent trading and money laundering related to companies within the Gupta Family Group Alliance (GFG), led by British-Indian businessman Sanjeev Gupta.

GFG Alliance includes the embattled Liberty Steel business that continues to find alternative financing after its main backer, Greensill Capital, collapsed in March. The SFO said its investigation covers the company's financial arrangements with Greensill Capital UK Ltd.

The SFO is investigating suspected fraud, fraudulent trading and money laundering in relation to the financing and conduct of the business of companies within the Gupta Family Group Alliance (GFG), including its financing arrangements with Greensill Capital UK Ltd, an SFO statement said.

As this is a live investigation, the SFO can provide no further comment, it said. The Gupta-led business has been the subject of much speculation over the past few weeks as it was feared thousands of jobs in Britain's steel industry were under threat as a result of

Greensill's collapse.

The finance company itself faces separate inquiries, including by the Parliament's Treasury Select Committee which called in former British prime minister David Cameron on Thursday to give evidence related to his role as part-time adviser to the collapsed bank.

The panel of cross-party MPs is among three parliamentary committees that have launched inquiries into Greensill Capital following its collapse in March, including to probe the extent of Cameron's lobbying of ministers in the lead up to its bankruptcy. — PTI

SHORT TAKES

Shaw stopped for pass, gets it soon

Mumbai: India batsman Prithvi Shaw was stopped while on his way to Goa in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra for travelling without an E-Pass, a police official said on Friday.

The incident took place at Amboli on Wednesday when the cricketer was heading for Goa in his car, said the official. He was allowed to leave after obtaining a pass.

Shaw was going to Goa for vacation, he said.

The Maharashtra government has made it mandatory to obtain a pass for travelling in its efforts to contain the second wave of the pandemic.

After the police stopped him in Amboli, he applied for the pass online afresh and got it in an hour. — PTI

Hussey Covid free, Saha still positive

New Delhi: Chennai Super Kings batting coach Michael Hussey has recovered from Covid-19, paving the way for his return to Australia on Sunday but Sunrisers Hyderabad's Wriddhiman Saha has received conflicting results in two coronavirus tests, prolonging his isolation.

Saha, who has been named in India's squad for the World Test Championship final and the subsequent Test series against England, is hoping to join the squad's bio-bubble in Mumbai on May 25. His inclusion is subject to fitness.

Both Hussey and Saha had first tested positive during the now suspended IPL. "Hussey has returned with negative RT-PCR results and has recovered well," CSK CEO Kashi Viswanathan said on Friday. — PTI

Nadal rallies past Shapovalov in QF

Rome: When it comes to long, grueling clay-court battles, nobody is better than Rafael Nadal. Nearing his 35th birthday, the Spanish great showed he's still got the stamina to withstand much younger challengers in a 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (3) comeback win over 22-year-old Denis Shapovalov on Thursday that secured him a spot in the Italian Open quarterfinals.

Nadal, a nine-time champion in Rome, will next face Alexander Zverev, the 2017 Rome champion. He also won in a comeback, beating Kei Nishikori 4-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Earlier, top-ranked Novak Djokovic cruised past Spanish qualifier Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-2 6-1. — AP

Tvesa off to good start in Capetown

Capetown: India's Tvesa Malik made a good start before dropping two bogeys to finish at even-par 72 and lie tied fifth after the first round of the Investec South African Women's Open golf tournament here. Tvesa had a share of the lead for some part of the day before faltering. Lee-Anne Pace and Welsh Lydia Hall, who carded two-under 70 each on the opening day, shared the lead. — PTI

Indian shooters hit range next week

New Delhi: In quarantine till May 19, India's Olympic-bound shooters are keeping themselves busy with dry firing in their respective hotel rooms at Zagreb before they hit the range next week. Accorded a warm welcome by the Croatian shooting fraternity, including world number three rifle shooter Peter Gorsa, the Indian team will take part as a guest invitee in the European Championship from May 20 to June 6 at Osijek. After the continental event, the Indian shooters will compete in the ISSF World Cup, slated to be held in same city from June 22 to July 3. — PTI

Live on TV

FOOTBALL

FA Cup Final: Chelsea vs Leicester from 9.45 pm on Sony Ten 2, HD

UFC

Fight Night: Charles Oliveira vs Michael Chandler and other bouts from 7.30 am (Sunday) on Sony Ten 2

COACH POTATO

Raman writes to Ganguly, Dravid on 'Prima Donna Culture' in women team

New Delhi, May 14: Ousted Indian women's cricket team coach W. V. Raman has written to BCCI president Sourav Ganguly, alleging that there is a "prima donna culture" in the national team and it needs to change.

In the mail that has also been marked to National Cricket Academy head Rahul Dravid, Raman has also offered to present a roadmap for women's cricket in the country, if asked.

In a surprising move, the former India Test player was not retained as the head coach of the senior women's team by the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) which picked Ramesh Powar for the top job. Raman's major achievements included a runners-up finish for the side at the women's T20 World Cup last year.

"As far as I know, Raman has said that he has always 'believed in team being placed above everybody else, and insisted that no individual can really be a prima donna,'" a source privy to Raman's mail said.

The stylish former left-hander's crisp letter to the two former captains is sure to ruffle a few feathers given that it has always been the coaches who have either stepped aside or sacked following fallout with players, most notably ODI captain Mithali Raj.

While Raman's letter didn't name anyone, it is understood that he has spoken extensively about the star culture that prevails in the team, which he said is probably doing more harm than good.

While repeated calls to Raman went unanswered, a source in the know of things did admit that a mail to both Ganguly and Dravid has gone out.

"Raman has asked Dada



(Ganguly) that if a past accomplished performer feels constrained by this culture, then he (Ganguly) as a former India captain, should take a call on this matter, whether the coach is asking for too much," the source added.

Raman, it is learnt, is dismayed by allegations that he is not proactive as a coach. He has recalled how he oversaw three training sessions (for Trailblazers, Velocity and Supernovas) between 1 pm to 9 pm in humid UAE conditions during the last T20 challenge.

"In case the president and secretary want to hear his opinion on allegations about his work ethic, he can explain."

The letter has been copied to Dravid because Raman sincerely believes that he can contribute towards building a roadmap for Indian women's cricket. — PTI

Raman, David were not on same page for SA selection

New Delhi, May 14: Former opener W. V. Raman's unceremonious ouster from the Indian women's team head coach's position has opened a can of worms with both the Madan Lal-headed Cricket Advisory Committee and Neetu David-led selection panel coming under the scanner of BCCI bigwigs.

It has been confirmed from multiple sources that Raman had red-flagged the kind of squad that David, Arati Vaidya, Renu Margrate, Mithu Mukherjee and V. Kalpana picked for the South Africa series, for which teen batting sensa-

tion Shafali Verma was not picked for the ODIs and senior pacer Shikha Pandey was inexplicably dropped.

While both David and Raman couldn't be contacted for corroboration, it is understood that the BCCI nowadays records all selection meetings. The just-removed coach didn't approve the changes.

"Do you know what kind of logic was given for dropping Shikha and Shafali? It is beyond comprehension," a peeved senior official said.

The selectors said that Pandey was unfit because she hasn't worked hard

on training during lockdown and was "overweight".

"But when they were asked to prove their point, they couldn't simply do it," the official alleged.

In the case of Shafali, her fielding was questioned and put forth as the reason for her non-selection in the ODI team.

"If Raman had a counter-question that if Shafali's fielding is a problem for 50-over cricket, then it is bigger problem in T20 format where it is more important. Then how is she being selected in T20 format," the official asked. — PTI

VIHARI AND TEAM COMES TO THE AID OF COVID PATIENTS

New Delhi, May 14: Crushing the pain barrier to save a Test match is by no measure a small feat but for Hanuma Vihari, the biggest satisfaction these days comes from being able to arrange a hospital bed or oxygen cylinders for desperate Covid-19 patients through a network of friends.

Vihari, while being in the UK for his county stint, has used his Twitter handle to amplify appeals for help. He has also created a team of 100 volunteers, comprising friends and followers from across Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka.

Just like Congress leader B.V. Srinivas in New Delhi, Vihari's friends and followers have reached people with plasma, oxygen cylinders and arranged food and hospital beds for patients.

"I don't want to glorify myself. I am doing it with the intention of helping people at the ground level, who actually need every help possible in these difficult times. It is just the start," the 27-year-old said.

Vihari left for England in early April to play in the English county for Warwickshire.

Vihari, like every Indian, has been shocked by the obstacles that Covid-19 patients and their families have encountered on a daily basis.

"With the second wave being so strong, getting a bed became a difficulty and that is something which is unthinkable. So, I decided to use my followers as my volunteers and help as many people as I can," Vihari, who has more than 110,000 followers, said. — PTI

Rookie Roy gets maiden call-up for England tour

New Delhi, May 14: Rookie wicketkeeper-batter Indrani Roy from Jharkhand was rewarded with maiden Test and ODI call-up for India's tour of England next month but senior left-arm spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad missed out due to an injury.

The Neetu David-led selection panel made a course correction with teen batting sensation Shafali Verma and seasoned pacer Shikha Pandey making it to all three squads after their South Africa home series snubs.

Sneh Rana and Indrani were two stellar performers in the National One-Day competition and thus got their call-ups.

The likes of Monica

THE FIXTURES

- **Test:** June 16-19 (Bristol)
- **1st ODI:** June 27 (Bristol)
- **2nd ODI (D/N):** June 30 (Taunton)
- **3rd ODI:** July 3 (Worcester)
- **1st T20 (D/N):** July 9 (Northants)
- **2nd T20:** July 11 (Hove)
- **3rd T20 (D/N):** July 15 (Chelmsford)

SQUADS

Test & ODI: Mithali Raj (captain), Smriti Mandhana, Harmanpreet Kaur (vice-captain), Punam Raut, Priya Punia, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Indrani Roy (wicket-keeper), Jhulan Goswami, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav.

T20: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain), Smriti Mandhana (vice-captain), Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh, Harleen Deol, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia (wicket-keeper), Indrani Roy (wicket-keeper), Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav, Simran Dil Bahadur.

Patel, C. Prathyusha have been dropped from the squad altogether.

As expected Mithali Raj will lead the team for the one-off Test, to be played at Bristol from June 16 to 19 and the three One-Day Internationals while Harmanpreet Kaur will take over the reins during the three T20 Internationals. — PTI

TUCHEL TARGETS FA CUP AS FOXES CHASE HISTORY

London, May 14: Thomas Tuchel plans to ruin Leicester's bid to make history, as the Chelsea manager eyes the first trophy of his reign in Saturday's FA Cup final at Wembley.

Tuchel has enjoyed a superb run since replacing the sacked Frank Lampard in January. The German has led Chelsea to the FA Cup and Champions League finals, while taking them back into the Premier League's top four. Winning his maiden silverware in English football would be further evidence of Tuchel's impact.

But Leicester will pose a significant threat to Tuchel's ambitions under the astute guidance of boss Brendan Rodgers.

The Foxes are aiming to win the FA Cup for the first time in their first final appearance since 1969.

No club have appeared in more FA Cup finals without lifting the trophy than Leicester, who have lost four times in the showpiece match. — AFP

Reds boost chances of CL return

Manchester, May 14: Liverpool kept their chances of a place in next season's Champions League in their own hands with a thrilling 4-2 victory over Manchester United at Old Trafford on Thursday.

Jurgen Klopp's men still need to win their remaining three games to guarantee a place in the Premier League's top four, but cleared the biggest hurdle in their path with a first victory away to United since 2014.

Roberto Firmino scored twice either side of half-time after Diogo Jota cancelled out Bruno Fernandes' early opener for the home side.

Marcus Rashford's strike set up a grandstand finish, but Mohamed Salah secured a vital win in the final minute as Liverpool moved up to fifth in the table.

"We are still in the game, still in the race. That is all we could do tonight," said Klopp.

"It was necessary. Without this result we don't have to talk about it."

The clash between



Liverpool's Roberto Firmino (left) scores against Manchester United in an EPL match at Old Trafford on Thursday. — AP

English football's two most successful clubs had been postponed 11 days ago as United fans stormed the pitch and clashed with police amid protests against the club's owners.

A peaceful protest took place before kick-off as supporters again voiced their anger at the Glazer family. Distrust of the Americans has been reignited by United's part in a failed European

Super League (ESL) project, that collapsed within 48 hours last month due to a backlash from fans, players, governments and governing bodies.

United and Liverpool were reportedly two of the leading drivers behind the project that sought to guarantee top level European football for 15 founder members every season without the need to qualify on the pitch. — AFP

MADRID VICTORY PUTS PRESSURE ON ATLETICO

Madrid, May 14: Real Madrid kept the pressure on Atletico Madrid by thrashing Granada 4-1 on Thursday to reduce the gap to two points at the top of La Liga, with two games left to play.

A draw or defeat for Real would have given Atletico the chance to win the title on Sunday by beating Osasuna but goals from Luka Modric, Rodrygo, Alvaro Odriozola and Karim Benzema secured a comfortable victory.

Atletico could still be crowned champions this weekend if they overcome Osasuna and Real fail to win away at Bilbao but the Spanish title race has been full of surprises and still nothing is guaranteed. z" "We can only keep putting pressure on Atletico and hope they don't win both of their games," said goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois. — AFP

Japan to expand virus emergency

Tokyo, May 14: Japan on Friday further expanded a Coronavirus state of emergency from six areas, including Tokyo, to nine, as Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga repeated his determination to hold the Olympics in just over two months.

Japan has been struggling to slow infections ahead of the Games. The three additions are Japan's northern island of Hokkaido, where the Olympic marathon will be held, and Hiroshima and Okayama in western Japan.

Despite the worsening infections, Suga stressed his commitment to holding the games safely and securely while protecting Japanese by strictly controlling the movements of foreign participants, including possibly expelling journalists covering the event if they defy regulations.

"I understand there are various difficulties, but the priority is to stop the further spread of infections and protect the people's lives and health," Suga said.

The three additional areas will join Tokyo, Osaka and four other prefectures already under the

● **The three additional areas will join Tokyo, Osaka and four other prefectures already under the emergency Coronavirus restrictions through May 31, Japan PM Suga announced at a government taskforce meeting on Friday.**

emergency coronavirus restrictions through May 31, Suga announced at a government taskforce meeting Friday. Bars, karaoke parlors and most entertainment facilities are required to close. Business owners who comply will be compensated; those who don't could face fines.

"Infections are escalating extremely rapidly in populated areas," Suga said. "As new variants continue to spread, we judged that now is a very important time to stop the further spread of infections."

It was the second expansion of the emergency in just one week.

Suga said he will decide on a possible further extension by evaluating the virus situation at the end of May. — AP



Lawyer Kenji Utsunomiya, a representative of an anti-Olympics group, shows an anti-Olympic banner after submitting a petition to the Tokyo government calling for the cancellation of the Tokyo Olympics on Friday. — AP

PETITION SUBMITTED TO CANCEL TOKYO GAMES

Tokyo, May 14: An online petition calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled has been submitted to the Tokyo government with over 350,000 signatures on Friday morning.

The rollout of the petition comes with Tokyo, Osaka and several other areas under a state of emergency with coronavirus infections rising particularly new variants.

The postponed Olympics are to open in just under three months on July 23rd.

The petition will also be sent to International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach, who cancelled a planned trip to Japan this month due to surging cases of Covid-19 in the country, and to International Paralympics Committee President Andrew Parsons.

Although 70-80% of Japanese citizens in polls say they want the Olympics cancelled or postponed, there is no indication this will happen. The petition was organised by Kenji Utsunomiya, a lawyer who has run several times for Tokyo governor. — AP



Tamil Nadu Olympic Association president N. Ramachandran hands over a cheque for ₹1 Crore to TN Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. Ramachandran contributed the amount to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund in respect of the Covid-19 relief initiatives.

Irfan negative in second Covid test

New Delhi, May 14: Olympic-bound race walker K.T. Irfan and four other elite track-and-field athletes have returned negative for Covid-19 in a confirmatory second test conducted at Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru, the nodal body said on Friday.

Irfan was among five athletes who tested positive for Covid-19 at the centre in a weekly test conducted on May 7.

But the SAI on Friday confirmed that all these athletes, who got their first jab of Covid-19 vaccine on April 29, have returned negative in the second test conducted on Thursday.

However, the SAI said out of 22 athletes, who underwent the tests, one is still positive but it didn't disclose any further details.

"All have tested negative in the second test conducted yesterday, the results of which came on Friday morning. All athletes at the SAI campus across the country are being tested on a weekly basis," a SAI source said.

A total of 16 tests were conducted, which included two steeplechase athletes, two male race walkers, a male middle and long distance runner, two female middle and long distance athletes, four para athletes, besides a para coach and an NCOE athlete. — PTI