

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | FRIDAY 14 | MAY 2021

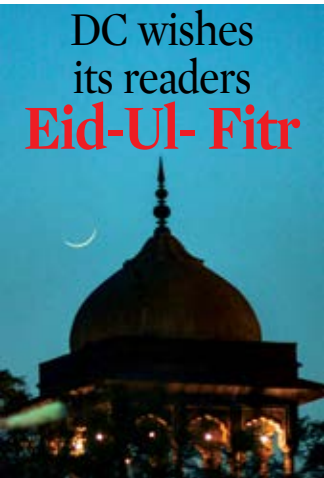
WEATHER



Max: 34°C
Min: 25°C
Rainfall: 3.7 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Chithirai 31
Tithi: Thrithiyai
Star: Mrigasirisham
Rahukalam:
10.30 am to 12 noon
Yamagandam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.31 am
Luhar: 12.11 pm
Asar: 3.19 pm
Maghrib: 6.25 pm
Isha: 7.40 pm



CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+3,23,038)	(+3,616)
2,40,26,262	2,61,969

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+30,621)	297
TN: 14,99,485	16,768

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

16,15,66,997

DEATHS

33,52,365

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES

219

worldometers.info

COUNTER POINT



It won't affect the common man... he is standing in the queue at vaccination centres!

4 workers killed in Cuddalore factory blast

DC CORRESPONDENT
CUDDALORE, MAY 13

Four workers, including a woman, were killed and 17 others sustained injuries in a boiler blast at a chemical plant in SIPCOT Industrial Estate in Cuddalore on Thursday.

The victims have been identified Rajkumar, 42, Ganapathi, 25, Savitha, 35 and Vishesh Raj, 25. A police official said the death was due to asphyxia-

tion. The injured have been admitted at government general hospital, Cuddalore.

The plant was operating with 19 regular staff and 18 contract labourers.

The incident took place at 7.45 am in Crimsun Organics Private Limited, which manufactures active ingredients for crop protection chemicals.

The boiler mixer exploded with huge noise, releasing

ammonia gas, triggering a fire. Following the blast, people in the surrounding areas rushed out of their houses and saw thick smoke gushing out from the unit. Police and Tamil Nadu Fire and Rescue Service personnel rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area and doused the flames. They also rescued the workers who were trapped inside the plant. A few workers sustained injuries when they tried to

rescue others trapped in the unit.

Condoling the death of the workers, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin sanctioned a solatium of Rs 3 lakh to the family members of each of the deceased. The Chief minister also ordered an assistance of Rs 1 lakh each to the injured.

Minister for Labour Welfare and Skill Development C.V. Ganesan visited the chemical company.



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Doctor held for selling Remdesivir in the black market



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US vax beat strain found in India

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Powar back as coach of women's cricket team



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TN to impose more curbs, deal with violators sternly

■ **All party-meeting backs lockdown restrictions**

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 13

The government will intensify lockdown regulations and deal severely with violators from Friday as the government is all out to impose stricter restrictions to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, it told a meeting of legislative parties, presided over by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin on Thursday.

While political party leaders unanimously resolved to usher in more lockdown measures and stressed on the need for people's cooperation to its efforts, Chennai corporation commissioner Gagandeep Singh Bedi warned of severe action against those violating lockdown rules.

The meeting passed five resolutions which supported the lockdown measures, sought to suspend all political and related meetings, called upon leaders to persuade people to adhere to lockdown rules. The meeting also decided to form an advisory committee with representatives of the legislative parties to guide the government formulate regulations.

Mr Bedi's reaction was to the criticism that motorists were out on the roads needlessly despite the government clamping a total lockdown, allowing only shops selling essential items like groceries, vegetable and meat to be open from 6 am to 12 noon and also restaurants to provide takeaway service alone at specific hours, from Monday. ■ **P2**

Make GST on vax, drugs zero p.c., CM tells Modi

G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 13:

In a bid to meet the increasing cost in ramping up Covid-19 prevention and treatment facilities, Chief Minister M K Stalin wrote to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi placing some financial demands and also appealed to the World Tamil community to donate liberally to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund.

Demanding a zero rate of GST for vaccines and medicines to treat Coronavirus patients, the Chief Minister, in his let-

CM WISH LIST

- Impose zero rate of GST on vaccines, medicines.
- Release GST dues
- Release rice subsidy
- Make ad hoc-grants-in-aid
- Increase state's borrowing limit from 3 per cent of the GDP to 4 per cent.

DONATE TO CM PUBLIC RELIEF FUND P2

ter to the Prime Minister on Thursday, urged the

Centre to take three steps to help the states offset the tax revenue loss suffered due to the pandemic.

He wanted the immediate release of the pending GST dues to the states and the rice subsidy for the public distribution system.

The Chief Minsiter also asked for an ad hoc-grants-in-aid since the additional tax on sale of diesel and petrol had not been shared with the states by the Centre.

The Chief Minister also wanted the Centre to increase the state's borrowing limit from 3 per cent of the GDP to 4 per cent.

PM missing with O2, vax: Rahul

New Delhi, May 13: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi launched an attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, alleging that he is missing along with vaccines, oxygen and medicines during the Covid-19 pandemic and what remains is the Central Vista Project and the Prime Minister's photos.

Mr Gandhi also said the government of India has "abdicated" its duty towards citizens during the pandemic and people must come together for those in need.

Congress' spokesperson Randeep Surjewala also hit out at the government over bodies floating in Ganga. "What time has come in this New India that even dead bodies floating in rivers are not visible to the government. Shame...,," he tweeted. — *PTI*

Covid tally up by 3.62 lakhs

New Delhi, May 13: India added 3,62,727 new coronavirus infections in a day taking the Covid-19 tally of cases to 2,37,03,665, while the death toll rose to 2,58,317 with 4,120 daily fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday. India had reported 3,48,421 cases on Wednesday.

The active cases have increased to 37,10,525 comprising 15.65 per cent of the total infections.

The national Covid-19 recovery rate has improved to 83.26 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,97,34,823 while the case fatality rate was recorded at 1.09 per cent, the data stated. — *PTI*

POINTMAN OF ASSAM NRC IN SC FOR REVIEW

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, MAY 13

Assam NRC coordinator H.D. Sarma has moved the Supreme Court seeking a comprehensive re-verification of the draft National Register of Citizens as well as its supplementary list.

Following the decision of the outgoing and present BJP governments, the NRC coordinator in the petition pleaded for an appropriate direction from the court on the process to be undertaken under Clause 4 (3) of the Schedule of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules 2003. "Major irregularities have been detected in the lists of the NRC in Assam and a comprehensive re-verification should be conducted. Irregularities have been detected in the final draft as well as the supplementary list. While ineligible names were included, many eligible names have also been excluded," he said in his petition.

MASS IMMERSION

NHRC issues notice over bodies in Ganga

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, after receiving complaints about several bodies found floating in the Ganga river in the two states.

REPORT ON PAGE 4



Inayat Ali, a Muslim, offers prayers while performing last rites of a person, in Jabalpur, Thursday. Inayat claims that he has cremated about 1200 bodies, most of them being COVID-19 victims. — *PTI*

Centre to allow private firms to make Covaxin

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 13

Under pressure from several states to increase the production of the two vaccines available in India, the Centre on Thursday said it is ready to allow private companies to manufacture the country's indigenous vaccine Covaxin.

Covaxin is jointly developed by ICMR and Bharat Biotech and is currently being produced by Bharat Biotech. The government has now engaged five public sector undertakings to help increase the production of Covaxin.

"While people are welcome to make Covaxin there is only one problem with the technology platform," said Dr V.K. Paul, member NitiAayog, who is part of Centre's major policy decisions on health. "The company making this vaccine must have Bio-Safety Lab level 3 to ensure bio safety of the virus. We give an open invitation to companies who want to produce as per our norms. Even Bharat Biotech has welcomed our decision to open up production and it has also reached out to a few companies. The Centre will assist in all ways to increase the capacity of vaccines."

Several states have suggested to the government

SECOND JAB OF COVISHIELD CAN WAIT FOR 16 WKS

New Delhi, May 13: The government has accepted the Covid-19 working group's recommendation for extending the gap between the two doses of the Covishield vaccine from 6-8 weeks to 12-16 weeks, the Union health ministry said, while announcing the extension on Thursday.

However, no change has been suggested for the dosage interval for Covaxin, it said.

"Based on the available real-life evidences, particularly from the UK, the Covid-19 working group agreed for increasing the dosing interval to 12-16 weeks between two doses of Covishield vaccine. No change in interval of Covaxin vaccine doses was recommended," the ministry said. The vaccine is manufactured by the Serum Institute of India.

to open up its production to other companies as well as to increase supplies.

Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had earlier urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to direct Bharat

200 CR DOSES TO BE AVAILABLE BY DEC, SAYS CENTRE

New Delhi, May 13: As states grapple with a shortage of coronavirus vaccines, the Centre on Thursday said that over two billion doses will be made available in the country in five months between August and December, enough to vaccinate the entire population.

V.K. Paul, member (Health), Niti Aayog, also said at a health ministry briefing that the Russian anti-Covid vaccine Sputnik V is likely to be available by next week.

With the domestic supply falling short to meet the huge demand, several states and Union Territories including Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Telangana have decided to opt for global tenders for procurement of anti-coronavirus shots. — *PTI*

Biotech and ICMR-NIV to transfer the Covaxin manufacturing technology and provide the viral strain to all those who are capable of manufacturing the vaccine and ramp up production.

Hamas rockets go deep inside Israel

Gaza City, May 13: Hamas sent a heavy barrage of rockets deep into Israel on Thursday as Israel pounded Gaza with more airstrikes and called up 9,000 more reservists. The relentless escalation of hostilities came even as Egyptian negotiators held in-person talks with the two sides, intensifying efforts at mediation.

Previous fighting between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers, including a devastating 2014 war, was largely confined to the impoverished and blockaded Palestinian territory and Israeli communities on the frontier. But this round seems to be rippling farther and wider than at any time since the 2000 Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

While some rocket attacks have reached the Tel Aviv area, Arab and Jewish mobs have rampaged through the streets, savagely beating people and torching cars. Flights



Smoke rises following Israeli airstrikes on a building in Gaza City, Thursday. — *PTI*

have been cancelled or diverted away from the country's main airport.

Weary Palestinians, meanwhile, somberly marked the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan on Thursday as militants fired one barrage of rockets after another and Israel carried out waves of bone-rattling airstrikes. Since the rockets began on Monday, Israel has toppled three high-rise buildings that it said housed Hamas facilities after warning civilians to evacuate. — *AP*

CJI open to livestreaming of court proceedings

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, MAY 13

Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana said on Thursday that he was "actively considering" a proposal to allow the live telecast of Supreme Court proceedings given the court's experience of over a year of hearing cases through video conferencing. However, he

added that before going any further and initiating any "concrete steps" on this, he would seek the "general consensus" among his fellow Supreme Court judges. "I plan to seek general consensus among my colleagues in the court on the live streaming of cases," he said.

The CJI also made it clear that the live streaming of



proceedings would be limited only to a few courts and that too on a trial basis.

Speaking at the launch of a mobile app to grant access

- **LIVE STREAMING** of proceedings would be limited only to a few courts and that too on a trial basis.

to the media to court proceedings without having to come physically to the Supreme Court, to help in their job of reporting, Chief

Justice Ramana said the media faces great challenges and noted its importance in the dissemination of information. The CJI referred to his own first-hand experience when he, for a brief period, worked as a reporter for a Telugu newspaper before embarking on a legal career.

The Supreme Court had, by an order of September

26, 2018, permitted the live streaming of court proceedings in cases of constitutional and national importance. However, the live streaming of sensitive cases was excluded.

The virtual event for the launch of the app was also attended by Justices D.Y. Chandrachud, A.M. Khanwilkar and Hemant Gupta.

OTHER STORIES

Doctor held for selling Remdesivir in the black market

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 13

A private doctor was arrested on Thursday by the Chengalpet civil supplies crime investigation department (CID) for selling Remdesivir in the black market.

The arrested doctor has been identified as Mohammed Iqbal (44), of Pillaiyar Kovil street in Thazhambur on OMR. He worked as an ICU consultant at a private hospital in Chengalpet.

The CS-CID team, upon information that a private hospital doctor has been selling Remdesivir, which was meant for the treatment of Covid-19 patients at the health centre for ₹22,000, laid a trap to arrest him. They approached him over the phone posing as a customer and placed an order for Remdesivir. He had agreed to give it for ₹22,000 and asked the 'buyers' to reach his house. Police in plainclothes went to the spot and arrested Mohammed Iqbal. Six vials were seized from him. He has been booked under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and various other sections of IPC. Further investigations are under process.

Assistant commissioner dies after fighting Covid

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 13

Pallavaram assistant commissioner of police Eshwaran (52), succumbed to Covid-19 here on Thursday afternoon. Easwaran was confirmed to have contracted the virus and since then he was admitted to the King institute in Guindy, where he breathed his last.

He was earlier with the Adyar PEW (Prohibition Enforcement Wing) police and was recently transferred and posted as Pallavaram assistant commissioner, ahead of TN assembly polls.

Police sources said that despite having had a severe fever, the officer was on duty on counting day. He went to the King's institute in Guindy on May 3 as he was feeling unwell. His reports came back positive for Covid-19 and since then he was admitted there.

Meanwhile, on Thursday morning he developed complications and died. He is survived by his wife and two children. It may be noted that 3,070 police personnel have lost their lives to coronavirus in the state.

State adds 30,621 new cases, 297 deaths

DC CORRESPONDENT,
CHENNAI, MAY 13

The state on Thursday added 30,621 and 297 deaths with recovery of 19,287 patients.

According to the data provided by the Health Department, the total Covid19 tally in the state has now reached 14,99,485 while the death toll touched 16,768 including 5,546 in Chennai.

Chennai has registered 6991 new cases and 88 deaths while the total number of positive cases in the district now touched 4,19,261.

A total of 2,173 people tested positive in Chengalpattu district with 32 death cases. Total cases in the district now stand at 1,07,038. Coimbatore added at least 2835 new patients with 13 deaths. Madurai (1,391), Kanyakumari (1079) and Thiruvallur (1251) districts also reported 1,000 plus cases.

While 18 people lost life in Kanyakumari, Madurai recorded 9 cases. A total of 22 patients succumbed to the virus in Thiruvallur.

Cuddalore (672), Erode (910), Kancheepuram (691), Krishnagiri (609), Selam (673) Thanjavur (683), Thiruvannamalai (589) Tirunelveli (781) Tirupur (712), Trichy (940) Vellore (640), Villupuram (571) Virudhunagar (564) crossed the 500 mark. As many as 7 districts recorded 300 plus cases while five other districts crossed 200 mark.

The contribution of Chennai and surrounding districts including Thiruvallur and Chengalpattu is 10415 cases.

Daily active cases touched 1,83,772 cases on Thursday while daily total active cases in the Chennai district touched 42579.

The district wise death toll goes as: Cuddalore -4, Dharmapuri-3, Dindigul-7, Erode-2, Kancheepuram-12, Karur-3, Krishnagiri-2, Nagapattinam-3, Namakkal-4, Nilgiris -1, Perambalur-1, Ranipet-6, Selam-6, Thenkasi-6, Thanjavur-11, Theni-4, Thirupathur-6, Thiruvannamalai-1, Thiruvallur-3, Thoothukudi-6, Thirunelveli-4, Thiruppur-1, Trichy-10, Vellore-5, Villupuram-1 and Virudhunagar-3.



A corona patient waiting in an ambulance at RGGGH.

— DC

CM's efforts to raise funds

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 13

In his appeal for donations, Chief Minister Stalin made it clear that the funds collected would not be spent on anything other than coronavirus related expenses like setting up oxygen beds and procuring vaccines.

He assured that the accounts would be available on the public domain and that the donors would get tax exemption.

Thanking all those who had donated generously, Stalin said that the state now faced two crises. One was the medical emergency and the other was the financial crunch.

Though the state was prepared to contain, prevent the spread and save those infected by coronavirus, the government had to provide relief to those who lost their livelihood due to the lockdown.

Though the government was ready to face the second wave of the pandemic, there was a need to ramp up the medical infrastructure, which had given rise to sudden emergency expenses.

It was to meet the expenses that he wanted the world Tamils to donate as he knew that the expatriate Tamils had not forgotten their State.

Meanwhile, donations started pouring in ever since the Chief Minister sought funds to overcome the crisis. The DMK Trust, headed by Stalin, announced a donation of ₹one crore, VCK's two

Allot funds for buying vaccine, MP urges PM

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 13

Madurai MP S. Venkatesan has appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to allot funds under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme to purchase Covid-19 vaccines for inoculation of youths who could be roped in to assist the government in the fight against the virus.

In a letter sent to Modi on Friday, the CPI(M) MP said, "I would like your cooperation in procuring Covaxin and Covidshield, using the funds under my MPLADS, to vaccinate 30,000 youths in my Madurai constituency on priority, so that they can be ready for Covid-related voluntary works in the temple city."

"Initially, with the available fund of ₹1 crore, I

Members of Parliament and four Members of the Legislative Assembly together announced Rs 10 lakh to the fund.

Dravidar Kazhagam's Periyar Trusts donated Rs 10 lakh for the Chief Minister's Fund. Besides, DK president K Veeramani also handed over the Periyar Maniammai Hospital located inside Periyar Tidal to make use of it for Corona treatment.

Even the corporate

would like to vaccinate around 30,000 youths, who will be available to support the ground level activities of the government to fight the pandemic", he said.

"I have proposed to enrol the willing youths, who will act as a secondary health volunteer force to help the authorities in Madurai and the Covid-infected persons and families by educating the community about the availability of hospital beds, providing food, guiding the affected, monitoring the progress, connecting people on home quarantine and ensuring vaccination by all so that the core front line workers can be relieved from these secondary tasks and would be helpful for them to focus on treatment of infected persons," he elaborated.

world had chipped in to help the government overcome the coronavirus crisis. EKKI Pumps, in association with its German partner Viessmann, committed to Rs 1 crore work of ventilators PPE. The company's co-CEO Kani-shka Arumugham called on Stalin. Global technology firm Zoho corporation donated ₹5 crore to the Chief Minister Public Relief fund towards Covid relief.

Two patients die after long wait in ambulances outside GH

Rising Covid TPR makes hospitals short of beds

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 13

Despite the authorities striving hard to ensure bed availability to treat critical Covid-19 patients, the rising test positivity rate, especially in Chennai and surrounding districts, has made hospitals short of beds.

On Wednesday, Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital (RGGGH) witnessed the death of two Covid-19 patients after a prolonged wait in ambulances outside the hospital for beds. A senior official with the health department told DC that the deaths happened due to the dearth of beds at the hospital.

Denying reports on shortage of beds at hospitals, health minister Ma Subramanian told reporters on Thursday that they had opened a new 100-bed facility at Omandurar Medical College and only two beds are occupied and rest is vacant now. "Lot of patients are now being brought from neighbouring districts that may create a bed crisis in the city hospitals," he said.

According to reports, the ambulances with patients waited outside RGGGH for



Health minister Ma. Subramanian along with director Dr Narayanasamy inspecting at King Institute of Preventive Medicine and Research on Thursday.

— N. Sampath

hours on Wednesday evening. Dr E. Tharanirajan, dean, RGGGH, said the patients, aged 74 and 75, were referred from private hospitals after they were found critically ill. One died at around 5.45 pm and the other at 7.30 pm. Over 20 ambulances were waiting outside and the doctors' team was checking

the patients one by one. So, before the two patients could be checked, they died in the ambulances. "Private hospitals are referring patients in the terminal stage," said Dr Tharanirajan.

While the city had capacity to accommodate 4,368 patients in the five MCHs in the city in the initial stages of the second wave,

the situation has changed now and the test positivity increased during the last couple of weeks. Following this, the authorities decided to add 2,400 oxygen beds in the city. As part of this, the Greater Chennai Corporation opened 360 beds at the Covid-19 care centre in Chennai Trade Centre on Wednesday.

56 empty cylinders from Singapore sent to Sterlite plant

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 13

The consignment of empty cylinders that arrived from Singapore by two IAF aircraft were sent to Vedanta's Sterlite copper in Thoothukudi.

According to airport sources, the two IAF aircraft brought around 256 empty oxygen cylinders from Singapore to Chennai airport on Wednesday.

They were procured by the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu Limited, according to the official Twitter handle of the Indian diplomatic mission in Singapore. The empty cylinders were transported to the Sterlite plant in Thoothukudi, the sources said.

Buy addl stretchers for patients, HC tells TN

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, MAY 13

Recording the assurance given by Advocate General R.Shanmugasundaram that steps are being taken to ensure that there is no queuing up of ambulances and that ambulances are not held up as additional hospital units, the Madras high court has said for such purpose, additional stretchers may be procured by government hospitals to house patients in corridors and other places available, particularly as this is a war-like situation where treatment has to be afforded to all who need the same.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar



Ramamoorthy made the observations while referring to the submissions made on behalf of some of the intervenors that queues of ambulances are lined up outside government hospitals and such ambulances are used as make-shift hospital beds resulting in other patients in dire need of transportation being deprived thereof. The bench also referred to the photo-

graphs of such queuing up of ambulances, which have appeared in several newspapers.

The bench was passing further interim orders on a suo motu proceedings initiated by it pursuant to the newspapers reports relating to alleged shortage of Oxygen and drug Remdesivir and another batch of Public Interest Litigations.

The bench said there was a shortage of vaccination in the State and, though a decision has been taken to call for a global tender, the allocation otherwise to be made by the Centre to this State should not be diverted in the wake of the State's decision to call for a global tender, particularly as it may be a long-drawn process.

Cops can't afford to be more forgiving on roads



B. Vijayalakshmi

Viewpoint

It has been four days since the state government imposed a 15-day complete lockdown in the state to rein in the galloping Covid cases.

With hotels and restaurants functioning (from 6 am to 10 am, 12 noon to 3 pm, 6 pm to 9 pm) for take-away, tea shops (with take-away service) open till noon, Swiggy and Zomato operating, ration shops functioning till noon, banks and other related services operating with 50 per cent workforce, e-commerce companies allowed to provide groceries, food, meat and provisions services and standalone grocery shops, fish and meat stalls open till noon, the buzz is back on city roads.

The six-hour window for people to buy essentials and those working in essential services trying to reach their workplaces leads to heavy movement of vehicles.

Last year, the police had collected over ₹20 crore as fine from those who violated lockdown regulations. Over 6 lakh vehicles were seized after its owners were found to be breaking the norms.

Sources say the cops have been told not to be rude, but considerate to commuters and motorists

already reeling under the calamitous second wave of Covid.

The city police have erected barricades across arterial roads and junctions to prevent unnecessary movement of people. Nearly 10,000 police personnel have been deployed to ensure that lockdown norms are followed. Besides, the city has 318 vehicle checkpoints and 360 patrol vehicles are used to keep tabs on violators.

Despite repeated appeals by health authorities to remain indoors and not to venture out without any reason, movement of people and normal traffic continues in several parts of the city. Cases are not booked against violators and vehicles are not seized.

The police must take action against those travelling without any valid reasons. The crackdown may be harsh, but such a move by the police will caution people against taking a casual approach to lockdown.

While police have been taking necessary measures to maintain law and order and enforce lockdown in the city, only strict rules with public cooperation can contain the spread of infection.



A woman traffic cop checks an auto rickshaw in the city on Thursday

— DC



Autos, cars and bikes line up on a city road on Thursday.

— DC



Chennai traffic police creates corona awareness and advises motorists against venturing out without valid reasons, at Chromepet signal, on Thursday.

— E.K. Sanjay

OTHER STORIES

Many vehicles on roads with passes

From P1

Though traffic signals had been switched off in most of the junctions and police posts were monitoring the movement of vehicles, more vehicles than the expected numbers were out.

That the police took a lenient view of violators unlike the lockdown of 2020 when people were beaten up and vehicles were seized for just coming out even for valid reasons led to more people taking the restrictions for granted.

Since many government offices functioned and some public sector undertakings like banks and insurance firms worked with 50 per cent attendance, many vehicles were on the roads with passes.

This was over and above the essential services that have been exempted from the lockdown.

Apart from these vehicles carrying the persons with legitimate reason to step out of home, there were many other vehicles, too, many felt. With the police being not too strict about preventing vehicles needlessly plying on the road, many motorists started hitting the road to carry out unimportant tasks.

While Mr Bedi said 30 teams have been formed to monitor those lockdown violators and take action against them in Chennai, the meeting of political parties decided to prevail upon the people to follow the government regulations.



No diversion in Central allocation of vaccines to TN in wake of global tenders: Madras HC

Chennai, May 13: The Madras High Court on Thursday said the Central allocation of Covid-19 vaccines to Tamil Nadu "should not be diverted" in the wake of the state's decision to call for global tenders of the jabs to meet its vaccination requirements.

The first bench of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthilkumar Ramamoorthy said the state's allocation by the Centre "may be appropriately reworked" as and when the global tender matures and supplies are received.

The court's order came on a matter related to Covid-19 management, taken up on its own. "There is a shortage of vaccination in the State and, though a decision has been taken to call for a global tender, the allocation otherwise to be made by the Centre to this State (Tamil Nadu) should not be diverted in the wake of the State's decision to call for a global tender, particularly as it may be a long-drawn process," the bench said.

"However, as and when the global tender matures and supplies are received, the State's allocation by the Centre may be appropriately reworked," the judges added. The court further called for "every endeavour" in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry to ensure that abandoned or disused places are converted into makeshift hospitals to augment the number of beds available for Covid patients. The bench also noted that there are "some murmurs regarding hefty amounts being demanded at some places for release of dead bodies."

"Elsewhere in the country, there are reports of persons at the crematoria demanding more money to cremate the Covid dead. The common person also feels the burden of additional cost at private hospitals when no place is available at government hospitals."

"In addition to the rather satisfactory work taken up by the State Government, these areas should be monitored so that the common man is not burdened any further," the bench said.

— PTI

SHRC asks cops to pay ₹2 lakh for false case

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 13

Two years after the Mayiladuthurai police registered a false case against two youths and remanded them in prison, the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) has directed the cops to pay them a compensation of Rs 2 lakh. The policemen assaulted them for taking pictures of a cop assaulting one among the complainants.

In the complaint, E. Praveenbabu and A. Ashok of Thathangudi village in Mayiladuthurai district stated that Praveenbabu was working as manager in a tyre company and Ashok was studying in a college. On December 11, 2019 at 11.50 AM, Praveenbabu went to Mayiladuthurai bus stand on his motorcycle and

G. Arivalagan, SI, Mayiladuthurai police station and others assaulted them in the police station. Praveenbabu sustained injuries on his back and Ashok's hand was fractured

parked it near the police outpost. Constable R. Balu questioned him why he came to the bus stand on a motorcycle and slapped him. His spectacles fell on the ground and broke. Ashok, who was standing nearby, took photographs of the incident. Angered over this, Balu abused them and took them to the police station in an auto and told police-

men that he was assaulted by the duo.

G. Arivalagan, SI, Mayiladuthurai police station and others assaulted them in the police station. Praveenbabu sustained injuries on his back and Ashok's hand was fractured.

The youths were arrested on false charges and remanded at the sub-jail, Mayiladuthurai. The jailor admitted them in the hospital and they were under treatment as inpatients for four days. On the insistence from the cops they were transferred to the Central Prison, Trichy and the prison authority admitted them in the government hospital, Trichy. Thereafter they were released on bail.

In the reply, the cops denied the allegations. They said Ashok

destroyed the properties inside the police outpost, when Balu restrained them and Ashok fell down and sustained injuries and they were taken to the hospital for treatment.

Brushing aside the police reply, SHRC member D Jayachandran said the cops abused Praveenbabu and Ashok in filthy language and took them in an auto to the police station and registered a false complaint against them as if they came on a motorcycle in triples and assaulted Balu.

The duo were beaten up by the cops severely and sustained injuries. Hence, the Commission directed the cops to pay a compensation of Rs 1 lakh each to the complainants. The Commission also recommended the government to initiate disciplinary action against the cops.

Rajini gets second dose of Covid-19 vaccine

Chennai, May 13: Actor Rajinikanth was on Thursday administered the second dose of Covishield vaccine at a hospital here, his publicist said.

The top star, who arrived here on Wednesday from Hyderabad after taking part in the shoot for the under-production Tamil film, 'Annaathe', received the jab at a hospital, Riaz K Ahmed said.

S o u n d a r y a Rajinikanth, the actor's daughter, tweeted, "Our Thalaivar gets his vaccine, Let us fight and win this war against Coronavirus together #ThalaivarVaccinated #TogetherWeCan#MaskOn#StayHomeStaySafe." — PTI

Two Covid patients end life near Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 13

Two Covid-19 patients allegedly ended their lives on the hospital premises where they were treated in Chengalpet and Kanchipuram districts.

In the first incident, a 48-year-old man, a patient of the Covid-19 ward in Chengalpet government hospital, was found hanging dead on the second floor of the hospital premises on Thursday morning.

The police identified the deceased as, Shanmugam (48) of the Mangkollai area in Tirupurur of Chengalpet district. Sources said that he had ended his life by hanging with his dhoti on the sec-

ond floor of the hospital building on Wednesday night. The incident sent shock waves among patients and staff of the Covid ward in the hospital. Police said Shanmugam was tested positive for the virus recently and had been undergoing treatment at the GH for the last two days. Sources at the hospital said that depression might have prompted the poor man to resort to the extreme step.

Kanchipuram Taluk police registered a case regarding the incident. In another case reported from Kanchipuram in less than 12 hours, a 50-year-old Covid-19 patient undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the dis-

trict jumped off the hospital building and ended his life on Thursday afternoon.

The deceased, Gopala Krishnan was a resident of Varadhappa Nagar in Kanchipuram. He was tested positive for the coronavirus on May 11 and had been admitted to a private hospital in Kanchipuram. Ever since the admission, he was sad and depressed, the sources said. Meanwhile, on Thursday evening he jumped from the third floor of the hospital building and died on the spot.

The hospital authorities alerted the Kanchipuram taluk police, who rushed to the scene, conducted inquiries. Further investigation is underway.

Pondy logs 1,942 fresh Covid-19 cases, overall tally rises to 78,973

Puducherry, May 13: The union territory of Puducherry logged 1,942 new coronavirus cases during the last 24 hours, pushing the overall tally to 78,973, a senior Health Department official said on Thursday.

Twenty-four patients succumbed to the virus during the last 24 hours ending 10 AM Thursday raising the toll to 1,069, Director of Health and Family Welfare Services S Mohan Kumar said. While the Puducherry region

alone accounted for 1,550 of the 1,942 fresh cases, Karaikal reported 227 followed by Yanam (123) and Mahe (42).

The 1,942 new cases were identified at the end of the examination of 9,292 patients projecting a test positivity rate of 20.89 per cent. The number of active cases stood at 16,568 (2,203 in hospitals and the remaining 14,365 in home isolation).

As many as 1,336 patients had recovered and were discharged so

far. The Health department Director said the Puducherry region alone recorded 18 new deaths during the last 24 hours while Karaikal had three, Yanam (two) and Mahe (1). He said 912 patients recovered and were discharged during the last 24 hours. The fatality and recovery rates were 1.35 per cent and 77.67 per cent respectively. He said that so far 8.89 lakh samples were tested and of them 7.95 lakh of them were found to be negative.



Minister for Information & Publicity M.P. Saminathan, Tirupur District Collector K.Vijayakart hikeyan chaired an all department meeting with officials about Covid 19 situation in Tiruppur on Thursday.

— DC

IIT-M, rice varsity researchers develop algorithms for lensless cameras

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, MAY 13

The Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) and Rice University in the US have developed algorithms for lensless, miniature cameras, which have numerous vision applications in augmented reality and virtual reality.

The research was led by Dr Kaushik Mitra, assistant professor, department

of electrical engineering, IIT-M, and Prof Ashok Veeraghavan, Rice University.

Dr Mitra said the existing algorithms to deblur images based on traditional optimisation schemes yield low-resolution 'noisy images.' 'Our research team developed a reconstruction algorithm called 'FlatNet' for lensless cameras which resulted in significant improvement

over traditional optimisation-based algorithms. FlatNet was tested on various real and challenging scenarios and was found to be effective in de-blurring images captured by the lensless camera."

Lensless cameras do not have a lens which, in a conventional camera, acts as a focusing element allowing the sensor to capture a sharp photograph of the scene.

Due to the absence of this focusing element, the lensless camera captures a multiplexed or globally blurred measurement of the scene.

The findings were presented as a paper in the IEEE international conference on computer vision and an extended version appeared in IEEE transactions on pattern analysis and machine intelligence.



Additional Chief Secretary to Government Atulya Misra and Coimbatore District Collector S.Nagarajan inspect CMCH in Coimbatore on Thursday.

— DC

Govt to set up 8 oxygen concentrators in Karur

DC CORRESPONDENT
KARUR, MAY 13

The Tamil Nadu government is going to set up 8 oxygen concentrators at the government hospitals and Corona care centres at Pallapatti, Aravakurichi, Velayuthampalayam, Government Arts College at Karur, Kaniyaalampatti, Kovai-kulam, Kulithalai, Veliyanai in Karur district. These concentrators are expected to function from May 25, according to electricity, prohibition and excise minister V. Senthil Balaji.

Balaji accompanied by Karur collector Prasant M. Wadnere and Karur MP S. Jothimani told the media after inspecting the Corona speciality care centre located at the old government hospital complex at Karur on Thursday that so far 10,445 persons were affected by Corona in Karur dis-

Oxygen shortage will be resolved: MLA

DC CORRESPONDENT
SRIRANGAM, MAY 13

Srirangam MLA Palaniyandi has assured suitable action to solve the existing shortage of oxygen in the government hospital at Srirangam.

He said at present there are 5 Corona care centres in Srirangam constituency and three more will be established at Inamkulathur, Maravanur and Pettavaithalai shortly.

He said the Tamil Nadu government under the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister M.K. Stalin is working on a war-footing to eradicate Corona from the state within 15 to 20 days.

tribut of which 8,883 are fully cured.

As many as 1,452 affected are now undergoing treatment at government medical college hospital, government and private hospitals and 674 are under house quarantine, he added.

He added so far 2,78,127 swab tests were taken. As many as 68,168 persons were administered Covid-19 vaccine so far, and the district administration has collected a fine of Rs 46,44,600 from violators of Covid-19 protocol, he added.

MPs, MLAs, collector inspect hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, MAY 13

Thanjavur MP S.S. Palanimanickam, Rajya Sabha MP S. Shanmugham and MLAs Dural Chandrasekaran (Thiruvaiyaru) and T.K.G. Neelamegam (Thanjavur) inspected the Rajah Mirasudhar government hospital and Thanjavur medical college hospital along with M. Govinda Rao, Thanjavur district

collector, and Ravikumar, dean of Thanjavur medical college on Thursday.

Later, Durai Chandrasekaran told mediapersons that their visit was on the advice of Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to the MLAs to visit hospitals in their areas and inform the chief minister's secretaries about the requirements, if any, in those hospitals. "Thanjavur being the hospital hub for many dis-

tricts, its future needs were discussed with officials. With respect to Corona treatment, there is sufficient production and supply of oxygen, adequate number of beds and availability of vaccines at present. Future needs will be taken care of," the MLA said.

Palanimanickam said that there is no problem with vaccination as vaccines are available for everyone. Earlier, the MPs

and MLAs discussed with officials about the number of persons tested so far and after how many days, test results are conveyed to persons etc.

Deshmukh Sekar Sanjay, superintendent of police, Thanjavur district, Janaki Raveendran, commissioner, Thanjavur city corporation, and Dr M. Maruthudurai, superintendent of the hospital, were present on the occasion.

Collector's mission a success: Tribals take vax

B. RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, MAY 13

J. Innocent Divya, the Collector of Nilgiris, was successful in persuading the reluctant tribespeople to take the vaccine jab to combat Covid-19 as they turned out in large numbers at the special vaccination camp on Thursday at the Aanaikatti tribal hamlet in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve buffer zone.

The officials faced an embarrassing situation last Monday when the residents of a remote tribal village in Gudalur taluk,

who had tested positive for Covid-19, refused to move to the hospital. Following this, the Nilgiris district administration took steps to sensitise the tribal communities, most of them residing in jungles, on the dreaded Covid-19 spread and the need to get vaccinated.

Innocent Divya was successful in instilling confidence among the tribes as the special camp held at Aanaikatti tribal hamlet on Thursday saw the tribespeople, who are eligible for vaccination, com-

ing in large numbers to take the jab. The collector appealed to them to shed their fears on vaccination. She said the frontline health officials took the Covid-19 vaccine a few months ago to instil confidence among the hill residents.

So far 1.50 lakh residents in Nilgiris have received Covid-19 vaccine and none of them developed any complaints. Hence the tribespeople should come forward to take the jab. Special vaccination camps will be held in the tribal hamlets, she noted.



GRT Jewellers contributes a sum of ₹1 crore to the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund to help the state government's various efforts to restore normalcy. G.R. 'Ananth' Ananthapadmanabhan, Managing Director of GRT Jewellers, said, "We have always believed in putting people first. And we are doing our bit by contributing to the relief efforts."

SHORT TAKES

SALARY OF K'TAKA MINISTERS FOR COVID RELIEF FUND

Bengaluru, May 13: The Karnataka government has ordered depositing one-year salary of State Ministers in the Covid Relief Fund.

This was decided by the State Cabinet a few days ago. The order was issued on May 11 and would come into effect retrospectively from May 1 for a year.

The order was given on the direction of Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa.

The State has been reporting 40,000-50,000 Covid infections daily resulting in about six lakh active cases.

This has led to shortage of oxygen, hospital beds, and essential drugs.

The government has imposed a lockdown-like restriction from May 10 to May 24 to contain the spread of the virus.

NAXAL COUPLE SURRENDERS FOR COVID TREATMENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
RAIPUR, MAY 13

A Maoist couple, who tested positive for Coronavirus, surrendered in north Bastar district of Kanker in Chhattisgarh, police said on Thursday.

Arjun Tatti and his wife Laxmi Padda, members of Medki Local Operation Squad (LOS) functioning under north Bastar division of Maoists, surrendered before police in Kamdeta BSF camp under Koyelbedda in Kanker district late on Wednesday.

“The Naxal couple deserted their unit owing to illness and approached the police for medical treatment. Both of them tested positive for coronavirus and were admitted to Covid care hospital in Kanker for treatment”, Bastar range inspector general of police Sunderraj P told this newspaper.

According to him, 40-50 Naxals in south Bastar have contracted the virus as per the inputs received by the police.

“Due to strict vigilance at interstate and inter district border areas by security forces, Naxals are not getting medicines and other logistic supply”, he added.

Police intelligence suggested that several top Maoist leaders of Bastar such as Rajesh, a divisional committee member and Sujata and Savitri, members of Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee of Maoists have contracted the virus.

“We have received inputs that several senior Maoist leaders have contracted Coronavirus”, Mr Sunderraj said.

ODISHA URGES CENTRE TO GIVE 25L VAX DOSES

AKSHAYA KUMAR
SAHOO IDC
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 13

Odisha health minister Naba Kishore Das on Thursday urged the Centre to immediately provide 25 lakh doses of Covid vaccines to expedite the ongoing inoculation that has been seriously hit due to inadequate supply of the life-saving injections.

“I urge the Union government to immediately provide at least 25 lakh doses of Covid-19 vaccines so as to regularise the immunisation process. As many as 22 lakh people are awaiting the second dose of vaccine. In fact, I have already formally placed the demand before Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan during a discussion on the Covid situation on Wednesday,” Mr Das said.

Other than the vaccines, Mr Das also demanded oxygen cylinders, Rapid Antigen Test kits, PPE kits and masks.

“We have enough oxygen but not cylinders and hence, we need 30,000 cylinders,” he said. Mr Das informed that the Union health minister has assured him to take Odisha's demand seriously.

The Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan had on Wednesday held a meeting with health ministers of seven states and one Union Territory and reviewed the progress of the Covid-19 vaccination drive.

On Thursday, Odisha again crossed 10, 000 mark in single-day Covid spike with 10, 649 people testing positive for the contagious disease and 19 deaths. The fresh positive cases took the state's cumulative count to 57, 6297. Similarly, the cumulative death count climbed to 2,251.

Of the new cases, 5,965 infections were detected from quarantines centres while 4,684 were local contacts.



A critical Covid-19 patient being shifted to the Hallet Hospital in Kanpur, on Thursday.



People buy sweets and new clothes on the eve of Id-ul-Fitr at Jama Masjid market, in Sadar Bazar during Covid-19 lockdown in Gurugram, on Thursday.

NCP ALLEGES FRENCH CITIZENS IN INDIA GIVEN MODERNA VAX

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, MAY 13

Maharashtra minister Nawab Malik has sought an explanation from the Centre claiming French citizens and their relatives are being given Moderna vaccine despite only three vaccines permitted in India. Why the Centre cannot procure the vaccine for the people of India if the French Embassy can, he asked.

“Covishield, Covaxin and Sputnik V are the 3 Vaccines that are permitted in India by our government. According to information received by me, the French Embassy in India has procured the vaccine @moderna.tx and is inoculating their citizens and their relatives at Navi Mumbai with the help of @ApolloHosMumbai,” Mr Malik tweeted on Thursday.

“Question arises, how can a non-permitted vaccine be allowed to be administered? If they can get it, why can't Indian government get it for our citizens too. The government and the Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan must clarify,” he added.

“While only three companies are allowed to vaccinate in India, are the French nationals being given the Moderna vaccine as a special case? Even the Indian relatives of these nationals have also been vaccinated with Moderna,” said Mr Malik, who is a minority affairs minister in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra.

Commenting on his allegations, senior BJP leader Pravin Darekar accused him of creating a sensation. “Nawab Malik has the habit of blaming the Centre. The companies have made a provision for the embassy employees of that respective country. They are taking care of their citizens and employees,” he said.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope demanded that the Union government float a single global tender of Covid vaccines on behalf of all the states to avoid “unhealthy competition”.

NHRC issues notice over bodies in Ganga

52 bodies were found in Ujiyar, Kulhadia, Bharauli ghats

New Delhi, May 13: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notices to the Union Jal Shakti Ministry, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, after receiving complaints about several bodies found floating in the Ganga river in the two states.

“It (NHRC) has issued notices to the chief secretaries of both the states and the secretary, Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, today calling for action taken report within four weeks,” its statement noted.

According to residents in Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh, at least 52 bodies were seen floating at the Ujiyar, Kulhadia and Bharauli ghats in the Narahi area. Similar

● **NHRC SAID** that it seems the public authorities have failed to take concentric efforts in educating the masses and checking the immersion of half-burnt or unburnt bodies into the Ganga.

reports of bodies floating in the Ganga have come from Bihar.

In its statement, the NHRC said that it seems the public authorities have failed to take concentric efforts in educating the masses and checking the immersion of half-burnt or unburnt bodies into the Ganga.

India has been badly hit by the second wave of coronavirus infections and cremation grounds

and burial grounds across the country have been overburdened.

The NHRC's statement said, “The practice of disposal of dead bodies in our sacred river Ganga is clearly in violation of guidelines of the National Mission for Clean Ganga project of the Ministry of Jal Shakti.”

It said it received a complaint dated May 11, 2021, based on several media reports, wherein apprehensions were expressed that these bodies floating in the Ganga were of Covid-19 victims.

The complaint noted that the disposal bodies in such a manner may seriously affect all those persons who are dependent on the Ganga for their day-

to-day activities, the NHRC mentioned.

“It (complaint) further stated that even if these dead bodies were not of Covid victims, then such practice/incidents are shameful to the society as a whole as that amounts to violation of human rights of even deceased persons,” the NHRC added.

India added 3,62,727 new coronavirus infections in a day taking the Covid-19 tally of cases to 2,37,03,665, while the death toll rose to 2,58,317 with 4,120 daily fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday. The active cases have increased to 37,10,525 comprising 15.65 per cent of the total infections. — PTI

BIHAR EXTENDS LOCKDOWN TILL MAY 25

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, MAY 13

The Bihar government has extended the lockdown till May 25 to stop the surge in Covid – 19 cases in the state.

The decision was taken during a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Thursday.

“The impact of lockdown in the state was reviewed during a meeting with ministers and officials. The positive effect of the lockdown is visible. Therefore, it has been decided to extend the lockdown in Bihar for the next ten days from May 16 to 25”, tweeted chief minister Nitish Kumar after the meeting.

The lockdown was imposed in Bihar on May 4 after the Patna High Court stepped in and slammed the state government over its handling of the Covid-19 crisis. Bihar has been witnessing a surge in Covid cases. According to reports, the death toll went up to 3,503 on Wednesday after 74 people succumbed to the viral infection.

No entry in Maharashtra without negative RT-PCR

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC
MUMBAI, MAY 13

The Maharashtra government on Thursday announced the extension of Covid induced restrictions till 7am on June 1. Any person coming from anywhere in the country will have to carry a negative RT-PCR report to enter in Maharashtra by any mode of transport.

Maharashtra on Thursday reported 42,582 new positive cases taking the total number of active cases 5, 33,294. While 850 new deaths were reported on Thursday raising a total fatality in state 78,857. Maharashtra is among the states that account for 82.51 per cent of the total active cases in the country, officials said.

The state government order said that the restrictions will remain in force till June 1. “Any person entering the state of Maharashtra by any mode of transport will have to carry a negative RT-PCR test report, which will have to be issued from upto a maximum of 48 hours before the time of his entering into Maharashtra,” the order added.

It also said that all restrictions enforced as per earlier orders for people arriving from places of sensitive origin will be applicable to anyone arriving from any part of the country into the state.

“In the case of cargo carriers, not more than two people (driver and cleaner/helper) may be allowed to travel in the same (those vehicles). If these cargo carriers are originating from outside the state (Maharashtra), these may be allowed to enter into the state with a negative RT-PCR test which will have to be issued from upto 48 hours before the time of entry into Maharashtra and which will be valid for seven days,” the government order said.

The order also allowed the personnel engaged in airport and port services to use the local trains, mono rail and metro services. It also gave some relaxations to dairy industries. “Milk collection, transport and processing may be allowed without restrictions though its retail sale be allowed subject to restrictions imposed on shops dealing with essential items or

through home delivery,” the order said.

The lockdown-like restrictions have been imposed in the state from April 5. The restrictions were further tightened on April 15 with Section 144 of the CrPc, banning assembly of five or more people, imposed in the entire state. However, even after a month, the Covid cases in some parts of the state are still increasing.

The state, which has consistently reported a high number of Covid infections and remains the worst affected state in the country due to the second wave of the pandemic, added 46,781 new cases on Wednesday and 816 related deaths. On Tuesday, the state reported 40,956 cases while on Monday, 37,236 new cases were logged by the state.

State health minister Rajesh Tope cautioned that some districts in the state have still been reporting high numbers of cases and therefore are a cause of concern for the government. “We need to focus on these districts more. The positivity rate is still not below 10 per cent”.

UP: 14 docs resign over harassment

Unnao (UP), May 13: Fourteen doctors working at community and primary health centres in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao have tendered their resignation alleging misbehaviour and mental harassment by administration officers.

The doctors, however, assured that they will not let their Covid-related work be affected till talks are going on with the district magistrate and the chief medical officer over the resignations.

The fourteen doctors, who are in-charge of CHCs and PHCs here, submitted their resignation letters at the CMO office on Wednesday evening.

They also forwarded a copy of their resignation letters to the additional chief secretary (Health), director general (Health) and other senior officers.

“We will not fight under the banner of Provincial Medical Services (PMS) association. This is our

fight. The DM and CMO misbehave with us even after we have been working in limited resources in rural areas for the past one year. Instead of cooperating, administration officers misbehave with us,” Dr Sanjay alleged.

“Our work is being reviewed by the sub divisional magistrate (SDM) and block development officer (BDO) level officers,” he added.

The agitated doctors claimed that their salaries were also withheld several times.

However, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Ashutosh Kumar refuted all the claims and said all the doctors have returned to their work.

“We don't talk like that. We all will work together,” Kumar said.

Meanwhile, the doctors said they will decide on the future course of action after meeting the chief medical officer and the district magistrate in the evening. — PTI

Cong. attacks PM on Covid-19 crisis

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 13

Congress on Thursday once again lashed out at the center over the Covid related issues in the country. In a tweet in Hindi Congress leader Mr. Rahul Gandhi said, “The prime minister is also missing, along with vaccines, oxygen and medicines.

situation in Uttar Pradesh is ‘inhuman and criminal’ and demanded a judicial probe headed by a High Court judge into the several instances of bodies found floating in the Ganga in many parts of the State.

She tweeted, “What is happening in U.P. is inhuman and criminal. The government is busy image building while people are suffering unimaginably. There must be an immediate judicial enquiry headed by a High Court judge into these events.” She also accused the governments of under-reporting of Covid cases and deaths. She added, “Bodies are floating in the Ganga in Ballia and Ghazipur. Reports are coming in of mass burials on the banks of the river in Unnao. Official numbers from cities like Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Jhansi and Kanpur appear to be grossly under-reported.”

Meanwhile Congress General Secretary Incharge of Uttar Pradesh Ms. Priyanka Gandhi said the

GREAT | MOVE

Aims to use state's resources and manpower to manage Coronavirus pandemic

C'garh govt suspends its 'Central vista' project

RABINDRA NATH
CHOUDHURY | DC
RAIPUR, MAY 13

Amid mounting pressure by the Congress on the Union government to suspend the Central Vista project, Chhattisgarh government on Thursday announced that it was suspending all major projects, including the construction of a new Raj Bhavan, state legislative Assembly and the official residence of chief minister in Nava Raipur.

The tenders for two projects worth Rs 363 crore for the construction of a new state legislative Assembly building have been cancelled with immediate effect by the Congress state government led by

chief minister Bhupesh Baghel.

To focus the state's resources and manpower in managing the raging Coronavirus pandemic, the state government has also decided to take stringent austerity measures while announcing free education and scholarships for children who lost their parents due to the coronavirus pandemic in Chhattisgarh.

“Our citizens - our priority. Foundation stone for the construction of the new Assembly building, Raj Bhavan, chief minister's residence, residence of ministers and senior officials, and a new circuit house was laid before the start of Corona. Today, all these construction works

have been stopped in these times of crisis,” Mr Baghel tweeted.

Chhattisgarh has 1,22,798 active Covid-19 cases, while the cumulative number of deaths in the state stands at 11,094, according to the Union health ministry.

“In view of the circumstances arising in the state due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Chhattisgarh government has stopped construction works of all major projects with immediate effect and also decided to take even more stringent measures for austerity,” a press release issued by the Chhattisgarh government said.

Accordingly, ongoing works on construction of new Raj Bhavan, state legislative Assembly, official

residences of chief minister, other ministers and senior officers in Nava Raipur have been suspended, the press release said.

The foundation stone-laying ceremony for these projects was performed on November 25, 2019.

“The chief engineer of the Public Works Department has issued orders to the concerned contractors to stop the construction work of the new Raj Bhavan, new CM house, new houses of ministers and officers and new circuit house in Nava Raipur,” the press release said.

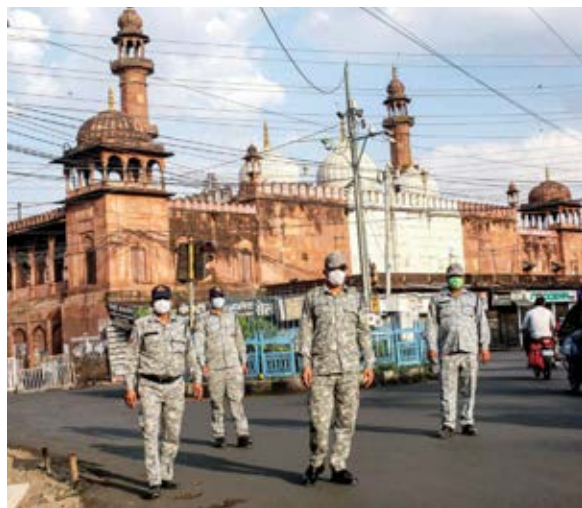
The state government has instructed all the departments that, like the previous year, austerity should be exercised in the

financial year 2021.

Mr Baghel also announced that his government will provide free education and scholarship to children who lost their parents due to the coronavirus pandemic in Chhattisgarh.

“The Chhattisgarh government will now bear the entire expenditure of the education of children who have lost their parents due to coronavirus during this financial year.

Also a scholarship of ₹500 a month will be given to such children studying from standard first to eighth and ₹1,000 per month for children from standard ninth to 12th,” a separate press release issued by the state government said.



Police officers patrol as security beefed up on the eve of Id-ul-Fitr, during Covid-induced curfew, in Bhopal on Thursday.

SHORT TAKES

LANKA: INDIAN FAMILY HELD FOR FLOUTING LAWS

Colombo: Four members of an Indian family, including two children, have been arrested for allegedly entering Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula illegally and violating the local immigration and the quarantine laws, police said on Thursday.

The family, which consists of a 61-year old woman, her 34-year-old daughter and her two children, said they had entered Sri Lanka on May 6 with the help of fishermen.

Ajith Rohana, the deputy inspector general of police, said the members of the family were arrested at Gurunagar area in Jaffna for their illegal stay in the country and violating the immigration and quarantine laws.

They had arrived from India on May 6 on an Indian boat halfway and had travelled the rest of the way aboard a Sri Lankan fishing boat, Rohana said.

DEATH OF STUDENT IN CHINA TRIGGERS PROTEST

Taipei: It was a call no parent wants to receive. On Mother's Day, around 9 pm, a woman in Chengdu in southwestern China was told that her son, who she had dropped off at school just hours ago, had died. Distraught, she went to Chengdu No. 49 Middle School immediately, but could not even enter the school grounds, she wrote in a series of Twitter-like Weibo posts on Monday that were shared hundreds of thousands of times this week.

Her account disputing both the police and local government's account of her 16-year-old son's death has touched a nerve, becoming one of the most discussed topics on Chinese social media this week. One related hashtag #ChengduNo.49Middle racked up more than 1.5 billion views alone on Weibo.

People online called for justice for the mother and questioned the actions of the school, police and local authorities. On Tuesday night, videos of a protest in front of the school circulated. People clutching white flowers shouted "the truth!"

S.TAIWAN LOSES POWER AFTER PLANT FAILURE

Taipei: An equipment failure caused an outage at a power plant in southern Taiwan on Thursday, triggering rolling blackouts across the island affecting millions of people.

The outage in Kaohsiung trapped at least one person in an elevator and disrupted a daily briefing being given by government officials on the island's pandemic situation. Taipower, the government-run electric company, launched the rolling blackouts at 3 pm and said emergency repairs were underway. The outages affected 8.46 million households, Taipower said.

In Yilan county, one person was trapped in an elevator, the government-backed Central News Agency said. In Hsinchu, 150,000 households lost power. In the southern city of Tainan, 14 districts were affected. President Tsai Ing-wen issued a statement saying that "everyone can rest assured" and that the government was handling the situation. She said an investigation would be conducted into the cause of the outage.

UK: ROYAL MAIL TO ISSUE STAMPS FOR PRINCE PHILIP

London: The UK's Royal Mail will issue a set of special stamps in memory of Prince Philip the Duke of Edinburgh, the husband of Queen Elizabeth II who passed away aged 99 last month.

A sheet of four black and white stamps, which are now available to pre-order, show Britain's longest serving escort to a British monarch in different stages of his life.

The first design features a portrait of the duke as a young man, taken by photographer Baron. The second depicts Prince Philip at the passing out parade of his son, Prince Andrew, at Dartmouth Naval College in Devon. Another stamp shows the duke at the Royal Windsor Horse Show. The final and most recent image is a portrait snapped by photographer Terry O'Neill.

"Throughout adulthood, the Duke of Edinburgh dedicated himself to the service of this country, the Commonwealth and to the many causes he was involved with," said Simon Thompson, chief executive of Royal Mail.

The stamps, officially on sale from June 24.

US vax beat strain found in India

Observation based on latest data about variant and three major vaccines approved in the US

Washington, May 13: Covid-19 vaccines approved by the United States like Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson have effectiveness against the B1617 variant of the virus that is predominant in India, which is experiencing one of the worst outbreaks of the pandemic, a top American health official said.

The observation is based on the latest data about the variant and the three major vaccines approved by the United States, said Dr Francis Collins, Director of National Institute of Science. "The data is coming in, and it looks very encouraging that the US-approved vaccines, the Pfizer, the Moderna, the J&J, do have effectiveness against this variant called B1617," Collins told the media.

"It's a little less effective in that case than some of the others, but it looks like it ought to be good enough to make Americans protected. And that's really a good thing to hear," he said in response to a question.

Early this week, the World Health Organisation classified the B1617 SARS-CoV-2 variant, which was first detected in India, as a variant of concern. The WHO said that evidence showed B1617 was more transmissible.

— PTI

INDIAN COVID-19 STRAIN REACHES LAS VEGAS

Las Vegas (US), May 13: The Las Vegas area has been added to places in Nevada where authorities have detected cases of a potentially worrisome strain of the Coronavirus first detected in India.

The Southern Nevada Health District reported on Tuesday that a woman in her 20s who had not travelled recently and was not vaccinated against Covid-19 tested positive for the variant subtype. She didn't require hospitalisation. A district spokeswoman said on Wednesday that there were no additional cases to report.

Eight other cases of the variant were previously identified in northern Nevada, including four confirmed last week in the Reno area.

— AP



Joe Biden

BIDEN TO BEEF UP FEDERAL CYBERSECURITY

Richmond, May 13: President Joe Biden has signed an executive order meant to strengthen US cybersecurity defences in response to a series of headline-grabbing hacking incidents that highlight how vulnerable the country's public and private sectors are to high-tech spies and criminals operating from half a world away.

The order signed on Wednesday will require all federal agencies to use basic cybersecurity measures, like multi-factor authentication, and require new security standards for software makers that contract with the federal government. Officials are hoping to leverage the federal government's massive spending power to improve security across all types of software.

The order comes as the administration has been grappling with its response to a massive breach by Russia of federal agencies and ransomware attacks on private corporations. Hit by a cyberattack, the operator of a major US fuel pipeline was forced to shut down service.

— AP



Worshippers stand on circles marked on the ground to help people maintain social distancing during religious ceremonies at the Catholic shrine in Fatima, Portugal on Thursday. Due to Covid-19, the shrine has limited to 7,500 pilgrims that can be present during the celebrations of May 12 and 13.

— AP

US Cong. urges to boost aid to India

Washington, May 13: Fifty-seven US Congressmen have written to President Joe Biden, urging him to bolster America's Covid-19 assistance to India.

The sharp increase in cases has overwhelmed India's healthcare system. We must do our part to quell the virus everywhere it persists, the law-

makers said in a letter to Biden on Wednesday.

We are extremely concerned with regards to India's deadly Covid-19 second wave. India is now the epicenter of the Covid-19. Today, marked India's deadliest day, with 4,205 deaths reported, carrying the total number of confirmed deaths to more than 250,000, said the letter

initiated by Congressman Brad Sherman, the Democratic Chair of the Congressional India Caucus.

In the letter, the Congressmen relayed to the administration that India remains in need of additional medical equipment, supplies and other vital resources to emerge from this crisis.

They requested the

administration to provide oxygen cylinders, oxygen concentrators, oxygen generator plants, cryogenic oxygen tanker/container, Remdesivir, Tocilizumab and ventilators/BIPAP to India.

It is also in the US interest that everyone in India be vaccinated, the Congressmen wrote.

— PTI

Oz signs deal for 25mn Moderna vax

Canberra, May 13: Australia has reached a supply agreement for 25 million doses of Moderna Covid-19 vaccines, the US-based biotechnology company and the prime minister said on Thursday.

The deal included 10 million doses of the vaccine against the ancestral

strain to be delivered in 2021 and 15 million doses of an updated variant booster to be delivered in 2022, Moderna said in a statement.

The vaccines have yet to be approved by the Australian regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration. Pfizer and AstraZen-

eca are the only other Covid vaccines approved for use in Australia. All three vaccines require two doses.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that he expected the first Moderna vaccines to arrive in Australia in the last three months of 2021. The 15

million booster doses would deal with possible future variants of the virus, he said.

We're now well into the phase of dealing with what's coming next because the pandemic's not going anywhere, Morrison told *Perth Radio 6PR*.

— AP

Nepal: Sharma Oli set to reclaim PM's post

Kathmandu, May 13: K.P. Sharma Oli was set to be reappointed as Nepal Prime Minister as the Opposition alliance of Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) on Thursday failed to muster majority support to form the next government.

President Bidya Devi Bhandari had asked the Opposition parties to come up with the support of majority lawmakers to form a new government by 9 PM on Thursday.

However, as the deadline which ended at 9.00 pm on Thursday, the NC-



K.P. Sharma Oli

Maoist Centre alliance has its hopes crashing down as disgruntled Nepal-Khanal faction of the ruling CPN-UML did not forward their resignation, which they had been claiming to do for long as a bargaining chip with embattled former prime minister Oli.

As the time accorded by

the President gradually runs out and the deadline approaches, it can well be assumed that Oli is all set to make a comeback, emerging victorious in this Game of Thrones, as the country grapples with unprecedented rise in Covid-19 cases and corresponding fatalities as the second wave of the pandemic rages on, *The Himalayan Times* newspaper commented.

Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba and CPN-Maoist Centre chairman Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda" held a meeting on Thursday at the former's residence at Budhanilkantha in the outskirts of Kathmandu to discuss the formation of the new government.

— PTI

Russia to send crew to ISS for first space movie

Moscow, May 13: Russia's space agency said on Thursday it was sending an actress and a director to the International Space Station in October to make the first feature film in space.

"Filming will take place at the International Space Station. The start of the expedition is scheduled for October 5, 2021 from the Baikonur cosmodrome on the Soyuz MS-19 manned transport spacecraft," Roscosmos said in a statement.

Actress Yulia Peresild,

COSMOS | DRAMA

Pre-flight training to be documented by Channel One of Russia

36, and director Klim Shipenko, 37, will undergo special training, including tests on a centrifuge and flights in zero gravity, starting no later than 1 June. Their pre-flight training will be documented by one of Russia's main TV channels, Channel One, which will also be involved in producing the film.

The film's working title

is "Challenge" and will be in the genre of a "space drama". Roscosmos said, without providing details about the plot of the film or Peresild's role.

Roscosmos said in September the movie will aim to "popularise Russia's space activities, as well as glorify cosmonaut profession".

The film will be co-produced by Dmitry Rogozin, the head of Russia's space agency, with the ambition of making Russia the first country to shoot a film in space.

— AFP

India asks China to restore cargo flights

Beijing, May 13: India has asked China to help stop the sharp increase in prices of essential medical supplies being procured from Chinese manufacturers by private Indian traders to deal with the Covid-19 surge in the country and restore the normal frequency of cargo flight services to maintain a steady supply chain.

Soaring prices of medical supplies like oxygen concentrators and disruption of cargo flights to India are slowing arrivals of medical goods, India's Consul General to Hong Kong Priyanka Chauhan said.

"What I would like to say is that our expectation at this point is that the supply chain should remain open and product prices should remain stable," Chauhan said in an interview with the *South China Morning Post* on Wednesday.

"Even if there is a little bit of supply-demand pressure, there has to be some stability and predictability to product prices," she told the Hong Kong-based newspaper. "And there has to be a sense of governmental level support and efforts. I don't have the information as to how much influence the Chinese government can have in this matter but if they can, then it would be welcome," she said.

Her comments came in the backdrop of efforts by private Indian traders to source much-needed medical supplies, especially oxygen concentrators to meet the shortages in hospitals. The cargo flight disruptions were amplified by the decision by Sichuan Airlines to suspend all its 11 cargo flights for 15 days from April 26, citing the Covid situation in India.

— PTI

NEPAL HOSPITALS STOP ADMITTING VIRUS PATIENTS

COVID-19 CASES DROP BY HALF IN UNITED KINGDOM

Kathmandu, May 13: Patients in Nepal are gasping for breath, as authorities said that they were facing an acute shortage of medical oxygen due to which 16 people infected with Covid-19 died recently, according to media reports. The deadly virus has so far infected 413,111 people and claimed 4,084 lives in the country, which has a population of approximately 29.5 million.

The government on Wednesday asked private hospitals to instal their own oxygen plants to meet the need of oxygen within 15 days, the *Himalayan Times* reported.

— PTI

London, May 13: The number of people infected with the Coronavirus in England fell by almost half over the past month marking the lowest level of Covid-19 cases since last year, according to new statistics released in London on Thursday as UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said "cautious steps" were being taken on the virus variant first identified in India. The Imperial College London-led Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission (REACT-1) study comes as it emerged that the government's SAGE is holding a review meeting on Thursday.

— PTI

NORTHERN RAILWAY				
Tender Notice				
Tender Notice No. 219-S/1/TMC/04/2021-22 Dated: 12.05.2021				
Chief Engineer/TMC, Northern Railway, Headquarters office, Baroda House, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites 01 No. tenders through e-Procurement system for supply of the following items:				
S. No.	E-Tender No.	Description of item	Qty.	Due date Time
1	A20P90TMC2021	ANTIWEAR HYDRAULIC OIL (HLP-68 TYPE) VG-68GRADE FOR TRACK MACHINES	20160 Ltrs	07.06.21 at 11:30 hours
NOTE:- 1. The complete information of above E-Procurement tenders is available on website "www.ireps.gov.in". The firms, who desire to participate against E-Tenders, are advised to electronically register themselves on the above website for which they would be required to have a class-III digital certificate from certifying agencies authorized under IT Act 2000, by Govt. of India. Manual offers against E-Tenders will not be accepted. 1028/2021				
Serving Customers with a Smile				

NORTHERN RAILWAY	
E-SINGLE TENDER NOTICE	
Sr. DEE/EMU/GZB for and on behalf of President of India, invites open e-tender under single packet system for the under noted work:-	
1. N.I.T. No.	232-Elect-EMU-WC-08-20-21
2. Name of the work	Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of Medha Electrics fitted 3 Phase EMU (IGBT Technology) rakes for 2 Years on Single tender Basis through OEM
3. Tender cost	Rs. 00.00
4. Approximate cost	Rs. 4,03,20,000.00
5. Earnest Money	Rs. 00.00
6. Completion period	24 Months
7. Validity of offer	45 days
8. Date & Time from tender submission start and end	13.05.2021 (12:42 Hrs.)
9. Date & Time from tender advertised on IREPS website	26.05.2021 (00:00 Hrs.) to 09.06.2021 (15:00 Hrs.)
10. Tender closing Date & Time	09.06.2021 (15:00 Hrs.)
11. Date & Time of tender Opening (immediately when tender submission ends)	09.06.2021 (15:00 Hrs.)
Note 1 : The Tenderer/s will submit their requisite documents along with their tender offer. No post tender correspondence for submission of additional document shall be entertained after opening of the Technical & Commercial offer. Even suo-moto post tender letters of the tenders shall be treated as null & void.	
Note 2 : Duplicate documents should not be enclosed/up-loaded. Tender Notice is available on website of www.ireps.gov.in No. 232-Elect-EMU-WC-08-20-21 Date : 13.05.2021	
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE	

SOUTH EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY			
CORRIGENDUM			
Corrigendum to Tender Notice No.: TRD-R-2021-E1. Submission of Tender: Upto 15.00 hours on 25.05.2021. Opening of Tender: 15.30 hours on 25.05.2021. The Schedule-A item 4a should be read as mentioned below. PB working for Erection of Galvanised Traction Mast (Rolled & Fabricated). Item Qty will be 1.23 MT & Rate will be ₹ 3348/- per MT. All the terms & condition will be same which is available on our website. www.ireps.gov.in			
Sr.Divil. Electrical Engineer(TRD)/ P.R./R/TRD/P/13 Raipur.			
f South East Central Railway @ @delnari			

NORTHERN RAILWAY				
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system				
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items :-				
S.No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
1	03202226A	DECORATIVE THERMOSETTING SYNTHETIC RESIN	30975 NOS	05.06.21
2	11203802	ALUMINIUM CHEQUERED SHEET	68250 KGS	11.06.21
3	03200999A	FLEXIBLE POLY VINYLE CHLORIDE	59057 MTR	14.06.21
4	03200990A	VINYL COATED UPHOLSTERY FABRIC	228637 MTR	16.06.21
5	09212319B	ADAPTER (NARROW JAW) CLASS 'E' 6"X11"	37076 NOS	16.06.21
6	09212036A	ADAPTER AAR STANDARD WIDE JAW	35250 NOS	16.06.21
NOTE :- 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained. Tender Notice No. 10/2021-22 Dated : 13.05.2021 1031/2021				
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE				

DECCAN Chronicle

14 MAY 2021

De-escalate conflict in Gaza, US must step in

There is a burgeoning conflict between Israel and the Hamas-administered Gaza Strip that must stop immediately if the entire Middle East region is not to be embroiled in another full-scale war. The Israeli police intervention restricting the right to freedom of worship during the Muslim holy month of Ramzan outside the historic Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem was the trigger for the events which have led Israel to the brink of an invasion of Gaza, with its combat troops massing on the border and preparing for a possible incursion like in 2008-09 and later in 2014. There are two “wars” on at the moment — the unprovoked firing of rockets by Hamas into Israeli population centres and the retaliatory aerial attacks on the Gaza Strip on the one hand and, on the other, the sectarian violence in Israel between Jews and Israeli Arabs.

Amid an already grim scenario, it does not help that US President Joe Biden declares Israel has a right to defend itself, though of course every nation does have the right to defend itself against external aggression, as illustrated in this instance of hundreds of Hamas rockets testing Israel’s fabled Iron Dome defence system with some streaking through to kill civilians, including an Indian housemaid. The Israelis are also facing a new type of challenge in people of the TikTok generation owing no loyalty except to the social media and spreading stray images of individual Arabs attacking Jews, which situation has now worsened into attacks on synagogues and citizens fighting on the streets.

World powers are calling for a cessation of hostilities, while some like Russia and Turkey are egging Hamas on though they may know who will be the likely victor in aggrandising traditional Arab territory. Of course, there can be no end to arguments about whose land it was and who was evicted 2,000 years ago. Such issues, in which 1948 and 1967 were significant dates, are being revisited now with arguments over seven Palestinian families facing eviction from the Sheikh Jarra neighbourhood of East Jerusalem and a court holding back a ruling only due to the outbreak of violence, starting with stone throwers aiming at policing of their congregating near the confluence of some of the holiest shrines of three religions and excessive police retaliation.

The one person who might not find the situation as incommoding of his power and position is Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who could be replaced if his rival Yair Lapid’s coalition moves bear fruit. These moves have become complicated amid the bloodshed in the raging conflict, with at least 67 Palestinians and seven Israelis dead. If Mr Netanyahu does cling on for now as he presides over operations in tandem with his nemesis Benny Gantz, the United States would have to play a leading role in bringing about a ceasefire. It is not clear where President Biden’s optimism springs from as he said “we will see this coming to a conclusion sooner than later”, but can there be a more effective peacemaker in this conflict than the US President, if he can exert America’s traditional influence on the Jewish state.

Kerala Left icon’s legacy

The centenarian Communist leader K.R. Gowri Amma who passed away earlier this week was a product of, and represented, the essence of the renaissance values Kerala had nurtured in the early 20th century. Her call was to use those progressive and revolutionary values to the benefit of the working class and the downtrodden, and she did it quite successfully. Kerala’s land reforms are one of the legacies she has left behind.

That Gowri Amma was the first woman law graduate in her community was made possible because of the ideals of social reformer Sree Narayana Guru who emphasised the role of education in the emancipation of the subaltern classes. A successful lawyer, she later embraced the Communist ideology and there was no looking back. The fiery leader was subjected to police brutality during 1948-52 when the Communist Party was banned. She was elected to the Thiru-Kochi Assembly in 1954 and then to the first Kerala Assembly in 1957.

It was Gowri Amma as revenue minister in the first EMS ministry who moved the path-breaking Agrarian Relations Bill, 1957, which began the process of land reforms in the state. The ministry did not survive the combined assault of the reactionary forces but the ideals behind the bill did. True, it took another 13 years for Kerala to initiate land reforms but the egalitarian push that made the bill possible was too strong to be put under the carpet.

Gowri Amma was part of four more ministries in Kerala, thus actively contributing to the evolution of the state to its present form. She held on to her beliefs, political as well as personal, leading to her ouster from her party, the CPI(M), in 1994. She, along with her political outfit, later sided with the Congress-led United Democratic Front. Her spirits had returned to the Communists towards the frag end of her life, and her body has now joined those of the martyrs of Punnappra-Vayalar uprising and her husband and Communist Party leader T.V. Thomas at Valiya Chudukad, Alappuzha. Rest in

Subhani



Why did Centre fail to act despite a surge warning?

Karan Thapar

I want to tell you about a news report that hasn’t got the attention it deserves. With very few exceptions it’s been ignored by our newspapers and television channels. Yet it raises deeply disturbing questions about the government’s handling of the entire coronavirus crisis. Indeed, you could even say it provides “proof” of the government’s irresponsibility. That’s why it’s a story we need to know about so each of us can decide what we make of it. In that spirit I shall proceed.

On May 1, Reuters released a story headlined “Scientists say India government ignored warnings amid coronavirus surge”. It claimed five scientists from the government-appointed consortium of national laboratories tasked with genome-sequencing, INSACOG, had “warned Indian officials in early March of a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus taking hold in the country”. The story added: “Four of the scientists said the federal government did not seek to impose major restrictions to stop the spread of the virus”. So, in a nutshell, the government had been effectively forewarned to expect a possible exponential rise in cases but did virtually nothing.

The story carries a quotation from Shahid Jameel, the head of INSACOG, that suggests corroboration. “As scientists we provide the evidence, policymaking is the job of the government”. That seems to say INSACOG had done its duty, but the government did not.

On May 5, I interviewed a member of INSACOG. Three days earlier he had retired as director of the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology. His name is Rakesh Mishra.

He confirmed the Reuters story. “This concern was raised”, he said. “It was a kind of warning that we are heading towards danger”. In fact, Dr Mishra went further. “It was a high concern and there’s no doubt about it ... we were very, very concerned ... dreading something bad would happen”. Dr Mishra said INSACOG’s concerns were conveyed directly to Sujet Kumar Singh, the director of the National Centre for Disease Control, to whom INSACOG reports. He added: “I think it went to the health secretary”. More important, he said it’s impossible to believe the Prime Minister would not have been told.

This means Dr Mishra did a lot more than confirm the Reuters story. He suggested the responsibility for not responding to INSACOG’s warning lay with the Prime Minister. Not surprisingly, a desperate government struggled to defend itself. Renu Swarup, biotech secretary, told a major financial daily that she wasn’t aware of any warning but then, bizarrely, added: “I also don’t understand the word warning at all”. If this was intended to scotch the Reuters story and rubbish Dr Mishra’s confirmation, it failed miserably.

Several INSACOG members confirmed that Dr Mishra spoke the truth. Of course, they didn’t do so in public. When I told them of Renu Swarup’s response, they laughed. “What else could she have done?”, one asked. Meanwhile, Dr Mishra repeated his confirmation to a major newspaper.

This brings me to the government’s response. Remember, the warning from INSACOG came in early March. But on March 7 health minister Harsh Vardhan told the Delhi Medical Association: “We are in the endgame of the Covid-19

pandemic in India”. That was the first sign that the government was paying no heed to INSACOG.

Thereafter, it got worse. Right through March massive political rallies, with tens or hundreds of thousands, took place in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Assam. In West Bengal they continued well into the second half of April. There were also *shahi snans*, with two or three million taking part, both in March and April. Ask yourself a simple question: after receiving INSACOG’s warning, was it all right to continue with these gatherings?

That’s not all. After INSACOG’s warning, Assam’s health minister (who is now the chief minister) said publicly that there was no need to wear a mask. Uttarakhand’s chief minister said faith in God and the power of Mother Ganga would protect people at the *shahi snans*. In the light of what we now know, was this the right response from health ministers and CMs?

In fact, deliberate disregard, not just of INSACOG but science itself, goes all the way to the top. When questioned, the home minister said political rallies can’t be held responsible for spreading Covid as Covid cases were rising in Maharashtra, where there were no rallies, not in Bengal, where he was present. If only he could see the situation today. Maharashtra is plateauing or declining, West Bengal seems to be shooting for the stars.

Perhaps the most incriminating proof of how our government disregarded science and ignored INSACOG came from the Prime Minister himself. On April 17, when cases were growing by over 260,000 a day, he

applauded the massive turnout at his Asansol rally. Yet the tens of thousands in front of him were doing things he should never have permitted: they weren’t wearing masks and they weren’t maintaining “*do gaj ki doori*”.

However, when INSACOG advised the government cases could rise dramatically it was also, at one remove, telling the authorities serious illness, hospitalisation and deaths would go up sharply. This should have prompted the government to immediately increase hospital beds, ICU facilities, ventilators and, most important, oxygen. It didn’t. Instead, the facilities set up to tackle the first wave were dismantled.

Now, let me ask a critical question. Doesn’t this story suggest — actually prove — the government was forewarned of the looming crisis but chose to ignore scientific advice? Worse, the government did all the wrong things. Doesn’t that amount to irresponsibility?

So that our political divisions don’t prejudice us, I put this question to one of the world’s most highly regarded experts on global health, Prof. Ashish Jha, dean of Brown University’s School of Public Health. He said he has no doubt “the government failed to respond in a serious way even though the data was clear”. He also said the Kumbh Mela could end up being “the biggest superspreader in this pandemic’s history”. But he went one critical step further. He said this failure must be explained by “the people in power”. India, he added, is owed “an explanation” by its government.

Now can you see why this story is so important and you should know about it? If the answer is yes, ask why the vast majority of our media kept quiet and failed to tell you? Just as the government owes us an explanation for its irresponsibility, doesn’t the media owe you an explanation for keeping you in the dark?

The writer is a television commentator and anchor

LETTERS

PREACHING IS EASY

This refers to the joint opposition parties urging our Prime Minister to centrally procure vaccines from all global and domestic sources and launch free mass vaccination. What an irony, when the virus peaked last year all these political leaders were critical of our PM’s actions like lockdowns, etc. When he arranged for domestic vaccinations, all these leaders branded it as ‘Modi Jab’ and not only refused to take the shots but also gave negative publicity to prevent the people from taking the vaccination. Even now, the Congress preaches to stand together but continues to criticise.

Last year they advised the PM to give free hand to state Chief Ministers to take their own actions to arrest the virus. Now when the PM has given the responsibilities to the CMs, they want the PM to get the vaccines. This is nothing but the act of a chameleon.

N. Mahadevan, Chennai

NEED 2 EXTRA HOURS

The Tamil Nadu State government will do well if it extends the business hours of the grocery shops, tea stalls and vegetable outlets up to 2 pm as most of these establishments start their business around 9 am only. This will benefit both the traders and customers a like.

S. Vaithianathan, Madurai

WITHERING PRIDE

The editorial, Be grateful for ideas, don’t cast them in partisan light pummels hard on the Centre’s historical fiasco in tackling the pandemic’s second innings, thanks to the lack of sustainable planning and execution resulting in the affected states demanding autonomy in ordering oxygen cylinders and other life-saving appliances from sources across the globe. The BJP’s president’s lament that the Indian scientists’ discovery of the vaccine goes unappreciated is understandable, but they are still many a mile away in containing the virus spike to the barest minimum resulting in drawing flak from all quarters. As the swan song of the editorial said, finding ways and means to tackle the pandemic crisis is more important than shooting the messenger, which is unethical.

E.S. Chandrasekaran, Chennai

Mahir Ali



Jerusalem & Gaza: Do alternatives to violence exist; can youth find way out?

Resistance to the latest bout of attempted ethnic cleansing in the Old City has fed into spiralling violence in Jerusalem in the days leading up to Eid. Sheikh Jarrah — the Old City neighbourhood where the legally sanctioned evictions of long-standing Palestinian residents at the behest of Jewish settler organisations predictably sparked a response — serves as a reminder that the Nakba is much more than a historical event.

It is an ongoing catastrophe, perhaps best exemplified by the creeping annexation of the West Bank.

Amid the confrontation centred around Al Aqsa mosque — with stones and fireworks on one side, and stun grenades, tear gas and rubber bullets on the other, causing hundreds of injuries — Hamas opted for its usual tactic of lobbing a bunch of missiles towards Jerusalem. They caused little damage and no casualties, whereas the Israeli response claimed the lives of at least 24 people, many of them children, in the Gaza Strip, according to reports.

That’s par for the course in that part of the world. Likewise the swift Western condemnation of Hamas’s futile attacks. More broadly there have been the usual calls for a “de-escalation on both sides” from the US and EU. Moral equivalence between the brutality of the oppressor and the resistance of the oppressed remains a problematic hurdle for Western “diplomacy”.

This is reflected in efforts across Europe and the US, legally or legislatively sanctioned in some cases, to effectively outlaw most criticism of Israel, and specifically the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement. It’s worth recalling that there was also opposition to pressure for sanctions against the South African apartheid state. It took a few decades for sufficient momentum to build up to make a difference.

It may take even longer in the case of Israel. After all, the Afrikaners who dominated South Africa lacked the leverage of a historical holocaust. Mind you, this is not to suggest that Europeans, or anyone else, ought to

overlook one of the 20th century’s most atrocious crimes against humanity. On the contrary, the horrific Nazi extermination campaign against European Jews should forever serve as a particularly sordid reminder of the depths of hatred to which human beings can descend.

One can only wonder whether historical memories play any role when, for instance, German legislators effectively criminalise solidarity with Palestine amid a rising tide of neo-Nazism in their nation, when French politicians and retired generals promote Islamophobia, or when Israeli fascists mobilise to chant “death to Arabs” in Palestinian neighbourhoods.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding bipartisan opposition to a congressional effort to legislate some leverage over how generous US subsidies to Israel, mostly in the form of military aid, are used, there are persistent reports from the US suggesting that the mood over unquestioning backing for Israel is shifting, not least among younger American Jews.

It may be so, although there’s scope

for scepticism. It was nonetheless intriguing to encounter an opinion column in *The New York Times* recently in which former CIA chief John Brennan advised Joe Biden to watch Palestinian film-maker Farah Nabulsi’s Academy Award-nominated short film *The Present*, which depicts the ordeals Palestinians routinely face in crossing checkpoints not between the occupied territories and Israel, but within the West Bank.

Who knows whether Mr Biden will bother, but either way chances of a substantial policy shift in the US — perhaps the only country capable of single-handedly compelling Israel to reconsider the status quo — remain infinitesimal. It won’t matter that Human Rights Watch has at last acknowledged that Israel is guilty of the crimes of apartheid and persecution.

It will matter even less that Israel remains in a political mess, with its fourth election in two years predictably yielding no clear mandate, and its caretaker Prime Minister facing corruption charges and the prospect of imprisonment.

Benjamin Netanyahu was once more afforded the opportunity of forming a government after his Likud party won 30 Knesset seats in March, falling short of a majority by 31 seats. He failed, and last week Yair Lapid of Yesh Atid, which won 17 seats, was invited to have a go. That effectively means either a (probably temporary) government led by Naftali Bennett (who is even nastier than Netanyahu in some respects), or a fifth election. Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas, meanwhile, has lamely put off indefinitely elections scheduled for this month. One could argue that under the circumstances, Palestinian elections, like the aspirations of young Palestinians who have never had a chance to vote, hardly matter. But how exactly do young Israelis see their future? Are they comfortable with the idea of living in, and fighting for, a proto-fascist state? Would they be willing to confide as much the next time they commune with their grandparents?

By arrangement with Dawn

SHORT TAKES

Lukaku fined for birthday party

Milan: Romelu Lukaku has been fined along with three Inter Milan teammates after a party in the early hours of Thursday morning to celebrate the Belgium forward's birthday which broke Covid-19 restrictions. Lukaku, Achraf Hakimi, Ivan Perisic and Ashley Young were among a group of 24 people celebrating his 28th birthday in a Milan hotel after the Inter's 3-1 league win over Roma, *Gazzetta Dello Sport* reported.

Police were called with all present receiving fines for breaking coronavirus rules, *Gazzetta* said. According to Lukaku's entourage, the former Manchester United forward went out with friends, but had not organised the party. Lukaku scored the final goal against Roma to bring his tally to 22 in the league this season, six behind Cristiano Ronaldo.

— AFP

Serena beaten in 1,000th match

Rome: Serena Williams' 1,000th tour-level singles match ended in defeat as she marked her return to action with a 7-6 (6), 7-5 loss to Nadia Podoroska in the second round of the Italian Open. The eighth-seeded Williams, who hadn't played since the Australian Open, rallied from a break down twice in the opening set on Wednesday and saved the first three set points she faced in the tiebreaker before Podoroska converted her fourth. "It's tough to have a first match on clay. It was definitely kind of good to go the distance and to try to be out there, but clearly I can do legions better," said Williams. Defending champion Simona Halep was forced to retire with a left calf injury in the second set of her match against fellow former No. 1 Angelique Kerber.

— AP

Djokovic sweeps into Italian last 8

Rome: World number one Novak Djokovic swept into the Italian Open quarter-finals on Thursday with a straight sets wins over Alejandro Davidovich Fokina in front of spectators who were allowed to watch in the Foro Italico for the first time. The five-time Rome champion won through 6-2, 6-1 in 1hr 10min against the 48th-ranked Spaniard with the venue filled to 25 per cent of capacity. "It was not good, it was great. I missed the crowd," said the 33-year-old Serb. "It was nice to see them back." After losing his opening service game, Djokovic powered back with five breaks of serve, outclassing his rival, despite a late fightback, to seal the win on his sixth match point.

— AFP

Oz players may return home soon

Male, Maldives: A group of Australian cricketers, coaches and players-turned-commentators, currently stranded in Maldives, may return home in a chartered flight on Sunday, though they are still waiting confirmation from their government, according to a report. A group of 38 Australians, including 14 players, left for Maldives on May 6 after the suspension of IPL 2021 as their government had banned flights from India till May 15 due to surge in Covid-19 cases. "Under plans currently being thrashed out, the group would be able to take a charter flight out of the Maldives via Malaysia to Sydney on May 16, where they would then serve their mandatory 14-day quarantine period," said a report in *ESPNcricinfo*.

— PTI

Hockey legends kin to get ₹5L

New Delhi: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday announced financial support of ₹5 lakh each for the bereaved families of former hockey players M.K. Kaushik and Ravinder Pal Singh, who recently lost their lives to Covid-19. Both Kaushik and Singh were a part of India's 1980 Olympic gold-winning team. "We've lost two hockey greats to Covid. MK Kaushik ji & Ravinder Pal Singh ji's contribution to Indian sport will always be remembered," Rijiju wrote.

— PTI

Atletico on in Spain

Atletico on the cusp of La Liga glory after Sociedad win

Madrid, May 13: Atletico Madrid held their nerve to beat Real Sociedad 2-1 on Wednesday and move within touching distance of winning La Liga.

Yannick Carrasco and Angel Correa made a dominant first half count for Atletico, who retreated in the second and were left hanging on after Igor Zubeldia blasted in for La Real with seven minutes left.

When the final whistle blew, Diego Simeone jogged up the tunnel at the Wanda Metropolitano, punching the air as he went, fully aware how important this result could prove.

"We were excellent in the first half but the suffering was unnecessary when we had so many chances," Simeone said.

Outside, Atleti fans had gathered to cheer and sing throughout a nervy contest and when victory was confirmed, fireworks filled the sky.

"We thank all those who are outside tonight and all those who can't come because of everything that is happening," said Atletico captain Koke. "We could hear them outside when we needed them in the last 10 minutes."

Victory puts Atletico four points clear of Barcelona in the table and five ahead of Real Madrid, with Zinedine Zidane's side playing their game in hand away at Granada on Thursday.

It also raises the possibility of Atletico winning the title in the penultimate round on Sunday when they play at home to Osasuna.

Another victory this weekend would knock Barca out of the race regardless of what the Catalans do against Celta Vigo while Real Madrid would also concede if they had not taken six points from Granada and Sunday's trip to Athletic Bilbao.

Sevilla, in fourth, had earlier edged past Valencia 1-0 but they can no longer overtake Atleti, given their six-point deficit and a losing head-to-head record with the leaders. Youssef En-Nesyri scored his 26th goal of the season at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

The four-horse race is reduced to three and after weeks of various twists and turns, Atletico suddenly appear to have a route to the trophy.

In terms of the table at least, this game against fifth-placed Real Sociedad was their toughest remaining fixture, although Real Valladolid could well be fighting for survival on the final day.

— AFP



Atletico Madrid's Angel Correa (left) vies for the ball with Martin Zubimendi of Real Sociedad in their Spanish League match in Madrid on Wednesday. — AFP

Rowe exploits Jorginho blunder as Arsenal win

London, May 13: Thomas Tuchel admitted Chelsea's 1-0 defeat against Arsenal was a "wake-up call" after Emile Smith Rowe punished Jorginho's blunder to dent the Blues' bid to finish in the Premier League's top four.

Midfielder Jorginho was guilty of a woefully misplaced back-pass that ended with Gunners youngster Smith Rowe slotting home early in the first half at Stamford Bridge.

Tuchel's side were bereft of quality in the final third as they succumbed to only a third defeat in their 26 matches in all competitions.

Chelsea remain in fourth place, but their bid to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish is now on a knife edge.

They sit six points clear of fifth placed West Ham, who have a game in hand, and seven ahead of sixth placed Liverpool, who could be the biggest threat with two games in hand.

"I don't know how

MILAN RUN RIOT TO KEEP THEIR CL CHANCES ALIVE

Milan, May 13: Ante Rebic scored a hat-trick and Theo Hernandez a double as AC Milan thrashed Torino 7-0 on Wednesday to keep their push for a return to the Champions League for the first time since 2014 on track.

The battle for elite European football remains tight with just three points separating second-placed Atalanta and Juventus in fifth.

Atalanta moved back second ahead of Napoli with a 2-0 win over relegation candidates Benevento.

The Bergamo side are equal on points with Milan, with Napoli a further two points adrift in fourth.

"Until you cross the finish line, you can't give up on anything," said Milan coach Stefano Pioli whose final two games are home against Cagliari and away to Atalanta.

— AFP

Arsenal would have scored if we didn't give it to them. We scored more or less an own goal, a total gift," Tuchel said.

PSG MAKE IT TO FRENCH CUP FINAL

Paris Saint-Germain squeaked past Montpellier 6-5 on penalties in Wednesday's

French Cup semi-final to keep alive their hopes of ending the season with silverware.

Spot kicks were required after the two sides were all square at 2-2 after normal time in Montpellier.

"It was a real cup tie, they're never easy," said PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino.

— AFP

CL FINAL MOVED FROM TURKEY TO PORTUGAL

Paris, May 13: UEFA announced on Thursday that the Champions League final between Manchester City and Chelsea had been moved from Istanbul to Porto, Portugal.

The match on May 29 has been switched to the Estadio do Dragao to allow English spectators to attend as travel between the UK and Turkey is suspended because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Earlier, European football's governing body announced up to 6,000 supporters from each club will be able to attend.

"We accept that the decision of the British Government to place Turkey on the red list for travel was taken in good faith and in the best interests of protecting its citizens from the spread of the virus but it also presented us with a major challenge in staging a final featuring two English teams," UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said.

UK citizens returning from red list countries are required to quarantine for 10 days.

— AFP

India remain No.1 in Test rankings

Dubai, May 13: India remained the number one Test side after the annual update of the ICC team rankings, released on Thursday.

India head the table after gaining one rating point for an aggregate of 121, having accumulated 2,914 points from 24 matches.

Virat Kohli's men are closely followed by their World Test Championship final opponents, New Zealand, with a rating of 120. The Kiwis have garnered 2166 points from 18 Tests and gained two rating points.

Australia's 2-1 win over England and 3-1 win over England over the past year and New Zealand's 2-0 series wins over the West Indies and Pakistan have helped them keep ahead of the pack.

According to an ICC statement, the latest annual update eliminates results of 2017-18.

The latest update rates all matches played since May 2020 at 100 per cent and those of the previous two years at 50 per cent.

England (109 rating) have climbed a place to third at the expense of Australia (108 rating), down to fourth now.

England's jump came

● **India's 2-1 win over Australia and 3-1 win over England over the past year and New Zealand's 2-0 series wins over the West Indies and Pakistan have helped them keep ahead of the pack.**

after their 0-4 defeat to Australia in 2017-18 was dropped from the rankings.

Pakistan (94) have gained three points but remained at fifth spot, while West Indies (84), who beat Bangladesh 2-0 and drew 0-0 with Sri Lanka in series played this year, have jumped two places to sixth, their best position since 2013.

South Africa (80) and Sri Lanka (78) have dropped a rung each to seventh and eighth positions respectively, followed by Bangladesh (46), who have lost five points and Zimbabwe (35), who gained eight points.

India and New Zealand will square off in the inaugural World Test Championship final at Southampton's Ageas Bowl from June 18 to 22.

— PTI

PAINE HINTS AT GIVING UP CAPTAINCY AFTER ASHES

Melbourne, May 13: Australian Test captain Tim Paine has hinted at stepping down from the position if his team manages to defeat England in the Ashes series this year and backed former skipper Steve Smith to succeed him.

The 36-year-old Paine has been under intense scrutiny after Australia were beaten 1-2 by an injury-ravaged India in a home Test series earlier this season. Paine said that debacle was partly because his team got distracted by India's "nig-gling".

Smith was Australia's captain before being forced to step down in 2018 owing to his role in the ball-tampering scandal. "He's probably a bit like me when I was at the start of my captaincy journey in Tasmania — he was thrown into a very big role at a very, very young age and he proba-



Tim Paine

bly wasn't quite ready for it," Paine was quoted as saying by *news.com.au*.

"But by the time I came in he was growing into that role and getting better and better. Then obviously (in) South Africa events happened and he's not doing it anymore. But yeah I would support him getting that job again," he added.

Paine also hinted that he might step down from captaincy if Australia can beat England in the Ashes later this year.

— PTI

WOMEN'S | CRICKET

Powar replaces Raman as coach

SHAFALI, RADHA READY TO MAKE WBBL DEBUTS

New Delhi, May 13: Indian batting sensation Shafali Verma is set to make her Women's Big Bash League debut with two-time champions Sydney Sixers later this year.

The 17-year-old is expected to be joined by left-arm spinner Radha Yadav, who is currently in talks with the Sydney Sixers franchise.

"Shafali's deal is done, it will be announced when the Women's Big Bash schedule is released," a BCCI source said.

"Radha is also in talks with the Sydney Sixers," the source added.

The teenager's father was also required to sign a consent form as Shafali is still a minor.

Shafali joins the trio of T20 skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (Sydney Thunder), opener Smriti Mandhana (Brisbane Heat) and all-rounder Veda Krishnamurthy (Hobart Hurricanes), which has featured in the WBBL.

The world number one batter in ICC women's T20I rankings will also be turning up for Birmingham Phoenix in the inaugural edition of The Hundred — the 100-ball domestic competition of the England and Wales Cricket Board later this year.

— PTI

Negative public opinion is no threat to Olympics

Geneva, May 13: The IOC has downplayed concerns over Japanese public opinion calling for the Tokyo Olympics to be cancelled, before its virtual news conference was interrupted by an activist protesting the Games.

The news conference on Wednesday followed a monthly meeting of the International Olympic Committee's executive board held amid a state of emergency in Tokyo to curb surging Covid-19 cases. Polling in Japan also persistently suggests people want the July 23-August 8 Olympics to be called off, having already been postponed by one year.

"We listen but won't be guided by public opinion," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said, adding "everything is telling us ... that the Games can go ahead and will go ahead."

Adams stood in for his boss, IOC president Thomas Bach, whose planned visit to Japan next week was called off Monday after states of emergency in Tokyo and other regions were extended through May.

The final question of the news conference, held by video call, was offered to a reporter from Yahoo Sports.

TOKYO-BOUND RACE WALKER IRFAN +VE

New Delhi, May 13: Olympic-bound race walker K.T. Irfan is among five elite track-and-field athletes who have tested positive for Covid-19 at the Sports Authority of India's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

The tests were conducted last Friday and those who returned positive have been kept under quarantine.

"At least five elite athletes have tested positive for Covid-19 when tests were conducted on Friday. They have been kept isolated from others," a source at the SAI Centre said.

The source said another race walker could also have tested positive but this could



K.T. Irfan

not be confirmed.

"4 male players and 1 female player and 4 support staff tested positive for Covid-19," a SAI source stated.

Irfan had qualified for the Tokyo Olympics way back in 2019 after finishing fourth in the 20 km event of the Asian Race Walking Championships in Nomi, Japan.

— PTI

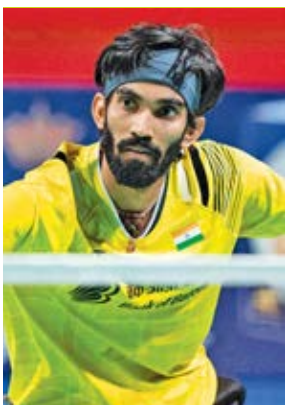
Instead, an activist appeared on the screen holding up a black and white banner opposing the Tokyo Olympics.

"No Olympics anywhere, No Olympics anywhere," he said, before using a profanity and adding "No Olympics in LA., No Olympics in

Tokyo," before the line was cut. The 2028 Olympics will be held in Los Angeles.

Adams made light of the interruption noting if Bach had been present it "probably would have made that stunt a little bit more interesting."

— AP



Kidambi Srikanth

done anything differently, Srikanth said: "Now we can say a lot of things because the tournament is not happening but we really don't know what is happening between the organisers and BWF."

"So, I don't know what else can be done, may be BWF can communicate things better to players."

With no events lined-up, Olympic-bound shuttlers such as P.V. Sindhu, B. Sai Praneeth and men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy, too have decided to take some time off.

"Definitely disappointed that all the three events got cancelled. I have been training for 7 weeks but now just training without purpose makes no sense," world No. 15 Praneeth said.

— PTI

Srikanth holds on to slim Oly hopes

New Delhi, May 13: Left stranded after the final three Olympic qualifiers were cancelled, Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth still harbours "some hope" of making it to the Tokyo Games, his faint optimism resting on the world body's assurance of a statement on the qualification process.

Former world No. 1 Srikanth and Saina Nehwal were all but out of contention after the Badminton World Federation on Wednesday cancelled the last qualifying event in Singapore due to coronavirus-related travel restrictions.

The cancellation of the Singapore event (June 1-6) was after Malaysia Open and India Open had to be shelved due to the health crisis.

The BWF, however, said it "will issue a further statement on Tokyo Olympics qualifying at a later date."

"I could have qualified if I had participated in the qualifiers but there is nothing much I can do about it now. Just waiting to see what BWF says about this whole qualification things, so yeah holding on to some hope," Srikanth said.

There is no tournament scheduled till August and Telangana too has gone into a lockdown. Srikanth said he would now take a break from training.

Asked if BWF could have

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